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The Public Library as Past Become Space

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Abstract

I use Walter Benjamin's historical materialism in *The Arcades Project* to critique contemporary notions related to the understanding of the public library as a place. My critical theoretical approach, grounded in historical research and Benjamin's theories of modernity, highlights contemporary aspects of the public library and broadens and deepens our understanding of the library's physical role, both within and outside its walls. My research is based on the concurrent yet divergent social and cultural development of modern public libraries and Benjamin's symbolic shopping arcades. Like Benjamin with the arcade, I believe that the public library contains innovative potentiality, in its spaces, collections, and modes of circulation. While I work within the library and information science research area of "library as place", my critical method stands in contrast to other library as place research, which often simply describes the physical and historical characteristics of library spaces or treats the presence of any library as beneficial. I contribute to library as place research by considering how the public library, like the arcade, is "a past become space" (Benjamin [1927] 1999a, 871). Individual chapters consider the suitability of *The Arcades Project* as a theoretical framework for library as place research, the parallel histories of the arcade and the public library as projects of modernity, the display of the public library and its items, the library as a site to experience empathy—bad or true—with objects, the public library as the living room of the community, and how library workers and patrons alike can experience true empathy with the library as place. Original findings include a reframing of the modern public library movement, a comprehensive praxis of library display, a unique synthesis of Benjamin's writing on empathy, and a demonstration of the effectiveness of a Benjaminian literary montage.

Keywords

public libraries; Walter Benjamin; library as place; arcades; library history; literary montage; modernity; library exhibits; library circulation; empathy; commodities; historical materialism

Summary for Lay Audience

In a time of rapid technological change, unstable funding sources, and shifting social conditions, particularly in urban centres, the public library must constantly reevaluate itself, its services, and its physical spaces. Public librarians are quick to promote the library as a welcoming space, yet, concerned as they are with annual budget cycles, they rarely have an opportunity to consider critically broader theoretical and historical concerns. This dissertation examines the history of the public library to understand its present role as a community space. My work is part of the library and information science (LIS) research area of "library as place", which is concerned with meanings and functions of the physical library. I use the writing of the critical theorist Walter Benjamin, particularly *The Arcades Project*, to understand the social, economic, and cultural forces at play during the age of modernity. These forces affected the modern public library movement—the effort to establish public libraries throughout the world—and still affect public libraries to this day. After establishing the appropriateness validity of my Benjaminian approach in theoretical and historical studies, I turn my attention to three present-day issues in public libraries: displays, circulation, and the library as the living room of the community. I argue that the public library is and has always been a place affected by the forces of modern capitalism while also containing the potential to help the world past limited forms of social and cultural exchange. Perhaps my most novel research contribution is an entire chapter constructed as a literary montage following the model established by Benjamin in *The Arcades Project*. In addition to the field of LIS, my research has relevance to cultural history, urban studies, book history, print culture, critical theory, and museum studies.

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I am so grateful to have had such supportive, encouraging, and dedicated supervisors. Since my very first day as a PhD student at FIMS, Dr. Paulette Rothbauer has been involved in my work, from approving a last-minute directed study, to serving on my comprehensive exam committee, to co-supervising my dissertation. I believe that I was one of the first students at Western that my other co-supervisor, Dr. Melissa Adler, met, and we have worked closely together ever since. Our brainstorming sessions and lengthy email exchanges helped me to clarify many thoughts that otherwise would have remained dormant.

It was my great luck to have not two, but three exceptional supervisors. The third member of my dissertation committee, Dr. Catherine A. Johnson, also served as my supervisor during the comps process and provided extensive suggestions, comments, and edits writing that I did at every stage of this degree. Even as I routinely changed my mind about my research and writing, Kate, Paulette, and Melissa provided consistent encouragement and advice.

Thank you to my examiners, Dr. Ronald E. Day (Indiana University Bloomington), Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford, and Dr. James Miller, who all agreed to take on this extra work in such trying times. And an extra special thank you to Dr. Grant Campbell for examining both my dissertation and my comps, in addition to teaching me how to catalogue in library school a decade ago, recommending me for the doctoral program, and providing my first serious academic exposure to critical theory.

By earning my doctorate, I follow the example of my mother, Demetra, who continues to demonstrate the importance of hard work and higher education.

My wife, Caroline, is my biggest supporter and believes in me even when I don't believe in myself. Without her, nothing I do would be possible. During my doctoral studies, our two children, Lane and Evan, were born. It is for them that I imagine revolutionary potentialities.

My father, Clayton, passed away two years ago. He taught me to believe in the transformative power of old spaces. I dedicate this dissertation to his memory.

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Chapter 1

1   Introduction

In this dissertation, I use Walter Benjamin's *Das Passagen-Werk* (also known as *Das Passagenarbeit* [1] or *The Arcades Project*) as a critical historical lens to conduct a contemporary critique of the public library as a place. Benjamin (1892–1940), a member of the Frankfurt School of critical theorists, was concerned with the revolutionary potentiality of moments, places, objects, and images. I bring that same approach to library as place research, based on the concurrent social and cultural development of shopping arcades (*passages*, in French) and public libraries. Benjamin's sprawling yet unfinished and posthumously published text, *The Arcades Project*, serves as my theoretical lens through which to critique longstanding notions of the public library's community function and its role as a place. The arcades and the public library movement were contemporaries. The Galerie de Bois, in Paris's Palais-Royal, opened in 1786; Henri Labrouste, famed architect of the arcades, first innovated with iron and glass in la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève and later in la Salle Labrouste in la Bibliothèque nationale. Shopping arcades had their golden age in France, the rest of Europe, and other parts of the Western world throughout the nineteenth century, becoming for Benjamin a symbol for the "high capitalist" modes of production and ways of city life throughout the entire century. This coincided with the public library movement, which started in the mid-nineteenth century; arcades and public libraries can be understood as containing and representing various aspects of life in the modern, imperial Western city.

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[1] "The diverse assortment of papers and notes produced by Benjamin in connection with his Paris studies over the last thirteen years of his life were gathered by Rolf Tiedemann for publication in 1982 under the title *Das Passagen-Werk*, a name that has not been free from criticism" (Gilloch 1996, 100). Gilloch adds in an endnote: "Ivornel [1986, 62], e.g., points out with some justification that this leads to 'petrifying as an *oeuvre* (*Werk*) what Benjamin himself designated more fluidly and openly as his *Passagenarbeit*'" (202). I use "*(Das) Passagenarbeit*" when referring to Benjamin's unpublished manuscript, "*(Das) Passagen-Werk*" when referring to the published German-language edition, and "*(The) Arcades Project*" when referring to both the published English-language translation and the entire project generally (because I am writing for an English-language audience).

For Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* was an "attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible *Ur*-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life in the arcades (and, accordingly, in the nineteenth century)" [N1a,6].[2] I apply the same logic to library as place, assuming that the library represented some aspects of life in the nineteenth century and that twenty-first-century public library spaces can be studied as extensions of the spaces of the nineteenth-century public library movement. I follow in the footsteps of "library as place" research, which is concerned with the presence, contexts, meanings, and roles of the physical library building, including its spaces and materials (e.g., Aabø and Audunson 2012; Buschman and Leckie 2007; Griffis 2013; Leckie 2004; Leckie and Hopkins 2002; Lenstra 2018; Wiegand 2005; Wiegand 2015). "The library is first and foremost a place, a spatial experience" (Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw 2009, p. 2). Even as contemporary public libraries deemphasize their print collections and promote their digital services, spatial concerns remain vital to the public library. For example, a growing number of libraries are offering a range of non-traditional circulating collections of physical items as well as other objects (e.g., seeds) for free, as well as larger reading areas, meeting rooms, community spaces, and increased programs and social services, all of which require physical space.

Using Benjamin's historical materialism, which analyzes everyday life dialectically, I hope to advance library as place research by considering some features of contemporary public libraries, our professional collective dreams, and how the public library, like the arcade, is "a past become space" (Benjamin [1927] 1999a, 871). "Just as Proust begins the story of his life with an awakening, so must every presentation of history begin with awakening; in fact, it should treat of nothing else. This one, accordingly, deals with awakening from the nineteenth century" [N4,3]. What are the nineteenth-century dreams from which the public library collective—academics, librarians, staff, board members, patrons, community members—must awaken? How do these dreams manifest in our library spaces, in the library as a place, and in the subdiscipline of library as place? These

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[2] In keeping with common practice, passages from the "Convolutes" and "First Sketches" of the Eiland and McLaughlin English-language edition of *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999a) are cited herein with simply their passage numbers in brackets.

questions are especially urgent as librarians consider how technological innovations impact the physical items in the collection, the configurations of interior spaces, and even the library building itself. Contemporary public libraries are descendants of the nineteenth-century modern public library movement. Griffis (2013) states that "the library as an organization still relies on many of the same socio-spatial models of control as it did one century ago when public library building design first became standardized" (iii). Louis Aragon ([1926] 1994), one of Benjamin's main influences, wrote about a famously destroyed arcade: "Future mysteries will arise from the ruins of today's. Let us take a stroll along this Passage de l'Opéra, and have a closer look at it" (15). Here in the future, I examine the public library's current mysteries that arose from yesterday's. "The city pushes the student of arcades to the limits of his ability to distinguish differences among them. A casual glance out of a car window reveals arcade-like forms even in the suburbs, which, however, are only market halls, extended subway entrances, or train station vestibules" (Geist 1983, 310). The arcades have permeated the features of the Western city, including the library as place.

1.1 Walter Benjamin

Benjamin, born and raised in Berlin, was from an upper-class assimilated Jewish family.[3] His childhood experiences in the bourgeois apartments of his neighbourhood, in secondary school, running errands with his mother, and walking on city streets factored heavily in his later autobiographical writings such as *Einbahnstraße* (*One-Way Street*; Benjamin 2016), *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert* (*Berlin Childhood around 1900*; Benjamin 2006), and "Berliner Chronik" ("A Berlin Chronicle"). He studied at the University of Freiburg, the University of Berlin, and the University of Munich, becoming involved with the German Youth Movement and meeting lifelong friends and colleagues Gershom Scholem and Ernst Bloch, among others. In 1919, Benjamin completed his doctoral studies at the University of Bern, where he met his future wife Dora Sophie Pollack. In 1925, Benjamin finished writing his study of the Trauerspiel, *Ursprung des*

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[3] For a comprehensive picture of Benjamin's life and work, see Scholem's (1981) primary account and Eiland and Jennings's (2014) critical biography.

deutschen Trauerspiels (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama*; Benjamin 2009), an ultimately withdrawn habilitation thesis at the University of Frankfurt am Main. Benjamin's personal and professional lives were both thrown into turmoil by his failure to secure a faculty position, rising inflation, and his and Dora's reliance on their parents for lodging and financial support. Benjamin's work during this early part of his life focused on literary criticism in the Romantic tradition, including studies of Goethe, Hölderlin, Proust, and Baudelaire. Walter and Dora separated in 1928 before divorcing two years later; around this time, he had several romantic interests, including Asja Lācis, his co-author for the essay "Naples" (1925; Benjamin and Lacis 1978) and whom he visited for an extended stay in Soviet Moscow. Even before Hitler rose to power, Benjamin moved around Europe, spending time in Switzerland, Paris, and Capri. But after 1932, he was a refugee, abandoning his Berlin apartment—and the extensive private library it contained—and dividing his time between Paris, Ibiza, Dora's boarding house in San Remo, and Bertolt Brecht's residence in Svendborg, where Benjamin would arrange to have half of his book collection delivered. From the late 1920s, he made a modest living writing for radio[4] and publishing articles, book reviews, and translations, in addition to receiving funding from the Institute for Social Research. Under the influence of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Fritz Pollack, Benjamin's later work saw him transition from the simultaneously traditional yet anarchist literary criticism of his youth to an experimental Marxist historical materialism. Benjamin wrote letters extensively to his dispersed, exiled network of personal and intellectual contacts, especially the Adornos and Scholem, the former having relocated to New York and the latter to Palestine.[5] Benjamin eventually settled in Paris to spend most of his time on his arcades notes. Following the revocation of his German citizenship by the Nazis and a failed attempt to gain French citizenship, Benjamin was interned in 1939 by the French government at a camp in Nevers, from which he wrote a now famous letter to Gretel Adorno about his

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[4] Rosenthal has assembled Benjamin's (2014) radio works in an edited volume.

[5] Gödde and Lonitz edited six volumes of Benjamin's correspondences in German (Benjamin 1995–2000). Collections of Benjamin's correspondences translated into English include those with Gretel Adorno (G. Adorno and Benjamin 2008), Theodor Adorno (T. Adorno and Benjamin 1999), and Scholem (Benjamin and Scholem 1989), along with various others (Benjamin 1994).

dream of the fichu (G. Adorno and Benjamin 2008, 272–274). Determined to continue working on *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin returned to Paris, where he resided until fleeing from the Gestapo in June 1940. Before he left, he entrusted the *Passagenarbeit* manuscript to his acquaintance Georges Bataille, writer and librarian at la Bibliothèque nationale de France, where Bataille hid the manuscript until 1947, when it was recovered and sent to Theodor Adorno in New York. The Adornos had spent years trying to convince Benjamin to move to New York, and Horkheimer had finally secured a travel visa for him. In late September, carrying a briefcase containing an unknown and unrecovered manuscript, he crossed from France to Spain on foot with a small group of refugees. Due to a tragic coincidence, they arrived one day before Spanish authorities were to reverse their policy to deport all incoming refugees from France. Fearing that he would be subsequently turned over to the Gestapo, Benjamin took his own life. If he had arrived one day later, he might have been allowed to continue his journey to Portugal and then safety in New York. Benjamin's major works published during his lifetime include "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" ("The Task of the Translator", 1921), "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften" ("Goethe's Elective Affinities", 1924), *One-Way Street* (1928), the Trauerspiel study (1928), "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" ("The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1935), "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows" ("The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov", 1936), and *Berlin Childhood* (1938). The posthumously published translated essay collections *Illuminations* (1968) and *Reflection*s (1978) helped introduce Benjamin to the English-reading world.[6]

1.2   The Arcades Project

The Arcades Project is Benjamin's critique of modernity and capitalism grounded in the symbolic rise of the arcades in the 1830s through their height of popularity in the mid-nineteenth century and subsequent decay. It is a grand critical portrayal of the influence of forces of modern capitalism on life during the nineteenth century, with the arcades of

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[6] Benjamin's writings have been collected into seven German-language volumes (Benjamin 1972–1989) and four volumes of English translations (Benjamin 1996–2003).

Paris of the Second Empire serving as a synecdoche for the commodity trade throughout France and, by extension, Western Europe. Benjamin introduced or extended several key concepts—such as flânerie, ragpicking, dialectics at a standstill, the now of recognizability, the threshold, phantasmagoria, dream-time, and empathy—to understand how high capitalism influenced the modern period and led directly to the fascism and extreme nationalism of the era of the World Wars. For example:

> A theater audience, an army, the population of a city comprise masses which in themselves belong to no particular class. The free market multiplies these masses, rapidly and on a colossal scale, insofar as each piece of merchandise now gathers around it the mass of its potential buyers. The totalitarian states have taken this mass as their model. The *Volkgemeinschaft* <People's Community>[7] aims to root out from single individuals everything that stands in the way of their wholesale fusion into a mass of consumers. [J81a,1]

For Benjamin, the nineteenth century was not simply history; it continued to affect everyday life directly and tragically. "[T]he relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical" [N2a,3 & N3,1]. The *Project*'s philosophical themes include "the prehistory of modernity, fashion and commodity fetishism, novelty and repetition, and the architecture of dreaming" (Gilloch 2002, 118).

Benjamin began work on his *Arcades* study in 1927, and it would remain his intellectual priority for the rest of his life. From it he produced the "Work of Art" article as well as two essays establishing the themes of the project, "Paris, capitale du 19e siècle" ("Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century", 1935) and "Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire" ("The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire", unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime). Due to conceptual differences between Theodor Adorno and Benjamin, the Institute refused to publish the latter essay; in its place, Benjamin submitted another result of his arcades research, "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire" ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", 1939). In addition, Benjamin drew parts of the essay "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" ("Theses on the Philosophy of History", unpublished in his lifetime) from Convolute N of *The Arcades Project*. Like the "Theses", the main bulk of Benjamin's

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[7] A sentiment promoting German nationalism following defeat in the First World War that became a slogan of Hitler's Nazi Party.

arcades research remained in the form of unpublished handwritten notes that he would occasionally revise, reorder, or revisit. The *Project* has had many vast, improbable forms: as a collection of quotes, notes, drafts, and revisions; a loose-leaf manuscript in hiding in la Bibliothèque nationale de France; and, later, posthumously, in book form, first in German, and then in French and English translations. What we in the English-reading world now consider the definitive form of the *Project*, the nearly 1,100-page translation by Eiland and McLaughlin (Benjamin 1999a), is nothing more than its most recent form, the one most accessible to us, but one that can still change through translating, editing, revising.

Following an itinerant early adulthood, Benjamin's continuing work on the arcades physically grounded him in Paris amidst the wealth of primary materials in la Bibliothèque nationale. Forever an exile, Benjamin dwelled in books—in libraries, in his private collection, written by others or himself, fully realized or perpetual drafts. The library was the place in which Benjamin's study was realized, researched, compiled, hidden, rediscovered, reborn, and subsequently stored again, in different, published versions. Benjamin mined libraries for forgotten sources and out-of-context quotations to present a literary montage that would undermine all previous forms of knowledge and order.[8] "The *Passagen-Werk* might […] be seen as an attempt to overturn [Wissenschaft's] omnibus volumes, to ransack the library and pick up whatever bits and pieces can serve the revolutionary cause of impeding 'progress'" (Wohlfarth 2006, 18). Wissenschaft (systematic research), the academic trend in nineteenth-century Germany, can be seen as an extension of what Benjamin (2009) identified as "[t]he baroque ideal of knowledge, the process of storing, to which the vast libraries are a monument" (184). Critical scholarship has the potential to undermine the library as place's monumentality by transforming it and its holdings into new holdings, new places.

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[8] This was an approach based on contemporary creative trends: "montage as a principle of artistic construction was in its heyday in the 1920s (one need only mention in this regard the names of Moholy-Nagy, Heartfield, Eisenstein, and Brecht)" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 288).

Benjamin drew heavily from a vast array of primary sources to portray as complete a picture of the age of modernity as possible. His main literary influence was Charles Baudelaire, the focus of Convolute J, the centrepiece and longest section of the *Project*. Other recurring figures include Victor Hugo, Stéphane Mallarmé, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Carl Jung, Charles Fourier, Louis Auguste Blanqui, Henri Saint-Simon, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Benjamin's style of notetaking and montage presentation was influenced by the notebooks of Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Joseph Joubert, and possibly Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. Louis Aragon, Marcel Proust, Bertolt Brecht, Theodor Adorno, Franz Hessel, Sigfried Giedion, György Lukács, Paul Valéry, André Breton, and Ernst Bloch are among Benjamin's contemporary influences whose writings frequently appear in his notes. Benjamin, the most poetic and allegoric of the materialist historians, was directly influenced by the declining Parisian arcades that he observed on his daily walks in the 1920s and '30s:

> As rocks of the Miocene or Eocene in places bear the imprint of monstrous creatures from those ages, so today arcades dot the metropolitan landscape like caves containing the fossil remains of a vanished monster: the consumer of the pre-imperial era of capitalism, the last dinosaur of Europe. On the walls of these caverns their immemorial flora, the commodity, luxuriates and enters, like cancerous tissue, into the most irregular combinations. [R2,3]

According to Gilloch (2002): "This prehistory of the recent past was intended to excavate, identify and explode the manifold manifestations of this dreaming collective, so as to bring modernity to its sober senses" (124).

Benjamin worked with fragments, as both a reader and a writer. In his Trauerspiel study, he compared fragmentary discourse, which could form a complete whole by examining an object from many different angles, with medieval mosaics, which "preserved their majesty despite their fragmentation into capricious particles" (Benjamin 2009, 28). These fragments of materials provided an example for philosophical writing: "Both are made up of the distinct and the disparate [….] The value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea" (28–29). This fragmentation and subsequent reconfiguration led to the "transformation of material content into truth content" or, put differently, "historical content […] into a philosophical truth" (182). As a

result, "all ephemeral beauty is completely stripped off, and the work stands as a ruin" (182). It presents itself as both an intellectual ruin and as part of the physical world: "In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting" (179). The historical materialist isolates the truth content of the physical world only through critical observation of its decay. (I hope that I have faithfully followed Benjamin's example in my own research.)

Benjamin's manuscript, the one Bataille hid, consisted of 426 sheets folded in half, in effect creating a folio with writing on two sides. Benjamin separated the notes into 36 subjects, assigning letters and numbers to each passage based on subject, order, and page of the folio (see Benjamin 1999a, 958). The numbers therefore reflect both physical and intellectual relationships: "Each numbered passage in this giant arcade of a text communicates between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; each is, at least in theory, a threshold and corridor leading into the past—into recorded history and into the primal history (*Urgeschichte*) informing it—and thereby into the present" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 288). Rolf Tiedemann, the German-language editor of *Das Passagen-Werk*, used this systematic arrangement for the text's 36 sections. Theodor Adorno suggested using the term "Konvolut" to describe this division, which Eiland and McLaughlin (1999) chose to translate as "convolute":

> In Germany, the term *Konvolut* has a common philological application: it refers to a larger or smaller assemblage—literally, a bundle—of manuscripts or printed materials that belong together. The noun "convolute" in English means "something of a convoluted form." We have chosen it as the translation of the German term over a number of other possibilities, the most prominent being "folder," "file," and "sheaf." The problem with these more common English terms is that each carries inappropriate connotations, whether of office supplies, computerese, agriculture, or archery. "Convolute" is strange, at least on first acquaintance, but so is Benjamin's project and its principle of sectioning. […] [I]t remains the most precise and most evocative term for designating the elaborately intertwined collections of "notes and materials" that make up the central division of this most various and colorful of Benjaminian texts. (xiv)

This decision is symbolic of the complicated and changing nature of both Benjamin's original notes and its published book form: "The 'Arcades Project' is not so much an unfinished text as a series of texts in various stages of completion. It is neither a coherent

nor a single piece of writing, but rather an agglomeration or plethora of interconnected, related enterprises, begun at various times, dropped, taken up with renewed zeal, transformed and eventually abandoned in favour of something else" (Gilloch 1996, 100). The *Project* has taken various forms and can be experienced in various ways: "As published today, *The Arcades Project* is de facto a text, like the notebooks of Joubert, Baudelaire, or Nietzsche. The book can even be read from beginning to end as an encyclopedic narrative of everyday life in mid–nineteenth-century Paris, though a mode of reading closer to the divagations of flânerie—the flâneur experiences the city as historical palimpsest—is no doubt preferable" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 288).

Starting with his Trauerspiel research, Benjamin obsessively accumulated his own personal archive of quotations from primary sources. According to Hannah Arendt ([1955] 2019), who was married to Benjamin's cousin: "collecting was Benjamin's central passion. It started early with what he himself called his 'bibliomania' but soon extended into something far more characteristic, not so much of the person as of his work: the collecting of quotations. […] The 'inner need to own a library' (*Briefe* I, 193)[9] asserted itself around 1916, at the time when Benjamin turned in his studies to Romanticism" (l). This habit of collecting quotations would continue for the rest of his life, reaching its peak in his arcades work. He was a metaphorical ragpicker, about which modern archetype Benjamin quotes and cites Baudelaire:

> "Here we have a man whose job it is to pick up the day's rubbish in the capital. He collects and catalogues everything that the great city has cast off, everything it has lost, and discarded, and broken. He goes through the archives of debauchery, and the jumbled array of refuse. He makes a selection, an intelligent choice; like a miser hoarding treasure, he collects the garbage that will become objects of utility or pleasure when refurbished by Industrial magic" ("Du Vin et du haschisch.," *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, pp. 249–250). [J68,4]

Benjamin adds: "As may be gathered from this prose description of 1851, Baudelaire recognizes himself in the figure of the ragman" [J68,4]. One can assume from this extended quotation that Benjamin recognized himself in this figure as well. The historical

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[9] Volume 1 of *Gesammelte Briefe* (Benjamin 1995–2000).

materialist takes on the role of the ragpicker, recovering sources and citations, ordering quotations, illuminating forgotten or ignored moments. Yet despite Benjamin's desire to compose a book entirely out of quotations, often cited in the secondary literature (e.g., Arendt [1955] 2019; Wizisla 2007b), and despite Missac's (1995) claim that Benjamin achieved this goal with *Das Passagen-Werk* (144–145), *The Arcades Project* as we have come to know it—not necessarily how Benjamin intended it—contains numerous original prose passages by Benjamin, some rather long, some placed side-by-side such that they almost form persuasive essays while remaining fragments. The result is "a dialectical relation—a formal and thematic interfusion of citation and commentary" (Eiland and McLaughlin 1999, xiii).

The Arcades Project is therefore more than a compilation of passages; it is also a list of sources that, when combined, present an image of the modern era in the same way that a specialized library with an extensive collection of sources presents an image of a particular topic. There is a long history of pronouncements about the books or sources that should constitute an idealized collection; such treatises have been popular since the seventeenth century with Bacon, Naudé, (C. D. Johnson 2011; Muñoz 2010), and Dury (Minter 2015), up through the age of modernity (e.g., Everyman's Library), and into the present day. Unlike these other authors and publishers, however, Benjamin wasn't trying to compile an idealized collection but rather a collection that reflected an image of the world as it was. *The Arcades Project* is therefore "a library in and of itself" (Battles 2003, 206), one that simultaneously shatters and reconfigures both history and everyday life.

1.3   Literature Review: Benjamin

Notable scholars that have written general secondary studies of Benjamin's thought include A. Benjamin (1989), Gilloch (2002), Leslie (2000), Missac (1995), Nathan Ross (2015), Uwe Steiner (2010), and Wolin (1994). Detailed treatments specifically of *The Arcades Project* have been written by Buck-Morss (1989), Buse et al. (2005), and Hanssen (2006b). Writers have also summarized or synthesized Benjamin's ideas regarding specific topics, such as the modern city (Gilloch 1996), the aura (Petersson and Steinskog 2005), Romanticism (Hanssen and A. Benjamin 2002), architecture (Elliott 2011). In addition, scholars have applied Benjamin's ideas to topics such as political

philosophy (A. Benjamin 2013; Richter 2000), gender (D'Souza and McDonough 2006), art (A. Benjamin 2005a), history (A. Benjamin 2005b; Steinberg 1996), photography (Smith and Sliwinski 2017), fashion (Hvoch 2010), eschatology (Martel 2012), the Paris Commune (K. Ross 1988), urban studies (Pile 2005), cultural studies (Richter 2002), and commodities (Markus 2011). On the topic of place/space, Cauchi (2003) considered philosophically the notion of space in Benjamin's work, Thompson (2010) examined a specific place—Gateshead, England—in a Benjaminian fashion, and Chiesa (2016) used *The Arcades Project* as a lens for examining different ways that space functions as a storyteller. Two secondary studies that are outside of, but still directly relevant to library and information science (LIS) are Newman's (2011) detailed examination of the Baroque primary sources in Benjamin's Trauerspiel study[10] and an edited volume profiling Benjamin's writing process and personal archive (Benjamin 2007). While many of the above writers have commented on Benjamin's literary montage, I am not aware of any effort to replicate it in an academic or persuasive sense, although Hoffmann et al. (2017) edited an exhibition catalogue featuring creative writing and visual art inspired by *The Arcades Project*, including its Convolutes and montage style. Scheurmann and Scheurmann (1993) compiled another catalogue with a variety of media, bringing together interviews, essays, photographs, and primary documents related to Benjamin's internment in Nevers and death in Port Bou. Buck-Morss (1989) constructed a reverse montage of sorts, synthesizing passages from *The Arcades Project* and Benjamin's other writings to present the cohesive monograph that he might have written.

Benjamin's brief 1931 essay "Unpacking My Library" (in Benjamin 2019), a meditation on collecting and order inspired by the act of moving his personal book collection to a new location, is perhaps his most directly relevant and frequently cited source in literature regarding libraries (e.g., Bakker 2015; Battles 2003; Cavallaro 2010; Kidd 2011; Mida and Kim 2018; Russell 2013; Schnapp and Battles 2014); I use it in Chapters 6 and 7 as a central primary source regarding Benjamin's notion of empathy. *The*

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[10] "The Renaissance explores the universe; the baroque explores libraries. Its meditations are devoted to books" (Benjamin 2009, 140).

Arcades Project, however, despite its monumental size and nearly endless themes and subjects,[11] tends to receive little more than a passing glance or brief mention in LIS literature (e.g., Hayes 2010, Lane 2015, Ventura 2011), with the notable exception of Day (2001), who uses Benjamin's project as a lens to examine the rising importance of information in the modern era. I revisit Day's work in Chapter 2 below, in which I provide a more complete summary of *The Arcades Project*'s main themes and how they are relevant to library as place; that chapter can be read in part as an extension of this introduction.

1.4   Literature Review: Library as Place

Griffis (2013) defines library as place research as "the study of libraries as built environments including their cultural, geographical, and historical contexts, as well as their representative properties as social, political and informational space" (8). Library as place, as a broad area of LIS research, is still relatively new. Foundational works include Leckie and Hopkins's (2002) study of "the public place" of the main branches of Toronto Public Library and Vancouver Public Library, as well as Leckie's (2004) more theoretical considerations of the library as "public space". This line of inquiry was soon expanded upon by Wiegand (2005), the PLACE Project (which began in 2005 as a joint initiative among a group of researchers in Norway), and a wide range of researchers in two edited volumes (Buschman and Leckie 2007; Council on Library and Information Resources 2005). Aabø and Audunson (2012), from the PLACE Project, found that the public library is complex and serves, with varying degrees of interaction and instrumentality, "first place", "second place", and "third place" functions. Other studies from the Norwegian PLACE Project put forth an original body of research that examines public libraries, especially urban ones in a multicultural and digital society, as both low-intensive and high-intensive meeting places, fulfilling the role of both the public square and a location where people can actively engage with each other (Aabø, Audunson, and

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[11] A list of themes for the preliminary exposé of 1935, "Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts" ["Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century"], alone takes up six full pages (901–907) in the English language edition, in addition to a dozen more pages of schemata and methodological reflections (898–918).

Vårheim 2010; Audunson 2005). The PLACE Project also considers the social capital roles of the public library (Audunson, Essmat, and Aabø 2011; Vårheim 2009), a topic covered in a North American context by several authors (e.g., Gong, Japzon, and Chen 2008; Griffis and Johnson 2014; C. A. Johnson 2012) and more generally by Ferguson (2012). Some contemporary public libraries in the UK have been rebranded as "Idea Stores", "Discovery Centres", or "shopping center" libraries (Black 2011; Black and Pepper 2012; Dahlkild 2011), showing the influence of a retail model on library services and spatial configurations. Related studies of the phenomenon of public libraries in shopping malls (e.g., Forsyth 2006; Morris and Brown 2004) fit into larger discussions about the community roles of private or quasipublic spaces at the intersection of consumerism and the public realm (e.g., Lewis 1990; Parlette and Cowen 2011; Voyce 2006). Additional topics covered in library as place research include the library as a site for social reproduction (Frederiksen 2015), the influence of information technologies on library spaces (Janse van Vuren and Latsky 2009; Vogt 2011; Warren and Herter 2020), profiles of individual libraries (Russo 2008), Carnegie libraries (Griffis 2010), other historical studies (Aaltonen 2012), space use (Given and Leckie 2003; May 2011; Shill and Tonner 2004), space planning (Kahn and Underwood 2018; Norton et al. 2013; Pierard and Lee 2011), accessibility (Hill 2011), building renovations (Dewe 2009), reading practices (Rothbauer 2009), sustainability (Pionke 2016), human geography (Templeton 2008), placemaking (Berndtson 2013), professional identity (Hicks 2016), sensory experience (Cox 2019), and noise levels (Pierard and Baca 2019).

1.5 Methodology

In their introduction to the foundational text *The Library as Place*, Buschman and Leckie (2007) include a discussion of space versus place—both in general and specifically pertaining to libraries—informed by Harvey (1973), Lefebvre (1991), and Casey (1997), among others. (A similar discussion can be found in Elmborg 2011.) While it is important for me to keep in mind that "space is not some big empty container but rather a living, fluid entity that can be used to describe systems of social relations (or interrelations) on many levels and at many scales" (Griffis 2013, 42) and that "'place' denotes a more concrete sense of *where*" (43; emphasis in original), my dissertation does not delve

deeply into the distinctions between space and place as they relate to the public library. Instead, I focus on the various meanings attached or assigned to the public library, whether as place or space. This involves moving beyond a purely physical assessment of library spaces; drawing inspiration from Benjamin's methodology, themes, and ideas, I synthesize various historical, theoretical, philosophical, and critical methods to consider a wide range of factors relevant to library as place.

My critical approach stands in contrast to other library as place research, which tends to describe the physical and historical characteristics of library spaces (e.g., Russo 2008), to treat the presence of any library as beneficial (e.g., Tetreault 2007), or to take library as place as a given, by the mere fact that the library occupies a physical site. As an outlier in library and information science literature, Templeton (2008) offers a scathing critique of library as place: "Narrowly construed, the library as place has served as an ideological touchstone, a reservoir of semantic potential available to obscure complicated and specific relationships among the body of people and things that constitute the life (and whose deterioration prefigures the death) of a library" (197). Gorman (2015) notes that librarianship has a long history going back to the days of Melvil Dewey and Anthony Panizzi—with some exceptions (e.g., Jesse Shera)—of ignoring the meaning and philosophy behind our work:

> We are, then, dealing with a profession whose practices and methods have evolved over many centuries without too much regard to philosophy, overarching principles, and values, but with great respect for the practical, the useful, and the utilitarian. One could almost say that we have evolved a kind of anti-philosophy of practicality—one that values what works and discards what does not. […] To many of us, however, such intense practicality leaves a void, a sense of longing for more meaning and richer philosophical underpinning. (24)[12]

At the same time, librarianship's practicality is not necessarily grounded in research. Griffis (2013) notes the lack of empirical library as place research: "There exist relatively few evidence-based studies in the literature, however. Database searches will uncover

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[12] While the situation has changed somewhat in recent years with the emergence of critical librarianship as a research area (e.g., Adler 2017a; Civallero 2016; Jacobs and Murgu 2016; Schlesselman-Tarango 2017; Selman and Curnow 2019), there is still much work to do.

dozens, possibly even hundreds, of articles using 'library as place' as a descriptor—all replete with opinion and conjecture but relatively few findings supported by evidence derived from fieldwork" (9). Griffis goes on to call for more library as place research that "is both theoretically and empirically grounded" (190). However, I think that a study that is theoretically and historically grounded can have the same effect; my library as place research grounded in Benjamin's oeuvre need not be empirical, so long as I avoid mere "opinion and conjecture".

In a 1939 letter to Gretel Adorno, Benjamin wrote that "one of the basic conceptions" of his project was "the culture of commodity-producing society as phantasmagoria" (G. Adorno and Benjamin 2005, 251; letter 157), equating the spaces and transactions of the modern city with the deceptive light and sound shows that were designed to amaze, entertain, enthrall, and distract (for more on this topic, see Chapter 2). According to Benjamin, the arcade as phantasmagoria, through the display and circulation of commodities and the blurring of interior and exterior spaces, supported the dream state of high capitalism. As libraries inevitably—perhaps accidentally—reinforce this culture, they take on the nature of the phantasmagoria, while also having the potential to undermine it. Indeed, the modern public library, by embodying one potentiality of modernity, stands as a counterpart to Benjamin's symbolic arcade, which developed along a divergent path. It follows, then, that like the arcade, the modern public library contains within itself both a critique of modernity and a revolutionary potentiality, in its spaces, collections, and modes of circulation. Benjamin argued that true revolution takes places dialectically, in everyday moments, which the modern public library has the potential to enact in each day-to-day task. My dissertation is not another discussion of the public library's opposition to neoliberalism, nor an attempt to document or enumerate neoliberalism's encroachments on the public library's spaces and services (e.g., Buschman 2017); it is likewise not a plea to revisit some historical, likely fictional state of purity in the modern public library. The liberalism of "the culture of commodity-producing" capitalism—out of which rose the modern public library—is already a phantasmagoria. Perhaps neoliberalism brings us further under this spell, but the narrowly-defined fight against it is not enough. Rather, I believe in the *world-changing* revolutionary potentiality at the heart of the modern public library's spaces, collections,

and sharing practices, which can be realized in each moment of praxis. Critiquing contemporary notions related to the library as place through an historical understanding of the potentiality of the modern public library therefore becomes a revolutionary activity.

By focusing on the historical and phantasmagorical features of the contemporary public library, I build on an area of future research identified by Griffis (2013):

> The one area of this study that shows perhaps the most potential for further study is the area of enchantment. If, as this study suggests, the meanings that people assign different styles of library architecture are rooted in several overlapping and ever-changing contexts, is it possible to propose a phased, conceptual model based on this change over time? Are all library buildings not fated to be historical artifacts at some point? Do classical library buildings and their use of historicism enjoy an advantage that other styles of library buildings do not? (189)

The arcade and the public library, as vernacular innovations, were both reactions to the changing conditions of everyday life in the newly modern city. While they were different places with different objectives, they used similar techniques to stake their claim to their respective parts of the city, integrating and enhancing the conditions of modern life. Their divergence was largely completed after the arcade became a project for large-scale private speculative capital while the public library became a social service project for public municipal funds through the influence of the public library movement. I am not suggesting that the library was an arcade; rather, I contend that the arcade and the public library used similar methods to respond to similar forces in close proximity to sometimes aligned, sometimes differing ends and goals. Furthermore, Benjamin's work demonstrates what universal factors were at play in the arcades and how the arcades had universal impact. It is natural to assume that these same factors affected public libraries, which in turn had their own effects. Public library services have always been commercial to a certain extent (see Chapter 4); while directly appropriating and therefore reinforcing elements of capitalism, they also reinforce the phantasmagoric elements of the public library as place. A dialectical examination of the public library as place, according to Benjamin's methods of historical materialism, therefore becomes a way to awaken the public library collective from the "dream-filled sleep" [K1a,8] of modern capitalism (see Chapter 2).

Historical research following Benjamin's historical materialism, as expounded in Convolute N, is meant to produce dialectical images in the reader, who will recognize the present in the past. "The dialectical image is the alarm clock of history, which brings awakening from the dream-sleep of the nineteenth century. The moment of recognition is that of revolution" (Gilloch 1996, 115). To quote Benjamin: "It may be considered one of the methodological objectives of this work to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress. Just here, historical materialism has every reason to distinguish itself sharply from bourgeois habits of thought. Its founding concept is not progress but actualization" [N2,2]. I need not prove anything about the present, as is usually the objective of an empirical study; by presenting the history of library as place in a different light, by offering my critique, the reader will ideally experience Benjamin's "now of recognizability" [N3,1]. Benjamin's early works were concerned with the destructive and transformative power of criticism that went beyond commentary and even the work of art itself. The near limitless expanse of criticism was a way to approximate "language as such", containing as it did universal truths unable to be spoken in the mere "languages of man" (Benjamin [1916] 1978, 314–332). The now of recognizability is therefore an image outside of language. The dialectician does not and indeed cannot articulate the true state of the world—the true tragedy of history—but rather presents the critical conditions necessary for the image to form in an ever-nearer approximation of language as such. This dialectical image is the result of an increasingly expansive number of works of criticism from different perspectives; the process of translation, for Benjamin, was another early philosophical concern and another way to understand language as such. The more works of translation and criticism in the many languages of man, the more that universal truths that transcended language could be isolated. The now of recognizability, with its transcendent inexpressibility, is therefore a collective process, unspoken in the languages of man. While individuals can have unique moments of awakening, the now of recognizability of language as such is only possible once this process has been repeated enough times to have a collective, universal effect. Every translation, every work of criticism—including mine—is part of this vast process. My methodology is therefore an adaptation of Benjamin's literary montage: "Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no

valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" [N1a,8]. This presentation of the past exposes the present: "Historical materialism must renounce the epic element in history. It blasts the epoch out of the reified 'continuity of history.' But it also explodes the homogeneity of the epoch, interspersing it with ruins—that is, with the present" [N9a,6]. Through critical theory, historical research becomes contemporary criticism. "The materialist presentation of history leads the past to bring the present into a critical state" [N7a,5] This critical state is Benjamin's dialectics at a standstill, when knowledge of the present is radically transformed by a new awareness of the past (see Chapter 2 below).

Critics of historical materialism focus on its role in political or state-making processes, through its tendency to be simultaneously comprehensive yet reductive, particularly in Soviet contexts. For example, Soja (1989) summarizes its application in the early twentieth century: "Social theorization thus came to be dominated by a narrowed and streamlined historical materialism, stripped of its more geographically sensitive variants (such as the utopian and anarchist socialisms of Fourier, Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Bakunin […])" (31). Yet such cases were the dialectical approach reduced to its most pedestrian and scientific form. Historical materialism, for Benjamin as well as Lefebvre, is a meaningful approach only when it attempts to break free from history itself, rather than attempting to explain the historical process in evermore ambiguous and therefore deceitfully relevant terms. To quote the latter:

> Historical materialism will be so far extended and borne out by a history so conceived that it will undergo a serious transformation. Its objectivity will be deepened inasmuch as it will come to bear no longer solely upon the production of things and works, and upon the (dual) history of that production, but will reach out to take in space and time and, using nature as its 'raw material', broaden the concept of production so as to include the production of space as a process whose product—space—itself embraces both things (goods, objects) and works. (Lefebvre 1991, 128)

Historical materialism, conceived in this way, "embraces concrete and abstract, historicizing both instead of leaving them in the sphere of philosophical absolutes. Likewise history is thus thoroughly relativized instead of being made into a substitute

metaphysics or 'ontology of becoming'" (129). Throughout this dissertation, my own historical materialist approach, which I expand on in Chapter 2 below, is informed by Benjamin's in both *The Arcades Project* and his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (in Benjamin 2019; also commonly translated as "On the Concept of History").

My work is Benjaminian, but not in any strict sense, incorporating various aspects of his philosophy, his techniques, his themes, and his interests without adhering to one approach, trying to demonstrate the validity of his methods, nor exhausting the topic of the modern public library the way he hoped to exhaust the topic of the arcades. I merely use his work as a starting point and a guide. In a way, my presentation is similar to that in Pusca's (2010) edited volume *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Change*, with chapters that are variously philosophical, historical, contemporary, looking at topics such as democratic rights, cultural memory, fashion, commodity display, the aura, and political economy. While I focus on different topics, I too employ a variety of methods. At times, my presentation verges on literary montage (including in this introduction);[13] at others, I use the headings for the Convolutes in *The Arcades Project* to organize my own examinations of the public library; at others, I expand his own writings about libraries, books, and reading culture into the present day; and at others still, I explore some of the sources or ideas that he cited in a different context. In other words, I am not trying to replicate *The Arcades Project* or prove the validity of Benjamin's unique take on historical materialism; rather, I draw inspiration from his work to examine the public library as place in my own unique way, with the potential for similar diversions and explorations in the future. I pose many questions, only a few of which I even endeavour to answer.

Like Benjamin, I am preoccupied with structures—physical and intellectual—in the process of decay, on the brink of obsolescence, and what they reveal about the past, the

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[13] It might be more accurate to say that most of my chapters are Denkbilder (thought-images) in the style of Benjamin's Trauerspiel study, which was made up of numerous quotations from a variety of sources alongside Benjamin's "aphoristic prose […] combining philosophical analysis with concrete imagery" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 2; see also Gilloch 1996 and Chapter 5 below). On the other hand, Chapter 5, which I've chosen to call a Convolute, is presented as a literary montage in the fashion of *The Arcades Project*.

present, and our potential futures. For example, rediscovering forgotten sources left out of the prevailing academic discourse becomes a reconstructive, redemptive, and political action. Because I do not have my own vast rag heap to draw from, as Benjamin did with the holdings of la Bibliothèque nationale de France, my dissertation is not a comprehensive theory of the public library, the modern public library movement, nor the library as place. Rather, I use Benjamin's theories of modernity—disagreeing with some—to help illuminate the history, present, and potentiality of the public library as place. A more complete study using Benjamin's methods of literary montage is a much larger, future project; Chapter 5 below is my fledgling attempt.

Benjamin's later work, especially the "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" essay and *The Arcades Project*, was concerned with the minute examination of the *process* of modernity to understand how it was linked to the *process* (the rise) of fascism. For him, partially due to his Messianism and partially to his Marxism, the collective was both the literal embodiment of the dream-state and perhaps the only possible source of a revolutionary awakening, approaching a violence—that is, a justice—that was neither law-making nor law-breaking but divine. Perhaps also because of these beliefs, Benjamin was neither prescriptive nor utopian. His realism bordered on the transcendental, spanning an evermore minutely examined and therefore dizzyingly incomprehensible past—the object of history, of the historical method—and an unnamed future that will either be spared or be destroyed by violence. It was through an examination of modernity that we might be spared in the present, that we would have a future worth sparing. My aim, less ambitious yet less humble, is to demonstrate those aspects of public library services that can bring us into our collective redemptive future. This necessitates a historical study of the public library movement—the *process* of the public library in modernity—and its precursors, as their spaces have become today's library spaces. I hope that I am neither prescriptive nor utopian in my defence of the public library as place being a site of sharing, borrowing practices, and collective experiences. Yet I also want to isolate those redemptive, even revolutionary, elements of the public library as place that are worth saving so that one day we as a collective might abandon the rest. Borgwardt's (1970) goal for library display—"that the library is brought into line with the everyday interests of the people" (20)—can be applied to my

entire dissertation, although perhaps replacing "interests" with "life". These concerns are at the heart of this dissertation.

1.6 Outline

In each chapter, I use a different research method to answer at least one question. This current chapter, the introduction, pulls together a broad range of sources into a literature review of sorts. Next, Chapter 2 is a theoretical exploration of the suitability of Benjamin's historical dialectical approach in *The Arcades Project* as a lens through which to critique longstanding notions of our understanding of the public library as a place and the public library's community function. To what extent are Benjamin's theories applicable to library as place? I argue that an examination of Benjamin's methods in compiling *The Arcades Project*, of his archetypal flâneur, and of the history of the arcades, contrasted with and informed by more recent literature regarding public libraries, reveals a clear progression in the design of the public library building, the dialectical tensions surrounding multiple thresholds within the library, and a new perspective on the communities that form in the library. Informed by Benjamin's concept of dialectical images and by his emphasis on the persistence of nineteenth-century collective dreams, I present an image of the public library as place that sustains, as the arcades did for Benjamin, numerous collective dreams remnant from the nineteenth century, but that also offers us and our communities the chance to "awaken". Chapter 3, a historical study covering roughly the years 1784–1933, from the opening of Paris's Palais Royal to the closing of its Galerie d'Orléans, answers one main research question: How is the development of the modern public library related to the arcades? Drawing from Geist's (1983) study of the arcades, Gilloch's (1996) synthesis of Benjamin's theories of the modern city, and Thad Logan's (2001) history of the parlour, I trace the parallel histories of arcades and public libraries as projects of modernity, simultaneously supporting high capitalism yet possessing utopian potentialities. Chapters 2 and 3 together reframe the history of the modern public library movement in Benjaminian terms.

Chapter 4—a discourse analysis of Borgwardt (1970), Mattern (2007), and others—applies Benjamin's thoughts about commodity display in the arcades to contemporary

issues related to various types of display in the library. This chapter has two parts, one that considers the ways in which the display of objects or places influences their perception and use, and another that examines how the library building itself is displayed and experienced. These two approaches answer the question: What does a dialectical approach, grounded in Benjamin's historical realism and informed by the nineteenth century, reveal about contemporary issues related to display in and of the public library? Along the way, I put forth a praxis of library display. Chapter 5, a literary montage, uses Benjamin's ideas regarding the bourgeois parlour and the blurring of interior and exterior spaces within the arcades and the modern city to reconsider public libraries. From their nineteenth-century form as single public rooms in otherwise private dwellings to the recent trend of "the living room of the community", public libraries still have much in common with the arcades. In this Benjaminian literary montage, I put quotations in conversation with each other and with my own prose passages to "assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components" [N2,6]. This exercise addresses the research question: What can a literary montage, in the style of *The Arcades Project*, contribute to and reveal about contemporary discussions related to the public library as the living room of the community? The montage highlights recurring and contrasting themes in literature related to Benjamin's work and life in libraries (e.g., Eiland and Jennings 2014), the public library's life in its community, and the community's everyday life in and around the public library. I pose a similar question to Chapter 4's in Chapter 6: What does a Benjaminian approach reveal about contemporary issues related to the circulation of public library materials as commodities? Relying heavily on Flexner's (1927) contemporary guide to circulation work in the modern public library, I engage in an original philosophical inquiry into Benjamin's concept of empathy, the process by which an individual displaces their identity into an object. Circulation work simultaneously undermines and reinforces what I have chosen to call bad empathy with the library item as commodity. Finally, Chapter 7, the conclusion, is a persuasive essay that brings each of these Benjaminian examples together along with the main findings from each chapter to consider how library workers and patrons alike can experience true empathy—as opposed to bad empathy—with the library as place that "step[s] into our life" [H2,3].

While I have identified numerous areas for future or further research throughout this monograph, I want to mention a few here. Chapter 3 suggests several areas for further exploration based on the history of public libraries in the modern city: libraries and art nouveau (aka Jugendstil); libraries and world's fairs, exhibitions, and expositions; and public libraries that were located within arcades, such as Chicago's Pullman Arcade (Geist 1983, 237). My findings in Chapter 4 related to display and exhibition could be expanded to apply Benjamin's concept of the aura to books as commodities or works of art. Perhaps the most obvious area for further research is to expand on the ideas in Chapter 5 and tell the full story of Benjamin in the library as place. He spent most of his working days in various libraries, all of which had personal and professional meaning for him. That same chapter also brings forth other topics to explore: library tourism, from the Grand Tour to today; and more fully and critically considering various forms of homelessness with regard to the library as living room or home. Chapter 6 ends with a brief discussion of circulation and disease; this topic can be greatly expanded into a comprehensive history of libraries and disease spanning anywhere from decades to millennia. Finally, some general issues present themselves. One could follow the threads of *The Arcades Project*, noting every time a certain place, person, idea, or object is mentioned, and how each passage connects to other passages. Similarly, one could trace the parallel histories of notebook writing and the literary metaphor of the flower, through Baudelaire in whose writings the flower became evil, to be recovered as a transformative rag in Benjamin's *Arcades* notebooks and manuscripts. Additionally, Benjamin's works, especially his study of Baudelaire, can be read as an attempt to establish a poetics of modernity; his example can be followed in putting forth a poetics of librarianship broadly or modern librarianship or public librarianship specifically. Lastly, I repeatedly address the themes of phantasmagoria, commodities, and the influence of commerce and capital on public library services. This groundwork can directly lead to sustained critiques of the retail service model and privatized services, both so prevalent in North American public libraries today.

Chapter 2

2   A Benjaminian Exploration of Library as Place

Even though the arcades supported the dream state of modern capitalism, their phantasmagoric elements also proved "startling or extraordinary"[14] and therefore contained within themselves the means to awaken the city's dream collective, an example of Benjamin's "now of recognizability" or "dialectics at a standstill". The influence of commerce on public library services, while directly appropriating and therefore reinforcing elements of capitalism, also reinforces the phantasmagoria of the public library as place, including the revolutionary potentiality of an awakening. A dialectical examination of the public library as place, according to Benjamin's methods of historical materialism, therefore becomes a way to awaken the public library collective. In this chapter, I explore a central question: To what extent are Benjamin's theories applicable to library as place? I argue that an examination of Benjamin's methods in compiling *The Arcades Project*, of his archetypal flâneur, and of the history of the arcades, contrasted with and informed by more recent literature regarding public libraries, reveals a clear progression in the design of the public library building and the dialectical tensions surrounding multiple thresholds within the library. I also discuss the extent to which the archetypes of the ragpicker, allegorist, collector, student, and gambler are relevant to a Benjaminian approach to library as place research. I then conclude by highlighting several examples from contemporary public libraries—such as signage, library display, the "retail" library service model, and library design—that can benefit from such an approach. In the end, informed by Benjamin's concept of dialectical images and his emphasis on the persistence of nineteenth-century collective dreams, I present an image of the public library as place that sustains "a past become space" and numerous collective dreams remnant from the nineteenth century, while also offering us and our communities the chance to "awaken".

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[14] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "phantasmagoria, *n.*3," accessed 3 January 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/142184.

Benjamin saw a symbolic parallel between the circulation of commodities, "in which there is no trace whatsoever of the labor used to produce [them]" (Roca 2007, 13), and phantasmagorias, "which a person enters in order to be distracted" (Benjamin [1935] 1999a, 7).[15] These were "blockbuster performances" of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which "optical techniques […] were combined with various stage effects to seduce an impressionable public with illusory images that alluded to the macabre and fleeting nature of earthly existence" (Roca 2007, 10). Phantasmagorias, advertised as fictions, required the audience to suspend willfully their disbelief: "Most phantasmagoria impresarios were very careful to clearly establish that what they were offering was a spectacle of illusionism and not a spiritual séance of a connection with the occult. The fictitious nature of the spectacle was always made explicit" (11–12). Multiple aspects of the modern life were, for Benjamin, phantasmagoric: commodities, arcades, and the city itself. "The world dominated by its phantasmagorias—this, to make use of Baudelaire's term, is 'modernity'" (Benjamin [1939] 1999a, 26). I believe that the same logic can be applied to libraries, especially public libraries, relying on both an audience and the circulation of commodities to persist.

While I might be the first to equate the arcade and the library explicitly, Baudelaire, who greatly influenced Benjamin's views of modernity, does so implicitly in *Les Fleurs du mal*, which Benjamin translated into German. Using metaphorical language that predates and prefigures Borges's ([1941] 2004) Library of Babel, Baudelaire ([1857] 1993) describes only two things as Babel throughout the entire collection: arcaded Paris and the library. In "Rêve parisien", part of the second edition's "Tableaux parisiens" and dedicated to Constantin Guys, a recurring figure in *The Arcades Project*, Baudelaire ([1861] 1993) includes this stanza: "Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades, / C'était un palais infini, / Plein de bassins et de cascades / Tombant dans l'or mat ou bruni (206). McGowan, preserving the rhyme scheme, translates this as: "Babel of endless stairs, arcades / It was a palace multifold / Replete with pools and bright cascades / Falling in

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[15] "Everything, in other words, anything at all, can become interesting and even enthralling, provided that it is *presented*, i.e., *present*" (Lefebvre [1961] 2014, 370).

dull or burnished gold" (207). It might be simpler to say: "Babel of stairs and arcades, it was an infinite palace" (my translation). Paris, with its arcades, had become a confounding interior space. "La Voix", originally printed in 1866's *Les Épaves de Charles Baudelaire*, was added to editions of *Les Fleurs du mal* published after Baudelaire's death. It begins: "Mon berceau s'adossait à la bibliothèque, / Babel sombre, où roman, science, fabliau, / Tout, la cendre latine et la poussière grecque, / Se mêlaient. J'étais haut comme un in-folio" (312). Again, McGowan's translation again takes some poetic liberties: "My cradle rocked below the stacks of books— / That Babel of instructions, novels, verse / Where Roman rubbish mixed with Grecian dust. / I was no taller than a folio" (313). Baudelaire's original French, however, implies that the Latin texts were burned rather than simply left to decay. A more literal version: "My cradle leaned against the library, / Dark Babel, where novels, science, comic verse, / Everything, Latin ash and Greek dust, / Mixed. I was as tall as a folio" (my translation). Baudelaire grew up among the library and later came to understand his own body in relation to its books. Benjamin quotes "La Voix" twice in *The Arcades Project*: "in the pit's deepest dark, I distinctly see strange worlds" [J33a,12]; "Behind the scenes, the frivolous decors / of all existence, deep in the abyss, / I see distinctly other, brighter worlds" [J70,3]. The goal of Benjamin's historical materialism was to illuminate such brighter worlds even while modernity's physical and intellectual decors continued to obscure existence in the abyss between the World Wars.

For Benjamin, the arcade was the site of modernity, the convergence of thresholds, the birthplace of commodity fetishism, originator of myths, magic enchanter. Filled with commodities, domestic and exotic, the arcade represented the full scale of high capitalism and its enchantments. "Arcades are houses or passages having no outside—like the dream" [L1a,1]. The arcade was both passage and destination, home and street, inside and outside, enclosed and open. "Utter ambiguity of the arcades: street and house" [O°,40]. The arcade's iron and glass shell was ahead of its time, causing fascination, yet also resulting in poor construction and inevitable obsolescence. The original constructions of iron and glass were adopted so quickly that they were imperfect, rapidly outdated as technologies changed (e.g., the development of steel), and therefore destined to become ruins (Miller 2006, 252): "The dusty fata morgana of the winter garden, the

dreary perspective of the train station, with the small altar of happiness at the intersection of the tracks—it all molders under spurious constructions, glass before its time, premature iron. For in the first third of the previous century, no one as yet understood how to build with glass and iron" [F3,2]. The effect was still amazing, and the arcade was frequented by the dream collective as represented by flâneur, who "went to the arcade to see and to be seen" (Gilloch 2002, 132). Gilloch succinctly summarizes the importance of the arcade for Benjamin: "The arcade was the 'most important architecture of the nineteenth century' because it was home to the fetishized commodity, the seductive prostitute, the whirl of fashion, the theatricality of the dandified flâneur, home to the phantasmagoria of the recent past, to the *Zeitraum* [time-space] and *Zeit-traum* [dream-time, Benjamin's famous play on words] of high capitalism" (133). Yet when Benjamin began his project in the late 1920s, few arcades remained, and the ones that did were, at the time, but ghosts of their former selves. (He did not live to witness their revival.)

The curious library as place researcher can find many underexplored examples in Benjamin's life and work. His methods of research, reading, quoting, citing, composing, and endlessly revising have been covered a great deal, especially with regards to *The Arcades Project* and its massive, overlapping, and unfinished structure. Scholars have attempted to situate Benjamin himself within his representative archetypes (most of which he borrowed from Baudelaire) of the nineteenth century: Benjamin's habitual wanderings through Paris (the flâneur), his belief in the transformative potential of allegory (the allegorist), his equating literary work and indeed all capitalist pursuits with games of chance (the gambler), his notable collections of books and images (the collector), his never-ending research (the student), and even his attraction to prostitutes and his relating all modern work to the selling of one's body (the prostitute). Especially popular is the notion of Benjamin, materialist historian, as fulfilling the societal role of the ragpicker, recovering his citations from seemingly lost or forgotten primary sources, most of which he encountered during his extensive reading and studying in la Bibiothèque nationale, that central landmark (along with le Louvre) in the French nation-building process. These scholars of Benjamin, originating mostly from history and literary studies departments, no doubt place a great deal of importance on this highly symbolic library, as it figures as a central character in their biographies of Benjamin's

Parisian life, gaining added significance as the hiding place chosen by Georges Bataille for Benjamin's *Passagenarbeit* folios. The library, for them as for Benjamin, is the location for and source of scholarly research. It is natural for them to draw parallels between Benjamin's meticulous searching and the ragpicker's daily wanderings. Yet I believe that this approach fails to consider critically the library as an institution, especially in relation to the materials it preserves and makes available. Benjamin was not, like the ragpicker, combing through sources discarded in gutters and trash heaps, literally thrown away. He was accessing materials consciously and purposely stored and preserved by perhaps the largest, most powerful, most significant library in the world at the time, which had as its central mission the construction of the modern nation-state. Yes, many of the sources Benjamin used might have been forgotten, but they were neither rags nor refuse; they were parts of collections.

Indeed, in addition to his research within libraries, Benjamin's knowledge of the arcades was centered on libraries, specifically la Bibliothèque nationale and the still surviving *passages* that surrounded it. Buck-Morss ([1986] 2006) recreates, "through our own flânerie", Benjamin's daily Parisian routine:

> Arriving from the Left Bank by subway, […] he would reach the safety of the entry of the Bibliothèque Nationale. He worked 'the whole day there' finally accustoming himself to the 'annoying regulations' in the main reading room (*PW* 1100), with its nineteenth-century iron and glass dome, and on its ceiling, a 'painted summer sky' (*PW* 1059 [N1,5]). Seated below, one hears the constant rustle of the dusty leaves of books. And when one tires of reading or waiting for a book, a short stroll from the library brings to view all of central Paris. Benjamin surely worked this way, uncovering in his research the history of these places through which he moved. The themes of the *Passagen-Werk* can in fact be mapped out typographically on a small section of Paris, with the old Bibliothèque Nationale at its hub. […] Included with his walking terrain were, first and foremost, the surviving arcades which ring the Bibliothèque Nationale: Choiseul, Vivienne, Colbert, Puteaux, Havre, Panoramas, Jouffroy, Verdeau, Princes, Caire, Grand-Cerf, Vero-Dodat. (57)

The library building, the library collection, and the library's surroundings all immediately informed Benjamin's work on the arcades. At the same time, the library posed dialectical challenges, representing (for Hugo (1872) in "Paris incendié", as quoted by Benjamin) the "Unfathomable ABC of the ideal, where progress, / Eternal reader, leans on its

elbows and dreams" [N15a,2]. Is this not an illustration—an image—of the importance of "library as place"? Only if we take his dialectical method to heart, as opposed to one that uncritically considers anything related to the physical library space as beneficial, positive, or even ideal. I believe that it is no accident that librarian and information theorist Day (2001) has recognized the influence of bourgeois institutions—among which I would include the public library—on the perpetuation of the dream state and as the target of dialectics at a standstill:

> If the commodity as fetish speaks of a dream state that masks the reality of industrial culture, and if it is the function of a bourgeois understanding of history to continue this dream state through the hegemony of its discourses, institutions, and historiographies across cultural space, then it is the function of a critical, materialist history to interrupt this dream, its appearance, and its ideological propagation by a form of historical dream interpretation ([N4,1] […]) and a subsequent moment of historical 'awakening.' In the 'now' (*Jetztzeit*) of this awakening, the dialectic of bourgeois history is brought to a momentary standstill. The house reappears from the arcades' street market. (110–111; citation in original)

Day believes that information, or the generation of knowledge, has a role to play in this process. I would also point to the community role of the library as place as a potential wake-up call.

But such awakening is not an easy process, and it runs counter to many commonly held notions of the public library. For example, the study of the library as place has meant that "a historically specific type of library, the outcome and agent of a historically specific spatial expansion, has come to be regarded, cherished, fetishized, and lamented as an important type of place" (Templeton 2008, 204). In this case, the "historically specific type" is the public library of the modern public library movement, closely associated with the standardized library building projects funded by Carnegie starting in the late nineteenth century, when the arcade was also becoming a standardized building type throughout the imperial world. Missac (1995), Benjamin's long-time acquaintance and translator, who helped recover the *Passagenarbeit* manuscript from la Bibliothèque nationale, accepts the symbolic importance of Benjamin's arcades, yet takes this thought one step further: "Hence the twentieth century, and perhaps the twenty-first, appear as extensions of the nineteenth or even earlier centuries" (177). If so, then we are still

experiencing "[t]he 'modern,' the time of hell" [S1,5], with its "previously unknown chthonic traits" [M16,3]. At the same time, each moment contains a revolutionary potentiality (see A. Benjamin 2013) if we "recognize a particular point of development as a crossroads" [S1,6]. In other words, "[t]he enchantments of modernity contain within them the seeds of their own disenchantment" (Gilloch 2002, 118). This was as true during Benjamin's time periods—both the one in which he lived and the one about which he wrote—as it is today.

Benjamin's historical materialism was based on his concept of "dialectics at a standstill", brought on by "dialectical images", grounded in the revolutionary potentiality of awakening in a "now of recognizability", when a sudden understanding of the historical in the present irrevocably changes everyday life. It is common for scholars studying Benjamin to highlight the visual nature of this process; for example, Eiland and McLaughlin (1999) write:

> In the dusty, cluttered corridors of the arcades, where street and interior are one, historical time is broken up into kaleidoscopic distractions and momentary come-ons, myriad displays of ephemera, thresholds for the passage of what Gérard de Nerval (in *Aurélia*) calls "the ghost of material things." Here, at a distance from what is normally meant by "progress," is the *ur*-historical, collective redemption of lost time, of the times embedded in the spaces of things. (xii).

The library, with its dialectical identity as adopter of new technologies yet preserver of the old, purchaser of books as commodities yet provider of free access to information, with its interior shelves as streets (after Adler 2017b), breaks up historical times "in the spaces of things", offering "collective redemption". Yet this process is not simply visual: "Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language" [N2a,3]. Historical language, found in the library as a space of books as things, can transform the future, especially when aided by the art of library display. But I must stress that the revolutionary potentiality can be discovered only if the library is viewed as the site of this dialectical process.

The dialectical image is central to Benjamin's materialist history, isolating historical objects as an attempt to arrest the "progress" of bourgeois capitalism. "[E]very historical object is in some sense not yet dead. […] The dialectical image rescues that which

threatens to be lost, by fixing on that within it which refuses to be sealed off in this time and place" (Buse et al. 2005, 100). The oft-quoted passage from Convolute N:

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression, but image, suddenly emergent.—Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. [N2a,3]

This "standstill" leads to a moment of awakening, where the individual or collective can awake from the "dream-filled sleep" [K1a,8] of history—more specifically, in the context of *The Arcades Project*—from the dream state of modern capitalism.

Benjamin believed capitalism to be the main source of nineteenth-century collective dreams, from which it was imperative to awaken or else to continue being intoxicated by the bourgeois worldview. "Capitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream-filled sleep came over Europe, and, through it, a reactivation of mythic forces" [K1a,8]. This mythic dream "appear[ed] in the modern metropolis in a plethora of new guises: artefactual (the commodity form), temporal (fashion, repetition and 'progress'), and spatial (the arcade as dream-house). Each has its own representative figure [borrowed from Baudelaire]: the prostitute, the gambler and the flâneur" (Gilloch 2002, 125). This sleep also manifested itself in numerous structures throughout Europe and, more specifically, Paris, which for Benjamin was "the capital of the nineteenth century", as the title of his 1935 exposé reflected. Arcades were but one—although perhaps the most significant—example: "Dream houses of the collective: arcades, winter gardens, panoramas, factories, wax museums, casinos, railroad stations" [L1,3]. Identifying these structures was crucial for Benjamin to understand the social forces and individuals that led to their production and, hopefully, their transformation: "The intention of Benjamin's Arcades Project was to read social force and the pain of labor back into the crystal dream structures of the nineteenth-century marketplace" (Day 2001, 112).

One such individual was the flâneur, the most persistent of the nineteenth-century archetypes adopted by Benjamin from Baudelaire. "In Baudelaire Benjamin found the archetypal flâneur strolling through the arcades in decline (and the archetype is always male). […] The flâneur is open to stimuli and walks the streets of the modern city at a slow and leisurely pace, an observer and recorder of modernity, the archetypal modern subject, passive and open, restrained and appreciative, a customer of the world" (Buse et al. 2005, 4). The flâneur, whose main destination is the arcade, consumes images, experiences, and cityscapes, but rarely commodities, as he usually does not have the financial means to do so (Missac 1995, 190). For the flâneur, "commodities became objects of unrequited desire" (Gilloch 2002, 131). According to Buck-Morss ([1986] 2006), "The flâneur is not the aristocrat: not leisure (*Musse*) but loitering (*Müssiggang*) is his trade. […] The prototype of the rebellious flâneur is the bohème [...]. His objective situation connects him with the clochard, and in fact the bravado of their politics of loitering, its anarchism and its individualism, is the same" (43). Baudelaire, according to Benjamin, contrasts the flâneur with Desbordes-Valmore's historical figure of the promeneur, "who strolls through the garden landscape of her poetry; the perspectives of the past and future open before him. […] The *promeneur* is no longer capable of 'meandering capriciously.' He takes refuge in the shadow of cities: he becomes a flâneur" [M13a,3]. Whereas Baudelaire's flâneur wandered about in shock "in search of material with which to make sense of time and space […, Benjamin] attempted to add method and ideological coherence to the flâneur's quest" (Buse et al. 2005, 5). The flâneur's method consisted of remaining devoted to the dream-city of capitalism, crossing multiple thresholds daily, empathizing with commodities, and expressing similarities with other key archetypes (e.g., the collector, the ragpicker, the student, and the gambler).

The flâneur is an urban, male creature, inhabiting a city whose features—shaped as they are by both ancient and modern myths—he only partially understands. "The city is the realization of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself" [M6a,4]. His devotion to flânerie changes his experience of the city from one that is lived to one that is both observed and contested: "To the flâneur, his city is—even if, like Baudelaire, he happened to be born there—no longer native ground. It represents for him a theatrical display, an arena"

[J66a,6]. He exists as part of, yet in opposition to, his surroundings, both material and human: "Finally, within the labyrinth of the city, the masses are the newest and most inscrutable labyrinth. Through them, previously unknown chthonic traits are imprinted on the image of the city" [M16,3]. The city becomes an underworld in which the flâneur and the masses are trapped together, surrounded by the façades of bourgeois dwellings:

> The domestic interior moves outside. It is as though the bourgeois were so sure of his prosperity that he is careless of façade, and can exclaim: My house, no matter where you choose to cut into it, is façade. Such façades, especially, on the Berlin houses dating back to the middle of the previous century: an alcove does not jut out, but—as niche—tucks in. The street becomes room and the room becomes street. The passerby who stops to look at the house stands, as it were, in the alcove. [L1,5]

This is but one threshold that the flâneur crosses during—or, along—the course of his day.

Crossing the threshold is a highly symbolic act for Benjamin, portending personal and social awakenings and transformations. The threshold is not a boundary, but rather a zone in which action takes place, akin to a rite of passage (recall that in French, arcades are *passages*):

> Rites de passage—this is the designation in folklore for the ceremonies that attach to death and birth, to marriage, puberty, and so forth. In modern life, these transitions are becoming ever more unrecognizable and impossible to experience. We have grown very poor in threshold experiences. […] The threshold must be carefully distinguished from the boundary. A *Schwelle* <threshold> is a zone. Transformation, passage, wave action are in the word *schwellen*, swell, and etymology ought not to overlook these senses. [O2a,1]

The arcade, at once street and house, inside and outside, exterior and interior, shrouded in myths and magic, connecting the city's neighbourhoods, commercial areas, and residential areas, offers numerous thresholds, not the least of which is the commodity that ushers in the new age of capitalism:

> But although 'we have grown very poor' in such traditional experience, Paris produces innumerable new thresholds in space and time: points of transition, passages from reason to myth, moments of magic that exist at the interstices of modernity. […] The key to these new thresholds is the commodity, which, as understood by Marx, has both a use value and an exchange value. It might even

> be argued that the commodity form itself is kind of a threshold: it stands at the point where use and exchange value meet. According to Benjamin, the commodity form is only just emerging in the early nineteenth century. It is itself on the threshold. (Buse et al. 2005, 53)

Passing through multiple thresholds every day, observing yet not purchasing commodities, the flâneur develops a destructive empathy (Einfühlung) with the exchange value of the commodity based on unrequited desire. The way to undermine the power of exchange value is to remove the commodity from the capitalist context altogether. The collector achieves this, according to Buse et al. (2005): "For the collector, on the other hand, who wrenches the object or quotation from its context and places it within a new system of meaning, both exchange-value and use-value fall by the wayside. What results is actualization, a special kind of 'nearness' antithetical to *Einfühlung*" (81). This is what Benjamin calls "a favorable prospect […]: the method of receiving the things into our space. We don't displace our being into theirs; they step into our life" [H2,3]. I believe that this idea can be directly applied to the public library, with its physical collections and modes of circulation (see Chapter 6 below).

In addition to the allegorist and the collector, the flâneur is also related to the ragpicker, the student, and the gambler. The ragpicker, who recovers scraps of cloth morning and night, sustains capitalism by recovering its detritus, allowing it to be reused in a reduced form. "The ragpicker is the most provocative figure of human misery. 'Ragtag' <*Lumpenproletarier*> in a double sense: clothed in rags and occupied with rags" [J68,4]. Like the flâneur, the ragpicker wanders the city, yet his purpose is to be unseen. Whereas the flâneur takes pride in his lack of employment, the ragpicker's occupation reduces him to nothing more than the rags he collects. One of Benjamin's ([1940] 2019) main philosophical concerns was the concept, process, and study of history, which he famously symbolized in the Thesis IX of the "Theses on the Philosophy of History":

> A [Paul] Klee painting named "Angelus Novus"[16] shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His

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[16] Benjamin owned this 1920 monoprint and kept it as one of his most prized possessions for much of his adult life.

eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (201)

This pile of debris, this heap of rags, the "Refuse of History" (see Convolute N, Benjamin 1999), becomes the source of historical knowledge in the face of the myth of progress, the catastrophe of the status quo. The historical materialist takes on the role of the ragpicker, recovering sources and citations, ordering quotations, illuminating forgotten or ignored moments, compiling the material into a literary montage, a process which I believe is akin to the finding of books previously hidden on a library shelf.

Benjamin contrasts the constant, crushing economic activity of the ragpicker with the idleness of the flâneur, the student, and the gambler: "The student 'never stops learning'; the gambler 'never has enough'; for the flâneur, 'there is always something more to see.' Idleness has in view an unlimited duration, which fundamentally distinguishes it from simple sensuous pleasure, of whatever variety. (Is it correct to say that the 'bad infinity' that prevails in idleness appears in Hegel as the signature of bourgeois society?)" [m5,1]. We know that the arcades and panoramas are the dream houses of the flâneur, while the gambler's is the casino. What is the student's? What does he dwell within? Benjamin notes the rise of l'Ecole polytechnique, yet this is where the student would go to learn how to further the projects of the capitalist dream-world. Studies there have a purpose and an end. What about the perpetual student, the one who "never stops learning"? Benjamin reflects: "Collecting is a primal phenomenon of study: the student collects knowledge" [H4,3]. What is the site of his "bad infinity"? Is it perhaps the library, that same place where Benjamin, perpetually compiling *Das Passagenarbeit*, dwelled?

In general, we see nineteenth-century dreams in our library spaces. Capitalism, Marxism-Leninism, and "positivist Social Scientism" (Soja 1989, 33) alike led to a modernization that attempted to control, dominate, and even dissolve space, leading to "a significant

recomposition of space-time-being in their concrete forms" (27). We see such dreams in each developmental stage of the public library. Black and Pepper (2012) trace the history of the English public library, from the Enlightenment when "early public library *buildings* were analogous to the quest for modernity and progress" (464), to the era of industrialization when "public libraries […] were created as institutions that could stabilize society and heal the wounds that early industrialization had inflicted" (447), to the post-World War II years when "the public library was woven into the fabric of a powerful welfare state, after which it has struggled […] to respond to the needs of an emergent postmodern digital society" (441). We see such dreams in the provision of library services. Griffis (2013) draws similarities between the department store, successor to the arcade, and the widespread "'monitored department store' model that public libraries have been using for over a century" (187). We see such dreams in library architecture. Van Slyck's (2007) study "highlights the public library's historic roles in reinforcing class differences" (233). We see such dreams in library design, informed as it is by the nineteenth-century trends of personal (or home) libraries (or salons), Carnegie libraries, and the iron and glass of the arcades. "All collective architecture of the nineteenth century constitutes the house of the dreaming collective" [H°,1].

Our collective public library dreams manifest themselves in no doubt countless other ways. I emphasize but two more recurring trends in the library as place literature: the public library as the "living room" of the community and the economic importance of library sites. The nineteenth-century bourgeois interiors and façades, which Benjamin was fascinated by and whose inherent repressiveness was noted by Lefebvre ([1974] 1991), along with their subsequent move outside, provide a clear connection:

> Streets are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that—in the space between the building fronts—experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls. For this collective, glossy enameled shop signs are a wall decoration as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois; walls with their 'Post No Bills' are its writing desk, newspaper stands its libraries, mailboxes its bronze busts, benches its bedroom furniture, and the café terrace is the balcony from which it looks down on its household. The section of railing where road workers hang their jackets is the vestibule, and the gateway which leads from the row of courtyards out into the

open is the long corridor that daunts the bourgeois, being for the courtyards the entry to the chambers of the city. Among these latter, the arcade was the drawing room. More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses. [M3a,4]

In this context, Benjamin was referring to personal libraries of bourgeois homes. Nineteenth-century personal libraries and public parlours, as described by Arenson (2007), share many similarities with Benjamin's nineteenth-century bourgeois parlours. The modern public library grew out of private libraries, keeping much of the same furniture and décor, even operating out of the front rooms (that is, the parlours) of private residences in cities and small towns alike (see Chapters 3 and 5 below). The public library, with its atrium and alcoves, is the fusion of the nineteenth-century parlour and personal library, made living room of the community, where the inside and outside are indistinguishable.

The library location and its place-based services remain valued for their economic importance, whether in shopping malls (Forsyth 2006) or in their own buildings in commercial areas (Fisher et al. 2007). The signs of the nineteenth-century street become the décor of the modern public library: "In places where the library entrance is a sombre alternative to the shop-windows, libraries should aim for a retail-style appearance […]. Attractive displays and a shop-style layout could bring more people into the library and make the shops more aware of its presence, whilst minimising any detraction from the retail image of the shopping centre" (Morris and Brown 2004, 136). This focus leads to a patron base who see the library as a place unable or unwilling to transform larger socially produced spaces. Rahder and McLean (2013) recount the experience of newcomer women in Toronto who expressed frustration at public library programs such as "job-hunting courses" (153) that teach newcomers how to make a résumé that is largely ineffective in the face of "systemic barriers to employment" such as "a discriminatory job market" (154). The public library becomes Lefebvre's ([1974] 1991) "abstract space", which "works in a highly complex way. […] It imposes reciprocity, and a commonality of use. […] Abstract space, the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, bound up as it is with exchange (of goods and commodities, as of written and spoken words, etc.) depends on consensus more than any space before it. (56–57) In this context, imposed

reciprocity, commonality, and consensus are not positive experiences: "The subject experiences space as an obstacle" (57).

In this dream state, the public library is where our nineteenth-century collective dreams dwell. Miller (2006) points out that "dwelling" is related to "the *problem* of community, the nature of metropolitan experience" (257; emphasis mine). I contend that nineteenth-century personal libraries became public through the gradual involvement of the community, yet self-perpetuating contemporary public libraries must now *use* the community to justify projects, rather than naturally being justified as community projects. A Benjaminian dialectical approach, by turning obstacles into *thresholds* and embracing the public library as a site of multiple dialectics, can bring the public library's possible self-negation to a standstill. According to Miller (2006), "Benjamin implied that the interiorized shell of dwelling—the dream house of the collective—is first and foremost a sheath of rigid, deadened matter to defend against the shock of urban experience. The loss of this shell is traumatic" yet necessary to awaken "from the protective dream" (257). The shock of losing one's shell is a vital part of awakening. The public library must seek to undergo this shock, to throw off the shell of the parlour, of the interior made exterior.

Some of these dialectics can be drawn directly from Benjamin's life and work. His life in Paris was "mediated through the dual experience of exile and attachment and 'lived' at the threshold between the virtual and real" (Marder 2006). Benjamin wrote: "Museums unquestionably belong to the dream houses of the collective. In considering them, one would want to emphasize the dialectic by which they come into contact, on the one hand, with scientific research and, on the other hand, with 'the dreamy tide of bad taste'" [L1a,2]. Public libraries as dream houses still struggle with the local and the (inter)national, with the virtual and the physical, with education and entertainment. The structure of *The Arcades Project* itself provides another example. Over time, the library's collection develops its own narrative according to Benjamin's process as explicated in Convolute N—that is, by "literary montage" [N1a,8], "rung by rung" [N2,4]—based on the display of the items (see Chapter 4 below). We engage in further dialectics between, for example, best practices and community-led autonomy, free access and bureaucratic

control, volunteerism and professionalization. Recognizing and exploring these issues becomes a method to bring the dialectics to a standstill, to cross these various thresholds, and, ideally, to bring substantive, revolutionary change to both the public library and its community.

The public library as place already offers opportunities to bring these dialectics to a standstill. For example, the library provides a space for us as patrons to practice, as I mentioned above, "the method of receiving the things into our space" [H2,3]. Library collections—with the placeness of their physicality—facilitate the creation of dialectical images by offering a way "to capture the uniqueness of a commodity while at the same time also capturing the commodity's mythic status as a repetition" (Pensky 2006, 119). Yet, according to Benjamin, the true transformation of the commodity only happens when it is collected for completeness rather than utility. Can the public library collection, like that of Benjamin's collector, have "the diametric opposite of any utility" [H1a,2]? That is, can our collections be based on completeness, not utility? Can we ever awaken if we offer collections according to use value and impose fines and fees according to exchange value? Are our collections even collections, or are they modern equivalents of the arcades' glass display cases, filled with commodities? Or is the library collection, expertly organized, already "a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system: the collection" [H1a,2]? Examining the dialectical relationship between completeness and utility in the public library collection is an area for future Benjaminian research into the library as place. When doing so, it is worth remembering that, according to Doherty (2006), "the bibliophile is unique among collectors in that she or he *uses* the objects in her or his collection (H2,7; H2a,1; O°,6; O°,7)" (169). Furthermore, Lefebvre ([1974] 1991) warns: "What is a commodity? A concrete abstraction. […] The commodity hides in stores, in warehouses—in inventory. […] The enigma of the commodity is entirely social. […] The commodity asks for nothing better than to *appear*" (340). More succinctly: "Things lie" (81). We must not let our collections hide from the dialectical process.

Benjamin demonstrated that everyday life in the nineteenth century was affected by the spatial reconfigurations of city life, especially by the projects of modernity, such as the arcades and, I would include, the modern public library movement. Nevertheless, the public library need not be the site of the student's "bad infinity", of limitless idleness, of perpetuating the library merely for the library's sake. Though it is, with its nineteenth-century dreams, "a past become space", the public library can become a space for the future. Templeton (2008) writes: "the library is a site of transformation, always on its way to becoming many different places and absorbing the experience of many different places" (206). The library as place is not a singular place, and it can indeed become a threshold for its community. Again, I turn to Benjamin: "to the dreaming collective itself, the decline of an economic era seems like the end of the world" [R2,3]. Yet the arcades themselves were the dream. The shopping malls that survive, like the arcades before them, are being renovated, refurbished, repurposed into university campuses or other public spaces. And public libraries continue to find their place in the world, secretly possessing, as I believe they do, the means to bring us across the threshold, to bring us out of the dream world. "[F]or those who want to find in it a programme for future work, [*The Arcades Project*] does offer an eccentric set of imperatives: Collect. Stroll. Gamble. Redeem. But make sure to reserve yourself a good place in the library as well" (Buse et al. 2005, 186). Or, why not collect, stroll, gamble, and redeem *in* and *around* the library and *across* its thresholds, as Benjamin did?

Chapter 3

3 The Modern Public Library as Dream House

This chapter, by examining the common characteristics of the arcade and the public library as dream houses, inserts the modern public library movement into Benjamin's historical image of the modernizing city. The library and the arcade affected—and were affected by—the same social, cultural, and economic forces. Fashioned after bazaars and the Galerie d'Orléans of the Palais-Royal, modern shopping arcades started as alleyways covered with glass, made possible by nineteenth-century advances in iron and glass building technologies. Arcades became destinations, such as the Passages des Panoramas. The arcades quickly expanded, both in size and in popularity, and became more elaborate. They could be found all over Paris, London, Brussels, and other major European and imperial cities. The arcades were filled with commodities, domestic and exotic, representing the full scale of high capitalism. Benjamin was fascinated by the way that the arcades merged the inside and the outside, covered while still open at the ends of the passages. They were both street and house, or where the street and the house came together. In this way, according to Benjamin, they were the bourgeois parlour made street, allowing the entire city to become the living room of the collectivity of city dwellers. The arcades, I believe, symbolically contained the two factors that Thad Logan (2001) argues "were vitally important in the construction of bourgeois life: the emergent culture of consumerism and the ideology of domesticity" (23)

A similar progression can be seen in the public library, which in the nineteenth century grew out of private libraries, keeping much of the same furniture and décor, and even operating out of the front rooms (that is, the parlours) of private residences in cities and small towns alike. In the same way that arcades continued to grow larger, especially as they came to North America and became the predecessors to the modern shopping mall (e.g., Cleveland Arcade, opened in 1890), libraries also grew, as they incorporated design elements from the arcades, particularly in the roof structures and circular chambers, such as in the main reading of the Library of Congress's Jefferson Building, opened in 1897. This chapter traces the parallel histories of arcades and public libraries as projects of

modernity, simultaneously supporting high capitalism yet possessing utopian potentialities. As I argued in the previous chapter, Benjamin showed that modernity's spatial projects, such as the arcades, reconfigured everyday life in the nineteenth century. I would include the modern public library movement among such projects. Yet, as Peter Kropotkin (1927) argued, the modern library's access and lending practices stood in contrast to high capitalism (9–10). In true dialectical fashion, the public library as place both represented and resisted modernity, and perhaps continues to do both. From their nineteenth-century form as single public rooms in otherwise private dwellings to the recent trend of "the living room of the community", public libraries still have much in common with the arcades. This chapter addresses one main question: How is the development of the modern public library related to Benjamin's arcades? By offering a panoramic view of the modern public library movement, I argue that, much in the same way that the arcades had subversive qualities while supporting modern capitalism and traditional gender norms, the modern public library had progressive goals while also inculcating middle-class values in its patrons and incorporating regressive gender-based roles into its newfound notion of professionalism. I believe that these tensions are at the heart of the modern public library movement, as the library tried to find its role in the modern world. Like the arcade, the public library was a reconfigured space, based as it was on the straight lines of the shelf, the bookstack, the aisle, even the book itself. It was also a place that offered an experience that was at once unique and universal, local and international, while symbolizing the fundamental differences between the rural and the urban. If nothing else, the examples of the arcade and the public library illustrate that subversion and reversion each contain elements of the other.

3.1 Timeframe

My historical study covers roughly the years 1784–1933, from the opening of the Palais-Royal to the closing of its Galerie d'Orléans. These years incorporate the entirety of the Victorian era (1837–1901, or, as it relates to the establishment of Victorian style, 1830s–1880s, according to T. Logan [2001]) and the modern public library movement (from the establishment of the first municipal public library in Peterborough, NH, in 1833 to the completion of the last Carnegie-funded library in 1929). I am especially interested in the

period from 1851, when Henri Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève opened in February and London's Crystal Palace opened in May, until 1926, when Louis Aragon published *Le Paysan de Paris*, his classic surrealist meditation on the Passage de l'Opéra, which had been demolished the previous year just over a century after it had opened. I am aware that these periods are somewhat arbitrary, and I wish, as Howsam (2006) says, "to avoid being trapped in the arbitrary categories of periodization" (53). To this end, I treat the modern library movement as just that, a movement, an ongoing activity, rather than a reified—and periodized—historical event with a beginning and end. In this sense, elements of the movement persist to this day, comprising one approach to public librarianship.

Benjamin believed that the arcade was the "domestic interior", or bourgeois parlour, made exterior; I see a similar connection between the personal library in the home and the public library. In both the arcade and the public library, the lines between home and street, private and public, were blurred. While this proves a fruitful metaphor for theorizing the public library, in this chapter I prefer to take a more direct historical approach in understanding why, when, and how the library crossed the threshold from private/personal to public/community. In practical terms, that means finding a way to connect the arcades of pre-Haussmann Paris and the modern public library movement of post–Civil War North America, with a slight detour through the parlours of Victorian England (whose model was influential throughout the European Continent and North America). While at first glance these appear to be relatively disparate topics, upon closer inspection it becomes evident that they were driven by similar and indeed coinciding social, cultural, historical, and architectural forces. Until the post–World War II era, the vast majority of North American urban residents lived in areas serviced by public libraries, while the vast majority of rural residents did not (see the Discussion section below); therefore, libraries either were situated in modern cities shaped by the same forces that Benjamin identified in *The Arcades Project* or were in rural areas likely shaped by the historical legacy of the parlour. As such, this study involves considering similarities between arcades and libraries, in both their physical characteristics and the forces that affected them, including: other modern dream houses; proto-arcades; urbanization and urban planning; glass architecture; iron construction; gas lighting and

heating; architectural styles, including Beaux-Arts and Art Nouveau (or Jugendstil); architects; surveillance or "social engineering"; the shift from vernacular to monumental buildings; civic function and importance, including the blurring of private and public; world's fairs, exhibitions, or expositions; commodity display; parlours and gendered spaces generally; social movements; the publishing industry, including reading rooms in arcades and other precursors to the modern public library; and finally, the public library movement itself, including standardization, monumentality, the legacy of the parlour, and library extension.

3.2   Dream Houses

I argued in the previous chapter that libraries could be added to Benjamin's list of "[d]ream houses of the collective: arcades, winter gardens,[17] panoramas, factories, wax museums, casinos, railroad stations" [L1,3]. For Benjamin, dream houses were "the most apparent and enduring of the dream-elements" in the city (Gilloch 1996, 123). They were new structures made possible by developments in iron-and-glass architecture in which an altered collective life took shape. These buildings became unquestioned fixtures of urbanity: "Men pass their lives in the midst of magic precipices without even opening their eyes. […] After that, what hope for man to become aware of the enchantments that surround him?" (Aragon [1926] 1994, 177). These structures obscured both the experience of everyday life and its analysis: "However closely we approach the everyday it can be never be close enough" (152). Some of them could be entered freely; others charged admission. One thing they had in common was that they evoked the feeling that life in the city was magical, enchanted, while obscuring the fact that this was due to the phantasmagoric influences of capital, commodity fetishism, and alienated labour: "The modern city is not only the site of the disappearance of the poor in the present, but also

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[17] Mattern (2007) notes two recent downtown libraries with winter gardens: Chicago's Harold Washington Library (90–91) and Toledo's Main Library (98). The library's winter garden remains a phantasmagoric space: "Critics have charged Chicago […] with allowing private interests to infringe on its provision of public services. The library's ninth-floor Winter Garden, a public space mandated by the library program, has become so popular as a venue for proms, weddings, and graduations that it is booked for two or three years in advance. In fact, it has proved almost too successful; according to some critics, the space is reserved so frequently for private events that it is rarely open for public use" (90–91).

the space in which they become imperceptible in the past" (Gilloch 1996, 92). Dream houses were monumental, highly visible, and part of the bourgeois myth of progress:

> The most apparent and enduring of the dream-elements of the urban complex are not so much the products of capitalist industry, however, as the very buildings that comprise the city. For Benjamin, the arcade, the museum, the exhibition hall, the railway station and the other great monuments inspired by the dream, designed and constructed to the glory of iron (the Eiffel Tower) and glass (the Crystal Palace), are the most prominent, profound forms of the phantasmagoria of the modern epoch. (Gilloch 1996, 123; see also Hº,1)

Elsewhere in Convolute L, Benjamin does say that all museums are dream houses in a passage I quoted in Chapter 2 above that concludes: "This thirst for the past forms something like the principal objects of my analysis—in light of which the inside of the museums appears as an interior magnified on a giant scale. In the years 1850–1890, exhibitions take the place of museums" [L1a,2]. Indeed, world's fairs, expositions, and exhibitions introduced a theatre for the large-scale viewing, appreciation, and consumption of the latest industrial products (see the World's Fairs section below). The expos served as a "secret blueprint for museums" [G2a,6], which redefined their focus in the modern era:

> The world exhibitions were occasions for the concentration of the fantastic and the exotic, objects distant in both space and time. The most modern and the most ancient were combined. […] While the world exhibition celebrated the achievements of modernity through the exhibition of the latest technologies and artefacts, the museum also sought to articulate a vision of history as progress. […] In the museum the past is catalogued and transformed into an object of contemplation, robbed of its power. (Gilloch 1996, 128–129; see also L1a,2 & G2a,6)

This was the same past that the libraries of modernity catalogued, classified, and displayed on their shelves, a past that was increasingly commodified in the present. "Neil Harris [1990] has pointed out that in the latter part of the nineteenth century the museum and the department store joined the trade fair as sites of the accumulation and display of goods" (T. Logan 2001, 184). Subject to the market, the myth of progress, and the other forces of high capitalism, libraries and museums underwent similar processes of standardization, professionalization, and monumentalization from 1870–1920, influencing and informing each other along the way (Roffman 2010). Yet this was also

when libraries and museums began to distance themselves from each other, defining their own spheres of influence, their own goals, their own professional identities—especially when determining the extent to which they were educational institutions or displayers of aesthetic objects. Their concurrent processes of standardization, once realized and entrenched, led to divergent roles for libraries and museums as dream houses in the modern city.[18]

3.3 Modernity

As I hope I have already established, for Benjamin the modern city was a phantasmagoria of commodities and buildings in which a dream-filled sleep fell across the archetypal inhabitants as they crossed multiple thresholds and experienced confusion between the virtual and the real, the interior and the exterior, and other dialectical tensions in the bourgeois shell made dwelling place. In the age of modernity, the myth of progress was experienced as a phantasmagoria of the past in the city:

> The modern city endeavours to present itself through its monumental façades and structures as the zenith or culmination of progress. The past is as much a part of the "phantasmagoria" of modernity as the commodities and dream-like architecture of the cityscape. For Benjamin, however, such monuments, read critically, unveil the metropolis as the locus of self-deception and folly, ignorance and inhumanity, myth and myopia. The city is composed of nothing more than the ceaselessly piled up ruins of the past. (Gilloch 1996, p. 75)

It is evident by now that the ultimate symbolic site of this process was the arcade. Geist's (1983) authoritative and exhaustive historical study of the arcades demonstrates the interplay of architectural developments in arcades and libraries in the nineteenth century, as well as presenting numerous examples (which I cover later) of writing rooms, reading rooms, bookstores, and circulating libraries in arcades. Geist also highlights the importance of and relationships between some pre-1851 structures, including Paris's Palais-Royal and Passage des Panoramas and London's Burlington Arcade. The arcade as a distinct building type had its genesis in the Palais-Royal's Galeries des Bois, opened in

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[18] In recent years, however, this process is in reversal, with increased cooperation—and new forms of standardization—between galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM).

1786, with their self-contained halls of wooden shoppes: "The Palais Royal became the prototypical arcade. The building complex was functionally and architecturally independent, containing all of the necessary facilities. For decades it was the focus of public life; the public life, that is, that was introduced by the bourgeoisie emancipated by the revolution. The Palais Royal became the mecca of the leisure class" (448). Given the popularity of this proto-arcade among the bourgeois leisure class, the arcade began to take its modern form around the city of Paris, as alleyways, courtyards, or buildings were transformed. The Passage des Panoramas, opened in 1800, was fashioned out of a mansion, with the former gate serving as the arcade's entrance; it was literally a house turned interior street, and it took its name from "the two panoramas that stood on either side of its entranceway and that disappeared in 1831"[19] [A7,7]. According to Geist (1983): "The panoramas, then, were an ingredient of the arcade; indeed, they were its main attraction" (467). This applied to the Passage des Panoramas and its imitators, which could be found not only in Paris but throughout the West; Geist argues that the "wooden, smooth-surfaced roof with glass panels" of the Passage des Panoramas directly influenced the Burlington Arcade (467). By extension, Parisian arcades influenced British ones, which in turn influenced those overseas: "At the end of the eighteenth century, London was the opposite pole to Paris and the point of departure for the spread of arcades in the Anglo-Saxon nations" (31o). For example, Rochester, New York, had an arcade that was "a copy of the Burlington Arcade" (543). The modern interplay between France, the United Kingdom, and the United States was aided and influenced by the arcades. Aragon ([1926] 1994) provides accounts of various Americanisms on display in the Passage de l'Opéra (opened in 1822): the blonde hair of "film heroines [and …] their American pearliness" (40) replicated in salons; "far-off America and its bloodstained epics" (59) reflected in the mirrors of Café Biard; the shoeshine parlours' "elevated armchairs, the idea for which is said to have originated with a New York shoeblack" (69); "caramel-and-whipped cream footgear" seen in "Hollywood film[s]" (71). This arcade demonstrated that Paris did not simply influence the world, but was also influenced by it,

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[19] Benjamin quotes "Paul d'Ariste, *La Vie et le monde du boulevard* (Paris), p. 14".

from fashion to booksellers to leisure to food. Copies proliferated, whether they were mass-produced commodities, arcades, or cities themselves.

3.4   Urbanization

Indeed, the production of the city was a uniquely modern problem, as urbanization rapidly intensified. "The city was the most urgent and the most comprehensive problem of the nineteenth century. It had been criminally neglected by the architects, and by governments as well" (Pevsner 1968, 192). With its aging infrastructure, sanitation issues, and overcrowded apartments, Paris was the site of pollution, disease, and instability. Napoléon III's solution was to entrust Georges-Eugène Haussmann, prefect of Seine, with a large scale, nearly complete reconfiguration of Paris's streets and public spaces. Haussmann, who viewed the entire city, rather than any one neighbourhood, as his project, expropriated decaying buildings to widen medieval alleyways into modern thoroughfares. "Urban planning, which had been introduced in the eighteenth century, was conceived after the [1848] revolution as a task involving the entire city" (Geist 1983, 448). Geist argues that such an approach was inspired by the success of the Palais-Royal's network of arcades; arcades inspired Haussmann at the same time that he threatened to destroy them:

> The great American passion for city planning, imported into Paris by a prefect of police during the Second Empire and now being applied to the task of redrawing the map of our capital in straight lines, will soon spell the doom of these human aquariums. Although the life that originally quickened them has drained away, they deserve, nevertheless, to be regarded as the secret repositories of several modern myths: it is only today, when the pickaxe menaces them, that they have at last become the true sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral, the ghostly landscape of damnable pleasures and professions. Places that were incomprehensible yesterday, and that tomorrow will never know. (Aragon [1926] 1994, 14)

For many residents of Paris, including Aragon and later Benjamin, Haussmann was a villain who disrupted everyday life, negated history, and served the interests of bourgeois capitalism:

> Haussmann's ideal in city planning consisted of long straight streets opening onto broad perspectives. This ideal corresponds to the tendency—common in the nineteenth century—to ennoble technological necessities through spurious artistic

ends. The temples of the bourgeoisie's spiritual and secular power were to find
their apotheosis within the framework of these long streets. […] With the
Haussmannization of Paris, the phantasmagoria was rendered in stone. (Benjamin
[1939] 1999a, 24)

The arcade, a clandestine alternative to Haussmann's wide boulevards, became an
alternative thoroughfare through the city for the 1871 Communards, who constructed
their barricades out of the arcade's mass-produced contents—pianos, furniture— and the
very cobblestone of Haussmann's widened boulevards (Ross 1988, 151; see also E7a,1 &
E8,9). Before Haussmann, the streets were made from wood to prevent the building of
barricades [E1,4]; after Haussmann, who destroyed the homes of the working classes to
benefit the bourgeoisie, the straight lines of the city could be under-mined and
reconfigured for revolutionary purposes (Benjamin [1939] 1999a, 23–24). For Benjamin,
this represented the potential of any of modernity's reconfigured spaces. The Commune
might have failed, yet Benjamin recognized the elements of its history—the false
promises of the myth of progress, a phantasmagoric oppression, and latent revolutionary
potentiality—in every preceding and subsequent moment. What follows for a majority of
the rest of this chapter is a discussion of several such elements and how they related to
both the arcade and the public library, starting with perhaps the most symbolically
important: glass, iron, and gas.

3.5   Glass Architecture

Benjamin's thoughts on glass architecture, a central theme of *The Arcades Project*, were
heavily influenced by Scheerbart's (1972 [1914]), who considered the meaning and
possibilities of this new building technology from a variety of perspectives. The arcade's
glass-and-iron roof quickly led to developments in transparent roofing, allowing the
atrium to be used by a variety of building types (especially libraries). This was so
significant that, in addition to the department store and the shopping mall, Missac (1995)
identifies the glass atrium as the other main successor to the arcade, which I cover in
depth in the next chapter. Although iron was a more revolutionary building material, as it
allowed the fabrication of structures that were previously impossible, the transparency
made possible through glass—which was taken to its extreme in iron-and-glass
architecture—predated iron construction. This is another way of saying that the window

was an invention that predated the modern period by many centuries and had already been used in various architectural ways. One only need think of stained glass windows or vaulted Gothic ceilings to understand that glass has long served practical as well as experimental purposes in buildings. For example, clerestory windows and skylights had long found specialized use in libraries before being applied to arcades, especially monumental arcades or gallerias (Geist 1983). Indeed, in the Palais-Royal's Galerie d'Orléans, "[t]he glass vault covering the arcade space was the first of its kind and predated all known vaulted conservatories. It was hipped and described a segment of a circle. […] This was in essence the glass-roof construction used later in Brussels, The Hague, and Hamburg" (529). Another dream house found its origin in the Palais-Royal's "complex conglomeration of buildings" (528): the "first winter garden—a glassed-in space with flower beds, espaliers, and fountains, in part underground"—was a feature of the Palais-Royal [A3,10]. In turn, the natural light made possible by advances in glass ceilings in the arcades was quickly adopted by libraries (Geist 1983, 20 & 24). The transparency of glass as a building material had its advantages in opening up spaces to the outside and allowing in more natural light. However, it also increased the phantasmagoric enchantment of interior spaces, which began to take on dazzling qualities that they hadn't possessed before the modern era, although such qualities degraded along with the iron window frames: "Around the middle of the [nineteenth] century, it was not yet known how to build with glass and iron. Hence, the light that fell from above, through the panes between the iron supports, was dirty and sad" [F1,2]. The inherent obsolescence of early iron-and-glass structures was a recurring source of fascination for Benjamin, who saw parallels within many features of the modern city.

3.6   Iron Construction

Iron was notable for its novelty and its rapid development: "For the first time in the history of architecture, an artificial building material appears: iron. It undergoes an evolution whose tempo will accelerate in the course of the century" (Benjamin [1935] 1999, 4). A Parisian arcade opened in 1847 was perhaps the first site of a ceiling supported in part by iron: "The Passage Jouffroy is the first arcade that owes its aesthetic impact entirely to the use of iron. The arcade space is made of glass, iron, and stone

slabs; wood appears only in frames, bars, and mouldings" (Geist 1983, 534). It featured "phantasmagorias and marionette plays" (530). However, construction entirely in iron—and indeed iron-and-glass architecture—had its genesis in the public library, specifically the new home built for the centuries-old Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève in Paris by Henri Labrouste. The building was structured with straight lines figuratively like a catalogue (Levine 1982a), and the central reading room is (still to this day) covered with an iron skeleton ceiling supported by iron posts. Frampton (1980) provides a summary of Labrouste's career with libraries and iron:

> In 1840 Labrouste was named architect of the Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève in Paris which had been created to house part of the library impounded by the French state in 1789. Based apparently on Boullée's project for a library in the Palais Mazarin, of 1785, Labrouste's design consists of a perimeter wall of books enclosing a rectilinear space and supporting an iron-framed, barrel-vaulted roof which is divided into two halves and further supported in the centre of the space by a line of iron columns. […] Such Structural Rationalism was further refined in the main reading room and book stack that Labrouste built for the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1860–68. This complex, inserted into the courtyard of the Palais Mazarin, consists of a reading room covered by an iron and glass roof carried on sixteen cast-iron columns and a multi-storey wrought- and cast-iron book stack. Dispensing with the last trace of historicism, Labrouste designed the latter as a top-lit cage, in which light filters down through iron landings from the roof to the lowest floor. Although this solution was derived from Sydney Smirke's cast-iron reading room and stack built in the courtyard of Robert Smirke's Neo-Classical British Museum in 1854, the precise form of its execution implied a new aesthetic whose potential was not to be realized until the Constructivist work of the 20th century. (18)

The bookstacks of the Bibliothèque Nationale formed a contiguous unit with iron grating as flooring forming the separation between each level, while its reading room—site of a large portion of Benjamin's *Arcades Project* work—was covered by a vaulted iron ceiling.[20] Benjamin quotes Perret (n.d.)[21]: "Construction in iron has provided a succession of buildings, of which the great reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale by Labrouste

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[20] I discuss the display of these two famous libraries of Labrouste in the following chapter.

[21] Cited by Benjamin as: "*L'Encyclopédie française*, vol. 16, 16–68, pp. 6–7 (Auguste Perret, "Les Besoins collectifs et l'architecture")."

was the first, and one of the most successful" [F8,4].[22] That is, Labrouste's Bibliothèque Nationale was the first to have its structure fashioned almost entirely out of iron. Put simply, architectural advances in the library led directly to advances in the arcades, which reciprocally influenced other modern libraries. Display was a central concern for other aspects of libraries, arcades, and parlours, including their design and layout, their civic importance, and the social forces that influenced them, and iron was utilized along with glass in such buildings to maximize visibility, which accompanied mobility. "Iron is avoided in home construction but used in arcades, exhibition halls, train stations— buildings that serve transitory purposes" (Benjamin [1935] 1999a, 4). Transitory buildings needed to be seen to be moved through. With iron and glass, the modern library—a threshold in numerous ways—was designed as a public building meant to be moved through (e.g., browsing the newly opened stacks) at the same time that it housed a large number of items, all the while being seen.

3.7   Gas Lighting & Heating

This visibility was enhanced for all transitory buildings by the modern invention of gas lighting, which originated in the arcades (Benjamin [1935], 1999a, 3). The Passage des Panoramas was the site of the first illumination in January 1817, although "the public seemed resistant to this kind of lighting, which was suspected of being dangerous and of polluting breathable air"[23] [T1a,2]. Despite these trepidations, gas lighting soon became a fixture of modern iron buildings; Benjamin quotes Dulaure[24]: "The two great advances in technology—gas and cast iron—go together. 'Aside from the great quantity of lights maintained by the merchants, these galleries are illuminated in the evening by thirty-four jets of hydrogen gas mounted on cast-iron volutes on the pilasters.' The quote is probably

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[22] Benjamin also quotes Levasseur (1904, 531–532): "The use of iron greatly increased in that period, thanks to the new combinations to which it lent itself. Two quite different but equally remarkable works in this genre deserve to be mentioned first: the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève and the central marketplace, Les Halles" [F1a,3]. And again (197): "Henri Labrouste, an artist whose talents are sober and severe, successfully inaugurated the ornamental use of iron in the construction of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève and the Bibliothèque Nationale" [F14,4]. (See also F7a,1.)

[23] Benjamin quotes "Du Camp, *Paris*, vol. 5, p. 290".

[24] "J. A. Dulaure, *Histoire de Paris . . . depuis 1821 jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 2 <(Paris, 1835), p. 29>."

referring to the Galeria de l'Opéra" [F1,4]. As showcased in the arcades, "gas lighting […] represented the height of luxury and splendor" (Benjamin [1928/1929] 1999a, 885), the luxury and splendour of being unaware of the passage of time, of experiencing perpetual daylight within the bourgeois interior. At the same time, gas lighting changed the appearance of the night sky for those outside the arcades: "the big city knows no true evening twilight. In any case, the artificial lighting does away with all transition to night. The same state of affairs is responsible for the fact that the stars disappear from the sky over the metropolis" [J64,4]. Gas lighting had phantasmagoric effects on the entire city.

The Passage de l'Opéra also provided an example of the related phenomenon of gas heating: according to Aragon ([1926] 1994), the climate was controlled at that arcade's café Certa in the Passage de l'Opéra: "everything is just perfect. In winter, the café is well heated and never too cold; in summer, its ventilation system prevents it from getting too hot, and it remains a grotto of coolness" (80). As with gas lighting, gas heating also enhanced the phantasmagoria of the arcade, which no longer simply provided protection from the weather and shelter from the storm, but could now be experienced uniformly throughout the year. Benjamin quotes an anonymous source[25]: "Truly incomprehensible to me is the existence of those shopkeepers who, entrenched in our arcades, remain—at all hours and in the warmest of weather—within shops where, on account of the gas, it feels like the Tropics" [T1,6.]. Benjamin notes in several passages the boredom associated with both weather in the natural world [D1,3; J31,2; B^{o},5; K^{0}14] and the lack of weather in interior spaces [K1,5; a^{o},1]. The result was a new collective whose everyday life was not concerned with the weather: "These were spaces for a generation of people who knew little of the weather and who, on Sundays, when it snowed, would rather warm themselves in the winter gardens than go out skiing" [a^{o},1]. With climate-controlled interiors, the weather became but another of high capitalism's products: "architecture, fashion—yes, even the weather—are, in the interior of the collective, […] in the cycle of the eternally selfsame" [K1,5].

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[25] "*Nouveaux tableaux de Paris, ou Observations sur les moeurs et usages des Parisiens au commencement du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1828), vol. 1, p. 39."

Gas heating and gas lighting both affected the storage and display of books, in the home library as well as the public one. Ste-Geneviève, as I discuss in the following chapter, was notable for being perhaps the first public library to feature gas lighting, allowing for longer opening hours in the evenings and more uniform reading conditions throughout the day. Other libraries followed Labrouste's lead and installed gas light fixtures.[26] Yet for libraries, gas lighting had its risks and challenges, as did the related provision of gas heating. In his guide to home libraries, Brander Matthews, under the pseudonym Arthur Penn (1883), warned about the dangers of gas lighting: "Never put [books] on a shelf high up near the ceiling of a room lighted by gas, as the results of gas combustion are highly injurious" (116). He also cautioned against making bookshelves too tall:

> heat ascends, and the upper part of a room is sure to be many degrees hotter than the lower, and heat, especially the dry heat of gas and hot-air furnaces, is very injurious to books, decaying and cracking the bindings and bringing rapidly to light any hidden defects in the paper. […] The old-fashioned library, public and private alike, with its Gothic architecture, its vaulted ceiling, its lofty alcoves, and its circling gallery, piled high with books rising tier on tier, is wholly unscientific [….] The upper galleries of a high-arched library are almost as hot as the upper galleries of a theatre. Books are not better for being baked, any more than is man. The massive pile of buildings, with a great dome towering over all, no longer meets with the approval of the expert in library science. (60–61)

Vaulted ceilings and domes were considered advantageous in earlier libraries, even in early modern ones, because of the benefits of added light from high windows and the overall airy and spacious feel. With the introduction of gas lighting and heating, however, such spaces became impractical—heat rose into those vast spaces, gas lights along the ceilings or upper walls were too far away from the readers—or outright dangerous. In the library, the phantasmagoric effects of gas lighting and heating competed with the phantasmagoria of overwhelmingly large spaces, ultimately influencing the design, layout, and architectural style of such spaces.[27]

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[26] Gas lighting also changed the nature of the parlour, which went from being dark and isolated to bright (yet still isolated in the home).

[27] Despite warnings such as Matthews/Penn's, however, large library spaces remained fashionable in the age of iron construction, such as the Jefferson Building's reading room, which opened in 1897 and, like the arcades, featured false indoor façades.

3.8   Style

Perhaps the two most influential Western stylistic forces of the modern era were Beaux-Arts and Art Nouveau (Benjamin exclusively used its German name, Jugendstil, meaning "Youth Style"). Both styles made use of iron-and-glass architecture to different yet similar ends. The neoclassicism Beaux-Arts architecture, which also drew inspiration from Gothic and Renaissance sources, took its name from l'École des Beaux-Arts, famous for its elite teachers drawn from the ranks of the winners of its most prestigious competition, the Grand Prix:

> But above all else, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts was the training ground for France's architectural civil service, and the winners of the Grand Prix were primed to fill the top bureaucratic positions. […] Most important buildings in Paris or the provinces were entrusted to this elite corps of designers, as, for example, were the Paris Opéra, the Central Markets (les Halles), the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Palais de Justice, La Trinité, the Petit Palais, the Sorbonne, as well as the Galerie des Machines. The Grand Prix programmes were preparation for the design of such large commissions […]. The designs produced in the Grand Prix competition were neither visionary nor unrealistic. They grew out of contemporary architecture and became models for later buildings, especially in provincial cities and foreign countries. (Levine 1982b, 123)

While the entire history of l'École is outside the scope of this chapter, the example of the Grand Prix provides one topic worth exploring. The architects and adherents of Beaux-Arts believed that they were participating in a classical tradition with new building materials, incorporating the best of both the old and new methods. Some arcades, especially monumental ones, were built in a standard neoclassical Beaux-Arts style, while others featured Beaux-Arts style stripped of everything except its most modern building materials: iron and glass. Yet Levine's critique demonstrates that l'École was a conservative force, determining which buildings would become important and reinforcing their influence. Rykwert (1982) similarly argues that during the modern age, the École developed "a wholly unhistorical, wholly a-prioristic approach to design, in which the procedure of the architect is wholly autonomous, and the past a mere repository of conventions. […] Insofar as we can isolate something which in architecture can be called a classical tradition, then the Ecole des Beaux-Arts had very little to do with it" (16–17). By establishing not just the architect, but the architect from a specific school, as the most

important stylistic driving force, l'École undermined its own apparently historical traditions. This is another example of high capitalism's "reactivation of mythic forces" [K1a,8], in this case in the authority of l'École itself. As I discuss below, the modern public library, especially the Carnegie library, was heavily influenced by l'École and its architects, incorporating Beaux-Arts into a conservative monumental neoclassicism. Does this represent a similar sort of reactivation of mythic forces? And if, as Griffis (2010) writes, "the Carnegie library movement was in many ways where modern library design began" (193), then what other characteristics of the library as place came under the spell of these forces?

In some ways, Jugendstil was a reaction to Beaux-Arts, while in other ways, it exerted the same effect on the modern city, reactivating its own mythic forces [see G1,7]. Whereas those from l'Ecole thought that Beaux-Arts represented an historical tradition, Jugendstil's adherents identified elements of a conservative historicism in the former (Pevsner 1968, 113). Jugendstil drew inspiration from natural forms, "with its characteristic floral motif" [S10,1]; in terms of architecture, this meant using iron to replicate plants—vines, blossoms, leaves—in the interiors and exteriors of buildings. The use of iron, itself a new technology, was an "attempt on the part of art to come to terms with technology" [S8,8]. Pevsner (1968) uncritically summarizes iron's importance to Art Nouveau:

> Iron is a decorative as well as a structural material. Viollet-le-Duc had recognized that and suggested its use in both capacities in the same building. He was the fountain head. […] Art Nouveau must retain the credit for the discovery of the aesthetic possibilities of iron and glass […]. Art Nouveau adored lightness, attenuation, transparency and of course sinuosity. Iron meant thin members and ductility; iron and glass used externally produced the same transparency obtained internally by iron alone. (95)

For Benjamin, Jugendstil's inspiration was not so pure, nor was its effect. Benjamin writes that "Jugendstil arises out of weariness" [J82,5], which I would argue relates to the boredom of modernity's climate-controlled spaces; Jugendstil was reactionary, not revolutionary. It began by establishing a false duality between nature and technology: "Already at work in Jugendstil is the bourgeois tendency to set nature and technology in mutual opposition, as absolute antithesis" [J67,6]. This led to a "retrogressive process"

[J83a,3] that fetishized nature while dominating it: "Jugendstil represents an advance, insofar as the bourgeoisie gains access to the technological bases of its control over nature; a regression, insofar as it loses the power of looking the everyday in the face" [S9a,4]. As presented by Benjamin, Jugendstil becomes one of the driving forces behind the "dream-filled sleep" [K1a,8] of the modern city; indeed, Benjamin quotes Dalí,[28] one of the masters of Art Nouveau: "No collective effort has succeeded in creating a dream world as pure, and as disturbing, as these Jugendstil buildings" [S2,5]. This dream state was especially deceptive, however, as it came out of Jugendstil's false promise of an awakening: "Jugendstil is the dream that one has come awake" [K2,6]. The lasting lesson of Jugendstil, for Benjamin, was "the increasingly desperate trajectory of an art intent on rising above the marketplace and the technological apparatus, in the process losing its connection with the life of 'the people'" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 291). In the end, both Jugendstil and Beaux-Arts represented bourgeois control over the spaces of modern life. While it would be convenient to recognize a tension or dialectical relationship between the two styles, I don't believe that this would be accurate, as both represented an ahistorical break with everyday life; Beaux-Arts and Art Nouveau competed with nature and with life in the city, but not with each other.

3.9 Architects

It is precisely within this context that arcades and public libraries were constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, a period that saw increasing standardization in both building types by increasingly interconnected international architects. It should come as no surprise that entire generations of architects could trace their stylistic lineage back to Labrouste and l'École des Beaux Arts:

> The French architect, Henri Labrouste (1801–1875), had a major influence on U.S. library architecture, an influence that lasted into the twentieth century. […] One of his students was Henry H. Richardson (1838–1886), a major American architect of the 1870s and 1880s. […] Henri Labrouste's first government commission was to rebuild the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in 1843. This pioneer library planner used wrought iron supports in the main reading room, an

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[28] "Salvador Dalí, 'L'Ane pourri,' *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, 1, no. 1 (Paris, 1930), p. 12."

innovation because iron had not been used before in any similar construction. The reading room, sixty feet wide and three hundred feet long, was on the second floor, with the book storage areas directly below on the basement and ground levels. This arrangement was used in U.S. libraries in the twentieth century in preference to the previous method of housing most of the book collections in a large reading hall. […] The self-supporting bookstack [of la Biblothèque nationale] was Labrouste's major contribution to the U.S. library architecture. In 1877, William R. Ware (1832–1915) and Henry Van Brunt (1832–1903), Boston architects, were the first to use the bookstack concept in the United States in their addition to Gore Hall at Harvard College. (Oehlerts 1991, 5–6)

In other words, Labrouste's influence could be found in the students he taught at l'École, the Beaux-Arts style he used, and in his technical innovations using iron for the storage and presentation of books. Incidentally, although he didn't attend l'École, Ware, "the founder of architectural education in the United States", modelled the program of MIT's school of architecture, of which he was the first director, after l'École and "recruited his faculty from graduates of the École or among those who were influenced by the École" (Oehlerts 1991, 9). There was no shortage of American architects who fit this bill, many of whom were also involved in library architecture. "Between 1850 and 1941, fifty-four different architects or firms designed the largest public library buildings in the United States. More than one-third of them received all or part of their architectural education at the École des Beaux-Arts" (Oehlerts 1991, 10).

I think that a few more examples will suffice to show the wide range of this influence. "Richard Morris Hunt (1827–1895) was the first American to enroll at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1846 at the age of nineteen. […] He also designed the Lenox Library in New York in the 1870s and the administration building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893" (Oehlerts 1991, 10). Another architect for the Chicago expo was Charles McKim, who also studied at l'École and used Ste-Geneviève as a model when designing Boston Public Library's Copley Square building: "The main interior features were a grand stairway to the second floor, and a reading room on the second floor that extended across the front of the library. McKim also wanted the library to follow in the École traditions that were expressed by Richardson's Trinity Church on the opposite side of Copley Square" (Oehlerts 1991, 36). McKim's firm became a leader in public library projects, and architects with McKim's firm went on to design numerous

libraries, open their own firms, and train other architects who did the same. For example, John Carrere also attended l'École and worked, alongside Thomas Hastings, for McKim's firm. Carrere and Hastings, influenced by the Columbian Exposition, were awarded the contract to design NYPL's famous 5th Avenue building in 1897, with Hastings expanding it in the 1920s (49). There was also Edward L. Tilton, a library architect who attended the École and worked for McKim's firm and the Carnegie Corporation (71–82). Among other notable projects, Tilton designed Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Free Library, where Kate Coplan would later usher in a new form of library display (see the next chapter). The Enoch Pratt Free Library, in turn, influenced the design of other libraries in the US, such as Rochester, as well as the Central Reference Library in Manchester, England, as Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw (2009, 170 & 177) note in their similar historical study of British public library projects. Once again, the influence went back and forth across the Atlantic.

3.10 Surveillance

There was also transatlantic modern development in buildings used for surveillance purposes, of which the library serves as an example. Perhaps the most famous conceptualization of such a building is Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which he was never able to construct but which still influenced the design of prisons and other structures. Griffis (2013) offers an extended treatment of the panopticon as it relates to surveillance in prisons, factories, other workplaces, and, indeed, libraries. Yet I maintain both that the panopticon found its true form only after the architectural advances in the arcade and that the design of arcades may have been directly influential on libraries. Bentham's unrealized panopticon found eventual realization using layout techniques developed in the arcades. One notable example is John Haviland, who designed two arcades and three prisons in the United States (Andrzejewski 2008; Geist 1983). This is not so surprising, given that the arcade influenced many modern building forms: "There are other building types of the nineteenth century besides the prison and [Fourier's] phalanstery which employ the arcade's method of spatial access. Market halls and the stacks of large libraries are two examples" (Geist 1983, 33). Haviland (1792–1852), an English-born architect who made his career in the US, "designed the Philadelphia Arcade

and built it in 1826–1827, almost simultaneously with his second, the New York Arcade"
(538). Although Haviland lost money speculating in his own arcade projects, he learned
enough about the visibility afforded by their straight lines to design his first major prison
after the arcades: "John Haviland built the Eastern Penitentiary in Philadelphia according
to the radial system as an experimental building […]. The individual wings had one story
with a long corridor illuminated from above and lined on both sides with indefinitely
extendable cells. Each wing ended in a walled courtyard. The cross section of these wings
resembled that of an arcade" (28). Each wing could be viewed from the centre of the
structure, demonstrating the real-world application of the panoptic designs. The
penitentiary, which opened in 1829, was the "prison as arcade—this is the logical
conclusion of the search for a system in which the greatest number of cells can be located
in the smallest possible area. The prisoners then can be served and patrolled by a limited
staff" (28). Although in practice the day-to-day operations of the penitentiary needed
frequent adjustments, Haviland's design was successful enough that he "built two more
prisons in 1836: one in Trenton, New Jersey and another in New York" (28).

The panopticon, via the arcade and Haviland, also served as an inspiration for reading
rooms in major libraries around the Western world.[29] The examples of national libraries
with large circular reading rooms surrounding a raised dais as centralized service desk
and observation area are part of our collective memory: the Jefferson Building, Canada's
Library of Parliament, the British Museum Reading Room, to name a few. Even in
standard Carnegie public libraries, the service desk was often located at the crux of a
cross-shaped building, allowing library staff to observe the entire library space from a
central position. Surveillance, or at least monitoring, was one of the main reasons for
libraries to be designed in such a way, especially once formerly closed stacks were
opened to the general public during the modern public library movement: "The shift to
open access was a turning point in public library design. Open access not only
revolutionised the library service, increasing substantially its popularity, it also paved the
way for an open-plan mentality [….] Open access did not instantly liberalise the user. Its

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[29] "The library is both a place of remarkable intellectual freedom and a prison" (Roffman 2010, 116).

full name, it is important to recall, was '*safeguarded*' open access" (Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw 2009, 346). The authors reject the premise that social control was a priority for early public libraries, arguing instead that this "represented an extensive programme of social engineering, the aim of which was the furtherance of progress, learning, culture, discovery and science" (347); however, I imagine that this must have been accompanied by prevailing sentiments regarding ideal behaviours and morals which libraries tried to instill in their patrons. Along those lines, Hammond (2006) argues that the working class was denied access to the library through "a form of social control" based on

> severe rules and regulations designed to discourage use of the library as a congenial meeting place, insisting on silence within and prohibiting congregation in doorways or on steps. Persons using the library were expected to be clean, and risked banishment if they were not. […] [A]t a time when few work places provided washing facilities for their employees, calling in to borrow a book on the way home was fraught with risk and embarrassment for those employed in manual jobs. (38)[30]

The public library not only sought to regulate its thresholds but also the bodies of those who crossed them. Whether by social control or social engineering, the modern public library's mission was tied directly to the myth of progress, which was also a driving force behind the increasing monumentality of public and quasipublic buildings.

3.11 Vernacular to Monumental

If I may borrow terminology from Brand (1994), it can be argued that during the late modern period, both arcades and public libraries went from being Low Road, vernacular buildings to High Road, monumental ones. "Low Road buildings are low-visibility, low-rent, no-style, high-turnover. Most of the world's work is done in Low Road buildings" (24). They are vernacular in the sense that they are localized, part of everyday life, and easily changed to meet the needs of the people who inhabit them. They form haphazardly, sporadically, even temporarily: "Vernacular buildings evolve. As generations of new buildings imitate the best of mature buildings, they increase in sophistication while retaining simplicity. They become finely attuned to the local weather and local society.

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[30] Hammond cites Altick (1957).

[…] The heart of vernacular design is about form, not style" (132–133). A building does not automatically become a High Road structure after a certain amount of time; rather, it is a process of calcification, in which change ceases and the building stops responding to—or even stands in the way of—local or individual needs:

> But most institutions occupy blocked High Road buildings. A frozen bureaucracy and a frozen building reinforce each other's resistance to change. […] Libraries are a glorious case for study. They exude architectural permanence. Meanwhile their collections grow and grow, and the pressure builds. Do any expand gracefully? The Library of Congress does not. […] Because it is not allowed to anticipate its growth realistically, this superb institution barely functions. Most of the collection is neither processed nor accessible. (45–46)

For Brand, the LoC is an example of an especially ineffectual High Road institution because its monumental architecture prevents it from being able to respond to the day-to-day concerns of its staff and patrons. Its monumentality undermines its practicality.

Arcades went from being defined by their vernacular form—covered alleyways—to being defined by their monumental style. Similarly, public libraries went from being spare rooms in any building that happened to be open to the community, even if only for a few hours a week, to monumental, purpose-built structures, especially under the influence of Carnegie. The relationship between arcades and libraries during this time was reciprocal. The iron and glass of the vernacular arcade and the traditional arcade of window arches both informed the design of Ste-Geneviève (Levine 1982a, 154–156), the monumentality of which went on to inform large-scale purpose-built arcades. Vernacular arcades influenced the modern iron-and-glass library, which then served as a model for monumental arcades (e.g., gallerias), which in turn provided architectural and stylistic inspiration for monumental public libraries. At each step of this process, as the vernacular was obfuscated and buildings became even farther removed from everyday life, the phantasmagoria increased.

Throughout this chapter and the ones that follow, I cover many instances of monumental public libraries. Here, I would simply like to highlight a few arcades that exemplify the difference between Low and High Road structures, starting with the Palais-Royal's vernacular Galeries de Bois, which was replaced by the monumental Galerie d'Orléans.

The Galeries de Bois was formed through a gradual process of expansion and improvisation that incorporated buildings and streets into the interior space of the Palais. Geist's (1983) authoritative summary:

> In 1781 the Salle de l'Opéra on the east side of the palace burned down. This incident caused a comprehensive change in the Duc de Chartres's [expansion] plans. In 1784 Louis presented a new plan: the Théâtre Français replaced the Cour Intérieure and the Rue de Valois was extended through to the Rue St. Honoré. The process of exposing the Palais Royal on all sides began. In 1786 the galleries were completed and the foundations for the colonnades bordering the south side of the garden were laid. Then the money ran out. The rest had to be improvised. The connection between the galleries and the palace remained unfinished. The Théâtre Français was not built until 1789–1790. The passages of the gallery were provisionally enclosed by wooden barracks, the Galeries de Bois, which were built on the plan of the intended colonnade of the cross-wing. These Galeries de Bois—three rows of shops, which contained two taller passages with high side lights—formed the first arcade ever built. They already possessed the two required elements: shops on both sides and their own source of illumination. […] Hence, the history of the arcade began with a provisional structure, a building without an architectonic plan, without any direct model. (452 & 457)

Even the restoration of the Palais, begun in 1814 "under the auspices of the Duc d'Orléans, later King Louis Philippe" (523), incorporated temporary wooden structures erected in a piecemeal fashion around sections of the Palais still damaged from the revolution. Work continued in this way for 14 years before the monumental Galerie d'Orléans, that foundational pre-iron arcade, was built:

> In 1828 the work had progressed far enough so that the old temporary wooden structures from before the revolution could be torn down, thereby making room for a new, elegant, and spacious structure […]. In 1828 the Peristyle de Valois was finished, the Galeries de Bois torn down, and the Galerie d'Orléans begun. In 1829 the arcade was completed and attached to the system of palatial galleries by the Peristyle de Montpensier. (523)

The Duc d'Orléans used the glass terrace roof, perhaps the first of its kind, as a private garden, cementing the building's monumental negation of the vernacular. "The ugly temporary structure was replaced, the space celebrated; yet the life began to disappear from this architecture with its aura of imperial coolness" (528). A complex series of interconnected spaces that had developed over decades quickly lost its appeal, as it no longer appealed to the average Parisian. "People regretted the glass sterility, the lost

intimacy, and longed for the old wooden galleries. […] The Galerie was torn down in 1935" (528). The shift from Low to High Road marked the beginning and the end of this first monumental arcade, which had replaced the first vernacular one.

North American arcades offer a different perspective on the distance of monumental structures from everyday life. Unlike early Parisian arcades, which either incorporated or connected busy pedestrian routes, Haviland's purpose-built Philadelphia Arcade did not function as a thoroughfare: "The most essential difference from the earlier European arcades was the strictly commercial function of the arcades as a shop, office, or display space. It lacked any real function as an avenue for traffic. There was no need to include apartments in the arcade since, in contrast to Paris, the city of Philadelphia had plenty of undeveloped land for dwellings" (Geist 1983, 538). Ignoring such a central component of the arcade's success was probably a reason that Haviland's arcade proved unsuccessful, causing him to declare bankruptcy. Nevertheless, he had his imitators, such as Russell Warren (1783–1860), architect of the Providence Arcade. According to Geist, that arcade's "role as an artery for traffic is of secondary importance" (539). Philadelphia and Providence offer an important lesson: European arcades succeeded if their primary purpose was as a shortcut or cut-through; in North America, the arcade was instead "a finished system, a shopping center in the guise of a Greek temple" (542). The North American arcade therefore expanded within itself, rather than within the city; the best example of this progression is the Cleveland Arcade, "the gigantic variation of the ground-plan system established in Providence" (542). Can the same be said of public library buildings? Have North American public libraries become gigantic finished systems? With the additional land available in North American cities, many of which took their first form during the modern era and were designed for carriages and, later, cars and mass public transit, North American public library buildings haven't had interior and exterior functions related to the circulation of people through the city.

3.12 Civic Function

Instead, much like monumental arcade projects, the public library—the large urban one as well as the small rural one—has often been valued for its civic function or symbolic importance. Arcades, libraries, and parlours (which I revisit below) all had civic

functions. The parlour served a complex socializing role, with norms around visiting and hosting. This role was subsumed by municipal governments as public libraries and publicly-funded arcades alike took on symbolic importance and became sites for community life to unfold. All three types of spaces were destinations, with various levels of public access: arcades, parlours, and public libraries became the living room of the community (see Chapter 5 below) metaphorically, literally, and ideally, respectively. In the next chapter, I discuss several examples of important central libraries in the context of their visibility within their cities.

For now, I simply want to discuss some notable arcades that were driven by civic pride. A relatively early case was the Royal Arcade in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. When it opened in 1832, local news reports, as cited by Geist (1983), claimed that not only was the Royal Arcade superior to London's Lowther Arcade, but it was in fact the finest arcade in the entire universe (437). This competition between new arcades and existing ones would become a recurring theme, especially in Italy, where many of the largest monumental gallerias were built with public funds as civic resources, rather than with private funds as speculative interests, as was often the case in France, England, the United States, and elsewhere. In Turin, the Galleria Nazionale, "built before 1890" (Geist does not provide an exact date), "must be included among the monumental arcades of Italy" due to "its size and pretensions" (564), by which Geist means that it "strove to compete with the other great Italian arcades" (561). A similar impulse of city pride was behind the Galleria Umberto I, dedicated in 1892 in Naples: "The building of the Galleria Umberto I was motivated by the pride of the Neopolitan people. They wanted to make Naples Italy's leading city, an aspiration of almost every large Italian city after unification" (428). According to Geist, this galleria, as publicly funded and publicly accessible civic building, was an ideal example of a space that supported the public sphere: "The arcade belongs to everyone. It is the monumental expression of this most characteristic achievement of the nineteenth century, the public sphere, in which everyone may participate" (437). Public libraries, of course, are also regularly cited for

their function in the public sphere, for similar if not identical reasons.[31] Yet some gallerias as civic projects ran into difficulties around their public functions. In Rome, the city government was heavily involved in the Galleria Colonna project, which was intended to serve monumental civic functions. Unfortunately, this resulted in over 40 years of debates, planning, and revisions (543). When the space finally opened, it was a strange amalgamation of forms and purposes:

> One sees in the Galleria Piazza Colonna as it was constructed in the mid-1920s a building which was debated and discussed to death. The arcade wings cannot be recognized from the Piazza Colonna. They are gloomy because of the convex dust covers which give the arcade space the feeling of a bank. Even the wonderful ice cream and candy shops at the entrance and the music of the small band playing for the guests of a restaurant within cannot bring it to life. (548)

As with public libraries or any other civic spaces, the monumentality of purpose-built arcades could either enhance public life or stand in the way of it, depending on how the projects were conceived, executed, and maintained.

Perhaps the most important monumental arcade with a civic function was Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, which opened in 1867 with the namesake king himself in attendance. Again, I lean on Geist's (1983) expertise:

> The Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan marks the zenith of the development of the arcade building type. The progress that began with Paris and had an intermediate stage in the Galeries St. Hubert in Brussels finds its end here. From an anonymous object of private speculation, the arcade has become a public building built by competition and financed by foreign capital, as well as a part of monumental redesign of the city center. (371)

If the arcade and the public library could be seen as originally arising as different reactions to similar forces in the modern city, the example of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II highlights the precise moment when the galleria and the large urban public library converge with similar objectives and functions. They were extremely symbolic and high profile public buildings, built with public money, open to the public, yet reliant

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[31] Exploring the connection between Italian civic projects and Italian public libraries would be an excellent area for further study, although one for which I am ill equipped.

on the commodities of high capitalism to bring people into their spaces. From this moment on, civic spaces would be inextricably bound with the phantasmagoria of modern capitalism. In this sense, I disagree with Geist: the galleria was not an idealized "monumental expression" of the public sphere, but rather an example of the public sphere under pressure from monumental forces. In the galleria as in the public library, these forces were increasingly subsumed by capital and by the nation-state at its various levels of government:

> Here the arcade has become a national political symbol. In conscious references to St. Peter's in Rome, Roman imperial architectural forms, the cross in the coat of arms of the family which brought about Italian unification, the arcade legitimatizes the new nation by calling on a widespread background of tradition. With the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, the arcade building type enters the gallery of the great representative buildings of the nineteenth century. In these buildings— the theaters, the palaces of justice, city halls, stock exchanges, parliamentary buildings—bourgeois society becomes manifest. (371)

The arcade, by way of the galleria, became part of not only bourgeois society but also the growing bureaucracy of the nation-state, a fate which would befall all such "great representative buildings of the nineteenth century", among which I would include the library in its many forms. "After the construction of huge arcades in Brussels and Milan, an arcade became an essential feature of a major city" (148). Of course, the same can be said of libraries, especially national and large public ones. In this sense, monumental bourgeois buildings, while relying on individual visitors, became part of the collective identity: "Benjamin also says that all that is external to the individual (fashion, architecture, etc.) becomes internal for the collective. He constructs a relation between an inside and an outside in which the two remain disjointed even as they are bound tightly together" (Chiesa 2016, 44; see also K1,4 & K1,5). This is evident in the glass shells of the arcades as civic monuments, but it was demonstrated on a much larger scale in the world's fairs, expositions, and international exhibitions that rose to prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century.

3.13 World's Fairs

The first world's fair, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held in London in 1851, featured one of the most significant early examples of iron-and-glass

construction, the Crystal Palace, "a name taken straight from the dream-world of the fairy-tale" (Gilloch 1996, 128). Benjamin cites the importance of the Crystal Palace on modern architecture and its influence on other dream houses in numerous passages (e.g., F1a,5; F4,2; F5,4; F6,4; F7,6; G2a,7; G2a,8; G6; G6a,1; G10,2; R2a,1). It was so significant, in fact, that it prompted a rare display of excitement in Benjamin's notes: "The first world exhibition and the first monumental structure in glass and iron! […] the exhibitors took pains to decorate the colossal interior in an oriental-fairy-tale style, and […]—alongside the assortment of goods that filled the arcaded walks—bronze monuments, marble statues, and bubbling fountains populated the giant halls" [G2a,7]. The Crystal Palace and its arcades filled with commodities—and by extension, all world's fairs—became for Benjamin a symbol for life beholden to high capitalism in the modern world. The Paris exhibitions of 1855, 1867, and 1889 were also central to Benjamin's theories (Gilloch 1996, 127 & 128), the last of which saw the construction the Eiffel Tower, "the definitive modern structure" (127). World's fairs were "the ultimate loci of self-congratulation of modern industry and technology" (Gilloch 1996, 127). By displaying the latest fashions, technologies, scientific developments, and commodities from all over the world, the fairs were training grounds in collective desire for the products of industrial capital:

> World exhibitions glorify the exchange value of the commodity. They create a framework in which its use value recedes into the background. They open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. The entertainment industry makes this easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity. He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others. (Benjamin [1935] 1999a, 7).

The fairs amazed and overwhelmed an eager public that was willing to be enchanted by the latest fashions. With some notable exceptions including Eiffel's tower, most structures built for the world's fairs were temporary; they appeared monumental without becoming monuments. They were built to be disassembled, demolished. The buildings themselves were part of the new waves of fashion ushered in by each successive fair, with the Crystal Palace serving as the most prominent example:

> "After the closing of the London Exhibition in 1851, people in England wondered what was to become of the Crystal Palace. […] The newspapers were full of

proposals of all kinds, many of which were distinctly eccentric. […] One person had the idea of making it a gigantic library." […] A. S. de Doncourt, *Les Expositions universelles* (Lille and Paris <1889>), p. 77. Compare F6a,1.[32] The Bourse [paraphrasing Hugo] could *represent* anything; the Crystal Palace could be *used* for anything. [F5a,1]

This was certainly not the last connection between the world's fair and the library, which was a similarly mutable and representative space.

Indeed, the shared history between fairs and public libraries is older than the fairs themselves. Mechanics institutes, widely recognized as direct precursors to the modern public library, also influenced the first European expos in the form of travelling exhibitions featuring "exhibits of products, competition for awards, amusements" (Findling and Pelle 1990, xviii). "From their beginning in Manchester in 1837, the mechanics institute exhibitions spread to nearly every town of any size in England and attracted several million visitors before 1851" (xvii). Findling and Pelle note that even though the United States also had mechanics institute exhibitions, they had "had negligible impact on the individuals who were involved in the planning of the earliest international fairs held in the United States. Rather, American fairs came about because of the experience Americans had participating in early European fairs" (xviii). Even if mechanics institutes didn't have a domestic impact on expos in the US, they had a European impact, which fairgoers regardless brought back across the Atlantic. Soon, the fairs and expos themselves would start to have a direct impact on libraries and librarianship. Below I have catalogued the most noteworthy and easy-to-find examples of libraries at national and world's fairs. Surely this is a fruitful topic for further research.

The first expo to organize its buildings and exhibitions according to a classificatory scheme was Paris's 1867 Exposition universelle, which "recognized ten fundamental

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[32] In this passage, Benjamin quotes "Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes*, novels, vol. 3 (Paris, 1880), pp. 206–207 (*Notre-Dame de Paris*)": "Victor Hugo […] on the Bourse: 'If it be the rule that the architecture of a building should be adapted to its function, . . . we can hardly wonder enough at a monument which might equally well be a king's palace, a house of commons, a town hall, a college, a riding school, an academy, a warehouse, a law court, a museum, a barracks, a sepulcher, a temple, or a theater. For the present, it is a stock exchange. . . . It is a stock exchange in France just as it would have been a temple in Greece'" [F6a,1]. Couldn't the same be said of the library?

divisions of human endeavor, each group divided into classes, or subgroups" (Chandler 1990a, 37). Many, if not most, of the fairs and expos that followed were subdivided in similar ways—some more complex, some less—to determine where the buildings would be in relation to each other and what exhibits they would house inside. The categories were subdivided further less than a decade later in 1876 at Philadelphia's Centennial International Exhibition:

> Most items were grouped according to their countries of origin—the United States, Austria, Britain, France, Japan, and so forth. But everything at the Centennial was also classified in one of eight departments (Mining and Metallurgy, Manufactures, Education and Science, Art, Machinery, Agriculture, and Horticulture), subclassified and subclassified again, in a logical scheme that later became a model for the Dewey Decimal System used in libraries. (Heller 1990, 58–59)

The process of subdivision started in the expos directly influenced Dewey and, in turn, libraries all over the world, especially public ones, which tend to prefer Dewey's classification scheme over that of the Library of Congress. The public library as place wouldn't be organized, structured, and displayed as it is without the world's fairs. The same can be said about librarianship as a profession: "The emerging library profession was formally organized as the American Library Association in 1876 at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia" (Oehlerts 1991, 7). The ALA, although the target of much criticism, would become the leading professional organization for librarianship in North America, accrediting library schools and participating in international associations.

The 1878 Exposition universelle in Paris also had a wide-ranging impact in several areas that would affect public library services internationally. Numerous meetings and congresses took place during the Exposition:

> Victor Hugo headed the Congress for the Protection of Literary Property, which led to the eventual formation of international copyright laws. Similar congresses dealt with the problems of protecting international property and of governing the rights to reproductions of works of fine arts. An international postal union was established to facilitate communication by letters among the nations of the world. The International Congress for the Amelioration of the Condition of Blind People led to the worldwide adoption of the braille system of touch reading. (Chandler 1990b, 66–67)

The structure and administration of the modern public library came to depend on international copyright, reproduction rights, postal services (both for the purchasing of books and for services such as interlibrary loans), and braille options. And Hugo, the publishing industry, and the reproduction of works of art would all become central themes of Benjamin's later writings, along with gas lighting, the phantasmagoric properties of which were on full display in the Expo's Trocadéro, whose "4,500 gaslights made every musical performance a visual spectacle" (66). Additionally, the Société Franklin, a US philanthropic group operating in France since 1862 that "furnish[ed] books free of charge or at reduced prices to libraries of all types", "received a gold medal from the Jury International de l'Exposition universelle for its effective work in the domain of popular libraries" (Benoit 2008, 53). Therefore, France's 1878 Exposition helped to expand public library services both domestically and internationally.

Similarly, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago marked a turning point in the North American library as place.[33] The ALA, under the direction of William Poole and Melvil Dewey, hosted a conference for 300 librarians and exhibited a model public library: "The exhibit included a complete small public library collection of 5,000 titles completely catalogued, new equipment, and library supplies. The proceedings of the conference and the *Catalog of the American Library Association Library* were published later by the U.S. Bureau of Education" (Oehlerts 1991, 30). The modern public library was one of many fashionable trends on display for a national and international audience, providing a visible example for the visiting librarians and other members of the public to emulate in their own communities. The influence of the Expo also spread through the architecture of the modern public library. As I noted above, many architects in the United States who made names for themselves by designing for the Columbian Expo would go on to design public libraries. "Almost all public buildings completed between 1895 and 1945 show the French influence on American architects and the World's Fair on our public architecture" (31). The Expo ushered in a new "era of urban planning" (31) and civic projects that saw the construction of numerous central public libraries influenced by

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[33] Exploring this topic in much greater detail is another area for further research.

the trendy Beaux-Arts style of the Expo's White City. Before the Expo, public library buildings were frequently constructed of brick or "dark granites and sandstones"; after the Expo, "light-colored granite, white marble, and light-colored limestone" were the building materials of choice (138). Milwaukee's central library, for example, was finished in 1898 and "modeled after the agricultural building at the Columbian Exposition, designed by McKim, Mean, and White" (41). San Francisco's central building, in the first decade of the twentieth century, was also inspired by the Columbian expo (47). The library was built with funds from Carnegie by George Kelham, Cass Gilbert, and Paul Cret, all of whom attended l'École des Beaux-Arts. Kelham would go on to be "the supervising architect for the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915 held in Golden Gate Park" (48).

This new era of urban planning and civic projects was evident in 1897 during the Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition in Nashville, a city which wanted to "revitalize the notion that [it] was the Athens of the South" (Caudill 1990, 146). This plan was structured around a heavily representative structure: "The architectural centerpiece of the event was the Parthenon building, which housed fine arts exhibits and was a replica of its namesake" (146). During the age of neoclassical Beaux-Arts, Nashville went one step further, constructing an exact replica of one of the most famous classical Greek buildings. The example of Nashville offers an opportunity to trace the influence of a world's fair on the public library up to the present day. Nashville's identity of Athens of the South, revived during the fair, served as a guiding principle over a century later; in 2001, the city's new public library also claimed to resurrect this civic identity anew (Mattern 2007, 36–7). The central, defining feature of this project was the $1.5 million reading room, with its neoclassical barrel-vaulted ceiling (107). Knowingly or unknowingly, this is more a reference to the excess of late nineteenth-century monumental building projects in France and England than it is a direct descendent of classical Greek antiquity. By attempting to rebrand themselves *a second time* using language and references originally conceived for a world's fair, Nashville and its public library demonstrate that a city's supposed "rebirth" might be nothing more than a repacking of the unfulfilled or unrealized promises of high capitalism.

These promises were on full display during Paris's 1900 Exposition universelle, which featured over 83,000 exhibits in "18 subject groups, subdivided further into a total of 121 classes" (Brown 1990, 156). The Expo made full use of a variety of phantasmagoric imperial monuments, some left over from earlier fairs:

> At the base of the Eiffel Tower clustered restaurants and a potpourri of unclassified attractions, including the Panorama du Tour du monde and displays by motoring and climbing clubs. Across the pont d'Iéna and beneath the Palais de Trocadéro, built for the Exposition universelle of 1878 and demolished for that of 1937, sprawled the colonial exhibits […], the exotic harvest of European imperialism. (157)

Twenty-five years later, Paris's Exposition internationale des arts decoratifs et industriels modernes featured a model library alongside galleries and theatres (Matthias 1990, 241). In the following year, 1926, the ALA again had a presence at a world's fair in Philadelphia, 50 years after it was founded at one: "The [ALA] Fiftieth Anniversary Committee has put special emphasis on publicity, has planned and placed magazine articles, prepared and distributed posters and arranged an exhibit on a large scale at the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia" (The Committee on Library Extension of the American Library Association 1926, 100).[34] The 1920s would end with the Exposicion Ibero-Americana in Seville, Spain, putting both the publishing industry and the imperial archive on display: "the Exposición del Libro […] examined the historic role of printing and publishing as a method of exporting Spanish culture. […] Seville also emphasized its role in the discovery of the New World. The Historia de América exhibit displayed authentic maps, documents, and other treasures from the city's famed Archivos de los Indios" (Palmer 1990, 256). Cultures, cities, nation-states, imperial powers, and entire industries were on display alongside the library at the world's fairs and expos in a world with a growing collective desire for the commodities of high capitalism. For Benjamin, desire for commodities was the defining trait of the phantasmagoric modern city. Glass architecture, and the expanded use of glass in general, allowed new forms of display.

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[34] The paragraph continues: "This special effort should be continued beyond the Fiftieth Anniversary Year. The uneven distribution and development of public library facilities demand continuous, large scale, nation-wide publicity." Nearly a century later, public libraries still struggle with issues of identity, publicity, and uneven development.

Benjamin was especially concerned with the commodities of high capitalism being held behind display cases, visible yet inaccessible, in the arcades and the expos. The glass display case found a similar role in nineteenth-century museums and libraries, at the same time that the bookshelf found expanded use in libraries, parlours, and bookstores, which featured prominently in arcades. I explore the topic of display in the modern public library in more depth in the next chapter. For now, I turn to the related example of the parlour.

3.14 The Parlour

The parlour both contributed to and was subjected to the same modern forces that influenced the arcade and the library. The parlour developed according to local or national trends in the various industrial nations (e.g., France, Germany, Russia, the United States, Victorian England) but was also subject to standardizing international forces, such as fashion, mail order catalogues, industrial production of furniture, and the world's fairs. Thad Logan (2001) argues that the Great Exhibition of 1851 "was a spectacle aimed at educating the taste of the middle and working classes" and that masculine "authorities explicitly linked the design on display at the Crystal Palace to that which appeared or might appear in the English home" (47–48). Scobey (1994) attributes a similar influence to fairs—especially the Centennial Exposition of 1876—on furniture, design, and décor in the North American home as part of the "house beautiful" movement: "The fair connected household goods to both the celebration and questioning of American national achievement, both the stabilizing and undoing of Victorian gender ideals" (99).

The nineteenth-century home became a place for the collection of goods connected to social and cultural movements outside of the home. The "accumulation and display of many such objects" (T. Logan 2001, 7) was a uniquely nineteenth-century phenomenon, arising during a time of increased mass production in the mid-1800s and falling out of fashion by the early 1900s. Like the arcade, the parlour, regardless of where it was located, was packed with "bric-a-brac and whatnots, the proliferation of ornament" (8). Benjamin (1978) made a similar observation: "An essential feature of the petit-bourgeois interior, however, was completeness: pictures must cover the walls, cushions the sofa,

covers the cushions, ornaments fill the mantelpiece, colored glass the windows" (108).
Thad Logan (2001) argues that the Victorian parlour was distinct from its French
counterpart because in the former "aesthetics, commodities, and the domestic interior
were intricately related", while for the latter "aesthetic innovation is associated with the
world of the streets" rather than the home (76). Conversely, Benjamin demonstrates that
the modern home in France was a reaction to life in the streets, whereby the interior
became a phantasmagoric shell that protected its occupant from the world while
simultaneously representing it:

> For the private individual, the place of dwelling is for the first time opposed to the
> place of work. The former constitutes itself as the interior. Its complement is the
> office. The private individual, who in the office has to deal with reality, needs the
> domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions. This necessity is all the more
> pressing since he has no intention of allowing his commercial consideration to
> impinge on social ones. In the formation of his private environment, both are kept
> out. From this arise the phantasmagorias of the interior—which, for the private
> man, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together the far away and
> the long ago. His living room is a box in the theater of the world (Benjamin
> [1935] 1999a, 8–9).

This protection, however, was an illusion, reliant as it was on the products of high
capitalism: "Such petit-bourgeois rooms are battlefields over which the attack of
commodity capital has advanced victoriously; nothing human can flourish there again"
(Benjamin 1978, 108–109). For Benjamin, bourgeois isolation in the private, comfortable
home led to the mechanization of the individual removed from the collective (Eiland and
Jennings 2014, 643). The total victory of the petit-bourgeois lifestyle destroys the human,
yet so does the total victory of the collectivity, as in Soviet Moscow, where "only a
residue of petit-bourgeois possessions" (108) remained, "coziness" (109) had been driven
from the home, and the collective's "dwelling place is the office, the club, the street"
(109). The coinciding elevation of the collectivity and denial of the private negate the
public. In the bourgeois interior, Benjamin identified the battle at the heart of modern
life.

3.15 Gendered Spaces

Yet it is also essential to understand the library, the arcade, the parlour, and in fact all of modernity's space as gendered spaces, which view undermines the false authority of the masculine flâneur of Baudelaire, Hessel ([1929] 2017), and Benjamin. Benjamin considers the theoretical role of the modern home from a purely masculine perspective. He only mentions women in connection with the specific living spaces they inhabited, such as his grandmother's apartment in Blumeshof (Benjamin [1938] 2006, 86) or the prostitutes of Steglitzer Strasse (Benjamin [1932] 1978, 12). Benjamin's lone female archetype, the whore, has a largely negative connotation, being associated with the haunting of forgotten spaces in the city and the human body as phantasmagoric commodity; otherwise, his archetypes in the home—the collector, the student, the allegorist—are all male. Benjamin also takes a holistic view of the home as dwelling place, which he metaphorically applies to all of the spaces of modern life, rather than considering the different sorts of living spaces within the home and their unique social, cultural, and gendered functions. More recent feminist critiques of the flâneur (e.g., Elkin 2016; D'Souza and McDonough 2006; Leslie 2006; Wolff 1985) discuss how the arcades—and indeed, most public spaces in Paris and nineteenth-century urban public spaces in general—were places for men, while the home was for women, yet still controlled by men. This "doctrine of separate spheres" under which life was separated "into a public sphere of production inhabited by men and a private sphere of the home presided over by women was a central ideological development of the era" (T. Logan 2001, 24). The differentiation of separate spaces was at the centre of modern life (27). "While the home is gendered feminine in contrast to the masculine workplace, within the home certain rooms—the study, the library, the dining room—were marked 'masculine.' The parlour itself was very distinctly gendered feminine" (31). With the parlour coded as feminine, and the personal library as masculine, to what extent was the newly public library, whether in the home or outside of it, an attempt by women both to end their "sequestration […] in the home" (25) and to undermine masculine spaces? Exploring this very difficult question in more depth is yet another area for further research.

It is also not within the scope of my current project to go back and adjust Benjamin's theories of the arcades. I can, however, consider how two different living spaces in particular—the parlour and the personal library—affected the development of the public library. I believe that the modern public library, especially as it began in the front rooms of private homes opened to the public, was the combination of the feminine parlour and the masculine personal library. Griffis (2013) summarizes Arenson (2007):

> Taking a gendered space perspective, Arenson (2007) explains how social libraries were primarily 'gentlemen's clubs' (p. 57) [*sic*] for young professional men new to larger cities and in need of somewhere to spend their leisure time. Most social libraries were lavishly furnished and ornately decorated, acting as 'showrooms' for library members and fashioned after the private parlours of the elite classes. Arenson argues that the decor of these social libraries greatly influenced the decor and atmosphere of the first public library reading rooms and also played a significant role in influencing gender segregation in early purpose-built public library building design. (10)

The public library as place therefore represents an interplay between gendered spaces, gendered roles within these spaces, and the changing notions related to both, all of which were affected by the growing professionalization of librarianship in the nineteenth century and modern librarianship as a gendered profession.

In the nineteenth century, increasing numbers of women entered the workforce, including the public library field, bringing with them broader struggles related to inequality and marginalization. The men in charge of management and hiring in libraries were well aware of how to manipulate this new workforce for economic reasons:

> By recruiting women and utilizing a marginal labor force, a marginal profession was able to stretch its limited resources and advance its own development. Because women were barred from employment in almost every other profession, they could be attracted to this one on less than equal terms. Inequality, then, was the basic condition for women's employment as librarians. In this sense, libraries employed women to advantage by capitalizing on the segregation which excluded them from other fields. (Schiller 1975, 12–13)

Dewey and others were aware of this, Schiller argues, and exploited it to their own benefit. This was partially due to the not-for-profit nature of the burgeoning public library, which was still coming to terms with its own material limitations: "Operating under severe financial constraints, the library profession sought all possible ways to

maximize its limited resources. The employment of women was one way to do this" (12). Of course, the male managers did not seek to reduce their own wages; instead, they attempted to justify their own positions of power and privilege by elevating their own abilities and diminishing those of the women alongside whom they worked. During the modern public library movement, this manifested itself as the "tension between an idealized version of educated gentility and the relentless push of capitalist modernization, and between the Self-Made Man and his suffragist sister," the impact of which can still be felt in the present day (Keer and Carlos 2014, 72). Roma Harris (1992), in a study that is both contemporary and historical, uses a feminist lens to establish that librarianship's internal and external difficulties regarding professional identity are part of large societal problems that tend to devalue "female-intensive professions" (e.g., librarianship, nursing, social work); at the same time, the push to professionalize such occupations defers to masculine tendencies, authority, power structures, and expectations. That is, even women in the library field end up learning to value the masculine qualities of an increasingly professionalized librarianship. The result is a dialectically complex sense of gendered professionalism: "The trend in librarianship has been to counter the ill effects of being a feminized occupation with a strong dose of [masculine] professionalism. […] Thus librarianship resists easy categorization as either a 'feminine' or a 'masculine' pursuit while being claimed (and sometimes denigrated) as both" (Keer and Carlos 2014, 76). This issue, like many others in present-day librarianship, can be traced back to the modern public library movement and broader struggles and social movements of the nineteenth century.

3.16 Social Movements

During the modern period, parlours, arcades, and libraries, which all were formerly influenced by largely local social forces, became modernized and standardized. Parlours, once designed to reflect the individuality of residents, were increasingly decorated with items from mail order catalogues, following the latest imperialism-inspired fashion and design trends. Arcades, once simply covered alleyways in a vernacular style that connected neighbourhood streets, were also influenced by fashion trends, as well as becoming architectural marvels that served nation-building objectives. Early public

libraries were established in community clubs or in public rooms in private homes; the nineteenth century saw the international rise of professionalization in librarianship and the spread of Carnegie libraries. This was also when the nation-state consolidated its power through "the standing army, the bureaucracy, the police, the clergy, the judiciary" (Ross 1988, 24). For Marx, according to Ross: "The state is not merely an instrument of the bourgeoisie; its detachment from civil society, its status as a distinct organism, is attained only *through and by means of* the social division of labor" (24). The public library, I believe, was not one of the "organs of centralized state power" (24); rather, it emerged at the same time, in response to the same social forces, as an organ of *decentralized* state power. It was not entirely distinct from civil society, yet it still mediated civil society and the bourgeois state.[35]

An example can be found in *Books: A Guide to Good Reading*, which John Millar, the Deputy Minister of Education for Ontario, published in 1897 for the province's Department of Agriculture. In what was a common refrain for library reformers at the time, Millar appealed to capitalistic, moralistic, and religious values to argue in favour of increased funding for public schools in rural areas:

> It is in the best interests of the State to help the poor boy who is striving to "climb" to a position of trust and usefulness. If the children of the so-called "working classes" desire to attend a High School every impulse of patriotism, not to speak of Christianity, should encourage their aspirations. Fortunately the temple of learning may be reached by more avenues than one and entered by more than one door. For people who will read good books there is always ready access. Young persons who make a judicious selection of reading matter may improve in intelligence and morals. (iv)

The reformed public library becomes a nationalistic project and a key instrument of the centralizing nation-state: "A free country can exist only when its people are intelligent. The State has a right to adopt such measures as are necessary for its preservation, and there the State is warranted in making suitable provision for education. […] The function of the public library is to advance intelligence among all classes of citizens" (60). Millar

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[35] This topic deserves to be explored in much more depth.

hoped to promote reading among rural children, specifically those living and working on farms. He attempted to show how literacy can have a directly beneficial impact on agricultural practices as well as children's social and educational lives. This was part of what Ennis (1965) called "a peculiar cultural imperialism" in the modern public library movement: the idea that "everyone should read good books; everyone should develop his capacities to the fullest; and everyone should be educated, freer, and above all, more refined" (29). Like other books from this time (and ours), Millar's demonstrates this peculiar cultural imperialism by arguing that there are harmful books that waste time and good books that elevate their readers. Relieving boredom, therefore, is associated with the capitalist myth of progress, which, Benjamin would argue, only increases collective boredom.[36]

3.17 Publishing

The publishing industry, that steady source of library materials, was one of major ways that people tried to relieve their boredom in the modern era. This reliance on books as commodities can be seen in arcades, parlours, and libraries alike. For Benjamin, "commercialized leisure is at the core of the metropolis's compulsion" (Gretton 2006 in D'Souza and McDonough 2006, 107). Benjamin devoted large sections of *The Arcades Project* to tracing the rise of the publishing industry, the modern novel, and the growth of colportage, as they related to the phantasmagoria of the arcades. Arcades, as thoroughfares and destinations, were places where people could quickly borrow or purchase a book or spend extended time reading and writing in the various booksellers, reading rooms, writing rooms, and subscription libraries. Geist (1983) includes "[r]reading rooms, where books and out-of-town newspapers could be read for a fee" among his list of "attractions and establishments [that] can be found in most arcades"

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[36] There was (and is) revolutionary potentiality in this boredom, however: "Not only is change to the status quo often accompanied by the destruction of libraries, libraries themselves have served counter-hegemonic functions, incubating the development of controversial and confrontational ideas and actions. Marx, for instance, extensively used the British Museum, a symbol of the temporal hegemony of the most industrialized nation of the time period, to write *Capital*, his most revolutionary work" (Bales 2015, 121). One could substitute Benjamin, la Bibliothèque nationale, and *The Arcades Project* for Marx, the British Museum, and *Capital.*

(110). Benjamin quotes Muret[37]: "the Galeries de Bois were the center of the new book trade" [A2a,7]. Geist (1983, 459) provides more context by quoting Balzac (1893):

> The place was occupied solely by the shops of booksellers and publishers (poetry, politics, and prose) and by those of milliners. At night the women of the town appeared there. Novels and books of all kinds, new and old reputations, political plots and counterplots, the lies of publishers and booksellers all flourished there. There, too, novelties were sold to a public that persisted in not buying them elsewhere. In the course of a single evening thousands of copies have been sold of a pamphlet by Paul-Louis Courier or the "Adventures of the Daughter of a King" [.…] As soon as the crowd poured in, the gratuitous readings at the booksellers' counters by penniless young men hungry for literature began. The shopmen whose business it was to watch the books thus exposed for sale charitably allowed these poor fellows to turn the leaves. If the book happened to be […] two hundred pages, […] two visits would enable the reader to devour it. In those days circulating-libraries did not exist; it was necessary to buy a book in order to read it; and this was why novels were sold in numbers that now seem fabulous. (143–150)[38]

Arcades were the first site where mass-produced works of literature could be reliably browsed by the urban collective. The circulating library was devised as a way to profit from those individuals who would take multiple trips to a bookseller to read a book in full. In addition to the Galeries de Bois, other notable examples include the writing and reading rooms of Berlin's Kaisergalerie (Geist 1983, 153), Brussels's Passage du Nord (230), Newcastle's Royal Arcade (442); the Passage de l'Opéra's reading room and bookstore (485); and the library of Chicago's Pullman Arcade in the rail magnate's company town (237).[39]

3.18 Subscription Libraries

Reading became a public phenomenon, part of the phantasmagoria of commodity consumption. Like the flâneur, the reader wanted to see and to be seen: "these modernising forces also created spatial change and new outlets for art in the shape of

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[37] "Théodore Muret, *L'Histoire par la théâtre*, vol. 2, pp. 225–226."

[38] Page numbers in Balzac cited in Geist.

[39] I am not aware of a comprehensive study of libraries in the arcades. This is yet another area for further research.

galleries, museums, railway stations and public libraries, and contributed to formal development within literary narratives as well as changes in the physical appearance of books. […] New social spaces enabled purchasers to read, and be seen to read, their new acquisitions" (Hammond 2006, 9). People began to read different books in different contexts. Popular books bought or borrowed from railway stalls, for example, might have been a way to pass the time on a train, but they were not seen as appropriate to display in the home (74–76). In Britain, circulating libraries became so popular that buying books went out of fashion; in the United States, with its more dispersed population and fewer circulating libraries, owning books was the trend (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 13–14). In the Parisian arcades, lending libraries, however ubiquitous, were a form of luxury: "Passage Vivienne the 'solid' arcade, in contrast to the Passage des Panoramas. No luxury shops in the former. Businesses in the Passage des Panoramas: Restaurant Véron, Marquis Chocolates, lending library, music shop, caricaturist, Théâtre des Variétés (tailors, bootmakers, haberdashers, wine merchants, hosiers)" [E°,29]. Because lending libraries or reading rooms (see, for example, the reworked version of this passage in A2,1) were paid or subscription services, they were seen as indulgences, as less "solid". It seems fair to say that the modern public library movement gave the library more substance, made it more a part of the everyday lives of people in the city, even though the library was moved from the arcade—an idealized thoroughfare—into a standalone building.

It was from this assortment of commercialized reading spaces that the modern public library arose. This was a time of ambiguity, uncertainty, and overlap between the various kinds of libraries. The for-profit reading room gave way to its public service equivalent; Berlin's municipal reading room, with its iron architecture, was the "proper domain" for Benjamin ([1938] 2006, 94) during his childhood. "Libraries for the people in Paris grew out of small 'cabinets de lecture' and private libraries" (Benoit 2008, 49). Parisian public libraries initially served as models for Anglo-American libraries, which in turn re-influenced French libraries (55). If the precursor to the French public library was the private library, in Britain, it was the circulating library. New public libraries, usually underfunded as they struggled to demonstrate their usefulness and relevance, used circulating libraries to supplement their stocks. "[T]hey were able to borrow a certain

number of new, high-demand but short life-span books each year, thus borrowing alongside them, of course, the censorship and moral narrowness for which these [circulating] libraries were famous" (Hammond 2006, 30). In North America, libraries frequently started as reading rooms operated by some society (e.g., Salvation Army, Odd Fellows, Good Templars, Women's Christian Temperance Union) or at least in their building, perhaps moving to various storefront and semi-public locations, before becoming standardized as municipal projects, Carnegie libraries, or both (see Russo 2008). Many early public libraries operated out of rooms in personal homes, open either at specific times during the week or simply whenever the residents were at home. Before the public library was the bourgeois-parlour-made-exterior made interior again, it was, in many cases, simply a bourgeois parlour, opened to the public.

3.19 Discussion

This was the ambiguous, complicated, multiform state of the library as it became public during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this section, I focus on aspects of the movement that can be analyzed through a Benjaminian lens, rather than offering a complete history. The history of the public library movement has been covered quite fully elsewhere in the library and information science literature (e.g., Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw 2009; Bostwick [1921] 1968; Bruce 1994; Green 1913; M. Harris 1995; Martin 1993; Shera [1949] 1974; Van Slyck 1995). The public library movement was not a unified, defined program, but rather a decentralized process that was "part of a loosely connected series of social movements ranging from the struggle for women's rights to vote and enter the work force to a general reformist and evangelical belief in education and uplift" (Ennis 1965, 27). As the movement continued, priorities and similarities began to develop between libraries: "education was the primary goal and that other goals such as providing information and recreational reading were less important. Binding together these goals was a prime article of the library faith, that the library must serve everyone in the community" (28). The public library changed rapidly during the modern public library movement, according to Flexner's (1927) contemporary guide to circulation work, published in the same year that Benjamin started working on his *Passagenarbeit*. Flexner describes the public library as an institution coming to terms

with urbanization, a changing society, a greatly expanded publishing industry, new library technologies, and an increased emphasis on public service to the entire community:

> The scope of library service has spread so rapidly that it seems but a short step from a simple organization of the last generation to a complex institution reaching out for every possible relation to community life [….] Librarians with imagination are questioning traditional limitations, are regarding critically their whole field of activity with an insistence that promises a revaluation of numerous phases of library work (180)

Three interrelated aspects of the public library as place that changed due to this focus on community life were open access to the stacks (as I mentioned earlier), relative location of items on the shelves, and the checking out or "charging" of materials. If the public library was going to be a community space, open to all visitors, funded by taxes, then it made sense to allow patrons access to the formerly closed stacks. If members of the public would be handling and removing materials, then it was no longer practical to devote a specific location on the shelf for each individual item, since items would be leaving and re-entering the library at unpredictable intervals:

> The *fixed location* of books in old libraries gave every volume its own place on the shelf, which stood empty when the book was out, and to which the volume was returned. The *relative location* of a book in connection with other books in the same class is now regarded as the important factor in shelving. Books are usually kept in order by shifting them to fill vacancies on the shelves, as well as to make space for the return of any volume and for new books added to any class. (232–233)

In other words, during the public library movement, order in the library became a shifting, relative process *at the item level*; however, this was made possible by an increasing devotion to rational efficiency *at the institutional level*. This required call numbers to define the location of items relative to each other, and it also required circulation practices that made it easier both to keep track of items that had been borrowed and to return items to the shelves when they were returned. The public librarian went from being the guardian of books to their distributor: "From the days when a librarian's chief ambition was presumably to keep every book in its place on the shelves, the effect of ever closer contact between librarian and borrower has been to liberalize

book distribution by simplifying procedure" (73). Yet this community function was made possible by, and led to even more, uniform processes across libraries; like many developments during the modern age, including the arcades themselves, the public library movement standardized and reified over time. For example, Flexner notes six different charging systems that had been used in the modern public library (73), one of which, the Newark system, was the predominant system of stamped slips in each book that is still used in many libraries, even with the rise of the integrated library system.

Both cataloguing and circulation—along with other aspects of library work, such as administration—became dependent on processes developed outside of the local, individual library. "During the nineteenth century librarians began in earnest to define the principles governing the organization and management of libraries" (Lerner 2009, 171). Even when cataloguing was done at the local level, it came to rely on classification systems that were highly specialized and centralized:

> Anthony Panizzi's 92 rules for the printed books of the British Museum (1841) and Charles Coffin Jewett's 39 rules for the Smithsonian Institution's library (1853) […] greatly influenced the more complex "Rules for a Dictionary Catalog," which Charles Ammi Cutter published in 1876. This code of 205 rules was abridged in the American Library Association's *Condensed Rules for an Author and Title Catalog* (1883). (178)

The Dewey Decimal Classification was also introduced in 1876, becoming by far the most prevalent system used by public libraries. That was the same year that Dewey started the Library Bureau, a company that provided supplies, furniture, and equipment to libraries throughout North America and Britain. Many of the tools used by circulation staff—such as date stamps, book slips, ledgers, library cards, stationery, filing cabinets, service desks—were produced by Dewey's company. The public library became wholly dependent on the marketplace, not just for books and other items in the collection, but for the objects used in the library as an everyday workplace.

Is it possible to discuss the modern public library without discussing Dewey and Carnegie? Is this the legacy they chose to leave through a universal system and thousands

of monumental buildings? Even I can't seem to get away from them, although I have purposefully avoided a broad summary of the Carnegie library program.[40] Is this continued focus on such men in the historical study of our profession an inherent rejection of Benjamin's rag heap of history—in other words, a negation of an everyday history of the library? The examples of towns that rejected Carnegie grants (Martin 1993) demonstrate the tensions present when Carnegie's world inserted itself into local communities, into people's everyday lives, and the oftentimes constructive resistance that followed. A renewed appreciation of the public library in everyday life must be accompanied by a desire to rescue everyday histories from the rag heap, to resist conflating our own everyday lives with the mythical ones of Carnegie and Dewey.

> Yet Dewey makes quite clear that attacking any part of the [Decimal] system is also an attack on a great effort to systematize, centralize, and organize; in other words, to attack Dewey's efficient, practical, useful system is to attack modernization itself. The very people who are excluded from his system, however, or whose identities are questionably defined by it, and who might want to challenge the kind of knowledge about themselves that might be generated by it, are the very people—primarily women and minorities—who are being accused (by self-proclaimed modernists such as Dewey) of not embracing the modern. (Roffman 2010, 73)

Then let us attack!

Library spaces were a conservative counterpart to the revolutionary violence that swept through much of the West during the mid-nineteenth century: "At the same time that village reading rooms offered a retreat from the workaday world, communities and nations across Europe were awakening to a need for that world's transformation. […] In many places, barricades were constructed, arms were taken up, and revolt took violent form" (Schnapp and Battles 2014, 107). In Paris, revolution against the bourgeois way of life took place in the street, which was the bourgeois parlour made exterior. In the public library, the bourgeois parlour remained an interior—albeit reconfigured—space, protected from and supressing social unrest. The modern public library as dream house supported the phantasmagoria of high capitalism by assimilating immigrants and, in the

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[40] For such summaries, see Bobinski (1969) and Van Slyck (1995).

tradition of the mechanics institutes that inspired the world's fairs, indoctrinating workers to the demands of industry and the market:

> Originating in the subscription library, an institution established by the upper middle classes for their own use, [the public library] became transformed into a vehicle for shaping the thought and behavior of the lower classes of society. Much of its evolution in Great Britain and the United States was as a way of socializing immigrants, whether internal or external, to the needs of an urban industrial society. (Lerner 2009, 125)

The legacy of the parlour meant that borrowers as well as purchasers of books navigated complex social and economic relations with their reading. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a hierarchy of lending services developed: "the rich had their books delivered to their houses, the upper-middle class purchased their books from upscale bookshops, the middle class paid fees to borrow their books from private circulating libraries, and the legions of the working class used public libraries" (Gorman 2015, 63). Those who could afford to furnish parlours included bookcases to demonstrate that they didn't have to rely on the public library for their reading. This "new emphasis on the middle-class home as a display case and reading as a key to social advancement" led to the popularity of "the cheap classic series", which the consumer could purchase "to announce that one knew enough to value 'culture' sufficiently to want to own and display it rather than borrow it from a Free Library" (Hammond 2006, 113). The institutional urban public library, founded with upper-class funds to support middle-class values, was frequented by neither. Eventually, people from all classes felt alienated by and in the public library: "But by the time its adoption was widespread the public library had become, more often than not, an architecturally repressive and logistically prohibitive symbol of civic pride patronised overwhelmingly by the lower-middle classes. In fact, it was a space that ended up alienating large sections of the population whom it had been intended to serve" (24). One of the ways that librarians tried to alleviate this alienation was library extension, which was popular in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Library extension, at its most basic and in its earliest form, was the effort to bring books, other materials, and other services to patrons in areas that did not have easy access to

physical library spaces. Bruce (2019) defines it as "the promotion and supply of books and assistance to people or groups beyond a public library's regular jurisdiction" (14). In the city, this meant providing resources to neighbourhoods that didn't have easy access to the main library. Through library extension, materials—in the form of deposit collections, travelling libraries, and bookmobiles—entered homes, clubs, factories, orphanages, and the other sites of modern collective life. As library extension and the public library movement both standardized, urban public libraries transitioned from deposit collections to stations to sub-branches to, finally, branches, wherein the neighbourhood library as place took its decisive form as a defined, separate, self-contained institution. The library no longer entered the neighbourhood; the neighbourhood had to enter the library. This mentality has carried forward to the present day as librarians continue to adhere to the traditional outreach model, with its emphasis on promoting the library, rather than a community-led approach designed to break down the public library's physical and ideological barriers to access (see Pateman and Williment 2013; Working Together Project 2008).

Benjamin's focus on urbanity demonstrates that during the modern era urban areas were becoming increasingly differentiated from rural ones. The urban—or even small town—monumental public library as dream house was one of the features that defined the city as distinct from the countryside, which likely had a vernacular public library if it had one at all. In cities, the public library felt like a "natural and almost inevitable" (Joeckel 1946, 12) development—and therefore part of the myth of progress. "In the more sparsely populated rural areas, on the other hand, the organization of public libraries has been correspondingly more difficult" (12). In rural areas, library extension was often the work of state, provincial, or county libraries that travelled to remote areas, sent books by mail, or devised other ways to bring materials to people who had no local libraries. Rural library extension "was fuelled by the value of equity in remedying disparities between urban and rural libraries" (Bruce 2019, 14). I would go so far as to suggest that urban and rural public libraries represent fundamentally different places, even though they might have many of the same services. This was recognized by Joeckel (1946) in his summary of library extension work: "Any broad view of the geography of library organization in America makes it clear that the American system has failed, in a large proportion of

cases, to unite urban and rural areas into effective library units. For historical or governmental reasons, many cities have been content to go their own way quite separate from the surrounding rural areas" (20). The discrepancy between rural and urban library services was indeed staggering. According to an ALA report from the 1920s (The Committee on Library Extension 1926), out of a combined population in the US and Canada of 114,499,103: "3,415,418 urban people, 6 per cent of the entire urban population, are without public library service. 47,054,168 rural people, 83 per cent of the entire rural population, are without public library service. 7 per cent of the people without public library service live in urban communities; 93 per cent live in the open country or in communities of less than 2,500 population"[41] (11). Such statistics, however, couldn't reveal the entire picture of how a library operated at the local level: "The size of the library collection is an indication of possible service, though it is decidedly less significant than income or quality of staff. Statistics unfortunately cannot distinguish between the live, fresh collection, in good physical condition, and the run down, dead one. A library collection cannot be static, it must be constantly renewed, as books wear out under frequent use, and new books are published" (21). Library materials themselves, in the rural library as well as the underfunded urban one, became the "sheath of rigid, deadened matter" in the "dream house of the collective" (Miller 2006, 257). The reverse was true in libraries, especially large urban ones, with steady funding sources, as they could constantly renew their collections—choosing, of course, from the newest, most fashionable books as commodities sold to the dreaming collective. "The inequalities in the quantity and quality of library service in the United States today are notorious. We have the best library service in the world and almost the worst" (Joeckel 1946, 10). In dialectical fashion, North American public libraries, as the best and worst in the world, represented the best and worst aspects of modern life, as did the arcades, museums, and other dream houses that existed alongside them.

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[41] It is almost amazing, in our time, to think that any settlement with a population over 2,500 was considered an urban community.

Monumental libraries—from the national library to the central branch to the small-town Carnegie—were architecturally designed to awe, to inspire, to amaze. The one-room rural library tried to approximate a similar reaction through its materials and the vague promise of the civilizing and economic benefits of good reading and good taste, defined according to middle- and upper-class standards. The modern public library as place has become both a physical embodiment and a symbolic reflection of a narrow worldview that it also helped to define (Templeton 2008). For Geist (1983), the Town Hall passageway in Winterthur, Switzerland, "represents the destiny of many arcades: they will either be torn down or exist in the future as architectural monuments" (569). This was also the destiny of the public library movement's structures; those that survive have become architectural monuments to a historical process of standardization and a distinct building type—the public library—defined by both their dream houses qualities and their civic functions.

Arcades, when they first appeared, could contain the whole world, or any part of the world. They were attractive as destinations precisely because they were unknown, magical, individual yet universal. It was only when they started to be both maximized and standardized—as purpose-built municipal projects, or targets of private speculation, or, later, department stores or shopping malls—that they began their decline, while the most notable and well positioned, literally and figuratively, held on. The modern public library has a somewhat different trajectory. Its precursor was the vernacular library, but it spread, rather than declined, as it became a standardized project of modernity. It is only in recent years—local history collections, Friends groups, and the like notwithstanding—that libraries have been forced to individualize, because of the wide range of identities and service possibilities available, the ever-increasing influence of the internet and digital technologies, and the drive to stay current and relevant, however vaguely defined. And of course, librarians and library and information science researchers alike see near limitless potential in these technologies to achieve finally the Universal Book, the Universal Library, the World Brain, the "universal museum and […] the total library" (Lefebvre 2014, 632), or some similar utopian dream, yet the arcades provide a cautionary tale against maximizing and standardizing the projects of modernity. Otherwise we run the risk of only the most notable and well positioned large urban public libraries being able

to hold on, to "survive this age" (Benjamin [1931] 1978, 278),[42] albeit in glorious fashion.

The flâneur walked through cities and arcades that were both parlours and streets, and, as a result, neither. Early modern public libraries, in the transition from personal to communal parlours, were also both and neither. Personal libraries became public through the gradual involvement of the community, yet now we are faced with the "*problem* of community" (Miller 2006, 257; emphasis mine). Our contemporary public libraries must *use* the community to justify projects, rather than naturally being justified as community projects. Through this inversion, the public library is no longer both *and* neither communal and/nor personal; it is simply neither. It has become a self-perpetuating project. The public library is now completely interior, even—or especially—when constructed as the simulacrum of an arcade. A Benjaminian dialectical approach can bring the public library's self-negation to a standstill. That is my goal for the remaining chapters.

3.20 Postscript: The Public Library & the Shopping Mall

Now is a time of apparent decline or decay for both public libraries (depending on whom you ask) and shopping malls (everyone would agree). While many proponents of neoliberalism would welcome the demise of the public library, and while opponents of neoliberalism would do the same for the shopping mall, both occurrences would have social consequences. Opponents of neoliberalism, for example, would do well to note that the loss of any public space, even "quasi-public" or "privatized" space, is a loss of potential "warm knots of community [that] can and do disrupt the cool smooth flow of economic transaction" (Lewis 1990, 134). "Spatial practice supersedes conceived space. People form attachments to malls and use mall space in ways that exceed and extend corporate plans for community" (Parlette and Cowen 2011, 797). This debate, and the potential transformative power in subverting capitalist spaces, is reminiscent of the declining arcades. Shopping malls and public libraries, those dinosaurs of the post-

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[42] From Benjamin's "Karl Kraus" essay. For more on this, see Chapter 4 below.

imperial era of capitalism, however much they are in decline, still dot our metropolitan landscapes, displaying commodities on their shelves and walls [see R2,3].

The arcade's function was replaced by—yet lived on within—first the department store and later the shopping mall. The department store is, at its most basic, an arcade with exterior, but no interior, walls. The shopping mall is an arcade enclosed and expanded in every direction. It is no surprise that Gilloch (2002), presenting an argument familiar in the scholarly literature on *The Arcades Project*, says that Benjamin's work "clearly has a particular relevance for us today, ensconced in the last shopping complexes and mega-malls, the architectural heirs of the arcades" (138). Any number of architectural or sociological critiques of "shopping mall culture" (or whatever variant phrase might be used) could certainly convince one of the negative social and cultural impacts of the shopping mall and its related elements of consumerism, isolation, and exclusion (e.g., Voyce 2006). Yet these critiques are rarely as nuanced as Benjamin's historical materialism and rarely offer the path to redemption as quickly as Benjamin's metaphorical crossroads (see Chapter 2 above).

Like the flâneur who was seen without fully participating in the capitalist excess in the arcades, other examples of communities forming on the margins of capitalism present themselves. Of course, there is Habermas's ([1962] 1989) public sphere, with its emphasis on intellectual exchange and the written word. Benjamin reminds us that newspapers were not always available to everyone, necessitating sharing in public spaces: "Because of the rarity of newspapers, they were read by groups in the cafés. Otherwise, they were available only by subscription, which cost around eighty francs per year. In 1824, the twelve most widely circulating newspapers had, together, some 56,000 subscribers. For the rest, both the liberals and the royalists were concerned to keep the lower classes away from the newspaper" [U4a,7]. More recently, in a study of community building among teens and the elderly in a New England shopping mall, Lewis (1990) observes "community through exclusion and illusion", to quote the article's title. Bookchin (via Biehl and Bookchin 1998), who maligns "shopping mall culture", points out that the exchange of capital was historically a fringe activity, at the edges of societies

and cultures. I wonder, has the formation of community become the fringe activity in the age of capitalism?

Recall that Aragon and Benjamin both found transformative magic in the arcades; Lewis's (1990) focus on illusion is therefore relevant. Mall developers and managers designed the mall space in a dazzling fashion "to create the warm *illusion* of community, while at the same time quietly stacking the deck against its actual development" (123). This led to a collective mass, or "collectivities and crowds" of shoppers rather than community groups with "common ties […] and social interactions" (122). Yet among the shoppers, Lewis did locate close-knit, albeit somewhat itinerant, communities in two groups of "non-shoppers": teens and the elderly. "Ironically, then, the real community ties that do exist in the mall have little to do with its economic function" (133). Both groups congregated on the fringes of the mall, in spaces they could carve out for themselves, "provid[ing] a visually exciting and socially validating backdrop" (135), in the same way that the flâneur formed part of the crowd while standing outside of it. The connection to the flâneur is even more direct in the mall walker, a fixture of any shopping mall in North America. Many of Lewis's elderly interviewees arrived at the mall early every morning—before the stores opened—to do as many unimpeded laps as possible. Teens and seniors alike reported, in language that recalls both the arcade and the public library, that "the mall is centrally located, easy to get to, safe and climate controlled" with amenities that "can also be used by the non-shopper" (135). The inside was the outside, the street was the house.

It is not insignificant that the modern-day flâneur can be anyone, rather than able-bodied young (presumably white) men. "Local residents used the halls of the mall as a walking route in the cold Canadian winter months and mothers would spend time with their children in strollers on benches, watching people go by" (Parlette and Cowen 2011, 795). Rahder and McLean (2013) found that newcomer women in Toronto had positive experiences in shopping mall based on the walkability, restrooms, and HVAC, yet had negative reactions to the "sheer consumerism" and expensive items they couldn't afford

(156). Yet unlike the flâneur, who was "always in full possession of his individuality" (Fournel quoted in [M6,5][43]), these women formed communities at the margins of capitalism: "When public space is inadequate, immigrant women create other ways of meeting their social needs by carving out their own spaces within privatized realms" (Rahder and McLean 2013, 157). The present-day public library, of course, hopes to be one of the public spaces that can meet these needs, and some public libraries have turned to the "privatized realm" of the shopping mall as a site.

In a fitting way, the two most important public spaces to Benjamin's work on *Das Passagenarbeit*—the library and the arcade—come together in the form of the public library located within a shopping mall. They are situated there for a variety of reasons, usually due to convenience, ease of access, or attempting to reach a larger or different crowd of potential patrons. Sometimes municipal councils will require developers to put community space in a mall for the project to receive zoning approval, and the public library is a frequent choice (Forsyth 2006). Since the developer is focused on profit, though, the library is sometimes placed in less desirable, low-traffic locations within the mall, and it also does not always receive adequate maintenance support. While many mall managers believe, as one put it, "anything that has more people staying longer in a shopping centre is better for a shopping centre" (84), Forsyth still cautions that public libraries should be placed in shopping centres not necessarily in all cases, but rather "if it is the most appropriate location for the community" (84). Morris and Brown (2004), in a similar study, report: "As one shop manager said, the library attracted 'more lookers than shoppers', but it was then 'up to the shops to convert the lookers into shoppers'" (132). The present-day flâneur, then, while still an observer, can yet be converted into an active participant.

Both libraries and shopping malls, like the arcades before them, tend to adopt new technologies, services, and even buildings too quickly, before they are fully realized, operational, or stable. Are public library buildings, spaces, objects, and services

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[43] Benjamin's citation: "Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* (Paris, 1858), p. 263 ('L'Odyssée d'un flâneur dans les rues de Paris')."

predestined to become obsolete, mere ruins, before they are even completed? Using the figure of the flâneur in the arcade and the present-day flâneur in the shopping mall, public library workers would be wise to consider the library as an institution on the fringe of—rather than vital to the machinations of—modern capitalism. Just as communities develop within the space of the shopping mall, so do they within the public library, on the margins of capitalism (e.g., Pyati and Kamal 2012). Yet public librarians are usually concerned with measurable patron activity, with the visible and quantifiable "community", regardless of how cohesive it is. Instead I ask: What communities form on the margins of public library services? In what ways can these communities awaken the library as place?

Chapter 4

4   The Exhibition of the Library[44]

In this two-part chapter, I undertake a contemporary theoretical consideration of display in the public library as place, informed by Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image and theories of display.

4.1   Library Display

The first part of this chapter is an examination of Borgwardt's treatment of the display of objects in the library through a Benjaminian critical theoretical lens, addressing the research question: What does a dialectical approach, grounded in Benjamin's historical materialism and informed by the nineteenth century, reveal about contemporary issues related to display in the public library? While answering this question involves some broader considerations related to architecture and physical aspects of the library building, in the first half of this chapter I am particularly interested in the ways in which the display of objects influences their perception and use. After discussing relevant aspects of Benjamin's historical materialism, particularly as displayed in *The Arcades Project,* and framing library materials as commodities, I use this as a lens for a close reading of Stephanie Borgwardt's *Library Display* (1970). After contrasting Benjaminian interpretations of library display in the "broadest sense" and the "narrower sense" (after Borgwardt 1970), I offer some lessons for contemporary public library services and the study of library as place. In the end, I argue that the collection and display of commodities, while directly appropriating and therefore reinforcing elements of capitalism in the library, also reinforces the phantasmagoric elements of the contemporary public library as place, including the revolutionary potentiality of an awakening, in the Benjaminian sense.

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[44] "on the occasion of the exhibition of the library and the historical works of the city of Paris" [A3,7]

Display is linked to publicity (e.g. Franklin 1985), to the publicness of the public library. There is no shortage of tips and tricks in the trade literature on library displays and exhibits aimed at working librarians, yet these specific topics have received relatively little critical or theoretical examination in Library and Information Science scholarship. In a crowd of practical guides to "effective" library displays or exhibits, Borgwardt (1970) provides one of the few (if only) sources to discuss "the theory of library display": "Library display work may be defined as library art, as contrasted with library science. This is an aspect of librarianship which deals with intangibles, because its appeal is to the imagination and to the emotions" (6). Following Borgwardt's (1970) lead, I consider *library display* to be concerned primarily with objects. I also employ her dual conception of library display: "Firstly, there is display in its broadest sense, in which the *library itself* is an exhibition of books[45] [….] Secondly, there is display in the narrower sense, in which books and materials on *some central theme* are collected together, and arranged in a prominent place for a short time, in order to attract the attention of readers" (6). Library display "in its broadest sense" involves the display of books and other materials on shelves, stacks, or other relatively fixed or permanent units. Library display "in the narrower sense" deals mainly with library display*s*, exhibits, exhibitions, signage, and posters. *A* library display (or library display*s*, in the plural) is a distinct, standalone assembly of library items or promotional materials, apart from but in conjunction with the shelves or stacks. Library exhibits are larger than displays, usually housed in separate rooms, foyers, galleries, or the like. Exhibitions are made up of more than one exhibit. Library exhibits bring in people who don't normally visit the library, the "nonusers". Library displays target people who are already there, the "users". These subsets of library display are separate from, but naturally bound together with, the display (or exhibition) of the library building and its spaces; this even broader form of display is the focus of the second part of this chapter.

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[45] And numerous other types of items in the collection.

4.1.1   Benjamin's Theories of Display

The arcades were a site for modern forms of advertising, shop windows, glass display cases, where commodity display went hand in hand with the phantasmagoria of commodity fetishism. Benjamin offers a bleak description of the modern city transformed by commodity display: "An impenetrable chain of mountains, no, caverns of commodities—that was 'the town'" (Benjamin 1978, 40). This cavernous quality comes from the primacy of commercial objects in display windows and domestic and public spaces: "the poverty of interiors, enslaved and enslaving objects" (180). Modern life in the city condenses, shrinks, alienates: "Present-day man; a reduced man, chilled in a chilly environment" (235). In the nineteenth century, exhibitions and displays were among the main means of sharing the world of commodities with the urban collective. Yet display at that time was not the "highly specialized technique" that it became in the 1920s: "Until this time the idea of displaying merchandise was to cram as much as possible into a window to give an idea of the range of stock which a store carried" (Borgwardt 1970, 1–2). Display in the nineteenth century attempted to overwhelm the onlooker, who wandered through the caverns. This environment is in no small way influenced by the proliferation of images, advertisements, moving pictures, recorded music: "The entertainment industry facilitates this by elevating people to the level of commodities. They submit to being manipulated while enjoying their alienation from themselves and others" (Benjamin 1978, 152). The public library, displayed in the modern city as well as today, resists but is still always at risk of becoming one chilly cavern among many, beholden to and obsessed by its things, one more place of overwhelming phantasmagoric amusement.[46]

Recall that Benjamin, when describing the literary montage of *The Arcades Project*, wrote: "I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. […] But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow […] to come into their own: by making use of them" [N1a,8]. Benjamin used slightly different phrasing in an earlier draft: "But the rags, the refuse—

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[46] The public library, however, has a reputation of being a better place to spend one's time than the street. This, of course, is up for debate.

these I will not describe but put on display" <Oᵒ,36>. Display and use are intimately entwined; there can't be one without the other. Indeed, montage, "the art of citing without quotation marks" [N1,10], is most effective when "assembl[ing] large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components" [N2,6]. Display—of texts, of images, of history—leads to what Benjamin variously called the dialectical image, dialectics at a standstill, or the now of recognizability, "to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event" [N2,6]. This "standstill" reveals the catastrophe of the status quo [N9a,1], destroys the myth of progress, and leads to a moment of awakening, in which the individual or collective can awaken from the "dream-filled sleep" [K1a,8] of history—more specifically, from the dream state of modern capitalism. Thesis V of Benjamin's ([1940] 2019) "Theses on the Philosophy of History" states: "The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. […] For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably" (198). Every moment is dialectical, for recognizing threats from the past in the present is the only way to realize future liberation. This is the revolutionary potentiality of display: the hidden power of every image, every moment, to reveal the entirety of the historical process, containing both what leads to the standstill and what can happen after it.

4.1.2   "Broadest Sense"

These cornerstones of Benjamin's historical method as explicated in Convolute N provide a starting point to understand how library display in the broadest sense presents and indeed creates an ever-changing narrative, through the ordering and display of books. The library collection is a literary montage, presented physically, containing and expressing the lives of innumerable library workers, patrons, publisher, authors, and other creators. The collection presents its own narrative, developing "rung by rung" [N2,4], because the books are *displayed*, and the narrative depends on how, where, why, by whom they are. "All historical knowledge can be represented in the image of balanced scales, one tray of which is weighted with what has been and the other with knowledge of what is present. Whereas on the first the facts assembled can never be too humble or too

numerous, on the second there can be only a few heavy, massive weights" [N6,5]. The librarian continually weeds the humble, numerous ephemeral items from the collection, leaving the figuratively heavy, massive ones, which become more massive over time, while prefiguring their own obsolescence. In Benjaminian logic, the historicist would be concerned with the massive books left on the shelves as source materials for the theoretically bare "universal history" of "homogeneous, empty time", whereas the historical materialist would be more interested in the "constructive" capabilities of those volumes that have been cast aside (Benjamin [1940] 2019, 207). Thad Logan (2001), drawing on Bourdieu's habitus, examines the relationship between decoration and consumption in the Victorian parlour, a room with many parallels to the library (both within the home and outside of it), especially as a predecessor to the modern public library: "the acquisition of consumer goods can be seen as only part of the practice of decoration, which includes competence in selecting and arranging commodities. However we understand these terms' precise logical relationship, both are essential to studying the production of the parlour" (77). It is reasonable to argue that mass produced books became decorative objects, décor, whether in the parlour or the public library, serving either different purposes or variations of the same purpose. Additionally, one purpose of weeding old books is to make the shelves more attractive, removing clutter and highlighting newer titles. The modern librarian's competence in (de)selecting materials and creating library displays therefore produced and continues to produce the public library.

It is impossible to speak of library display in the broadest sense without considering cataloguing and classification: "The idea of the whole library being an exhibition of books is very clearly bound up with the principle of classification" (Borgwardt 1970, 7). Classification fixes books and other materials in place; this is akin to Benjamin's ([1931] 2019) observation in "Unpacking My Library": "The books are not yet on the shelves, not yet touched by the mild boredom of order" (1). Yet paradoxically, books must be an ordered, even boring, part of a literary montage, to contain within them the "crystal of the total event" [N2,6], leading to a dialectical image. The ordered and ordering image is

nothing new in libraries. Adler (2017b) demonstrates how the panopticon,[47] adopted symbolically into the design of libraries and prisons under the influence of arcades themselves, organizes and structures the display of library materials:

> Bibliographic classifications, subject headings, other classificatory techniques, and their attendant/enabling technologies operate in concert, by way of particularly insidious architectures that reside beneath the hood of the library catalog at the level of the database, and these techniques also govern how the books are displayed to the eye. The panoptic eye is simultaneously inside the system, disciplining and correcting subjects and seeing to it that authority headings and classes are in control, and outside looking in. (107)

The governing ideologies of the world become visible in the display of library materials on the shelves. For Adler, the physical structure of the library mirrors the physical structures of the city: "The shelves are the streets, and when browsing or cruising the library, the classification roughly serves as a map to guide our desires" (xii). Library shelves, with their internalized logic, connect to larger social structures and "produce a particular materiality that brings texts from all over the globe under one roof and one universal system, unifying the disciplines and arranging how we come to knowledge, making visible the ideological mappings of the world" (150). Traditionally, the library as bibliotheca is a shell or case for the dwelling of books. "The world-making properties of the library—the *theca* as microcosm—are enduring facets of its container function" (Schnapp and Battles 2014, 26). The library as place contains the world the librarian produces and displays, much like the projectionist's phantasmagoria.

However non-curated or formless a library collection might appear, it is continually and continuously being constructed and produced by librarians, library workers, and even patrons—who borrow, lose, remove, hide, reorganize, and otherwise alter the contents and arrangement of the shelves. The collection is therefore at once both rag heap and (in most cases) unintentional literary montage, containing books that are simultaneously massive weights and décor. Even the most narrowly defined, restrictive, meticulously ordered collection contains within it the sources for a dialectical image, the now of

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[47] Related to the panorama, that central feature of the arcades; see Chapter 3 above.

recognizability. The rags are used through their display, displayed through their use, and this process takes place within the library, for Benjamin as much as any other patron. This process is enhanced by the active work of library display in the narrower sense.

4.1.3 "Narrower Sense"

As the librarian builds the display of the collection, the library display worker (to borrow Borgwardt's archetype) also chooses which books to display more prominently, drawing books (or other materials) out of one montage (the collection) to create other montages in the form of specific, standalone library *displays* (or library exhibits). The library display worker represents many archetypes, in the tradition of Baudelaire and Benjamin: "Library display work is many-sided: it embraces art, journalism, advertising and salesmanship, librarianship, literature and even publishing, and the display assistant will find that she needs to be something of an artist, advertiser, journalist, librarian and publisher!" (Borgwardt 1970, 27). It is through these archetypal roles that the worker passes on the enchantment of the library, *which originates with the worker*, to the patrons: "To reveal the riches and treasures of the library she herself [the library assistant] must delight in them, for it will be her mission to pass on this enchantment to others" (24). The enchantment of the library as place is first and foremost an embodied one, for both the worker and patron, but it must be disembodied to be conveyed and re-embodied to be experienced. This disembodiment enhances the phantasmagoric qualities of the display for both parties.

Despite its magical qualities, the public library, perhaps because of habit, expectations, or the capitalist dream-state, cannot fully escape the modern world and representative archetypes ushered in by life in the arcades and its colourful advertisements:

> The library has something to offer everybody, and therefore something to interest everybody: the housewife, the business man, the artist, the actor, the farmer, the artisan, the schoolboy, the collector, the dilettante. But the world of commerce has taught us that the public remains deaf and blind to goods available unless they are advertised again and again. In just the same way, books, to attract the readers for whom they were intended, must be brought vividly to their attention. To do this it is often necessary to *remove them from their places* on the shelves for a time, arrange them in a new and prominent position, open at attractive pages, with

colourful objects and posters grouped about them to catch the eye. (Borgwardt 1970, 15; emphasis mine)

The stagnant library does not attract, yet the process of novelty and rotation becomes another advertisement among many in the everyday life of the community. In this context, even removing items from the shelves, even the most eye-catching display or exhibit, isn't enough. "Any librarian can tell when a display has reached saturation point. When people no longer stop to look at it, but pass by with a blank expression, the time has come to change it—the message has lost its force and the colour and novelty have lost their appeal. When this point is reached readers no longer see what is displayed, and the cases might just as well be empty for all the good they do" (38). Compare this with an observation in Benjamin's "A Berlin Chronicle" ([1932] 1978): "It is true that countless façades of the city stand exactly as they stood in my childhood. Yet I do not encounter my childhood in their contemplation. My gaze has brushed them too often since, too often they have been the *décor* and theater of my walks and concerns." Décor loses its distinctiveness. On the one hand, this is a subversive process, undermining the illusion of the symbolic phantasmagoria, but on the other it requires an individual—the display worker, the advertiser, the dialectician—to intervene lest the items on the threshold of decay and irrelevance be forgotten completely. This highly nuanced and timely task is a good match for the expertise of the librarian, and it is of the utmost importance: "From the start, to keep this thought in view and to weigh its constructive value: the refuse- and decay-phenomena as precursors, in some degree mirages, of the great syntheses that follow" [Y1,4]. Library display is a form of ragpicking that can lead directly to the now of recognizability.

Benjamin's various writings on childhood—both his own and that of the archetypal child in the modern city—and his collections of toys, postcards, and other artefactual remnants, reinforce the simultaneously subversive yet redemptive functions of playfulness. According to Gilloch (1996):

> It is through play that the child encounters and transforms his or her surroundings. The notion of play is a fundamental, differentiated one in Benjamin's work. The key aspect of this is the relationship between play and myth: the playful child both participates in and negates myth. Playfulness contains within it utopian impulses,

eschewing the division between subject and object and creating reciprocal and non-hierarchical relationships with the world of things. Play is spontaneous and creative, a counterpoint to the tedium and exploitation inherent in instrumental labour. It is the domain of freedom from compulsion. For Benjamin, the playfulness of the child comes to unmask the desolate, alienated reality of the bourgeois mode of existence within the city. The "magic" of the child's imagination (disruptive, subversive) is the antithesis of the mythology of the adult (fetishistic, reifying). (84)

The child, free from adult myths, experiences and interacts with the world in unique ways through play. "Play appears in three main guises in [Benjamin's] Berlin writings: as transgression, mimesis and collection" (85). To illustrate this third point, Gilloch quotes a passage from Benjamin's 1924 essay "Old Forgotten Children's Books": "[Children] are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring or carpentry. […] In using these things they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artefact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new, intuitive relationship. Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one" (Benjamin 1985, 52–53, as quoted in Gilloch 1996, 88). In summary, Gilloch (1996) writes: "Play consequently entails the activities of both the rag-picker and the collector" (88).

The librarian, who also collects rags, therefore has much in common with the child, and this emphasis on bringing things into "a new, intuitive relationship" demonstrates the difference between a library display and a library exhibition for the library display worker. Patron interaction with a display is normally limited to selecting an item from the display to peruse, skim, or borrow. Exhibits, however, as part of their more intricate design (Brown and Power 2006, 23), can include "hands-on" or "interactive" elements, as part of their more intricate design, "requir[ing] the visitor to take some sort of action to experience the exhibit" (169). Brown and Power argue that the exhibit provides an active experience more favourable than a passive one: "An active experience is more likely to stay with a victory, giving them the opportunity to make connections between the experience and other things they know, whether in that moment or later on in life. Passive experiences can be enjoyable in the moment, but they often don't have as much staying power and don't prompt as involved a thought process as active experiences" (170). While at first this might sound similar to Benjamin's notion of awakening, I argue that

this is just an approximation—a phantasmagoria—of an active experience, as the librarian or other worker who designed the exhibit has predetermined what "the exhibit's message" (169) is meant to be. The exhibit, as designed by Brown and Power, becomes nothing more than a different way to convey an authoritative worldview, assuming the viewer receives the message that the designer intended. However, play in the Benjaminian sense requires both detritus and the ability to reconstitute the detritus in previously unknown, undetermined ways, rejecting (in this case, the librarian's) authority.

The intervention of library display in the narrower sense, by removing items *from their places* and giving them new associations while not fully embracing playfulness, both undermines and enhances the authority of classification:

> That books are removed from their logical places in the classification scheme is a common objection to the principle of library display. This is said to be the negation of librarianship. But provided that the display is successful in its object—that of getting books used more—this objection can surely be set aside. The prominence given to books on display is in itself an advertisement as to where the books are to be found. If this fails, the library staff should know at once where to find any particular book that is being displayed (Borgwardt 1970, 10).

Displays "bring together books separated by the classification scheme […,] a technical service which is an extension of classification, in fact, which is actually *re-classification*" (14). Whether this is an ironic, subversive, creative, or dialectical act, Borgwardt does not say, but I believe that it is a direct example of an idea proposed by Benjamin ([1931] 1978) in his essay "Karl Kraus": "Only in despair did he discover in quotation the power not to preserve but to purify, to tear from context, to destroy; the only power in which hope still resides that something might survive this age—because it was wrenched from it" (271). I argue that libraries provide a context to items by wrenching them from other contexts. In purifying, they destroy. In preserving, they tear away. "'Construction' presupposes 'destruction'" [N7,6]. Library displays, by removing items from the classificatory context, both reverse and advance this process of survival by destruction, destruction by survival. Whether these contexts are false or invented is up for debate, as is the extent to which we should despair.

Can library materials be preserved without being torn away? The flâneur, like the library patron, feels distanced from items housed in glass cases,[48] which proliferated in the arcades: "These [display cases] presented commodities not as objects for use, but as pure spectacle. The glass screen ensured visibility, suggested proximity, yet denied tactility. Enthroned in such crystal casings, luxury goods remained distant no matter how close they appeared: 'auratic'. Within the arcade, commodities became objects of unrequited desire" (Gilloch 2002, 131). The difference between the flâneur and the patron, of course, is that the flâneur lacks purchasing power to obtain the commodities for himself, while the patron can access and borrow items with relative ease, provided that the items in the display case are available for circulation or stand in for other items that are. Benjamin quotes "Album des installations les plus remarquables de l'Exposition de 1862, à Londres" (1866), released in advance of the 1867 Exposition universelle: "Technique of exhibition: '[…] The best exhibits make use of two quite distinct systems: displays under glass and open displays. To be sure, some products, by their very nature or because of their value, have to be protected from contact with the air or the hand; others benefit from being left uncovered'" [G13,1]. The glass display case, as either advertisement or protective shell (see Borgwardt 1970, 20–21 & 33), both elevates and further alienates commodities which could be left uncovered and fully integrated into the library as place. Otherwise, they risk prolonging the phantasmagoria of the object removed from everyday life, as items in the British Museum Library collection do for Borgwardt (1970): "Dream over them, absorb them, study them with veneration, and give thanks for the foresight and loving care which have preserved them for this age" (60).

Indeed, the book as an object of display is sometimes more important than the text: "The expression of an *abstract idea* by means of books, models and objects is one of the most interesting types of display. […] The very fact of using an object to symbolize an idea is one that appeals to a very deep-seated instinct in all of us" (Borgwardt 1970, 17). Library art's objects symbolize rather than explicate. Such symbolism means that displays can

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[48] A similar phenomenon can be seen in materials held behind a service desk or on a reserve shelf. These items are seen but inaccessible or accessible only to a select group of individuals, with specific qualifications.

either reinforce library materials as commodities or show their greater potential. Borgwardt contrasts the aims of the library display worker, who displays "only books which are less in the public eye, though deserving of attention", with those of the bookseller, "his main desire being to dispose of as many [best-sellers] as possible in the shortest possible time" (81). Yet Borgwardt still recommends some commercial methods: "The idea of the window is not to sell the goods, but to bring the customer into the shop. The material used in library windows may therefore be quite different than used in interior display, though both deal with the same subject" (75). The former catch the eye, while the latter invite deeper engagement. This must be conscientious work, however, as highlighted by another materialist: "[T]ransparent windows […] parody the transparency of human relations […]. Window-shopping has its magic and its religion: the perfected, all-powerful commodity. Sanctified, goods coincide with the spectacle which they and their advertisements offer" (Lefebvre [1961] 2014, 606). The challenge for libraries, especially public libraries, becomes how to display commodities bought in the marketplace as something other than a phantasmagoria, a spectacle, an advertisement, a symbol and reinforcement of capitalistic modes of production, social relationships, and ways of being. In other words, the library must become a place where the commodities of everyday life can transform both themselves and everyday life in a now of recognizability. To do this, the library display worker assumes the role of a dialectician: "Being a dialectician means having the wind of history in one's sails. The sails are the concepts. It is not enough, however, to have sails at one's disposal. What is decisive is knowing the art of setting them" [N9,8]. The art of library display doesn't stand on its own; it must be undertaken for political ends, along with other work in the library as place.

4.1.4   Discussion

Displays frequently complement other library services, such as traditional face-to-face reader's advisory interactions: "Recommending books on display dramatically increases the number of books taken off the display" (Rippel 2003, 155). But there is a risk: "[Book displays] are the most effective way to recommend books. Standing books on a low table is boring and suggests that the books are insignificant. Effective displays will recommend

the books by being located where the display will be seen. They will attract the eye with color and signage and making the books seem important" (152). For the display worker as merchandiser, it matters not whether the books *are* important or not, just that they *seem* important. Library display, to realize its full potential, must go further by facilitating a "method of receiving the things into our space" [H2,3] that undermines the commodity nature of library materials.[49]

This process of receiving is and should be different from commodity consumption, from mere purchasing. It is common for librarians to draw lessons from bookstores and other retail establishments (e.g., LaPerriere and Christiansen 2008; Rippel 2003). Some lessons from Rippel (2003) include lower levels of lighting; illuminated book displays; putting displays, new books, and other materials on the right as patrons enter the library, since they naturally drift that way; and separating fiction by genre, as in bookstores. While some of these methods are no doubt effective for increasing visibility and circulation, I argue that they are most effective in a world-changing or world-making sense when part of a dialectical approach to library display work—a praxis of library display, based in Benjaminian theory, relying on more than a rotation of colourful objects. Such a program of action could include:

- Displays designed to shock, in the historical materialist sense;

- Displays of older books and other items removed from their historical context, that is, on the threshold of decay and irrelevancy;

- Updated weeding practices, especially in public libraries, that value the rag heap of history and develop new ideas of storage, display, and access to facilitate standstill moments;

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[49] For more on this topic and how it relates to circulation and empathy, see Chapter 6 below.

- Displays of non-mass market objects: self-published books, books by local authors, things made (e.g., crafted, 3D-printed) in the library, natural items (e.g., plants, seeds);

- Displays and exhibits that embrace a Benjaminian playfulness, free of preconceived messages or lessons, inviting patrons to make, alter, change, bringing the "world of things" into "a new, intuitive relationship";

- Exhibits that contrast non-mass market items with books as commodities, plus additional information as context, without over-contextualizing or over-explaining;

- Cataloguing, classification, and shelving systems inspired by the literary montage of revolutionary, dialectical library display, which would be shifting, impermanent, with ever-changing contexts while at the same time contextless, alterable;

- Endcaps, corners, windows, display cases, program rooms, lobbies, foyers, and other spaces transformed by some combination of these ideas to challenge the historical, preconceived, stereotypical notion of the library as a "cavern of commodities".

Many libraries and librarians already incorporate some of these elements into their displays and exhibits, but likely not for political ends. Kate Coplan (1958), one of the most influential public library display workers (see Part Two below), recognized that display values human labour: "Library materials that simply sit on the shelves are just so much dead wood, the money, time and labor expended on their acquisition and processing largely wasted. Through dramatic displays many of these inactive items can be restored to life, thereby fulfilling the authors', publishers', and librarians' intent" (21). If library display work in the narrower sense (displays, exhibits, exhibitions, posters, signs, ads) can break free from the phantasmagoric hold of library materials as commodities, restoring both items and people to life, then this process can be a model for library display in the broadest sense (collections, shelves, stacks) finally to be arranged

by something more than a narrowly defined classificatory scheme. This is nothing short of the revolutionary potentiality of the library as place.

Eiland and McLaughlin (1999), in their "Translators' Foreword" to *The Arcades Project*, summarize Benjamin's method:

> These proliferating individual passages, extracted from their original context like collectibles, were eventually set up to communicate among themselves, often in a rather subterranean manner. The organized masses of historical objects—the particular items of Benjamin's display (draft and excerpts)—together give rise to 'a world of secret affinities,' and each separate article in the collection, each entry, was to constitute a 'magic encyclopedia' of the epoch from which it derived. An *image* of that epoch. (x)

In the same way that each book becomes an allegory of the library, so too does Benjamin's literary montage become an allegory for the materials in a library's collection. The materials' "world of secret affinities" [R2,3] does not become an image on its own; it is a function of "the organized masses". Benjamin's library art unearthed sources among the library science of la Bibliothèque nationale and arranged them into a "magic encyclopedia" [H2,7; H2a,1] in which they could "communicate among themselves".[50] (Is this idealistic process not reminiscent of what many librarians wish they could achieve both in their own libraries and universally?) Later in that same passage, Benjamin observes: "It would be interesting to study the bibliophile as the only type of collector who has not completely withdrawn his treasures from their functional context" [H2,7; H2a,1]. That is, books in a collection still maintain use-value; they have not become completely fetishized, phantasmagoric. Library displays, by wrenching the items from their scientific place on the shelves, allow items not only to "survive this age" but to reconstitute their own meanings in a shared future, to be witnessed and interpreted by the librarian or patron. These lessons of library display can be applied to the whole library. The challenge I pose for librarians is to figure out how to transform the

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[50] See also "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" (in Benjamin 1978), in which Benjamin writes: "Things are denied the pure formal principle of language—sound. They can only communicate to one another through a more or less material community. This community is immediate and infinite, like every linguistic communication; it is magical (for there is also a magic of matter)" (321). Is the library shelf such a material community?

organization and display of the library's entire collection from a preserving, idealistic, universal science to a purifying, magical, affinitive art. To quote Borgwardt (1970) yet again: "Must the library be a place apart, or should it embrace all sides of human life and knowledge?" (20).

4.2   The Display of the Library Building

The second part of this chapter considers the display of the public library building, including the spaces within the building and the building within the city. What does a library look like, how is it imagined or perceived? Shannon Mattern (2007) recounts a public forum in 2003 regarding the proposed renovation to Philadelphia's 1927 Free Library building: "The first question, likely the inaugural question at many recent public library design forums, addressed the building's appearance—specifically, the fact that it did not *look* like a library. All that public space and glass, one loyal library patron charged, was transforming her beloved bastion for the book into a mall" (55). What we think a library should look like depends largely on an appearance that was standardized during the public library movement, at the same time that arcades were developing their own standardized appearance; even today, the display of the library is often contrasted with that of the shopping mall, the successor to the arcade. Recall that Borgwardt's (1970) idea of library display in the "broadest sense" was concerned with the library as "an exhibition of books" (6). In my treatment of the entire building, I go beyond books and other library materials, therefore broadening Borgwardt's broadest sense to include the architecture, layout, design, spaces, and appearance of the library as place. Perhaps this could be called library display in the "even broader sense". The three "senses" of library display—narrower, broadest, and even broader—influence each other dialectically. Collections, stacks, and shelves determine space needs and spatial configurations. Interior spaces determine the exterior shape and vice versa. These determinations are sometimes planned beforehand, by the librarian or architect, and sometimes adapted to once the building has been occupied, once library services have dwelled inside for some time. Those services include displays and exhibitions. "Each exhibition is unique: the same objects look completely different when shown in another space" (Matassa 2014, xvii). The space affects how the objects look and therefore how

they are experienced, including what information can be gleaned from them, and those objects affect how the space is experienced.

I have structured this discussion thematically, beginning with those two extremely significant modern developments for the display of any building: lighting (first gas, then electric) and glass architecture. These features allowed libraries to feature increasingly large reading rooms, which I discuss next. I then look at other glass elements used to display the library as place—windows, display cases, atria, glass shells, arcaded library buildings—before concluding with a general discussion of library design over the last 150 years. I examine two related questions: What does a Benjaminian approach, as demonstrated in the first half of this chapter, reveal about contemporary issues related to the display of the library building itself, both internally and externally? If display, as I argue above, is part of "the method of receiving the things into our space" [H2,3], then how are library *spaces* received in the spaces in which they are viewed or experienced? It makes sense to use a Benjaminian lens to examine such questions; Casey (1997) includes Benjamin among a list of twentieth-century thinkers who "tried to find place *at work*, part of something ongoing and dynamic, ingredient *in something else*: […] in the sociology of the *polis* and the city" (286). Library display in the even broader sense is directly linked to the work that takes place inside the library as place, for the patron as well as the librarian.[51]

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[51] Evans (2015) studied how the architecture and design of reading room influenced readers' handling of materials in archival spaces. While Evans reached no definitive conclusions, the preliminary research did reveal some "possible connections": "the symbolism of architecture affecting perceptions and in turn behaviour; the comfort and calm atmosphere influencing behaviour in general through mood and physical comfort; light and temperature influencing where readers choose to sit; the influence of sight-lines on behaviour; the effect of furniture and particularly table design and noise controlled through architecture affecting behaviour" (206). I'd imagine that a similar study conducted in a library would reveal similar findings.

For its potential importance, the display of the library building—or the library space within a larger building—remains a relatively unexamined topic within the larger body of literature on library design. For example, Griffis (2013) studies lighting, glass, and windows in the public library mainly as they relate to active or passive surveillance, only briefly discussing display by way of the "fishbowl effect" or "lantern effect" of light and windows in the evening, "merchandizing" the library by "'opening' [it] up […] to the outside" through its "glass facades" (168–170). Other studies have examined how the prominence of the library helps to determine its role everyday life of patrons. Rothbauer (2009), in a study of the reading habits of young people, identified the impact of "the shifting valence of visibility of the public library in the daily landscape of these youth" (472). Gong, Japzon, and Chen (2008) use the case of Woodstock Library in the South Bronx to show how the surrounding neighbourhood, buildings, and environment can impact the use, perception, appearance, and even maintenance and upkeep of the library building:

> The Woodstock Library reflects the poor condition of the neighbourhood. Although it was built with Carnegie funds […], the Woodstock Library building lacks maintenance and is falling apart. Graffiti can be seen on the walls immediately outside the library. The circulation in the Woodstock Library is one of the lowest among the 200 branch libraries in New York City […] This problem of underutilisation is perpetuated because the funding for a branch library in New York City is determined, in part, by its circulation. (72)

The authors note: "The Woodstock Library was conveniently sited when it was built" (72). But the neighbourhood changed as empty housing units were left to decay, schools closed, and abandoned buildings turned into vacant lots, including on three sides of the library, making it more visible yet also more inaccessible. In one more example, Black (2011) analyzed data in the Mass-Observation Archive (MOA), a huge repository of "evidence, stretching back to the 1930s, of the British public's daily lives and attitudes" (30), to determine what sorts of library buildings people preferred. MOA respondents fell into 4 groups: preference for the new; preference for the old; preference for new interiors in historic buildings; and those who preferred neither, expressing "architectural indifference", focusing instead on services provided, "the library as 'place', and the concept of 'libraryness'" (36). For the indifferent, the architectural style isn't important;

the design matters insomuch as it affects services. Among those who preferred the old: "Concrete and glass libraries of the 1960s were seen as 'soulless' and 'boring and functional'" (36). Even in cases where the display of the library isn't deemed important, it can still influence service provision. Griffis (2013) came to a similar conclusion in a study of Carnegie libraries in Ontario: "Style is not merely a matter of looking appealing inviting; it is a matter of communicating what a library organization stands for, and the degree to which it wishes to fit in with the rest of its community" (188).

This handful of disparate examples shows that this topic has the potential to be massive, touching on all aspects of library services in the modern age and later. Numerous monographs about library design cover all or a portion of this time period (e.g., Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw 2009; Dewe 2010; Mattern 2007; Oehlerts 1991); other monographs address the history of certain types of libraries (e.g., Bobinski 1969; Van Slyck 1995), libraries built in certain areas (e.g., Bruce 1994; Bruce 2010), or social issues related to library buildings (e.g., Knott 2015). It is therefore not my intention to do an exhaustive study of the display of the public library building. For instance, I don't go in depth into aspects of library furniture, bookstacks (e.g., closed vs. open), service desks, meeting rooms, multipurpose spaces, or specific architectural styles or architects. A truly complete picture of the display of the library as place would, of course, include all of these and more. Rather, I have chosen to focus on Labrouste's la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, the modern public library movement, Kate Coplan's display work at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and the writings of Missac (1995), Oehlerts (1991), Lees (2001), and Mattern (2007). I also discuss the central branches in Nashville, San Francisco, Vancouver, Salt Lake City, and Seattle. I consider these various examples from a Benjaminian perspective and put forth some initial thoughts that can hopefully inform future research into this topic or related ones.

4.2.1   Glass Architecture & Lighting

I have already established that iron-and-glass construction and gas light were the two most important architectural developments at the beginning of the modern age, and they had their genesis in the library—in particular, Henri Labrouste's la Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève, completed in Paris in 1850, the year that is also commonly given as the start

of the modern public library movement. It should come as no surprise, then, that glass architecture and lighting were and continue to be key elements in library display in the even broader sense. Levine (1982a) argues that Labrouste structured la Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève figuratively like a catalogue, with its gridlike structure and defined areas representing visually how the library space was supposed to be used. This use was directly affected by light in the space. In Ste-Geneviève, Labrouste was "the first to use iron and gas to make a space that literally turned night into day" (171). With gas lighting, the library could stay open much later than others; this was reflected in the building's exterior: "Within the flattened jambs are two embossed lamps, signifying the fact that the library is open in the evening" (167). As discussed in Chapter 3 above, the distinctive feature of Ste-Geneviève was and is its reading room, with its iron skeleton. Through its visibility, the exposed support structure gave the interior space a feeling of openness. Iron construction allowed the use of more glass than usual, letting in more sunlight, which simultaneously made the structure more striking and the library materials easier to read:

> The single most obvious quality of the Reading Room is its openness and lightness. The deep, girding arcade is continuous, letting in daylight on all four sides, and acting as a *brise-soleil* for most of the day. One is constantly made aware of the passage of time by the movement of the sun and of the fact that it is the skeletal iron construction that allows for this perception of the cycle of the day. Labrouste clearly felt the importance of that and, therefore, detailed a certain number of the thin stone pedestals of the central spine of columns to underline the building's orientation in relation to the path of the sun. (169)

Labrouste, through the library building, introduced into modern interiors both the difference between night and day and the negation of the night into day. Daylight through the glass made visible the items of the interior, while glass made visible the daylight of the exterior; gas, on other hand, illuminated the interior and its items while making the exterior night invisible, instead reflecting back the interior artificially lit. The library, with uniform lighting throughout its opening hours, was the first instance of a modern space perceived consistently at all times while altering perceptions of the outside world. The urban phantasmagoria, it could be argued, originates with the modern library, enhanced perhaps by the precise ordering of the space according to principles of organization that were invented, idealized, and ultimately illusory.

These phantasmagoric elements of the modern city and its buildings fascinated the Surrealists, whose worldview and artistic practices had a profound impact on Benjamin. For Aragon ([1926] 1994), the arcade's demise was especially poignant because it could still be seen and inhabited, could still exert its effect on those who passed through it: "What I forgot to say is that Passage de l'Opéra is a big glass coffin" (34). Being inside the arcade was like being able to see while buried alive—or glimpsing hypnotic reflections through the waves while trapped underwater. Elsewhere, Aragon writes of the arcades that "it is the modern light radiating from the unusual that will rivet [the passerby's] attention" in "these human aquariums" (13–14). Benjamin quotes this passage [R2,1] and attributes similar qualities to the Passage des Panoramas: "The innermost glowing cells of the city of light, the old dioramas, nested in the arcades, one of which today still bears the name Passage des Panoramas. It was, in the first moment, as though you had entered an aquarium. Along the wall of the great darkened hall, broken at intervals by narrow joints, it stretched like a ribbon of illuminated water behind glass" [Q3,2]. Elsewhere, Benjamin, like Aragon, connects modernity's symbolic aquarium to death by quoting Paul Morand: "In an era of light and electricity, what triumphs is the aquarium, the greenish, the submarine, the hybrid, the poisonous" [S2a,6]. The aquarium becomes a symbol for the experience of the passage of time in the modern city as dream house: "Motif of dream time: atmosphere of aquariums" [O^0,46]. This feeling of being trapped and displayed underwater, as if in an aquarium, spread over all of Paris and, by extension, all of France and Western society. "The twilight of the arcades, which contemporaries compared to an undersea landscape, lies over the society that built them" (Benjamin [1935] 1999a, 896). The city was a contained landscape, and so were the interiors of its buildings, both of which represented and housed a death that was on display.

It was during this time of decay that advances in electric lightning fully illuminated library spaces to the extent that they relied less on windows and could be contained underground:

> Public library buildings have been low-profile structures since 1850, with few exceptions.[52] Smaller public libraries have been two- or three-floor buildings. One or two floors above a partially exposed basement level has been a typical plan. Public libraries were very much like post offices, county courthouses, and other public buildings. In order to have a basement of sufficient height and with some natural light, the building had to be raised several feet above ground level—thus, the ever-present flight of steps to the main floor. As soon as electric lighting improved, just before the First World War, the basement level was put below ground and the entrance was placed at sidewalk level without exterior steps. (Oehlerts 1991, 134)

Access to the building drastically improved, with accessible entrances at ground level, at the same time that the building became more hidden, the lightning became more artificial, and the interior and the exterior were less visible to each other. For the average city, town, or rural public library, the profile of the entire library structure became even lower, while national libraries, academic libraries, and large urban public libraries became even larger in stature with even greater profiles, to match the growth of the reading room.

4.2.2   Reading Rooms

To trace the history of the reading room, even the modern reading room, is a task much too large for this space; even listing all of the world's notable examples is a huge endeavour. Here, I am only concerned with what the reading room represented for Benjamin and how it still affects library display in the even broader sense to this day. I discuss several representative reading rooms (Ste-Geneviève, Peabody, Salle Labrouste, Nashville, Astor, Cincinnati); other famous ones include those of the main branch (Oakland) of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, New York Public Library Main Branch, the Library of Congress's Jefferson Building, the British Museum, and so on.[53] One of

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[52] This has changed in the past three decades, with numerous cities around the world building massive central public library buildings. I touch on this trend later in this chapter.

[53] However, I am not familiar with a comprehensive history of the reading room as an architectural and social space; most of the histories of reading rooms appear to be attached to the histories of their institutions, rather than of common national and international characteristics and developments. This is an area for future research, particularly the question of the specific ways in which the reading room transformed during the age of modernity and how the design of reading rooms both standardized and changed over time.

these reading rooms was very important for Benjamin, as he began writing the notes that would become *The Arcades Project* under the "dreamy, unlit ceiling" [N1,5] of la Bibliothèque nationale's iron-buttressed Salle Labrouste, designed by Labrouste himself.[54] The significance of this space for the modern world was, of course, not lost on Benjamin; he quotes August Perret: "Construction in iron has provided a succession of buildings, of which the great reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale was the first, and one of the most successful" [F8,4]. Benjamin makes frequent references in his correspondence to feeling at home in la Bibliothèque nationale, suggesting that he might agree with Albert de Laparent, whom he quotes, on the Salle's apparent perfection: "Labrouste . . . , in 1868, . . . gave to the public the reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale. . . . It is difficult to imagine anything more satisfying or more harmonious" [F7a,1; Benjamin's ellipses].

It seems that Benjamin was drawn to reading rooms, or perhaps they were inescapable features of modern Paris; in either case, they became one recurring theme among many in *The Arcades Project*.[55] "Julis Rodenberg on the small reading room in the Passage de l'Opéra: 'What a cheerful air this small, half-darkened room has in my memory, with its high bookshelves, its green tables [….] But when there is any news in Paris, it is here that one can receive it'" [A2a,8]. Elsewhere, another "cheerful reading room where some volumes are displayed" is included in a quote from Erich Stenger that Benjamin argues represents "[t]he genteel variant of the dream house" [L1,1]. The reading room has fallen under the spell of dream time, like all dream houses. Another quote, this one from J. Lucas-Dubreton, mentions the reading room in the Passage du Saumon [A6a,1]. There were reading rooms in other arcades throughout Paris and the rest of the imperial world (Geist 1983). This ever presence could explain why Benjamin wrote that an entire arcade had the characteristics of a reading room: "Passage du Commerce-Saint-André: a reading room" [A8a,1]. I do not know which specific characteristics of this arcade Benjamin had

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[54] For more on this, including how Benjamin dwelled within the library, see Chapter 5 below.

[55] Studying these and other references to libraries—public, national, or subscription—in Benjamin's writings is another area for potential future research.

in mind, but it opens up the possibility of comparing the two types of structures, aided by another key passage: "In a letter to his mother, Baudelaire refers to the reading room, in addition to the café, as a refuge in which to work" [J46,4]. The reading room was a satisfying, harmonious, cheerful refuge that could be as large as an arcade—in other words, it could be the world. One room therefore exemplifies the dialectical character of iron construction, of library spaces, and of life in the modern city. The willful nature of the phantasmagoria makes it both a distracting enchantment and a cheerful refuge, subject as it is to dream time; a space can proliferate in various sizes and various locations, different every time while remaining essentially itself; a building can be reduced to its essences or take on symbolic characteristics, becoming what it is not; a city, a structure, and a room are undefined, interchangeable. And each dialectical image depends on display in the even broader sense.

The display of the reading room has taken on other symbolic meanings in public library spaces, as it occupies the middle ground between practicality and extravagance. "The search for adequate natural light has influenced the design of library buildings since 1850. The early solution was a skylighted ceiling and windows high above the reading room as in the Astor and Cincinnati book halls" (Oehlerts 1991, 136–137). Yet librarians and architects began to view such large rooms as wasteful, requiring a large amount of materials and taking up a lot of a space, which was especially difficult to justify in buildings built with public funds. In recent decades, though, such reading rooms have come back into fashion, owing perhaps, on one hand, to a sort of conservative nostalgia for nineteenth-century spaces, and, on the other, to a desire to (re)create satisfying, harmonious, cheerful spaces in the library. Of course, even this desire has nostalgia at its root, regardless of the specific form the reading room takes. I discuss in Chapter 3 above how the reading room of Nashville Public Library's downtown library represents a return to the neoclassicism of late nineteenth-century high capitalism rather than a rebirth of classical Greek antiquity as intended. As the central component of the project, the reading room's barrel-vaulted ceiling covered the sort of room that was only practical after advances in iron construction and gas lighting made reading possible in such vast interior spaces, so far removed from the windows high above. Nashville's reading room is but one example of a larger trend: "the traditional library reading room is enjoying a

renaissance as a place to study in the presence of others; it is a place to see and be seen while working privately"[56] (Demas 2005, 29). Library designers and architects consciously reproduce spaces as a reference to the authority of neoclassical libraries, national and public, built during the period of rapid library expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

4.2.3   Windows & Display Cases

It should be clear by this point that modern reading rooms and other library spaces relied on windows in many ways. Commercial reading rooms in the arcades, for example, used their windows as advertising, like the other shops around them. Lending libraries, reading rooms, and public libraries alike use windows for both lighting and to reduce the isolation of the space. The window directly influenced how much of the library's foundation could be above ground or how tall the ceilings could be. "When the second or third floor was used as the main service level (as in Boston and New York), high windows were used to capture the maximum natural light" (Oehlerts 1991, 137). Indeed, even before entire central branches were being made from glass, the window was an important connection between the library interior and the outside world. To quote Borgwardt (1970):

> The window is the link between the passer-by outside and the goods inside. […] Windows have a tremendous selling power, and create a reputation for a store or for a library. […] Windows can advertise a library whether they are display windows or not. Passers-by look through the windows of the library and see all the activity within; the sight of many people inside, all busy with books, will be a reminder of the usefulness of the library and an invitation to enter. Libraries set well back from the pavement, or approached by flights of steps, are at a disadvantage, for they are both literally and figuratively too far removed from the man in the street.[57] (73)

From a Benjaminian perspective, it is almost self-evident that windows close to sidewalks, especially along busy thoroughfares, advertise the library space by inviting passersby to look in. One supposes that this could even be the case for cars driving down

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[56] The reader is to the reading room what the flâneur was to the arcade.

[57] I would add that libraries surrounded by parking lots suffer the same fate.

that same street if traffic moves slowly enough. In either case, the appeal of the library space has more to do with its design and the people inside than library materials—"the appeal of the activity within". Indeed, library windows free of books can "help to convince [the passerby] that the library is much more closely bound up with everyday living than he expected" (74). In this formulation, everyday life is represented by the library on display in the even broader sense, rather than any particular item.

That is, of course, not to say that libraries haven't used their items to display themselves. Kate Coplan, according to Borgwardt (1970), was almost single-handedly responsible for the new artistic approach to library display during the middle of the last century. Coplan started making library displays at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore in 1927 and continued leading the field for decades. Her displays were closer to those found in a department store than on a library floor, filling entire window bays with eye-catching and intricate scenes. She directly influenced Borgwardt, for example, and basically anyone else who put together library displays in the middle decades of the last century. Her techniques were grounded in artistic techniques, many of which have largely been abandoned by libraries, but the main philosophy she put forth about library display persists.[58] Coplan had plenty of display space to work with: "The outstanding example of library show windows is, of course, that of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, which has twelve" (Borgwardt 1970, 74). Coplan's displays were intricate, beautiful, professional, and whether assembled alone, as in the early years of her career, or by the team she supervised later on. A detailed study of her display work is outside the scope of the present discussion; instead, I am interested in what the symbolic results of this work were on the library building. The physical space of the Enoch Pratt Free Library opened up and circulated information: "Bulletin boards, exhibition cases, free-standing panels, shelves and tables within the library become excellent channels for conveying whatever information the library desires to present. But exterior show windows are far more important, because the chief aim is to carry the reading message to persons not already

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[58] I fear that Coplan is one of those giants of the profession that has been largely forgotten. She should really be the subject of someone's dissertation, if she isn't already, or at least of a future research project of mine.

familiar with the library's facilities and potential usefulness" (Coplan 1958, 25). The library extended itself into the city through display:

> Perhaps the leading grocer on the main street will lend his window for a week or two. As this will represent some sacrifice on his part, the librarian can show appreciation by displaying some tempting cook books, thus promoting not only the books, but also the grocer's wares.
>
> In the spring a hardware merchant might be induced to give up a show window temporarily to an exhibition of garden literature. He will consent with alacrity if a collection of his garden implements can be induced in the design. When properly approached almost any shop owner, as a matter of self-interest, will be happy to fall in line with the library's plan. (Coplan 1958, 26)

The most valuable result of Coplan's display work, according to her supervisor Gerald W. Johnson (1958), was "the integration of the institution with the life of the city outside its walls" (xv).

However, Coplan's own examples show that this is an integration with the phantasmagoric forces of capital still at play in the city. The library can even extend the display of itself by putting display cases out in the city:

> Outdoor display cases are sometimes used in overseas libraries which have no show windows. *They resemble the outdoor island cases seen in arcades outside stores.* They stand near the entrance to the library, are generally sheltered by a sloping roof with deep eaves and are raised on pedestals or legs. They are lit up at night and contain only one or two books, and the display is so simple that even a passing motorist may receive some impression of its message. (Borgwardt 1970, 89; emphasis added)

This tactic, directly derived from the arcades, also works for—and is still used by—libraries that are housed in municipal buildings or other multipurpose facilities to display their items in other, perhaps more high traffic, areas. However, the display case in the city becomes a Benjaminian symbol for any windowed library space, in the same way that library materials as commodities become objects of unrequited desire. The library can be seen without being accessed. Through the transparent window, the interior is less isolated from the exterior, and vice versa, yet neither actually touches the other; their interactions are mediated phantasmagorically. The library even enhances this feeling of isolation by controlling access to the library space—through gates, metal detectors, even

security guards, at sanctioned points of entry and exit, with the flow of human movement heavily controlled—where the arcade space itself, open at the ends, could be accessed at all hours of the day. The library displayed thusly becomes itself a sort of glass display case, which is enhanced by other uses of glass in the library building, namely atria, glass shells, and arcaded spaces.

4.2.4   Atria

Pierre Missac (1995), Benjamin's acquaintance who spent much of his life thinking about the latter's philosophical position, argues that the atrium is the contemporary successor of the arcade in "Perspectives on the Atrium", likely the most Benjaminian treatment published on this subject. Even though, as Missac points out, Benjamin only uses the word "atrium" once in *The Arcades Project* (and in a quote, no less), Missac goes to great lengths to demonstrate how the arcade's enchantment of everyday life is still found, and indeed flourishes, under the atrium: "by an irony of the dialectic, [Benjamin's] work attains its significance through what came after him, through what it prefigures if not announces. […] [T]he phenomenon of the atrium […] completes and 'sublates' that of the arcades. […] [D]espite his arguments the arcade did not die out in the nineteenth century and is still flourishing today" (173). According to Missac, the arcade first became the gallery—or the galleria, such as the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, a large, monumental, purpose-built arcade, rather than a smaller, vernacular structure—before taking on the form of the atrium:

> "modern" glass architecture began with the roof. It made up for this, to be sure, by gradually monopolizing the whole of the construction, as occurred with the greenhouses, the *jardins d'hiver* that Benjamin often mentions in connection with the arcades (A 3, 10) and that carry the features of the gallery to the extreme. […] The character of something intermediate between interior and exterior becomes accentuated. The gallery ceases to be a construction intended for transitory ends. It becomes a monument and intends to remain one. (179)

In the galleria as well as the atrium, glass architecture is a visual display of luxury and excess. As a galleria, the arcade is no longer a thoroughfare first and a shopping area second; it is primarily a monument, with the structure taking prominence over the activities inside. "In becoming a gallery, the arcade—which even as a street salon or

street gallery […] never stopped being above all an arcade, a traffic mechanism linking two streets or two squares—sees its role fundamentally modified" (180). The galleria is associated with luxury without having to worry about the exact form of commerce that takes place inside, although still featuring shops. As the galleria becomes the atrium, it is almost unrecognizable as an arcade, even as an architectural successor made from the same materials: "the atrium […] asserts itself from the start as a public space while denying that it is an arcade" (181). Unlike the arcade, the atrium for Missac no longer has a "pure commercial function […]. Far from devoting itself entirely to commerce and profit, it does so only indirectly and partially, sometimes reluctantly" (191). Paradoxically, this allows commercial functions to re-enter the atrium:

> today the atrium can represent a sort of status symbol, like the big private car, indisputably a prestige factor yet capable of turning against its beneficiary, a risk that seems to diminish if a larger public than the users of the building takes advantages of the charms of a semipublic space. […] In short, activities that are commercial in the strict sense can be reintroduced into the atrium and tolerated or even welcomed. Restaurants and boutiques flourish there for the convenience and delight of all. (191)

By mitigating the financial risk of an otherwise empty space within the city, the atrium invites in kiosks and small shops, again becoming a sort of arcade. This explains why there are shops in the arcaded atria of central libraries such as Salt Lake City and Vancouver, which areas have the added benefit of being open earlier in the morning and later in the evening than the library proper. According to Missac, such functional areas of the newly defined atrium become spaces of potential human interaction: "Intermediary between the office and the outside world, it [the atrium] breaks the circle of professional relations and provides an opportunity to overcome loneliness by facilitating new encounters" (192–193). In dialectical fashion, however, the atrium also turns its spaces and the spaces around it into extensions of the dream house: "But it has revived the notion of the museum as the 'collective's house of dreams' (L 1, a 2). The collective, and also the art lover, who ceaselessly traverses it with his eyes, making of it a sculpture viewed from the inside." New encounters exist alongside isolated yet public viewings.

I argue that the atrium takes on these characteristics in the library as well as the office building and the museum, given that the library, as a sort of hybrid of the two, is a

professional workplace that relies, through the display of items, on the visiting public. If the reading room occupies a middle ground between practicality and extravagance, then the public library's atrium is the intermediary between interiority and expansiveness, representing in many instances a threshold containing both commerce and public service in alternatingly private, quasipublic, and public spaces. The library atrium's expansiveness, which is reminiscent of other, earlier forms of physical library extension, annexes surrounding spaces: "In a city where available space is rare, the space occupied by the atrium will necessarily be the result of a conquest" (Missac 1995, 175). Here I should stress that Missac was concerned with the walled glass atrium opening up from the urban skyscraper's lobby, creating an interior glass case separated yet visible from the other floors. "To increase its height, it leans on the interior facades of the stories above and butts up against them, compromising their personality, something it does not have but to which it aspires" (182). Activities are isolated, sounds contained.

In many library buildings, however, we encounter the atrium with no walls, simply a glass roof, open to the library space on all sides. An example from the modern period, Johns Hopkins University's famous George Peabody Library, built in 1878 by Edmund G. Lind, has a famous reading room defined by iron and glass, with "a bright atrium bordered by five tiers of elaborate cast-iron balconies, which rise dramatically to the highly lavish skylight, 19 metres above the black and white marble floor" (Roads Reflections 2014, 49). At the time, such a design, while monumentally impressive, was considered wasteful. As in the galleria, it was a visual symbol of excessive luxury; but unlike in the galleria, such an outward display was not favoured by library planners. However, it has come back into fashion in recent decades:

> Early library planners pointed to the Astor, Cincinnati, and the Peabody as examples of what was not wanted (the large hall surrounded by tiers of bookshelves open to a fifty- or sixty-foot skylighted ceiling). Several of our recent public library buildings have returned to this earlier-rejected style of public library, however. The Fort Lauderdale building has an eight-story atrium. The recent Lexington, Kentucky, and Charlotte, North Carolina, buildings feature open interiors. Cincinnati (1982); Birmingham, Alabama; Omaha, Nebraska; Houston; Canton, Ohio; and the Boston addition all have openings to the upper floors. (Oehlerts 1991, 135–136)

The library, especially the urban central branch, opens back up, with interior spaces acting as thresholds for each other. Another recent example is the Toronto Reference Library, opened in 1977:

> The large, ceiling-to-floor, five-story atrium in the middle of the building provides a central core of light and space linking all levels […]. No single major space on any one level is physically separate or walled from any other. […] According to [TRL architect Raymond] Moriyama, this design is meant to diminish mental barriers by promoting mental connections among the disciplines, thus enhancing creativity, freedom of thought, and spiritual enlightenment. (Leckie and Hopkins 2002, 337)

Internal barriers are removed and display in the even broader sense becomes symbolically as well as physically important. In libraries such as these, the atrium and the reading room share the same space, which expands to contain the entire library. The library displayed in the even broader sense is both atrium and reading room; the whole library is a practical, extravagant, inward-facing, expansive, conquering threshold. Recall that, for Benjamin, the threshold is a zone of transformation [O2a1,]. While there is creative freedom for the library as place as threshold, there is also confusion when this space is viewed instrumentally rather than dialectically.

San Francisco Public Library's "New" Main—planned in the late 1980s and opened in 1996—is one library that was planned without such a dialectical approach. There are numerous examples from this library, both during the planning stage and after it opened, of library management not learning from the past and incorrectly trying to forecast the future. A full discussion of these matters is outside the scope of this paper and has already been covered by writers such as Mattern (2007, 95–124); I am specifically interested in how SFPL's prediction that print would become increasingly obsolete led them to weed vast quantities of books to cut down the footprint for their print collection as part of the move to the new building. As we know now, their prognostications were misguided, and the print book continues to remain an integral part of library services. But even if it had gone obsolete, SFPL did not choose to use their extra floor space for the provision of other services, the storage of other materials, or even for a multipurpose space. Instead, they built a massive, now infamous atrium that took up the entire centre of the building, through all six floors above ground. "The atrium was evidence that books

were not the sole priority of this building" (Mars 2019, 12:10). I would add that public service in general was no longer the central focus. When accompanied with SFPL's official stance of technological determinism, this highly visible display of the library in the even broader sense signalled a shift in the focus of central public libraries in North America. Indeed, this can be seen as another "reactivation of mythic forces" in which a "dream-filled sleep" falls over the city [K1a,8], or at least the public library. SFPL, in embracing technological change too quickly, in prefiguring the obsolescence of its own spaces, demonstrated that the phantasmagoric spirit of the arcade lives on within the public library.

4.2.5   Glass Shells

This can also be seen in libraries that have fully embraced glass architecture, whether with exteriors completely made of glass or with glass shells surrounding part or all of the library building. The library itself becomes a display case, contains a display case, or both. In the first part of this chapter, I discussed how the display case is both a protective shell and an advertisement, and earlier in this second part, I made the argument that the display case becomes a metaphor for the entire library. Now, I will examine in more depth how these forces are at play in some notable library buildings. For example, Seattle's central public library building also features a contemporary rebranding of the reading room as the "Living Room". This space features the traditional elements of a reading room (e.g., large walls, a high ceiling, separate workstations), yet the entire exterior is made from steel and glass. Some more comfortable furniture and architectural techniques derived from the age of modernity seem to be enough to make the reading room more like a home—a dual role reminiscent of the arcade (see Chapter 5 below). If, for Benjamin, the city was also the home during the age of modernity, in the information age, the public library approximates the home by fully enclosing itself yet leaving the city on display for the people inside, and vice versa. Familiarity and comfort are products of closeness and visible separation.

This can also be seen when new library spaces are added onto existing public library spaces. In such cases, the old building is often left largely intact, perhaps featuring a

walkway or atrium connecting it to the new half of the structure. Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw (2009) discuss a large-scale project in Croydon, England:

> In the early 1990s Croydon's Victorian (1896) town hall and adjoining library […] were re-vamped and supplemented by an award-winning purpose-built extension, resulting in a cultural complex, branded the Croydon Clocktower, comprising a cinema, tourist information centre, function hall, exhibition rooms, art gallery, café, shop and, occupying most of the extension, 'hi-tech' library. The new library—at the time the largest project of its kind for many years—was eight times larger than the one vacated (320).

The new aluminum-and-glass library building—or the new part of the library building—surrounds the old red-brick structure. "Inside, old and new parts of the complex were linked by a spectacular atrium. [… T]he historic, and what was once *outside*, now formed, in a post-modern twist, part of the modern *inside* of the building. This interlocking of old and new served as a metaphor for the library's overall purpose" (320). When the old library is subsumed by the new one, glass architecture allows the old one to be displayed rather than forgotten, turning historical continuity into a matter of visibility and self-advertisement. The library still looks like a library in its old part (thinking back to the Philadelphia example) while hoping to change the public's idea about what a library could or should look like in its new part. A parallel example can be found in the Putney Public Library, where an extension project completed in 1998 featured a new structure attached to the side of the original Edwardian library building from 1899 (323–325). The new structure is a visual representation of updated library services, whereas the old one represents historical continuity. In either case, the building itself says more than any promotional material might.

The dialectical nature of closeness and visible separation is most apparent in public library buildings that envelop library spaces—stacks, for example—entirely in a glass cage. "Conceived as a 'coffer of books'," Mexico City's José Vasconcelos Library features "a network of stacks […] suspended in a five-storey glass case, confronting the visitor with all the information available" (Roads Reflections 2014, 40). The concrete exterior surrounds a library on display in a giant glass case. In Germany, the Stuttgart City Library has a similar design: "The new nine-storey library has a double façade; an austere exterior of grey concrete and frosted glass, and an inner shell of glass,

surrounding a bright and spacious heart. Here, books and readers provide the colour"
(132). This phenomenon also often happens in extensions or renovations that contain the
older part of the building within glass, making the library space a curiosity in a display
case that it also comprises. Perhaps no library project is more Benjaminian than the
Library of the Faculty of Law, University of Zurich, where the external is made internal
by encasing a former courtyard, preserving as interior what used to be exterior walls that
opened onto outdoor space surrounded by a building:

> When designing a new library for the courtyard of Fietz's 1909 building, which
> previously housed the chemistry department, respect for the original building was
> paramount. Inspired by libraries of the Renaissance and Baroque periods,
> [Santiago] Calatrava [in 2004] inserted the library like a piece of furniture, barely
> impacting the exterior. Upon entering, one's eyes are immediately drawn upwards
> to the bright timber galleries, which surround an asymmetric elliptic atrium,
> reaching from the first floor to the seventh. It is roofed with a glass cupola which
> tempers the heat and light throughout the seasons. The books are clearly
> displayed, while the library appears to hover over the courtyard. (Roads
> Reflections 2014, 131)

The display of the library itself is enhanced by the many layers of construction and
renovation, resulting in a space that is separate yet visible from numerous angles,
surrounded by glass on all sides. Other prominent libraries with atria or glass shells
include: Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen (89); Library of Birmingham,
England (94); Book Mountain, Spijkenisse, Netherlands (112); Philological Library, Free
University of Berlin (164). The Black Diamond extension to the Royal Library of
Denmark features a large atrium that divides the building in two, connecting the old part
to the new one (151). It seems safe to say that, in recent decades, it is a trend for major
library building projects—whether new builds, renovations, or extensions—to have either
a glass atrium onto which the floors open or a wall of glass through which the stacks are
displayed. In the latter case, library buildings frequently have an arcaded space on the
other side of the wall, outside of the library proper.

4.2.6   Arcades

Three notable central public library projects in recent decades have incorporated arcades
into the larger library building. Put differently, these buildings contain both a central

branch and an arcaded space, in addition to other public or semi-public spaces as well as shops, kiosks, or cafés. I am referring to Vancouver Public Library's current Central Branch, opened in 1995, designed by Moshe Safdie; Salt Lake City's Main Library, opened in 2003, also designed by Safdie; and Seattle Public Library's Central Library, opened in 2004, designed by Rem Koolhaas's Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). All three are massive, postmodern structures, containing a multitude of interior spaces, relying heavily on glass architecture, visually opening them up to the surrounding cities while inviting people in. Mattern (2007) recognizes the influence of commerce on the design of these central libraries: "the ideals of retail design are influencing library design: the library as destination, much like the superstore or theme restaurant, functions primarily to draw visitors through its door" (87). However, I would take this argument one step further and say that the designs descend from the arcades, perhaps with a slight detour through the atrium. Whereas the arcade as thoroughfare got as many as possible to walk through by using shops as advertisements, the central library tries to convince people to enter its space by using the arcade as an advertisement. This seems to suggest that the roles are reversed, that the shop has taken on more importance than the arcade. But one must remember that the library also advertises itself, through its glass windows, and the entire space, through exterior glass walls on the exterior of the library arcade. (The traditional arcade, of course, had no exterior walls, as the shops formed parts of the neighbouring buildings.) Since neither the library arcade nor the library proper is a thoroughfare in the traditional sense, they must both function as advertisements to drive foot traffic. The arcade space is therefore more like a re-commercialized atrium (after Missac), which is especially evident in the example of Vancouver.

4.2.6.1   Vancouver

Safdie, in ambiguous language,[59] described the challenges and opportunities of designing a public space in a city still defined by the modern era: "Green glass, blue glass, pink glass, granite and metal. The city glistening in a kind of crass commercial modernity in the most beautiful physical setting. Now in the midst of all that . . . I'm asked to create a

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[59] Perhaps reminiscent of my own.

civic place with a sense of civic identity" (quoted in Lees 2001, 63). In a move perhaps fitting for the scenery while also attempting to undermine it, Safdie designed a postmodern yet classical—or postmodern *because* classical—library building made from glass, metal, and concrete. This is Vancouver's (in)famous Colosseum. From the very beginning, display was central to Safdie's design. His proposal gained community support from the public design competition (although the final decision was left in the hands of a selection committee): "The general view was that the Safdie model was fun and had panache. The other two models were seen as too conventional, too much like ordinary downtown office blocks or parkades" (Lees 2001, 69). The Colosseum stood out because it did *not* look like a library.[60] "Its oval shape, open, see-through arcade at the top of the building, paired columns on the facade, arched openings, buff-coloured sandstone-like concrete and monumental scale all mark the resemblance [to Rome's Colosseum]" (52). The glass, the arcade, the façades, all prominent modern architectural features in the arcades, were used by Safdie phantasmagorically to refer to the classical era. Yet even when the library's architecture hints at the classical, the modern must be on display: "The library design exploits the contrasts between a classical exterior and a modern interior [….] [W]hen you enter the library, […] you soon forget its classical and Colosseum-like echoes, so impressive is the display of the building's high-tech innards: air ducts, pipes and wires" (64). Glass architecture makes the library visible and protects it, even in this case when the exterior is just another interior, an approximation of an arcade.

While this boldness had its supporters, it also was not without its critics, who said "that the playful style and shopping mall-like interior arcade turned an important civic institution into a Disneyesque theme park" (Lees 2001, 53). Here, the arcade is one element in the larger phantasmagoria, which contains the entire structure. This is magnified by the fact that retail found a home within the building's arcaded atrium: "The interior centerpiece is a six-story high, curved and glass atrium flooded with natural light, which serves as foyer and retail area. The elliptical transparent wall and the flowing

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[60] Ironically, its visual boldness would go on to set a standard for large central libraries.

public space, which link the two exterior plazas on the north and south sides of the building, are its fundamental design elements" (Leckie and Hopkins 2002, 339). Along the curved passageway, shops line the exterior wall of the large structure, opposite the massive glass face of the library proper, on display for the passersby, the shopper, and the office worker, all of whom the library relies upon. "Attached to this Canadian Colosseum is a twenty-two-story office building, and inside that concourse are shops and cafés, additions that have helped to fund the library construction" (Mattern 2007, 87). In this skyscraper, the library itself becomes the atrium, which commercial functions reoccupy. The various entrances and the many windows serve to guide visitors to the library's front door, in hope of turning them into patrons, which added fuel to the critics' fire:

> For these critics, the resemblance of the library to the Roman Colosseum was a symbol of the wider process by which the displacement of public spaces was being concealed through elaborate bread-and-circuses variety dis(at)tractions staged within shopping malls, theme parks and other ersatz public spaces. […] The Colosseum design, with its commercial arcade of shops and cafes, is a contrived and ersatz architecture, devoid of any geographical specificity, that substitutes the placebo experience of consumption in a shopping mall-type environment for the truly democratic public space of the public library. (Lees 2001, 62)

Others, such as Mattern (2007), view the results more positively: "In Safdie's hands, the library becomes a convocation point, an activated public space, a mixed-use development with civic, cultural, and retail functions" (87).

For her part, the critical geographer Lees (2001) struggled for years to come to terms with the public debate surrounding VPL's Colosseum. The ambiguities she felt, compared to other people on both sides of the debate, helped her both to recontextualize the library and to put forth her own vision for "a critical geography of architecture". "Instead of asking what the library *means*, I began also to consider what it *does*. In moving towards a critical geography of architecture I do likewise" (71). To Lees, it still matters how the library is displayed (in the even broader sense), but what is most important is how that display is linked to use and to function, rather than semantic or semiotic meanings. For example, regarding a chance meeting between strangers in VPL's arcade, Lees writes: "This interaction to a considerable degree makes a nonsense of dystopic theses on the

demise of public space, for the arcade became an amenity, a stage, for public interaction rather than a symbol or example of the privatization of public space. The tables and chairs and coffee shop in the library arcade were fundamental to the nature of the interaction" (73). Lees demonstrates a dialectical approach to a consideration of both library display in the even broader sense and public spaces in general. In the arcaded central library, the arcade still functions dialectically.

4.2.6.2   Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City's library board members were so enamoured with Safdie's Vancouver design that, after slightly altering the rules of their competition, they ended up selecting him to design their new central branch (Mattern 2007, 85–88). The defining feature of SLC's library building is its Urban Room, the name given to the structure's large arcaded, atriumed entryway, opening up onto shops, sitting areas, an auditorium, and the library proper. Mattern recounts her first experience with the Urban Room, which is "located outside the library's secure entrance […and] can function separately from the library proper" (93) with different hours of operation:

> I arrived nearly an hour before Salt Lake City's central library opened to the public, and there were already twenty or thirty people gathered, including teenagers toting skateboards, well-dressed businesswomen, and an elderly gentleman obviously carrying a good portion of his worldly possessions in an overstuffed backpack. This motley crew congregated in the shimmering, five-story arcade running from one corner of the library's site to the other, bridging Salt Lake City's central business district and the nearby residential areas. These people waited together in splendor, in Salt Lake City's Urban Room, until the library gates opened. […] Inside the Urban Room one can shop at Crimson's News and Views for pencils, snacks, and aspirin—things patrons said in library surveys that they wanted to be able to access in the new building. The Library Store offers literary gifts, a deli has snacks, and the English Garden is filled with greenery. Look up and you see walkways crisscrossing the five-story atrium, linking the stacks to the four-level reading gallery, with fluttering books and butterflies in Ralph Helmick and Stu Schechter's whimsical hanging sculpture *Psyche*. One can purchase a newspaper and sit at one of the tables in this oversized atrium and maybe, but not necessarily, enter the library proper at some point" (Mattern 2007, 84–85).

Psyche is a large sculpture made of smaller sculptures made of books: "This hanging public art piece by Ralph Helmick and Stu Schechter, entitled *Psyche*, consists of nearly

fifteen hundred small sculptures of books and butterflies forming the shape of a head" (Dawson 2014, 132). Books are literally turned into décor, suspended from the glass architecture in the interior of an arcade outside the library proper. This installation highlights the importance of display in this space, in which the library is also on display in hopes of building anticipation in the patrons waiting outside. "The Urban Room is a transparent, 'come on in!' kind of architectural welcome to a library that embraces and promotes free public access and that seems entirely comfortable with the fact that this public place is inhabited by, and funded in part by, private interests" (Mattern 2007, 88).

Mattern (2007) argues, and I agree, that this relationship between commerce and public service has been present in public libraries since the modern age. "The urban room is emblematic of what public libraries have become or, more accurately, what they have been since the days of Carnegie, although we tend to forget it" (88). After introducing the example of Dewey's Library Bureau, which made a business of selling furniture and accessories to libraries as well as other businesses and individuals, Mattern continues: "And the commercial attractions in today's libraries have a nineteenth-century precedent. The cafés and shops are intended to function as romance novels did in the libraries of a hundred years ago; commercial activities and commercial literature both draw patrons who might not otherwise come to the library [….] Marketing and merchandising have for years influenced librarianship" (89). In developing this argument, Mattern seems to put forth the idea that because something has always been done a certain way, then that justifies the status quo, as she praises SLC's approach: "This is a library that regards comic book shops and newsstands not as competitors or commercial interests likely to tarnish the reputation of the pure, benevolent institution (that never was), but as services that enhance the library experience for its patrons" (88). Yet, to reiterate, for Benjamin the status quo was the catastrophe; anything that upheld the phantasmagoric dominance of capital in the modern city was part of the tragedy. I discuss this in a little more detail below, after the final example of an arcaded central library: Seattle.

4.2.6.3   Seattle

Just a year after SLC's library, modelled after Vancouver's, opened with its commercial arcade, so too did Seattle Public Library's (SPL) new central branch—designed by Rem

Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture—feature a similar area combining the public and the private in an ambiguous space.[61] There are multiple entrances to Seattle's arcade: "From the 4th Avenue entrance, users access the checkout desk, the book return, a colorful Children's Center, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) materials and a 425-seat auditorium. From the 5th Avenue entrance users enter a high-ceilinged atrium filled with natural light that leads to the fiction collection, young adult resources, the SPL Foundation gift shop, and an espresso stand" (Fisher et al. 2007, p. 139). Indeed, ambiguous spaces would be a recurring theme for this library according to Koolhaas's design, which Dahlkild (2011) argues "tries to combine fixed and flexible functions", aided by the transparency of metal-and-glass architecture: "The new, iconic Seattle library is an eleven-story, crystalline building with a striking appearance, lodged among the high-rise office buildings of the area. A glass and steel net forms a skin around the inner floating platforms" (36). The levels of the libraries are contained yet floating, separate yet visible from the arcade.

Fisher et al. (2007) use "Cresswell's [2004] five-part definition of 'place'" (153) to frame their survey of SPL's patrons to determine how the library provides a sense of place. Two features relevant to a discussion of library display in the even broader sense are "locale" and "landscape": "*Locale*: […] Users frequently commented on material features (plants, lights, furniture, coffee stand, colors, etc.) as they related to the activities they were conducting. […] *Landscape*: Respondents shared their thoughts and feelings regarding how the Central Library fits into the greater topography of the city and the downtown area" (153). In other words, the display of library spaces and the display of the library building both influenced not only how patrons used the library but also how they felt about it as a place. As a result, it could be both a locale and a landscape—both a contained space and a paradoxically ambiguous component of the cityscape that also helps to define it.

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[61] Perhaps the defining feature of the entire project, however, is the library proper's Living Room, which I highlight in Chapter 5 below.

Although Seattle, like other postmodern projects, was intended as a break from monumental library design, it has taken on its own monumentality over time, especially due to its ambiguity. OMA's work on, and philosophy for, the Seattle building was informed by their previous library project. For example, about 1989's Très Grande Bibliothèque competition, Koolhaas and Mau (1995) write: "Portrait of all the libraries the way they will never be seen: as shapes, as objects. If all goes according to plan, we will have taken that status away from them. Formless architecture" (683). Seattle's exterior shell and interior arcade are both clear examples of this formlessness. I also notice parallels to the two Bibliothèques Jussieu, completed by OMA in 1993, in which the science and humanities libraries were "superimposed" on each other and the urban landscape, with the entire complex serving also as a thoroughfare through the university's campus "connected in the south with the metro station and in the north with the Seine" (1314–1315). The libraries, like arcades, become both street and house, due in part to their commercial functions: "Through their scale and variety, the effect of the inhabited planes becomes almost that of a street; this boulevard generates a system of supra-programmatic 'urban' elements in the interior: plazas, parks, monumental staircases, cafés, shops" (1326). For OMA, such a design represents the possibility for library spaces, however conceived, to affect everyday life: "The architecture represents a serene background against which 'life' unfolds in the foreground. In this urban concept the specific constructions of the libraries will have unlimited potential for individual expression and difference" (1328). However, even in OMA's somewhat self-congratulatory formulation, the library thus conceived cannot escape the influence of modernity: "The visitor becomes a Baudelairean *flâneur*, inspecting and being seduced by a world of books and information—by the urban scenario" (1322–1325). The visible library contains and is part of the seduction of the flâneur's urban landscape.

At the end of the previous chapter, I argued that the library can help the flâneur become an active, rather than passive, participant in his surroundings. But must this participation take place in a capitalist context? Put differently, is the public library a site for flânerie only because it features commodities, only because our gazes have been commodified? With glass architecture, the library itself and its holdings become an entire display, are put on display. The public library as place becomes the site and subject of this exhibition,

of the library's own exhibit. It is this side of the history of the public library that Mattern (2007) seems to minimise when writing about Salt Lake City:

> History has already justified the integration of such seemingly library-'inappropriate' activities. To regard the conference centers, the exhibition galleries, the copy centers, the bookshops, and cafés as inconsistent with some historical notion of the library as a literacy-centric institution is to ignore the history of the public library as a social and cultural center. The diversified, commercialized institution of today is only part of a tradition of diversified institutions that are subject to economic pressures, and thus must evolve to remain economically viable. (93–94)

While I agree that the public library has never been ideal, that it has never been purely about literacy or public service, I also must invoke Benjamin's theses on history: history justifies nothing, especially in cases when that history is a series of ongoing crises. The public library might have always been commercial, like everything else displayed in the modern city, but that is precisely the problem, the dream from which we must awaken. Taken to its Benjaminian conclusion, Mattern's line of reasoning indicates that the public library, especially through its display in the even broader sense, has been one factor keeping us in our dream-filled sleep for over 150 years. As a commercialized institution with formless architecture, the library becomes part of the urban landscape, which Benjamin argues was redefined in the modern era.

4.2.7   Landscapes

Libraries, especially the massive new central branches, no longer use their windows for intricately designed and built exhibits, let alone materials themselves. Rather, the library's windows display the library itself; it must stand on its own. Or it must isolate itself further, becoming a self-contained unit separate from the surrounding city: "The San Antonio building [built in the 1960s] is completely dependent on artificial lighting except for some sidewalk-level windows" (Oehlerts 1991, 137). In either case, the library becomes part of the urban landscape, which is categorically different from a natural one; Benjamin quotes an unknown author: "In passing from all these Romantic poets to Baudelaire, we pass from a landscape of nature to a landscape of stone and flesh" [J13a,4]. Benjamin's language alludes to a quote from Balzac elsewhere in *The Arcades Project*: "Beneath the roofs of Paris: 'These Parisian savannahs consisting of roofs

leveled out to form a plain, but covering abysses teeming with population.' Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*, ed. Flammarion, p. 95.[62] The end of a long description of the roof-landscapes of Paris" [M20a,2]. This roof-landscape is not unified like a natural landscape but rather dependent on the simultaneous distance and closeness of buildings, streets, arcades, and similar features that are interior and exterior at once. "Landscape—that, in fact, is what Paris becomes for the flâneur. Or, more precisely: the city splits for him into its dialectical poles. It opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room" [M1,4]. This dialectical character of life in the modern city contributes to its phantasmagoric character, which gets reflected and multiplied in this city's commercial buildings: "This phantasmagoria, in which the city appears now as a landscape, now as a room, seems later to have inspired the décor of department stores, which thus put flânerie to work for profit" (Benjamin [1939] 1999a, 21). If we recall Borgwardt, Coplan, and the windows, display cases, glass shells, atria, and arcades of public library buildings, we can see that flânerie has now been put to work for the profit of the formless library as landscape. This process is enhanced—but can also be undermined—by library design, depending on whether it is standardized or revolutionary.

4.2.8   Library Design

As I argued in Chapter 3 above, the modern public library movement was the time of standardization in the library world, and Carnegie libraries were the monuments of this process. That is, the existence of a standardized form gave public libraries more visibility and therefore legitimacy in larger society. The story, as recounted by DuMont (1933), of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, one of the first Carnegie libraries, shows that this display of the building wasn't necessarily linked to use. Carnegie chose to place the library in the middle-class neighbourhood of Oakland. According to the local Trades Council, this meant that Carnegie placed "within the reach of the workingman books, etc. which they might never see, however great their desire" (quoted in Dumont 1933, 6). The public library was literally seen yet figuratively distant, while the books inside were figuratively within reach yet literally unseen.

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[62] Benjamin's citation.

The neoclassical modern public library was both more and less visible than the arcade. The library occupied the footprint of a traditional building, obviously, with four or more external walls, often made of brick or limestone. These solid, opaque materials closed off the library completely, however, while the arcade remained open on one or more ends, sometimes a very large scale, with the opening taking up almost the entire street-facing façade. Even in the case of a domed or peaked roof made possible by iron construction, a library frequently featured skylights or clerestory windows, separated from each other, rather than ceilings or roofs made entirely of glass. The arcade was therefore more visible from above—part of its self-advertising, no doubt, as it was usually surrounded by taller residential structures that looked down into the arcade space. During the modern public library movement, it would have been rare indeed for a library, especially a new purpose-built monumental one, to have such lofty neighbours or to have been planned with much consideration for what its interiors looked like from outside and above. This might explain why more recent, steel-and-glass central public library projects in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries feature completely glass roofs, if not whole exteriors, increasingly surrounded as they are on all sides by skyscrapers and highrises.

After iron-and-glass architecture was introduced in Ste-Geneviève, other libraries, particularly in North America, used it to enhance or reinforce their own imposing, monumental classicism at a time of rapid social and spatial change. The Jefferson Building, even with its dome made possible by new technological advances, is only modern in the sense that it appropriates the past by approximating it. In the arcades, Jugendstil tried to react to modernity by using new technologies to imitate Renaissance designs [G1,7]; in the libraries, Beaux-Arts responded to the same forces through an exaggerated classicism. It is perhaps only now that libraries are embracing the new forms made possible by metal-and-glass designs. "Since they are voids—they do not have to be 'built'—individual libraries can be shaped strictly according to their own logic, independent of each other, of the external envelope, of the usual difficulties of architecture, even gravity" (Koolhaas and Mau 1995, 620). Yet this mindset quickly leads to the same international superstar architects (like Koolhaas's OMA) working on major projects throughout the world:

>Because the same architects and firms—Safdie, Cesar Pelli, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, and Michael Graves, for example—appear repeatedly in libraries' short lists, the similarities between their proposals for diverse cities become obvious. As a consequence, it becomes clear that the designs they present to the client as inherently contextual, and the design elements rationalized by references to site and local character, are really just revisited signature elements that lend themselves to customized justifications in different contexts. The glass wall that, in one city, promotes views of the surrounding geographic splendor will, in a sun-deprived city, maximize the passage of light, or, in sunny region, even celebrate the abundance of light. These design elements are conveniently polysemic. (Mattern 2007, 58)

According to Griffis (2013), "Mattern's (2007) study of new central public libraries examines what one might call the 'new monumentalism': the central library building as a symbol of urban prosperity in the age of the knowledge economy" (15). Drawing as they do on a variety of styles and architectural and historical references, these central libraries embody a new monumentalism that depends, I believe, largely on the scale, scope, and prominence of these buildings: "The architectural styles [of the new 'downtown libraries'] range from classical symmetrical buildings with columns and decoration, in the tradition of the historic Carnegie libraries, such as the new libraries in Chicago and Nashville; to the deconstructed coliseum of the library in Vancouver, and the 'iceberg' of glass and steel that forms the library in Seattle" (Dahlkild 2011, 34). Compare this new standard with Oehlerts's (1991) statement less than three decades ago: "Only a few large public library buildings have been designed with glass and steel" (139). In other words, we are already in a new period of standardization of library display in the even broader sense. Even smaller libraries (e.g., neighbourhood branches or those in small towns and rural areas), being constrained by budgetary restrictions and wanting only to fulfill practical goals, construct modest, utilitarian structures that just as easily be—and often are shared with—municipal offices or community centres. At both the monumental scale and the local one, library design has taken on the form of the surrounding area.

This is consistent with Lefebvre's (1991) warning of the dangers of splitting studies and expertise of space into different disciplines, rather than considering space and its related ideas as a whole. If libraries are constructed locally as part of their cities (or communities), and if the formless library as place is difficult or impossible to separate from other space(s), then how accurate is it to talk of "library design" or "library

architecture"? It does seem that libraries are designed according to more universal properties, depending on their localities and purposes. Small rural libraries are minimal, utilitarian. Small town libraries fit into the aesthetic of the town. Large urban libraries aren't even designed as libraries at all, fitting into the postmodern international aesthetic, with large competitions and celebrity architects, meant to promote the city rather than the library itself. While Carnegie libraries might now be considered to have a universal style, they were a generic Beaux-Arts style, stripped of any differences, to make them fully adaptable to any town or city. They weren't libraries; they were symbols of modernity. They still are. They were *produced* as such spaces, Lefebvre would say, and they persist. Regarding Vancouver, Lees (2001) observed: "the public process of deliberating on the library design was the very means through which its contested meanings were produced" (71). From a Benjaminian perspective, as I hope I have established by now, this production depends on the dream-state of capitalism. Iron-and-glass architecture was the newfound enchantment of the modern city; its metal-and-glass descendant is at once a way to break free from that enchantment *and* to become further enchanted. This is precisely because our contemporary public library, especially the huge central building, is left with no other option but to display itself. The challenge, therefore, is to find a way to transcend the display of the library through this very same inevitable display. The library must, by necessity, be on display, but how can it do so without being yet another enchantment abstracting our everyday lives? We need to find a way to display the public library that undermines its dream-house qualities.

The public library that so many people idealize is not a timeless design, but one ushered in by modernity in response to the changing character of the city under high capitalism. The monumentality of the (especially Beaux-Arts) library building was a reaction to, while at the same time a symptom of, this transformed urban environment. It was part of the crisis of modernity, which was also a crisis of the status quo, a crisis that is being resurrected as cities and their libraries continue to change drastically—while also remaining the same—in the information age. The crisis is in crisis. The options are to embrace the *new* architecture of aluminum and glass, and therefore information-age capitalism, or the *old* architecture influenced by and contemporary with iron and glass, and therefore modernity's high capitalism. The era of the arcade and that of the shopping

mall are presented as alternatives to one another, when they are in fact extensions of the same process, maintaining the status quo while also offering the chance for change. The library's display of itself therefore takes on the characteristics of the items it displays inside: commodities—products of the most recent developments in capitalism—that, because public, might transcend their purely functional or transactional destinies, that is, their use or exchange values. The glass atrium, for example, by cutting through the library's functional spaces, disrupts and limits services while opening up the building to the city.

The formless library is continually being reconfigured to enhance its visibility. New thresholds develop between public spaces and staff ones. "In fact, the reconception of public areas almost always necessitates parallel changes in staff areas" (Mattern 2007, 125). Staff roam about the stacks or other public areas (e.g., roaming reference), service desks get distributed through the rearranged stacks, or service desks get removed altogether, to highlight just a few recent trends. It is safe to say that such reconceptions of public areas depend on their *reception*, which is directly tied to visibility. Indeed, each one of these examples depends on the staff member—specifically, the staff member's body—being more visible and receptive within the library space (or the library's spaces). While this opens up services and presumably frees the worker from the former secret confines of closed stacks and barricaded circulation desks, it also means that those same workers are physically on display. I can't help but think of the sexual nature of life in the modern city identified by Benjamin, who saw visibility and receptivity as example of high capitalism's dominance over the body of anyone who chanced to wander into public spaces. The library worker—like retail workers, like those of any profession forced to haunt the passages of the city—must be consumed as part of the reconfigured library, more so now than in the past.

Library display in the even broader sense demonstrates both the separateness of the standalone library and its integration into its community. The major public library building as municipal project represents its own monumentally, its own singular importance, while inevitably affecting many—if not all—aspects of everyday life that surround it, that overlap with it, that arise because of it. It is in the new, postmodern steel-

and-glass central library that the library has realized its destiny as an arcade stretched to the ends of an entire square block (or multiple blocks), entirely visible on all sides.[63] Yet even in arcaded libraries—Seattle, Vancouver, Salt Lake City—the library space itself is not as accessible as an arcade, since admission is still restricted (even the library proper might not be open when the library building's arcade is, as in Salt Lake City), materials are still safeguarded, entrance and exits are still gated. In the fully glass, fully arcaded library as thoroughfare, the library itself serves the role of a single shop—albeit an anchor tenant—within the arcade. In displaying itself totally, the library can't help but display its inherent limitations. The only way to do otherwise would be to design a library service—an entire library system and organization—entirely free of such limitations. Here, I agree with Koolhaas and Mau (1995): "liberated from its former obligations, architecture's last function will be the creation of the symbolic spaces that accommodate the persistent desire for collectivity" (604). The library's exhibition of itself is the physical manifestation of its potentiality; the challenge is turning it into actuality. How can we design a library to be completely open, fully integrated into the surrounding community, a thoroughfare for the everyday, to display itself without remaining separate, locked, closed, encased in a shell, however transparent? Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, I provide some tentative answers to this crucial question, which I believe should be at the centre of all library as place research.

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[63] Perhaps the same could be said about any public or quasipublic building that is designed to advertise itself and make as many people as possible enter, rather than those buildings that restrict access to a select few (e.g., residents, employees, customers with a certain level of purchasing power, etc.).

Chapter 5

5   The Living Room of the Community: A Convolute

"Antiquity. I prefer ruins to reconstructions."
–Joubert (1983, 56)

"The books improve the room somewhat."
–Bioy Casares ([1940] 2003, 14)

"You see, all the books were in the library at home; one simply took them from the shelves."
–Arendt (2013, 15)

"alone in my room / I feel like such a part of the community"
–Smog (1997)

Benjamin's ideas regarding the domestic bourgeois parlour and the blurring of interior and exterior spaces within the arcades and the modern city provide a theoretical framework to reconsider public libraries. From their nineteenth-century form as single public rooms in otherwise private dwellings to the recent trend of "the living room of the community" (e.g., Evjen and Audunson 2009; Griffis 2010; Griffis 2013; Leckie and Hopkins 2002; Vårheim 2009; Wiegand 2005), public libraries still have much in common with the arcades. The public library, with its atrium and alcoves, is the parlour made living room of the community, where the inside and outside are indistinguishable. In this dream state, the public library is where our nineteenth-century collective dreams dwell.[64]   {1}

In its published form, *The Arcades Project* is a montage of notes, prose passages, and extensive quotations from a variety of sources. At the centre of the work is Benjamin's philosophical concern for the presentation of words, images, and thoughts. What can a Benjaminian literary montage contribute to and reveal about contemporary discussions related to the public library as the living room of the

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[64] I believe that a Benjaminian literary montage is most effective when it is seamless and integrates a variety of sources on equal footing. To that end, I have chosen to mirror the presentation and structure of *The Arcades Project* by single-spacing this chapter, numbering each passage (in braces, e.g., "{1}"), assigning themes to some (e.g., "|Benjamin in exile|"), and using distinct fonts for each type of source: Candara for my original prose, Gill Sans for quotes by Benjamin or from texts he co-authored, Helvetica Light for quotes about Benjamin or using his ideas, and Times New Roman for all other quotes. In addition to the headings of the Convolutes, Benjamin noted some passages by theme (e.g., "Awakening", "Dream Consciousness", "Dream Structure", "Fashion", "Flâneur", "Gas", "Haussmannization", "Interior", "Iron", "Jugendstil"). I have mimicked this technique by assigning recurring themes to some of the passages in this chapter. Unlike Benjamin, I have numbered each use of a theme sequentially, at first to show the linear progression of the story of Benjamin in exile and later for the sake of consistency.

community? To address this question, I present a montage of original prose alongside quotations taken from Benjamin, from his biographers, and from primary and secondary literature related to the library as place. |Montage, 1| {2}

"Phenomena do not […] enter into the realm of ideas whole, in their crude empirical state, adulterated by appearances, but only in their basic elements, redeemed. They are divested of their false unity so that, thus divided, they might partake of the genuine unity of truth. […] For ideas are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete elements in the concept: as the configuration of these elements. […] Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars. […] Ideas are timeless constellations, and by virtue of the elements' being seen as points in such constellations, phenomena are subdivided and at the same time redeemed" (Benjamin 2009, 33–34). |Montage, 2| {3}

Citing Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686): "The idea is a monad—that means briefly: every idea contains the image of the world. The purpose of the representation of the idea is nothing less than an abbreviated outline of this image of the world" (Benjamin 2009, 48). The treatise, the montage, the book, the library all outline this image. |Montage, 3| {4}

This montage supplies half of the image for the librarian-reader: "As Susan Buck-Morss [1986][65] proposes, Benjamin's collection of scraps, notes, and images of outmoded commercial forms found in the Paris arcades were meant to provide half a text—or rather half an image, to which readers would supply the other half by bringing images of their own historical moment to bear on these antiquated artifacts" (Smith and Sliwinski 2017, 9). You, reader, will complete the outline. |Montage, 4| {5}

Benjamin influences this topic in two ways: first, as a case study, as someone who frequently worked in libraries, who made libraries the centre of his daily routines, and who moved his own collection of books between various homes, between various libraries within those homes; second, through his thoughts and theories related to dwelling, homes, and libraries, especially with regard to the modern city.   {6}

Working on his Trauerspiel study: "By the autumn of the year [1923], Benjamin's research was in progress. He was a library-cormorant and a devourer of ancient print quite in the manner of a Coleridge or a Marx. He had collected baroque poetry and emblem-books for his personal delight. Now he could ferret with intent among the folios, broadsheets and in-octavos of the Berlin *Staatsbibliothek*. He made some six-hundred excerpts from long-dormant baroque plays, from theological tracts of the

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[65] Reprinted as Buck-Morss (2006).

tormented period, and from secondary sources" (Steiner 2009, 9). {7}

In 1930, Benjamin "claimed to be at peace with his subsequent loneliness—whether in his Berlin apartment with its two-thousand volume library or in a primitive summer house in Ibizza [*sic*]" (Buck-Morss 1989, 37). |Benjamin in exile, 1| {8}

"Benjamin's conversations [in 1931] in Le Levandou with Brecht—who was now clowning, now fierce—stand out against this dark horizon [of Benjamin contemplating suicide]. As was usual, their talk ranged over a number of different writers—Shakespeare, Schiller, Proust, Trotsky—and touched as well on what Benjamin calls 'my favorite topic,' that of dwelling (das Wohnen)" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 358). Benjamin dwelled within the topic of dwelling. |Benjamin in exile, 2| {9}

"Instead of 'palace' or a 'temple', the library as a place is perceived more as a 'living room' or a commons" (Griffis 2013, 105). {10}

The library approximates a living room due to its dream house properties and its dialectical relationship with the home. {11}

"Baudelaire, in the introduction to his translation of Poe's 'Philosophy of Furniture,' which originally appeared in October 1852 in *Le Magasin des familles*: 'Who among us, in his idle hours, has not taken a delicious pleasure in constructing for himself a model apartment, a dream house, a house of dreams?' Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Crépet, *Histoires grostesques et sérieuses par Poe* (Paris, 1937), p. 304" [I8,3]. |Baudelaire, 1| {12}

It bears repeating: "Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" [N1a,8]. |Montage, 5| {13}

Quoting Baudelaire: "'Do we show the public . . . the mechanism behind our effects? . . . Do we display all the rags, the paint, the pulleys, the chains, the alterations, the scribbled-over proof sheets—in short, all the horrors that make up the sanctuary of art?' Ch. B., *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, p. 582" [J56,4]. This question applies to both the montage and the library. |Baudelaire, 2| |Montage, 6| {14}

"Ruinous objects housed in ruinous buildings—these provide a model of, and material for, montage" (Gilloch 2002, 136). |Montage, 7| {15}

"It is ultimately the task of the reader to rescue the fragments of the text, to redeem and refunction them in the struggles of the present. The reader is the

physiognomist of the text-as-city. Reading is the salvation of the text, which complements rag-picking as the redemption of the thing. Benjamin predicts the afterlife, the ever-changing manifestation of the truth content of his own activity as a writer" (Gilloch 1996, 183). |Montage, 8| {16}

"And yet when Benjamin attempted, as in the first Baudelaire essay, to let the montage of historical facts speak for themselves, he ran the risk that readers could absorb these shocks in the same distracted manner, the same trancelike dream consciousness in which they absorbed sensations when walking on the crowded city streets or moving through aisles of department store merchandise. The danger was that the lay reader of the Passagen-Werk would miss the point, that it would be accessible only to initiates" (Buck-Morss 1989, 252–252). I recognize this danger and proceed nonetheless. |Baudelaire, 3| |Montage, 9| {17}

"Arcades are houses or passages having no outside—like the dream" [L1a,1]. {18}

"Most of his reading, though, was devoted to his work on the Paris arcades— and it took place in the Bibliothèque Nationale. In the course of the 1930s, amid constant changes of abode and even country, the Bibliothèque Nationale was Benjamin's lodestar, the one homestead on which he could count" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 450). |Benjamin in exile, 3| {19}

Recall: "Streets are the dwelling place of the collective. […] [N]ewspaper stands [are] its libraries [….] [T]he arcade was the drawing room. More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses" [M3a,4]. |Décor, 1| {20}

Recall: "All collective architecture of the nineteenth century constitutes the house of the dreaming collective" [H°,1].   {21}

Recall: "Utter ambiguity of the arcades: street and house" [O°,40].   {22}

"The road has been taken for the dwelling place. A bad guide is leading us" (Joubert 1983, 52).   {23}

From the "Exposé of 1939": "The gaze which the allegorical genius turns on the city betrays, instead, a profound alienation. It is the gaze of the flâneur, whose way of life conceals behind a beneficent mirage the anxiety of future inhabitants of our metropolises" (Benjamin [1939] 1999a, 21).   {24}

"The house reappears from the arcades' street market" (Day 2001, 11).   {25}

"My library is transformed into a living city: so much of what I read about has its corollary before me" (Elkin 2017, 125).   {26}

The library building is literally and figuratively the home of library services: "As well as providing encouragement and noting lessons learned along the way, the projects described by these case studies offer exciting instances of the way modern library services, and the renewed buildings that house them, are developing" (Dewe 2009, xvi).

{27}

The literary montage shows that Benjamin's themes and form—like the library and its materials—can both renew and be renewed. |Montage, 10| {28}

There are many ways of dwelling in the library, including: the library as a home for materials, a home for activities (e.g., studying, lending); the library as a place to belong or to feel a sense of belonging; libraries as figurative or symbolic homes (e.g., the living room of the community); libraries, through their circulating collections and digital resources, entering or influencing the domestic sphere; libraries in the home (i.e., private collections); libraries coming out of the home, such as early public library services that began in front rooms or parlours of houses; and library products (e.g., furniture, scrapbooks, office supplies) marketed for home use, initially coinciding with the public library movement but carrying forward to the present day.   {29}

Another way of dwelling in the library: the "library building is obviously home to a library" (Mattern 2007, 93). The building houses the library; the library building and the library itself are two distinct yet often overlapping entities. The library building can also be home to other places, as in Vancouver's arcade or Salt Lake City's Urban Room.   {30}

In addition to dwelling in the metaphorical sense, there are at least six types of "home libraries": (1) personal collections of books in the home; (2) the furniture—shelves, cabinets—on or in which such home collections were stored; (3) a room in the home, sometimes overlapping in identity or purpose with the parlour, to display collections of oddities, bric-a-brac, various artworks (whether unique or mass produced), magazines, and, possibly, a book or two; (4) selections of works in one volume or a series of volumes offered by a publisher to supplement or comprise the entirety of a personal home collection; (5) deposit collections offered by public libraries as part of library extension, especially around the turn of the last century; and (6) a patron's preferred or neighbourhood branch in a multibranch system. The library as living and living room as library each incorporate one or more elements of these home libraries. |Décor, 2| {31}

Recall Mattern (2007) in Salt Lake City's Urban Room, a "public place […] inhabited by, and funded in part by, private interests" (88), where one can sit and enjoy the library without having to enter it (see Chapter 4 above).   {32}

"A few years ago libraries were flying high. I wrote a book about the so-called 'third wave' library-building boom of the '90s and early aughts, a boom made possible in part by the dot.com bubble. Today, […] our cities and their libraries find themselves in a very

different situation. While libraries are welcoming record numbers of visitors and breaking circulation records, library budgets are facing drastic cuts, some of those flashy new buildings are often shuttered, and cities are resorting to the privatization or outsourcing of library services. Meanwhile, many services that patrons once relied on libraries to provide—specifically the provision and preservation of information in multiple formats—are now accessible elsewhere, including in our living rooms, and even in the palms of our hands" (Mattern 2012). |Technology, 1| {33}

Benjamin brought a unique approach to historical materialism by using the method of literary montage "to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components" [N2,6]. Space is produced; history is *constructed*. |Montage, 11| {34}

"From the Goethe essay [1924] on, quotations are at the center of every work of Benjamin's. This very fact distinguishes his writings from scholarly works of all kinds in which it is the function of quotations to verify and document opinions, wherefore they can safely be relegated to the Notes. This is out of the question in Benjamin. […] The main work consisted in tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their raison d'être in a free-floating state, as it were" (Arendt [1968] 2019, lix). |Montage, 12| {35}

"[Benjamin's] Marxism was a library affair (more Lenin and Trotsky than Marx, and more early Lukács than Engels)" (Jephcott 1978, xxviii).   {36}

"'Home' as a cultural concept and a social phenomenon underwent extensive revaluation and change as industrial capitalism came to dominate the economic life of western Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century" (T. Logan 2001, 22–23).   {37}

"[T]he very collection of objects that in one sense constitutes the Victorian home also threatens it: superfluity turns the home into a museum. Aside from the glimpses of domestic interiors that they offer us, various linguistic representations of the Victorian interior and its contents allow us to read traces of anxiety, longing, and repulsion" (T. Logan 2001, 9). |Décor, 3| {38}

Borgwardt (1970) tells of a shopping area rented to house the library's gimmicky Victorian parlour: "An annual series of children's book exhibits has been run by the Walthamstow [England] Public Libraries since 1960. The librarians here were very conscious of the lack of book awareness in Walthamstow, a city of 110,000 which had no 'real' bookshop. The aim has been to drive home the value and importance of books, and the librarians felt no shame in using gimmicks to draw attention to their message. […] A hall in a busy shopping area and not far from the Library was hired for the exhibitions. The first of the series was a nostalgic flashback to Victorian times, and two 'rooms' were built within the hall. The first was a Victorian parlour, (the local Museum staff were responsible for this), to create the atmosphere in which the books on display would have

been read. The other room represented a small modern children's library" (209–210). In the absence of a town bookstore, the public library uses a shopping area to construct a facsimile of a parlour, which is deemed to be the ideal reading atmosphere, rather than the library itself. |Décor, 4| {39}

A different display, on a different continent, brings the street and the house *into* the library, The street is the décor; the room is the exhibit: "An exhibition on the Housing Problem is described by Mildred Binder Buchanan of the Chicago Public Library in 1949. This exhibition was on an ambitious scale, for not only were large panels of photographs and scale drawings displayed, as well as books and pamphlets on slum clearance, with an old street light set up in the corridor to provide atmosphere, but *an actual room was detached from a down-town slum house and transported intact to the exhibit*! We are told that 'it was encrusted with filth, papered with newspapers, and still furnished with dilapidated odds and end.'[66] At one time the single room had housed a family of four persons" (Borgwardt 1970, 44–45). Not only were newspaper stands the urban collective's libraries, but they also provided the materials to paper the walls of their dwellings. |Décor, 5| {40}

"The letter form suited [Benjamin] because it predisposes to mediated, objectified immediacy. Letter writing simulates life in the medium of the frozen word. In a letter one can disavow isolation and nonetheless remain distant, apart, isolated" (T. Adorno [1966] 1994, xviii). I think that the same can be said about the book or any other written form. The library is one site of this process, while also offering the potential to break the isolation of experiencing the written word. The library as living room of the community is a more concentrated attempt to break the collective isolation of its patrons by simulating the home. Of course, the home itself is the initial site of isolation, for the writer or otherwise. There is, therefore, a dialectical element to breaking isolation in the living room of the community. |Benjamin in exile, 4| {41}

Library work is the metaphorical construction of the library as house: "The very necessary routines of library work—so often described as the 'real work' of the library— ordering, accessioning, cataloguing, classification and circulation, have an importance and a significance of their own. They are the foundation, the walls, the roof of the structure. Display work, reference work and service to readers have a value of a different kind, they are like the doors and windows and ventilation of the building. For now we are dealing not only with books and cards and inanimate objects, but with human material" (Borgwardt 1970, 217). Access to the house is granted through work that is concerned with humans rather than objects. |Library worker, 1| {42}

If the library is the community's living room, then what comprises the rest of house?

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[66] Borgwardt cites: "Buchanan, M. B. Housing exhibit. *Wilson Library Bulletin* 23: 528, 1949".

The obvious answer is the city, in the case of urban libraries. What about with suburban, rural, and small town libraries? Are they an entire house unto themselves? Another obvious answer: usually not; they are often smaller, more modest, more limited in their collections and services than urban libraries. So we who reside in such areas, our homes must be nearly the entirety of our dwelling places. The library integrates itself more seamlessly with the other communal rooms of city life, but its role as living room is more necessary—and therefore should be, must yet become, more pronounced—outside of urban centres. {43}

"The new Hogansville Public Library, GA, draws design inspiration from surrounding - historic homes and barns" (Fox 2017). {44}

"Physical libraries, says [Toronto Public Library's Director of Branch Libraries Anne] Bailey, are community connectors that build community capacity while acting as the 'essential component of 21st century public space.' Thus, libraries must be visionary, dynamic and inviting in order to promote community togetherness. She sees the term community living room, a term often cited by architects, as too limiting. Instead, she prefers 'community home'" (Phillips 2014, 21). The library as living room and the library as home are two distinct yet related phenomena. To suggest that the library is the community living room is to extend Benjamin's analogy that the entire city is the extension and projection of a bourgeois home made up of places (e.g., streets, newsstands) and objects (e.g., benches, mailboxes) that take on the qualities of rooms while giving parts of the city roomlike qualities. To suggest that the library is the community home is to say that the library contains all these qualities within itself; it is the reinteriorization of the bourgeois shell. Whether the library is a living room or a home depends on the physical, social, and economic characteristics of the city. |Ontario, 1| |Shell, 1| {45}

In the arcades, the second floor above the shop was often the shopkeeper's living quarters, inaccessible to the public. The shop was the home of the owner. {46}

"In the 1880s, Black readers excluded from the public library in Macon, Georgia, patronized a 1,000-volume subscription library in a local clergyman's home" (Mattern 2019). |Library worker, 2| {47}

Two examples from Huron County, ON: In Kirkton, the library opened in the front room of a farmhouse. In Goderich, the attic of the purpose-built library was the librarian's apartment. In Kirkton, the house became the library. In Goderich, the library became the house. In either case, it was the worker's dwelling. |Library worker, 3| |Ontario, 2| {48}

An example from the neighbouring county: "The oldest library in Thorndale was the Mechanic's Institute Library. It was held first in the Masonic Hall, but since enough members could not be secured to pay expenses, it was moved to James Harding's store. Later it was transferred to the Public School at the corner. […] In 1914, on August 1, the Women's Institute, on the suggestion of Miss E. G. Harding and Mrs. Robert. [*sic*]

Stevenson, was instrumental in starting a Public Library. At first it was held in homes, then in the Fire Hall, in the village Council room and later in the Orange Hall. On January 1, 1915 the Women's Institute relinquished its control so that it could be converted into a Public Library. […] The history of the library was one of progress and in every endeavour to improve the library or building, the board received the co-operation of the village and township residents. […] In 1934, Thorndale Library joined the Middlesex County Library Association and by 1947 there were 2,200 books available. In 1962, it became a branch of the Middlesex County Library" (I. Logan 1967, 39). |Ontario, 3| {49}

One more example, this time from two political subdivisions over in what is now the Regional Municipality of Waterloo: "About this time [c. 1835] citizens [in Galt] wanting a library borrowed about $80 from William Dickson and sent to Scotland for books. The library, or collection of volumes, was first kept in a Mrs. Johnson's home at Ainslie and Main Streets. After the erection of the town hall it was moved there and newspapers and magazines were made available. That first library served the people from Mrs. Johnson's parlour for about 20 years" (Moyer 1971, 118). I have no doubt that similar stories can be found in communities all over Ontario and the rest of Canada, North America (e.g. Martin 1993, 68, 94, 156, 157), and the West. These few examples should suffice. |Library worker, 4| |Ontario, 4| {50}

The public library in the private home was not simply a modern phenomenon: "Throughout the South in the early 1960s, activists (many from the North) opened dozens of Freedom Libraries in churches, rundown houses, and other ramshackle buildings, which brought donated reading material, educational courses, and voter registration drives to underserved Black communities" (Mattern 2019).   {51}

After Benjamin rejected Scholem's offer in 1930 to move to Palestine: "Three years later, Hitler was in power, the brown shirts roamed through the streets of Berlin, and Benjamin was an exile, without a roof over his head, or, rather, without his collection of rare editions to protect him against a world of merciless enemies" (Jephcott 1978, xiii). Displaced from his library, Benjamin was homeless without his protective shell. |Benjamin in exile, 5| |Shell, 2| {52}

Benjamin quotes Balzac by way of Curtius: "Perhaps there is a connection between the shrinking of residential space and the elaborate furnishing of the interior. Regarding the first, Balzac makes some telling observations: 'Small pictures alone are in demand because large ones can no longer be hung. Soon it will be a formidable problem to house one's library. . . . One can no longer find space for provisions of any sort.' […] Ernst Robert Curtius, Balzac (Bonn, 1923), pp. 28-29." [I6,5]. As residential space shrank in the city, books needed to be housed elsewhere, in the various libraries. |Décor, 6| {53}

From the "Exposé of 1935": "The shattering of the interior occurs via Jugendstil around the turn of the century. […] The new elements of iron construction—girder forms—preoccupy Jugendstil. […] Around this time, the real gravitational center

of living space shifts to the office. The irreal center makes its place in the home" (Benjamin [1935] 1999a, 9).   {54}

Benjamin ([1939] 1999a) states this last thought slightly differently in the "Exposé of 1939": "The liquidation of the interior took place during the last years of the nineteenth century, in the work of Jugendstil, but it had been coming for a long time. The art of the interior was an art of genre. Jugendstil sounds the death knell of the genre. […] Henceforth, as Fourier had foreseen, the true framework for the life of the private citizen must be sought increasingly in offices and commercial centers. The fictional framework for the individual's life is constituted in the private home" (20).   {55}

"For the private person, living space becomes, for the first time, antithetical to the place of work. […] In shaping his private environment he represses both. From this spring the phantasmagorias of the interior. For the private individual the private environment represents the universe. In it he gathers remote places and the past. His drawing room is a box in the world theater" (Benjamin [1939] 1978, 154). |Décor, 7| {56}

Borges (1971): "At home, both English and Spanish were commonly used. If I were asked to name the chief event in my life, I should say my father's library. In fact, I sometimes think I have never strayed outside that library. I can still picture it. It was in a room of its own, with glass-fronted shelves, and must have contained several thousand volumes" (140). |Childhood, 1| {57}

From Benjamin's ([1955] 1978) "Karl Kraus" essay: "It is entirely logical when the impoverished, reduced human being of our days, the contemporary, can only seek sanctuary in the temple of living things in that most withered form, as a private individual" (246).   {58}

The modern French public library was composed of books confiscated from the homes of people who had left their homelands: "The public library had had a dual composition: its original stock and the post-French Revolution government confiscations from religious houses and personal libraries of *émigrés* for which it acted as the *Fonds d'Etat* (government stocks) and *fonds de ville* (town stocks)" (Benoit 2008, 24).   {59}

Benjamin's daily work routine, and the fact that his knowledge of arcades was centered around la Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (see Chapter 2 above and Buck-Morss 1986), show the importance of both the individual library user and the library's location when it comes to understanding the library as place. Indeed, Benjamin commemorates *The Arcade Project*'s conception in la Bibliothèque nationale's famous reading room, itself a descendant of the arcades: "These notes devoted to the Paris

arcades were begun under an open sky of cloudless[67] blue that arched above the foliage; and yet—owing to the millions of leaves that were visited by the fresh breeze of diligence, the stertorous breath of the researcher, the storm of youthful zeal, and the idle wind of curiosity—they've been covered with the dust of centuries. For the painted sky of summer that looks down from the arcades in the reading room of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has spread out over them its dreamy, unlit ceiling" [N1,5]. The architecture and ornamentation mirror the holdings: "The painted foliage on the ceilings of the Bibliothèque Nationale. As one leafs through the pages down below, it rustles up above" [S3,3]. |Baudelaire, 4| |Benjamin in exile, 6| {60}

Libraries preserve materials, control and restrict access, and organize collections through the psychological and physical states of being indoors. Most attempts at bringing the outdoors in, or appearances at being the living room of the community, are therefore psychological tricks, such as the ceiling of la Bibliothéque nationale. {61}

Hammond (2006) cites E.M Forster's *Howards End* (1910): "To the Schlegels, Leonard Bast's 'brain is filled with the husks of books, culture' and it is 'horrible; we want him to wash out his brain and go to the real thing' (p. 150)" (109). Recall what Miller (2006) said about Benjamin: "the interiorized shell of dwelling—the dream house of the collective— is first and foremost a sheath of rigid, deadened matter to defend against the shock of urban experience" (257). Books and libraries are husks, shells, guarding individuals and collectives from everyday life in the city. The library is a husk filled with husks, a husk of husks. |Shell, 3| {62}

"Walter Benjamin's own archive has been collected, displayed, exhibited and published, indicating how he meticulously inventoried his own work in all its various stages and fragments. His fear of losing bits and pieces of his labour was a real fear, arising directly from his itinerant homelessness as an exile in interwar Europe" (Russell 2013, para. 30). |Benjamin in exile, 7| {63}

"The 'dialectics of awakening' thus calls for a theory and practice of citation. Although the word Zitieren goes back to Latin citare, meaning originally 'to set in motion," 'to summon,' Benjamin's concept transcends the classical distinction between motion and stasis. In The Arcades Project, to cite is at once to explode and to salvage: to extract the historical object by blasting it from the reified, homogeneous continuum of pragmatic historiography, and to call to life some part of what has been by integrating it into the newly established context of the collection, transfiguring and actualizing the object in the 'force field'—the

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[67] "The opposite poles of the Baudelairean sensibility find their symbols equally in the skies. The leaden, cloudless sky symbolizes sensuality in thrall to the fetish; cloud formations are the symbol of sensuality spiritualized" [J72a,5].

oscillating standstill (Stillstand)—of a dialectical image. The redemption of the past in constellation with the now, adumbrating in language a 'nucleus of time lying hidden within the knower and the known alike' (AP, N3,2), takes place in what Benjamin will call, in his 1929 essay 'On the Image of Proust,' 'intertwined time' (verschränkte Zeit). This is the temporality of montage. By means of quotation and commentary—'interpretation in detail'—the principle of montage makes possible a new concreteness, a 'heightened graphicness,' in the reading and writing of history" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 290–291). |Montage, 13| {64}

Recall: "This work has to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage" [N1,10]. |Montage, 14| {65}

Common knowledge is akin to myth. Some detail of a person's life—Benjamin's entrusting the *Arcades* materials to Bataille, for example—becomes common knowledge only when it is written—and read—in enough sources *without quotations marks or citations* so as to become part of the mythical, unchecked, accepted version of the person and the life. The proliferation of texts, which for Benjamin was one way to isolate universal truths, is at the same time the genesis and reinforcement of modern and contemporary forms of myth, turning individuals into mythical creatures that represent symbolic, archetypal, allegorical aspects of their lives, works, and lives' works. The library's montage presents and indeed generates common knowledge while displaying all knowledge as common. The individual commonly known is also the only one extraordinary enough to be re-presented mythically in the library. Extraordinary montages result in common myths. This shows the potential of literary montage, like all other aspects of life subject to totalizing systems, to be co-opted for other means. If the librarian is not also a dialectician (see Chapters 6 and 7 below), then the mythic forces will overtake both the collection and the people—authors and subjects—represented and re-presented therein. |Library worker, 5| |Montage, 15|
{66}

"Not only were 'other resources' at [Benjamin's] disposal prior to his emigration, but behind the façade of free-lance writing he led to considerably freer, albeit constantly endangered, life of an homme de lettres whose home was a library that had been gathered with extreme care but was by no means intended as a working tool; it consisted of treasures whose value, as Benjamin often repeated, was proved by the fact that he had not read them—a library, then, which was guaranteed not to be useful or at the service of any profession" (Arendt [1968] 2019, xxxii).   {67}

"Do I imagine myself being influential? No. I want to understand. And if others understand—in the same sense that I have understood—that gives me a sense of satisfaction, like feeling at home" (Arendt 2013, 6).   {68}

During the public library movement, use of the public library became inextricably fixed to the private home: "The resident borrowers of a library are usually divided into two groups: (1) adult borrowers, (2) juvenile borrowers. In addition the library often desires to extend its privileges to those who are (3) non-resident, within reach of its service; and (4) temporary residents, which may mean students or other less permanent, transient population. Different information is required from these groups in order to fix responsibility and safeguard the library. […] In planning the organization of the library, the librarian will decide what information about the borrower should be kept on file. An application form will be adopted which incorporates the items considered necessary, and from this information the various records will be made. The usual items are: (1) full name of borrower; (2) home and business address; (3) occupation; (4) telephone number; (5) date" (Flexner 1927, 51). |Childhood, 2| {69}

"Book service to rural districts is usually provided through library branches and stations varying in size and content, established in villages, at cross-road centers, in schools, clubs, stores, and residences. […] Since 1904 book trucks have carried book service to country dwellers. This type of service, started by the Washington County Free Library, Maryland, has developed rapidly. Through the library trucks, which first made trips from door to door, readers have been educated to a point where group service is now more common than visits to individuals" (Flexner 1927, 169). Library extension became less individual and more collective as the public library service became more established.
{70}

Changes and growth in circulation work are a direct result of libraries moving out of other buildings—stores, homes—and into their own; as circulation continued to grow, it continued to change the new standalone libraries. "The circulation department, at one time concerned merely with supplying books to those asking for them, has now become aggressively useful. The years of change that have taken the public library out of old, cramped quarters, little musty rooms with mattings on the floor, and put into a building of its own used every day by hundreds of active, important people, manifests a growth that is reflected with special emphasis in circulation work" (Flexner 1927, 252). Does the public library remain "aggressively useful"? Or is it now passively so?   {71}

"Modern [read: new] public library interiors, with their large open-plan interiors, contrast with the compartmentalized libraries of decades ago. When discussing the organization of the library interior, it is important to draw attention to the disquiet that has been expressed over the way such space is organized because of the effect it has on people's attitudes: enclosed 'living room' space (personal space) versus the open-plan 'supermarket' (common space). In the latter environment people feel alone and there is less pressure to make contact with others. Consequently in open space, which brings with it greater problems of supervision, the onus is on the librarian to make contact with the user (as in the Idea Stores), although such moves may be rejected. In small, one-room libraries the initial contact between staff and reader upon entry is thought to lead to better communication" (Dewe 2010, 297). |Library worker, 6| {72}

In early public libraries: "It is important to remember that libraries were a long way ahead of the retail world in providing free access, open access, to the 'goods' they purveyed. Further, through its layout, furniture, fittings, and ambiance, the newspaper/magazine reading room, the most popular department in the public library, offered access to the news, current affairs and popular culture in a speedy and functional fashion, in settings that were quiet and (often) aesthetically pleasing in comparison with many working-class homes" (Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw 2009, 345). The modern public library, which freely offered access to the phantasmagoria of mass media and culture, was an alternative to the home, at the same time that the modern individual, according to Benjamin, began to lose his or her sense of home in the modern city. |Décor, 8| {73}

"Moreover, as a peripatetic critic, Benjamin simultaneously emerged as a writer in search of a new habitat; not just because of his love of the Berlin cafés, where he wrote the better part of the Trauerspielbuch, or because of his search for the comfort of tranquility in the Rue Dombasle and the Bibliothèque Nationale. Instead, as an early draft of The Arcades Project indicates, Benjamin decried modernity's alienation as a collective state of no longer being heimisch or at home. Seeking to remedy this condition of homelessness, he charted the changed urban habitat required of the new historical subjects—a motley group which included flâneurs, surrealist artists and energized political crowds, whose new politicized gaze and activism were to be at home in cafés, movie theatres or even arcades" (Hanssen 2006a, 2). The bourgeois parlour isolated its occupant from the world, yet the loss of this shell (hastened by Jugendstil) also led to being lost in the world, trying to find or to make homes in spaces formed by high capitalism. The public library is still attempting to be such a place for its patrons, who bring with them the same problems: homelessness, alienation, and the search for comfort. |Shell, 4| {74}

"Benjamin produced a plethora of texts focusing on the character of urban experience and, in particular, a number of sketches of the cities that he visited during the mid- to late 1920s. Denkbilder ('thought-images') was the general designation for a variety of texts that included a series of short cityscapes beginning with an impressionistic essay on Naples written around September/October 1924" (Gilloch 1996, 2). Benjamin's Denkbilder style was a precursor to the literary montage. |Montage, 16| {75}

"Purely as a crafter of sentences, Benjamin bears comparison to the most supple and penetrating writers of his day. And he was a pioneering formal innovator: his most characteristic works are based on what he came to call, after the poet Stefan George, the Denkbild or 'figure of thought,' an aphoristic prose form combining philosophical analysis with concrete imagery to yield a signature critical mimesis. Even his ostensibly discursive essays are often secretly composed of sequences of these trenchant 'thought images,' arranged

according to the principles of avant-garde montage" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 3). |Montage, 17| {76}

Citing 1928's *Einbahnstraße* [*One-Way Street*]: "Benjamin's search for a 'prompt language' involves engagement with the quotation and with the principle of montage. Diverse, incongruent elements are rudely dragged from their intellectual moorings to be reassembled in radical and illuminating configurations. The 'shock-like' character of modern social life finds its expression in this montage of heterogeneous fragments" (Gilloch 1996, 19). |Montage, 18| {77}

Ste-Geneviève: the text is on the outside of a building organized inside like a book. The book is the shell of the building which houses books. |Shell, 5| {78}

Recall: "Landscape—that, in fact, is what Paris becomes for the flâneur. Or, more precisely: the city splits for him into its dialectical poles. It opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room" [M1,4]. The library is part of the urban landscape as room while its interior landscape turns into a living room. {79}

"[Benjamin's] first commission from a French newspaper, the Communist weekly Monde, came late in 1933, presumably through the mediation of Alfred Kurella, who was on the editorial staff of the paper. The subject was Baron Haussmann, the prefect of the Seine under Napoleon III and the man largely responsible for the radical renovation and 'strategic embellishment' of the city of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century. […] Benjamin's research on Haussmann and on recent sociolinguistics took him once again to the imposing environs of the Bibliothèque Nationale, where we worked in the famous reading room 'as on the set of an opera' (GB, 4:365).[68] The library was to become the real center of his activities in Paris in the coming years. 'I was amazed,' he writes on December 7, 'how quickly I found my way back into the complicated catalogue system of the Bibliothèque Nationale' (BS, 90)[69]" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 429). |Benjamin in exile, 8| {80}

According to Brand (1994): "Every building leads three contradictory lives—as habitat, as property, and as component of the surrounding community" (73). Can the public library combine all three so as not to be contradictory?   {81}

The private library can be regarded as a home: "look at the fairly graceful evolutions of Boston's Athenaeum and Britain's London Library. As private libraries, both are directly

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[68] Benjamin 1995–2000.

[69] Benjamin and Scholem 1989.

responsive to their users. Though institutional, they are treated exactly like High Road homes, with an affection and attention to detail that grows through the centuries. Both are filled with the quirks and traditions characteristic of long, independent life" (Brand 1994, 45). By contrast, must the public library only approximate a home?   {82}

"Inhabitation is a highly dynamic process, little studied. There's a term floating around the fringe of biology that applies—'ecopoiesis': the process of a system making a home for itself. The building and its occupants *jointly* are the new system" (Brand 1994, 164). First, the library needed a public home, making for itself the early public library. Then, the public library formed a new system jointly with its patrons as occupants during the modern era.   {83}

"The difficulty in reflecting on dwelling: on the one hand, there is something age-old—perhaps eternal—to be recognized here, the image of that abode of the human being in the maternal womb; on the other hand, this motif of primal history notwithstanding, we must understand dwelling in its most extreme form as a condition of nineteenth-century existence. The original form of all dwelling is existence not in the house but in the shell. The shell bears the impression of its occupant. In the most extreme instance, the dwelling becomes a shell. The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling's interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the instrument with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet. What didn't the nineteenth century invent some sort of casing for! Pocket watches, slippers, egg cups, thermometers, playing cards—and, in lieu of cases, there were jackets, carpets, wrappers, and covers. The twentieth century, with its porosity and transparency, its tendency toward the well-lit and airy, has put an end to dwelling in the old sense. Set off against the doll house in the residence of the master builder Solness are the 'homes for human beings.' Jugendstil unsettled the world of the shell in a radical way. Today this world has disappeared entirely, and dwelling has diminished: for the living, through hotel rooms; for the dead, through crematoriums" [I4,4]. |Décor, 9| Shell, 6| {84}

The city as panorama: "For if flânerie can transform Paris into one great interior—a house whose rooms are the *quartiers*, no less clearly demarcated by thresholds than are real rooms—then, on the other hand, the city can appear to someone walking through it to be without thresholds: a landscape in the round" [M3,2]. {85}

In Toronto or Vancouver: "[A] retired gentleman […] noted that coming to the spaciousness of the library was wonderful antidote to his small, cramped apartment, and that he enjoyed feeling part of the larger community by coming to the library. This patron remarked that he could not understand why more seniors did not come out to enjoy the wonderful resources of the central library, rather than remaining isolated and alone" (Leckie and Hopkins 2002, 348–349). |Ontario, 5| {86}

"Benjamin's formulation—eine Freundschaft der fremden Freunde, the friendship of friends who maintain distance in their relations (C, 57)[70]—invokes the dialectic of solitude and community to which he often recurs in his letters of this period. This formulation would be reflected in his conduct in human relationships for the remainder of his life. Solitude is to be cultivated as the precondition for true community, which is necessarily a community of individual intellects and individual consciences" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 41).   {87}

An idealized view of new urban libraries: "Like other cities' new library projects, Birmingham's [England] demonstrates the evolution of the public library: they are no longer just places of reading and private study, but are community and cultural centers, living rooms for cities, digital hubs and mediatheques, and are not just for the storage and access of print. The library is […] a key element in urban placemaking" (Berndtson 2013, 119). |Technology, 2| {88}

In Toronto and Vancouver: "There seem to be two kinds of patrons of the central library: those for whom the library serves as an extension of their living room and who visit on a daily or weekly basis, and those for whom quick and convenient access to a larger collection is important, who visit less frequently and do not linger. Because the central library is a relatively open and unconstrained space, both types of users are perfectly compatible and expected. As a result, the central library fosters a large, diverse, and loyal clientele who feel relatively free to pursue their own uses of the space (within the usual expectations about appropriate behavior in public places)" (Leckie and Hopkins 2002, 353–354). |Ontario, 6| {89}

In Seattle: "This homeless woman appropriated the library for her own purposes—to bathe. She used a public space to undertake a private activity. She made a public space temporarily a private one, as evidenced by my uncomfortableness—I felt like I was intruding in her space" (Lees 2001, 74). Who determines what "the usual expectations about appropriate behavior" are in the public library as home?   {90}

The newspaper stand in Seattle's library connects patrons who feel like strangers to other homes: "The public library, with its access to 'foreign' newspapers and magazines, becomes a space in-between, in-between Canada and their country of birth, a space in which ideas about home and nation and encounters with Others, real and imagined, are played out. From talking to these old folk, I discovered that for them the library became temporarily a place/space of not here nor there, of indeterminacy; as one woman said to me, 'Sitting here reading news from home I feel like I'm not there [i.e., Hong Kong, her place of birth][71] but I'm not here either—it's strange.' Some said that they felt like

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[70] Benjamin 1994.

[71] Lees's note.

'strangers in a strange city', but that the library gave them a 'kind of life line to "home"'. Another said that he was glad that he wasn't at 'home'. Although their reading was located—in the newspaper and magazine section—their reading eluded the library building as the space became home. In this way the space of the library was incorporated into processes of identity formation and reproduction" (Lees 2001, 73–74).   {91}

"One bright spot amid so much gloom was the additional help he received in mid-March [1934] from the Institute of Social Research (in the person of Friedrich Pollock) for the successful transfer of 'about half the library, but the more important half' from his apartment in Berlin to Brecht's house in Denmark (C, 437).[72] He had hoped to transfer the library in its entirety, but his tenant in Berlin, von Schoeller, who had proved so accommodating and reliable, was reluctant to have the apartment wholly denuded of its most prominent furnishings and thus 'completely lose its character' [Benjamin 1995–2000, 4:298n]. The books, in five or six large crates, arrived safely in Denmark. This transfer not only put the library at Benjamin's disposal for his writing but allowed him to make important sales, foremost among them a tortuously negotiated sale of the complete works of Franz von Baader to the library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which he took care of in July. Books, and thoughts of books, thus continued to serve as an escape from the horrors of daily life in exile" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 449). |Benjamin in exile, 9| |Décor, 10| {92}

The phantasmagoria of Seattle's atrium turns inefficient, wasted space into a marvelous indoor park as living room: "The third-level Living Room is a vast, atriumlike space that seems certain to become the central park that Seattle never had. On opening day visitors could be overheard commenting on the 'wasted space,' but they seemed to be marveling, not carping. The diamond-patterned I-beam exoskeleton of the curtain walls infuses the space with a tension and elegance that might have been absent in a right-angled scheme. And the tall space isn't energy-inefficient: HVAC vents in the floor are engineered to heat and cool only a 10-foot-high envelope" (Cheek 2004, 45). The contemporary reading room, like its modern counterpart, is still difficult to heat and cool.   {93}

"OMA decided to design a flexible connection of "programmatic clusters—five of stability and four of instability." The former are called platforms (the parking, the staff spaces, the meeting spaces, the spiral, and the headquarters) and the latter, called in-betweens, are spaces where circulation and flow is continuous (spaces for kids, the living room and the entrances, the mixing chamber, and the reading room). Because the platforms and the in-betweens have different purposes, they differ in size, density, and opacity" (Chiesa 2016, 182–183). Chiesa quotes Koolhaas and McGetrick (2004) from OMA, the firm that designed Seattle's building. The famed SPL Living Room is a place

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[72] Benjamin 1994.

of instability. It provides a place of comfort reminiscent of the home while avoiding becoming a shell; it approximates a living room without becoming a parlour. Yet is also not truly a dwelling place. The library is the dialectical living room of this community. |Shell, 6| {94}

"Benjamin challenges more conventional notions regarding the form and content of philosophical discourse. Benjamin, ingeniously or ingenuously, rejects authorial control in order to provoke and disconcert the reader, to bring about recognition. […] The Paris writings constitute the fullest development of methods pioneered in the Denkbilder. Benjamin is concerned with the analysis and refunctioning of the fragment, the redemption of the obsolete as part of an 'archaeo-monadological' practice. Such ephemera and minutiae are to be rearranged in new configurations. These mosaics of modernity are based on the disruption of established contexts and the juxtaposition of diverse elements in order to startle the reader. They engender shock. […] Above all, it is the arcade itself that serves as Benjamin's model: constructed from thousands of tiny, precise iron components, covered by glass to permit illumination from above, it is a ruin filled with the outmoded and the despised, and frequented by the shabby outcast. The 'Arcades Project', like the Berlin writings, can be seen as an attempt to write dialectically, or perhaps mimetically, to delineate the form and content of a reflexive critical theory of modern social life" (Gilloch 1996, 115–116). |Montage, 19| {95}

Seattle's Living Room transforms the city not through the traditional services it provides but through the physical and symbolic thresholds it creates: "Even though the library in Seattle has a huge 'living room' at the entrance and an array of PCs on the top floor, the rest of the library is quite book-oriented with a six-storey high spiral book-case as the core of the library. In many ways, it is a 'knowledge temple' in disguise and still more collection than connection. In the process of using public libraries as placemakers, they have actually re-conceptualized the library through new design, facilities and activities by establishing transzones [read: thresholds] between the city and the library, offering new performative spaces, and by creating new public domains through inviting living-rooms and lounge areas" (Skot-Hansen, Rasmussen, and Jochumsen 2013, 16–17). The city is changed by being cut off from yet accessible to the library as living room. {96}

Yet even Seattle's famous Living Room was not home enough for one patron, who brought her home living room, furniture included, to the library: "Seattle's Gabriela Frank is writing her very first novel, spurred on by the challenge of National Novel Writing Month, fondly known as NaNoWriMo. […] But instead of writing from her kitchen table, or a coffee shop buzzing with laptops, Gabriela has set up a miniature version of her living room in the main, downtown branch […] 'This is all really from my house,' she says gesturing to her furniture. 'So we're sitting on my couch, and a little table that I refinished over here. We've got a lamp, we've got a Persian rug. Plants all around here. The people who have seen my living room have been able to come in and

say, yeah, this is what your house looks like. […] [S]he pitched her idea to 4Culture, who gave her a grant and a place in the library to call home" (Belle 2014). At home in the library, Frank and her writing were both on full display for the other patrons. I wonder if they perhaps felt slightly less at home by comparison when witnessing how ensconced she was in her home away from home. |Décor, 11| {97}

In Norway's Vennesla Library and Culture House, the building is the furniture: "In 2005, the Municipality of Vennesla decided to relocate its library to the city centre, linking it with existing community and educational facilities to create a cultural hub. The new library's most distinguishing feature is its ceiling, comprised of twenty-seven prefabricated glued-laminated timber ribs. The ribs gradually shift throughout the interior to inform the library's different spaces and the geometry of the roof, before joining with the ground floor as furniture, accommodating stacks and seating. The distinctive 'whale-skeleton' structure and generous use of glass make this a bright, striking library that has become part of the urban fabric" (Roads Reflections 2014, 127).   {98}

The library as a shell for the dwelling of books: "The standard modern definition brings us back to the etymology of the ancient Greek wor[d] for library, *bibliotheca*, which knots together the container and the contained. The Bibliotheca as *theca*: a case for what? For all the things that are the case? […] If the world itself is a library, what is the world *of* the library? Does it possess doors, windows or walls, book shelves, reference desks or reading rooms?" (Schnapp and Battles 2014, 26). In the theca as living room, the feeling of home and the person are both the container and the contained. The space can't feel like a living room without the person, and the person can't be housed without feeling as such. |Shell, 7| {99}

Having returned to Paris in 1934, Walter to Gretel: "I am not sure whether I told you that I am working on an essay about the préfet Haussmann at the request of a journal here. […] And you too will be pleased to know that this has brought me much closer once more to my study on the arcades, whose pages are now in use again after many years of dormancy. As the Bibliothèque Nationale does not loan books out, I spend most of the days in its reading room" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1934] 2005, 71). He works at home as much as possible because the library is so difficult to access, yet this is still rare because he can't take the books home. The library clearly defined as a place by isolating itself and its items, in this case, inhibits home life. |Benjamin in exile, 10| {100}

A hundred years ago, librarians spoke of "library extension" with its physical connotations. They wanted to extend the limits of the physical library, especially the central library, by bringing books to people's homes, by running bookmobiles, by establishing neighbourhood branches, and by sending themselves (the librarians) out into these places. Today, we speak of "outreach", with an emphasis on the interpersonal, which is no doubt important work. Outreach includes getting materials to patrons outside of the library, expanding library services, and sending librarians out into the community, but it strikes me as a less inclusive, less comprehensive

notion. Outreach recognizes the physical limits of the library; extension recognizes that the physical library can transcend its limits. Through extension, the library loses its forms, gains new forms, morphs, changes, enters people's everyday lives in structurally transformative ways. Outreach is perhaps one component of this process, yet limiting the extent of our community-based and -focused work to outreach alone limits our understanding of the library as place. |Library worker, 7|

{101}

"The ideas of eternity and space have something divine about them, but not those of pure duration and simple extension" (Joubert 1983, 137). {102}

Library extension as a directed activity provided connections along both literal and metaphorical streets in the changing city: "Not only must the librarian meet individual readers, he must likewise strive to extend the use of the institution to connect with all possible community activities. […] Every avenue of approach to the library must be kept open" (Flexner 1927, 4). |Library worker, 8| {103}

Nowadays the library is an avenue of approach to itself: "The idea of an indoor library street, as a means of moving visitors through the library to various destinations, can be seen in libraries as far apart as Canada, Hungary and Sweden. The 'street' may run through the centre of the library, across the library diagonally or close to one edge of the building" (Dewe 2010, 247). This "library lane" design is also found in Finland (Aaltonen 2012, 160). {104}

In British English, "extension" refers to renovation projects that add onto an existing building (e.g., Dewe 2009). Library extension in this sense only concerns the library as place rather than the library's place in the community. {105}

In the 1990s, we librarians spoke of the "living room in the library"; now we speak of the library as the "living room of the community" or the "community living room". The library has gone from *having* a room to *being* a room—in either case, one symbolic room among many in the community. |Library worker, 9| {106}

To what extent is the public library an extension of the bourgeois shell, of the shell of the bourgeois interior made city street? To what extent does the public library offer a way to break this shell? What is the "shock" of the loss of this shell? Is it (either the shock or the public) experienced differently by those who had no bourgeois shell to break? Or has the bourgeois shell covered the whole city, leaving the public library as one (of the few?) possible site(s) of rupture? In the former case, different individuals experience the urban public library differently; in the latter, urban public libraries are experienced differently from those in other sorts of communities, such as small town or rural ones, unless the bourgeois shell has spread over suburbs, small towns, and rural areas, too. Either way, the public library is not experienced universally as a single, enduring place; a universal public library as place is unattainable. And the public library, that historical invention, must be experienced as a physical place, not

simply as a digital one. The entire concept of a universal public library is therefore also unattainable. This means that every public library is experienced as a uniquely personal space, at a uniquely personal level, by every person who enters it. |Shell, 8| |Technology, 3| {107}

The physical public library enters the patron's living room through its objects. The digital public library enters the patron's living room through its electronic resources. The living room in the home is the stronghold that must be infiltrated by the public library. The library is an invader. {108}

Benjamin and Asja Lacis (1978) describe communal life in Naples: "So the house is far less the refuge into which people retreat than the inexhaustible reservoir from which they flood out. Life bursts not only from doors, not only into front yards, where people on chairs do their work [….] Just as the living room reappears on the street, with chairs, hearth, and altar, so, only much more loudly, the street migrates into the living room" (171). As in bourgeois Paris, the street takes on the characteristics of the house, yet it matters what these homes contain, what they let spill onto the streets, and these characteristics help determine the character of everyday life in the city. The authors go on to say that Neapolitan cafés are "the opposite of everything Viennese, of the confined, bourgeois, literary world" (172–3). If interior life is confined, staid, then so too is the street. |Décor, 12| {109}

Benjamin and Lacis equate the "literary world" with the bourgeoisie. Is the public library's adoption of a wide range of materials a rejection of this world? Is this a defining characteristic of the public library as living room? {110}

Or is it a living room due to its physical properties? "[L]ibraries should be second homes for the community's readers. Consider creating homey reading areas in a general lower lit area with good reading lamps on side tables lighting comfortable chairs. Incandescent bulbs in reading lamps provide a warm glow, inviting readers to sit down and read" (Rippel 2003, 149). Lighting is therefore tied directly to book displays and to the feeling of home in the library. In other words, the way the library is displayed affects how it is perceived as homelike. {111}

"Douglas County Libraries in Parker, CO, leverages views over the Town of Parker's Discovery Park, where patrons can gather, stay, and play. What could be more homey than a front porch offering rocking Adirondack chairs?" (Fox 2017). {112}

"Whole objects and persons are not the preferred objects of wish production, and Rimbaud's 'montage' technique in the *Illuminations* closely resembles the process of mechanical wish production. If we recall the montage or *bricolage* technique we saw operative in barricade construction and street warfare during the Commune ('find flowers which are chairs!'), we find a clue: use familiar parts to invent new functions. The previous 'whole' (social context, dominant organization of space, of bodies) must be sabotaged to allow for new functions, pieces put back together again" (K. Ross 1988, 131). |Montage, 20| {113}

The library both relieved and deepened Benjamin's isolation and alienation in the modern city: "It is sad that the library closes at 6 o'clock and leaves me to my own devices for long evenings. For I have contact with people only in exceptional cases. This brings one into a situation where one could occasionally use a novel" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1934] 2005, 86). |Benjamin in exile, 11| {114}

In the modern era, the act of reading became closely associated with homelike surroundings, whether in the home or not: "By the eighteenth century, French and British booksellers charged a fee for reading books in their shops and rented them for home reading. London coffeehouses provided newspapers and magazines for their customers, as an essential complement to the beverages they served—for those didn't want coffee or beer, reading privileges were sold by the hour—and the *cabinets de lecture* of Paris and Vienna offered those who paid a small entrance fee the opportunity to read newly published books as well as current periodicals. Subscription reading rooms offered middle-class readers access to published news and comment in more genteel surroundings, while aristocrats enjoyed the reading facilities in their clubs, which often extended to books as well as periodicals. [...] For those who preferred to read at home— and for the wives and daughters of the middle and upper classes, who had no choice in the matter—circulating libraries began to provide the opportunity" (Lerner 2009, 129).
{115}

Pre-modern libraries in the home reinforced power, pleasure, and the state: "Libraries and librarians have always existed at the margins of the societies they served. The central function of the mediaeval monastery was prayer; that of the university, education; and that of the prince's household the power and pleasure of the prince" (Lerner 2009, 181–182). |Library worker, 10| {116}

"Within library buildings there are numerous components, including the collections, computer workstations, reference services, the patrons and library staff, individual and group study areas, and exhibits. The library is home to a potentially infinite number of activities" (Russo 2008, 6). |Library worker, 11| |Technology, 4| {117}

Russo (2008) describes many of the libraries in California with terms such as "warm", "inviting", "welcoming", and "beautiful" that speak to a homelike atmosphere as one of the ideal characteristics of the public library as place. Several of Russo's example libraries were or are housed in former residences: the Del Mar Public Library's "first location [...], in 1914, was in the home of the librarian" (25); in Coroan del Mar, the Sherman Library & Gardens was established in an "old abode house" (50) that received an addition and became the entrance to the library; the Brand Library & Art Center in Glendale had a similar history, with an old donated mansion serving as the entrance to a joint public library and museum building (91–96); the "Silverado Library is a small, one-room building that provides a feeling of home upon entry" (75) that, in 1984, was used as an emergency shelter "when residents were unable to reach their homes during a brush fire" (74). |Disaster, 1| |Library worker, 12| {118}

Veil and Bishop (2014) interviewed people who turned to public libraries for assistance after being affected by tornadoes in 2011 in the Southern and Midwestern United States: "Most poignant in the interviews with patrons was that the libraries provided a place that felt 'normal,' like a living room in the midst of the chaos and cleanup outside. One patron whose library did not have a back-up generator to remain open the first week after the storm said, 'the library was like our normal, and when it wasn't open we couldn't be normal. It sounds silly, it's just some books and some people, but it seemed like it was everything.' A patron from another library whose home was destroyed with her and her children still in it brought her sons in several times a week following the storm. She commented: 'Maybe the library was not critical for us—providing food, clothing, shelter. But it was comfort—familiarity, a luxury. My one son is still in therapy. Comfort can be critical. . . . Our house was gone and it's the only place that felt like home.' At least to the patrons interviewed, an opportunity identified was that the library clearly fostered attachment to place. A librarian from one of the libraries that had to close because of structural damage said the city made a really big deal about the library reopening. She said, 'it was like the library opening again was a sign that the community was recovering'" (729). |Childhood, 3| |Disaster, 2| {119}

The "modest contrast" between home and the library: "I now spend all my evenings in my room and read: the inkpot has defined the period of my life just as lightning defined that of Luther (in which, after all, there was also an inkpot). By day I read at the Bibliothèque Nationale: thus one must content oneself with modest contrasts" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1934] 2005, 98). |Benjamin in exile, 12| {120}

"An opportunity identified was that the library served as the community's living room, beyond work and home, where patrons could share their personal experiences of the storms. Some libraries used the story time centers to have the children write their stories of the storms. Other libraries worked with the local newspaper to organize and bind the images and news stories from the tornado coverage. By capturing the communal narrative of the disaster, libraries are able to support community healing and emotional recovery and further engender a sense of community" (Veil and Bishop 2014, 730). |Childhood, 4| |Disaster, 3| {121}

Regarding unexpected tragedy: "This notion that architecture is stable, immutable, and, above all, permanent, and that home is always safe and present, is shaken by these events" (Hornstein 2011, 83). |Disaster, 4| {122}

"The public restroom block of the Allerton Public Library, Monticello, IL, is designed as a reinforced severe weather shelter. The building has a flexible social gathering area with self-serve coffee and an iconic entry tower structure. The Kasson Public Library, MN, was replaced by a building encased in a dome, with stem walls that join with the foundation. The space would also serve as a community shelter in emergencies" (Fox 2017). |Disaster, 5| {123}

"From the economic renewal potential of library development projects, to the provision of public space in a privatizing world, to targeting services for the homeless and crisis management during natural (and other) disasters, public libraries have shown themselves capable of contributing to community resiliency—that is, the ability of a community to respond effectively to stressors and challenging circumstances" (Dudley 2013a, ix). The resilient public library helps the city through a disaster and then through its recovery efforts. But what if, as Benjamin argued, the status quo is the catastrophe, the disaster? Even recovering after some catastrophic event—hurricane, flood, fire—simply returns the city to another catastrophe. The truly resilient public library, then, is one that undermines the status quo of the city ruled by capitalism, providing in turn greater resiliency in all situations, both everyday and extraordinary. |Disaster, 6| {124}

The library doesn't just provide food in emergencies. Seed libraries—an example of a service that undermines the status quo of corporatized food insecurity—allow community members to borrow seeds, grow plants at home, and bring back harvested and saved seeds the following growing season: "Phoenix Public Library spokesperson Lee Franklin says seed sharing makes sense from a library's perspective too. The opportunities to expand access to home-grown food and educate people about the region's history and ecology through educational programming and seed distribution fit squarely into the library's missions of community building and promoting lifelong learning, Franklin says. […] '[Seeds are] cultural documents of what we have saved and found valuable in terms of taste and community,' [Rebecca] Newburn [co-founder of Richmond (CA) Grows Seed Lending Library] says. 'When we take the seeds home and plant them and return them we're actually adding another chapter'" (Davis-Young 2018). {125}

The Brand Library is multiple dream houses in one: "Upon entry, one may experience the feeling of being in both a home and a library. Behind the circulation desk is a fireplace that retains its original wood carving. […] An adjacent room is the former bedroom where Mr. Brand passed away. […] Located in perhaps the smallest room of the original mansion is a collection of art videos, music videos, and DVDs. […] This room is near the former solarium, a large room in the middle of the mansion with books and periodicals [….] Off from the solarium is a wonderful reading room with a large window, providing a view of some of the many trees on the lawn. Several tables are available in this room that was formerly the Brands' dining room. Serious researchers may want to sit with their backs to the window or they may find themselves losing time while getting lost in the majestic scenery outside" (Russo 2008, 93). {126}

"Every house: temple, empire, school" (Joubert 1983, 70). {127}

The Mendocino Community Library, in "a converted yellow house that was donated to the library by a former volunteer" (Russo 2008, 244), is so homelike that it can be confusing: "Unless one was permitted to walk through the administrative area of the library after completing a visit to the back room, one would need to continue the path back to the front through the two narrow hallways and other rooms to reach the exit and circulation area. Although the interior of the building is clearly a library, the experience

of walking around within it does feel like being inside a home. The Mendocino Community Library is a labyrinth of welcoming spaces" (246). {128}

Walter to Gretel, from San Remo: "I have been experiencing hours and days of the most profound misery, the like of which I do not think I have known in years. […] It is entirely clear to me that the decisive reason for this is my situation here, my unimaginable isolation. Being cut off not only from people, but also from books" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1935] 2005, 132). The public library decreases both kinds of isolation. |Benjamin in exile, 13| {129}

Regarding a recently renovated Carnegie library: "The new entrance as a space experienced, as lived space, conveys a sense of letting the outside in—the library has become more accessible and thus more inclusive. […] Further changes have brought the outside in" (Griffis 2010, 204). Windows were extended to the floor; patrons are now encouraged to socialize and spend time together in the library, rather than remaining quiet and solitary. The home, as well as the library as home, can be a place for both quiet solitude and social togetherness. Yet, in this case, letting the outside into the building was an attempt to do away with the former. Is the library as living room only a specific type of collective home? |Ontario, 7| {130}

Fireplaces were likely essential in early modern public libraries, especially in Owen Sound in 1914, yet now fireplaces impart an inessential coziness: "The library space generates a sense of community in other ways. For instance, though originally functioning only as a heat source, Owen Sound's fireplace has, over the years, been transformed into something very meaningful to library users, a place for gathering and interaction. Historical photographs show that, by mid-century, librarians gave Christmas Eve story-times at the fireplace. Today, the fireplace, no longer wood burning but instead a gas insert, is a major draw for patrons not just in the colder months but year-round as well. Around the fireplace today are several comfortable chairs in which patrons of various ages gather and either read silently or chat with each other quietly. The fireplace and chairs provide a traditional element of the home in what is, by definition, institutional space. While in 1914 spatial practice discouraged patrons from remaining in the library longer than required, as perceived space the Carnegie space today is inviting, encouraging patrons to stay and relax as long as they would like. Some patrons even nap in these chairs. As space experienced, the library is like a home away from home; it is a place where library users can be among strangers but still feel welcome and safe. It is a concept one librarian has referred to as the 'community living room'" (Griffis 2010, 205). The inessential characteristics of the library allow it to approximate a home. |Ontario, 8| {131}

It is important to remember that Carnegie's original libraries were not meant as living rooms, although they can become them: "In fact, the case of the Owen Sound library is most important because it shows that, whatever their physical limitations, Carnegie libraries, over and above being merely physical constructions, are not incapable of adapting to newer visions of the public library in the community, particularly that of the 'community living room,' a vision different from Carnegie's own of the library space"

(Griffis 2010, 208). |Ontario, 9| {132}

Benjamin recalls his childhood around 1900: "The book lay on the table that was much too high. While reading, I would cover my ears. Hadn't I already listened to stories in silence like this? Not those told by my father, of course. But sometimes in winter, when I stood by the window in the warm little room, the snowstorm outside told me stories no less mutely. What it told, to be sure, I could never quite grasp, for always something new and unremittingly dense was breaking through the familiar. Hardly had I allied myself, as intimately as possible, to one band of snowflakes, than I realized they had been obliged to yield me up to another, which had suddenly entered their midst. But now the moment had come to follow, in the flurry of letters, the stories that had eluded me at the window. The distant lands I encountered in these stories played familiarly among themselves, like the snowflakes. And because distance, when it snows, leads no longer out into the world but rather within, so Baghdad and Babylon, Acre and Alaska, Tromsö and Transvaal were places within me" (Benjamin [1938] 2006, 59–60). |Childhood, 5|{133}

"Early on, I learned to disguise myself in words, which really were clouds. The gift of perceiving similarities is, in fact, nothing but a weak remnant of the old compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically. In me, this compulsion acted through words. Not those that made me similar to well-behaved children, but those that made me similar to dwelling places, furniture, clothes. I was distorted by similarity to all that surrounded me. Like a mollusk in its shell, I had my abode in the nineteenth century, which now lies hollow before me like an empty shell. I hold it to my ear" (Benjamin [1938] 2006, 97–98). |Childhood, 6| |Décor, 13| |Shell, 9| {134}

"The text itself featured dashing companies of lancers, as well as virtuous apprentice journeymen, blonde daughters of castellans or armorers, and vassals owing fealty to their suzerains; but there were also disloyal stewards plotting intrigues, and mercenaries in the hire of foreign kings. The less we sons of retailers and civil servants felt ourselves at home among this population of lords and liegemen, the more easily their world of gorgeous trappings and noble sentiments entered our dwellings. […] The book […] has long since returned to its shelf in the classroom, where it functioned both as the corridor leading from the 'Berlin room' to other farther back and as that long gallery through which the lady of the manor wandered at night. But whether these books were comforting or chilling, boring or exciting—nothing could diminish or augment the magical charm they possessed" (Benjamin [1938] 2006, 144–146). |Childhood, 7| {135}

"The desk [at home] thus bore a certain similarity to my schoolbench. But it had this advantage: I was safely hidden away there, and had room for things my schoolbench knew nothing about. The desk and I were united against it. And hardly had I regained my desk after a dreary day at school, than it gave me new strength. There I could feel myself not only at home but actually in my shell—just like one of those clerics who are shown, in medieval paintings, kneeling at the prie-dieu or sitting at their writing desk, as though encased in armor. In this

burrow of mine, I would begin reading *Debit and Credit* or *Two Cities*. I sought out the most peaceful time of day and this most secluded of all spots. I would then open my book to page one with all the solemnity of an explorer setting foot on a new continent. And, in fact, it *was* a new continent, on which Cairo and the Crimea, Babylon and Baghdad, Alaska and Tashkent, Delphi and Detroit were as closely packed together as the gold medallions from cigar boxes which I used to collect. Nothing was more gratifying than to pass the time in this way, surrounded by the various instruments of my torture—glossaries, compasses, dictionaries—there where the claims of these things were nullified" (Benjamin [1938] 2006, 151–152). |Childhood, 8| |Décor, 14| |Shell, 10| {136}

In Nella Larsen's novel *Quicksand*: "Helga recognizes that when knowledge is treated as a passive thing (it can simply be 'housed'), it becomes more silently destructive" (Roffman 2010, 83). What is housed in the library as living room? What does it silently destroy?   {137}

In 1935: "Despite the temptations of further flight, Paris ultimately represented the possibility of continuing the arcades project and the necessity of commencing the essay on Eduard Fuchs. The prospect of once again, after so many months, working in a library by now played a role not just in Benjamin's waking life but in his dreams as well. He reported that the years spent working in libraries, 'of letting so and so many thousand printed characters run through [his] fingers every week,' had created 'certain almost physical needs' in him, needs that have long remained unsatisfied (GB, 5:70).[73] He had an unsettling dream of seeing a stranger who, arising from his desk, took a book from his own library. Benjamin's agitation led him to reconsider his situation—and propelled him even more powerfully toward Paris. He thus left Monaco in early April, still unsure how he could afford life in the French capital" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 488). |Benjamin in exile, 14| {138}

Marianne Moore's room—including furniture, books she owned, and her published books—becomes a library in another house's room, alongside her letters as archive and other objects as museum in other rooms, faithfully reassembled in another city (Philadelphia instead of New York): "Moore's will creates a new space for the 'Marianne C. Moore Room'—the objects taken from the 1960s New York City apartment—to be placed inside the Rosenbach building, a privately owned townhouse built in the 1860s near Rittenhouse Square […]; another section of the same building would hold her manuscripts and other papers. She wills a new institution (her own museum) with a modest building on a street of private homes. In her unpublished poem 'Museums' Moore had criticized the formal city museum for its 'formidable' power that is 'not going anywhere' and its gothic architectural style. As a response to these

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[73] Benjamin 1995–2000.

criticisms much later, Moore creates a museum at her death and picks an utterly antimonumental, unformidable type of space in which to exhibit" (Roffman 2010, 138–139). Even in trying to undermine the nineteenth-century monumental library, Moore established an idealized library, a facsimile of her actual apartment, "to house her library and her poetry" (143) when the real spaces—houses, libraries—in the real world wouldn't do. The house had to become an ideal version of itself before it could become a library. The library is not the living room as it was but rather how it should be, and therefore even in its "antimonumental" form it ends up only approximating both. |Décor, 15| {139}

The public library as home as an alternative to and counterpart of the public house: "Fiction reading had come by this period to stand in a metonymic relation to a number of social ills, and the debate over its inclusion in public libraries foregrounds the thinking behind them. In an ironic reversal of one of the main impulses behind the library movement—that of providing working people with an alternative space to the public house—the reading of 'ephemeral fiction' (as it came to be called) is frequently likened to an addiction to drink" (Hammond 2006, 32–33). {140}

"In countries such as England and Scotland, freestanding village reading rooms first become popular in the mid-nineteenth century, deriving their inspiration from adult night schools and the evangelization efforts of Bible-study societies. Reform movements promoted them as a sober, character-building alternative to the tavern and public house. To compete with the latter, they were rarely 'bookish' in the ordinary sense. They featured games like checkers and chess. Current periodicals were place on an equal footing with books. They favored conversation as well as silent study, group as well as individual self-improvement" (Schnapp and Battles 2014, 107). Even early public libraries recognized that most houses—except perhaps for Benjamin's—are not entirely devoted to reading. {141}

Following an increased stipend from Pollock and the Institute, plus a request to write an exposé of *The Arcades Project*, in April 1935: "Benjamin straightaway grasped the intellectual lifeline extended to him and plunged into work on the exposé. The composition of the piece was aided, paradoxically, by the annual closing of the Bibliothèque Nationale: deprived of the opportunity to follow the traces of his material into new paths, Benjamin sat in his room and wrote, with only the voluminous notes of his arcades project on which to draw. The result, produced relatively rapidly in the course of the next month, was 'Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts' (Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century), the first of two epitomizing presentations of the arcades complex (the second was written in French in 1939)" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 489). |Benjamin in exile, 15| {142}

Library extension efforts to rural Ontario logging camps at the turn of the last century: "An effort is being made to advance the education and other interests of the more isolated classes of laborers. It is believed that systematic home study ought to be made possible for all workmen, even those whose conditions are the most adverse. […]

This pamphlet contains a statement of work of this kind begun amongst woodsmen, undertaken by way of experiment. It is hoped that in this way camp life can be made more homelike, that the men will improve their spare moments, that they will quit the demoralizing tramp habit of 'jumping,' and that they will be less likely to frequent the saloons" (Fitzpatrick 1901, 1). |Ontario, 10| {143}

The alternative to the public house becomes the public library, itself one such alternative: "at the end of the 19th and the beginning of [the] 20th century [*sic*] there were a number of library building projects in many towns. […] In Viipuri, a licensed restauranteur donated a former temperance saloon to be used as a library" (Aaltonen 2012, 55). {144}

In the 1980s in Finland, one type of dream house becomes another, in the 1980s: "One new phenomenon was the renovation and conversion of old empty factory premises into libraries, e.g. in Forssa, Karkkila and Orimattila" (Aaltonen 2012, 142–143). {145}

When replacing or standing alongside other dream houses, the library should try to differentiate itself: "institutions such as libraries, rather than blending in inconspicuously—as another store, another little factory, or another modern house—should emphatically try to be an accent" (Glazer 1965, 80). The trend in recent years, of course, is for every new urban building to stand out from the ones around them. In standing out, they fit in, as simply "another modern house". {146}

"Gradually the library hall was filled with bookshelves in a store-like fashion. More space began to be needed around the bookshelves, as well as more working and lounging spaces for the customers. […] At its best, the library as a livingroom [*sic*] has allowed customers to be ever more active and has also allowed for [a] wider variety of activities to take place on library premises" (Aaltonen 2012, 181). The living room of the community is an increasingly paradoxical space devoted to both working and lounging. Benjamin notes that in the nineteenth century, the office as workplace developed an identity distinct from the home. Perhaps in the twenty-first century, as advances in digital technology bring the workplace back into the home, the library must also take on this dual—or dialectical—identity. {147}

At the turn of the twentieth century, home reading was different from public reading: "But by the turn of the century things were changing again. Speed, short bursts of attention and the benefits of something to read which was disposable, fun and relatively harmless were becoming accepted as part of the travelling experience. There was an increasing sense that while railway reading wasn't art, it was entertainment, and of a kind that signalled its reader was 'not at home'. This shift in the perception of literature's function—forming throughout the latter half of the century, becoming concrete towards its close—was to have a profound impact, not only on its form, furthering and facilitating its diversification, but also on its social significance" (Hammond 2006, 74). {148}

Benjamin's friendship with Adrienne Monnier connected him to the Parisian literary scene, and her bookshop provided him with another source of materials for his work. Walter to Gretel: "The relationship with Monnier is developing favourably. Her excellent lending library is of great use to me in my work. The travel connections between my area and the Bibliothèque Nationale are so poor that I take every opportunity to work at home" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1935] 2005, 170). The city connects the home and the library. If this connection isn't adequate, then the home must take on the role of the library as workspace, supplemented by commercial sources. The city and its businesses therefore determine the extent to which the home and the library overlap, in one space or the other. |Benjamin in exile, 16| {149}

During the public library movement, public libraries were used for different reading purposes than subscription libraries or private collections in the home, as Hammond (2006) found in a historical study of Southampton's (England) Central Library: "the middle-class households utilising the central library, wealthy enough to permit their women to stay in the home, were also those most likely not only to buy rather than borrow such fiction as they read or to get it from a subscription library, but perhaps also to use the free library as a public space in which to engage in different and perhaps more serious kinds of reading" (34). Even when wealthy families would spend money renting or buying popular fiction, they weren't willing to do the same for "serious" books. The public library established itself by providing alternative sources for its bourgeois patrons.   {150}

A similar and more recent sign that public libraries aren't reaching the people who need them most: "Generally, as households report greater income, more respondents reported being library users" (Oliphant 2014, 351).   {151}

According to Henninger et al. (2019), Canada has seen in recent years a growth in precarious employment, which involves a reliance on "temporary or irregular contract labour" (2). These practices are used by libraries to save money (especially regarding benefits), to increase scheduling flexibility, and to give new workers a trial run. Such "positive outcomes" were mainly felt at the organizational level, while many more "negative outcomes" were felt by individual workers, affecting their personal lives, mental and physical health, career development, and roles within their organizations (9–12). "Participants noted that short contracts and infrequent shifts inhibited the growth of institutional and community knowledge, while high turnover meant losing what knowledge had been gained. Irregular scheduling and temporary placements were implicated in weaker relationships with both coworkers and library users, poorer library service, and a reduced capacity for teamwork" (12). A library characterized by precarity is one in which the library worker cannot feel comfortable. It is an irony—or perhaps an outright lie—to market the public library as the living room of the community when library staff themselves do not feel at home there. At the very least, the public library creates a situation where workers in a precarious, uncomfortable position

must put on a show in creating a phantasmagoric simulation of a public space that is welcoming, stable, and comforting to all. "One participant also described a lack of physical space for employees to work as limiting the number of permanent positions that could be created" (12). I think that we often fail to consider the importance of library as place for the library worker. Here is one example where the space itself leads to precarity, as there isn't enough room in the library for more full-time workers. The awe-inspiring, wasted space of the atrium welcomes in the patron and forces out the worker. |Library worker, 13| {152}

"As the last truly democratic space in [the United States of] America, where there are no entry fees, judgments, or barriers, public libraries offer a tour of our society's ills and ill. We library workers are, in practical terms, surrogates for shuttered schools, parks, hospitals, and homes. And we know we are hopelessly unqualified to treat what ails many of the people who pass through our doors" (Lazard 2014, 105).   {153}

"In popular culture, the haunted library is a space with books: it is an aesthetic constructed to represent a fantasy. As such, it is noteworthy that death of libraries discourse centers specifically on libraries as spaces and institutions. Libraries become the haunted mansion, the singular magical entity inhabited by ghosts (library workers) who may or may not be visible. This privileging of the institution overlooks the reality of library *workers,* actual people whose material and emotional needs are denied or compromised in the service of neoliberal capitalism [….] Libraries are haunted houses, constructed sites of possibility inhabited by ghosts. As our patrons move through scenes and illusions that took years of labor to build and maintain, we workers are hidden, erasing ourselves in the hopes of providing a seamless user experience, in the hopes that these patrons will help defend libraries when the time comes" (Settoducato 2019). |Library worker, 14| {154}

The dream state both contains and excludes everyday life.   {155}

During work on "The Work of Art" essay in 1935: "Clearly inspired by these fast-erupting ideas, Benjamin suspended his 'historical studies' at the Bibliothèque Nationale and followed the 'whisperings of his room' (GB, 5:199),[74] spending September and most of October burrowed away, composing what turned out to be the first version of the essay" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 512). |Benjamin in exile, 17| {156}

Benjamin ([1930] 1999b) wrote in "The Crisis of the Novel", a review of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* that the writer of epics spends his days out in the world, among other people, while the novelist spends them at home, among his own thoughts: "From the point of view of epic, existence is an ocean. Nothing is more

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[74] Benjamin 1995–2000.

epic than the sea. One can of course react to the sea in different ways—for example, lie on the beach, listen to the surf, and collect the shells that it washes up on the shore. This is what the epic writer does. You can also sail on the sea. For many purposes, or none at all. You can embark on a voyage and then, when you are far out, you can cruise with no land in sight, nothing but sea and sky. This is what the novelist does. He is the truly solitary, silent person. Epic man is simply resting. In epics, people rest after their day's work; they listen, dream, and collect. The novelist has secluded himself from people and their activities. The birthplace of the novel is the individual in his isolation, the individual who can no longer speak of his concerns in exemplary fashion, who himself lacks counsel and can give none. To write a novel is to take that which is incommensurable in the representation of human existence to the extreme. Simply to think of the works of Homer and Dante is to sense what separates the novel from the genuine epic. The oral tradition, the stuff of epic, is different in kind from what forms the stock-in-trade of the novel. What distinguishes the novel from all other forms of prose—folktale, saga, proverb, comic tale—is that it neither originates in the oral tradition nor flows back into it. And this is what distinguishes it above all from storytelling, which in the prose tradition represents the epic form at its purest" (299). Benjamin researched like an epic poet and wrote like a novelist, yet the library for him also became his home away from home. He could never quite get over his tendency to self-interiorize. |Benjamin in exile, 18| |Shell, 11| {157}

The difference in writing styles reflects the different uses of the gendered spaces of the modern era: "the private, feminine world of home might correspond to the descriptive mode, while the public, masculine world of work might be figured as the narrative mode" (T. Logan 2001, 204).   {158}

Dwelling within the arcade or on city streets was necessary in modern Paris because there was not enough space to dwell residentially. By contrast, expansive North American cities with seemingly no shortage of land are rarely like collective dwellings. The library as living room of the community therefore becomes a way to make the city feel more livable and more contained within itself—creating a shell where there isn't one. Is the bourgeois shell inevitable under capitalism, or was the library always part of this process? |Shell, 12| {159}

"[L]ibraries have always been institutions built upon a paradox. On the one hand, they are places of enclosure: fortified bastions; sites of burial and storage of treasures; places of retreat from the din of the marketplace; sacred precincts and temples devoted to contemplation and prayer; self-sufficient worlds […]. On the other hand, libraries open up *onto* the world: the noise of the street invades their sacred precinct; the collections cannot be built up without connections between capital and periphery in the form of trade routes [….] The conditions against which the library is meant to serve as a buffer or a bastion are precisely the conditions out of which it arises. The library is a product and a critique of urban possibilities" (Schnapp and Battles 2014, 27–28).   {160}

The library has moved from housing metaphorical books as bodies to actual human bodies: "The library is born as a container shaped by its contents. Like the tomb, its sacred meaning is intimately associated with the *Sōma*, the bodies that it houses. The structure itself thus is summoned into being not along the lines of the ideal or sacred geometries, not to serve the fulfillment of practical everyday tasks, but instead as the external manifestation of an internal treasure that needs, at once, to be manifest to the world of the living and protected, sheltered, locked up like a treasury or invisible reserve" (Schnapp and Battles 2014, 29). The contents of the library as living room are the people themselves, who become the treasure that must be manifest to and protected from the rest of the living world. |Library worker, 15| {161}

Through the introduction and subsequent cessation of deposit collection services, library extension put materials into the home and then took them away.   {162}

"The collections of Alexandre du Sommerard in the holdings of the Musée Cluny" [H3a,4]. Du Sommerand lived in l'hôtel de Cluny, where his personal collection was housed while he converted the entire space into a public museum. |Décor, 16| {163}

Benjamin visited the Musée: "Scholem tells about [Benjamin's] ambition to get one hundred lines onto the ordinary page of a notebook and about his admiration for two grains of wheat in the Jewish section of the Musée Cluny 'on which a kindred soul had inscribed the complete Shema Israel.' For him the size of an object was in an inverse ratio to its significance. […] The smaller the object, the more likely it seemed that it could contain in the most concentrated form everything else" (Arendt [1968] 2019, xix–xx). |Benjamin in exile, 19| {164}

In 1936: "In Denmark, Benjamin was reunited not only with his friends but with the part of his library he had been able to get out of Berlin—that, too, a reunion he had often longed for and about which he would dream in Paris" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 535). |Benjamin in exile, 20| {165}

Manguel (2010) writes in "The Library as Home" that he can't feel at home unless his books do: "For the past seven years, I have lived in an old stone presbytery in France, south of the Loire Valley, in a village of fewer than ten houses. I chose the place because next to the house itself was a barn, partly torn down centuries ago, large enough to accommodate my library of some thirty thousand books, assembled over six itinerant decades. I knew that once the books found their place, I would find mine" (278). Comfort in the home is dependent on the comfort of the home library.   {166}

"Like every library, mine will eventually exceed the space allotted to it. Barely seven years after it was set up, it has already spread into the main body of house, which I had hoped to keep free of bookshelves. […] There is a story by Julio Cortázar, 'House Taken Over,' in which a brother and sister are forced to move from room to room as something unnamed occupies inch by inch their entire house, eventually forcing them to move out into the street. I foresee a day in which my books, like that anonymous invader, will

complete their gradual conquest" (Manguel 2010, 281). The library takes over the home, and the home moves into the street, just as it did in modern Paris. Regardless of the time period and where they are located, the street, the library, and the home are in constant struggle with each other.   {167}

"If the only room which can be devoted to holding books is too small to hold all the volumes the family is fortunate enough to own, or if no room at all can be given up to them exclusively, then by all means let the books overflow the house. Some authors have had books in almost every room of their residence. Southey had his even down along the staircase, lining its walls, and Shelley declares that Southey did not like his venturing to take down a volume as he descended the steps" (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 49).   {168}

"Once, I went to see him [Rafael Cansinos-Assens] and he took me into his library. Or, rather, I should say his whole house was a library. It was like making your way through a woods" (Borges 1971, 152).   {169}

Patrons without permanent or fixed addresses already have enough difficulty using the library, as borrowing permissions are tied to the home, with the library usually requiring proof of address. On top of that, the mere perception that a patron might be homeless has negative consequences, especially in rural areas where such patrons can be less common: "Indeed, there was evidence in the rural data which suggested that, while the free public library may be open to all, the library as an organization is capable of closing doors of other kinds to those who fall outside the profile of the average library user. The data revealed that sometimes the homeless or poorly housed are treated with suspicion at some of these rural libraries" (Griffis and Johnson 2014, 107). The library feels more like a home to those who already have stable housing. Those who don't find themselves feeling homeless in a double sense: without stable housing and unwelcome in public spaces. This is another example of the public library expanding, rather than breaking, the bourgeois shell. |Ontario, 11| |Shell, 13| {170}

In 1937, upon returning to Paris from San Remo: "Just when Benjamin was feeling that he could no longer afford even the cheapest hotels, he was saved by an offer from Adorno's wealthy friend Else Herzberger to take up residence, rent-free, in the maid's room of her apartment at 1 Rue de Château in Boulogne sur Seine, while mistress and maid were in America (a period of some three months). By September 25 he was installed in the tiny room [….] To escape these conditions, he fled every morning to the Bibliothèque Nationale to pursue his research on Baudelaire" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 571). Benjamin's conditions at home influenced his work. Sometimes he would stay in a comfortable home working on compiling his notes. Other times he would flee an uncomfortable home to gather more notes. The library was usually the counterpart to his home. |Baudelaire, 5| |Benjamin in exile, 21| {171}

Banville regarding Baudelaire: "'In his lodgings at the Hôtel Pimodan, when I went there for the first time to visit him, there were no dictionaries, no separate study—

not even *a table with writing materials*; nor was there a sideboard or a separate dining room, or anything else resembling the décor of a bourgeois apartment.' Théodore de Banville, *Mes Souvenirs* (Paris, 1882), pp. 81–82" [J41,3]. |Baudelaire, 6| |Décor, 17| {172}

According to Söderholm (2016), who studied the Berkley (CA) tool lending library in the South Branch Library, in addition to other benefits, tool borrowing has a positive impact on sustainable community development by allowing people to improve homes, other buildings, and therefore the community. Tool borrowing is done for reasons related to the local community, not to more global issues or concerns. The public library doesn't affect the home simply through the borrowed objects that enter it; the library also affects the structure, appearance, and livability of the house itself and the buildings that surround it. |Technology, 5| {173}

"Like stores and rental businesses, libraries too are places for people to get things, to bring home" (Söderholm 2016, 141).   {174}

Pateman and Williment (2013) summarize a common argument: "In addition, if people can download books from home, why should they go to the library and why should local councils pay for library buildings and staff?" (114). |Technology, 6| {175}

Library as storehouse: "The storehouse metaphor forecloses on other possibilities for the library as place (i.e., as a shifting, dynamic social ground) as it forces us to see the library solely as a kind of container that changes depending only on what gets put into it or taken out of it. This conceptualization of the place of the library corresponds to the notion of space as fixed, objective surface that allows social identities to be 'read off' of it" (Rothbauer 2007, 109).   {176}

"Libraries are about much more, of course; they exist not simply to store and provide access to information. Advocates argue that libraries continue to serve crucial civic and social functions, and their tenacious faith is reinforced by a flurry of recent street-level library activity. The last few years have seen the emergence of myriad mini, pop-up, guerilla and ad-hoc libraries" (Mattern 2012). These include little free libraries (LFLs), storefront libraries, pop-up programming in public spaces, and "fugitive libraries" (Mattern 2019) with shifting locations, personnel, and priorities. |Library worker, 16|
                                                                                 {177}

"Given the rise of proprietary platforms and ephemeral content, the LFL believes that the tactility, the originality, the *aura* of these structures—plus the fact that they're communal property—generates an *affective* response" (Mattern 2012). |Technology, 7| {178}

"Indeed, in the *Controversia de nobilitate* [written in 1428 by Buonaccorso da Montemagno], Flamminius emphasizes his collection of books as a collection of objects. His books are likened to the furniture and other domestic goods that are stored in the library; all of these belongings are prizes for their value and beauty. […] The books are

understood as material commodities and are cataloged with other household possessions" (Mak 2007, 210–211). |Décor, 18| {179}

Children at the margins of modern library spaces: "The children themselves helped to force library doors to open wider and wider. They crept into adult libraries until they could no longer be ignored. In some instances they were allowed to come in on Sunday afternoons, or a corridor or alcove was set aside for their use, so that they would not annoy the adults. These corridors and alcoves became rooms as children demanded more space. The decade from 1890 to 1900 witnessed the opening of children's rooms from Brookline, Massachusetts, to Denver, Colorado" (Long 1953, 8). The passageways became rooms. |Childhood, 9| {180}

"The nature of the [children's] service also emphasizes the individual, since the public library is used as a home library is used, on an individual basis. It is the 'home library writ large for the community'" (Long 1953, 15–16). |Childhood, 10| {181}
"The more attractive this [children's] room becomes, departing from the conventional table-chair equipment to furniture more resembling that to be found in a well-furnished living room in a home, the more it will offer as an attractive place to read and browse, with the comfort and freedom the child might find in a well-appointed home library were he fortunate enough to have one. All encouragement is made to have him consider this room not merely as a place to make hurried use of in connection with his school needs, but where he may indulge in the pleasure of reading for enjoyment in an atmosphere of books, helpful guidance, and stimulation. The children's room is and always has been a place where children and books are brought happily together in an informal, friendly way" (Long 1953, 50). Does the children's room of the public library movement serve as a model for the library as living room of the community? |Childhood, 11| |Décor, 19|
                                                                                               {182}

Drawing on Gilloch's (1996) notion of the "'embourgeoisement' of space", Thompson (2010) critiques the Sage in Gateshead, which promotes itself as an "urban living room", as fulfilling "the historical destiny of city space" by being "a perfect example of the current colonization of the city in the form of this pre-scribed, pseudo-public space" (65).   {183}

"Artist Colin McMullan's Corner Library Project, which is catalogued on a Tumblr, consists of mini-libraries in commercial-news-rack-sized, weatherproofed sheds on street corners. […] McMullan's libraries, which have attracted a lot of attention—including from *The Wall Street Journal*—represent another 'species' of little library: what I'm calling the 'birdhouse collections.' These micro-scale, user-cultivated collections reside in tiny, often hand-made, bird- or dog-house like structures sited in parks and street corners and marginal spaces. […] McMullan sees his Corner Libraries as a new iteration of the book swap. […] These birdhouses house an alternative economy of information" (Mattern 2012).   {184}

"Still, some critics have wondered if equating a 'library' with a 'bunch of books' might suggest that librarianship is merely a hobby that anyone can take up, and that libraries can

survive on donations and micro-financing, rather than public funding" (Mattern 2012). |Library worker, 17| {185}

"Many early public libraries were appallingly under-resourced and forced to rely on donations, usually the passing on of out-dated or highly specialised volumes from private libraries" (Hammond 2006, 29). These materials, much like the materials still donated to public libraries today, were ill suited for a general readership and in low demand. The library in the home simultaneously sustains and undermines the public library. {186}

One of Benjamin's ([1931] 2019) thoughts while unpacking his library: "the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter" (9). Does the public living room lose its meaning in a similar way? {187}

He concludes: "Other thoughts fill me than the ones I am talking about—not thoughts but images, memories. […] memories of the rooms where these books had been housed [….] for a collector—and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be—ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them. So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting" (10). Regular public library patrons develop a strong connection to the collection, moving or altering items, demanding that certain ones be removed, suggesting that others be added. It is the public library's duty to make sure that *all* patrons can experience any item in the collection as if they were its owner, as if they had personal relationships with it, as if they lived in it (see the next chapter). {188}

Gretel, from New York City, to Walter: "You can probably hardly imagine just how much I would love to see you over here. However, I harbor the single fear that you are so at home amongst your Arcades that you will never want to leave the splendid structure, and that it is only when you have finally closed the door on it that any other subject will catch your interest" (T. Adorno and Benjamin [1938] 1999, 240–241). |Benjamin in exile, 22| {189}

Put differently, Theodor to Walter: "Gretel once jokingly remarked that you dwell in the cavernous depths of your Arcades and that you shrink from completing the study because you are afraid of leaving what you have built" (T. Adorno and Benjamin [1938] 1999, 285). |Benjamin in exile, 23| {190}

Benjamin dwelled so deeply in the husks of libraries, of books, of his own *Arcades Project* that he couldn't move about the world, that he ignored the rising threat of Nazism, that he was interned, that he ultimately couldn't escape. |Benjamin in exile, 24| |Disaster, 7| {191}

The status at the turn of the previous century: "Persons who have lived all their lives in an atmosphere of good books may be slow to realize the lack of reading matter that prevails in many homes. Frequently only a small amount of any kind of literature that would stimulate mental growth is to be found in the house of even well-to-do classes. In rural districts especially, where public libraries are not available, children are often intellectually starved" (Millar 1897, iii). |Childhood, 12| |Ontario, 12| {192}

A contemporary account of the modern bourgeois home library devoid of books: "It is a sad sight to see a home without books. […] If the absence of a small library is due to poverty there is some excuse. Where is evidence of means, the lack of books is to be condemned. It too often happens that in the houses of well-to-do people there is little appreciation of good reading matter. Money is expended in dress, furniture and fine houses, but books are seldom purchased. It is one of the most incongruous sights to see an elegant house with fine furniture, paintings of the masters, valuable bric-a-brac, extravagant frescoes, expensive house-plants, and yet scarcely a standard work in the library. The sublimity of folly is reached when several massive volumes, with elegant illustrations, add to the costly array of furniture in the drawing-room of a family that possesses no taste for literature and no appreciation of the proper value of books. Indeed, such a condition has its amusing aspects, when books have been secured, but without any regard to their intrinsic merit. The binding of the books, which is sure to be costly, indicates that display and not real worth determines the choice" (Millar 1897, 66). |Décor, 20| |Ontario, 13| {193}

It must have been a common occurrence: "A New York paper recently told a story of an enriched couple who were about to decorate their new mansion in the highest style of the latest art, and who, therefore, went about seeking hints that they might devour and digest to their own profit. Among the houses which they got leave to examine was the home of a prominent publisher; and the sight of the library therein was suggestive to the lady, for she turned to her lord with the pertinent query, 'Don't you think we might have some books, too.' […] Now, between the gentleman who buys a book just to fill up his book-case and the gentleman whose library consisted mainly of old boots, there is no great difference" (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 6–7). |Décor, 21| {194}

"The need of home libraries is felt more in the country than in the city. In rural districts the opportunities for self-improvement are generally very limited. The young people seldom have access to public libraries and good lectures are rare. […] Even an agricultural journal is not provided [in the home], and it is apparently assumed that the tiller of the soil has no need of scientific knowledge regarding farming operations" (Millar 1897, 67). |Childhood, 13| |Ontario, 14| {195}

"Children should be trained to value their books, and to form little libraries for themselves. A book worth reading is worth preserving. […] A public library can never meet the needs that are supplied by a private one. […] Almost any boy or girl who tries may have, in a few years, a fair library. […] To purchase a great many books is unnecessary. Not more than a thousand really first-class books are to be found in the

English language, and of these the greatest will not exceed one hundred" (Millar 1897, 69). |Childhood, 14| |Ontario, 15| {196}

Millar put too much faith in the power of owning books: "Investigations by rural sociologists have proved that private ownership cannot meet the entire book need in the country any more than in the city, valuable as is the influence of the home library" (The Committee on Library Extension of the American Library Association 1926, 34). {197} "These books are an example of what librarians at the turn of the century called a 'home library'—not a privately owned collection, but a set of books gathered together and sent out to readers in the countryside. An early version of the bookmobile, the home library traveled to the farmsteads of rural Wisconsin in a horse-drawn, librarian-driven buggy. It's modest, and even homely [.…] The combination of settlement-house outreach and library science was a product of the twentieth century designed to further nineteenth-century goals: to bring untutored masses into the circle of readers, to set them on a path to right reading that would lead from adventure stories and travel tales to geography, history, and the trades. The expectation was that enjoyment of the home library would entice young readers into the children's room of the local branch, where they would begin the process of inculcation to the values of their society" (Battles 2003, 197–198). {198}

"If the home library can be an altar and a viral speck of civilization, if a few books in a wooden box could open like the ark on a farmstead in Wisconsin, what could massed millions of books—all just sitting there waiting—do for immigrants and their children lost among the shifting crowds of New York, Boston, Chicago?" (Battles 2003, 205). |Childhood, 15| {199}

Walter to Gretel: "Having long piled up books upon books and excerpts upon excerpts, I am now seeking to lay the foundation for a completely transparent structure with a series of reflections" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1938] 2005, 219). The physical act of surrounding himself with books led to the manuscript as metaphorical home. |Benjamin in exile, 25| |Montage, 21| {200}

The Home Library by Brander Matthews under the pseudonym Arthur Penn (1883) is part of a series of books (a type of home library), a manual about home libraries, and a catalogue of other books from the same publisher that could comprise a home library, as well as listing other great works (yet another type of home library). Including its title, it is five home libraries in one. The second half of the book, with chapters such as "On the Library and its Furniture", "On Book-Binding", "On Diaries and Family Records", and "On the Lending and Marking of Books", show how unique each home library was, how it relied on manual work by the library's owner (or someone hired to help), and how even the books took on their own forms, inside and out, between custom bindings and bookplates, notes, and scraps. "One library differs from another library just as one book differs from another book" (5). {201}

"The ordinary American, for whose use and behoof this simple treatise is intended, is well satisfied if he can give up any corner of his house to books. As often as not it is an

odd room, useless for any other purpose, and cheerless at all times. Now, this ought not to be. The library should be a room into which every member of the family may feel glad to go. It ought to be bright and cheerful. It ought to be easily accessible. It ought to be warmed in winter, and protected from the glare of the sun in summer" (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 49).   {202}

Regarding the practicality of hanging shelves: "In many houses there are not more books than will fill a set of these shelves; and, even in houses where there is a library with an abundance of books, there are likely to be members of the family who own and cherish their individual collections of volumes which they can hang on the walls of their own rooms under their own eyes" (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 52). Home libraries therefore define the home, whether in terms of the building and layout of the rooms themselves, through construction, or by separating or defining the spaces, through assembly and display. Rooms become libraries, or libraries define rooms.   {203}

In "A Berlin Chronicle", Benjamin ([1932] 1978) compares knowledge, even knowledge of self, to the *unfinished* body on display in the parlour or home library: "He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging. This confers the tone and bearing of genuine reminiscences. He must not be afraid to return again and again to the same matter; to scatter it as one scatters earth, to turn it over as one turns over soil. For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth: the images, severed from all earlier associations, that stand—like precious fragments or torsos in a collector's gallery—in the prosaic rooms of our later understanding" (26). |Décor, 22| {204}

"Everything is held together by the genius of the collector, who regarded 'being at home in marginal areas' (GS III, p. 369)[75] as a characteristic of the modern researcher" (Wizisla 2007a, 4).   {205}

Walter, in Denmark, to the Adornos: "Many thanks for [Meyer] Schapiro's letter! I shall write to him once the Baudelaire is finished. Then I will be able to move freely among people once more; but not before then" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1938] 2005, 242). Writing letters to people is Benjamin's way of moving among them, yet writing his study prevents him from writing anything else. His work prevents movement, both literal and figurative. |Baudelaire, 7| |Benjamin in exile, 26|{206}

Elliott (2011) notes that a central theme for Benjamin "is the shift from bourgeois dwelling to modernist housing" (6). "In this light the true task of modernist construction is to break open the protective shell of the nineteenth-century

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[75] Benjamin 1972–1989.

interior, rather than devising new means of realizing the reactionary desire for individualized dwelling" (Elliott 2011, 68). |Shell, 14| {207}

Bivens-Tatum (2012) notes that, during the public library movement, the presence of a public library in a city increased property values and was used as a selling point by both city administrators and real estate agents (123–125). The public library directly influenced the desirability and exchange value of the houses around it—and still does.   {208}

Attempts to study "everyday life information seeking", "the library in the life of the user", or similar notions, seem to ignore the critiques of modernity and of everyday life introduced by Benjamin and others. These become studies of information behaviour within our current systems, dominated as they are by the violence, inequality, and alienation inherent in capitalism and technological determinism, rather than considering information seeking or library services that *transcend* or *transform* the everyday life of the patron. Similarly, for the library simply to become the patron's living room does not drastically reconfigure the spaces of everyday life. |Technology, 8| {209}

"Neighborhoods thrive on libraries and citizens working together to create great spaces. Community stability depends on a solid foundation, and as with most homes, it's where the heart is" (Fox 2017).   {210}

Selman and Curnow (2019), in opposition to "Winnipeg's downtown Millennium Library's aggressive and invasive security screening practices" (1), cite other Canadian examples, such as Halifax, that welcome rather than exclude patrons: "By welcoming the community in and helping different patrons feel like they belong and are valued, the library sets itself up as a community space where respect is given and received. Welcoming and providing comfort are actually ways to make people feel more relaxed and can reduce tensions that may lead to violence" (4).   {211}

Librarians who claim that public libraries support the public good or democracy uncritically accept the current state of affairs, which includes the public library as a state-run institution, an extension of local, provincial, or federal governments. Most well-funded public libraries operate in middle- and upper-class districts with large tax bases; if public libraries were deemed true necessities, those in low-income areas— the very libraries that have proven most effective at increasing social capital (C. A. Johnson 2012)—would receive the most per-capita funding, regardless of political subdivision. At the same time, key stakeholders—mayors, councillors, directors— tout the public library as a local amenity, a selling point for potential residents, visitors, or tourists. For example, public libraries in cottage country cater to and in fact rely on cottagers, who are mainly interested in DVDs; the public library then becomes an extension of the cottage tourist industry.   {212}

Benjamin, in "Berlin Chronicle" Notice 33, regarding his childhood: "Our 'summer residences' were first in Potsdam, then in Babelsberg. In those days you lived outside, namely from the standpoint of the city; from the standpoint of summer, though, it was inside: You nested in summer" (Benjamin 2015, 115–116). |Childhood, 16| {213}

Library tourism: "Libraries are free, quiet, relaxing, air-conditioned in summer and heated in winter. They offer a pleasant respite from the streets and sometimes a great view. Many North American libraries have good play centers for young children, when they need a break from touristing, and they're full of locals who can dispense valuable recommendations" (Martinko 2018). The tourist values the library for its dialectical relationship with the surrounding city, not for the materials it contains. |Technology, 9| {214}

The public library as destination makes a city more habitable while tourism to the library undermines its community function: "Is there a downside to all this visiting? Are we just setting up another tension, in which libraries are victims of their own success, and locals compete with tourists for library space and time? Could our best libraries come to resemble parts of Amsterdam and Venice: pseudo-historical theme-parks; mere caricatures of civic spaces, more for tourists than for locals? Could the 'social glue' of libraries be replaced by tourists' discarded chewing gum? […] Nevertheless, I'm optimistic about the future, in part because those tensions are exactly what librarians are deft at resolving" (Kells 2019). The solution, as I argue in Chapters 6 and 7 below, is the library worker as dialectician. |Library worker, 18| {215}

Walter to Gretel, from Pontigny's library: "The large library with 15000 books is the best thing about Pontigny—from where I am writing you. It is at the free disposal of visitors, and you can imagine how I am profiting from that. As for the remaining features [read: the other patrons], they are infinitely less favourable. […] Another discovery I have made in this library is Joubert. (He was the last of the great French moralists and experienced the Restoration.) His 'Pensées' truly astounded me. In Joubert's work I find exactly the style I would like to have in everything I write—not so much the model as rather the masterful definition of his writing" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1939] 2005, 259–260). Joubert's aphoristic notebooks are similar in form and content to the "waste books" of Lichtenberg, whom Benjamin also admired (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 212). He quotes Joubert several times in *The Arcades Project* [N15a,3; N16,1; N16,2; O13a,4; m1,3]; one can assume that these passages were extracted at Pontigny. Although Benjamin encountered Joubert late in his arcades research, the *Pensées* could have easily served a model for the entire project had Benjamin been aware of them earlier. |Benjamin in exile, 27| |Montage, 22| {216}

"My ideas! It is the house for lodging them that costs me so much to build" (Joubert 1983, 106).   {217}

"One must know how to enter the ideas of others and how to leave them. One must know how to leave one's own ideas and how to come back to them" (Joubert 1983, 111). Benjamin did not know how to leave his own ideas, nor do I. |Benjamin in exile, 28|

{218}

The book as both dwelling place and underground passage, from Notice 34: "You did not read through books, no, you dwelt, you sheltered between their lines and when you returned to them after a break, you would startle yourself at the spot where you had stopped. And the bliss with which you received the new book, scarcely daring to cast a fleeting glance within it, was that of the guest who has been invited to spend several weeks in a palace and scarcely dares to throw an admiring glance over the long rows of splendid rooms through which he must pass in order to reach his own. He is all the more impatient to be allowed to withdraw. […] Making this first survey of the story-labyrinth, nothing was more delightful than sensing the various air currents, patches of light, odors, and sounds issuing from its many chambers and passages. Indeed, the longer stories, often interrupted and re-emerging in the form of continuations, traversed the whole as subterranean passages" (Benjamin 2015, 121–122). |Childhood, 17|{219}

The modern flâneuse: "But just as important as what she sees is what the walk does to her sense of self. Within our homes, Woolf [1986] writes, we are surrounded by the objects that make us who we are: things we have chosen and arranged, which 'express' and 'enforce' our identities. But the moment we leave that setting, that 'shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves', we 'shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers' [481]" (Elkin 2017, 87). The library is a living room defined by and encouraging of anonymity, as opposed to the shell-like identities we take on in our own homes. As the library creates the shell, so too does it offer a way to break it. |Décor, 23| |Shell, 15| {220}

Or it can lead to the increased alienation and seclusion of dwelling within the library: "people come to the library seeking seclusion from other library users, but they still desire the comfort that comes from knowing that others are nearby. Library carrels, alcoves, cubbies, and separated desks provide this contradictory private spot within a public setting. Many people find a favorite hideaway, be it a comfy chair tucked among the stacks or a certain table in the back of a reading room, claiming it as their own" (Maxwell 2006, 80). |Décor, 24| {221}

A library separated from everyday life seems to be some sort of spiritual ideal for Maxwell (2006): "Religious believers seek serenity in their houses of worship as an escape from the hustle and bustle of the secular world. Libraries, too, serve this purpose. As sanctuaries of knowledge, libraries are separated from the world but house and allow communion with the world's written record" (86). Do libraries serve this purpose? Should they?   {222}

The library as apparent sanctuary and saviour: "The attitude toward the library has changed since the institution's early days as a place of solitude and introspection, reading and contemplation. As demonstrated in this year's 82 building projects, completed between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017, academic and public institutions are now regarded as places of community, of gathering, and of collaboration, even as reading remains in play. They are new facilities finding a place within an established setting and saviors of materials and legacies while offering constituents the state-of-the-art. They comprise the core of campus life and the hub of neighborhoods nationwide. Libraries today are like coming home" (Fox 2017). Coming home in what sense? And for whom: the worker, the regular patron, or the "non-user" entering the newly configured for the first time? Or for that "most withered […] private individual"?[76] When did we *leave* home? |Technology, 10| {223}

For Glazer (1965), the solid homes of rich men make for the best public libraries: "I speak of the library in urban areas, and particularly urban areas influenced by immigration (as were most in America). In rural areas library services barely existed. In small towns, relatively unaffected by foreign immigration, a similar significance [to the urban library] was attached to the library. There too the library was the place for young people who wished to improve themselves. There too the library, even if it did not have the architectural grandeur of the city library, tended to be in a solid building, perhaps the former home of some wealthy man or given by some philanthropist. I think of [Henry Hobson] Richardson's [Thomas Crane Public] library in Quincy, Massachusetts, and of the Forbes Library in Northampton—there are many others" (76).[77]   {224}

"David Riesman once referred to the hard-cover man who needs a hard-cover book. I would now refer to the hard-cover library, in which one is protected by columns and stones and heavy wooden paneling and heavy wooden bookcases and signs of 'QUIET.' In such a library the important thing is the setting for a special kind of experience—being alone with a book, or with a lot of books—and not the efficiency of the library, or the art exhibit, or the lecture-discussions (though if the cover is hard enough, and the institution large enough, there is no reason why these things cannot go on at the same time)" (Glazer 1965, 79). While Glazer insists that his argument shouldn't be "dismissed as pointless conservatism" for "I am not a conservative" (81), these arguments sound very much like a man who wants to be protected by the library as bourgeois shell in the solid houses of richer men. |Shell, 16| {225}

In 1939, upon Benjamin's return to Paris from Pontigny: "He reported to Scholem, with some amusement, that he was acquiring new reading material from the

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[76] See {58} above.

[77] For example: "The library in Newcastle, NB, was given to the town by Lord Beaverbrook who grew up there. It was the former manse of his father, the Presbyterian minister" (Catherine A. Johnson, message to the author, 26 October 2020).

widow of the Russian writer Lev Shestov, who lived in his building surrounded by uncut copies of her husband's collected works; as she made room for herself by discarding volumes, Benjamin added to his library" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 640). |Benjamin in exile, 29| {226}

The present-day flâneuse: "My question then as a walker is not how can I possess the city as an occupying force, but *how can I be in it at all*? What would it really mean to be *at home* in this city where I was born and where I work, full of private memories, yet lacking public meanings for me?" (Scalway 2006, 168). What does the library as home do to create public meanings for those who can't find them elsewhere in the city?
                                                                         {227}

"The public realm also constitutes a center for communication—not the kind made possible by electronic technology, but the kind that sustains a community living room in which people see and talk to each other face-to-face" (Wiegand 2005, 79). |Technology, 11| {228}

Libraries as meeting places: "Just as cities work to develop open, living, and multifunctional space, the same design trends are apparent in the layout and interior of libraries. The rational reading room is replaced by more inspiring spaces that offer possibilities for meetings and experiences" (Berndtson 2013, 122).   {229}

"The library as 'third place' speaks to the design of the Grande Bibliothèque, Montreal. Upon entering, patrons see prechosen books and films, as well as an interactive showcase displaying digital resources" (Fox 2017). |Technology, 12| {230}

Oldenburg's (1999) central thesis, so adored by librarians even though he doesn't consider libraries in his formulation (nor arcades, for that matter), is that social life in a community, broadly defined, requires "third places": those which are neither home—"the most important place of all" (16)—nor work. Third places tend to be places with some commercial function that facilitates conversations and social interactions among "regulars". "Before industrialization, the first and second places were one. Industrialization separated the place of work from the place of residence, removing productive work from the home and making it remote in distance, morality, and spirit from family life. What we now call the third place existed long before this separation, and so our term is a concession to the sweeping effects of the Industrial Revolution and its division of life into private and public spheres" (16). I would argue, though, that embracing this division and formulating a worldview based on the existence of yet a third type of place ignores the dialectical qualities of work, home, and other spaces. Compartmentalizing social life into a third place ignores the revolutionary potentialities of work and home, diminishes the fact the one person's third place is another person's workplace, and through the formulation of the third place as "a home away from home" (38) oddly separates life along gender- and class-based lines. To what extent that constitutes a positive view of home life, an idealized form of social life, let alone a model for the library, is certainly up for debate.   {231}

"One library clerk who had worked at the branch for more than 20 years specifically described his role in social terms, and felt that the conversations he had with patrons were helpful to them: 'Well, I just talk to people all the time. I'm like the librarian bartender sometimes. People come ... and I just listen to them. I don't give advice, I just 'unh-huh, unh-huh.' So they have somebody to talk to.' When asked what he thought the patron got out of this interaction, the library clerk said: 'Well, somebody's here who's kind of like a friend to them and who's there and treats them like a regular person, because some of these people, they probably get called names or whatever on the street, you know'" (C. A. Johnson 2012, 59).   {232}

Regarding Boston's Uni project, which temporarily brings books to unused urban spaces: "To become stationary would mean losing the capacity to show how any space, if designed and programmed as a space of exception, can become a momentary utopia, dedicated to the values defining our ideal societies and better selves" (Mattern 2012).

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Walter to Gretel: "I will certainly not be leaving France this year, or even Paris, until the rough draft of the 'Flaneur' is completely finished" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1939] 2005, 263). Later that year, he would be interned in Nevers, where he would write the "fichu" letter to Gretel, which concludes: "I need hardly add that I am impatient to make myself more useful to my friends and to the enemies of Hitler than is possible in my present situation. I never stop hoping for a change, and I am sure that you are together with me in your efforts and wishes" (273–274). |Benjamin in exile, 30| |Disaster, 8| {234}

"In a world where the digital part of our lives is increasing, we have to understand that the reality of the twenty-first century will be a combination of the physical and digital. On the other hand, the digital influences the physical. […] It is a paradoxical reality that the more digital material we have outside the library, the more important the physical library and its interior become. In the future, the library will not be mainly for the storage of books but a place for people to connect and collaborate in a 'third place'—libraries will really become meeting places of people and ideas. In this case we have to give more and different types of space to people who come to the library to do different things" (Berndtson 2013, 124). The public library has intensified its efforts to approximate the living room as both a reaction and a complement to the internet. |Technology, 13|{235}

"These phrases—'urban living room,' 'makers' space'—are among a flurry of modern buzzwords being thrust into public vernacular by architects, urban designers and city planners. They describe libraries as an ideal 'third place' (as opposed to the first two, home and work), no longer 'temples of knowledge,' but rather 'innovation labs' and 'community spaces' with 'digital literary librarians.' The message is clear: Libraries are no longer just for books. Libraries are part of the future" (Fraiman 2015, 54). In the digital era, the traditional identity of library as living room paradoxically establishes it as part of the future. |Technology, 14| {236}

"It is possible […] to broaden our idea of library space to include the sanctity of the

library space created in the home on the internet" (Janse van Vuren and Latsky 2009, 9). |Technology, 15| {237}

"If the library is to serve as a truly constructive force in the community, then it must make more people aware of how the printed word can help them in their homes, in their jobs, with their educational and recreational problems" (Coplan 1958, 25). {238}

A suggestion for a "COZY READING SCENE" library display: "Pretend the glass front of the display case is the window of someone's home. Use masking tape to construct fake window panes if you like. Spray the glass with spray snow. Inside, use a doll or mannequin sitting in a cozy chair by a fireplace reading a book. Or have the doll in bed with a cozy quilt also reading a book. Make the scene as cozy as possible" (Everhart, Hartz, and Kreiger 1989, 86). |Décor, 25| {239}

The modern urban public library offered morally acceptable books and items such as toys and games to make itself "a welcoming, homelike, familiar place […] where children, many of whom lived in crowded, dingy tenement buildings, could be surrounded by beautiful objects that would inspire their wonder" (Walter 2010, 3, quoted in Pierce 2016, 387). The library as home gave working-class children aspirations toward bourgeois parlours. The homelike atmosphere the library cultivated wasn't the atmosphere of the children's own homes. |Childhood, 18| {240}

"Most children are searching for something,—some of them quite desperately. All children have their own dreams, their longings, as adults do. To them the library could become a mighty emporium where the rich variety of wares is theirs for the asking. To the underprivileged ones whose homes are rent by the tensions of too many people in too little space, the children's library could be a haven indeed, its displays a fount of inspiration and renewal" (Borgwardt 1970, 193). |Childhood, 19| {241}

"Let's think inside the box for a moment, because it is inside those brick-and-mortar boxes where community lives. Tacoma's ten libraries are the living rooms of 10 neighborhoods. They are places where latchkey kids can feel safe in the afternoons, where people without Internet access at home go online, where parents give their children the gift of reading" (Callaghan 2002, quoted in Wiegand 2005, 80). |Childhood, 20| |Technology, 16| {242}

An unlikely source of inspiration in a self-help book that offers a rare convincing argument in favour of limited lending periods: "Public libraries are for most people an easy and readily available solution for cutting back on the amount of stuff that comes into our homes [….] In addition to providing an ever-ready source of the latest books and reading material at minimal or no cost, public libraries also, through the ever-impending due date, supply the impetus to read these materials in a timely fashion. While we may not read every single book or magazine we bring home from the library, at least they won't be cluttering up our nightstands and bookshelves on a permanent basis [….] Libraries also supply a practical way to offload the stacks of your own books and audio- and videotapes that are cluttering up your environment. Not only will donating books to

the library free up space in your home and office, but it provides such a simple and satisfying way to share your resources with others. […] [W]hen you donate books to the library—if your library keeps them—you always know where they are should you want to read them again. You can thereby have your books and not have them at the same time" (St. James 1996, 162–163). In other words, the relationship between the home and the library is dialectical. The items that are or are not present in the home affect the items that the library does or does not offer. The library might offer some particularly because they cannot, do not, or are difficult to fit into the home. But beyond that, this dialectical nature of the collection can be traced back to the modern public library's genesis in the home. The reciprocity of this relationship might be more pronounced in the city, where the library and the home are closer in proximity and can interact in more urgent ways. {243}

Back in the capital and la Bibliothèque nationale following his internment, Walter to Gretel: "I must say that the day on which I went back to the library for the first time was like a little festive occasion at the house" (G. Adorno and Benjamin [1940] 2005, 279). The library as place can also improve home life. |Benjamin in exile, 31| |Disaster, 9| {244}

It also occurs to me that the library patron might perceive a false revolutionary potentiality in the physical public library's spaces and items. Most of the collection, after all, is comprised of items and objects that are bought on the market; the library is, to paraphrase Benjamin, a cavern of commodities. What appears to the patron as a way to liberate items is more a way to justify the purchasing power and wisdom of the librarian. Revolutionary potentiality will come from a new way of building and justifying collections. |Library worker, 19| {245}

The borrowed library materials in patrons' homes affect the library as place: "One of the ways to combat any lack of storage space [in the library] is to keep the collection moving. Just think how much space it would take to house your entire collection at once! To keep the collection moving, you need to promote it" (LaPerriere and Christiansen 2008, 13). {246}

Offsite storage is literally the interior of the library made exterior. {247}

The situation in Norway: "The library is conceived by the focus groups as a highly complex institution. It is simultaneously perceived as an arena buzzing with activity and an arena for reflection; it is perceived as a cathedral and a daily living room in the city with a low threshold. It is described as simultaneously being a trendy, sushi eating woman and as a person having his or her roots in the somewhat old fashioned social democratic traditions of Norway" (Evjen and Audunson 2009, 172). {248}

"It is obvious that, in an age of escalating building costs and straitened budgets, public and private institutions will look to creative and efficient collaboration as part of the solution to the library building problem" (Gorman 2015, 68). The public library is

already an institution that tries to take on multiple identities within a single space. This process is intensified in the multiuse facility. {249}

Toronto's renovated Mount Dennis Branch: "[architect Bruce] Stratton speaks of the interior as an 'urban living room' (with a fireplace retained from the original library) for both casual reading and contemplation. […] [A]n open 'feature stair' under clerestory windows connects the main and lower levels. The palette of materials used in the various open and overlapping zones is warm and inviting. Ash veneer, polished concrete floors, carpet tiles, brightly coloured back-painted glass and porcelain wall panels ensure rich haptic and visual texture. On one side, an outdoor reading garden, previously used for garbage bins, has been incorporated into the library by a glazed wall" (Phillips 2014, 24). |Ontario, 16| {250}

Toronto's Albion District Library: "The design concept for the new building reflects the library's dual role as a refuge and a resource. In plan, the multi-room building is a pure square punctuated by three courtyards and four interior pavilions. Its perimeter is marked by a polychrome terracotta tile screen, creating a richly textured mass. The screen is lifted at its corners, creating an entry forecourt for the library and articulating key program areas, including an urban living room and lounges for teens and children. The lifted corners also give a sloping form to the green roof, bringing light and water to the courtyard gardens. […] The trio of courtyards bring nature and sunlight deep into all parts of the library. They provide protected outdoor areas and allow for peaceful contemplation, offering a respite from the busy arterial context of Albion Road, while respecting the privacy of adjacent residences" ("Albion District Library" 2015, 40). The library as living room invites the outside in while protecting it and itself from each other; these outside spaces are in turn protected from nearby houses, which in turn must be protected from the library. A complex of barricades develops around the library as living room. |Childhood, 21| |Ontario, 17| {251}

Akron–Summit County Public Library's Ellet Branch: "Readers young and old in Akron, Ohio, an industrial city 30 minutes south of Cleveland that is known for rubber tire manufacturing, just got themselves a new library. And thanks to a design by van Dijk Pace Westlake, in Cleveland, it looks something like their own living rooms. For this added pleasure, the community hasn't stopped singing its praises. […] Instead of looking to the future and technology for inspiration, as might have been an obvious approach, [Ron] Reed and his design team looked around the neighborhood and into dens for the right tone and aesthetic. Thus, the colors and furniture don't say rare book room; they say family room" (Burnett 2001, 60). |Décor, 26| {252}

To be a home, the library must blend in with those that encircle it: "Since private homes surround the new library, the plans were presented to the neighborhood for approval. The architects worked with focus groups from the area's population of 30,000 well before beginning construction. 'We talked about the context,' recalls [library director Steven] Hawk. 'We couldn't ignore the fact that the library would be situated between a fire station and a drugstore, with homes across the street'" (Burnett 2001, 62). {253}

The public library, with carpeting and sconces reminiscent of the parlour, renders obsolete the envious patron's living room at home: "Along the south side of the building tall windows open up to the former park area. Oversized windows give the reading pavilion a spray of daylight and clear, open-air views. Continuing the residential analogy, the reading area is more private, where the taller slot windows tend to be found. The carpet tile beneath the reading tables references Oriental runners that homeowners would prefer under their very own dining room tables. Even the sconces are unassuming and decorative instead of serious and academic" (Burnett 2001, 73). |Décor, 27| {254}

Circa early 1940: "Benjamin still felt a deep attachment to Paris, which had been not only his home for seven years but also the object of his life's work: first with the tracing of the primal history of the nineteenth century, as it appeared in the murky light of the Parisian arcades, and now with the study of Baudelaire that had grown from it. He knew that 'nothing in the world can replace the Bibliothèque Nationale for me' (C, 621).[78] Yet he was quite aware that his freedom was only an interlude and that he would need to leave the city soon if he was to leave at all" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 654). |Baudelaire, 8| |Benjamin in exile, 32| |Disaster, 10| {255}

Book deliveries to homebound patrons: "Within the Swedish library organization, however, there is a common feeling that libraries here have an important function to fill. Everyone has a right to library service and through the book delivery service, the public libraries will assist everyone who cannot visit the library himself to obtain material. […] Every new household will be visited by the library, who enquires about his reading interests. The information will be completed when the librarian returns to see the borrower, and this he does as often as possible, at least 4 times a year. This personal contact is most important and from Swedish experience, it has proved to stimulate the reader who very often lives in complete isolation. Discussions about reading and the books required—and many other topics!—take much time, but is equivalent to the stimulation ordinary borrowers get from a visit to the library. The personal contact between the housebound reader and the librarian is also necessary in order to satisfy individual reading tastes" (Thulin 1969, 254–256). Alongside the books, the library worker enters—and transforms—the patron's house. |Library worker, 20| {256}

The situation is roughly the same 50 years later, albeit with more service options; now, though, the library worker also brings the library into the home through internet-connected devices: "Libraries offering homebound services are showing considerable flexibility in responding to customer needs: comments from respondents included introducing services such as ASL story times, collaborating with meals on wheels services and caregiver groups, as well as offering 'outreach to people with mental disabilities [and] abused women.' There was also considerable mention of providing

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[78] Benjamin 1994.

support for older adults learning new technologies, for instance 'lending pre-loaded eReaders,' and 'technology demos in people's homes to help transition them to downloadables'" (Yarrow and McAllister 2018, 202–203). The quotes are from survey respondents. |Library worker, 21| |Technology, 17| {257}

Mobile libraries in the Outer Hebrides: "The mobile libraries also serve as a lifeline to other people. In an increasingly distant, digital age, the service has made a difference in declining communities whose residents seek personal contact. Without the mobile libraries, some residents would be more than an hour's drive from their nearest library branch. Others, even if living less than a mile away, would still be unable to visit because of physical hardships" (Noche 2019). |Technology, 18| {258}

Fines, which were introduced in the modern era to enforce the system of borrowing tied to the residence, are now being reconsidered by librarians that recognized their negative effects on the library's most vulnerable patrons, especially the homeless: "At our 125th Street Library in Harlem, for instance, a young mother tried to check out a wi-fi hotspot so her daughter could do her homework. Homeless, the family couldn't afford broadband internet, and her daughter's grades suffered. Unfortunately, her library card was blocked, not because the family was irresponsible, but because one night, they were abruptly moved from one shelter to another, and in their haste to leave, they left behind a library book and DVD. The fines accumulated quickly, and without any way to pay them, their only hope for internet access was no longer available" (A. Marx 2017). |Childhood, 22| |Disaster, 11| {259}

The fining library antagonizes the home: "I'm advocating a system in which a family does not need to choose between dinner and using the public library" (A. Marx 2017). |Disaster, 12| {260}

"On September 26, 1940, Walter Benjamin, who was about to emigrate to America, took his life at the Franco-Spanish border. There were various reasons for this. The Gestapo had confiscated his Paris apartment, which contained his library (he had been able to get 'the more important half' out of Germany) and many of his manuscripts, and he had reason to be concerned also about the others which, through the good offices of George[s] Bataille, had been placed in the Bibliothèque Nationale prior to his flight from Paris to Lourdes, in unoccupied France. How was he to live without a library, how could be earn a living without the extensive collection of quotations and excerpts among his manuscripts?" (Arendt [1968] 2019, xxv–xxvi). |Benjamin in exile, 33| |Disaster, 13| {261}

Quoting Mark Surman, Executive Director of the Mozilla Foundation: "Despite the promise of the internet, where anyone, in theory, can be a publisher, a creator, or have influence, 'we live in a big shopping mall designed by these ['big five' tech] companies.' And it's a mall that's hard to step away from" (CBC Radio 2018). By offering electronic resources and operating over the internet, the public library brings the internet as

shopping mall into the home at the same time that it has the potential to undermine its products. The potential isn't realized, however, if the library simply subsidizes the limited-term acquisition of the products of digital capitalism. |Technology, 19| {262}

The central library as community living room—one house among many in a "revitalized" urban core—offers a manufactured silence: "The top floor, 'where silence is a service,' according to the [then] CEO [of Calgary Public Library, Bill Ptacek], will act as a vast 'community living room' to take in all the library has to offer, including its view of the city skyline and City Hall to the west and the Bow River to the east. […] Calgary's new central library is situated in East Village, a historic, 49-acre neighbourhood on the Bow River, between Fort Calgary and the downtown business core, that is undergoing a massive $3-billion revitalization to add housing, retail, hotel and public spaces" (Lawrence 2018). The living room as shell offers protection from the city on display around it. |Shell, 17| {263}

Regarding the new Halifax Central Library, quoting CEO Asa Kachan: "The $57.6-million-dollar facility has brought new life to its surrounding area, which is undergoing several revitalization projects and condo builds, 'so what's really inspiring is that it's within reach of where more and more people are choosing to live,' adds Ms. Kachan" (Lawrence 2018). The librarian chooses the library's location based on where people live; more people then choose to live near the library. The library as place alters the dwelling places of the city.   {264}

The library as container has now been replaced by the library as place: "Today the location of a central library is just as important (if not more) than its contents" (Lawrence 2018).   {265}

"Some little [free] libraries are driven by nostalgia; they lament the loss of tactile media, of real-time, face-to-face social interaction, of a visible print-based public sphere. […] In other words, are these libraries cropping up as a kind of homage to an institution just as it is becoming obsolete? And which, as Walter Benjamin might argue, now has only exhibition value, in the form of a 'library aesthetic'? […] Yet perhaps some of this nostalgia is based on an outmoded vision of the public library. In a time when even our largest, most august and bureaucratic libraries can envision the emergence of a Digital Public Library of America and the creation of spaces that incorporate 3D printers and CNC routers, these little libraries, with their vintage aesthetic, can indeed seem reactionary" (Mattern 2012). |Technology, 20| {266}

"American readers' relationship with public libraries is changing—with younger readers less likely to see public libraries as essential in their communities. […] Among those who read at least one book in the past year, more than half said they tend to purchase books rather than borrow them. Fewer Americans are visiting libraries than in recent years, but more Americans are using library websites. This is significant given what people say they

value most about libraries—it's the place, not the books available there, that young people cite as most important" (LaFrance 2014). |Childhood, 23| |Technology, 21| {267}

Huron County today: "For some, the library is 'their living room,' [branch manager Jenni] Boles said, adding it's also been a place for people to go who don't have Internet at home or don't have a place to be during the day" (Nixon 2018). |Ontario, 18| |Technology, 22| {268}

Finland today, according to Tommi Laitio, Helsinki's executive director for culture and leisure, on the city's new central library, Oodi: "'We often think that things like social cohesion or democracy are just words, but in spaces like these they really come to life,' Mr. Laitio said. You need some social infrastructure for communities to work. You can't build them on friendship, or this abstract idea of living together" (Rogers 2018). Of course, living together in the library is also an abstract, symbolic idea.   {269}

"Fugitivity brings restrictions as well as freedoms. Escapist, transgressive, operating by its own vernacular organizational logic and architecture, the Free Black Women's Library is unhoused and unpositioned. Yet the logistics of fugitivity—the sole librarian, burdened with thousands of books, doing work that is often uncompensated—can be onerous. That precarity informs [OlaRonke] Akinmowo's desire for the library to feel more solid. Ultimately, the Free Black Women's Library's legitimacy will be defined not by its size or fixity, but through its success in generating the spatial and social conditions for a free exchange of ideas. Every time women of color meet to trade and talk about Black feminist books, Akinmowo's library has fulfilled its mission. It's a real library" (Mattern 2019). |Library worker, 22| {270}

"Together with her partner Sangodare, [Alexis Pauline] Gumbs has built a lending and reference library of Black feminist texts in her home. […] In a magazine interview [Hobson 2019], Gumbs described the moment of realizing "I could use what I had, like my own living room, to create the intellectual, political, and creative spaces that I needed." […] This living-room library forms the intellectual core of the Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind" (Mattern 2019). |Library worker, 23| {271}

Some of Benjamin's papers were left in his Berlin apartment, confiscated by the Gestapo or, later, the Red Army. Some were left with friends, to be sent by his sister Dora to Theodor Adorno. "The papers most precious to Benjamin—in particular, the central arcades materials, the 1938 revision of Berlin Childhood around 1900, the third version of 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,' the author's copy of 'On the Concept of History,' his sonnets, typescripts of 'The Storyteller' and 'Commentary on Poems by Brecht,' and several theoretically central letters from Adorno—he gave to Georges Bataille. Bataille entrusted the greater part of this material to two librarians at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, where it remained during the war; after the war, Pierre Missac tracked down part of this hidden material, mainly the arcades convolutes, retrieved it from Bataille, and arranged for its eventual transfer by

personal emissary to Adorno. The remaining papers, which also included the most advanced drafts and notes for the partially completed Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Age of High Capitalism, seemed for many years to be lost. In 1981 Benjamin's Italian editor, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben, discovered a body of material in Benjamin's hand in the Bataille archive at the Bibliothèque Nationale and in papers given him by Bataille's widow; this proved to be the missing trove of the manuscripts entrusted to Bataille in 1940. It remains unclear whether Bataille after the war had mistakenly retrieved only part of the manuscript collection left with him by Benjamin or whether this material had been stored separately and forgotten" (Eiland and Jennings 2014, 667–668). |Baudelaire, 9| |Benjamin in exile, 34| |Disaster, 14| {272}

I am no longer impressed by the monumental library, neither its architectural importance nor its global significance. Rather, I value the library as place that endlessly both expands and diminishes, as it enters the everyday lives of its community while housing those lives. The public library is not (or at least should not be) "a place apart" (Borgwardt 1970, 20), and the same can be said about the places it contains, which enter the everyday life of the patron or library user. This idealized library as place, if such a thing can be imagined, therefore seamlessly enters the everyday lives inside and outside its walls, such that the integration of the public library into the community is total, effortless, such that all barriers—perhaps even the walls themselves—disappear. The now familiar trope of the library as the living room of the community simultaneously reinforces and undermines this ideal, as it attempts to enter everyday life while dictating that that life must take place within the library and according to certain standards or expectations, on both the form of the spaces and the behaviour of those people using them.   {273}

Chapter 6

6   Circulation & Empathy

Before we circulated objects, we circulated ourselves.[79] In this sense, circulation and communication were equivalent activities, both grounded in the body. It was only in the modern age that these terms took on meaning related to information and mass media. This definitional tension is reflected in the following list of things that circulate in *The Arcades Project*: "passersby" [A8a,3][80]; "five hundred sedan chairs" [C2a,2]; "the crowd" [C9,2]; "ideas" [E4,4]; a "remark" [G13,3]; "an object […:] a misprinted streetcar ticket" [H2a,2][81]; "2,790 copies" of "the second edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*" [J41,6]; "the mass produced article […] as obsessional idea" [J62a,1]; "legends […] about Baudelaire" [J85,5]; "intellect" [K4,2]; "velocipedes" [M4,3]; "a vitality, […] an activity without equal" [M19,5]; "'hollowed-out' things […,] newly introduced objects"[82] [N5,2]; "great thoughts", quoting Joubert [N15a,3]; "newspapers" [U4a,7]; "literature" [U6,5]; "volumes" [U6,5]; "works useful to all the phalansteries" [W15,3]; "people who serve no useful purpose in civilization" [W15,5]; "threats" [a2a,1]; "the accents of this workingman's Marseillaise" [d5a,1]; "money, […] billions" [d8,4]; "assets"[83] [r1,1]; "the owner of the shop" <b°,2>. Beyond that, "the riches of the world" recirculate [M19a,1]. Circulation—of commodities, people, and information—was how modern society came to define itself and reinforce this identity, and the public library played a role in the process.

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[79] Or, we circulated our bodies; or, our bodies circulated; or, our bodies were circulated along set paths, or along circumscribed paths, as in an arcade, as in an aisle.

[80] "'passersby circulate no longer in front of the shops but in their interior.' Tony Moilin, *Paris en l'an 2000* (Paris, 1869), pp. 15–16 ('Maisons-modèles')" [A8a,3]

[81] Compare with the draft in <O°,29>: "something […:] a misprinted streetcar ticket"

[82] "technical progress is continually withdrawing newly introduced objects from circulation" [N5,2]

[83] "'A fearsome audit is conducted on all assets in circulation, and an enormous quantity of them are declared worthless' […]. Eugène Buret […] (Paris, 1840)" [r1,1]

Even in the information age, interactions with objects and their circulation remain at the centre of our lives. "One way or another, objects feature in most moments and aspects of ordinary social life, and are an integral part of human interaction and of activity between humans and their environment. We experience, use, produce and shape objects all the time, at home, at work, at schools and at leisure, in numerous ways for different kinds of actions and tasks" (Nevile et al. 2014, 3). Put differently: "all places are worked by human hands, made useful and beautiful thereby" [J75,2]. Despite the public library's increasing emphasis on interpersonal or social services in recent years, it remains an institution also concerned with the provision and circulation of objects, whether physical or digital.[84] Physical objects must be manipulated, even those that will remain under glass, underground, or underutilized. This is just as much the case in the library as in the retail store: "what shoppers do with their hands is a critical issue. Whether you're stroking cashmere sweaters, hefting portable CD players or opening doors, your hands are key" (Underhill 2004, 91). It is through the library's circulation department that the item moves about the world by, among other activities, noting in-house usage, checking items out to patrons, monitoring borrowing periods, checking items back, and returning them to the shelves or other storage locations. This is especially significant because, as Thad Logan (2001) notes, "social meaning circulates through objects" (105). In the past, the library worker would exclusively use their hands to bring the item to its place or between places; this is manipulation in its literal sense. The average library worker still uses their hands for most of their daily tasks related to library items, but, in addition to digital materials (e.g., ebooks), a host of other technological implements (e.g., automated sorting or retrieval systems) serve to remove the hand from library work.[85] In other words, the process of handling in the library is undergoing rapid change. Other librarians

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[84] This is, to be fair, a false dichotomy, as even digital items (whose display requires a physical device) have some sort of physical properties, stored as they are on machines running off electricity, which has its own physicality. Digital library resources as therefore also physical. It is only for the ease of comparison that I've chosen to maintain the distinction between physical and digital in this context.

[85] For example, "library hand", the unique form of penmanship developed around the turn of the last century for uniformity in catalogue cards, has long since gone out of fashion (Morton 2017).

can highlight the merits of these changes; in this chapter, I focus on the history of handling in the library and what is at risk of being lost.

Benjamin was critical of the psychological process of empathy (Einfühlung) by which an individual identified with or even projected their own identity into an object—physical or intellectual. Such bad empathy, as I've chosen to call it,[86] results in commodity fetishism, in the former case, or an uncritical historicism that legitimizes oppressive violence, in the latter. In the home as well as on the global stage, Benjamin associated empathy with both sight and touch; world's fairs, for example, elevated the commodity as purely visual spectacle for those who couldn't afford it, while, on the other hand, the collector had to hold the item in their hand to understand it fully. For Benjamin, the archetypal collector had an ambiguous empathetic relationship with their collection, removing items from general circulation and valuing them for more than their usefulness. The public library and its patrons both develop complicated relationships with the library's items, dependent to a large extent on the type of material, the contexts it inhabits, and how it is handled. This is further complicated by the emergence of digital, virtual, or electronic library resources. This chapter explores a general question: What does a Benjaminian approach reveal about historical and contemporary issues related to the circulation of public library materials as commodities? This examination reveals a specific question: How does circulation reinforce—and how can it undermine—bad empathy with the exchange value of the library material (e.g., book or other item in the collection) as commodity?

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[86] I considered several terms. The German word "Einfühlung", of which "empathy" was later coined as a direct English translation, was the term Benjamin used and has a history of use in psychology and psychoanalysis, yet it is much more well known in its original definition (in German as well as English) and doesn't carry the harmful associations which Benjamin attached to it in the contexts of his writings. The Greek term "εμπάθεια" has almost the opposite meaning of "malevolence"; however, Benjamin's empathy is not an active or acute state of aggressive feelings, but rather a change in an individual's or collective's sense of identity. It is true that Benjamin had an altogether negative opinion of empathy; "negative empathy", though, has a distinct definition in psychological literature as "empathizing with others' negative emotions" (Andreychik and Lewis 2017, 139), rather than describing the negative results of empathizing with an object. "False empathy", which I considered, would imply that this state of mind was not actually being felt by the individual, when of course Benjamin demonstrated that its effects on both the individual and the collective were devastatingly real. In the end, I settled on "bad empathy" as a counterpart to the "true empathy" that most people would associate with the concept of empathy; this mirrors Hegel's distinction between "bad infinity" and "true infinity", which features in *The Arcades Project* [m5,1]. "Schlect Unendlichkeit" and "wahrhaft Unendlichkeit" are also often translated as "spurious infinity" and "genuine infinity"; I prefer the simplicity of bad v. true.

Answering this question involves considering how a library user—staff or patron—experiences physical materials with the hand. Upon return, the object is out of hand; library circulation attempts to control that which has gotten out of hand, through the changing of hands. To get one's hand on an object, it must come to hand, and the library worker lends a hand in this perhaps futile process. "How a book is taken up by others, circulated, read, interpreted, and cited is out of anyone's or any system's hands" (Adler 2017, 13). Additionally, through its rules and regulations, the library ends up circulating not only objects but also "disciplinary discourses" (100). Therefore, I also consider the intangible factors that get circulated along with physical items.

6.1 Circulation & the Hand

Flexner (1927), published in the same year that Benjamin began writing his project, provides a contemporary portrait of public library circulation services rapidly transformed by urbanization, the modern public library movement, and technological advancements. The modern public library was an institution coming to terms with urbanization, a changing society, a greatly expanded publishing industry, new library technologies, an increased emphasis on public service. "Its position with relation to the institution as a whole and to the surrounding community is rapidly expanding. […] A reinterpretation of traditional ideals is demanded, and an understanding of the spirit that should animate the service designed to spread the influence of books and enlarge the field of library activities" (1). As more people moved into cities and as rural areas were increasingly accessible through roadways, telephones, and postal services, the modern public library, with its emphasis on personalized public service, found itself lending materials in much larger quantities and to much larger geographical areas than ever before. The public library became a place by absorbing other modes of book distribution; for example, by rapidly expanding the circulation of popular materials in urban areas, public libraries directly competed with for-profit circulating libraries, such as W.H. Smith's famous railway bookstalls in Britain, which operated in a widely distributed network of railway stations. As the popularity of these dispersed circulating libraries waned, that of large urban libraries grew, with neighbourhood branches following later. It is only in recent years with public libraries reinventing their circulation models that we

see the library as place disperse itself, dislocate itself, offering kiosks in airports, train stations, and bus stops for travellers to borrow print or electronic resources.

During the modern public library movement, according to Flexner (1927), "the circulation librarian has probably a wider influence upon the service of the public than has any other member of the staff. In a sense all other departments exist for the public departments, the function of which is to bring together for the use of the public the finest possible collection of materials for distribution" (9). Formerly closed stacks were opened, their gates removed; many items circulated for the first time, with libraries quickly adding new materials to their circulating collections. This provided a "greater opportunity for personal service to readers. […] Even the desk where the librarian and reader meet shows the change in the outlook and actual working of this department. It is now without the wickets and barriers of previous generations. It is a post at which service is concentrated rather than a mark beyond which the reader may not advance" (7). Open shelves also allowed the reader a newfound freedom to handle the books before borrowing them. "This [general] reader may prefer to browse and to make his own selection largely from the shelves, handling and turning over the books themselves" (34). This was a level of familiarity through tactility that had previously been unknown to the public library patron. The entire sensory perception of the collection changed due to the hand's increased access to the book.

Yet increased levels of service and access to materials brought with them a corresponding emphasis on recordkeeping and other bureaucratic activities in the circulation department. The opening of closed stacks and the free circulation of materials led to the library exerting control on the community *outside* the walls. Late fines, rental fees, and other charges, previously unnecessary, suddenly were instituted to regulate the flow of items and to encourage patrons to return items on time. This was accompanied by a dramatic increase in the paraphernalia and ephemera of public library work: application forms, receipts, borrowers' cards, book cards, book slips, slip pockets, catalogue cards, date stamps, registration books, ledgers, overdue notices, temporary borrower records, reserve slips, reserve notices, union files (in central libraries), and duplicates or triplicates of everything, many of which were to be followed up with or destroyed according to

specific timetables. Like the books themselves, these papers had to be handled regularly by library staff; the circulation worker's daily life was concerned more than ever with the timely, speedy, and efficient holding, moving, and managing (with its etymological sense of controlling or directing with the hands) of items. In the modern city, the tactility and materiality of the library was more apparent than ever, even as technologies such as the telephone and the cash register brought with them both new problems and new possibilities.

During library extension's heyday, increased circulation activities extended the physical and bureaucratic reach of the public library farther beyond its walls than ever before:

> no library has on its shelves at any one time all the books that it possesses. Many of them are in circulation. Yet it is necessary that the library have control of these circulating books in several ways. It must know where they are, it must lay down rules to see that thoughtless people do not retain the books in their possession unfairly, and it must provide means for securing their prompt return. These and many other considerations combine to make it necessary for the department to install and maintain very efficient methods to control the circulation of books, which are commonly known as routines. (Flexner 1927, 6)

At a time when the circulation department still collected a patron's occupation and work address in addition to name, home address, and phone number (if applicable), the librarian's desire to control increased as circulation further extended the library. Free circulation of materials led to borrowing which led to fines and a whole host of records needing to be kept: "The question of fines and fees for damages and loss arises only when the rules for circulation are infringed, as when books are not returned on time, or books are lost, mutilated, or destroyed. […] With the introduction of the cash penalty, there develops the need for a system of collecting, recording, and caring for funds. Here the librarian usually endeavors to adapt accredited business methods to the uses of the library" (128). The first means of recordkeeping is the "cash sheet or books" (140).

> The second means of recording fines is by a cash register. […] Grave doubt has persisted in the minds of some librarians and boards of trustees as to the wisdom of installing a cash register, chiefly because of the expense and also because it seems to introduce a commercial element into the library. The staff often welcomes this innovation, since its mechanical precision stabilizes a process

which may be difficult for the busy assistant to carry through accurately when entry in a book is involved. (141)[87]

The mechanization of daily life that Benjamin identified as a feature of modernity was apparent in the public library.

In the modern public library, circulation was defined by its physicality: "Library circulation work may be defined as that activity of the library which through personal contact and a system of records supplies the reader with the books wanted" (Flexner 1927, 1). For the circulation librarian or assistant, knowledge of the materials was gained gradually, incrementally through the familiarity of handling, the handling of the familiar: "A broad interest in everything in print, in books that are read, that are inspected, and even those merely handled in passing, contributes to the sum total of information which is slowly gathered by the beginning librarian" (Flexner 1927, 3). This familiarity extended not just to items being circulated but also those still on the shelves:

> In an effort to overcome inexperience and insufficient acquaintance with books, the new staff member should acquire as rapidly and systematically as possible, a knowledge of the *local book collection*. One of the best ways to accomplish this is to utilize every free moment for inspection of the shelves. In passing even familiar shelves, books may be noted with the mind as well as they eye [....] A volume obviously out of place is recognized and removed at once. Shelves can be read, that is, inspected for proper arrangement, with real advantage as a means of gaining familiarity with the authors and titles of the books handled. (17)[88]

This acquaintance with the collection, virtually unheard of in today's complex and ever-changing libraries, was evidently a staple of library work for all staff during the modern public library movement, given its prevalence in Flexner's account. "A more or less careful inspection of books added to the library is generally required of the staff. Books may be held for examination for a short time [....] [E]verything that an alert mind and a quick eye can with practice learn to catch in merely running through a book, may prove

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[87] Flexner describes a similar reception to the introduction of the telephone into the public library: "The use of the telephone presents a real problem in the library, though it should be recognized as offering great possibilities for public service" (224).

[88] I ask: What is lost when shelf reading is done mechanically, with a shelf reader? Books do not enter the hand, let alone the mind.

of use" (18). The title page, call number, table of contents, and any illustrations all provided details about what was contained therein and helped to contextualize the book in relation to other items in the collection. These were physical associations: the eye *ran* through the book, the call number "associate[d] the volume with other related books" (18). While the catalogue might have organized the collection virtually, what was most important was the physical order, the arrangement on the shelves, and the details that could be gleaned with the eye from the book at hand. Stated differently: the librarian *moved through* the book to help it move through the library and its city. There was always a limit to this process, however, as not every book could be inspected thoroughly, let alone read in full: "Though a librarian handles books daily, he never knows enough of them, and his knowledge of the collection can be vividly supplemented if, in addition to other efforts, he gives careful attention to the comments of the men and women who read and think about books" (27). Supplementary information was provided to the circulation worker by patrons, presumably about the most interesting books or the ones that circulated most frequently. Personal service and interpersonal connections, enabled by the opening up of stacks and the expansion of circulation services, made up for the limitations of the physical collection.

Fittingly, close observation of the handling of library materials as objects also supplemented the emotional aspects of circulation work. "The person who shows an interest in the make-up of volumes may be won by having his attention called to books which are handsomely bound or illustrated, or beautifully made or printed. The reader's manner of responding to suggestion, his way of handling a book, the things he looks at and looks for, all indicate the direction of his tastes and the best opening for service to him" (Flexner 1927, 35). This period of increased book circulation—both within the library and in the publishing industry generally—led to increased familiarity with the different types of bindings, materials, illustrations, and content in a rapidly diversifying literary world. Penn ([aka Matthews] 1883) equated an expert familiarity with the book as a prerequisite of serious research: "It is this 'reading with the fingers,' this turning over of the pages rapidly and alighting on the exact spot where the thing wanted is to be found— this is the best test of active scholarship" (38). This is akin to the familiarity Benjamin ([1932] 1999b) observes of a famous juggler's hands: "This is why [Enrico] Rastelli's

stretched-out little finger attracts the ball, which hops onto it like a bird. […] To weary the master to the point of exhaustion through diligence and hard work, so that at long last his body and each of his limbs can act in accordance with their own rationality: this is what is called 'practice.' […] Your hand has, so to speak, taken the matter in hand and has joined forces with the object" (591). While such reading with the fingers or taking the matter in hand can lead to a fuller appreciation of the book as object, it also leads directly to its physical degradation, which can be exacerbated in a public library collection open to more people, more hands. Benjamin noted this: "Mode und Zynismus—from the copy in the <Prussian> National Library, one can see how often it was read in the past" [L°,1].[89] Each hand leaves an imprint; the more popular the book, the more it is ruined. This dialectical tension between access and preservation has been at the heart of circulation services since the modern public library movement.

The circulation of an item, of course, depends on its place in the collection, and the library's circulation services and collection development departments are closely linked, both in terms of the items themselves and the shared purpose of making the items available to patrons, whether for in-house use or use outside the library. Collection development, by purchasing items on the marketplace (often at specific, usually inflated, prices), removes library items as objects from the context of the circulation of the commodities of capitalism. In other words, items are purchased in one context and then shared in another. Yet the context of sharing depends on the context of production, distribution, and purchasing in the context of most library items—with the notable exception of those materials that fall under the "praxis of library display". As I established in Chapter 4 above, items depend on the context of the catalogue and the stacks to be displayed in the broadest sense, which is equivalent with the purifying, idealistic, universalism of library science, as opposed to the purifying, magical, affinitive art of library display in the narrower sense. Where the item is located in the library, then, and how it enters the hand of the patron, depends on its dialectical context within the

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[89] Tiedemann's note: "*Mode und Zynismus* (Fashion and Cynicism), by Friedrich Theodor Vischer" (Benjamin 1999a, 1010).

public library. An item exists, functions, and is handled and experienced within many contexts, such as: its city or geographic location; its building, whether the library, the patron's home, or elsewhere; the marketplace, including publishers and distributors; its format; the stack or other dwelling place within the library; the library's catalogue; the item's subject heading(s); its display (see Chapter 4); the patron's life (home, work, school, etc.); the author's life; the librarian's life; and, finally, the item's contents. Howsam (2006) writes: "a phenomenon that is simultaneously a written text, a material object, and a cultural transaction—the book" (vii). I support an understanding and a presentation of the book's place in the library as contextual in this way, not favouring any particular identity of the book (written, material, or cultural). In fact, I believe that this approach can be extended to the entire library as place. Every single one of an item's contexts helps to determine its place, its location, even its placeness, as it (re)defines its environment and context through its presence, its existence. This approach, however, risks giving the item primacy over human lives in the library. If the context is inverted, then every individual life socially and physically (re)produces the library as place within the context of its objects (or lack thereof). Reestablishing the primacy of the person over the object was a central aspect of Benjamin's critique of bad empathy.

6.2   Empathy & the Hand

Regarding a painting by Cézanne, Benjamin writes: "it is even linguistically fallacious to speak of 'empathy.' It seemed to me that to the extent that one grasps a painting, one does not in any way enter into its space; rather, this space thrusts itself forward" (Benjamin 1986, 42, as quoted in Eiland and Jennings 2014, 275). The empathy Benjamin refers to here is neither bad empathy nor true empathy, but rather the general empathy of psychologically entering an object's world. The viewer, however, experiences the painting in a way that is completely separate from empathy. (This distinction factors into the discussion of circulation and empathy below.) The object must remain distant, untouched, to be an object of empathy, whether bad or true. It is seen without being held, a distinction which factors again and again in Benjamin's writings on the image. For example: "Possession and having are allied with the tactile, and stand in a certain opposition to the optical" [H2,5]. The unrequited desire to hold something that

can't be touched is a symptom of empathy; the displacement of one's identity into that object of unrequited desire is the result of bad empathy; the painting, with its distant aura, is understood by the viewer as something that can't be held, and its appreciation therefore requires something that can be called the opposite of empathy (maybe construction, maybe extension). Perhaps nowhere is this better illustrated in Benjamin's ([1936] 2019) oeuvre than in his famous and oft-studied essay "The Storyteller" when discussing "some words which Paul Valéry wrote in a very remote context" (54):

> 'Artistic observation,' he says in reflection on a woman artist whose work consisted in the silk embroidery of figures, 'can attain an almost mystical depth. The objects on which it falls lose their names. Light and shade form very particular systems, present very individual questions which depend upon no knowledge and are derived from no practice, but get their existence and value exclusively from a certain accord of the soul, the eye, and the hand of someone who was born to perceive them and evoke them in his own inner self.'

> With these words, soul, eye, and hand are brought together into connection. Interacting with one another, they determine a practice. We are no longer familiar with this practice. The role of the hand in production has become more modest, and the place it filled in storytelling lies waste. […] That old coordination of the soul, the eye, and the hand which emerges in Valéry's words is that of the artisan which we encounter wherever the art of storytelling is at home. (54)

Does this connection of the hand and the storyteller undermine bad empathy? And can it be found in the book, which connects the story with the hand? "That old coordination of the soul", dependent on both the hand and the tradition of storytelling, predates the modern publishing industry and its book as commodity.

The publishing industry and the commercial circulation of books as commodities, including colportage, underwent drastic changes during the modern era (as discussed in Chapter 3 above), during which time, according to Karl Marx ([1885] 1967): "The collective machine . . . becomes more and more perfect, the more the process as a whole becomes a continuous one—that is, the less the raw material is interrupted in its passage from its first phase to its last; in other words, the more its passage from one phase to another is effected not only by the hand of man but by the machinery itself" (359–360;

quoted in J78,4).[90] The alienation of modern capitalism identified by Marx and expounded on by Benjamin was a result of a reduced role for the hand and a correspondingly expanded role for the industrial machine. In effect, the human hand was out of touch, out of practice. "On the theory of the trace. Practice is eliminated from the productive process by machinery. In the process of administration, something analogous occurs with heightened organization. Knowledge of human nature, such as the senior employee could acquire through practice, ceases to be decisive" [I8,1]. The hand leaves the trace on the object. The trace disappears when the hand is no longer involved.

In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin attempted to form a bridge between the psychoanalysis of Freud and Jung and the dialectical materialism of Marx, particularly with regard to concepts such as the unconscious, sleeping, waking, memory, and empathy. In other words, Benjamin's understanding of empathy was one rooted in its original psychoanalytic sense: "The quality or power of projecting one's personality into or mentally identifying oneself with an object of contemplation".[91] For Benjamin, it was possible to empathize both with an abstract "object of contemplation" (such as a historical subject) and a physical object (such as a commodity). Taken to its extreme, the result was the bad empathy of depersonalization. In bad empathy, Benjamin identified a potential emotional source for the alienation of commodity fetishism. The modern person was so enamoured with objects as commodities that they lost their own identity. This was a direct result of the forces of modernity: "The world exhibitions were training schools in which the masses, barred from consuming, learned empathy with exchange value. 'Look at everything; touch nothing'" [G16,6]. By learning to look at everything and touch nothing, bad empathy undermined the hand and the individual's physical sense of self.

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[90] Benjamin cites, "*Das Kapital* (Hamburg, 1922), vol. 1, p. 344" (Marx 1922); Eiland and McLaughlin quote text from the 1967 reprint of Moore and Aveling's 1887 English translation (Marx 1967). When technological alternatives developed to the point that the human hand was no longer perfect enough, library hand was eventually replaced by "more perfect" typewriters and computers.

[91] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "empathy, *n*.", accessed 26 June 2020, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/61284.

If the world exhibitions taught empathy with exchange value of commodities, then their circulation spread this lesson across modern society. The onlooker, the flâneur, or the window shopper, barred from touching, felt unrequited desire that could only be overcome through the exchange of capital for the item. This unrequited desire without handling until capital exchange led to possession—in this case, the person was possessed by the commodity, displacing their being and identity into it. Indeed, an object desired in this way could not be fully possessed; Benjamin quotes Marx's *Capital* via Franz Mehring: "The form of wood is altered by making a table out of it; nevertheless, this table remains wood, an ordinary material thing. As soon as it steps forth as commodity, however, it is transformed into a material immaterial thing" [G13a,2]. The commodity character of the table, as an example, means that part of its identity exists outside of itself, as exchange value. "In fact, the meaning of commodity *is* its price; it has, as commodity, no other meaning" [J80,2; J80a,1]. Benjamin quotes Otto Rühle,[92] who cites Marx's notion of commodity fetishism and, in turn, quotes Marx:

> Once escaped from the hand of the producer and divested of its real particularity, it ceases to be a product and to be ruled over by human beings. It has acquired a "ghostly objectivity" and leads a life of its own. […] The commodity has been transformed into an idol that, although the product of human hands, disposes over the human. Marx speaks of the fetish character of the commodity. "This fetish character of the commodity world has its origin in the peculiar social character of the labor that produces commodities. . . . It is only the particular social relation between people that here assumes, in the eyes of these people, the phantasmagorical form of a relation between things."[93] [G5,1.]

The alienation inherent in industrial production and commodity fetishism is reinforced socially, through circulation, Benjamin argues, in turn alienating people from each other. "It is only as commodity that the thing has the effect of alienating human beings from one another. It produces this effect through its price. What is decisive is the empathy with the exchange value of the commodity, with its equalizing substrate" [J92,4].[94] Elsewhere:

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[92] Benjamin cites: "*Karl Marx* (Hellerau <1928>), pp. 384–385".

[93] Eiland and McLaughlin use the English translation from Marx (1967, 76–77).

[94] See also Markus (2011, 569).

"Empathy with the commodity is fundamentally empathy with exchange value itself" [M17a,2].

The flâneur, "the virtuoso of this empathy" [M17a,2], experiences ultimate empathy with the exchange value of the commodity, which is related to its fashionable newness. "Fashion determines, in each case, the acceptable limit of empathy" [J75,3]. The flâneur's "thirst for the new is quenched by the crowd, which appears self-impelled and endowed with a soul of its own. In fact, this collective is nothing but appearance" [J66,1].[95] Through "the intoxication" [M17a,4 & 5] of bad empathy with the exchange value of the commodity, the flâneur, and by extension the modern individual, *becomes* a commodity: "The flâneur is someone abandoned in the crowd. He is thus in the same situation as the commodity" (Benjamin [1938] 2003, 31). Benjamin identified the promised proletarian revolution as the antidote to this mental state: "To be sure, insofar as a person, as labor power, is a commodity, there is no need for him to identify himself as such. The more conscious he becomes of his mode of existence, the mode imposed on him by the system of production, the more he proletarianizes himself, the more he will be gripped by the chilly breath of the commodity economy, and the less he will feel like empathizing with commodities" (33). Benjamin's political, historical, and philosophical methods—including the montage and collecting—formed part of the groundwork for this revolution.

Benjamin saw the alienation inherent in bad empathy with the exchange value of the commodity as yet another example of a totalizing historicism that legitimized the catastrophe of the status quo (see Chapter 4). "Historicism empathizes with the victors of history" (Meltzer 1996, 149). "Thereby, the historicist is implicitly identified as a latter-day allegorist who—as Marx said of the bourgeoisie—makes the world in his own image.

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[95] In the second half of this passage, Benjamin links this process directly to the rise of Nazism: "This 'crowd,' in which the flâneur takes delight, is just the empty mold with which, seventy years later, the *Volksgemeinschaft* <People's Community> was cast. The flâneur who so prides himself on his alertness, on his nonconformity, was in this respect also ahead of his contemporaries: he was the first to fall victim to an ignis fatuus which since that time has blinded many millions" [J66,1]. Empathy with the collective and with the exchange value of the commodity go hand in hand with the devaluing and destruction of the individual.

His claim to place everything in its historical context thus produces precisely the opposite result" (Wohlfarth 1996, 194). Indeed, for Benjamin there was a class element to empathy: "Cultural historicism identifies itself empathically (*Einfühlung*) with the dominant classes" (Löwy 1996, 207). Historicism creates a false historical context out of the features of the present day, thereby undermining both; Benjamin favoured an historical materialist approach that attempted to identify features of the present in the past, thereby dialectically reinforcing both eras. As such, "What mattered to [Benjamin] above all was to avoid anything that might be reminiscent of empathy, as though a given subject of investigation had a message in readiness which easily communicated itself, or could be communicated, to the reader or spectator" (Arendt [1955] 2019, lx).

As I have already established, Benjamin's historical materialism stood in opposition to mere historicism; the former is concerned with an image of history based on a dialectical interplay between destruction and construction, while the latter puts forth a false reconstruction based on bad empathy: "It is important for the materialist historian, in the most rigorous way possible, to differentiate the construction of a historical state of affairs from what one customarily calls its 'reconstruction'. The 'reconstruction' in empathy is one-dimensional. 'Construction' presupposes 'destruction'" [N7,6]. Benjamin argues that "historical narration" uses empathy to "reinsert" historical "objects" into a false "continuum"; on the other hand, "[t]he destructive or critical momentum of materialist historiography is registered in that blasting of historical continuity with which the historical object first constitutes itself" [N10a,1]. In a draft, Benjamin writes that empathy "makes everything abstract", contrasts empathy with the process of receiving things "into our space", and establishes "the opposition between empathy and actualization" <I°,2>. In summary: "this act of construction, which he deliberately opposed to the passivity of 'reconstruction' secured through 'empathy' and hence the 'abstraction' of what clearly was the bad side of modernity, requires a commitment to 'destruction,' violence and transgression delivered by repetition" (Harootunian 1996, 77).

Elsewhere, in a review of a book by German literary critic Max Kommerell, Benjamin ([1930] 1999b) contrasts empathy with tradition: "This author collects lived hours the way another might collect antiques. Not that he talks about them; you see them because

of the knowing, exploratory, reverent, involved, testing, inquiring way he turns each around in his hand, examining it from every side, conferring on it not the false life of empathy but the true life of tradition" (382). For Benjamin, even the intellectual examination of an idea involves metaphorical inspections by the eye and the hand. It takes a concerted effort to avoid falling under bad empathy's phantasmagoric spell. Benjamin continues:

> Closely related to this [distinction between empathy and tradition] is the author's own bent: that of a collector. For whereas with the systematic thinker the positive and negative are always cleanly separated, worlds apart from each other, here preferences and antipathies lie close together. The author picks out a single poem from a cycle, a single moment in an existence, and he makes very sharp distinctions between people and ideas that seem very closely related. (382)

Indeed, the collector, like the ragpicker, was one of Benjamin's modern archetypes capable of transforming the commodity through an interaction mediated by the hand.

6.3   Empathy & the Collector

Benjamin's archetypal collector undermines empathy, experiencing something other than bad empathy, by completely removing the item from circulation and its contexts, and placing it in a new one: the collection. This involves the handling and possession, but not the exchange, of the object, which forms part of the collection while altering it with its presence. The collector values the object for this relationship with the other objects rather than its exchange value, even though its price is a definitive part of acquiring the object. This exchange value is quickly forgotten by the collector, however, once the object enters the collection, as is the object's use value.

> What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. This relation is the diametric opposite of any utility, and falls into the peculiar category of completeness. What is this 'completeness'? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system: the collection. [H1a,2]

In other words, when entering the collection, the commodity has the potential to rid itself of the phantasmagoric, ghostly properties assigned to it by the capitalist system. The

collector's "existence is tied […] to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate" (Benjamin [1931] 2019, 2). The object becomes an integral component of the collector's life by becoming an integral part of their interior space:

> The true method of makings things present is to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space). (The collector does just this, and so does the anecdote.) Thus represented, the things allow no mediating construction from out of "large contexts." The same method applies, in essence, to the consideration of great things from the past—the cathedral of Chartres, the temple of Paestum—when, that is, a favorable prospect presents itself: the method of receiving the things into our space. We don't displace our being into theirs; they step into our life. [H2,3][96]

The ideal result is, to reiterate Buse et al. (2005), "a special kind of 'nearness' antithetical to *Einfühlung*" (81). Yet even though the collector doesn't empathize with the exchange value of the object as commodity, they still empathize with the object itself, as Benjamin ([1931 2019) illustrates in his famous study of himself as bibliophile, "Unpacking My Library": "O bliss of the collector, bliss of the man of leisure! […] For inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii, which have seen to it that for a collector—and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be—ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them" (10). Perhaps the persistence of this empathy in its pure, neutral (that is, neither bad nor true) state is because the object no longer has any function whatsoever for the collector. Benjamin offers a clue:

> It suffices to observe just one collector as he handles the items in his showcase. No sooner does he hold them in his hand than he appears inspired by them and seems to look through them into their distance, like an augur. (It would be interesting to study the bibliophile as the only type of collector who has not

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[96] This is the full passage that I quoted in part in Chapter 2 above.

completely withdrawn his treasures from their functional context.) [H2,7; H2a,1][97]

Indeed, the bibliophile is perhaps the Benjaminian archetype closest to both the public library worker—specifically the collection development librarian—and the library patron, albeit with slight differences in each case. I use the lesson of the bibliophile to consider the empathy of both the library worker and the library patron below; but first, I want to expand on the empathy experienced by the bibliophile and their private collection.

For Benjamin, the book in the collection is unique in that it retains its use value even as its exchange value is undermined. The bibliophile cherishes the book as both a collectable and a source of knowledge, information, or entertainment. "If you own a book, you can read it at will, as fast as you please, as slowly as you please, as often as you please; you can think about and talk about and put your hand at once on the passage you approve of […] There is pure enjoyment in the possession of a good book" (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 24). The intellectual contents of the book have a separate but related value to the book as (perhaps rare) commodity. If the book is different from other collectables, then the collector experiences empathy differently with the books in their collection. Benjamin's Parisian acquaintance Missac (1995) draws a distinction between collections of stamps and books:

> With the stamp, the empathy that for Benjamin dominates the reciprocal relationship between human being and commodity takes on a slightly caricatured and even crazy aspect, like a loose pulley whose movements are as unpredictable as those of a roulette ball. With books, in contrast, empathy blossoms naturally and to a certain extent legitimately, in that the pages of the book are the object of an exchange as mysterious as love. Sometimes, Benjamin tells us, when a volume has been or feels neglected in an auction, it abandons itself to the collector. Or the collector may be possessed by a passion for this or that book, which counts its owners the way a Don Juan counts his mistresses. (47)

The bibliophile experiences *some* degree of legitimate—or true—empathy with their books, which can enter their life in a variety of ways and be the source of a range of

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[97] A variation of this appears in "Unpacking My Library": "One has only to watch a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired" (Benjamin [1931] 2019, 3).

emotional and intellectual attachments. Yet this is not entirely true empathy, for two reasons: if the book, however well integrated into the collection, is not read, then it remains a commodity that possesses the collector; and if the book *is* read, then a process of exchange happens akin to the possession inherent in the exchange of capital. Missac refers to the empathy of reading a book in a private collection as "ambiguous": "Empathy which Benjamin rejects as a basis for criticism but which reappears in the commercial relationship and of which he analyzes the mechanism in collecting, is present in reading as well, where it assumes an ambiguous character. […] The book is the locus of an exchange. Possessed, but transformed into a 'spiritual instrument,' it permeates the reader, who penetrates it and who absorbs and assimilates it" (56). This is not entirely bad empathy, as the bibliophile does not displace their being into the book, but it is not entirely true empathy either, as they still form part of their identity as the owner of the book that they simultaneously possess and are possessed by. While other collectables might remain on the shelf or in the cabinet or display case for their entire existence in the collection, the book is frequently removed to be consulted, appreciated, perused. "Those who roam around in books do not worry about returning with empty hands. While their gesture is most often that of rejecting or ignoring, they can also seize and grab hold of very concrete prey—not only ideas but also texts or fragments of texts" (61). With most commodities, unrequited desire leads to the total possession of bad empathy with exchange value. For the standard collector, handling leads to bad empathy with the object itself. In the bibliophile's collection, however, handling books, which have been pursued like lovers, leads to an ambiguous empathy, neither true nor bad nor neutral. Could this ambiguous relationship with the book be transformed in the public library as a place in which we can experience true empathy with the book in a public, rather than private, collection?

6.4   Circulation & Empathy

From the moment that the library began circulating its materials, it stood in dialectical opposition to the private book collection in the home. Penn ([aka Matthews] 1883) expressed this thought from the viewpoint of the modern bibliophile with at least a moderate amount of disposable income:

> There is something to be said in favor of the English system of borrowing books—but not much. A book that is really worth reading is worth owning. A book that has benefited you while reading ought to be within reach immediately whenever you want to refer to it again. It is all well enough to rely on the circulating library or the book-club for the book of the day, the novel which has made an accidental hit, or the sensational book of travels. But it is best to own all really good books, that we may have them at hand whenever we need them. It is well every year to lay aside a certain fixed sum to be spent in books. No other portion of our annual expenditure will yield such high returns. (15)

Although Penn was dismissive of for-profit circulating libraries, he didn't take into account the growing impact of public libraries that were created in response to the growing number and cost of popular titles. Unsurprisingly, a more subtle, dialectical example can be seen in Benjamin, as summarized by Missac (1995):

> Benjamin's work follows a course parallel to the evolution of his situation as a lover of books. […] The book became primarily a bearer of knowledge. As such, its nature changed. In "Unpacking My Library," collecting (in general, not only book collecting) was dealt with as a private matter. Empathy culminated in a personal relationship with the book. This is hardly appropriate in a public library. Without claiming to be a substitute for the private library, it provides the individual with something else, a service of another kind. This involves an even more radical shift than the process of providing the public access to masterworks from a "deprivatized" collection in a museum. Here we encounter a typical instance of the divisions that tortured Benjamin and could even tear him apart: on the one hand, his decidedly positive attitude toward social change and development and, on the other, his liking for traditional "values," for the rarity and refinement that are threatened by such development. (49)

To quote Benjamin directly: "Thus there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order" (Benjamin [1931] 2019, 2). Perhaps it was too much for one person to try to embody these competing desires and goals. "Benjamin's sadness springs from the thought that history belongs to the victors; their spoils are called 'cultural treasures'" (Meltzer 1996, 149). Such spoils include monuments, statues, other works of art, and, indeed, books, which reinforce the history of the victors each time they change hands. Yet Missac's passage offers a hint for a possible solution: the public library itself. If the kind of empathy that can tear a person apart is hardly appropriate in the public library, then maybe, with a conscientious and purposeful approach, the public library could even lead to the healing of true empathy. Ideally, the public library fills the role of the bibliophile who doesn't keep their books hidden away, maintaining a

dialectical relationship with the physical community it serves. The library offers handling without possession and desire that can be fulfilled without the exchange of capital, while ensuring that there is still intellectual and physical exchange between people. This is how the library undermines the commodity. However, the library can reinforce negative empathy by locking the item away, by tying access or exchange (circulation) to capital, by treating the item as a commodity (replacement fees, late fines, etc.). This is how the library undermines *itself*.

As I argued in Chapter 4 above, library display has the potential to re-emphasize use value and to undermine empathy with the library item as commodity, therefore realizing Benjamin's political goal of "receiving the things into our space" [H2,3]. This is perhaps even more possible with library circulation, which goes beyond making items present (or presentable) and allows them to physically enter our spaces outside the library. The public library already serves a dialectical role in its community. By collecting, displaying, and circulating commodities, the public library undermines and reinforces the city beholden to commodities. The library is a purchaser, yet it shares. This sharing, however, still depends on use value and exchange value; the commodities that the public desires yet can't purchase—for reasons of affordability or availability—are the ones most circulated by the library. For the borrowing public, objects are attained without being owned, possessing while unpossessed. The public library frustrates by demonstrating that commodities can be at hand, or even in hand, without being under one's hand. The tactility of the library as place makes the patron's alienation more immediate, more apparent, leading to a potential standstill moment, in the same way that the flâneur proletarianizes himself. The library's revolutionary potentiality therefore is a result of its physicality; the online or virtual library, however informative, however accessible, is not at hand, but rather mediated through the device in the hand.

Library weeding practices, especially in the public library, tend to value efficiency, usage statistics, complicated numerical formulas, and uniform policies and procedures. Yet occasionally a librarian will feel an emotional affinity with an item, drawn to the subject matter or content or appearance or author, and choose to keep it when every metric, every policy says that it should be removed. This is the first step in undermining bad empathy

with exchange value; however, if the librarian simply puts the item back on the shelf, hidden among the stacks, nearly anonymous as before, then it will effectively remain out of circulation, trapped in the collection, a possession among many. Implementing the praxis of library display is the next step and a way to experience true empathy with the item, to recognize the limitations of a collection that removes objects from sight, to convey to the patron the librarian's emotional affinity. When the item is rescued from oblivion, displayed prominently, appreciated for properties beyond its use value or exchange value, affinity is transmitted not just to one patron but to many, to anyone who notices it; multiplied across many items, across many patrons, across many spaces, the effect is nothing short of a constellation of dialectical images leading to a collective awakening. There is perhaps no work more vital in the library as place.

"I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth" (Benjamin [1931] 2019, 3). Doesn't a book experience the same rebirth each time it is borrowed by a new patron? At the very least, this keeps it from being weeded due to disuse, although popular items get closer to being weeded each time they are handled due to wear and tear. We need to recapture and share the joy of a library collection that is continually reborn by changing hands. "So everything joyful is mobile: music, toys, ice cream circulate through the streets" (Benjamin and Lacis 1978, 168). It is in the library that circulation maintains its original circular nature, which has increasingly been replaced by linear forms of transmission; the former leads to Hegel's true infinity, while the latter keeps us trapped in bad infinity. "For Bataille," another of Benjamin's Parisian acquaintances, influenced by Mauss and Marx, "it is the circulation of goods and not the money supply that determines the nature of the economy" (Richardson 1994, 69). Excess energy is burned off in the form of gifts; capitalism denies this traditional act of giving and instead wastes the excess, putting accumulation and consumption ahead of circulation and giving. The public library as it currently exists promotes circulation while it accumulates; the truly revolutionary public library will accumulate only to circulate, will allow all of its materials to be passed from hand to hand without intervening, will encourage its material to be given rather than consumed.

The library's decision to remove the precious item from the hands of the patron is, according to Missac (1995), "a transposition onto the collective plane of the choices individuals used to make. In order to preserve the value, in the broadest sense, of a unique or very rare volume, one must lock it up in some sanctuary and forbid its use, even the simple reading, handling, and contemplation of it. The transmission of its contents can be guaranteed only by further damaging its aura" (51). While the book as physical container might be preserved in this way, both the knowledge it contains and the patron are harmed; the former by being inaccessible and therefore increasingly forgotten, and the latter through either the unrequited desire of bad empathy or the infantilization of a lack of choice, responsibility, and autonomy. Here, perhaps, we can learn something from the modern bibliophile:

> Books arranged on open shelves have a kindly and more comfortable welcome than when caged behind glass. […] There is a delight in being able to put your hand on a book at will without having to seek for a hidden key to turn a cruel lock and to open an unnecessary door. […] All is as open to the hand as to the eye. […] This general rule is to keep books on open shelves in sight, open to the air and the light and the friendly hand, guarding them against dust and decay by careful examination and cleansing at least twice a year. (Penn [aka Matthews] 1883, 57–58)

The best way to protect the book is to interact with it carefully, purposefully, respectfully.

In fact, we can see the tactility of circulation work during the modern public library movement as an unconscious attempt to undermine bad empathy with items in a city overflowing with commodities. Understanding of the item beyond its commodity character was gained by the library worker through the regular, routine, purposeful handling of books and other items in the collection. The patron also gained this understanding by taking home books that were housed only temporarily, not to become part of any dislocated collection, and therefore remaining in communication—a shared association—with other library items, wherever they may be. If, as I argued above, the trace disappears without the hand, then high-level knowledge organization systems no longer have any knowledge of human nature. Our contemporary tendency to look at books as disposable, superfluous, replaceable, or dislocable (in the case of books moved to offsite storage facilities) is a direct result of our lack of physical contact with the

object, resulting in the re-emergence of bad empathy. Electronic, digital-as-not-digital (that is, not with the fingers) management of resources—digital library assistants (DLAs) for shelf reading, self-checkout machines, automated material handling (AMH) sorting systems for check-in, and automated storage and retrieval systems—renders *from the librarian's perspective* the individual item indistinct, inconsequential, anonymous, and therefore interchangeable at best and unnecessary at worst. In the modern era, there was a clear distinction between urban and rural public libraries. While this persists to some degree, I think it is more accurate in our present era to draw a distinction between tactile libraries and technological libraries. Although larger urban public libraries tend to use more new technologies, tactile and technological libraries are not necessarily separated along geographic lines.

The library is both a specific historical institution (a product of the nineteenth-century modern public library movement) and a constantly changing, adapting, socially produced place, difficult—yet not impossible—to define. Perhaps the overarching theme, though, is the tenuous relationship the library has with capitalism in the face of urbanisation. This leads directly to the recent trend of attempting to justify the "value" of the public library in economic, monetary terms, whereas I would argue that the public library's persistent value has been as a site where the display of commodities and their potential redemption is not beholden to speculative capital. Paradoxically, while Benjamin was reconstructing the decayed arcade to serve as the site of historical awakening, he neglected to notice that the public library in which his work dwelled and which "occupied an increasingly important place in [his] life" (Missac 1995, 49) served that same purpose by the very nature of its existence. The library reproduces itself as a place by forcing patrons to return to it to return their borrowed items. Otherwise materials in circulation—on loan—could stay in circulation—moving—in the community, exchanging hands from person to person, not requiring a place to be the site of exchanges, to house their sharing practices.

Library workers have the choice between circulation work that, to reiterate Marx, either fosters the "social relation between people" or reinforces the "phantasmagorical form of a relation between things". The public library influences the geography of the city, the contents of its shops and its denizens' homes, and by extension the spaces in which we

dwell. A large, significant public library reduces the need (if one can call it that) to have as many commodities in our homes while at the same time displaying more commodities more publicly. A library that shares non-traditional items—tools, toys, etc.—highlights the importance of the library's specific sharing practices while undermining the primacy of those materials commonly associated with the library, therefore, as with any services, both undermining and reinforcing the public library service model. The library worker as dialectician can make the choice in such interaction to treat the patron as a borrower rather than the library as a lender, a distinction which Söderholm (2016) draws in the context of circulating tool collections in the public library: "Lending is a link in the circulation chain, and circulation is a library activity, not a patron activity. When patrons leave the library they disappear into the void of their lives outside of the library context. A borrowing perspective on the other hand, would see patrons' borrowing from the library as one acquisition strategy among others, and does not leave the patrons when they leave the library" (140–141). The public library becomes, at its heart, "a place to get things" (141), one among many available to the patron as consumer. "The decision to borrow an item instead of buying or renting it is a consumer's decision" (141). From a borrowing perspective, the public library builds a collection to leave the building as often as possible, for as long as possible, in a process of communalization: "To communalize a collection is to shift ownership—not of collection custody but of collection criteria. It is the social adoption of the on-site collection into its parent community" (Söderholm and Nolin 2015, 254). According to Söderholm and Nolin, the borrowing of communalized resources empowers community members in ways that mere purchasing or commodity consumption cannot; for example, it "promotes discussion of community sustainability issues such as social inclusion" (257). Here I would caution that even in the borrowing model, the public library still runs the risk of fostering empathy with the object itself; borrowing must be accompanied by the interpersonal transmission of knowledge. Many libraries that offer these non-traditional items for borrowing have programming, print collections, trained staff members, and other resources available. This allows the patron to understand the item fully, in the sense of true empathy, rather than being preoccupied with its commodity character.

I think that public libraries have a certain specialization in facilitating access to and exchange of physical, tangible collections. As it becomes increasingly unnecessary to facilitate the exchange of some formerly tangible objects, it makes sense that the library would continue—and, in fact, look for additional opportunities—to do so for collections of other types of objects. Taking this a step further, if the library specializes in this type of exchange, then it makes sense to concentrate these efforts on physical objects that are at much lower risk of being digitized in the future, hence the emphasis on seeds, tools, instruments, household items, and leisure and sporting goods. Although public libraries have offered such circulating collections of objects, such as artworks and toys, since the modern era, I believe that the prevalence and prominence of these services have grown in recent years, in part as a reaction to the diminished focus on print holdings. Does the blurring of the borders of the collection go hand in hand with the blurring of the walls of the library? Or, rather, does the blurring of the digital collection allow the physical library to be considered in a different way, leading to the blurring of the physical limits in general, to become even more integrated in the community? Derrida (2005), influenced as he was by Benjamin, associates the "de-paperization" of society with "a hyperactive circulation of ideas, images, and voices" (55–56). At the same time, "electronic writing […] offers […] capacities for resistance, reproduction, circulation, multiplication, and thus survival that are ruled out for paper culture" (60). Even if the touch of the hand is the only way to break the spell of bad empathy with the exchange value of the commodity, there are still other ways that the public library's workers and patrons can feel true empathy with each other and with the library as place, through the circulation of knowledge.

Indeed, by confining our understanding of circulation to only the lending of library materials, we fail to consider other kinds of circulation in the library as place. For example, every time a book is browsed, borrowed, read, and discussed, rhetorical circulation—the movement of texts and discourses—happens. Economists speak of currency in circulation: currency in the hands of private individuals or commercial enterprises, rather than being stored by banks or governments. We can also think of library materials in circulation: those currently on loan to patrons, rather than those housed in the library, on the shelves, or in transit to other branches or systems. The major

difference between currency and library materials, however, is that cash can be exchanged directly from one person to another; it might live out all its useful days outside of banks or reserves.[98] The library material, on the other hand, must be returned to the library each time it is borrowed. The public nature of the library limits the public function of the item. The public library restricts the public's use of library materials; an item can't freely circulate—and therefore it remains on the receiving end of bad empathy—when it must continually return to the library as place. While circulation remains the lifeblood—a metaphor based on another type of circulation, in this case *within* the body—of the public library as was the case in Flexner's day, the circulation of bodies—workers and patrons—through the library as place's architectural spaces is of equal importance. Indeed, the circulation of physical materials depends on the circulation of physical bodies, and vice versa. The item circulates with the worker through back-of-house areas of the library before emerging, first, into public, front-of-house areas—shelves, displays—and, then, from out of the library altogether, carried in the hand of a patron whose body moves through the outside world, along other streets, into other buildings, other homes. These are the metaphorical and literal ways in which the library as place and its materials enter into our lives, making themselves present in our spaces: as lifeblood, as a building that extends itself, through items that are temporarily *in* circulation, through rhetorical movement, and through traditional library lending.

The public library, realized in this way, can reach the full material and allegorical potential of the arcade: "The arcades become at the same time material architectural constructions that shelter without enclosing and also the perfect allegorical image that lets many elements of an epoch pass by and circulate, without imposing any essential meaning or access but instead fostering the movement of thought" (Chiesa 2016, 7). The key difference being, of course, that the arcades were commercialized spaces where the exchange of objects was dependent on capital, whereas the public library, with some administrative changes, can remove capital from the patron's side of the interaction

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[98] "The day comes when […] the banknote, used up by having been passed from hand to hand, [has] to leave the sidewalk or be retired from circulation and sink into the void" (Missac 1995, 46).

entirely, finally becoming a space that fosters the circulation of both thought and true empathy. To do so, the library must overcome both, on one level, the ways that it prevents true empathy and, on another, the ways that it demands bad empathy. True empathy becomes impossible when the library is only semipublic: it closes, some areas are off limits, and it imposes limits on what can be done within its space. Its items are also borrowed temporarily and therefore do not have the potential to become a permanent fixture of the borrowers' lives. Bad empathy is reinforced each time patrons must understand the library's systems—cataloguing and classification, borrowing and lending, codes of conduct—and each time there is an emphasis on and reinforcement of the item's commodity nature in the library as cavern of commodities.

The circulation of materials affects the empathy, both bad and true, experienced by both patrons and staff in at least three main aspects of the public library: library materials, the collection and its organization, and the narrative of collection (as discussed in Chapter 4). The patron feels bad empathy with the item when viewing it as a commodity to be consumed; with the collection when experiencing its organization as arcane, authoritative, and impersonal; and with the narrative of collection when it seems determined by the librarian or only projecting a single, dominant point of view. The patron's bad empathy is a result of identifying with a library driven by capital, commodities, and the librarian's instrumental authority. On the other hand, the patrons feel true empathy with the item as shared communal resource; with cataloguing and classification systems that are responsive and easily navigable; and with a narrative that is a revolutionary montage comprised of diverse sources, including those recommended or provided by community members. The library patron's true empathy comes from recognizing that the library changes according to their identities, rather than demanding that they identify with it. The library staff member's bad empathy, in all three categories, stems from thinking of the library as something that forces the patron to change: library materials, bought on the market and valued as holdings, are commodities, the use of which must be regulated and controlled; the catalogue is also a system to be regulated and controlled; and any narrative in the collection is heavily controlled by the librarian who picks the "best" resources. On the other hand, the staff member can experience true empathy when viewing the public library as changing with the patron. Library materials

are communal resources to be shared as freely as possible, the library seeks and facilitates as much input and change as possible regarding the collection and its organization, and the collection's narrative is a fragmentary montage putting forth the true image of history. The patron and the staff member both experience bad empathy with a collection that is stagnant, at home on the shelves, and true empathy with one that is living, changing, and circulating in the community. This applies to both the collection's organization and its narrative.

To experience true empathy with the commodity that wrenches it from the phantasmagoria of commodity exchange, the human, non-system element must be re-presented. For Benjamin, the phantasmagoria of commodity fetishism was not simply a product of alienation from the circumstances of its production but also the alienating functions of commodity display and the difficulty of collection that was not consumption. True empathy, then, reintroduces humanity into each stage of the circulation process; the commodity does not enter our space on its own, and we do not receive it on our own. Library circulation, with its potential emphasis on human connection at each stage of the process, can be a form of exchange that fosters true empathy between the community— both library workers and patrons, those offering and those receiving—and items that were commodities but have been transformed. The temporary nature of this exchange is what makes it most effective. Although Benjamin's collector values the commodity for more than its use value or exchange value, they still have the overwhelming urge to possess, to confine, to own. Library circulation grounded in true empathy allows the patron to collect without possessing, to receive without confining, to handle without owning, and, most importantly, to participate in an exchange of *former* commodities that is not dictated by the exchange of capital whatsoever. In the public library context, true empathy with the transformed commodity that was a product of—and displayed by—human labour leads to true empathy with the people who brought that object into our lives and with whom we continue to share it. This is where public libraries must adjust their policies and procedures around fines, fees, lending periods, and restricted access. At the same time, and of equally vital importance, the librarian ideally manages a collection that is open to all, that recontextualizes its items, and that enhances its revolutionary montage.

It is not enough for the library simply to have an item in its collection to transform the item's commodity character. But the library has the potential to transform the library item as commodity into a shared resource by being the site of communal exchanges. The item can enter our lives without being possessed—without being a possession. It becomes a temporary occupant of a shared living space—the patron's home—before returning to the library to be shared again. What is significant is the fact that the item is handled without being possessed. This process is not possible with the digital resource, whether purchased or licenced by the library (as opposed to the public domain material scanned and shared freely, for example), as it retains its commodity character, forcing us to displace our lives into it and its digital interface, experiencing Benjamin's bad empathy. It is not transformed when it is borrowed; it forces us to transform our lives and other possessions (e.g., ereaders) to experience it. Its use does not reflect the other patrons who have experienced it, whose hands have altered it.

Yet the physical item doesn't transform simply by being shared. This depends on the circumstances under which the sharing takes place: the library's policies and procedures. Late fines, euphemistically known as "extended use fees" or something similarly vague, reinforce or maintain the economic, phantasmagoric value of the item. This is even more apparent when the library charges a patron the full initial purchase price for a lost item, regardless of how old it is or how much it has degraded over time due to constant handling by staff and other patrons. After all, every time it is borrowed, browsed, read, or returned, the item decays a little more. The public library takes on the role of the ragpicker, for whom "the use value, as opposed to the exchange value, is once again affirmed. […] In a radical reversal, one takes up a position antipodal to the selection of merchandise, or the most select merchandise, where the least assault on the integrity of the object, even a scratch, causes the price to fall" (Missac 1995, 61). By charging the full price—or indeed, any price—for an item that has been handled and therefore altered, the library exhibits bad empathy with this exchange value of the commodity. The library remains its owner, the item just another object in its collection. Renouncing its price means reaffirming its use value. In other words, to undermine the exchange value of the commodity, the library worker must undermine the institutional nature of the library. The library worker as administrator must become the circulation worker as dialectician, in the

same way that the library display worker must embrace the dialectical nature of that labour. Late fines must be abolished, lending periods must be extended (perhaps indefinitely); materials should be treated as vital possessions of the community itself, with the library serving as the facilitator and site of free, open exchanges. A circulation department founded on the principles of transforming the commodity character of library materials rather than bad empathy with their exchange value is therefore constant, daily, everyday, vital dialectical work relying on the library worker's skills, expertise, and judgment, not institutional policies or capitalistic procedures.

6.5 Libraries, Disease, & the Hand

However, one of the essential means of transforming the commodity—its communal handling—also makes it more dangerous for both the worker and the patron. Although COVID-19's effects have been widespread, it is by no means the first disease to alter circulation work. The 1910s and '20s were especially difficult times in North America, with concurrent outbreaks of diseases and epidemics such as diphtheria, plague, scarlet fever, smallpox, spiral meningitis, spotted fever, tuberculosis (Flexner 1927, 122–123; Orlean 2018, 194). There was panic around library materials, which were seen as possible sources of disease, or "plague carriers" (Hammond 2006, 40). In the case of less virulent diseases, library workers would temporarily remove items from circulation and take steps to disinfect the materials, especially those that had been handled by or in the homes of infected patrons, through exposure to fumigation, formaldehyde, or sunlight. "Books exposed to epidemic types of disease, such as smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, or spinal meningitis [were] usually destroyed in meeting the demands of the public" (Flexner 1927, 123). In any case, infected patrons often informed their local health office or the library directly so that materials could be traced, accounted for, and dealt with appropriately. "Library committees held long meetings to debate the problem. By way of a preventative—but also in order to convince users of their safety—notices were prominently displayed in libraries, catalogues and newspapers ordering the burning of infected books and the banning not only of those who were known disease carriers but also of those who cared for them" (Hammond 2006, 41). Eventually, library authorities began to recognize that placing materials under ultraviolet light (specifically, at the time,

sunlight) and then removing them from circulation for at least a couple weeks was the best, truest way to disinfect the item, saving it from destruction and reducing the need for potentially harmful fumigants.

Library materials are no longer quarantined or fumigated (thankfully) or even left in sunlight when returned—again, because the sunlight might damage the item. Paradoxically, steps to protect the item itself, such as plastic covers, make it more dangerous for the person handling it, as some viruses, such as SARS-CoV-2, can live for much longer on plastic than on cardboard. As libraries reopen, we will see a new focus in circulation departments on the health and safety of all people handling the items: ultraviolet lights placed above all recently returned materials, ideally as part of an automated check-in and sorting system; more paper-, cardboard-, or cloth-bound books or the regular, routine sanitizing of every item that has been handled (which would be much easier on items with plastic or glossy covers); other non-traditional circulating collections that can be easily washed or sanitized; staff who wear gloves or regularly wash or sanitize their hands; dedicated check-in shifts, at dedicated stations, during which the staff members don't have any interaction with patrons nor touch anything that can't be wiped down or washed afterwards. These are merely ideas; although I was once a circulation supervisor, I am not a public health expert, and I don't know what the best practices are or what to recommend. But I do believe that it is now up to us as library workers to figure them out together and soon. Library circulation has the potential to be changed, perhaps irrevocably, by our collective experience with COVID-19. For example, we are already seeing some public libraries waive or even do away with late fines entirely, in addition to lending periods that have been extended indefinitely. And even though some might argue that such changes will be over the top or reactionary, I find it hard to believe that they won't be for the better. The irony, in the context of this discussion of handling, is that these necessary steps to protect health will distance the library worker (and perhaps the patron) from the item within the library.

When libraries close, when book drops are locked, when circulation is halted, the items patrons have checked out become extended, open-ended, indefinite guests in their homes, unable to return to the library yet still not fully integrated into the household. During the

early days of the COVID-19 lockdown, our shuttered libraries weren't places; they were merely husks surrounding empty space. We weren't there to give them socially constructed meaning, identities. Yet there is philosophical importance, potential in "mere" space. As our libraries reopen again, we have the option either to rehaunt them as ghosts playing out archetypal roles in places that we refuse to admit have changed or to reimagine them in truly revolutionary ways. The library should no longer be a place to retreat into, to inhabit defensively and artificially; with the lockdown and social distancing, we have now all done more than enough of that. We no longer need places that are comfy or familiar or welcoming; we need places that challenge us, that change with us, that remind us what it means to be alive within a community—a collective—that is dreaming and agitated, yes, but that also no longer wishes to be housed, contained, limited in any way. I hope that the new library as place will transcend the bourgeois notion of place altogether. I hope that my counterpart researcher 100 years from now will look back on libraries that dealt with massive social upheaval not by staying the course, as modern public libraries did, but by destroying, in whatever way they can, the social forces—bad empathy with commodities, colonialism, systemic racism, income inequality, jingoism—that exacerbated the catastrophic effects of a sudden yet foreseeable disaster. I hope that our world will become more like the public library *as it could be* than the arcade as it was. Otherwise we will face evermore certain and near total decay.

Chapter 7

7 True Empathy with the Public Library as Place

In Chapter 4, I argued that the praxis of library display can lead to true empathy with the library item through a process of emotional affinity, rescue from oblivion, prominent display, and appreciation of more than simple exchange value, eventually building into a constellation of dialectical images and a collective awakening. The ultimate goal should be fostering a similar process for the library as place as a whole; everybody who enters should have the potential to experience true empathy with all of its spaces, resources, items, displays, exhibits, programs, and even each other, in a truly reciprocal process whereby everything is freely given without being consumed, owned, or possessed. How can we experience true empathy with the public library as place? Examining this question brings us back to Benjamin's "favorable prospect": "the method of receiving the things into our space. We don't displace our being into theirs; they step into our life" [H2,3]. The public library needs to redefine its own notion of space: to whom does it belong? It must be a place in which patrons and staff both feel at home, that they can both refer to as "our space". How can it achieve this? How can the public library step into the lives of the community and its members? How can the public library be a workplace that steps into the lives of its workers without requiring them to step into it, both literally and figuratively? Perhaps this is the heart of the issue: How can the public library be a place within which we dwell without being a home? To answer these questions, I bring together and expand ideas from previous chapters.

I have already introduced the archetypal library worker as dialectician. Library work can be undertaken dialectically, and the library as place can be the site of the dialectical process. Benjamin's research is itself an example of another form of library work, one that isn't based on restrictive characteristics such as job titles, wages, or type of labour. Both the staff member and the member of the public dialectically (re)produce the library through their work, paid or not. Schwarz (2007), analyzing Benjamin's *Passagenarbeit* notes, reports:

In one of the fragments Charles Baudelaire's description of the *chiffonier* is quoted: […] *tout ce qu'elle a brisé, il le catalogue, et le collectionne* […]. And Benjamin also recognized himself in the figure of the ragman or ragpicker. Benjamin underlined the words "everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects" in the French quotation […]. The archival work of the ragpicker is related to his own: *The Arcades Project* wishes to pick up the refuse of history. Like a poor and burdened man cleverly picking through the rubbish of the previous day, the materialist historian selects from amongst all that is disregarded and from the residues of history. At the library he is unconcerned with what has been accredited as precious and valuable, but rather is drawn towards historical refuse. Waste materials are to enter into significant [end of 252] connections and fragments are used to gain a new perspective on history. Benjamin conceived his work on the nineteenth century as an appropriation of rags. (252–253)

In this archival work, Benjamin was concerned with the *margins* of the library's collection. It should be remembered—and in fact, I don't recall seeing it in secondary literature regarding Benjamin—that the ragpicker, historically, had a specific literary mission in picking rags to be turned into paper, which could be used to publish new books, pamphlets, and such. The passages that Benjamin copied aren't the only rags; the marginal books themselves are the rags which Benjamin—indeed, any researcher—can metaphorically recycle into new books. This work sustains the library and creates new ones, and it is only possible when the items are easily accessed, browsed, handled, copied, borrowed, and shared.

Elsewhere, Benjamin quotes Pyat: "Paris, when seen in a ragpicker's hamper, is nothing much. . . . To think that I have all Paris here in this wicker basket . . . !"[99] [J88a,4]. The fragments of the city look inconsequential when they are contained, whether in the ragpicker's basket or in the library. Such fragments, though collected, were disordered in the modern city, which shared the qualities of a museum or a library. Benjamin quotes Joseph de Maistre (1884):

One can form a perfectly adequate idea of the universe by considering it under the aspect of a vast museum of natural history exposed to the shock of an earthquake. The door to the collection rooms is open and broken; there are no more windows.

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[99] Benjamin's citation: "From Pyat, *Le Chiffonnier*, cited in <Jean> Cassou, *Quarante-huit* (Paris <1939>), p. 13" [J88a,4].

> Whole drawers have fallen out, while others hang by their hinges, ready to drop. Some shells have rolled out into the hall of minerals, and a hummingbird's nest is rooting on the head of a crocodile. What madman, though, could have any doubt of the original intention, or believe that the edifice was built to look this way? . . . The order is as visible as the disorder; and the eye that ranges over this mighty temple of nature reestablishes without difficulty all that fatal agency has shattered, warped, soiled, and displaced. (102ff; quoted in J86,2)

Baudelaire used a similar metaphor that can be more directly tied to the library: "The whole visible universe is but a storehouse of images and signs" [quoted in J7,3]. Elsewhere in *L'Art romantique*, Baudelaire writes: "Here everything—place, decor, furnishings, accessories […]—everything is allegory, allusion, hieroglyph, rebus" [quoted in J5a,6]. This could describe the library as place as easily as it could the modern city. The challenge for the library as place is to overcome its modern destiny as a storehouse of images and signs made up of spaces and objects that have meaning only by referring to other spaces and objects.

The library and its contents are part of—and reinforce through re-presentation—the monumental spoils of history's victors. Benjamin ([1940] 2019) writes in Thesis VI of the "Theses on the Philosophy of History": "In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. […] Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (199). A truly empathetic (re)presentation of history can stop bad empathy with history's victors from overpowering both the living and the dead. At the end of Thesis VII, Benjamin builds on this idea: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain" (200). The library worker as dialectician should brush against the grain the history of both the library as an institution and its materials through circulation and display work that transmits hope rather than violent barbarism, as well as through library design that embraces the vernacular at the expense of the institutional.

The library—any library—is produced sociomaterially. The librarian or other administrator ignores the vernacularity of everyday life in the city and its spaces when designing a library purely for functionality. Such a library nullifies its own revolutionary potentiality—that is, its dialectical nature. The creative freedom of the library as threshold cannot be realized when it is an instrumental, institutional space. In the expansive North American city, the public library created a bourgeois shell where there wasn't one. The library enhances phantasmagoric isolation by controlling access to the library space, becoming a glass display case itself. The library as living room and the library as home, though related, are different. The library as living room is one metaphorical room in a city whose parts take on distinct qualities of the bourgeois home. The library as home contains all of these rooms within itself; it is the reinteriorization of the bourgeois shell. In either case, the library controls by being an interior space even when it brings in the outdoors, for example, in fenced reading gardens or interior courtyards. How can the library bring in the outdoors and be the living room of the community without using psychological tricks? It can do so by undermining its very means of control, including the various state of being indoors. I envision a public library that combines all three of Brand's (1994) characteristics of a building—"habitat", "property", and "component of the surrounding community" (73)—so as *not* to be contradictory. This would require it to be a habitat that is closed to no one and in which no one permanently dwells, a property owned and operated communally, and a component of the surrounding community that changes and is changed by the community reciprocally.

Maxwell (2006) shows that the comfy chair claimed as one's own is a hideaway within the library, a hideaway within a hideaway (80). The public library has become a home by blending in with the homes around it. The new challenge for the public library is to stop blending in without falling into the postmodern trap of fitting in by standing out, while also avoiding the tendency to rely on timeless design, which was part of the crisis of modernity, a crisis which continues to this day. By undermining its own inherent commercialization and by participating in the decommercialization of the surrounding city, the public library can turn its postmodern formlessness (see Chapter 4)—in terms of both the collection and the building's architecture—into a positive, revolutionary one.

Conceived in this way, the library is no longer "a place apart", to quote Borgwardt (1970, 20) again, nor a shell in which books dwell, to paraphrase Schnapp and Battles (2014, 26), nor a shell in which people dwell, but rather a space continually reproduced socially and dialectically as the site of the everyday life of the community. The library, like its architecture, becomes formless in a positive way, with a constantly negotiated set of characteristics, priorities, and services that enter people's lives naturally and are understood instinctively, as they arise from true empathy.

The modern public library provides an example of formlessness with positive potential in stations, which Flexner (1927) defines as "small collections of books sent for an indefinite term to a definite location" (157). The station was one means for the public library to put localized collections into homes, schools, clubs, workplaces, orphanages, and other spaces of everyday life. To meet the varying and often unknown reading preferences and needs of the people in such spaces, the public library had to embrace the temporary, experimental nature of the station:

> The evolutionary process, constantly going forward in a live library system, can be demonstrated in the growth and development of these minor agencies for the distribution of books. The station with its total lack of definite form and its flexible book collection offers an ideal medium for experimental purposes. A station may start in a small way, take on new features, merge into new forms, and develop under skilful manipulation and with wide-awake observation. (Flexner 1927, 163)

As I noted in Chapter 3, modern library extension started with small-scale services like stations, before later becoming more centralized in library building projects, such as renovations and neighbourhood branches. While collectivization can accompany centralization, so can a reduction in the effectiveness of services for the individual. I would like to recapture the responsiveness of the station without regressing to something that was itself an extension of the myth of progress. The floating collection, in which items are placed on the shelves in whichever branch they are returned to, is a start. Yet I want to take this further by proposing a new public library station that promotes true empathy, consisting of variable collections of items, added by anyone, sent or taken for indefinite terms to indefinite locations, whether in the library or elsewhere in the community.

The station was, in many ways, a counterpart to a piece of expansive equipment, the Library Bureau Scrap-box, which Penn (aka Matthews 1883) described as "a heavy case as wide as a heavy manila envelope, and long enough to contain a hundred of them" (84). It contained a hundred paper envelopes that could be filled with "any special scrap, either cutting or [manuscript] note" (85) and labelled, arranged, removed, and rearranged as necessary. The Scrap-box was "at once a scrap-book capable of indefinite expansion, a classified commonplace book, and an *Index Rerum* [….] The clippings may be classified by any system, and the system itself may be changed at any instant with the slightest expenditure of time and trouble. […] At any moment the cuttings and notes and quotations and references, on any subject, may be subdivided, if you see fit, and re-arranged indefinitely" (84–85). Indefinite expansion and subdivision, both conditions of positive formlessness, went hand-in-hand with indefinite removal, as "you may take out the envelope or envelopes containing what you wish without disturbing the other envelopes" (85). The Scrap-box's contents took on the characteristics of Benjamin's (2009) fragmentary ideas, which had meaning only in relation to each other: "They are divested of their false unity so that, thus divided, they might partake of the genuine unity of truth" (33). Unlike the modern public library's collection—which could be expanded, subdivided, and reduced only by the librarian—the Scrap-box let anyone have full control over a compendium of materials on any number of subjects, with the one condition that it must be comprised of scraps and notes, rather than books, which couldn't be housed in the envelopes.

This was the exact type of notebook writing that Benjamin, whose personal library was stuck in various cities across Europe and who required more printed materials for his work on the arcades than he could ever hope to own, engaged in, particularly toward the end of his life. Wizisla (2007b) draws the connection between Benjamin's research and the libraries he used:

> Benjamin wrote constantly. When an idea occurred to him he did not delay its writing down by seeking out the right piece of paper, but rather used the nearest suitable thing at hand. In this way key thoughts are fixed in passing, 'scrawled down,' often on the margins of other works or directly interleaved in them […]. And of course he knew the meaning of the concept '*verzetteln*' prevalent in

library science or lexicography: 'to excerpt,' 'to disperse things that belong together into individual slips or into the form of a card index.'

The court library at Vienna introduced a card index catalog around 1780, because the bound catalog could not accommodate the flood of entries. Parish registers are entered on slips or even card[s], in order to be able to deploy the individual entries independently of the place of their transmission, and to be able to order them according to different criteria. Transfer to individual scraps or cards makes possible lexical projects such as the Goethe-Dictionary, which began to index the Weimar edition of slips of paper in 1946. Slips or their stronger sisters, index cards—of which the *Journal for Organisation* declared in 1929, 'cards can do everything'—stand out because of their flexibility, and thus they represent modernity. (31)

This is especially significant given the fact that Benjamin took notes on library forms and call slips, as these were often the closest pieces of paper at hand (see examples in Benjamin 2007). Wizisla (2007b) continues:

Benjamin repeatedly treated the elements of his text according to the principle of building blocks: he copied them out, cut them out, stuck them on new sheets of paper and arranged them anew […]. Benjamin's idea of composing a work entirely of quotations ensures that the material within the collection can remain mobile, elements can be shifted at will. At the outset all material is of equal value: knowledge that is organized in slips and scraps knows no hierarchy. (32)

Yet when organizing and cataloguing, librarians tend to take this invention of the library, this slip of paper, and try to fix it in a hierarchical scheme, rather than allowing it to be moved, shifted, and arranged at will, physically or symbolically. Therefore, Benjamin's notetaking and the Scrap-box's formlessness, both of which incorporated marginal scraps into other contexts by removing them from their original locations, are examples of how library and information science practices and materials can be undermined in constructive ways.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the crisis of modernity is itself in crisis when it comes to library architecture, presenting a false choice between the information age's aluminum and glass or modernity's iron and glass, both of which maintain the status quo while promising change. Lees (2001), by proposing a critical geography of architecture, began to consider what the library does in addition to what it means; I think we should also consider what it means when the library does something. That is, action and meaning

aren't separate or competing concerns, but rather entwined, overlapping dialectically, affecting one another reciprocally. Perhaps the public library's architecture became negatively formless in the postmodern sense only after extension was no longer a priority; a re-emphasis on extension can paradoxically give and take away forms of the formless library, transforming into positive formlessness. Extension can reopen its literal and metaphorical connections to the library, rather than the library continuing to be an avenue of approach to itself.

The public library, which has always been commercial and a persistent symbol of modernity, in its current and persistent form is one of the factors still keeping us in capitalism's dream-filled sleep. Reversing this process is the primary objective of true empathy with the public library as place. Librarians like to think that the public library can—or does—stand in opposition to a neoliberalism driven by entertainment, an argument surprisingly similar to the modern public librarians opposed to novels and other forms of pleasure reading. For example: "In a world of formulaic celebrity, infotainment and the cheap exploitation of basic instincts, the library can be a balancing force that provides people with the opportunity to enjoy and engage with a richer cultural experience. It can also reflect, indeed record and restore the local community culture which does not depend on commercial gatekeepers but can be nurtured by word of mouth and the knowledge and experience of local librarians" (Usherwood 2007, 50). Yet this is still a siting—an institutionalization—of culture, ambiguously defined, and it presents liberalism and neoliberalism as the only options, rather than something truly revolutionary. I prefer to imagine a library as place that is so integrated with everyday life that it is loses its physical identity, that its effect on culture is at once pervasive and invisible.

My vision of the library being fully integrated into everyday life through true empathy is different from what has become a common trope in LIS literature of "the library in the life of the user" (e.g., Buschman 2017; Wiegand 2005; Wiegand 2015). While I appreciate that such an approach, as contrasted with understanding "the user in the life of the library", examines the history of the public library from the "bottom-up" perspective of patrons rather than the "top-down" one of administrators and LIS researchers

(Wiegand 2015, 349), it also leads to an uncritical acceptance of the public library as a beneficial institution. For example, Wiegand's investigation begins with the question: "Why do Americans love their public library?" (362). His findings are hardly surprising: "After going through the data […] from a bottom-up perspective, I come away with a new appreciation for this civic institution, which, because it built a tremendous record of achievement serving people who used it in so many different ways, deserves much more credit than it has heretofore been given" (362). Both Wiegand and Buschman believe that the public library once supported "democracy" (uncritically defined) more in the past than it does now; indeed, Buschman (2017), while acknowledging the public library's role in excluding African Americans, "Americanizing immigrants[,] and other forms of social control", still argues: "The role of the library in the life of the public then was one of support and expansion of possibilities, opportunities, education, or just plain inexpensive leisure" (59; cites Wiegand 2015). I prefer a critical approach that identifies what the library does well, yes, but that also does not let it hide from what it has done poorly and, perhaps most importantly, considers how it can fulfill its revolutionary potentiality. An approach like Wiegand's and Buschman's still considers "the user" and "the library" as having separate lives that interact and intersect but remain, at their core, distinct. In this view, the library remains a place apart. A Benjaminian approach, on the other hand, shows that everyday life contains the patron, the library, the library worker, and the entire community at once, as they constantly, continually, and dialectically influence each other. A broad view of the public library's role in everyday life shows that "the library in the life of the user" and "the user in the life of the library" are equally unreal. What remains real, however, is the materiality of everyday life.

With expanded digital services and an increased emphasis on its community role, the public library now finds itself with less inventory, fewer physical items, and more available interior space. As discussed in Chapter 4, nineteenth-century display overwhelmed the onlooker in a cavern of commodities. Does less inventory lessen the phantasmagoric effect of the library? How does this effect true empathy? Mark Asberg (2019), current CEO of Calgary Public Library (CPL), argues that less inventory—fewer objects—can lead to more human activity and interactions within the library. Additionally, basic services can be automated with, for example, artificial intelligence

chatbots for online reference, digital account services, automated laptop lending lockers, and self-checkout machine. Systems such as CPL are even introducing self-serve branches in multiuse facilities that are open whenever the larger building is open and that allow patrons to access a wide range of services with their library card (Asberg 2019). While I agree with Asberg that automating routine transactional work allows staff and patrons to focus on meaningful human experiences, I want to caution that the library worker should remember which actions are necessary to maintain true empathy with the item. Fully automating all transactions or removing the human from transactional work, while allowing more time to build true empathy between patrons and workers with each other and the library as place, also could allow bad empathy with the exchange value of the library item as commodity to maintain primacy, as the routine motions of the hand that accompany knowledge transmission could be completely lost. In addition, automation, such as the self-checkout machine, reduces the number of face-to-face interactions during which workers and patrons can share ideas, information, and opinions about books, reading interests, and library programs and services.

If, as I argued in Chapter 6, the best way to protect the book is to interact with it carefully, purposefully, and respectfully, then the same should be said about both the public library and its communities. The library and its materials make themselves present in our spaces as lifeblood, as a building that extends itself, through items that are temporarily in circulation, through rhetorical movement, and through traditional lending. In each of these cases, and each stage of the process, the library is only present when it touches everyday life in the form of human interaction. That is, the library as place doesn't interact with humans; humans interact with each other through the library as a medium. The physical thing therefore mediates the process of making itself present, whether as a hindrance leading to bad empathy or as an assistance leading to true empathy. True empathy is gained when the item encourages human interaction, as in the case of a tool that requires a staff member or volunteer—someone acting on behalf of the library—to impart specialized knowledge to the borrower. That is, how we as workers

and patrons react to and interact with the library and its items directly influences the empathetic process.[100]

To reiterate the general framework: The patron and the worker alike experience bad empathy with the library as place when they must displace their being into it; on the other hand, they both experience true empathy with the library as place that steps into their lives. Fostering such true empathy involves a broader commitment to the principles I identified as a starting point in Chapter 3: removing capital from the patron's interaction with the library entirely, making the library fully public rather than semipublic, reducing as much as possible the need for the patron to understand the library's systems, undoing the library's institutionalization, and undermining the commodity nature of every object—physical or digital—with which the library is concerned. The human, non-system element must be re-presented not just in circulation work but in every single one of the library's aspects. In Chapter 6, I argued that the patron's bad empathy stems from identifying with a library beholden to capital, commodities, and the librarian's instrument authority, while the staff member's bad empathy stems from thinking that the library should force the patron to change. Both the patron and the staff member experience true empathy—which involves both the practice of the hand and the transfer of knowledge— with a library that changes with its patrons. It is now possible, following this model, to consider how both the patron and the staff member each experience bad empathy and true empathy with the public library as place.

The patron feels bad empathy with a public library that appears to be an arcane, bureaucratic institution devoted to cost-saving and a site to encounter only those items that are already desired. On the one hand, when access to the space and its materials is restricted, the patron must act according to the library's regulations; on the other hand, when the patron must enter the library to receive services, then their physical body is displaced. Two other opposite extremes result in the patron's bad empathy: wasted space

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[100] This is consistent with social capital research (e.g., Griffis and Johnson 2013; C. A. Johnson 2012), which finds that positive interactions with staff members increase social capital among public library patrons. Analyzing the similarities between true empathy and increased social capital is an area for further research.

on a massive scale as in the atrium (see Chapter 4) and the library as a shell to be inhabited defensively. In the former case, the patron feels insignificant; in the latter, subsumed. The staff member experiences bad empathy with the library as place if they believe that they must use the library's policies and procedures to control or restrict either patrons or items, especially if there is an emphasis on efficiency. The worker views the library as a lender, rather than the patron as a borrower. In the library as protective shell from the city, the precarious worker lacking adequate space must displace their professional identity and daily tasks to this rigid environment. For both the patron and the worker, bad empathy defines a relationship to the library as place based on economic terms, on maintaining the status quo, on conservative collections and services, or on the library as a place apart from everyday life.

Conversely, both the patron and the worker feel true empathy with a library as place that extends itself and is defined on human terms by its non-system elements, embracing positive formlessness, actively resisting the status quo, removing capital from its exchanges, fully integrating into everyday life, offering changing and adaptable services, and becoming as open and intuitive to access as possible. The library worker as dialectician treats the patron as a borrower rather than the library as a lender, leading to the communalization of collections and spaces. The patron's true empathy is enhanced when they feel like a borrower, when they encounter unknown items (rather than simply those desired ahead of time), and when they understand the public library as a communal space shared collectively and temporarily on a human scale. In addition to the elements that they have in common with the patron, the worker's true empathy also comes from a feeling of shared stewardship, job security, and adequate working spaces. Removing precarity for the worker and its accompanying vice of wasted space will make the library inviting and homelike for all who enter it, rather than simply presenting a false, phantasmagoric type of comfort. The worker must no longer be consumed along with the space.

In Chapter 6, I maintained the importance of emphasizing human connection at each stage of the circulation process. Now I want to expand that notion to the entire public library. If we shouldn't view our books as disposable, superfluous, replaceable, or

dislocable, then we shouldn't view our library spaces or the people who inhabit them as such. Our items are not indistinct, inconsequential, and anonymous, and neither are we. Public library services can be redesigned to be free of any limitations related to bad empathy with exchange value. The space, like the items it contains, can transcend its purely functional destiny and the cumulative exchange value of everything that comprises it. The public library as the site of true empathy is a temporary dwelling place, not an individual retreat but a shared communal space, produced by social interaction between the library worker as dialectician on equal footing with community members. Library display reverses and advances survival by destruction, destruction by survival. Display of the collection has the potential to recover items on the threshold of decay and irrelevance. What can be recovered when the entire library is displayed according to the praxis of library display? The library as place transforms from a phantasmagoria produced by the librarian into a communalized space. The public library can move beyond a service model that revolves around reproducing itself as a place, recapturing along the way part of its lost identity as a naturally justified community project that has grown out of and continues to grow with the people whose everyday lives surround it. As shown in Chapter 6, the library can foster Marx's (1967) "social relation between people" rather than the "phantasmagorical form of a relation between things" (76–77; quoted in G5,1). If the modern public library established itself by providing alternative sources for bourgeois patrons, then the library of the future can reconfigure itself by being the site of true empathy for the entire community, resolving the constant struggle between the street, library, and home.

If the reading room can be the world, if library display in the even broader sense represents everyday life, if the library as container has now been replaced by the library as place, then neither the library as place nor its services need to be designed to contain any longer. The library, especially the new urban central one, also should undermine its status as protective shell from the city around it. Then it will no longer be a husk of husks; it will contain only to liberate. One can imagine, for example, an endlessly subdividing library collection made up entirely of Scrap-boxes. If they are filled with materials selected, removed, and incorporated by the hands, and according to the preferences, of both the library worker and the patron or community member, then such a

collection forms a model for one based in and promoting true empathy.[101] Even though the virtual library is mediated through the device in the hand, such a device, or the sum total of such devices in the library community, offers new possible ways to turn the public library into a sort of Scrap-box that can take both physical and digital forms. For example, the library can use its makerspace's book printer to produce a volume collecting all of the material—original and quoted—that staff and patrons have gathered together on a certain topic, or patrons can use their devices to highlight relevant passages from a variety of online resources to appear side-by-side in an online compendium. This example of multiplatform Scrap-boxes suggests other ways that the public library can undermine its own standards and expectations broadly while promoting positive formlessness, for example: branches that can be accessed by anyone at any hour; stations comprised of materials that need never be returned; collections that are built serendipitously and never weeded; libraries that have a physical collection but no set location, such as the Occupy Wall Street Library (Taylor and Loeb 2013); libraries that circulate only collections of physical objects, not books; libraries that provide as much context as practicable in a variety of formats for each item, service, and program; furniture and décor that patrons can move at will; libraries that contain and are contained by other organizations and spaces in overlapping multiuse facilities; and materials of various formats and topics that are "intershelved" as in the Prelinger Library according to an "associative organizational scheme" (Bakker 2015, paras. 17 & 15) that invites patrons to, according to co-founder Megan Shaw Prelinger, "just engag[e] the shelves unmediated" (quoted in para. 17). Russell (2013) analyzes the collection of ephemeral films in the Prelinger Library's sister organization, the Prelinger Archives, and Rick Prelinger's approach to film preservation through a critical Benjaminian lens, arguing that the films become dialectical images in such a context, leading to a new understanding of film history. As I hope I have made clear by now, I believe that each library, archive, museum, and gallery possesses this potential, which can be realized only through praxis. These examples are but a start. I have no doubt that library workers—and

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[101] The Little Free Library offers a basic model of this process at work, although I imagine something much more comprehensive.

workers in archives, museums, and galleries—as dialecticians can manifest myriad forms of positive formlessness.

In closing, I am advocating for the total, effortless, seamless integration of the public library into the everyday life of the community. In the second of three epigraphs to Convolute K, Benjamin (1999, 388) quotes Mabille (1935): "Library where the books have melted into one another and the titles have faded away" (2). Perhaps soon we can speak of libraries where the services and spaces have melted into one another and the social, physical, and intellectual divides have faded away. If we are successful, that might even lead to cities where the metaphorical bourgeois rooms have melted into one another and the walls have faded away. The earlier passage from de Maistre (1844) concludes: "And there is more: look closely and you can recognize already the effects of a restoring hand. Some beams have been shored up, some paths cut through the rubble; and, in the general confusion, a multitude of *analogues* have already taken their place again and come into contact" (102fff; quoted in J86,2). True empathy through the touch of the hand and the transmission of knowledge is noticeable only in contrast to the catastrophe of modernity's bad empathy. In "La Voix", la fleur du mal in which Baudelaire refers to the library as Babel, he envisions a hopeful destiny for the endlessly referential spaces and objects of modern life: "Behind the scenes, the frivolous decors / of all existence, deep in the abyss, / I see distinctly other, brighter worlds" [quoted in J70,3]. Lichtenberg (2000), whose aphoristic notebooks possibly served as inspiration for Benjamin's *Arcades* manuscript, noted sometime between 1772 and 1773: "Libraries will in the end become cities, said Leibniz" (37; Notebook C, para. 29). This topic must have remained in the back of Lichtenberg's mind for the better part of two decades, as sometime between 1789 and 1793 he completed the thought: "If, as Leibniz has prophesied, libraries one day become cities, there will still be dark and dismal streets and alleyways as there are now" (164; Notebook J, para. 179). If the library worker as dialectician, committed to true empathy, heeds the lessons of the arcades and bad empathy, then perhaps one day our public libraries and cities alike will no longer have dark, dismal alleyways, covered or otherwise.

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