

"Utopias for Sale: Private Security in the Double City of Alphaville"

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Introduction:

Each morning David Aames awakes to be greeted by another luxurious day in what has become a near perfect life. For along with his impeccably sculpted body, fabulous New York City apartment and luxury sports car, David's private utopia coalesces around the freedom of being totally alone. Yet this day will not be the same. As David races out of his apartment in his vintage Jaguar, he quickly realizes that something is dramatically amiss in his fairy-tale world: the streets, which are normally bustling with the chaos of a New York morning, are completely deserted. Only the electronic advertisements and street lights have been left behind to preside over a completely barren city. So, alone with the buzz and flash of the city's electronic citizens, David Aames breaks down: abandoning his car, running wildly through the streets, David comes face to face with the truth of his exclusionary paradise; and with the horrifying thought of a life without others, David retreats into a final, all-embracing scream.

In this opening scene from Cameron Crowe's film *Vanilla Sky*, David's nightmarish encounter with a desolate city is revealed to be precisely that - a dream, which his therapist claims, signifies his inner loneliness. While this psychological interpretation represents a good starting place for a film which probes the disarray of a man, whose picture-perfect reality is disrupted by a debilitating car crash, I will offer another, perhaps more insidious, interpretation of the deserted city - in *Vanilla Sky* the abandoned streets represent the end of public space. That is, along with the film's psychological exploration of a narcissistic playboy, who retreats into a bubble of vanity and affluence, *Vanilla Sky* reveals a vacated urban landscape, whose vital public dimension has been mercilessly handed over to a virtual world of rampant advertising and consumption. Indeed, as the spectator comes to learn, most of the film's action takes place, not within the material space-time of the city, but within the virtual dream-space of David's mind. Choosing to live out the rest of his days plugged into an artificial reality, what David's decision ultimately signifies, therefore, is not only the obsolescence of the body, but a retreat from the city's utopian potential, as the good place emerges triumphantly as a virtual non-place.

With its vacant streets, dangerous, car-congested streets and lonely streets of despair, *Vanilla Sky* offers a rich cinematic typology of the modern city street. This is not surprising. As a spatial medium, with a long history of "picturing the modern city," the cinema remains one of the most important modern archives for depictions of city life. Yet which way does this history proceed: does it move inward from the city to the reflective surface of the cinema screen? Or does it cascade outward into the streets, reconfiguring the city through a glow of cinematic illuminations? These are, of course, complex questions without any straightforward answers. However, since the emergence of cultural studies they are the type of questions that have prompted

numerous replies, providing what has become by now a rich theoretical tradition in the city-cinema nexus. Indeed, from earlier studies on classical cinema's jubilant representation of the modern city to recent works on the cinema's global impact on the urban environment - through its Cineplexes, film festivals and location shootings - the cinema's common fate with the city seems to only grow stronger with time, proving that the city-cinema relation is perhaps here to stay.

Yet, while there are by now many approaches to choose from, the city-cinema relationship which appeals to me can be found in a quote by Jean Baudrillard. Observing the spectacular and eminently cinematic nature of American cities Baudrillard writes: "The American city seems to have stepped right out of the movies...to grasp its secret, then, you should not begin with the city and move outwards towards the screen; you should begin with the screen and move outwards towards the city."ⁱ Heeding Baudrillard's advice, in this paper I will explore how the cinema furnishes the city with a repertoire of cultural imaginaries, which help construct, map and conceptualize the urban environment. Specifically, I will focus on a recent phenomenon in urban studies, wherein the utopian desire to privatize space threatens the democratic potential commonly associated with modern cities. From private enclaves, pre-planned, gated communities and shopping malls, there is a growing trend in urban design today towards the creation of "privatopias," self-enclosed private spaces that are designed to blanket people from a city perceived to be highly dangerous.

According to Mike Davis, while this trend in "fortress cities" can be found flourishing throughout the post-industrial world, with the "good city" being defined by one's access to the most advanced surveillance technologies, contemporary urban theory has failed to grasp the impact privatopias have on the public sphere.ⁱⁱ However, one area where Davis sees an abundance of constructive work is within the creative arts, especially cinema and literature. Indeed, acutely aware of the role the arts play in mythologizing the city, Davis has even declared the cinema the medium *par excellence* for elucidating the dystopian characteristics of contemporary cities.ⁱⁱⁱ

To validate Davis' claim, what follows is an interdisciplinary analysis that juxtaposes one of cinema's most overlooked urban dystopic films - Jean Luc Godard's strange, futuristic film *Alphaville* - with a specific example of the privatopia phenomena: the gated community of Alphaville in Brazil. Of course, what brings together these two objects of study is not merely an uncanny coincidence of names. Instead, their placement will be explored in two ways. First, I will look at how each city mirrors the other, describing the common mould that aligns both in a dystopic portrayal of urban life. Second, while the cinema can be beneficially understood as a window onto the collective unconscious, bringing to the surface the desires and habits of a specific time and place, this does not mean that the city and the screen always form an interchangeable whole. Rather, what will also be examined are the gaps that form between both cities, the historical incongruities which allow us to reflect upon how urban life has changed over time.

Alphaville - City of the Future Now

In Robert Majzel's novel *City of Forgetting* Montreal is the setting for a satirical critique of man's hopelessly misaligned utopian projects.^{iv} Amongst the novel's stellar assemblage of bygone heroes- which sees notable characters such as Lady Macbeth, Che Guevara and de Maisonneuve recast as the city's homeless - perhaps the most

relevant city figure is Le Corbusier. As the leader of the International Style, whose motto "a house is a machine for living" combined technological innovation with architectural efficiency to reach a total rationalization of the built environment, Le Corbusier's appearance in Majzel's novel as a blabbering, obsessive-compulsive fool is rather interesting. Is Majzel suggesting that Le Corbusier's reign of geometrical terror has finally subsided? Are we fortunately living in a post-Corbusierian phase of architecture?

While this interpretation resounds with Majzel's overall critique, it is a view that should not be taken lightly. For while numerous critics have noted the fatal flaws of Le Corbusier's grand projects, especially his objectified treatment of the city and its inhabitants, in a way his legacy lives on. We may not live amongst modernism's mass-oriented, totalizing public projects, but a similar calculating and functionalistic rationale still abounds in today's postmodern landscape; no longer the monolithic, concrete slabs of modernity, today's subtle, high-tech, parodic designs remain nonetheless just as brutalizing in their ability to polarize the urban population, shrewdly separating a highly affluent private sphere from the dregs of a vanishing public.

Appearing nearly 40 years before Majzel's postmodern novel, Godard's (postmodern?) critique of modern architecture and the rationalization of the urban environment in *Alphaville* offers a much more complex confrontation with the symbolic figure of Le Corbusier. Indeed, relying on pop art, especially a comic-book style to prognosticate the urban ills of modern Paris, Godard's "indirect" reference to Le Corbusier leaves the spectator with a far more ambivalent reading of the modern city. Is Godard's portrayal of Alphaville as a technocratic city completely governed by a centralized computer to be taken seriously? Or is *Alphaville* Godard's parodic study of the science fiction genre, especially the American tale of man's heroic triumph over machines?

Perhaps the answer involves both. Reworking the dystopian genre through the tenets of the *new wave*, Godard's minimalistic portrait of the evils associated with modern technocracies still, no doubt, offers pertinent insights into the workings of the modern cityscape. For Chris Drake, Godard's explicit use of contemporary Paris as the setting for a nightmarish future forms a common thematic thread, linking *Alphaville* to other of Godard's films that directly explore the city's colonization by the dual forces of late capitalism and modern design.^v As such, *Alphaville* belongs to a series of spatial experiments with Paris, as Godard transforms the city into his cinematic playground, using a ground-level perspective to diagnosis modernity's rupture into alienation and fragmentation.

In *A Married Woman*, for example, Godard's sociological film about a middle class, married couple who move into a new apartment block on the fringes of Paris, the city's unabashed compliance with a capitalistic world of advertising is shown to have a detrimental effect on women's images of their bodies and sexuality. Likewise, in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, Godard continues his exploration of the gendered nature of urban spaces, showing how working class women are reduced to the prison of the home, disconnected from others and unable to gain any social or physical mobility. Thus, whether focusing on the material woes of the working classes or the bourgeoisie, Godard's message seems to be the same: wherever capitalism acts as the principal producer of urban space, alienation, tension and intimacy problems are bound to follow.

Yet, if in films such as *A Married Woman* Godard paints a dismal portrait of the contemporary city, in *Alphaville* Godard's diagnostic skills follow a more contorted and complex temporality: the Paris of the present is excavated through an image of Paris in the future. In other words, the dystopian future of the city is already with us. While most dystopian narratives follow this general rubric, wherein the creation of a futuristic world is designed to critique the present, through the principles of the *new wave* Godard transforms this pattern into a unique cinematic form.

At the centre of this style is a mixture of genres. For example, whereas the futuristic tradition of science fiction usually involves some high-tech world, in which the latest special effects are used to create a world of advanced space travel or robotic inhabitants, Godard's technocratic future is surprisingly quotidian, as modern Paris is used to stand-in for its futuristic other. Subsequently, instead of the dazzling sets of many science fiction films, Godard relies on Paris' most modern buildings at the time— such as the Masion de l'ORTF, the ESSO building and the newly designed business district — to present an architectural image of the future Now.^{vi} The advantage in using this procedure resides in Godard's ability to shock the everyday world, showing how our seemingly benign architectural achievements can become, under a different light, the roots of a far greater evil.

Filmed in the architectural present, *Alphaville* however still borrows from the futuristic tradition, especially its portrayal of modern technology. This is evidenced through Alpha 60, a central computer intelligence, which is not only ubiquitous (the gargled computer voice sees and hears everything) but is a tyrannical dictator, who uses advanced computer programs to govern the city's inhabitants. Of course, with the inauguration of the electronic and the information ages, which have transformed information technologies into an everyday urban commodity, Godard's depiction of a city totally managed by technological systems remains quite familiar. Yet, if in *Alphaville* the present and the future form a single temporal line dedicated to technocratic rationality, by today's standards Godard's solution seems overtly romantic.

Enter *Alphaville*'s central protagonist and post-noir hero of the future: Lemmy Caution. Fueled by an odd combination of obscure French poetry, violence, cigarettes and a love of American cars (Lemmy's side-kick is a Ford Galaxie), Lemmy Caution is *Alphaville*'s post-apocalyptic savior, whose no-nonsense, anti-technological sentiments form Godard's perfect weapon against Alpha 60's disdain for the irrational. Disguised as a reporter, who has travelled from the "Lands Without" to cover a festival, the spectator immediately learns of Lemmy's real agenda: in order to cleanse the city of its supra-rationality Lemmy must destroy Alpha 60. However, this will be no easy matter. As a truly outlandish city, whose motto "Alphaville: Silence - Logic -Safety - Prudence," has produced a monolithic place where freedom is non-existent, people are executed for crying, death is forbidden and non-rational words are regularly destroyed from the city's Dictionary-Bible, *Alphaville* seems beyond recovery. Indeed, when Lemmy finally destroys Alpha 60 and flees with his love interest Natasha, the only option remaining for the inhabitants of *Alphaville* is a post-modern biblical scourge — as Lemmy rides off into the sunset, *Alphaville* collapses in the background, crumbling under the threat of a power shortage.

With Godard's sanitized depiction of *Alphaville* as a florescent hell populated by passionless drones, it may come as an unpleasant surprise to learn that a development agency in Brazil decided to use the name *Alphaville* for its first pre-

planned community. Whether the *Economist's*^{vii} claim that the name was directly inspired by Godard's film is true or not is perhaps beside the point. For upon closer inspection what one discovers is a cinematic city sharing an uncanny resemblance to its geographic double. Put briefly, what the two Alphaville's share is an uncompromising marriage of private security with the latest advanced technologies. For just as Godard's inhabitants take refuge in a technocratic regime, where each future decision arrives by the mere pushing of a button, the citizens of the "real" Alphaville find solace from an urban reality ravished in violence and crime in a gated community protected by the most sophisticated surveillance technologies.

As one of Brazil's first gated communities, Alphaville has come to represent one of the country's most reoccurring urban models, offering security to those elite few that can afford a sheltered life outside the chaos and social ills of the contemporary Brazilian city. In her book *City of Walls Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*,^{viii} Teresa Caldeira, for example, provides a bleak and gripping look at the politics of fear facing cities like São Paulo, where the coupling of escalating rates of violent crime with a thirst for private vengeance has led to numerous citizen abuses. While the most disturbing response to this turbulent condition involves the hiring of trained assassins, who are paid to "clean up" the city's notorious slums, perhaps the most ingenious reaction entails the development of private enclaves, which allow the city to be cleansed of any unruly, public behavior. For Caldeira this has had a devastating effect on the public sphere, as the city street - that most idealistic place for the interaction of different social classes - has been vacated, left abandoned to a city all too reminiscent of a noir film plagued by crime.

Too Close for Comfort: Alphaville and the Double City

As it has become clear, Alphaville is a city of doubles. On the one hand, two cities - one cinematic the other geographic - overlap and even converge in an alliance of dystopic constellations. On the other hand, each city is itself split, divided and doubled into two separate urban zones. In Godard's city the social consists of an ideological battle between the rational and the irrational, between the poetics of facing the unknown and a cold calculus of predictability. In the Brazilian version, a similar boundary exists: between the walls of the private enclave and a public sphere plagued by fear, violence and crime resides a stark fissure of social injustice. Yet both cities are not mirrors of each other. For instance, how can we reconcile Alpha 60's claim (Godard's?) that both capitalism and communism are united in their desire to pre-plan all human actions, with a late capitalistic reality that prefers the exclusionary ideals of privatization over the democracy of the public sphere. Or is Godard's highly modern answer to the problems of technocratic rationality applicable to the so-called post-modern crisis in the public? That is, can a public romantically defined in terms of insecurity, the unknown, even the dangerous provide reassurance to a disenfranchised majority that already occupy positions of vulnerability. To explore these issues, in the following sections I will focus on two areas that bring out both the similarities and the differences between both cities. First, I will explore the role light plays in the constitution of the safe, modern city. Second, I will map the utopian significance of circular enclosures as both spatial and temporal modes of urban design.

And Let There Be Light...Illuminating the Dark Spaces of the City

That the modern city remains inseparable from the emergence of electric light seems almost trivial. Travelling into the city from the dark spaces of the rural village what transfixes the eye is not only the magnitude of its built structures, but the immense glow of the city's surrounding immateriality. As Peter Greenaway writes: the "passion for architectural space cannot be dissociated from passions for light."^{ix} Yet, from the perspective of one about to enter this fervent space, what was designed to cast an immaculate light onto the dirty and dank city can ironically seem like a voyage into an electric hell. Indeed, if the hyper-glow of cities like Las Vegas or Los Angeles offers a glimpse into the future of cities, Greenway's passion may too easily slip into a blinding, fanatical obsession.

If the city of the future then finds reality caught in a rapture of blinding, ecstatic light – from the virtual lights of the terminal screen to the traditional neon glow of consumer advertisements – in *Alphaville* Godard takes us light years in another direction. Unlike previous works in which neon advertisements signaled capitalism's siege over the city, in *Alphaville* the urban world remains free of any shimmering logos or utopian advertisements. Rather, Tokyo, Paris and New York – those international cities of neon blitz – are acutely absent, bygone cities of another time and place. Instead, what we find in *Alphaville* are two diametrically opposed figures of light: there are the ubiquitous fluorescent lights of a modern, technocratic world-order and there is the ambient, "primitive" light of Lemmy Caution.

To gauge the significance of these oppositional fields of light we can look to James Donald's reading of the modern city in his essay "The City, The Cinema: Modern Spaces."^x According to Donald, the modern city can be understood as an antagonistic relationship between a transparent city, which is ordered, managed and cleansed through a panoptic system of Light, and a city that recoils into a vast labyrinth of untraceable streets, a noir city that hides in the shadows, reveling in the ambiguity of chance. As an emblem of the omnipresent modern office building, Godard's use of stark, florescent lights clearly evokes this myth of total light. Set mainly in various "placeless" modern offices, where cold, austere lights illuminate the city with a penetrating immensity, Godard's future attests to the controlling influence light has on the modern city. This is reinforced further by Godard's visual presentation of Alpha 60 as a supra-rational florescent light bulb. Indeed, pulsating on and off, with the binary pulse of a computational life-force, Alpha 60 not only represents the city's *exterior* reliance on orderly systems of light, but is the embodiment of a new *invisible* regime, as the city's entire managerial system is reduced to a series of codes travelling at the speed of light.

Opposed to *Alphaville*'s rationalistic transparency (perfectly captured by Alpha 60's ability to see behind all the building's closed doors) is the neo-noir fire of Lemmy Caution. Kaja Silverman calls this fire Lemmy's primitive light,^{xi} an illuminating power exemplified through Lemmy's alter ego as the French Marlboro Man. In the film's opening scene, for example, Lemmy is found behind the wheel of his Ford Galaxie lighting a cigarette. Since Godard shoots the scene in naturalistic lighting, the frame remains mostly in darkness, forcing the spectator to protrude unknowingly into the night. For Godard this primitive light represents the poetics of mystery. Like the city's rebels, who have cast themselves outside the beacons of fluorescent light,

Lemmy's romanticism exemplifies an inner light of conscience - a creative light which relishes, not in the certainty of knowledge, but in the uncertainty of the unknown. Thus, opposed to the all-pervasive light that blankets Alphaville, Lemmy's primitive flames attests to the need for ambient spaces, regions of insecurity, where light, struggling to illuminate the present, can barely cast a beacon into the future.

If under the modern panoptic, artificial light represents a new electronic sun, which shines down on the city, preparing a panoramic view on the city's chaos, in today's privatopias light takes on a new meaning. Indeed, exploring a series of urban themes strongly reminiscent of Mike Davis' excavation of the fortress city in Los Angeles,^{xii} the city Caldeira describes no longer falls under the Concept City Donald equates with modernity. Rather, contra the totaling gaze represented by Alpha 60, in cities like São Paulo light becomes both immensely fragmented and terribly hidden. It is fragmented in the sense that the whole city no longer falls under state or municipal regimes of public surveillance or control. Instead, provision of security is allocated to private surveillance companies that provide *pockets of light* to the privileged, leaving the rest of the city to inhabit a large void of city darkness. This is clearly witnessed by the inhabitants of Alphaville, where security is an entitlement arising not from public authorities, but is purely a condition of access to the right real-estate markets. Likewise, with the increase in private, fortified enclaves there seems to be very little desire to remedy this situation within the terms of social justice, which would make security a public matter offered to all citizens.

Second, light is subtle or hidden in the sense that the quotidian technologies of surveillance under the panoptic have become dispersed into various high-tech systems of deterrence. While the presence of city walls certainly embody a traditional means of demarcating between the protected and the "dangerous others," in places like Alphaville there exist a whole assortment of new defense mechanisms: hidden security cameras, private, unmarked security guards, access codes, bullet proof cars, electric fences, privileged modes of transportation (Alphaville features 4 helicopter pads) - these are post-modernity's new beacons of light, a highly fortified, militant system of order and surveillance, which ruthlessly protects only those belonging to the new elitist tribe.

Circles of Enclosure: Going Behind the Utopian Wall

According to David Harvey the tradition of utopian thought can be bracketed into two categorical types: there are spatial utopias, such as the island-bound community in Moore's *Utopia*, and there are temporal utopias, such as Hegel's dialectical march towards the future.^{xiii} In *Alphaville*, Godard condenses both types in the figure of the circle. As a design trope, epitomized in Alpha 60's appearance as a round probing light, the circle represents the powers of reason, a closed circuit security system, in which the outside is tyrannically expunged from the space-time of the city. As a figure of time, the circle represents the pure present, a temporal enclosure which disavows the uncertainty of either the past or the future. Indeed, rejecting the sting associated with time's arrow, the definition of time reached by Alpha 60 is far more stable and entropic: "no one has lived in the past and no one will live in the future; there is nothing but the present." While this philosophical meaning of time may seem like mere abstraction, for the technocratic rulers of the city, it bears a far more pragmatic reality. That is, the rarified present is the scientist's looking glass into the future. For by reducing the complexity of time to a series of calculable equations,

wherein the future is always given in advance, what the present provides is a spinning wheel of endless predictability. A future city spawns from present and remains there in an uncanny case of immobile mobility.

When we think of the actual design of the built environment rarely do we conjure up images of time and narrative. Yet as the cycles of violence affecting cities like São Paulo indicate, narratives of the city - from its glory days to its present crisis - provide citizens with ways of organizing a range of complex experiences, emotions and ideas. In São Paulo, as Caldeira's study demonstrates, this city narrative often rests on simple tales of violence, wherein complex histories involving immigration, social groups and class tensions are reduced to a mythic before/after narrative system:^{xiv} in the past the city was beautiful, clean and the streets filled with happy citizens and now, after a stream of immigration, the city has been besieged by bandits and the streets transformed into a combat zone.

While Caldeira demonstrates the binary, linear ways in which narratives of violence are arranged, she does not analyze how the growth of privatopias figure within this trajectory. Once included within this story line, what the resort to private security systems creates, I believe, is a circular temporality similar to that of Godard's Alphaville. For just as the circle returns to the same starting destination, the hope placed in the private enclave represents a return to the city's lost innocence. Of course, as we will see, such a simplistic narrative arrangement betrays the complex ways in which this temporality reconfigures the city. This brings us to the spatial component of the utopian imaginary.

Just as the circle represents a recursive temporality, it can also act as a spatial enclosure. Indeed, from city walls, island cities, and castle moots, circular enclosures play an important part in the utopian imaginary, offering protective sanctuaries from the threats of an uncontrollable outside. While it is not evident if Alphaville forms a purely circular design, Alpha 60's celebration of the circle throughout the film can be understood as a valorization of systems of enclosure. Examples of this preference for isolation abound in the film. However, two of the most evident examples include Alphaville's suburban isolation from the Lands Without and the spatial boundaries separating the rational inhabitants from the irrational outcasts. In both cases the desire is the same: by policing the city's boundaries and reducing the population to a homogeneous mass, Alpha 60 can maintain control over all that remains within its system of enclosure.

Like Godard's exploration of the suburbanization of Paris, in the Brazilian example systems of enclosure also form a prominent feature of the privatopia. This is evidenced in the Brazilian real-estate market, where cheap land has been transformed into various exclusionary planned communities. As mentioned earlier, at the heart of Alphaville's design are various private surveillance measures, which surround the community and form an economic and social borderline, separating a homogenous class of elites from an outside world perceived to be highly menacing. Indeed, protection forms such a ubiquitous feature of the environment that Alphaville at times appears more like a military bunker than a luxury community. One feature of this security bubble which goes a long way in demonstrating the sophisticated mechanisms required to police the community's borders is a 24 hour closed-circuit surveillance system, in which citizens can watch from the privacy of their homes everyone who passes through the city's gates. Yet, while this trend in self-surveillance may leave its inhabitants with the comfort of knowing whose crosses over

into utopian territory, for the thousands of lower class workers, who supply cheap labor for the rich, it is a security feature abounding in humiliation. Forced to submit to a daily ritual of frisking and searches, for those on the other side of the fortress the reality of Big Brother unfortunately entails the much more traditional image of brutalizing control.

If both Alphavilles share in an exclusionary utilization of enclosures, their specific geo-political contexts have changed considerably. Whereas Godard's critique of suburbanization involves the evacuation of the "healthy" city centre, as the periphery becomes a haven for experiments in modern design, in the Brazilian context the periphery maintains a much more complicated nature. First, like the former, the price of security for many Brazilians involves relocating to the periphery. However, whereas in western versions of the suburbanization process, especially in America, the periphery is the privileged site for the affluent or middle classes, in Brazil the city's outer regions have been historically the prime site for the working classes and its notorious slums. Since land is cheapest in these areas, however, nearby regions have become prime locations for the development of affluent pre-planned communities. According to Caldeira, this has led to a strange spatial pattern, wherein luxury enclaves are now built alongside the city's slums. Thus, rather than owning a rare glimpse of some picturesque scene, for many elite residents the view from the top literally involves a breath-taking look at the city's poor.

Yet, despite the spatial proximity between rich and poor, unbridgeable gaps exist between both worlds. On the one hand, this gap is a direct result of the static security measures that surround the private enclaves. Yet, on another hand, security is equally provided through momentum: as in Godard's suburban world where the automobile reigns, in places like Alphaville modes of transport act as mobile extensions of the utopian dream. For some this entails flying high over the dark city in helicopters; for others it involves relying on the traditional automobile. Either way, what is unquestionable about these methods of transportation is their utilization as forms of exclusivity, security and deterrence. Since many planned communities are built in areas that require access to an automobile, and even sidewalks are non-existent, the spatial proximity between both worlds matters little if even these short distances are impossible to cross.

Conclusion:

Over the past two decades explorations of the cinema's intimate bond with the city have prospered from an eclectic methodology, as the fields of urban theory, sociology, film theory and aesthetics have joined together to tackle the plurality inherent in both objects of study. However, with the exception of a few recycled films, such as *Blade Runner* or Spielberg's **batteries not included*, there has been very little attention paid to the decline in public space and the ensuing trend in privatopias. This is unfortunate, since not only is this a pertinent issue that as Davis argues requires more critical tools, but as a distinctly spatial medium with a history of utopian and dystopian narratives, the cinema offers a unique perspective on the city, especially its idealized role in producing the good place. As I have attempted to show, the genre of science fiction offers one way in which this question of urban space can be explored. However, the dystopic tradition need not be the only way of exploring the ill effects the process of privatization has on the public sphere. What about the recent trend in "shopping malls films" – such as *Waydowntown*, *Clerks*, *Mallrats* and

subUrbia – which describe the shopping complex's role in bringing leisure activities within the sphere of private regulation. Or there is Peter Weir's brilliant study of New Urbanism in his hilarious film *The Truman Show*. Thus, while the trend in cinema-city studies over the past few years may have seemed to run out of steam, what these examples hopefully suggest is that the prolific relationship between the city and the screen is far from over.

Notes:

ⁱ Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 56.

ⁱⁱ Mike Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space," in Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), pp. 154.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

^{iv} Robert Majzel, *City of Forgetting* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997).

^v Chris Drake, *Alphaville* (New York: I. B.Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2005), pp. 23-27.

^{vi} *Ibid.*,

^{vii} *Economist*, Aug. 16, 2001.

^{viii} Teresa P. R. Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000). Throughout this essay my discussion of Brazilian cities, especially São Paulo and the nearby town of Alphaville will be based solely on a reading of Caldeira's excellent study of urban crime.

^{ix} Quoted in Patricia Kruth, "The Color of New York: Places and Spaces in the Films of Martin Scorsese and Woody Allen," in Francois Penz and Maureen Thomas, ed., *Cinema and Architecture: Mèliès, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), pp. 73.

^x James Donald, "The City, the Cinema: Modern Spaces," in Charles Jencks, ed., *Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 77-95.

^{xi} Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking about Godard* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

^{xii} Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990).

^{xiii} David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

^{xiv} See particularly Chapter 1.