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LIVING IN THE MARGINAL IN-BETWEEN: A STUDY ON THE MULTIPLICITY OF SPATIALITY IN *STONE BUTCH BLUES*

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Set in the geographical context of Buffalo and New York City in the 1960s and 1970s, Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* narrates the un-homed life from childhood to late adulthood of working-class Jewish transgender lesbian Jess Goldberg as she struggles to survive her socially transgressive body. Facing quotidian instances of bigotry, class prejudice, loneliness and searching for a home in her own body, Jess tries to create her identity and survive through marginalized community-formation spaces in Buffalo. Framing this analysis in the notion of the social dimension of space theorized by Henri Lefebvre (1991), Michel De Certeau (1984), Doreen Massey (2005) and Manzanas and Benito (2011, 2014), this article aims to explore the spatiality of the house and the city as environments capable to shape the lives of the subjects that inhabit them. It intends to do so by analysing the spatial perspective of the novel and how these multiple spaces shape the identity of the socially transgressive protagonist, whose body is analysed as the ground zero of spatiality.

Keywords: spatial studies; *Stone Butch Blues*; Leslie Feinberg; heterotopias; American autobiography; identity.

1. Introduction

Drawing from the spatial turn theorization of space as not simply a place we inhabit but rather, "a social morphology", as Henri Lefebvre theorized in *The Production of Space*, this paper aims to illustrate how public and private spaces constitute this "social morphology" and thus shape the lived experiences and subjectivities of transgender and queer individuals (1991, 93). This paper argues that Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) serve as an example of such notion, as it explores how public and private spaces intertwine in order to create the protagonist's transgender subjectivity.

As space is not neutral nor passive, but rather constantly being shaped by "lived experiences" that are "just as intimately bound up with function and structure" (1991, 94), such notion can be connected to Michel De Certeau's claim in *The Practice of Everyday Life* that "space is a practiced place" (1984, 118). Other space theorists, such as Doreen Massey, develop this notion by emphasizing the role of those "lived experiences" of space and their subversive possibilities. In *For Space* Massey states her aim "to uproot 'space' from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness . . . liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape" (2005, 13).

Within this theoretical framework, this article shares the premise that space is tantamount to those lived experiences that the subject undergoes in the spaces they inhabit. Such spaces create their identity, hence highlighting the dynamic notion of space and its subversive potential to be navigated and evaluated as an identity-creation tool, especially for marginalized subjects. Thus, this paper aims to explain this social perspective of space, which is always "under construction, […] in the process of being made", thus

representing a "simultaneity of stories-so-far", as Massey further illustrates (2005, 14).

It intends to achieve so by analysing the spaces that the protagonist of the American semi-autobiographical novel *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) navigates, or more importantly, is not able to navigate, due to her identity. Since its publication in 1993, scholars have found it rather difficult to define Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (Prosser 1995, Moses 2000, Hogan 2004, Noble 2004, Stafford 2012). Written from the perspective of working-class transgender butch lesbian Jess Goldberg in the last half of the 20th century in the urban Northeast,[1] the novel depicts her daily life struggles as she embodies different marginalized identities. She begins living as a "she-he", later passes as a man and ultimately chooses a life across and in-between genders as neither male nor female. Thus, a discernible hypothesis is to either assume the work's full fictional status as one of the first transgender works of fiction or categorize it as the first American transgender autobiography (Weaver 2014, Moses 2000). Concerning the status of the work, Feinberg herself writes**:** "It is fiction? I am frequently asked. It is true? It is real? Oh, it's real all right. So real it bleeds. And yet it is a remembrance: Never underestimate the power of fiction to tell the truth" (Feinberg 2003, afterword). As Stafford notes, by framing this semi-autobiographical style as "the vantage point of nonfiction and its reflection in the mercury of fiction", Feinberg reimagines autobiographies as a way of recording memory, describing the book as a "a bridge of memory" (ibid.) (2012, 31).

Thus, it could be argued that the novel fits what James Craig describes as the American autobiography, as it follows what he calls "the American question" or the "question of the self", arguing that American writers' introspection and their own lives become the primary source of value and meaning (1982, 25). Feinberg describes the novel as a "bridge of memory" which embodies her own

[1] Gayle Rubin explains that "butch" refers to those lesbian individuals who are "more comfortable with masculine gender codes, styles or identities than feminine ones" (467).

experiences as a working-class transgender butch. The semi-autobiographical aspect of the novel emphasizes the need for theory to be connected with lived experiences. I contend that this focus is clear as Feinberg expresses the highly political content of her novel, as she writes that it is not just a "working-class' novel—it is a novel that embodies class struggle" (1993, 416). This notion is clear in her description of the novel as a "call for action" inspired by her frustration with 1990s gender theory:

> it was mostly so abstracted from [human] experience that it lacked meaning for me. I wanted to write about trans characters, and how their lives were intersected by race, class, and desire. I wanted to write the kind of gender theory that *we all live*. (Feinberg, qt. in Rand 2012, 40, italics added)

Given Feinberg's emphasis on phenomenology or the living experiences of the individual, it is my contention that such living experiences are intricately related to notions of space. As Lefebvre argued for space to be reinterpreted by lived experiences, Massey called for a reconsideration of space in terms of "liveness" that would allow for space to be reconsidered "in a more challenge political landscape" (2005, 13).

2. From the ground zero of spatiality: "There was no place outside of me where I belonged"

From its conceptual beginning in the 1960s, Robert T. Tally Jr. describes the spatial turn as "the increased attention to matters of space, place and mapping in literary and cultural studies, as well as in social theory, philosophy, and other disciplinary fields (2013, 159). This spatial turn has evolved through the years—from the macro-level analysis of space and place to a narrower focus on the body as a spatial being. As geographer Edward Soja explains, there has been a "revived interest in the body as the most intimate of personal and political space" (1989, 111). He further defines the body as "an effective microcosm for all spatialities", thus emphasizing its condition as a spatial being (1989, 112). Edward Casey pays close attention to an analysis of the body in *Fate of Place* (1998). His theory is illustrated through an examination of the

approach to the body by philosopher Edmund Husserl. For the latter, the body becomes "the center of things", the "I-myself" or the "I-center" (Casey 1998, 220). Thus, this section aims to examine Jess' body as the "ground zero of spatiality" and as a spatial dimension which becomes the origin and centre of meaning.

The first focus of the narrative on the spatiality of the body can be seen early in Jess's life. After the epistolary first chapter in which Jess frames the setting of the story, the second chapter starts with the statement of her earliest childhood memory: "I didn't want to be different". Her narration continues by explaining how her childhood and the misfortunes that would follow were stirred by the question: "Is that a boy or a girl?" (1993, 28). As her body occupied a "gender borderland", as Jay Prosser would put it, the writer narrates: "The world judged me harshly and so I moved, or was pushed, toward solitude" (1993, 34). If the body becomes a "a site of signification—the place for the inscription of stories—and itself a signifier" as Peter Brooks explains, then it can also become a site of oppression and violence for those occupying the margins (1993, 5-6). As Adrienne Rich illustrates , the body becomes "the geography closest in" (1979-1986, 212)

As Foucault illustrates, the body becomes the "inscribed surface of events" which is shaped by "a great many distinct regimes" (1977, 148). Thus, it becomes "the ultimate material which is seized upon and shaped by all political, economic and penal institutions", as "systems of production, domination and socialisation fundamentally depend on the successful subjugation of bodies" (1977, 87). This can be seen in Jess's narration, as her body is subjugated by everyone around her for not committing to the expected gender norms of the hegemonic culture. Barbara Hooper demonstrates how when borders are either crossed, disturbed, or contested, hegemonic power will immediately act to reinforce them, as they are "vigorously disciplined" (1994, 113). By disturbing the boundaries of gender and sex, Jess's body embodies this counterculture and becomes the Other . Consequently, she will be "disciplined" in an attempt to conform to those norms (1994, 115). Thus, the narrative sheds light on Soja's approach to the body as "the most critical site to watch the production and reproduction of power" (1989, 114).

This production and reproduction of power by the hegemonic culture on the body will become the most recurrent act of violence during Jess's life. Her outlawed gender position as a "he-she" can be seen as an evolution from the childhood question of "Is that a boy or a girl?", which positions her at the boundary between sexes. As Moses explains, the narrative follows her struggle for acceptance in that socially transgressive position, as she inhabits "the space between the rigid cultural definition of maleness and femaleness" (2000, 27). I suggest that this liminal position can be applied to her body, which she attempts to alter in order to create her own centre of meaning.

However, as children are considered the most vulnerable citizens, her first attempt to cross the boundary of sex by trying on her father's suit is traumatically disciplined. Jess is forcefully sent to a psychiatric institution and her body is inflicted with the hegemonic violence. The psych ward becomes a "No Man's Land", in which her position as a child who crossed the boundaries of sex marks her as the most vulnerable but also the most disgusting patient to her caretakers. This notion can be further explained by following Julia Kristeva's theoretical approach of the "abject". According to Kristeva, the abject's only feature is being opposed to the "I", that part of us we reject and fear (1982, 1). This notion parallels that of the Other, as the Other cannot be constructed without the hegemonic subject to oppose it. Thus, Kristeva elaborates that it is not the dirtiness of the abstract which disturbs the system, but its status as "the in-between, the ambiguous [and] the composite". This perception can also be connected with Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization of the grotesque body. As he defines it "[the] body in the act of becoming […] never finished, never completed: it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body (1984, 317). Thus, as Jess has not respected the borders, positions and rules of the hegemonic culture, she has become the ambiguous in-between abject, the grotesque body in the act of becoming. By "transgressing her body", as Bakhtin would put it, her body becomes a threat to the nation-state and is consequently punished.

After these attempts to discipline her, Jess begins to understand her situation as the abject who will be constantly and

brutally punished for her transgression. As she claims: "I realized that the world could do more than just judge me, it wielded tremendous power over me" (1993, 18). As Moses observes, Jess realizes that rather than there being something wrong with her, the problem lies with the dominant culture. The reader makes the connection between the abject body being punished and hegemonic violence (2000, 125). However, as she comes of age, amidst continual police brutality, social displacement and verbal abuse, Moses argues that Jess learns to see her body "as a battleground" (2000, 131). Marc Augé's theorization of the body in relation to the nation state can illustrate this notion as well:

> This magic effect of spatial construction can be attributed without hesitation to the fact that the human body itself is perceived as a portion of space with frontiers and vital centres, defences and weaknesses, armour and defects. At least on the level of the imagination [. . .] the body is a composite and hierarchized space which can be invaded from the outside. (1992, 60)

As a "battleground" that can be "invaded from the outside", Jess's body embodies both ideas. By understanding the body as a site of oppression, the abject is able to make its body become a site of potential resistance and contestation. To maintain this assumption, I follow Kristeva's theorization that the abject "neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them" (1982, 15).

In an autobiographical segment of Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors*, she writes how during the McCarthy era, three pieces of gender-specific clothing laws were brutally enforced to discipline those who attempted not to follow gender norms. As she explains, those laws were not merely about clothing, but about harassing "gender outlaw" individuals (1996, 8). However, as the novel demonstrates, drag queens and butches did not follow the law and attempted to "take advantage of it", as Kristeva would put it. As Feinberg narrates, during police raids lesbians and drag queens would swap partners in order to fool the cops into thinking they were performing the regime of heterosexuality (1996, 3). In this rebellious act of breaking the laws and attempting to mislead the police, Jess and the rest of the abject bodies are able to reappropriate

authoritarian spaces. Thus, the narrative emphasizes the role of the marginalized body in reappropriating and reshaping space. As Feinberg illustrates, it is through her body and the violence inflicted upon it that she was able to embark on a journey to find the answers to why those laws were made against them and how to resist them (1996, 9).

However, after the Vietnam War and cultural shifts in the 1970s, re-appropriated spaces such as gay bars are forced to close down. The fact that men returned from the war also meant that Jess and the rest of the butches were unable to find jobs and support themselves anymore. When police violence turned unbearable as a countermeasure against civil rights movements, Jess was left with the only option of passing as a man. Many scholars (Prosser 1995, Jason 2013) have interpreted this act as an act of "coming home to one's body", as Jess takes testosterone and views her mastectomy as "a gift to myself, a coming home to my body" (1993, 243). However, as the narrative proves, even if Jess wins safety and employability as a man, she also loses her history as a he-she:

> But very quickly I discovered that passing didn't just mean slipping below the surface, it meant being buried alive. I was still me on the inside, trapped in there with all my wounds and fears. But I was no longer me on the outside. (1993, 186)

Her words correspond with the notion that her body is the centre of meaning and the bearer/inscription of stories: the butch and working-class struggle stories. Her body still carries all her "wounds and fears", but her outside is a "man without a past". By being "buried alive", Jess discovers her body as the centre of meaning, as she explains there was "no place outside of me where I belonged" (1993, 227). She narrates how the loneliness from passing became "the spatial dimension in which [she] was trapped". Her body becomes her "I-center", by which she "never stopped looking at the world through [her] own eyes" (1993, 241). This realization leads her to understand that she has become "neither" a man nor a woman and that she is not herself being either of those. Thus, she stops taking hormones and as her body becomes a spatial being between male and female, she aims to reaffirm it as a site of resistance once again.

As the body becomes a site of oppression and violence in which the subject feels trapped by this hegemonic violence, Jess's embodied acts of resistance culminate in the recovery of her socially transgressive body. Thus, *Stone Butch Blues* demonstrates how the body can subvert its condition and create its own agency by reclaiming the spaces it occupies. Moses reconsiders Foucault's notion of power and resistance as she writes: "Where there is power there is resistance". Thus, the body can be considered a centre of oppression that also functions as a site of resistance (2000, 155). By understanding the body as a spatial being and as a centre of meaning which can repossess spaces, it becomes a site of resistance through which the marginalized subject is able to recover their silenced history

3. Home space: Imaginative Power/Creation of one's home

If bodies can become spatial entities and centres of meaning, then it could be suggested that the most intimate place that bodies occupy is another major centre of meaning. As Bachelard contends in the epigraph, the house becomes the "topography" of our intimate bodies. Following Bachelard's meditations on the topology of space, this section aims to explore the spaces that Jess dwells in in order to shape and create her identity. However, it also aims to contest several of Bachelard's ideas, as he purposely overlooks the "hostile" spaces of the house in order to focus only on what he describes as the "felicitous space" of the house (1994, xxxvi). I argue that in order to understand the "felicitous" state of owning a house, it is crucial to also pay attention to the hostile spaces that one traverses without a home.

Bachelard's home poetics is based on his integral argument of the house as the place that allows "daydreaming". The house is interpreted as a shelter that allows those who inhabit it to dream "in peace" (1994, 13). Thus, this would indicate the possibility of the creation of identity and meaning through this safe space. Bachelard further contemplates that it is the childhood home that starts this process and the place where the individual "shall find repose in the past" (1994, 14). I would like to propose that Bachelard's perception

of the childhood home overlooks the possibility of Feinberg's reconsideration of the body as a "hostile" place for the child. As it can be seen in the novel, Jess's childhood home alienated her from shelter and comfort because of her in-between gender. As she grows up, the house becomes an oppressive space which does not protect her, as it allows her parents to enforce violence upon her socially transgressive body. Childhood home spaces can thus reinforce the hegemonic culture onto the marginalized child.

As Jess runs away from her childhood home at age 17, her working-class identity prevents her from finding stable housing. Living in her marginalized friends' houses she narrates how: "I'd spent a lot of my life on other peoples' couches…I had no privacy here, no space anywhere in the world where it was safe to grieve" (1993, 169). Following Bachelard's idea that the house is "the body and soul" of the individual, who would become a "dispersed being" without it, Jess struggles to find her place in the world without the safety and privacy that housing provides. It could be asserted that her fragmented identity is formed through this lack of stable housing, as she is unable to "daydream" the subjectivity of her body. Thus, the novel contends that is not until she moves from Buffalo to New York and aims to find stable housing that her identity becomes stabilized. As Weaver argues, the home-making process that Jess undergoes through her apartments in New York embodies and exteriorises her growing comfort in her transgressive gender identity (2014, 87). Thus, her new house becomes her "body and soul", as Bachelard would put it, as she narrates how:

> As my house came together, I suddenly wanted things that made my body feel good. […] I bought thick, soft towels and fragrances for my bath that pleased me. And then one day I looked around at my apartment and realized I'd made a home. (1993. 259)

Therefore, it is not the childhood home that becomes "the corner of the world", as Bachelard had suggested, but the one that can be reshaped and constructed by the individual (1994, 4). If we bear in mind the social dimension of space, as the body is shaped by the social dimension it inhabits, it seems possible to claim that the space of the house is shaped by the body. As Massey explains, these "new complexities of the geography of social relations" such as a home

do not have to be conceptualized as "singular and bounded". She claims that homes do not need to be a single place, "nor do they have to be places of nostalgia" (2005, 172). Thus, the marginalized subject does not need to dwell in their childhood house, but rather, can aim to construct new home spaces that would shelter them to "daydream" their potential future.

This process of homemaking is put to a sudden stop when her newly built apartment is burnt down without notice by her landlord. As Jess attempts to rent another apartment as soon as possible, the novel reminds the reader of her working-class struggle for survival. In her new apartment building, her isolation decreases as she meets her neighbour Ruth, a transgender woman whose body mirrors Jess's socially transgressive one. Thus, Jess develops a sense of kinship with Ruth, and she introduces Jess to her close circle of friends who inhabit the margins as well, Tanya and Esperanza. In this shared apartment, Jess finds her place in the world, as she was displaced from lesbian spaces by the women's rights movement that condemned masculine women. The apartment becomes a home for those living in-between, a place where they are safe to "daydream" their future with hope, as Esperanza reminds Jess of the meaning of her chosen name (1993, 293).

In this newfound home, Jess is once again able to embody Bachelard's notion of imaginative power as the nucleus of the home. After Jess suffers a brutal bigoted attack because of her gender presentation, Ruth nurses her in their room, where she paints a skyscape across their ceiling. As Jess is put in awe because of the shifting landscape, she remarks:

> 'It's just incredible. I can't believe you've given me the sky to sleep under. But I can't tell if its dawn or dusk you've painted.'
> She smiled up at the ceiling. 'It's neither. It's both. Does that unnerve you?' I nodded slowly. 'Yeah, in a funny way it does.'
> 'I figured that […] It's a place inside of me I have to accept. thought it might be what you need to deal with, too […] It's not going to be day or night, Jess. It's always going to be that moment of infinite possibility that connects them'. (1993, 294)

Thus, this "moment of infinite possibility" corresponds with Bachelard's notion of the imaginative power of their chosen home. Furthermore, the home space has once more become "the

topography of our being", as Bachelard would put it. The ceiling now corresponds with their intimate place inside of their body.

According to Weaver, the ceiling reflects their shared experience of bodily liminality and of lives in between. Thus, it illustrates how "home" has become "a space that both houses and reflects Jess's body and identity" (2014, 87). Furthermore, as their cumulative identities and life experiences of the body are reflected in the home, the novel illustrates Bell Hooks' reflection on the subversive powers of the home:

> Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal, fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting. (1989, 19)

Hence, the novel suggests how chosen home spaces can be re-interpreted as subversive spaces with reinvigorating potential for "daydreamers" that have been marginalized subjects. By living in different home spaces, Jess finally finds the home and the community which enable her to find "everchanging perspectives", illustrated by the "moments of infinite possibility" of her shared ceiling.

4. Urban spaces: "The streets of Buffalo were as familiar as my own reflection on the mirror"

Moving away from the microcosm of the body and the home space, this section of the essay aims to explore the macrocosm of urban spaces and its ability to shape the lives of the subjects that inhabit it. As Celeste Olalquiaga (1992) and Elizabeth Grosz (1992) explain, the body has also been theorized in a spatial metaphor in connection with urban spaces. As Grosz observes, "the city is made and made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn is transformed, its transformed, 'citified' urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body" (1992, 242). It can be argued that this

embodiment of the metropolitan status of the city illustrates the role of the city in the shaping of its subjects. Following De Certeau's notion of the panorama/migrational city in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), I contend that the "invisible" urban spaces that Jess dwells in shape her subjectivity as a marginalized un-homed subject. Following Manzanas and Benito's observation that "society produces its own spaces, striated by divisions as well as visible and invisible boundaries", Jess's dwelling in these visible and invisible boundaries can appear to shape her socially transgressive identity (2011, 2).

Jess's dwellings in the anonymous city begins after she moves to New York in a desperate attempt to find a job and escape her hometown, Buffalo. As she explains, "it was partly the anonymity that attracted me […] only fear kept me in Buffalo (1993, 245). This fear could appear to represent her negative experiences of dwelling in the urban spaces of the city while inhabiting the in-between spatiality of maleness and femaleness. A year prior to her moving, in a desperate attempt to find a job, Jess finds herself trapped on the border between Buffalo and Canada. As she narrates:

> But I still couldn't cross the border. I had no valid ID in case I was pulled over at customs. I opened my wallet and looked at my ID. Birth certificate, driver's license. They were all clearly marked female. How could I get ID as a male?
> Getting identification required identification. I couldn't even open a checking account without some sort of ID […]. I felt like a nonperson. (1993, 188)

This "oppressive geographical manifestation of the intersection of class and gender", illustrated by Mosses(2000, 82), corresponds with De Certeau's theorization that "there is no spatiality that it not organized by the determination of frontiers" (1984, 123). She further narrates how "a feeling of claustrophobia choked me even as my world was expanding, it was shrinking" (1993, 188). As Butler explains, to become a human under patriarchy, the subject must practice their gender following the "heterosexual construction of sexuality" (1993, 103). Thus, a person whose gender is neither male nor female embodies a vulnerable position outside the law, which echoes Butler's remarks on how hegemonic culture "regularly punishes those who fail to do their gender right" (1993, 178-335).

Following Lefebvre's theorization that social space as a social product is "a means of control, and hence domination, of power", it can be argued that the border space shapes her as the "nonperson" (26). Thus, Jess flees to New York in hopes of starting anew: "I felt as though I'd left myself behind. I didn't know what lay ahead, but the train was hurtling through the darkness toward that destination" (1993, 245).

Upon arrival in New York City, Jess describes how: "I stood stock-still outside Grand Central Station looking up. I felt like a child again, standing at the bottom of a concrete canyon with sky-high walls" (1993, 249). It could be argued that her early thought process follows De Certeau's notion of the "panorama city". As he observes, this conceptualization of the urban space corresponds with the city as understood by space planner urbanists (1984, 93). As Jess is mesmerized by the sight of the Grand Central Station, she begins to process New York as a spectacular panorama city. However, it is not long until she realizes that this mesmerizing panorama city does not accept those whose bodies inhabit the margins of class and gender. As she attempts to find accommodation, Jess is displaced from the "planned and readable city" to what De Certeau defines as "a migrational or metaphorical city" (1984, 93).

This "invisible" city, as De Certeau defines it, is "below the threshold at which visibility beings", and it is where Jess dwells as a homeless person in her attempt to afford stable housing (1984, 93). The novel considers the subversive multiplicity found in the invisible city, as an all-night theatre becomes her first accommodation. Thus, this inhabiting of the theatre can be interpreted according to Foucault's concept of "heterotopias". For Foucault, heterotopic spaces are

> capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus, it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space. (1986, 6)

Thus, the theatre that Jess inhabits can be considered as a heterotopic space in itself. However, I argue that by having a homeless Jess inhabiting the theatre, rather than just being a space that juxtaposes different worlds and spaces together, it also becomes a place of shelter. Thus, it becomes a significantly more heterotopic space as it juxtaposes and combines a new meaning of place into an existing heterotopia. As scholars Hetherington (1997) and Topinka (2010) explain, this juxtaposition and destabilization of space can offer an "avenue of resistance" (2010, 56). Concerning the subversive resistance potential of heterotopias, Hetherington further elaborates that

> […] Heterotopia [are] spaces of alternate ordering. Heterotopia organize a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them. That alternate ordering marks them out as Other and allows them to be seen as an example of an alternative way of doing things. (1997, viii)

Thus, the novel portrays the potential subversiveness of heterotopic spaces for the homeless and displaced subject in the invisible city. After inhabiting the heterotopia, Jess attempts to rent an apartment. However, as a working- class individual, the state takes advantage of her and offers her what Jess describes as an "unliveable" place (1993, 250). In this semi-public space, Jess feels at the threshold of the invisible city. Scared for her well-being she narrates: "I didn't know any other place to spend the night except the kung fu theatres. They felt a whole lot safer than an abandoned building" (1993, 250). By reconsidering a heterotopia as a safer place than the apartment, it can be argued that the narrative illustrates heterotopias' subversive ability as a place of resistance. As they offer Jess a reshaped space of security in the invisible city, they exemplify Hetherington's argument that "a valorization of margins rests on seeing [heterotopias] as counter-hegemonic spaces that exist apart from 'central' spaces that are seen to represent the social order" (1997, 21).

It is thanks to the counter-hegemonic space of the heterotopic theatre that Jess starts her life properly in New York. For the next month, she illustrates the multiplicity of urban spaces as she appropriates and reshapes them by finding shelter in the theatre and showering at Grand Central Station. By inhabiting the invisible city,

her act of living becomes an act of resistance, which follows Soja's notion that those who are marginalized by hegemonic power have two options:

> either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it; or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putative positioning, their assigned otherness, to struggle against this power-filled imposition. These choices are inherently spatial responses, individual and collective reactions to the ordered workings of power in perceived, conceived, and lived spaces. (1989, 87)

This notion is embodied in the final act of the narrative, as I argue that the gay liberation rally can illustrate this "spatial response". According to Weaver, marginalized subjects no longer hide in bars and subject themselves to police brutality but aim to reclaim public space as their space (2014, 90). This act inspires Jess to reclaim this public space as well, thus metaphorically embodying and occupying the centre and the margins simultaneously. Hence, the invisible and the panorama city of New York become what Gillian Rose terms a "paradoxical geographic", which recognizes both the power of hegemonic discourses and the possibilities of resistance (1993, 155). The story ends with Jess's working-class comrade Duffy illustrating this notion: "Try imagining a world worth living in […] You've come too far to give up on hope, Jess" (1993, 328). I contend that this world could not be possible without acknowledging the subversive multiplicity of spaces. A reconsideration of spaces as multidimensional immense possibilities can inspire the imaginative power of the marginalized subject to reshape the space they dwell in.

5. Conclusions

All in all, this study has attempted to illustrate the different scales of spatiality in the American semi-autobiographical novel *Stone Butch Blues* and how these intertwined public and private spaces shape the lived experiences and subjectivities of transgender and queer individuals. To date, the majority of scholars have focused on the transgender subjectivity and queer potential of the novel. My aim was not to discourage those readings but to illustrate how an

understanding of social space and its potential for subversiveness reveals that those subjectivities can find geographical spaces of resistance in the face of hegemonic oppression. This analysis considers the importance of understanding that space is multidimensional —capable of oppression but also resistance and recovery. Such understanding could have not been possible for Jess unless she inhabited the in-between hostile places of the house and the city. As Wrede illustrates, it is by this acknowledging of space as "multiple, shifting, heterogenous [and] situational" that the marginalized subject realizes the possibility to "subvert the oppressor-oppressed paradigm" of hegemonic spaces (10).

This understanding of space as "liveness", as Massey puts it, offers the marginalized a possibility to contest oppressive spaces (2005, 13). This article has argued for the necessity to understand spatiality studies not as inherently revolutionary but as the first step for the marginalized individual to yearn for freedom and to have the opportunity to reclaim the spaces they inhabit.

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