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Between representation and practice: contesting public space in New Orleans’ Jackson Square

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BETWEEN REPRESENTATION AND PRACTICE: CONTESTING PUBLIC SPACE IN NEW ORLEANS' JACKSON SQUARE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of Geography & Anthropology

by

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For Emily Ellen, Robert Raymond, Jack Michael, Nathan Bradley & Anna Grace
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Abstract

Recent geographic research on public space focuses largely on either the past or present. Using historical and ethnographic methods, I contribute to understanding public space over time from an everyday point of view, a variety of social scales. Further, departing from a generally political-protest focus that much geographic literature centers on, my study explores the multifaceted areas of the political, cultural, and economic in public space. Thus, I show that the need for public space expands beyond protest voices into other realms that form and inform identity. Through New Orleans’ Jackson Square, these prospects of public space demonstrate “a world of its own” that connects with and to other social worlds. Specifically, my research reveals ongoing and often mutually constitutive tensions between representation and practice, which various groups and classes employ in the meaning making of public space. In doing so, I engage with one of cultural geography’s current and important debates over the significance of and between representation and practice. I argue that approaches to creating cultural geographies must include examining both representation and practice together and on a continuum, where both are mutually constitutive of each other and thus to understanding the meanings of landscape and place.
Chapter One

Introduction: A World of Its Own

During a Saturday afternoon in autumn, Jackson Square, center of New Orleans’ French Quarter, teemed with activity and thousands of tourists (fig. 1). On the Square’s edge at the corner of St. Ann and Decatur Streets, atop a milk crate, a fairy mime posed in statuesque form. Wearing a shimmery crimson dress and elfish shoes, she gently held a small bouquet of flowers. Her delicate sheer wings, long baby-fine hair, powder-white skin, and slender-girlish frame matched her persona. The fairy captured tourists’ curiosity, as they stared and gathered around her.

Standing nearby, a captivated little girl exclaimed, “Ooo, Daddy, I wanna see what she does!” The father gave the girl a dollar to place in a basket at the milk crate’s base. The girl did so, watching the fairy all the while. With the girl’s kind gesture, the fairy slowly reached into the bouquet, taking out just a pinch of fairy dust, and sprinkled it into the air near the girl. Joyously, the girl twirled under the shower as the sparkling dust settled over her. Then, she and her Daddy strolled away, disappearing into the world of Jackson Square1 (fn 04.05.04).

The late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century Spanish-French architecture surrounding Jackson Square may certainly allow one to envisage that she is in a different time and place. But, the enclosing architecture only partly accounts for the microcosm within the Square—a world that is separate from and simultaneously connected to other

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1 The world of Jackson Square includes Jackson Square and its Pedestrian Mall.
worlds. In this dissertation one broad goal I have is to show how the creating of this world and its connecting to other worlds occurs in the life of this public space.

Figure 1  Jackson Square (source: collection of author).

Locals, who have a sustained presence in Jackson Square for cultural, economic, and social reasons, intimate that the Square is indeed a world of its own, making comments such as “Jackson Square has its own weather” (fn 06.25.04, 07.07.04). Others explain that different corners of the Square have different energies that sometimes change, not unlike the poles of the earth that also change (though of course over a much longer period of time) (fn 07.18.04). Jackson Square even seems to operate more by tourist seasons than by the earth’s natural seasons because in August, according to some, “The Square purges itself. In the slow season people get hungry and those that
can’t make it here leave” (fn 08.13.04). At other times, particularly during the spring months, Jackson Square “is a place to harvest,” as in tourist dollars (fn 01.03.04).

Initially in my ethnographic fieldwork for my dissertation, I was hesitant, actually resistant, to think of and refer to Jackson Square as a world of its own. It seemed too neat, too easy, and far too cliché. After listening and observing in the Square for a little over a month, however, I came to realize that in New Orleans’ French Quarter locals thought of their central plaza (known now as Jackson Square) in this way.

The insularity that I observed and felt while I conducted field work has a long history in New Orleans and in the Square. Long after Native Americans had settled the area (Kastor 2004), in 1718, France “founded”2 New Orleans (Lewis 1976, Huber 1982). By 1720, a French engineering firm platted the city along the Mississippi River in grid form with a central public Square at its center. As in new settlements in France, bastions fortified the colony (on the east and west sides near the river). Little fortification was needed, however, because the thick canebrake and swampy topography were almost impassable, creating any necessary bulwark for the community (Lewis 1976, Huber 1982).

From the outset, then, the colony’s physical character, a clearing surrounded by a vast swamp and thick underbrush, provided an environment for an insular French and Creole3 culture to develop (Lewis 1976, Colten 2000). Thus, the colony primarily

2 In this work, however, I focus only on European settlement.

3 The term “Creole” has had many definitions through the years and continues to have multiple meanings. In this dissertation, “Creole” means having European ancestry.
became a European-like city and until almost the nineteenth century was largely uninfluenced by Anglo-Americans. The initial urban area, known today as the French Quarter or the Vieux Carré (meaning old square), developed compactly with narrow lots and narrow streets with Place d’Armes (Jackson Square) the single civic public space.

The Civil War confounded most of the South economically, but according to Pierce Lewis, New Orleans suffered more from indignity than from a huge loss in trade and shipping directly related to the Civil War. Instead, transportation development in other regions was the “wrongdoer” to the city:

The Civil War was a lurid episode in New Orleans’s history, and according to local legend, it was the war that put a sudden and cruel end to the city’s lordly dominance over the Mississippi Valley. Whole Mississippis of tears have been wept over the event, but the tear-dimmed eyes failed to see that the city’s decline resulted from nothing more romantic than an upheaval in the technology of transportation (Lewis 1976, 47).4

For example, with the Erie Canal’s completion in 1825 and the Northern railways directly connecting Midwestern cities Chicago and St. Louis to the east and Atlantic by 1860, New Orleans lost its monopoly on trade in the Upper Mississippi Valley. In 1869, the Union Pacific railway, which joined the Central Pacific, northwest of Ogden, Utah, connected the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean by rail, completing

(usually French and/or Spanish) but born in the colony. Sometimes scholars use more specific terms such as “French Creole,” which means French ancestry but born in the colony. I use only the more general term “Creole.”

4 Others, however, place more blame on the Civil War for New Orleans’s economic decline (see, for example, Wilson 1969, Huber 1982).
the nation’s first transcontinental railroad (Lewis 1976, Meinig 1995). When the Southern Pacific finally reached New Orleans in 1883, linking the city by land for the first time to the rest of the country, it could not compete with already established rail centers. New Orleans, however, increased its commerce and shipping in the Caribbean through its long-time relationship with the region. Not until oil and gas boomed in Louisiana in 1905 would the city begin to compete again with other places at the scale of Chicago and St. Louis; however, New Orleans never regained the economic position it had known before the Civil War (Lewis 1976). Thus, though Anglo-Americans had been heavily populating New Orleans (mainly in the Uptown area) and though it had sustained its world-city status, the city, particularly the French Quarter, continued to be noticeably separated from the rest of the country (Lewis 1976).

Additionally, the French Quarter had gone into disrepair, as the Anglo-American economic center Uptown paid little heed to the Quarter over the following decades (Lewis 1976, Jakle 1985). In 1887, Harper’s New Monthly Magazine reported, “[The French Quarter] is a city of the past, and specially interesting in its picturesque decay” (Harper’s 1887, 200). The decline and neglect encompassed the French Quarter over a series of decades and ironically paved the way to economic revival in the city.

New Orleans became a pioneer in preserving architecture (in the Quarter) initially for its historical merits that local citizens wanted to salvage (Irvin 1998). In the early 1920s a bohemian population of artists and writers began to settle in the French Quarter.

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5 New Orleans had become a primary port for cotton, sugar cane, and enslaved persons before the Civil War (Lewis 1976).
Quarter, and the picturesque decay inspired both their work and a growing concern for the fate of area (Wallace 1996, Irvin 1998). This concern grew out of a larger national change in attitude toward history—particularly that past landscapes of architecture and neighborhoods were edifying to communities. According to Mike Wallace, in the South “dreaming nostalgically of the golden days when their ancestors had been undisputed masters of the region” also played an important role in the preservation movement (Wallace 1996, 182), while John Jakle argues, “in some cities, historical districts were protected as icons reflecting and perpetuating desired life-styles” (Jakle 1985, 297).

Concerned bohemians and nostalgic New Orleanians began to organize a preservation movement for the French Quarter.

In 1921, an amendment to the Louisiana Constitution enabled the creation of municipal bodies to safeguard historic structures (Irvin 1998). Though Charleston was the first city to designate an historic district using a zoning ordinance in 1931, New Orleans passed an ordinance in 1925 to create a preservation commission for the French Quarter (Jakle 1985, Wallace 1996, Irvin 1998). This first commission failed having only an advisory role, but in 1936, the present-day Vieux Carré Commission⁶ was established, and the French Quarter became the second historic preservation district in the United States. Then in 1937, the city gave the organization the authority to review and manage the character of the Quarter. Thus, the Vieux Carré Commission:

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regulated architecture and controlled building permits with WPA money... substantial parts of the Quarter were reconditioned, with primary attention around the French Market and Jackson Square, where five crucial buildings were restored—St. Louis Cathedral, the Cabildo, Presbytere, and the Pontalba buildings (Lewis 1976, 88).

The Vieux Carré Commission sought more than the restoration of a few buildings and Jackson Square. Instead, the Commission desired a specific kind of preservation for the entire Quarter of a *tout ensemble* or total lifestyle (Lewis 1976, Irvin 1998, Hudson 2002). As Jakle states:

> in Charleston and New Orleans the past was not ignored, but made an integral part of urban redevelopment. Although benefits were intended primarily for property owners, surviving landscapes proved attractive to tourists and tourism became the leading industry in each city (Jakle 1985, 298).

In New Orleans as early as 1937, a headline for the *New Orleans States Item* read, “City Destroying Rich Vieux Carré Asset: Mecca For Tourists Is Endangered: Gaudy Signs Replacing Beauty of Famous Streets: Ironwork is Being Torn Down” (*The New Orleans Item* August 5, 1937). This headline suggests an uneasy relationship between preserving an ideal past and the realities of tourism. This uneasiness has continually and complexly marked life in the French Quarter generally, and Jackson Square specifically.

Without a doubt, as New Orleans’ oldest neighborhood, the Quarter, as Pierce Lewis states, “serves as the city’s chief symbolic totem, and most city residents love it dearly” though “to be sure, some Orleanians profess to loathe it—because it is “dirty” or “dangerous” or “full of hippies and tourists” or simply because “it isn’t the way it used to be” (Lewis 1976, 86). Though Lewis was referring to the then current 1970s, his
observations are no less true today in both the symbolic importance of the Quarter and Jackson Square and some citizens’ exclusionary sentiment. However, as I will show, and contrary to what preservationists claim, from the colony’s beginnings a vast array of people and activities have always constituted the Quarter and Jackson Square (Lewis 1976, Honecker 1982, Huber 1982, Din and Harkins 1996, Vella 1997).

Today Jackson Square’s form and the structures surrounding it have changed little since the mid-nineteenth century, when the Baroness Pontalba transformed the grassy open plaza into a park (Honecker 1982, Huber 1982, Vella 1997). The Upper and Lower Pontalba buildings, which house shops on the first floor and apartments on the second and higher floors, flank the east and west sides of the Square, with St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest operating Catholic Church in the U.S., at the center of Jackson Square’s north side. The impressive Cabildo and Presbytere, which house the Louisiana State Museum, are adjacent to the Cathedral’s east and west sides, respectively. St. Peters, Chartres, and St. Ann’s streets now form a pedestrian mall around the Square, and on the south side, Decatur Street is open to two-way vehicular traffic. Across Decatur Street is an amphitheater, whose steps lead up to a war memorial that overlooks the Mississippi River. While standing at the top of the steps looking back on Jackson Square, the Square appears encapsulated—the height and symmetry of the architecture sharply define the edges and the amphitheater and levee prevent any view of the river from in the Square. A statue of General Andrew Jackson then centers the viewer’s sight.
A black iron fence set atop a two-foot stone retaining wall with four gates, one at the center of each side, surrounds the inner portion of the Square. Three steps lead up from each entry onto a curved promenade surrounding Jackson’s statue. A narrow canopy of Live Oaks edges the east and west sides with banana trees bordering the north and south entrances to the Square. Ornamental plantings of Crape Myrtles, small palms, and fine textured evergreen shrubs lie between portions of the promenade paths. Park benches are located around the outer most ring of the meandering walk. An elegant circular brick pigeon house situated on the southwest corner houses landscape maintenance supplies. English ivy surrounds its base and grows as well around the other three corners of the Square. Sculptures about three feet high symbolizing the four seasons, one for each of the corners, rest in the ivy. Small sections of lawn fill the remaining areas of the seemingly still Jackson Square.

Despite preservationists’ efforts with a tout ensemble perspective, the French Quarter and Jackson Square have long attracted tourists and those who supply tourist entertainment and products. Thus, altering the Quarter’s social character has been ongoing. Thinking of park areas as “nature” to take in, that is to consume, dates back to the 1880s with the Rationalistic movement, which conceptualized nature separate from humans (Williams 1973, 125 in Lawrence 1993, 115). This notion mystified nature, which resulted in “treating it [nature] as an amenity and as commodity” (Lawrence 1993, 155). Thus, “nature” areas, like Jackson Square, were something to consume even before tourism predominated. With this national sentiment concerning parks and as tourism increased in the French Quarter, the function of the Square easily became a part
of various capitalistic enterprises at various social scales. Though Henry Lawrence explains that parks in the U.S. moved “from a functional to an aesthetic role in the urban landscape and ultimately to a commercial one” (Lawrence 1993, 115), today, Jackson Square simultaneously performs all of these roles.

As early as the 1940s, artists began appearing in the Square, painting, and selling their work. They hung their finished pieces on the iron fence along Jackson Square’s edge and during the day painted, using folding chairs, simple easels, and the sidewalks for their studio (as many do today).7 When in 1970, the city created a permanent Pedestrian Mall around the Square, the area drew more artists and tourists and drew a greater variety of people wanting to earn tourist dollars.

Replacing the streets adjacent to Jackson Square (except on its river’s side), the slate Pedestrian Mall resides in contrast to the park. The Mall includes park benches but is void of plant material, fencing, and gates. Moreover, the Pedestrian Mall, which has a carnival-like quality, socially diverges from the serene, controlled, and established form of Jackson Square’s park.

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7 This information was first based on my conversation (summer 2002) with an artist, Nestor, who starting painting in the Square in the early 1950s. According to Nestor, he and other artists first started in Pirates Alley, adjacent to St. Louis Cathedral’s west side, and as their numbers grew some spilled over to Jackson Square. In my archival research, the earliest I could locate artists around the Square was 1948 (The Times Picayune November 21, 1948).
Young African-American tap dancers, for instance, from neighborhoods outside the French Quarter, began to play for tips on the corners of the Pedestrian Mall. Street entertainers and musicians from a variety of neighborhoods in the city came to the Pedestrian Mall to play and to learn to play jazz by listening and watching. By at least the 1980s, tarot card, palm, and bone readers began arriving in Jackson Square on the Pedestrian Mall to provide tourists (for a donation) with personal readings of their lives. Street preachers from various religions started to preach too, sometimes causing intense verbal conflicts. And, since Jackson Square’s earliest days, people who are homeless or transient have continued to use the Square as a resting and socializing place, sometimes asking for spare change.

Jackson Square Groups Defined

Throughout my dissertation, I refer to all persons using pseudonyms except for those persons who are public figures. Additionally, I do not use pseudonyms when generally describing readers’ signs and the names readers create and use for Jackson Square. The following groups are regularly present in Jackson Square, and though individuals in each group vary, the following descriptions provide general characteristics that will help the reader in this chapter and those to come.

8 Since the summer of 2002, however, the city has legally excluded young tap dancers from the Jackson Square area via “offenses” such as “begging, obstruction of a public place, and littering” (The Times Picayune August 11, 2002, see also August 23, 2002.).

9 Based on over a year of fieldwork, street preachers usually showed up on Jackson Square only during Mardi Gras and Halloween.
Artists

Artists are men and women, both black and white, but mostly white, who paint and draw on the Pedestrian Mall and sell their work mostly to tourists. Some are portrait and caricature artists, where tourists make up their clientele. Most of these people live in New Orleans but few are native New Orleanians. Several artists are from other countries such as Russia, Brazil, and Nigeria. On any given day, as many as 200 artists work on the Pedestrian Mall and show their art on Jackson Square’s fence. Some artists depend fully on selling in Jackson Square for income. Others, however, have different means of support such as a partner or spouse.

Gutter punks

Gutter punks themselves as well as Other locals in the Square and French Quarter use the term “gutter punk” to identify these groups; therefore, I use the same term for this group. Gutter punks are young white adults both male and female that are transient and homeless. They are regularly present in Jackson Square hanging out on benches in the Pedestrians Mall and sometimes on the park area’s benches and grassy areas. Some of the gutter punks come to Jackson Square only during certain times of the year while others have a year-round presence. Many from these groups are not from New Orleans. Though gutter punks often panhandle off the Square, I rarely saw them panhandle in Jackson Square.

Homeless people

Homeless persons form groups of mostly black but some white males and females who are older than the gutter punks are. While some homeless stay to
themselves in a variety of locations on the Pedestrian Mall and the park area, others
form small groups hanging out on the benches in front of the Cabildo building and on
the benches in the park area. They are present year-round in Jackson Square. Many from
this group are from New Orleans. I rarely saw anyone from this group ask for money
from tourists. Some homeless persons receive checks from the government and others
depend on odd jobs in the Square for income.

Mimes

Mimes are costumed men and women, both black and white, who pose in
statuesque form usually on top of a milk crate or small stepladder. These individuals
(though sometimes they perform in twos) portray various known characters such as
Raggedy Anne, a cowboy, Michael Jackson and unknown characters such as a futuristic
techno man, Victorian woman, and transvestite with exaggerated breasts. Most of these
mimes live in New Orleans and some rely exclusively on money they earn in Jackson
Square. Others have jobs to supplement their miming such as delivering food.

Musicians

Two main groups of musicians consistently play on the Pedestrian Mall. The
first is the Big Band. They are mostly black musicians from New Orleans who perform
on the benches in front of the Cabildo. Most members live in Treme, a traditionally
black neighborhood adjacent to the Quarter. Anywhere from five to 15 members show
up on any given day to play to tourists for tips. They play traditional brass jazz and
some of the best musicians in the city play there. Not anyone can play with the Big
Band; you must be asked or invited by a member. Members of the Big Band rely on
Jackson Square for income in addition to performing in New Orleans clubs. Several members also play internationally, in, for example, Brazil and Finland. The other group includes Joe and Kara a white husband and wife folk team that play on the benches in front of the Presbytere. They are not from New Orleans but live in a neighborhood near the French Quarter. Joe and Kara rely on the Square to support their family of four.

**Readers**

Readers are men and women, both black and white, who read Tarot cards or the palm for tourists. Many are not from the city, but most live in the New Orleans area, many living in neighborhoods adjacent to the French Quarter. Most readers rely heavily on what they earn in the Square to support themselves. For many, reading in the Square is their only job.

**Street entertainers**

Street entertainers are usually men, both black and white, but usually white, who perform, for example, magic, acrobatics, comedy, escape acts. Usually these are solo performances except for the acrobatic acts, which include 5-7 men. These performers include a mix of people who live in New Orleans and others who only spend certain months in the city. Street entertainers heavily rely on what they earn from performing in Jackson Square.

**Vendors**

Legal vendors are extremely limited in number. One shoe shiner, one hat and wreath seller, three (at the most) Lucky Dog vendors, and three (at the most) drink and
ice cream vendors. The city grandfathered the shoe shiner, a black man, and the hat and wreath seller, a white woman, into a legal place in the Square. The city did the same with the other vendors, but individuals who do the Lucky Dog or drink and ice cream vending vary from day to day, though sometimes for a period of months the same individual will sell in the same place on the Square. For these people, vending remains their primary income.

The groups above are not inclusive of all those who have a regular presence on the Square. They merely represent an effort at organizing the cultural, economic, and social makeup of Jackson Square locals. A few other points are worth mentioning here. As a group, the artists are the most affluent of the group, having higher social standing in the city based upon the city's legal support and having, on average, a middle-class lifestyle. The artists' committee, for example, is made up of entirely fiscally secure middle-class people. Based on my fieldwork other groups in the Square generally have a precarious financial position.

Tourism is integral to these groups in Jackson Square and to the shops in the Pontalba buildings, the Louisiana State Museum housed in the Cabildo and Presbytere, and even St. Louis Cathedral. Events and activities, such as music and food festivals that take place in the Square rely in part on tourist dollars for their success as well. The relationships between tourism and the French Quarter, specifically Jackson Square, are
beneficial to the city economically, but also to wide-ranging individuals and groups culturally, economically, socially, and politically.\textsuperscript{10}

The Square is workplace but also home and community. For example, when Tracy, a black man who had never worked in Jackson Square, had returned to New Orleans, explained, “When I come home, I told the bus driver that he could drop me off at Canal and Chartres—didn’t have to go to the bus station. I walked right up Chartres Street and into Jackson Square” (fn 12.31.03). And, Austin, an often homeless black man, described Jackson Square as homeless people’s “everyday family,” and in fact, free breakfasts and dinners are sometimes served to those in need in the Square (fn 01.29.04). Furthermore, Florence, a white ex-police officer reminisced that when she was on the Quarter beat that children played in the Square saying, “that was their little world” (fn 01.26.04). Thus, because of the various cultural, economic, political, and social facets existing in the Square, it is known and experienced as a world of its own.

Because of the array of people and activity, both past and present, Jackson Square is not a world easily read off from its historical status, structures, and tourist activity. Instead, at various social scales and in various realms the Square continually comes to be its own world yet remains connected with other worlds. With this diversity, various ideas and issues associated with public space are continually at the fore.

\textsuperscript{10} See appendix A for a brief description of local groups with a regular presence in Jackson Square.
Summary of Research

My aim in this dissertation is to show significant facets of public space that go beyond that of direct political protest. In looking to the everyday of Jackson Square, I illustrate the political in cultural, economic, and social expressions and meanings of urban public space at different social scales. Because the Square is replete with representations and practices, my research questions include: How have representations and practices shaped Jackson Square’s meanings at various social scales? How have these meanings affected identities? How have people in the Square expressed and constituted social order and disorder and how have these two ideas been unsettled and transgressed?

Thus in chapter two, I discuss geographic research dealing with public space, urban parks, tourism, and the relationship between ideals and practices. In chapter three, I discuss my methods and methodology. Because of the nature of my questions, I researched the past and present, not separately, but rather together with the perspective that the past and present co-create each other. Therefore, while I participated in observing Jackson Square, I also conducted archival work. Chapter four begins the body of my dissertation, explaining how particular ideal images of Jackson Square have been constructed and sustained. In chapter five, however, I show alternative representations and practices in the Square’s history. Both chapters four and chapter five draw largely from archival material while still connecting with present-day Jackson Square.

Beginning in chapter six, I shift my focus to ethnographic data to reveal how ideals of not just Jackson Square but of urban order and mainstream ideas are
transgressed and unsettled through everyday practices of Square locals and tourists. In doing so, I reveal that identities of individuals and groups as well as the place of the Square are ever-emergent.\textsuperscript{11} Then in chapter seven, I show how locals negotiate and control space on the ground in the everyday, revealing that even the most disenfranchised groups make a place and exert a force in shaping the Square. Finally, in chapter eight, I discuss how chapters four through seven connect to larger issues of public space. Additionally, I provide some preliminary thoughts about Jackson Square and public space in New Orleans post-Hurricane Katrina. To conclude, I espouse a framework for creating cultural geographies that incorporate the interplay between representations and practice in both the past and present.

\textsuperscript{11} I draw upon Dydia DeLysers use of ever-emergent landscapes, see DeLysers 2003.
Chapter Two
Notions of Public Space in Cultural Geography

Bring Back the Benches

On a steamy September afternoon in 2002, about 350 residents from all over New Orleans had gathered in front of St. Louis Cathedral on Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall for the Bring Back the Benches Protest. Bringing stools, chairs, and couches for a sit-in, residents came not only to demand that the Square’s park benches be returned but also to protest against councilwoman Jackie Clarkson’s hard-line “solution” to clean up the French Quarter.

The protest started with Ben yelling, “Bring Back the Benches Now!” Ben had become the leader of Bring Back the Benches, a grassroots organization formed to actively oppose the “clean-up” effort in the French Quarter and Jackson Square. He signaled the crowd of protesters to join him. “Bring Back the Benches now,” we roared, “Bring Back the Benches now!” According to this organization, Clarkson’s plan in effect called for the removal of all those who were not mainstream, white, and middle class.

The counter faction, those pro-clean-up, expressed in a press conference that tourists would not come to the Quarter if it and the Jackson Square area seemed dangerous or unappealing, and tarot or palm reading near the benches as well as sleeping on the benches indicated a precarious landscape. The councilwoman’s cleanup effort, its proponents argued, would solve the potentially disastrous economic and
quality-of-life situation by ridding the Quarter of “elements” that attracted indecent behavior and crime.

Yet the Bring Back the Benches speakers explained that tourists from all over the world come to the French Quarter and to Jackson Square precisely because of the diversity of people, talents, and products offered. The Bring Back the Benches organization maintained that the streets, sidewalks, and especially Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall were public property and that all people should have equal access and equal rights within these public spaces.

For them, this meant, for example, that the Jackson Square area belonged not only to French Quarter residents and property owners but also to all people, including tarot card and palm readers, young tap dancers, mimes, street preachers, musicians, and individuals (and groups) who were transient or homeless.

A microphone and a small speaker provided the means for a diverse array of individuals to tell their stories, accounts of their connection with the benches and what Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall meant to them. Even amid intermittent heavy downpours each person proclaimed with fervor and often with eloquence their democratic right to be there (fn 09.06.02).

This event appears to be a great example of Don Mitchell’s near-ideal public space in practice (Mitchell 1995). It is because it shows Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall as a political space for representation, allowing a dissenting voice to be heard and seen in the urban public landscape. This, Mitchell argues, should be the role of public space, where freedom to assemble and to speak manifest in public protest. But, the
Bring-Back-the-Benches protest also speaks to additional matters, as the benches themselves suggest a range of practices and meanings associated with public space, effecting identities from the individual to the city itself. Indeed, the newspaper headline describing the protest as, “Bench Warfare,” speaks to the polarized points of view and to the different social scales involved that shape the world of Jackson Square.

In the literature reviews that follow, I aim to build upon and open up geographic research on public space to include, more fully, the cultural, economic, and social. Then, with Jackson Square in mind, I discuss geographic work on parks and tourism, providing additional avenues to expand analyses of public space. Finally, after reviewing literature on these types of landscapes specifically, I draw from performance theory to provide the lens through which I have come to understand the Square’s patternings and meanings.

**Public Space in Early American Towns**

By the late eighteenth century, almost all new American towns had well-defined public spaces (Jackson 1984). Markets, drill fields for the military, and places for public celebrations and assembly were common. Early planners and leaders of communities hailed the importance of public spaces in town design, which was guided by “rational, egalitarian, political ordering of spaces and structures with a sharp division between public and private spaces” (Jackson 1984, 54). “People were present in [public spaces] to perform some public service or public role,” and a large plaza or square was the central public space (Jackson 1984, 53).
Access to the central square, however, was for those qualified citizens. J.B. Jackson suggests then, that all public space, which was controlled by authorities of the town, actually served certain institutions—those with political and monetary power, instead of a diverse public. Categories of class such as “the gentry,” and “the public,” apparent in governmental discussions, implied an organization of territory that directed who was allowed in public space and what activities were acceptable, if allowed to take place there (Jackson 1984).

This means that public squares did not begin in the United States as places for free assembly, freedom of speech, and equal access. These ideals, these rights have continually been struggled for over time (Mitchell 1995, 2003). Particularly in urban areas before the U.S. formed, these ideals were absent in urban design of public plazas. Instead, these public spaces served as spaces of control and often exclusion. Indeed, the Franco-Spanish bastide design of French New Orleans provided for a central square that symbolically and literally upheld the power, order, and grace of the colony and its elite citizens (Vance 1990).

Daniel Arreola, however, shows that variety of plaza types came into form in South Texas based on cultural heritage, economic conditions, and authorities’ political intentions (1992). Arreola explains, as anthropologists Miles Richardson (1978, 1982) and Setha Low (2000) do of Spanish America, that different plazas serve a variety of purposes and people, and that together social practices and material form create particular expressions of culture and meanings in plazas in these regions. And though
anthropologist Helen Regis’ research deals with second lining\(^{12}\) in public streets rather than public plazas in New Orleans, her discussion of alternative social orders, diversity of realms and social scales, and issues of commodification and authenticity relate to issues I address in chapters four through seven (Regis 1999, 2001). These scholars, for example, elucidate cultural, economic, political, and social understandings in public space rather than focusing only on events, demonstrations, and political protest in public space.

**Idealized Notions of Public Space**

Jackson’s work (1984) representing one of the first endeavors at a geographical understanding of public space, typifies the tone of later geographic work that favors overt political understandings of public space through an idealized lens. For example, Jackson comments that “implicit in the word ‘public’ is the presence of other people. We know better than to resent that presence; they have as much right to be there as we do” (Jackson 1984, 53). At the same time, however, he explains that, “Two centuries ago we assumed we were already citizens. Now, we believe that we become citizens” (Jackson 1984, 55). Hinting at a lost past, one that did not limit access to public space, a nostalgic Jackson engages with a romanticized notion of public space that, in fact, actually never has existed, but nevertheless one that various persons and groups pursue.

\(^{12}\) As explained by Regis, “Nearly every Sunday afternoon from mid-August to late March, New Orleans’s poorest neighborhoods are transformed through traditional performances known to locals as “second line” parades. These massive moving street festivals, commonly draw from 3,000 to 5,000 people, are organized and funded by working-class African Americans to celebrate the anniversaries of their distinctive social clubs and benevolent societies” (1999, 472).
Whether looking to an idealized past or future, this brief excerpt from Jackson’s essay also shows the political protest facet that geographers often use in thinking about matters of public space, including, for example, citizenship, class, and access. These are important issues with regard to public space, but I argue that powerful idealized political notions so deeply rooted in the American psyche sometimes have constrained the types of studies and issues geographers (and others) have engaged with outside and in addition to the overt protest aspects of public space. As this chapter proceeds, I show how this important theme influences not only public space literature but also public space itself. That said, I do not depart from the political in public space, but rather, I draw upon work that connects the political with the cultural, economic, and social in the everyday of public space.

In arguably the most influential article on public space to date, Don Mitchell details the debate over the use (and users) of People’s Park near the University of California at Berkeley. Mitchell explains that two main groups emerged from the struggle over control of the park. The first group comprised of activists and homeless persons envisioned (and had used) the park as “a space marked by free interaction and the absence of coercion by powerful institutions” (Mitchell 1995, 115). The second group composed of representatives of the city and University envisioned the public space as “an open space for recreation and entertainment, subject to the usage by an appropriate public that is allowed in” (Mitchell 1995, 115, emphasis in original).

The first public space, according to Mitchell, defines an inherently politicized space (for protest), and one that risks disorder because its function is for political actors
to be active. The second public space is planned, orderly, and perceived safe, with unplanned activity and political action unacceptable (Mitchell 1995). As Mitchell continues he states that these two normative ideals define public space and “drive political activity and the nature of spaces we call ‘public’ in democratic society” (Mitchell 1995, 116). He points out that these models are indeed ideals and references the Greek *agora*, noted as the first public space, which was a place for politics, commerce, and spectacle for the citizens, but citizens included only men, excluding foreigners, slaves, and women. Mitchell also discusses how in the U.S. the definition of public space was built upon that which was not private such as private land ownership and home activities. The legacy of these beginnings still remains evident with issues of access to public space, though the why, how, and who of exclusion is often more obscured than in the past and the process of exclusion is never complete.

Additionally, Mitchell also implies the necessity of including various social scales as he incorporates Henry Lefebvre’s distinctions of three kinds of space to explain the nature of public space (Mitchell 1995, see also Light and Smith 1998, McCann 1999). Interpreting Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1990), Mitchell explains that “representational space” is space that is lived-in and space that is in-use. This kind of space corresponds with how activists and the homeless have used People’s Park. “Representations of space,” on the other hand, are abstract space—space that is planned and controlled, which corresponds with the visions of the city and the University. He then calls for the need of Lefebvre’s third kind of space—a “space of practice,” a space that has movement (Mitchell 1995). And, one way to think of this
movement in public space is through the processes of including and excluding by various social and legal “orderings” (see also Sibley 1995, Parr 1997).

**Legal “Ordering” of Public Space**

Mitchell (1996b, 2003) details a legal construction of public space through the relationships of public use and legal discourse. Echoing Peter Goheen’s (1994, 1998) studies of mid-nineteenth century Toronto streets, Mitchell states that the legal construction of public space is not merely through law but rather the law is constructed through social struggles of inclusion and exclusion in public space. He explains that laws governing public space do not come before public space, but that these laws exist because of social struggles such as the radical suffrage movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the fights for free speech rights by the Industrial Workers of the World in the 1910s and 1920s; the right-to-picket-and-assembly cause fought for by workers in the 1930s; the spatial strategies of the civil right movements in the 1950s and 1960s; and feminist activism in the 1960s and 1970s (Mitchell 1996a).

Mitchell argues that authorities often labeled these groups and struggles as “violent” because their ideas went against the power of the state and the rich. Their active protests threatened the conventions of order of those in control, so laws were often put in place to exclude these groups from public space and thus from the public for, the “safety” of the public (Mitchell 1996b). According to Mitchell:

> The law treats all equally, but all are not equal, and such equal treatment may serve to reinforce unjust social

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relations. The law has no way to recognize that in order to be represented in public, dissident groups have had to make their claims in a manner that does not conform to norms of rational discourse—that needs of those who wish to use public space as a public forum may not at all align with the images the Court holds of an orderly, rational discourse. The guarantee of the right to speak in public forums is quite different from the question of effective access to that forum by those who need to speak in the street. Orderliness can quite easily serve as power (Mitchell 1996b, 171, emphasis in original).

The predicament is that in order for groups to exercise their right to use public space and the freedom of speech, a defiance of certain laws meant to secure these rights must take place. Mitchell asserts, however, that material public space is required for (certain) voices to be heard (Mitchell 1996b, 2003).

**Processes of Excluding and Including in Public Space**

By looking to the spaces of incompleteness in other exclusionary processes, that is, for example, how individuals and groups include themselves, other notions and hybrids of public space emerge. Thus, I will show how day-to-day economic, and social vagaries of society may also largely make, shape, and change public space. Though the two definitions that Mitchell describes above shape public space and public-space discourse, neither ideal ever completely manifests in practice or in material and conceptual forms. In fact, this is part of Mitchell's point, but his ideas of hybridity are heavily weighted with political events, protests, and contestations.

Michel de Certeau (1984) first drew critical attention concerning the hybridity of everyday microgeographies to understand social complexities of the urban setting. De Certeau would argue that spatial practices include the cultural, economic, and social, as
well as the political and reveal “a process of appropriation of the topographical system,… a spatial acting-out of the place,… [and] imply relations among differentiated positions” (De Certeau 1984, 97-98). Though mapping the paths of everyday acts provides some basis for comprehending meanings in the city, De Certeau emphasizes looking to spatial practices in the moment and at the pedestrian level.

**Everyday Life Shaping Public Space**

In addition to the need for public space to serve as a place to speak and to be heard, material public space may also be required or used as a means and place for various cultural, economic, and social activities that lie outside of dominant ideas of order (Ruddick 1996b, Valentine 1996, Staeheli and Thompson 1997). Mitchell does discuss some of these needs, particularly by homeless persons who may sleep and go to the bathroom in public space (Mitchell 1995, 1996b, 2003). He fails, however, to expand on how homeless people survive; rather he remains focused on significant legal issues. Nor does Mitchell discuss other marginalized or near-the-margin groups beyond those in political protests with regard to urban public spaces (Mitchell 2003). As other geographers have begun show, however, comparable situations occur between different kinds of marginalized groups and mainstream society (and those with more power and authority).

Though Mitchell’s interest remains in the political, he introduces the special issue on public space in *Urban Geography* (1996 vol. 17(3)) asking, “Is public space only a

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space for politics?” (Mitchell 1996, 127). The articles that follow begin to illustrate how elements of the cultural, economic, and social (along with the political) in part constitute public space. For example, Meghan Cope approaches relations of political action through an historical analysis from 1920 to 1939 of everyday personal accounts of Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile workers. Emphasizing the blurring of cultural, economic, political, and social realms, she shows that power is not an “all-or-nothing affair” (Cope 1996, 180). Through “flows of individual and household finances, position in the social relations of production, procurements of goods and services, family, affinities, social identifications, cultural ties, love, and, as always power,” workers resisted unfair management practices and realized their own power (Cope 1996, 180). In turn, these cultural, economic, and social complexities shaped the sites of political protest.

For example, Cope discusses workers’ resistance in everyday small acts such as young women workers hiding in the restroom to avoid work. While hiding, they practiced dance steps, strengthening personal ties and creating a different kind of space. Rather than insignificant acts, Cope argues that “the aggregate of thousands of small acts” manifested both lost production and control (Cope 1996, 195). Thus, instead of submissively accepting mandates from above, workers negotiated control, which served to make the everyday tolerable. Therefore, both positive material and metaphorical spaces emerged along with or in place of oppressive spaces associated with Taylorist production practices. In doing so, the textile workers complicated ideas of public and

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15 See also James Scott’s Weapons of the Weak (1985).
private spaces. By considering these everyday subtleties, ambiguities, and contradictions, multifaceted meanings of public spaces emerge.

Also in contrast to Mitchell’s research on public spaces as places for overt activism to be clearly seen and heard, Mona Domosh, like Cope, looks into everyday routines and even smaller political acts. Domosh explains that in nineteenth-century New York City white bourgeois women and black bourgeois men and women challenged the authority of white bourgeois men through a “polite politics” of the everyday (Domosh 1998, 213). Using three images from this period of Fifth Avenue, a popular promenade for the public, she suggests that resistance to the social norms and thus to social authority occurred through small, unintended transgressions on a daily basis. Thus, gestures, glances, unintended touches, and “improper” returned gazes were significant tactical actions to subvert power and did so through an accumulatory process. Of course, Domosh’s findings cannot be confirmed, but the strength of her work is that meanings and purposes of public spaces are opened up through her example of what she terms micropolitics. Further, by elucidating the accumulatory character, as Cope does, of public spaces and the importance of tiny acts, the value in examining the everyday of public space comes to the fore.

Departing further from an overt political focus, Gill Valentine explores issues surrounding the culture of youth, family, and public space. Valentine considers repetitive acts through media reports, education campaigns, and parental controls on children, while reviewing regulatory regimes of policy and punishment concerning youth in public spaces (Valentine 1996). Then, using surveys, interviews, and focus groups,
Valentine finds, for example, that the fear parents have for young children’s safety reproduces public space as a naturalized “adult” space. Yet teens, she notes, sometimes experience public space as private, and private space (i.e. the home) as public because only after dark do some teens find autonomous space—within public spaces (Valentine 1996).

Exploring similar ideas in her work with homeless young adults in Hollywood, California, Susan Ruddick (1996b) uses ethnography, newspapers, and government documents. In addition, Ruddick addresses how changing policy concerning “juveniles” greatly influenced these young adults’ sense of self and day-to-day life.

Before the 1970s, homeless young adults were placed in foster homes and rural camps. When social services became more deinstitutionalized, these same young people appropriated public spaces such as beaches and streets. As this “problem” increased, officials started to take control of public spaces pushing the young homeless, according to Ruddick, to share spaces with other marginalized groups. The young adults then became mixed up with drugs and other illegal behaviors. Ruddick explains that negotiating these spaces largely influenced their identities. Many from this group refused the label “homeless” and instead asserted that they were part of a punk subculture and formed new families in the streets to make up for families that they felt they did not have. Through public displays, they purposely challenged mainstream meanings and uses of public space (Ruddick 1996b). Of course, meanings and uses are not fully freely formed by (all) groups. Ruddick recognizes (as Mitchell does) that the farther from convention individuals and groups are the more difficult it is to exercise their
differences and therefore uses and meanings of public space. Exploring race, class, and
gender in public space, she conceptualizes public space as a medium through which
identities are created and contested (Ruddick 1996b).

In another study by Ruddick (1996a), she employs analysis of media
representations and ethnographic data to addresses how public space influences social
identities. Though in the U.S. society has considered public space inherently local in
scale, she insists that public spaces may hold and express meanings at a variety of scales.
Ruddick then explains her project of researching racialized representations of the public
sphere in a highly locally and nationally publicized shooting near a Toronto white
middle-class neighborhood, noting that two other similar shootings were simply not
publicized. One of the unpublicized shootings was in a poor neighborhood and the
other in the city’s Chinatown. Ruddick asserts that the highly publicized shooting in the
white middle-class neighborhood in part reinforced national ideas of class and worth,
aiding in the reproduction of class divisions (Ruddick 1996a).

In addition, Ruddick finds that the representation of public space is “deeply
implicated in the process of ‘othering’ and deeply constitutive of social identities of
communities” (Ruddick 1996a, 146; see also Staeheli and Thompson 1997). Thus, who
is an “insider” or included and who is an “outsider” or excluded in the public becomes
constituted in part through public space.

Related to Ruddick’s discussions of identity, Jon Goss links public space with a
sense of belonging. Focusing on affect from connection to particular public spaces,
Goss considers powerful narratives of nostalgia concerning the spaces of festival
marketplaces, which are privately owned but used by the public (Goss 1996). He states that these marketplaces rely on “a sense of historic public life, represented in architecture, cultural exhibits, concert programs, and ethnic festivals to draw the public [consumers]” (Goss 1996, 221-222). Using advertising and experiential data, he explains that these sites are emotive sites in the urban fabric of the city and that some users engage with these sites with real sentiment. That, Goss defends, is an authentic experience and the longing for a place that never was can be a conscious, powerful force (Goss 1996, 1999).

Others, such as Ali Madanipour, disagree with Goss’s analysis whether the site in question is a publicly owned public space or a privately owned public space. He argues that designers of public spaces have contributed to “stripping the emotional and cultural character of public spaces” because they are designing these spaces as a commodity (Madanipour 1999, 888). According to Madanipour, public spaces have been turned into nodes of social assimilation and their privatization results from a postindustrial economy which necessitates “new forms of productions and consumption of space” (Madanipour 1999, 890). For Madanipour, the experience of public space then becomes one merely of aesthetic consumption in a capital market. Possibly, Madanipour is extreme in his analysis, caught in the lost narrative of an ideal public space. Looking only to design (and with a limited view of design) and what design may represent, Madanipour misses opportunities to reveal what Goss and others do render in their work, that meaningful public spaces come to be through social

**Aestheticizing Public Space**

This is not to undermine the importance of fallout from commodity-driven interests in public space, for there is much, particularly from an aesthetic perspective. David Harvey explains that “aesthetic judgments have frequently entered in as powerful criteria of political and social action” (Harvey 1990, 29 in Mitchell 2003, 186-187). James Duncan and Nancy Duncan (2001, 2004) explore this aestheticization of landscape in their study of Bedford, New York. In Bedford, social elites perform their identities in part through establishing nature preserves. Preserving nature, seemingly benign and even noble in its directive, once juxtaposed next to residential land shortages reveals issues of social exclusion and the practicing of “ownership” and control of open (public and semipublic) spaces (Duncan and Duncan 2001, 2004).

Applying similar ideas to urban landscape, Sharon Zukin argues that a city’s image plays as much a role in “building the city” as do land, labor, and capital (Zukin 1995, 7 in Mitchell 2003, 184). Symbolic languages located in the landscape articulate exclusion and entitlement:

> The look and feel of cities reflect decisions about what—and who—should be visible and what should not, [about] concepts of order and disorder, and [about] uses of aesthetic power (Zukin 1995, 7 in Mitchell 2003, 184).

Zukin (1995), Mitchell (2003), Duncan and Duncan (2004), and others relate this specifically to a spate of “quality of life” initiatives that effectively create public spaces
of comfort for the middle-class. Thus, middle-class ideology dictates definitions of public space, de-democratizing its use and therefore meaning (Mitchell 2003). Mitchell claims that a “constant increase of urban order” is shaping urban public space and that instead a kind of order should be built “not on the fears of the bourgeoisie but on the needs of the poorest and most marginalized residents” (Mitchell 2003, 9).

Other studies incorporate the above ideas, and show that who may be included in the bourgeoisie can be quite narrow. For example, Lynn Staeheli and Albert Thompson (1997) address ideas of “insider” and “outsider” in terms of citizenship based in a particular aesthetic. Using newspaper accounts, informal interviews, and participant observation, they focus on conflicts in the use of public space around the Hill business district next to the University of Colorado. A group of young adults, who regularly hung around the Hill, was, according to businesses on the Hill, hurting business. Four groups, the businesses, the police, the neighborhood, and the young adults emerged in the conflict. The businesses wanted more control of the area and became the most visible group in the debate. This group even seemingly spoke for the neighborhood as the businesses formed the “Friends of the Neighborhood” organization. Public spaces “freely” viewed by the public, but near commercial places, like the Hill, are particularly susceptible to aestheticization by “preservation” groups (Madanipour 1999). Similarly, organizations like the French Quarter Citizens, Vieux Carré Commission, and Friends of Jackson Square work not only to preserve

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16 On one hand, democracy relies on every person having a voice, but on the other hand, democracy relies on majority rules. Thus, majoritarianism can work to exclude people from public space, democratically.
architecture but to also to exclude certain people and activities from being part of public spaces like Jackson Square and its Pedestrian Mall.

**Park Ideologies Contouring Public Spaces**

As an open public plaza and park, Jackson Square shares particular histories with concepts of plazas and parks that reveal deeper entrenched ideas of aesthetization and also preservation. As the commons for the New Orleans settlement, Jackson Square was intended and became its ordered governmental, military, religious, and social center. The Square became a park in the mid-1800s, but ideas of an ordered landscape remained, first with theories associated with the pleasure ground.

The pleasure ground, as conceived by American landscape architects Andrew Downing and Fredrick Law Olmstead, derived from a perceived need to transcend the ills of the city, both physically and morally (Cranz 1982, Platt 1994, Young 2004). These ideas have their basis in a Romantic ideology where nature was “an interrelated world of mind, body, and being, an organic whole that included God, people, and the physical world” (Young 2004, 4). Further, “urban disorder” arose, it was thought, “because its members were out of touch with nature,” (Young 2004, 2-3) and Romantic ideology posed nature as clearly good. Overcrowding, monotonous factory work, the widening divide between work and leisure, and the development of leisure time, left the masses wanting for psychic revival, fresh air, exercise, and instruction. Thus, in large U.S. cities, local governments developed vast parks designed in the picturesque style. The picturesque style relied on fine-tuning nature, incorporating large green meadows, ponds, and pockets of trees. Passively appreciating these scenes, viewers’ “immersion in
nature was thought to train [their] spirit” (Cranz 1982, 7). Scenic views captivated park goers who promenaded (ideally), which suited park designers’ passive and rather voyeuristic intent. Thus, the visual, material representations of health and beauty were not only two focuses of park design, but in the ideal were the exclusive purposes of the pleasure ground design.

Appearance and image was so important to the pleasure ground ideal that Olmstead considered the park as “a class of opposite conditions”—the exact opposite of the Cartesian city: an “aesthetic colony” (Olmstead 1871 in Cranz 1982, 8). Unfortunately, though park boosters boasted the pleasure ground as an egalitarian place open to all classes, ages, and genders, in reality these proponents intended the parks to be for white men. Further, the idea of curing social ills was directed at the lower social classes to bring them “up” to the middle- and upper-classes. Rather than an egalitarian project, the pleasure ground was an attempt at social engineering (Cranz 1982).

In the 1880s another parks movement began, fuelled by a Rationalistic ideology which posited humans separate from nature. In fact, nature, Rationalists argued, was not necessarily in harmony and therefore in its wildness “morally ambiguous” (Young 2004, 4). The Rationalistic approach to parks deemed total control and design necessary to yield the good in nature. Reforming the pleasure ground then required regularity in design and areas dedicated to specialized (approved) activities like baseball and instructional flora programs. In the minds of park reformers, their restructuring better realized cures to the same social problems that Romantic park proponents identified (Platt 1994, Young 2004).
Thus, through both the Romantic and Rationalistic periods, park advocates’ main objective, to promote and cure, through the mind and body, social problems, manifested in a top-down approach. Yet even with early pleasure grounds, people used them in active (rather than passive) ways, such as in horseback riding and rowing. The later reformed parks continued with activities not necessarily envisioned by park purists, such as “racing, galloping and jumping…merry-go-round, toboggan sliding…watching shows such as circuses and shooting matches” (Cranz 1982, 7).

Still, park planners maintained a large amount of control over park activities. For example, gambling and drinking, part of the perceived urban evils, were outlawed early on in parks; “Folk entertainment like horseshoe pitching, tomahawk twirling, and bullet throwing were not refined enough for city parks despite their popularity,” and burlesque shows, particularly popular in New Orleans, “filled the newspapers but not park programs” (Cranz 1982, 19). Park officials also fought the inclusion of shops, cafes, and vendors because they were elements of the urban. Music was regulated—music that was “overly stimulating” and “associated with dancing” never made it into park programs (Cranz 1982, 10). And, since politics and religion caused fiery debate, activities and events around them rarely occurred in parks. In fact, and contrary, it seems, to Mitchell’s understanding of Berkeley’s People’s Park, ordinances banned political meetings and other assemblies. Yet because military assemblies and parades marked a unified people, they were allowed and promoted in parks (Cranz 1982). Taken together, park policies seemed to command a certain submission to a social ideal, one sponsored by elites, one that closely regulated behavior along lines elites favored.
Following these first park movements, the City Beautiful Movement perpetuated aestheticization. Nationally gaining momentum in the early 1900s and lasting at least until the 1950s (Platt 1994), the City Beautiful Movement encouraged new green spaces and additional embellishment of existing public squares, plazas, and parks (Cranz 1982, Knox 1994, Platt 1994, Young 2004). These advocates furthered the civilizing cause that beautiful urban landscape pictures were expected to have on urban populations.

**Tourist Landscapes Framing Public Space**

It is not surprising then that early scholarly research in tourism sometimes encouraged a unchanging understanding of tourist sites, particularly those with an impressive material presence. For example, the marking of tourist sites, as Dean MacCannell discusses, whether in material form (as a sign in the landscape), or in more abstract form (as in a tourist brochure), situates the tourist site as frozen in time and thus “preserved” (MacCannell 1976). Following MacCannell, little room remains for a site to change over time—its preservation paramount to its value and use. As Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt suggests, “Tourist places produce particular temporalities” (Bærenholdt 2004, 3). Because in practice and representation, landscape acts as:

- the first and most enduring medium of contact between tourist and prospective or consumed place of travel….Tourist landscapes, moreover, through promotion, sustenance, and transformation of their specific functions, are among the most significant cultural battling grounds on which much of today’s sociocultural difference is increasingly created and development negotiated (Terkenli 2000, 180).
At the heart of these battle grounds are often issues of preservation and therefore aestheticization. Moreover, interests in preservation and aestheticization “inherently” have an advantage in these battles because, “the implicit understanding of place suffers from a ‘hegemony’ of vision that reduces places to the visual formations constituting place images” (Bærenholdt 2004, 5).

In New Orleans the importance of preserving historically unique sites has roots in this kind of tourism (PCR 1913, *The New Orleans Item* 1922, Taylor 1935, *The States Item* 1948) and thus a tourist gaze, which lends itself to the aestheticization of landscapes. John Urry (1990, 1995) develops the idea of touring and the tourist gaze through processes within the gaze. Urry describes why “places [are] gazed upon,” how “the tourist gaze is directed,” and what “the gaze is constructed through,” (Urry 1990, 3) but in doing so constrains the act of tourism to the visual, to sight. He also connects tourism with a variety of social and cultural practices such as “education, photography, music, sport, and shopping,” because they in part sustain the tourist gaze. Tourists’ “products” such as photographs, postcards, and models reproduce and extend the gaze (Urry 1990), emphasizing representation and preservation.

While Urry expands ideas and significance of tourism socially, the scale of his work precludes the individual tourist and separates the tourist from the tourist site. He also separates other actors in tourism from study. The propensity of exploring the tourist gaze or conceptualizing gazing as the predominate, if not sole, tourism practice comes at the exclusion of embodied practices and frames numerous contemporary
studies of the tourist and tourism (see, for example, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Lippard 1999, Jokinen and Veijola 2000).

Further, tourism literature has criticized and lamented the effects of tourism on local places because it erodes their authenticity:

[The] localities themselves [their landscapes] turn into caricatures or mutant reflections of their past. While popular knowledge of the world’s cultural landscape is increasingly global, understanding of individual places becomes increasingly shallow. The inevitable result, it seems, is the vulgarization of the world’s cultural geography (Nijman 1999, 102).¹⁷

Yet this perspective is limiting because what is authentic and “good” often depends upon setting up a qualitative hierarchy, elevating the past over the present. Following this viewpoint denies the validity of tourism as a meaningful social practice. Certainly, commoditization, which tourism in part produces, alters local places; however, as recent tourism literature suggests, tourism creates other significant meanings socio-spatially.

Geographers like Mike Crang, have sought “to reinscribe tourism as a space of activity, as a practice producing knowledge not necessarily in the form registered by a theoretical gaze” (Crang 1999, 244). Crang sees fluidity and multiplicity in tourism practice, following Löfgren (1985), he states, “We need then to think about the ways structures of journeys and particular technologies of travel intersect with those of representation” (Crang 1999, 251). Crang is calling for research that explores representation and practice, not as a dichotomy but as a continuum.

¹⁷ Similarly, MacCannell (1976) argues that once a site is marked as a tourist site then its authenticity is compromised.
Chris Rojek and Urry (1997), like Crang, also discuss the production of knowledge and explain that power and control are woven into privileging the visual because the visual is not only a way of seeing but also a way of knowing. Rojek and Urry consider embodiment integral to the tourist and tourism; for example, they call for an analysis of different senses in tourist practices. They ask, “What senses are involved in perception, interpretation, appreciation, and denigration of other spaces? How do we sense what other places are like?” (Rojek and Urry 1997, 5). Seeking ways of knowing beyond the tourist gaze, incorporating active tourists, these authors and others extend the depth of tourism practices and the understanding of tourist sites, revealing even preserved landscapes as fluid.

Thus, as geographers have begun to elucidate numerous tourist settings, diverse social meanings can be gleaned from tourism. Scholars such as Michael Neumann (1999), Tim Edensor (1998), Karen Till (1999), Dydia DeLysyser (1999), and Steve Hoelscher (2003) explore tourism meanings through ethnographic studies. They elucidate how tourists express the self and perhaps transform the self, in part, through engaging with the tourist site, but they also explore how tourist spaces are presented, regulated, and represented.

For example, Dydia DeLysyser’s work on the ghost town of Bodie State Historic Park in California illustrates the strength of an ethnographic approach. She examines the concept of authenticity and how visitors construct ideas of the authentic through landscape and myth. DeLysyser argues that visitors’ experiences inform their lives in powerful ways as they engage with the long-ago ghost town and narratives of the mythic
West. She goes beyond Edward Bruner’s (1994) discussion of various categories of authenticity to “trace the presentation and interpretation of authenticity in Bodie’s landscape” (DeLyser 1999, 613). DeLyser finds that visitors interpret the past through their contemporary social context, relying on social memory and their embodied practices of touring Bodie to form their own narratives. These narratives reinforce contemporary Anglo-American values in visitors\(^\text{18}\) such as hard work (DeLyser 1999). Indeed, as Jim and Nancy Duncan remind us, history is more than representations, it is “a ‘making,’ a ‘doing,’ and an interpreting of those facts with performative or causative power” (Duncan and Duncan 2004, 149). Thus, along with Cope and Domosh, DeLyser would agree with Crang that practices are accumulatory projects that open “up possibilities for thinking through the interaction of tourism practices, social formations and self-definition” (Crang 1999, 252).

Most of the studies above examine present-day tourists and tourism; however, some geographers such as Atkinson and Cosgrove (1998) and DeLyser (2003) investigate tourists and tourism in the past—a challenging project. Assembling data from guidebooks and iconography, for example, Atkinson and Cosgrove explore the Vittoriano Emanuele II monument in Rome to uncover “the monument’s intended and official meanings, and to examine how a changing Italian state sought to concretize the always fluid and elusive idea of Italianness” (Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998, 30). They

\(^{18}\) DeLyser explains that visitors to Bodie are “nearly all white, middle class, and overwhelmingly of suburban origins.... To study how landscape is interpreted in Bodie, then is to study aspects of hegemonic Whiteness....” (DeLyser 1999, 605).
discovered that particular “bodily spatialities” were part of the monument’s landscape and that public memory was manipulated through the Vittoriano monument in a performative rhetoric (Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998, 30). As Crang notes, “guidebooks, postcards, travel books, brochures, adverts, and the like…set normative agendas” of what should be seen and how (Crang 2004, 77). This process occurs in other places too, as Mitchell asserts, “certain forms of normative conceptualization of the city and public space—indeed, certain utopian images of what the city could or should be—have been and remain crucial” (Mitchell 2003, 10).

At a far different scale, DeLyser uses “tiny archival traces” in order to recover meanings of tourists from the past who visited real landscapes formed from fictional landscapes in the nineteenth century novel, Ramona (DeLyser 2003, 887). Not only are the tourists who toured Ramona sites gone, but also the sites themselves have mostly ceased to be tourist destinations. DeLyser explains that most research involving these types of issues focuses on deconstructing aspects of presentation. She creates interpretations of meaning and practice, revealing the personally performative nature of tourist practices that incorporate particular images into unique meanings and understandings (DeLyser 2003, 902). For as Crang argues in tourism research “we…need to inject…dynamism…the tourist is not just someone who has a particular cultural baggage or who responds to a given culture of a destination. These two elements are mutually constitutive, and from this it follows that both place and person may change, and change the other.” (Crang 2004, 79). Thus, by considering “defunct”
tourist sites, DeLyser also shifts the temporality of tourist places from islands *in* time to dynamic landscapes *through* time.

Numerous geographers are exploring this performative nature of practice (see, for example Coleman and Crang 2002, Houston and Pulido 2002, Hoelscher 2003, Waitt 2003, Szerszynski, et al 2003, Bærenholdt et al 2004, Crang 2004, Crouch 2004). Tim Edensor explores embodiment, reflexivity, and contestation in tourist and tourist worker performances. Edensor suggests that a range of choreographies exist from, for example, liminal sexual adventures to directed heritage tours and that these choreographies “can both renew existing conventions and provide opportunities to challenge them” (Edensor 2001, 78). Importantly, he explains that the “renewing” and “challenging” both occur along the entire range of performances (Edensor 2001).

In the above research, scholars show that the tourist does not simply visit a site, but in part constitutes that site, its meanings constantly reshaping and refiguring. Previously ignored through much of the literature, today a great amount of work focuses on the tourist; so much so, David Crouch has insisted that we must show the “tourist-in-action” in tourist practices (Crouch 2004, 86). Nevertheless, I believe it’s worth suggesting “tourism-in-action” lest we begin to neglect actors in relationship with tourists, tourism, and tourist places.

Philip Crang (1997) discusses other actors in tourism. He reveals that many employees in tourism work are in part constitutive of the tourist product through social and spatial relations. He also defines these relations as performances that help
determine the character of the tourist product. Not only is the tourist product constructed through the performance of employees, but these workers also produce themselves, in part, through their jobs. According to (Philip) Crang their identities are forged through their work, and “This entails producing their bodies (both through working on them and with them); their expressions; their feelings; in sum their ‘performed selves’” (Crang 1997, 152-153). He argues that investigating the character of these performances “in a particular employment situation [at a small scale] allows an analysis that goes beyond generalized assertions of the dramaturgical character of tourism work into the specific constructions of tourism sites and their performed personae” (Crang 1997, 138). (Philip) Crang shows that the division between tourism and real life is quite porous and that in fact no real separation exists. Indeed, in the words of Miles Richardson, “‘world’ is not an external thing, existing apart from our actions and awaiting our entrance; but is dependent upon our being-in” (Richardson 1982, 421). The world includes, of course, practices of tourism, and Jackson Square’s world includes a multitude of human practices along with those of tourism.

**Landscapes and Performance**

In the last section, I reviewed work that emphasized practice in how places and people are shaped, but as explained earlier, representations greatly shape places and people too. To be clear, representations are ideals, whether in material or conceptual forms, and practices are actual “doings” in physical and abstract forms. In truth, distinctions between representations and practices may become quite blurred and thus it may be best to understand these concepts on the same continuum and as guides to help
us interpret meaning in the landscape. Additionally, the work employed ideas of performance, applying concepts based in Judith Butler’s (1990) performance theory, which explores relationships in and between practice and representation (ideal social roles).

Butler first introduced the concepts of performativity and performance to the broader realm of the social sciences calling for a more embodied way of theorizing relationships between social structures and individual agency (the ability to decide and act on one’s own accord) (Butler 1990). She focuses on the construction of gender identity, which she argues was distinct from one’s biological sex. She shows gender as a social construction—men and women learn to perform every-day life in ways that are labeled as the natural order. Interpreting Butler’s theory, Nash’s states, “Gender does not exist outside its ‘doing’ but its performance is also a reiteration of previous ‘doings’ that become naturalized as gender norms,” and similarly, learned performances associated with particular spaces and places may seem fixed and natural (Nash 2000, 655).

been problematic for scholars (Ruddick 1996a). Ruddick argues that the concept of scale is thought of as:

interacting in discrete nested hierarchies, packed in the way that one would contain a set of Russian wooden dolls—each doll containing a smaller version of itself that patrols the boundaries of its contents. This approach tends to avoid relating scales to one another, but rather treats one scale as “dominant” and the others as “residual or emergent” (Ruddick 1996a, 139).

Instead, Ruddick suggests that the history and use of a public space determines how various scales interact. This means that a small public square may be more influential, for example, in creating social identities at a national level than at a local level.

Examining other facets of social scale, Nicky Gregson uses car-boot sales (flea markets), to emphasize the importance of “actors”—their bodies, movements, and their sensualities—to the sites of these events in the making of spaces and places (Gregson and Rose 2000). Gregson shows how people go against the grain of normative retail representations and practices yet at times reinforce highly traditional gendered roles by means of citational practices, long-established conventional behaviors. These performances occur at different scales, from the larger space of the flea markets to the personal spaces in the exchanges between seller and customer. Gregson does not refute Butler but takes her theory beyond gender and dominant power structures to include space and place, realizing a greater social range in the explanatory ability of performance theory.

Moreover, citational practices or “doings” of persons are not just that of a hegemonic system of representations and practices. Rather, they are interrelational to
multiple subject positions, representations, and practices, which allows for slippage, for transgressions and unsettlings, which create new spaces that form and re-form collective and individual identities even while they are infused with normative ideals. Though Tim Cresswell in *In Place/Out of Place* doesn’t explicitly employ Butler’s performance theory, his language and analysis are in many ways analogous. He explains, “Space and place are used to structure a normative landscape—the way in which ideas about what is right, just, and appropriate are transmitted through space and place” (Cresswell 1996, 8). Drawing from Bourdieu (1977), Cresswell further explains that, “certain orderings of space provide a structure for experience and help to tell us who we are in society” (Cresswell 1996, 8). Yet these assumed understandings and these dominant meanings of space and place are never complete, and the sites themselves used to question the normative world—whether intended or otherwise (Cresswell 1996, 9).

Because Jackson Square is such a place—a place imbued with normative understandings in that it is a celebrated public space, urban park, and tourist site—framing analyses through performance facilitates interpreting how the Square has been patterned over time and how it effects (and affects) identities. In doing so, nuances emerge from the data at various scales that otherwise might be disregarded as insignificant because of their taken-for-grantedness and subtlety. Thus, the ideal social order becomes unsettled through the landscape and different orders, meanings, and processes exposed. In chapters four through seven, I employ performance in varying degrees of explicitness, but always the performative—that is the interrelational facets of representation and practice—frames my analyses. But first, in chapter three, following
Adrian Franklin and (Mike) Crang’s call for studies to “investigate the sensual, embodied, performative dimensions of change” (2001, 14), I turn to a discussion of data collection and data analysis. My methods and methodology reflect performative ideas where research design and data come to be in processes that engage with both representational ideals and actual practices.
Chapter Three

Imperfect Performances: Doing Ethnographic and Archival Research

Choosing a Topic or a Qualitative Search

My dissertation research started with preliminary exploration of possible topics. Some doctoral students have a topic in mind well before they begin a program, and their topics are often based on years of keen interest in a certain place, like Southeast Asia (Del Casino 2001), people, like the Okies (Alexander 2004), or commerce, like a New England town’s fishing industry (Fagan 2003). In addition, these same students, particularly those qualitative researchers, have existing personal connections with their topics. Of course, this is not always the case, and in fact, scholars who specialize in qualitative methodology suggest that novice researchers choose a topic not close to their own heart, for additional difficulty might entangle with an already complicated process of qualitative research (Bogdan and Biklen 1992, Denezen and Lincoln 2000, Kitchen and Tate 2000).19

Aware of this sage advice, initially, I ignored it. I wanted nothing to do with any place or persons—any topic—that wasn’t deeply close to my heart. Perhaps somewhat egoistically, I thought of the places, people, and activities that had been and were in my life and how great it would be to elucidate some combination of these in a dissertation.

19 At the same time, these scholars suggest that one must have a ardent interest in a topic in order to see the project through and to create a quality dissertation. Further, geographers and anthropologists, for example, have carefully considered researching one’s own community (see, for example, DeLyser 2001) and those who go “native” (see, for example, Narayan 1993).
gave lip service to other topics but came back to “my” topics again and again. My advisor, Dydia DeLyser, warned me, for example, that if I made a topic of running, I might forever change running for myself, and I might not want that. Though I acknowledged her insightful caution, I found it difficult to listen to her because her dissertation (DeLyser 1998) was on her own tiny community of the ghost town in Bodie State Historic Park in California. I felt defensive and jealous of her and others who studied some place, some people, or some topic already connected to them. Too, I thought something lacked in me for not having a topic firmly in place, and as my first year of the program came to a close, not having a topic only intensified my feelings of lack. I wondered how I could ever spend years on a topic that in a sense I would have to meet for the first time. What if the novelty of a topic blindsided me? What if I ended up hating the topic? Or worse, what if I failed?

With time, money, and credentials riding on a dissertation, I didn’t want to risk exploring something totally unknown to me. Desperately, I wanted a topic connected to me, but more than that, I realize now, I wanted a plan. I like plans. I come from a long line of planners. Unsurprisingly, my first job out of undergraduate school was as a land planner. Early in life, I learned that meticulous plans created success and produced a day-to-day sense of peace as I worked toward particular goals. For example, from my family’s timely planting and care of gardens and yearly fattening of a steer, to training programs for different running races, to participating in the progression of sacraments as a Catholic, I relied on plans that produced certain known outcomes. Each of these goals or aims called for a clear roadmap.
Over that first year as I doctoral student, however, I learned that qualitative research did not include as definitive a roadmap as what I was accustomed to using. In part, beginning to understand qualitative methodology was how I learned to consider topics unconnected to me, to trust this particular process of inquiry from the very beginning. I realized that plans were good but strict plans could also foreclose opportunity along the way.

Certainly, I already knew this intellectually, but I’m not sure I ever felt it; certainly, I never practiced it in my own life. However, one day in the qualitative methods seminar that I was taking, Dydia (the instructor) played Benny’s Goodman’s 1938 Carnegie Hall performance of *Sing, Sing, Sing*. Then, playing back the song in pieces, she explained how with years of training, the band members produced a complex spontaneous sound. Trusting in their skills and the method/process of jazz, the musicians created the song anew. In fact, Goodman played an unplanned and previously thought impossible high note on his clarinet, to a transfixed crowd. Then in detail, Dydia compared qualitative methodology to *Sing, Sing, Sing*. I believe that day was the first time that I felt the significance of a qualitative perspective and probably the first time that I opened to the idea of what might be rather than what is to be (Pratt 2000, Smith 2000).

Of course, this feeling, these realizations only complicated matters for me concerning a dissertation topic. I continued wrestling with topics and with my ideals, then the day came that I received an e-mail from Craig Colten. Craig, who had written
extensive historical geographies of New Orleans (2000, 2002), had a great idea for my dissertation topic: Jackson Square in New Orleans. In the e-mail, he went through quite a bit of effort to outline the possibilities for me. It was a great idea, but unfortunately, I was immediately suspect of Jackson Square as a topic—for me. First, I didn’t come up with the idea. This was a ridiculous reason, but true nonetheless. Second, I never had had a fondness or fascination for New Orleans—for example, it had taken me a semester to visit the historical city that was only one hour and fifteen minutes away. Third, I had no connection to Jackson Square. Never completely revealing all my concerns, over the next several months I talked with both Craig and Dydia about the potential of Jackson Square as a dissertation topic. I also had important conversations with Miles Richardson, who had completed studies on plazas in Latin America (1978, 1982) and Helen Regis, who had ongoing research projects in New Orleans (1999, 2001), concerning Jackson Square and dissertation research in general. Jackson Square did offer a tremendous opportunity for my academic training, for exploring space, place, and identity over time at various scales, ideas that had long held my interest. Still, I wasn’t sold on Jackson Square. Craig suggested that I visit the Square fresh, not so much as a tourist, but as a researcher on preliminary reconnaissance.

In my first official “meeting of” Jackson Square, I was impressed—with the smell of garbage, effluence, and alcohol and the feel of hot, humid, August air, all of

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20 In 2005, fortuitously before Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast and New Orleans, Craig Colten published *Unnatural Metropolis: Wresting New Orleans from Nature*, which has become an important resource in understanding the human-environment relations of the city.
which nauseated both my body and mind. Readers, artists, tourists, homeless, gutter punks, and entertainers still sprinkled the Square even during this low visitor season. On my way back to Baton Rouge, a tourist’s comment repeatedly played in my mind, “Nothing like the smell of piss in the morning” (fn 08.12.01). I felt no affinity and certainly no common ground with any part of Jackson Square except for perhaps St. Louis Cathedral. Growing up Catholic meant that I could go to Mass there and be reassured that not all was unconnected to me in Jackson Square.

But, I had become a Fallen Catholic, meaning that I didn’t attend Mass and participate in sacraments regularly. In fact, I didn’t know where I stood with Catholicism or a higher power. Further, throughout my fieldwork, I never chose to venture into these areas of my life. In truth, I avoided this particular profoundly private exploration.

Hence, I found myself with a potentially super topic but with no personal connection to it, or at least not one that I wanted. Secretly, I was also embarrassed that the strangeness of Jackson Square made me personally uncomfortable. Graduate work, I thought, was supposed to be about exploration, if not adventure. Persistence in my want to feel in place, to be connected, to know already, in some way, frustrated me.

However, Sing, Sing, Sing also persisted in continuing to play in my mind and that feeling I had in class came back to me with each play. Eventually, after I had weighed all the pros and cons of potential topics, I dropped my fantasies of going
forward with a topic that was personally connected to me. Looking to what might be, I chose to study Jackson Square. Further, in the early phases of designing an ethnographic and archival dissertation, I allowed myself to wander through many ideas and data sources to understand the Square’s making and meanings over time. In truth, wandering became part and parcel throughout my research. I was able to do this because of the better understanding I gained from certain aspects of qualitative methodology. That is, using my training in qualitative methods, I attempted with varying degrees of success to let the data speak and lead me to an understanding of the making and meanings of Jackson Square.

Performing Qualitative Research

The manner in which I came to a dissertation topic highlights the personal, conditional, and process-driven nature of qualitative research. Thus in a comparable way, qualitative inquiry enables the dynamicism of iconic landscapes like Jackson Square to come to the fore because it offers a process-oriented approach concerned with “elucidating human environments and human experiences” (Hay 2000, 3). Accordingly, Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzen and Lincoln 2000, 8, emphasis in original).

Rather than definitive explanations, which can be verified or reproduced, qualitative researchers, using a vast array of concepts and methods, place more importance on
understandings. We seek to listen and give space to multiple voices and ways of knowing. The nature of our questions leads us to “answers” that are always partial, changing, and disputed to varying degrees. In fact, it is in revealing the partial, changing, and disputed that we may elucidate significant meanings and understandings.

My initial research questions were extremely broad\(^2^2\) and though I wanted to study Jackson Square over time, my “final” questions worked back from present issues and phenomena in the Square. As my ethnographic and archival research progressed, my questions focused on transgressive or unsettling performances. How are transgressive or unsettling performances constituted in Jackson Square? How are they policed and negotiated? How do they in part constitute place and identity at various scales? Exploring these questions through time has led me to particular understandings of the making and meanings—the patterning—of the Square that go against the grain of normative understandings and values.

As I show in subsequent chapters, normative meanings have thoroughly imbued Jackson Square’s understanding, so that conventional associations appear natural. Therefore, I looked to the everyday through ethnographic and archival methods to show other significant meanings of Jackson Square that emerge in accumulatory processes, not instantiated in normative discourses. To that end, I employ ideas of

\(^2^2\) Those questions from my proposal include: What performances have taken place in Jackson Square? How have they been performed? What performances do occur in Jackson Square? How are they performed? What have been and are the social meanings of performances in the Square? How have performances interacted and related with each other? How do they today? How have public space and tourism been implicated in performances in the Square? How do they today?
performance in both how I research and how I understand data because in performance, the social, including scholarly research, is always emergent and incomplete.

Indeed, performance has a creative resonance, making it appeal to geographers seeking ways to bring their analyses, fieldwork, and writing alive (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). In what follows, I explain my research design, methods for data collection, and technique for analysis, employing a performative perspective. First, however, I discuss ideas of the field, reflexivity, and positionality that inform my understanding of what a critical research performance means. Throughout the chapter, my discussion shows that lines between theory and practice and between the subject of research and the researcher are continually blurred. As I explain some of the interpretive consequences of my research performances to this study, I simultaneously expose how my performances produce data and lines of inquiry by breaking apart the process and then stitching it together again to reveal the how through the threads of the research process.

Fielding Reflexivity and Positionality in Research Performances

As I discussed in chapter two, performance is a means to think about the “day-to-day improvisations, which are the means to produce the here and now” (Thrift 2000, 577). Performance is also a means to reveal, for example, the expressive power of ethnography and work in the archives, bringing to the fore manipulations of time and space in the field (Thrift 2000). “The field” includes both the material and conceptual places of our research. As Jennifer Hyndman argues, “We are always in the field”

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23 Because performance began as a theory for empirical analysis, I first (in chapter two) discussed it as such and now move to ideas of performative research.
(Hyndman 2001, 262), from our first days of preliminary research, whether using ethnographic or archival methods, to writing up our analyses. Thinking of the field in this way calls for reflexivity through the entire research process. I use reflexivity here as “self-critical introspection and a self-conscious scrutiny of oneself as researcher” (Hay 2000, 195). Thus, reflexive research performances require an awareness of one’s positionality. I use positionality as “a researcher’s social, locational and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants in [which] it may be influenced by biographical characteristics such as class, race and gender, as well as various formative experiences” (Hay 2000, 193). Positionality has real influence on data collection and how we think about data. Thus, identifying personal influences on and in our research leads to more valid studies than unreflexive accounts do.

For instance,24 my life-long relationship and more recent misgivings with Catholicism impinged upon my data in terms of gathering information on St. Louis Cathedral’s relationship with Jackson Square. Simply put, I kept myself from talking with St. Louis Cathedral’s parishioners and the Cathedral’s Monsignor.25 I observed the parishioners and Monsignor outside the Cathedral and listened to Jackson Square locals’ accounts of interactions with them; however, I was reluctant to pursue any kind of rapport with the parish and rarely went to Mass. My obstinacy grew in this regard and

24 This is merely one example of how my positionality shapes how I effect my project.

25 Once, however, I briefly spoke with the Monsignor. The artist Jan had introduced me to him as he walked down the alley. She briefly mentioned that I was studying the Square. The Monsignor was in a hurry. As he shook my hand and was walking away he said, “It’s a zoo” (fn 08.22.04).
transferred to my inability to access the Dioceses archives. During my fieldwork, I was aware of these missed opportunities, these voices associated with Jackson Square. Nevertheless, I decided that I was unwilling to venture into a place that I sensed would bring me very personal distress.

Here, I limited the voices that I could share both in the methods that I “collected” and what emerged from them. Further, my strong relationship with and understanding of Catholicism may well make it extremely difficult to yield analysis concerning the Cathedral that isn’t deeply imbued with my feelings. Being or often becoming aware of one’s positionality with a research project allows us to acknowledge how our research is fractured and biased. Acknowledging partiality, in both its definitions, however, also means that we do not necessarily understand its consequences in our interpretations and “conclusions.” To do so would contradict tenets of qualitative methodology (Rose 1997).

In the following section, I discuss the basic structure of my ethnographic work and the research practices of ethnography using a performative approach. Drawing from various geographers, I explore the complexity of this reflexive means to understand our research and along the way, continue to reveal moments of my own research performance. Then, in the next section, I explain the framework for my archival work and research practices in the archives, again using a performative approach, drawing from various geographers, and showing instances of my own research performance. Though I separate these two methods, as I explain in the archival
section, in practice I relied on their interconnectedness to help sharpen my understandings of Jackson Square.

**The Basics of My Ethnographic Work**

From October 2003 through September 2004, I participated in ethnographic research in Jackson Square. During this time, I lived 15 minutes walking distance from the Square in The Marigny neighborhood. Many of the locals in Jackson Square live in this more affordable area, and often I saw readers, artists, and entertainers, for example, walking to the Square with their carts in tow. I saw these same people spend time at local coffee shops, cafes, and bars, where I hung out too. Hence, I was able to talk with these people outside of Jackson Square, which gave me data concerning the Square and also perhaps more importantly gave me credibility. They usually saw my living in The Marigny as a sign of commitment to my study and of my ability to understand the City and its neighborhoods. In my year of fieldwork, I went to Jackson Square an average of three to five times a week, stayed between one to five hours at a time, and always wrote field notes in a small notebook.

In addition, for eight months, between November 2003 and June 2004, I worked at The Kite Shop on Jackson Square at the corner of St. Peter and Chartres Streets. Generally, I worked alone two or three days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. While I worked, I kept a small notebook behind the counter, taking notes when time allowed. During slow periods, I stood in the doorway of the shop and watched the happenings in the Pedestrian Mall. Naturally, I talked with tourists but also Jackson Square locals who came to visit me there.
When I interviewed for the sales clerk position at The Kite Shop, I was forthright about my research on Jackson Square as I was with other Jackson Square locals. Rarely, however, did I feel compelled to tell tourists about my study. I wasn’t aware I was doing this until quite late in my research. Looking back, I believe that I felt tourists had fewer potential repercussions from what they told me, for their day-to-day life did not involve Jackson Square. More than this, however, I think that subconsciously, I felt these tourists, these outsiders, had less “ownership” of Jackson Square, which directly contradicts my conscious ideal that public spaces belong to all equally. Thus, in practice, through my own research performance, I experienced how difficult ideals are to live.

Occasionally, I took pictures, but after the majority of people knew me in the Square, I found it difficult to photograph spontaneously. Fortunately, I had an independent photographer covertly working for me. In different seasons and on at least seven separate days, my mother, Veronica Sheehan, walked Jackson Square independently of me, taking pictures of people, activities, and structures. She provided in-action and “tourist” photographs for my study. Further, my mother’s eye provided alternative interpretations of the Square through her framing of each photograph.

Originally, after I had gotten comfortable with being in the Square and with people there, I planned to conduct semi-structured interviews with those who worked or regularly hung out in the Square, its Pedestrian Mall, and the Pontalba shops as well as St. Louis Cathedral parishioners and staff, Pontalba apartment residents, and tourists.
Though I asked many questions of the people from most of these groups,\textsuperscript{26} my questioning was usually much more organic than any kind of interview. I decided to leave the idea of semi-structured interviewing behind because the spontaneity of Jackson Square implored me to continue to place my research efforts in participant observation. Also, I spent most of my time with Jackson Square locals, at their setups and on park benches, for example, on the Pedestrian Mall, spending much less effort talking with tourists; rather, I observed them. Indeed, geographers have discussed the great challenges in ethnographic work with tourists (Gable and Handler 1993, 1994, May 1996, DeLyser 1999). Though I found some of the same complications, I spent more of my time with locals because I found in them a coherent community, which appealed to me. Also, many of these groups had long been marginalized; therefore, I found the need to listen to their voices more pressing.

In order to begin to deal with the amount of hand-written field notes, I typed and expanded on them once I returned to my home in The Marigny.\textsuperscript{27} Then after my fieldwork, I coded my notes—the data—according to particular themes that emerged from the data. My technique for coding was based on Robert Bogdan and Sari Bilklen’s (1992) method that I learned in the qualitative methods seminar. Sixteen categories

\textsuperscript{26} See previous section on my relationship with the people associated with St. Louis Cathedral. In addition, I rarely talked with Pontalba residents in part because their presence was largely undetectable in a day-to-day embodied sense.

\textsuperscript{27} In actuality, I was constantly behind with this task, sometimes as much as a month behind. In part, I believe this was due to how drained I felt after coming home from Jackson Square.
emerged from my data, though the data overlapped categories. Thus, I frequently labeled the same data with multiple categories. Then, I scanned all my coded data, over 1500 pages. I counted the number of different categories on each page and then printed that many copies of it. Next, I sorted the printed pages into stacks based on my coding categories.

Reviewing these stacks, I was able to uncover more relationships and themes in and between data. For example, coding category “5: Insider/Outsider interactions” included Jackson Square locals such as musicians’, readers’, artists’, homeless peoples’, entertainers’, and gutter punks’ dealings with tourists. After labeling “5” over the top of appropriate field note data, copying all pages where the number 5 appeared, and separating those pages into the same stack, I then carefully reviewed these data focusing on issues and topics that appeared within insider/outsider interactions. Next, I sorted insider/outsider interactions based on particular groups in the Square and then compared interactions between groups. In this way, I discovered, for example, diverse social transgressions and relationships. As I briefly discussed in the last section, to recognize what were data and to understand how to analyze that data required

appreciating the complexities and complications of methodology and methods. Thus, in
the next section, I elaborate on performing ethnographic research.

Some Thoughts on Ethnographic Work and Telling the Living Truth

Steve Herbert explains that ethnographic methods “rest upon participant
observation…whereby the researcher spends considerable time observing and
interacting with a social group” (Herbert 2000, 551). Having the potential to critically
engage with the every-day and to reveal social groups’ “knowledge and meaning
structures” (Herbert 2000, 551), ethnography is a process, “a journey, to tell the truth,
the truth that lives in the lives of others” (Richardson 2002). As the following example
illustrates, the truth that lives is contingent upon time and experience.

In Jackson Square, two sometimes-homeless black men, Wheelie and The
Colonel refer to Jackson Square as their home, and both have spent many years living
on-and-off in the Square and on the levee in front of it. In 2003, both men had housing,
but they came back to the Square because “they know where they come from” and still
have many friends there (fn 11.04.03). The afternoon Wheelie and The Colonel were
telling me their stories, we sat on the steps of the St. Peter Street’s gates that lead out to
the Pedestrian Mall. Wheelie explained, “They used to sell slaves in those apartments,”
pointing to the Pontalba buildings that flank Jackson Square (fn 11.04.03). Though
never documented, both he and The Colonel believe this to be fact based on
information an old-timer, a longtime black homeless man, had given them. Continuing

29 Based on my archival research and reading in secondary sources I have never found
documentary evidence of this.
with pride beaming from their faces, they portrayed the people they knew in the Square as family. Though sometimes homeless, it seemed to me that they felt they and others had reclaimed and redefined the area from those days in the past. This is the truth that Wheelie and The Colonel live.

At the same time, as we talked, I noticed, and eventually both men pointed out to me, that tourists, mostly white and middle class, stared and glared at us—actually, mostly their eyes fixed on Wheelie and The Colonel. After a few of these instances, they told me that they could get “in trouble” for talking with me, a young white woman. Even though I was the one in many ways out-of-place, these men could, perhaps, suffer from my out-of-placeness. Thus, though Wheelie and The Colonel call Jackson Square home and where they belong, they experience home and belonging in a contradictory manner. The truth that lives, at least for a time, for Wheelie and The Colonel is that even “at home,” even in belonging, they are out-of-place. Yet, from the first part of this example, we see that that isn’t wholly the case either and the truth lives, transforms, goes back on itself, and then moves onward in various directions.30

Importantly then, the truth that lives is a fluid idea and attempting to reveal the living truth through research means that we as researchers are bound to the conditions of reflexive methodology, where “order should emerge from the field rather than be imposed on the field” (Herbert 2000, 552, emphasis in original). In addition, disorder or

30 During my time as a graduate student (2000-2006), Dr. Miles Richardson described the truth in ways such as these within various contexts.
contradictions from the field should be exposed because as Wheelie and The Colonel show, the truth lives through these conditions too.

**Creating the Living Truth**

To diminish the tendency of imposing order, performative ethnography asks *how* researchers practice and interpret data based on the researcher’s relationship with data and relations in the field. Working through the *how*, Heidi Nast calls for a re-working of reflexivity and the field that challenges our theoretical suppositions and methods, particularly concerning ethnography (Nast 1998). Living in the Kano Palace of Nigeria, for two years, she considers how she and women in the kingdom interacted through body spaces and body politics. Though Nast does not specifically engage with performance, she employs these ideas through her emphasis on the interrelations and negotiation of body, space, and place within the Kano culture. She includes discussions of her friendships, embarrassments, and every-day, mundane activities. Nast states that politics and interactions in fieldwork are often by chance and are always only partial. These aspects control social relations in the field, and Nast notes that not only is “the field everywhere and nowhere; it is every body” (Nast 1998, 111). Therefore, data arises through place from relations of researcher and subject(s) and through what they *say and do* (Nast 1998, Herbert 2000, Parr 2001). Indeed, Nigel Thrift claims that this process calls for “an observant participant rather than a participant observer” (Thrift 2000, 556). Ethnography then, in a performative sense, is an embodied method (Parr 2001).

As in Gregson’s ethnographic study of flea markets, she was not “just understanding and interpreting discursive [textual] accounts... but observing and
interpreting the visual, aural, olfactory space of car-boot sales [flea markets], and participating in [their] production” (Gregson and Rose 2000, 435). Lees’s ethnographic approach in her study of the Vancouver library expresses a comparable reflexivity, turning a critical eye on her research performance for a more nuanced apprehension of meaning through “an active and engaged process of understanding rather than as a product to be read off” (Lees 2001, 56). And, Hester Parr discusses how she literally used her body as a research tool in her ethnographic work with homeless people in public spaces (Parr 1998, 2001). Parr imitated dress, movements, and sounds of some of the homeless, many with mental illnesses, that she observed in Nottingham. Advocating the need to do this covertly in order to access these people’s worlds, Parr also argues that in any given social situation, research or otherwise, we use our bodies as a tool to communicate, fashioning ourselves uniquely in each situation. Thus, the researcher’s body may simultaneously have several roles in research: field, tool, and data. Together these interpretations of ethnographic practices show that the line between performances that we study and our own research performances is blurred—that is to say, our research performances quite consequentially constitute, in part, the hermeneutics of our studies (Ellis and Bochner 2000, Pratt 2000).

In my research, my body generated certain assumptions, readings, and positioning of me and for me. Early in my research, my “visible” demographics, a (relatively) young white middle-class woman, led some people to believe that I was a tourist. However, I found that once I got to know people in the Square, some took
liberties commenting on my body, especially when I wore shorts and sleeveless shirts. Because I had become acquainted with some Jackson Square locals, I no longer had certain social shields as a tourist, as a visitor. Uncomfortable with the sometimes-graphic conversations some local men instigated, I quickly learned that wearing pants and a t-shirt dissuaded some sexual commentary. More and more while in Jackson Square, I dressed like a tomboy. Actually, with a cap, short hair, jeans, and plain t-shirt, I was once mistaken for a boy by a man in the group of black men that spend time on the Chartres Street benches. Immediately, another man in the group came to my defense, saying that I wasn’t a boy but rather a lady. He continued to chastise the man who had mistaken my sex. I was amused by the first man’s misunderstanding and was warmed by the second man’s sense of looking out for me. The humorous incident allowed me to experience that Jackson Square locals may look out for each other in quite personal ways and brought me closer to the group. After this incident, we continued to talk, and the men seemed to open up more with me.

But, a question still lingers in my mind about these experiences. “Normally,” I, a (relatively) young white middle-class woman, would not instigate talk with some of the locals, those that are homeless, that I talked with regularly. Possibly, some men thought that the reason that I repeatedly wanted to speak with them, even after

31 The extremely hot and humid summers in New Orleans means that such dress is normal for locals and tourists.

explaining my research, was because I was interested in them romantically. In like manner, maybe the man who had mistaken me for a boy wouldn’t expect me to be talking with a group of black homeless men in a public place. Perhaps, because of this and my appearance, his mind subconsciously defaulted to a young white man, conceivably even a gutter punk from the Square. These examples highlight the performative qualities of ethnography, revealing, for example, the interplay of normative gender, class, and place practices and representations.

Rose (1997) reminds us, however, to be careful not to over-generalize in producing knowledge, and Pratt advises us that “reflexive accounts are not ones in which the researcher is firmly located” (Pratt 2000). For example, Vincent J. Del Casino Jr. shows the necessarily destabilized position of the researcher through simply choosing to be in different places in the field (Del Casino 2001). In Del Casino’s case, his decision to shift his focus from a place within an AIDS NGO to a district of its outreach meant that he found himself “being positioned and positioning [himself], in relation to different identity categories” (Casino 2001, 458). Different positioning matters because it redirects participant observation and therefore modifies research and alters its questions and interpretations (Casino 2001).

“Becoming” an Insider

Del Casino’s experience illustrates that becoming an insider can be far from a linear pursuit. That is, a researcher may begin as an outsider and then, as time goes by, the community trusts her more and eventually she becomes a part of the community in some way. But, Nast explains that we are constantly dealing with an insider-outsiderness
In my ethnographic research, I found that I was constantly negotiating insider-outsiderness, and this negotiating became extremely significant to how and what kind of data I collected and how I thought about that data.

Ironically, in the beginning, I found it easier to learn about Jackson Square as an outsider because in many ways, I passed for a tourist to locals. I walked along the Pedestrian Mall where readers, entertainers, musicians, and homeless worked, played, and hung out. Often I sat on park a bench, stopped to watch an entertainer’s show, or listened to one of the bands play. Sometimes, I bought a watercolor, received a reading, tipped musicians and entertainers, or gave spare change to homeless persons or gutter punks. My basic characteristics, I suspect, allowed me to appear harmless as readers, artists, musicians, and shop owners, for example, freely called me sweetheart, honey, darling, sugar, and girl. Therefore, though I was an outsider to locals, I was importantly, an inconspicuous, harmless outsider.

When I started writing in my pocket-sized notebook, however, my position in Jackson Square quickly changed, prompting questions from locals. For example, as I walked by the reader Princess Tonya, a Native American medicine woman, writing in my notebook, she called out to me. In an assertive, skeptical voice she said, “What are you doing?” (fn 03.12.02). This continued and even after two months in the Square, an artist firmly asked me what I was doing as I wrote in my notebook. Smiling, I quickly

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33 According to Princess Tonya.
replied that I wasn’t the police or the newspaper. She then quipped, “That’s refreshing” (fn 12.03.03).

Certainly, these reactions now marked my outsidersness as unknown and as a potential interloper. Further, these sorts of reactions, which regularly occurred in at least the first third of my fieldwork, provided me initial data to understand that the politics and contestation of the Square resided very near the surface in the day-to-day. Additionally, I learned that though note taking usually did cause initial distrust among Square locals, my photographing locals, a common tourist activity, caused no suspicion. The apparent naturalness of photographing in this landscape generated questions for my research concerning social transgressions and the separation of tourism from everyday life.

Eventually, because I spent so much time in Jackson Square, took the job at The Kite Shop, and studied the Tarot on the Square with Clark, a respected reader, most people knew me, knew of me (and my research), and recognized me as someone who regularly spent time there. In fact, I too came to have a place in Jackson Square. For example, one time while talking with the readers Marsha and Guy, I worried that I was taking too much of their time because I knew they were there to work. Marsha replied that I need not worry, “you have a job in Jackson Square too—you’re the researcher” (fn). And, near the end of my fieldwork when I arrived on the Pedestrian Mall where Mac, Haley, and Shirley were set up, Mac said, “At first, I said to Haley and Shirley,

34 Some Jackson Square artists, however, did take offense to tourists photographing their work. These objections stemmed from artists feeling that taking a photograph of their work was in effect stealing it.
‘Who’s that pretty girl walking down St. Ann,’ and then seeing you said, ‘Oh, it’s just our Rebecca’” (fn). On another day, when I was hanging out with Shirley at her setup, I started writing in my notebook. She remarked, “I always forget that you’re doing research on the Square” (fn). These examples highlight different ways the researcher may become a part of the study and a part of the place, illustrating that the place and the people are in some way changed through the interactions with the researcher.

Developing relationships with diverse groups and different people within those groups, however, brought new complications to my place in Jackson Square. Plainly speaking, not everyone likes one another or gets along; some even spoke in disgust of certain individuals and groups and openly had arguments. This, of course, is part of Jackson Square’s story: Alliances and divisions mark the Square. Because I wanted to learn about several different groups in Jackson Square, negotiating my position proved challenging and unfixed throughout my fieldwork, providing valuable insight into how groups related to one another.

**Position and Positioning in the Field**

Though working at The Kite Shop gave me easier access to storeowners’ opinions because they saw me as one of their own, many assumed that I shared their opinions concerning the Square. Usually, this wasn’t the case, but because the storeowners took for granted my position, I didn’t feel that I was misrepresenting myself by remaining silent. The owner of The Kite Shop never asked my opinion on current Square issues. His politics and beliefs concerning these issues, however, generally conflicted with my own ideas. Further, he had long been active in many
French Quarter preservation issues and those in the Square, particularly in terms of access and use. His efforts did not include equal access for all, or anything near it. Local people on the Square knew this and most every long-term Square person had an opinion about whether or not they liked the owner’s politics and actions. As soon as I got the job then, my politics came into question with people on the Square, not always overtly but people tried to feel me out on the subject. Of course, I explained that taking the job was part of my research, but I also felt a responsibility to make my views known to those who became wary of me.

Eventually, a few people on the Square, mostly readers and homeless persons, started visiting me briefly at The Kite Shop. They calmly but immediately left, however, when the owner arrived. My friends on the Square and I never talked about this but their actions allowed me to see that they were keenly aware of particular social and political conditions in the Jackson Square area.

These conditions from conflicting opinions among a variety of groups in a small area only increased the trickiness of my positionality and positioning. This trickiness, however, proved fruitful in terms of gaining insight into how people thought about access to and use of Jackson Square and public space more generally. Luckily, I developed the role of a listening ear to multiple groups in the conflict. Though I never volunteered my views, I never lied about them. Instead, I sincerely tried to present myself as someone who wanted to understand why an individual or group believed what they did. Sometimes, I failed. For when I began speaking with Leif Ruther, one of the most influential artists in Jackson Square issues, he commented that it sounded like I
had an affinity for the readers of the Square. I backpedaled some, and said that I wanted
to hear everyone’s story; that was what I wanted to do by talking with him and that as a
researcher it was my job to give everyone time to explain their perspectives. Continuing,
I said that I didn’t have a history with Jackson Square the way he and others did, so I
needed their help in understanding particular issues. Many people thought my desire to
understand coincided with me taking “their” side once I said that I understood their
reasoning. When pressed, as I was by only a few individuals, I discussed my views and
participated in fairly intense debates, which helped me appreciate particular positions
and shape my own views. That said, though I now surely grasp particular issues of
public space and Jackson Square more fully, my ideals about access and public space
have changed little. Thus, my analysis surely resounds with the ideal of equal access to
public spaces.

The ability of self-reflexivity that I am aiming to practice here, however, may be
an ideal. Following Gillian Rose (1997), Geraldine Pratt reexamines “how old habits of
thinking haunt the best intentioned, seemingly progressive research practices” (Pratt
2000, 639). Pratt finds that even her careful attempts to show herself uncertain, for
example, actually became attempts to “render the world transparent and coherent”
(Pratt 2000, 641). In part, this had to do with privileging data that rendered subjects
(herself and those part of her research) as unified in their intentions and performances
rather than partial or perhaps contradictory.

I too was haunted by old habits, those lingering from the scientific method,
which posits minimized outside influence onto a study. Certainly, this has its place in
research. On the other hand, I knew issues of insider-outsiderness do not fall on one side or the other as in the scientific method. I had read many pieces on reflexive and performative research (see for example, England 1994, Nast 1994, 1998, Bondi 1999, Regis 1999, Pratt 2000, Smith 2000, Lees 2001). In the field, Nigel Thrift’s idea that performance “allows no hiding place. You must be in it” (Thrift 2000, 556) came to my mind repeatedly.35

That said, almost instinctively, I saw part of myself, at least a part of my emotional self, outside my research, in effect hidden. I failed to consider emotional liabilities and obligations because of friendships that develop in the field. For just one example (for there are many examples and many remain unknown to me) once after not being in the Square for over a week, my friends, readers Marsha and Guy, asked where I had been and wanted to know if I were okay. Initially, I didn’t say much. I had been dealing with a few but intense personal situations and didn’t feel that I could be in Jackson Square with a pleasant, interested researcher’s disposition. In fact, I was down and believed that I always needed to be “on,” to be “up” while I was doing ethnographic work. Further, I didn’t mind being a listening ear to those in Jackson Square, but certainly, I didn’t feel it was right to burden these people with my troubles because

35 Though not focused on the researcher’s emotional responsibility, I had also read articles dealing with emotion and human geographies (Widdowfield 2000, Anderson and Smith 2001). Recently geographers have paid more attention to emotion and human geographies, though most of these articles focus on emotional geographies of a particular people or place (See, for example, Burnman and Chantler 2004, Social and Cultural Geography Special Issue on emotional geographies 2004). Far less attention has been paid to the researcher’s emotions. But, see Bennet 2004, for an analysis of researchers’ emotions.
wasn’t there something ethically wrong doing that in research? At the same time, was it fair for me to want these people, these friends, to lay themselves bare when I wasn’t willing to some extent to do so too? In fact, even here, as I write, I am reluctant to tell you, the reader, how this particular story ends.

Here, issues of emotional responsibility in terms of the researcher’s frame of mind and of reciprocity show how I attempted (and attempt) to keep my research performances less complicated, but perhaps less fluid and thus less truthful, in order to render Jackson Square and my research transparent and coherent. Of course, we must construct limits and parameters in research, but that framework need not be based on unrefined or dominant methodologies. Geraldine Pratt attributes tendencies to revert to old methodologies in part to privileging the indicative, the idea of what is, rather than the subjunctive, the idea of what might be (Pratt 2000). Indeed, Susan Smith acknowledges, “It is easier to document what is done than to appreciate what is happening in the ‘doings’” (Smith 2000, 635). This applies to the research process, as researchers spend much more effort in explaining our “findings” than considering potential consequences to our research, findings, and beyond from the doing of research. Yet, from a performative perspective, integrating our research process with our findings seems more truthful and opens up a fuller way to reveal the truth that lives.

In the next section, I discuss a few consequences of how I did archival research on Jackson Square.
Working in the Archives

During my year of ethnographic work, I also conducted archival research at various locations. I collected archival data by working back from issues, topics, and ideas that I came to understand as I was conducting my ethnographic work. In time searching through different sources, such as newspapers, city council proceedings, and ordinances allowed me to begin to understand how certain images of the Square have come to be, particularly when I compared this material to what Jackson Square locals and tourists said about and did in the Square. I started to see how in both the past and present social transgression occurred at a variety of scales in the day-to-day. Thus, I used my ethnographic research to help guide me through archival material and, importantly, vice versa. By tacking back and forth, I hoped to construct not a past and present of Jackson Square, but rather a more continuous account that revealed social transgression and thus alternative significant meanings of the Square.

Just as I had found in choosing a dissertation topic and conducting ethnographic work, questions concerning more of what might be rather than what is were omnipresent in the archives. Further, these questions went beyond what types of material existed or had existed but also to how they might be interpreted. Geographers

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36 The New Orleans Public Library, The Historic New Orleans Collection, The Vieux Carré Commission, Tulane University Special Collections, University of New Orleans Louisiana and Special Collections, and Louisiana State University’s Hill Memorial Library (Baton Rouge).

37 These sources include, but are not limited too, several newspaper collections, The Parkway Commission files, digests of ordinances from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, The Vieux Carré Commission files, the Vieux Carré Survey, tourist guides, and popular writings.
have discussed the problematic nature of interpreting historical material, explaining that these representations are socially constructed and we must analyze them in their cultural context (Schein 1992, Domosh 2001). Richard Schein argues that lithographic views from the nineteenth century “are not just innocent documents of the built environment” and interpreting these images,

becomes an exploration in landscape interpretation that tacks back and forth between narrative, text, and context; interweaving the story of the landscape, its representation, and its social production/reproduction as inseparable components in a historical geography of urban America (Schein 1992, 10).

Schein would agree that his sentiment should be applied to all archival data, as all historical material is culturally embedded in the past. In addition, all archives, by their construction and use, are fundamentally situated in the present.

Matthew Kurtz discusses difficulties that surround the seemingly innocuous construction and organization of archives. Political and institutional agendas as well as prevailing archival design methods greatly influence how and what is made visible, “so that the traces of people from another time or place repeatedly appear” or do not appear (Kurtz 2001, 34-35). For example, some social groups, such as minorities or those marginalized by others in power or more powerful, can be effectively erased from the historical record or rather, erased from the field. For example, while the indexes for New Orleans newspapers aided my research, the traditional black papers, *The Tribune* (1864-1869; 1985- present) and *The Louisiana Weekly* (1925- present), have never been indexed. Therefore, I used dates that I found pertinent from topics in the indexed (white) papers to
search the black papers. This process required so much time that I finally looked at dates when only “big” events happened. Thus, this source proved much less useful in understanding how people of color related to the Square over time.

Cole Harris asserts, however, that archival work provides unique kinds of insight to fieldwork—“Different data sets interact” (Harris 2001, 330). To be committed to good research he believes is to be committed to a variety of sources and methods. Archival materials such as lithographs, letters, newspapers, and government reports and laws complement ethnographic work and are the only means to construct a past and present, or rather a more continuous account, for a place like Jackson Square.

Harris also discusses the difficulty in working with archival material because:

> an enormous body of relevant information [is] contained in quite different types of documents, each presenting distinctive challenges and subtleties that, in sum, are quite inaccessible by means of any formalized analytical procedure (Harris 2001, 331).

Spending three to five hours in the archive per visit, I sometimes examined decades of a source in one sitting. Compressing time in this manner sometimes skewed my sense of day-to-day life during those periods. To begin, I personally have difficulty grasping scale in time. Further, what qualified as “news” for newspapers rarely included ordinary day-to-day living; papers rarely revealed the mundane except as special features or single photographs. These aspects of life may not be considered news. On the other hand, some sources never mentioned events or severely downplayed them. For instance, with almost fifteen years of struggle to desegregate parks in New Orleans, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the city must desegregate all its parks, the Parkway and Park
Commission minutes only stated that a letter was read from the city attorney to the mayor “making it illegal to operate the parks on a segregated basis” (PCM October 22, 1963). Certainly, this ruling would cause a huge amount of social and logistical problems and opportunities for the Commission, but no further mention or noted discussion about desegregation occurs in its minutes. Though this silence in the historical record may be telling and suggestive of the political and social tendencies of the Park and Parkway Commission, it is nevertheless unfortunate that the Commission did not record its debate and dialogue concerning the desegregation of parks.

Of course, the researcher’s job is to sift through these potential problems and their effects. To some extent, I ameliorated the first situation by alternating ethnographic and archival days in the field. That way, each kind of data, broadly speaking, could percolate together in my mind so that I might better imagine the day-to-day in the past. To construct a day-to-day life, the doings, in the past for Jackson Square, particularly the mechanisms of social issues that don’t necessarily surface in storied and tourist accounts, I turned to City Council proceedings, ordinances, and digests of ordinances. Because laws (ordinances) come to be and become more specific often through issues that repeatedly occur in everyday life (Goheen 1994, Mitchell 2003), reviewing ordinances and discussion of those ordinances (in City Council proceedings) enabled me to track the development of matters regarding, for example, vending, animals, and permissible activities in public places like Jackson Square. I then created timelines of specific issues regarding Jackson Square, which (the process of creating the timelines and the timelines themselves) also provided a more realistic
impression of happenings through time that my sometimes-feverish pace in archives had hastened. Both these techniques helped me process the archival work initially and later during more thorough analysis.

My analysis of historical material, however, did not include coding per se simply because the time needed to code would be unrealistic. Instead, as I discussed earlier, I used ethnographic notes and later coding categories from my ethnographic data to guide me through content, time, and themes in the historical record.

But, as with ethnographic fieldwork, Harris warns against preconceived notions of what the archives will divulge but suggests that the researcher should have a “fairly clear sense of where one is going,” calling attention to the emergent yet constructed nature of historical data sets (Harris 2001, 331). He reflexively explains that the process is about “an ongoing, evolving interaction between scholar and the voices of the past” (Harris 2001, 332). Significantly, “one brings one’s own personality to the archives, one’s own accumulated experience, one’s culture at a point in time, and a game plan of sorts,” (Harris 2001, 332) just as one does in ethnography. Going to the archives then does not solve the messiness of ethnography; rather, new challenges are waiting—both entail performances of the researcher and the need for creative solutions and decisions.

In the four chapters that follow, I employ my ethnographic and archival data to show both dominant and alternative meanings and significance of Jackson Square by examining how these social patternings form through representation and practice at various scales. To do this, I build upon literature from chapter two and use a
performative perspective, meaning that I look to relationships between representations and practices, for my analyses.

**Imperfect Geographies**

This is a tall task. Struggles with methods when approaching qualitative work from a performative, reflexive standpoint, expose the “gaps and fissures” in research (Rose 1997 in Pratt 2000). Considering our research performatively, however, is a means to make “dead” (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000) and “incomplete” (Pratt 2000, Smith 2000) geographies *live* even if, as Smith points out, by their very character, they may “never bring us to a neat conclusion” (Smith 2000, 635). In this way, the imperfect quality of these geographies highlights their validity.

On my last official day of ethnographic fieldwork, completing a full year of study gathering and creating data, Jackson Square had been very busy.

Dante, the magician, performed beautifully to a huge crowd, engendering them to laugh and gasp.

Amy, a gutter punk, was drunk on a bench in the Pedestrian Mall and needed medical attention—the day before she had been beaten.

On the corner of St. Ann and Chartres Streets, a carriage carrying tourists almost overturned. The mule had been spooked.

Nicole, a homeless woman, rescued a kitten she called Patches. She sat with him all day on the same bench.
Haley, an artist, became angry at homeless peeing in the park area behind the fence where she hung her art. After calling the police, she exclaimed, “I don’t care what they do with them” (fn 10.03.04).

Later, in the early evening as I sat with the reader Clark at his setup on St. Ann Street, a black man, swayed down the street, repeating, “Honky trash. Honky-Tonk, motherfucker trash. Uh huh, that’s why I’m on loud speaker” (fn 10.03.04). I think he was mad at his lover.

I realized that in a year I had gathered only a frame, though a rich frame, in the life of Jackson Square. The next day I would be leaving for my Grandfather’s funeral in Kentucky, and when I returned to New Orleans, I was immediately moving back to Baton Rouge to begin analyzing my data and writing my dissertation. It was exciting for me that I was about to start another phase of my life. But, the world of Jackson Square had become a part of my own world. After feeling many times that my research would never end, I suddenly felt that I wasn’t ready to leave.

I continued visiting with Clark, and by 8:00 p.m., the Square had become quieter. The calm seemed appropriate—winding down the day as my fieldwork came to a close. Clark and I drank a couple of beers joking around and recapping the day. In his sixties, he had been reading Tarot cards for 50 years and had taught me some of his methods. More than that, we had become good friends.

It was getting late in the evening, and though I knew that I was fully out of harms way in the Square, walking alone through the French Quarter and my neighborhood, The Marigny, would leave my safety uncertain. Reluctantly, I told Clark
that I needed to leave—he knew that I did too and answered, “I’ll walk you to one corner of the Square, which one do you want?” We both giggled a little. (Over the last year, Clark and I had found many of the same expressions amusing). Silently, we walked, my arm in his, to the corner of St. Ann and Chartres Streets, remaining in the Pedestrian Mall. He hugged me. Then, pulling away, Clark paused, nodded, and said, “Don’t look back.” I whispered, “Okay.” Turning to Chartres Street, I stepped out of the Square (fn 10.03.04).
Chapter Four

Ordering and Imagining the City in a Public Square

Last Friday evening the 1965, Spring Fiesta was opened with the crowning of Queen Kathleen Moore Mathews in Jackson Square. It was a beautiful spring night, with the scent of patio flowers wafted in a gentle breeze from the Mississippi River. The moon was high, and the shadows of the shrubbery were ebony black. A perfect night for an international event.

The queen and her maids were escorted by middle-aged gentlemen, mostly business and professional men, in tails and white tie. Behind them came a bevy of charming younger flower girls.

Following the coronation came a pageant, beginning with couples dancing about the statue of Andrew Jackson to a Chopin waltz…. The audience was attracted to an uptown Pontalba balcony by the clear voice of a singer on the second floor, where Jenny Lind once sang. Later, filmy ballerinas performed to a waltz from the Faust Ballet.

To the rousing strains of “Dixie” came southern belles in crinoline personifying the South before the War, followed by a post-war tableau of ladies in bright rags shuffling in an imaginary plantation field to “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.”

Later a carefree, lively “Bamboula” was stepped out by dancers, and a bicycle built for two was pedaled slowly to the notes of “South Rampart St. Parade.”

Finally the entire assembly promenaded to a street dance in front of the Basilica of St. Louis, King of France, to music from a Mexican mariachi band.

People from all over the Quarter were there—house-holders, apartment residents, dwellers of furnished rooms and efficiencies, street artists, beatniks—walking about or leaning on the barriers. Literally, thousands took part either as performers or spectators.

In the center of the audience, flanked by former President Miguel Aleman of Mexico and a cordon of Mexican senators and statesmen, sat Mayor Victor H. Schiro, who stayed on and on, as he always does at French Quarter festivities. Everybody, including the distinguished guests, had fun listening to the music, watching the colorful pageantry and drinking in the liquid of spring air (Vieux Carré Courier April 30, 1965).
As this event suggests, the life of Jackson Square has long been part of smaller and larger social and spatial processes in New Orleans. It reveals a dignified Square but also illustrates members of the citizenry in their “proper” places. And, note that in the opening newspaper story above, part of the population had to lean over barriers to glimpse the festivities. In this chapter, my aim is to elucidate how from the colony’s earliest moments to the present-day, government, elites, and the Church meant to shape the urban population and construct an image of the city using Jackson Square. Drawing from City Council proceedings and ordinances, descriptive popular and academic historical accounts, city guides, newspapers, and park commissions’ documents, I show that exclusionary discursive imaginings and events of the Square have been omnipresent. My discussion develops from a brief eighteenth century history of the plaza that illustrates those first images and struggles of power and control. Because the colony grew rapidly after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and again after 1812, when the first steamboat arrived, my argument concentrates on the time from nineteenth-century New Orleans and onward. Examining the designs of and designs for Jackson Square, I show how those with greater authority and influence promoted particular images over broader public use.

**Early Efforts at Order and Multiple Authorities**

In 1718, cutting through densely tangled vegetation, French Canadian Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, founded the New Orleans for France on a crescent-shaped natural levee of the Mississippi River. The colony was a commercial endeavor and became the capital of France’s territory, The Louisiana Territory (named
after King Louis XIV of France), in the New World. Similar to other plaza towns in the Americas (Arreola 1992), France intended the initial clearing, a Square, to be the governmental, military, religious, and social center of the settlement (Lewis 1976, Huber 1982, Colten 2005). Today known as Jackson Square, in 1721 with the first plat of the city, that Square was known as Place d’Armes (Lewis 1976).

While New Orleans developed as a center for trade, by 1734, buildings such as a Catholic church (1724), police station (1724), governor’s house (1726), warehouse (1727), prison (1729), courthouse (1729), and military barracks (1734) completely enclosed the Square (except for the side adjacent to the river) (Honecker 1982). Early on then, order and control resided in the Place d’Armes both literally and symbolically, as, together, the open expanse and the buildings bordering it articulated the location of power in the colony. The symbols of power, order, and grace became more substantial over the years, with each new structure more impressive than the last, honing the elegant image of New Orleans. By about the mid 19th century, as they do today, the buildings, now monuments to the city, seemingly towered over and shepherded the area.

The early colony also relied on this landscape in the practice of power. For over the first hundred years, the city performed executions and punishments in Place d’Armes, promoting obedience and dissuading defiance to crowds of colonists (Wilson 1968, Huber 1982). Further, a close association between the Church and government manifested, instilling a particular moral code. For example, in 1765, authorities had a man hung in the Square for committing suicide, disciplining the individual in death for
his blasphemous act.Military and political powers relied on the Square too: in 1768, four hundred militiamen paraded while colonial leaders met to consider the state of Louisiana settlement. And, when Captain General O’Reilly arrived to seize the colony for Spain from the resistant Creole population, it was Jackson Square that O’Reilly and his fleet of 2600 men marched into.

In addition, the Square demonstrated the intertwining of local government, church, and commerce. For example, in 1782, along with “public demonstrations of joy” with an “artillery salute [in] the plaza,” the Church held a Mass of Thanksgiving for the colonists as they won the right to free trade with French ships in Louisiana, Mobile, and Pensacola (CCDA April 4, 1782). This intertwining of different authority and interests appeared in the everyday too, such as the city prohibiting the traffic of carts and selling of merchandise on Sundays and religious holidays (CCDA June 2, 1786). The city even funded pews for the Cabildo (government) members in St. Louis Church (CCDA December 12, 1794).

**Local and National Meanings**

With the 1803 Louisiana Purchase ceremony proceeding in Place d’Armes, the public plaza would forever bear national significance. Significance went on to reside and evolve locally, however, as the Creole community resisted American citizenship evident

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38 The last record of a well-known execution in Place d’Armes occurred in 1837 with the hanging of Bras Coupé, an escaped enslaved person (Castellanos 1895).

39 Under Spanish rule, “Place d’Armes” became “Plaza de Armas.” I will retain the use of “Place d’Armes” until 1851 when the plaza was renamed “Jackson Square” (*The Daily Delta* January 26, 1851 in Huber 1982, 67).
in lackluster July 4th celebrations in the plaza. More specifically, by 1810, commemoration of the Louisiana Purchase had died (Huber 1982). The Gazette called on the Council to explain this national apathy, but later in the year, Independence Day events remained blasé. The editor of The Gazette went so far as to say, “The demon of discord has raised her sneaky head among us, and general apathy prevails to everything that is American” (Huber 1982, 27-28).

But in 1814, as threat from the British grew, people of New Orleans joined General Andrew Jackson in The Battle of New Orleans. Upon victory, New Orleans honored him with a magnificent ceremony in Place d’Armes that included a triumphal arch, song, military, and thousands of spectators:

Suddenly a roar of cannon on the levee echoed through the Square, the boys on the tree-tops shouted, the ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the soldiers brightened up… a group of a half dozen men entered the levee gate….

The first man who entered [had] an expression of severity and sternness… a forbidding aspect. A single glance revealed General Jackson….

As they walked up [the] human aisles, cheers on cheers went up in endless succession, deafening the very cannon, and shocking the air as if with an aerial earthquake. They neared the arch, the General stopped, two little girls, mounted on tip-toe, removed his cape, and dropped a laurel wreath upon his brow….

A young lad, glowing with all the beauty of this sunny clime, holding in her hand a banner bearing the proud name of Louisiana, stepped forward, and in that name welcomed “the hero of New Orleans” (Coleman 1885, 145-146).
With the General’s victory, subsequent reception as hero, and the growth of the economic sector in the Uptown Anglo-American population (the French Quarter remained Creole), the United States grew to be a part of New Orleans. Creole New Orleanians, however, saw that in the Battle of New Orleans, first (and foremost), their city was saved and only after this the integrity of the United States saved. Jackson was hailed as the hero of New Orleans—not the U.S.—even though the victory was critical to the United States maintaining sovereignty (Searight 1973, Remini 1988, 1999). Thus, with the celebration for the savoir of New Orleans in the Square, it was forever marked as the sanctum of harbor for city identity. As Ruddick explains, “public spaces serve not simply to surface pregiven behaviors, but become an active medium through which new identities are created and contested” (Ruddick 1996a, 135). Early on then, tension between local and national identity took form actively in Jackson Square via the presence and absence of practices in authority and homage.

Designs of and Designs for Order in Place d’Armes

So though in its nearly first 100 years, Place d’Armes was little more than a grassy field, the meaning imparted to it symbolically and in practice became socially enduring. Therefore, seemingly meager improvements, like placing the first (recorded) light in front of Place d’Armes (CCDA August 26, 1796) and the necessity to install drainage

40 In 1823, the inspector of the city’s first brigade of the Militia asked and was granted permission from the Council to place (temporarily) the cannons of the Legion (VCS June 23, 1823) in Place d’Armes. In 1825, the mayor allowed U.S. troops to drill in Place d’Armes only when it was not in use by the city’s militia troops (CVOR January 12, 1825). However, in 1853, Jackson Square did become a provisional camp for volunteer corps from Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, and other states (Huber 1982).
ditches around the plaza (CCDA March 26, 1779) were in fact significant efforts, at least symbolically, in managing the physical and social integrity of the developing city. Bit by bit, efforts to improve both increased with, for example, another wagon added for garbage pickup (CCDA July 11, 1800), discussion of constructing sidewalks around Place d’Armes (CCDA March 12, 1802 and CVP October 12, 1805), and the Council creating regulations for public works construction (CVOR April 8, 1806). In 1807, a Council member suggested that the French Market relocate from the riverfront to the plaza, but instead the Council persisted in their designs to “embellish” the Square (CVP December 30, 1807). In the same Council session, another Council member announced, “the citizens want Place d’Armes to be converted into a public promenade.” The Council responded positively to the request, appointing a committee to design landscape plans for the plaza.

In May (1807), the Council approved plans that included sycamore trees for their shade and a fence to protect the trees from children and animals (as reported in the CVP on January 16, 1808). By late 1808, however, work on the Square had not begun, in part because the mayor could not locate sycamore trees at a reasonable price (VCS February 3, 1808). In March of 1809, the Council decreed that the public Square “will be surrounded by a balustrade with turnstiles at the corners and in the center at each front, and… will be set off by banquettes [sidewalks] and curbing…” (VCS March 11, 1809). The project, after some revision, was only completed in July of 1812 (CVP July 18, 1812).
During these five years, however, the Council often visited the topic of embellishment for the Square, showing great interest and concern over the character that Place d’Armes should take. At the same time, the city guard began patrolling streets, public Squares, and levees at dusk (CVOR May 8, 1810), and the Council ordered each private person to plant trees in the area between the sidewalk and street (CDV November 9, 1808). Together these actions reveal the “processual elements” in an ongoing cultural, economic, political, and social complex of representations and practices to form an identity imagined by authorities (Coleman and Crang 2002, 11).

With improvements like those above, expectations of the public, public space, and the image of New Orleans continued to form. Importantly, some expectations were ill defined such as which “citizens” wanted a promenade and which areas, such as those between the sidewalk and street, were public and which were private. But, as Blomley explains, public areas have been “imagined as inherently disordered” and extending organization via beautification into these ambiguously defined areas proves ordering (Blomley 2004, 636). Further, the Council hinted at acceptable activities and behavior by refusing to locate the French Market in the Square and by the apparent need to protect the proposed trees from “children and animals.”

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41 In 1856, however, the Council adjusted its position on private individuals planting trees stating, “Shade trees may be planted on [sic] the sidewalks provided that they do not impede passage, planted in a line… but this privilege may be withdrawn… whenever such trees may injure [sic] or encumber the sidewalk or street, or impeded [sic] the public passage” (Jewell 1887, 328).

42 In the early nineteenth century, the idea of separating adult and children’s public spaces (playgrounds) had not fully formed (Gagen 2004), though as Valentine has
The city persisted with its embellishment efforts. For some, 1816 marked a discernable day-to-day materialization of the city’s ideal image for Place d’Armes. A description from a visiting Frenchman, for example, stated:

One reaches an attractive Square, planted with trees which are still young and allow a view of the three sides. The fourth fronts on the river. The church, together with several fine houses, make up the opposite side, producing an agreeable sight. Although unpaved, the streets are straight, of uniform width, and intersect at right angles’ there are sidewalks and two gutters to allow water to run off (Montulé 1950, 75).

Between 1817 and 1824, the city planned and completed more improvements to the plaza, in the Square, installing a city clock on St. Louis Church, planting willow saplings on the levee, and replacing missing trees (multiple times beginning in 1821) (CVOR August 6, 1817, January 16, 1819, January 23, 1821). Most impressive in scale was the 1819 Council’s decision to raise the plaza, replace the wooden fence with an iron fence atop a stone retaining wall, and construct an interior walkway (CVP February 9, 1819). The Council, however, suspended labor on the Square in order to construct and fix portions of the levee. In 1820, the city, persevering in enhancing the Square, resolved to dedicate a monument for General Andrew Jackson, victor of the Battle of New Orleans (1815) (CVP August 16, 1820), and work commenced on the Place shown, public spaces went on to develop into seemingly innate adult spaces (Valentine 1996).

43 The city and Church jointly purchased the clock, showing the continued interweaving of political and religious endeavors (CVOR May 10, 1819).
d’Armes at a pace not seen before, only to have it slow again in 1821 due to a shortage of bricks (CVOR February 23, 1821). Near this time, the Council also voted to light the city streets (GDA October 6, 1821), to provide new lights for the “Square of the city” (CVP November 3, 1821), to plant a row of orange trees around the plaza (CVP March 9, 1822), and to put benches underneath the plaza’s alley of trees (CVP July 19, 1823). In addition, the city moved the iron collar (or pillory) from the plaza to the area around the French Market (CVP February 17, 1821) and denied businessmen their request to build two cafes in Place d’Armes (CVP July 17, 1824). As the city’s center Place d’Armes was becoming both in form and as symbol the “cultivator of public taste” (Levine 1988, 203).

As Cresswell explains, places “provide historically contingent but durable schemes of perception… and act as an active participant in our understanding of what is good, just, and appropriate” (Cresswell 1996, 16). Accordingly, even after 1836 when the city divided into three municipalities and the American area, Uptown, became the leading economic sector, replacing the French Quarter, Place d’Armes always gained improvements before other squares (Searight 1973). More substantial improvement to the Place d’Armes began again in 1835, when the Council allocated 1000 dollars for a

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44 Later, the Council also passed rulings for Lafayette and Washington Squares to be fenced like Place d’Armes (1852, Records of the Board of Alderman, vol. 53, 206 in VCSA).
fountain (GDB March 21, 1835), echoing its 1833 sentiment “to beautify the city’s front and maintain good order and similitude” (CVOR December 23, 1833).  

In 1840, a triumphal arch was erected and grand military celebration given for visiting General Andrew Jackson to commemorate his victory at the Battle of New Orleans. Thousands of colonists packed Place d’Armes and the event made national news (Huber 1982, Remini 1988). In 1845, the New Orleans Weekly Delta (November 24), reported that a new railing would be up for “that old delightful promenade,” and the Square was “to be beautifully decorated.” In the same year, The Daily Picayune (October 18), another New Orleans newspaper described Place d’Armes with a similar vision, marvelling at the beautifully designed candelabra and that on fête nights “glass globes of lamps [will be] filled with colored fluids (blue, red, and white).”

Hence, though interruptions to work were common, events and improvements for the refinement of Place d’Armes and the city materialized and continued to unfold in the Council and other elites’ imaginations, for Cresswell insists, “the social and spatial are… thoroughly imbued with each other’s presence” (Cresswell 1996, 11). In Place d’Armes, each decision the Council made regarding its landscape seemingly built on the last decree, honing acceptable activity, behavior, and image, and patterning New Orleans identity as refined.

45 Subsequently, Lafayette (located Uptown) and Washington Squares (located east of the Quarter) were to receive comparable fountains (GDB March 21, 1835) and in 1838, the Council directed new gas lamps and gates for the Squares and markets (September 17, 1838, Journal of the City Council, City Hall Archives, in VCSB).
Championing the Cultivation of Place d’Armes

If in 1815 General Andrew Jackson became New Orleans’ savior, then in 1844, the Baroness Mircaela Almonester de Pontalba, a Franco-Spanish Creole, became the champion of Place d’Armes’ urbanity. The Baroness, who had lived most of her life in France, inherited the land adjacent to the east and west sides of Place d’Armes, from her father, Don Almonester y Roxas, a prominent colonist from Spain. In 1846, major improvement to Place d’Armes began when the Baroness submitted plans for two apartment buildings that would run the length of the east and west sides of the Square. At this time, the Baroness also submitted plans for significant changes to Place d’Armes (fig. 2) (Honecker 1982).

Figure 2  Baroness Pontalba’s Design for Jackson Square (source: collection of author).

46 The Baroness’s mother was Creole with French ancestry (Vella 1997).

47 Don Almonester y Roxas, a rich philanthropist, had served on the City the Council and contributed to building improvements around then Place d’Armes in the first quarter of the nineteenth century (Vella 1997).
Though the plaza remained public property, in nineteenth-century American cities public squares or parks were often spaces “controlled by private interests” (Domosh 1998, 209). The Baroness’ interests reflected design elements of Palais Royal, one of the most popular promenades in Paris with curvilinear walks, lawns, ornamental plantings, and statues (Huber 1966, 30 in Honecker 1982, 98). In her submission to the Council, she called for a forbiddance of cafes, cabarets, fruit stands, and boarding housing (Vella 1997). Additionally, she wanted to remove the “unhappy” alley48 of Sycamore trees that had been planted under the auspices of the City the Council because “they were only fit to shelter human and other vermin” (Kendall 1936, 62). Perhaps then, this is why the Baroness’ plans did not include benches so that “human vermin” would not linger on the debonair promenade.

The Baroness had other ideas for the Square as well, “that the drilling of soldiers and firing of the salute be discontinued” there, transferring these activities to another city plaza (NOSO 1937, 9). Between 1850 and 1852, her vision of a more dignified and elegant Square came to fruition, first with the completion of the Baroness’ twin Pontalba apartment buildings (fig. 3), and then with the city implementing her design for Place d’Armes. The plaza reached its culmination as a new elegant landscape when

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48 The alleys of Sycamore trees on the east and west sides of the Square installed in the early 1800s were popular during this time in place promenades or squares in France. The origin of tree alleys can be traced to 1670. Confident that his army could defend France, Louis XIV filled the moats around Paris, and the “sites were transformed into... promenades planted with double rows of trees” (Lawrence 1988, 365).
the city changed its name change to Jackson Square in honor of General Andrew Jackson (Honecker 1982, Huber 1982).

Though plaza parks differ in scale from pleasure grounds from the last half of the nineteenth century (Galen 1982), Jackson Square’s design incorporated most of the principles associated with this parks movement. Lush plantings amid green swards and two rings of curvilinear promenades (fig. 4), provided an “aesthetic away” from the compact design of the French Quarter.

Thus, order and aesthetization have long united with Jackson Square. In addition, many of the same controls, those made through city ordinances, those made via social convention, and those associated with the romantic, rationalistic, and city beautiful ideologies, became a part of Jackson Square.
For example, in 1856, intending to maintain order in the public and in public places, the Council declared (in part):

No beating of drum, blowing of horn, sounding of trumpet in any street or public place within limits of the city. Unlawful to use indecent or vulgar language in any street, cemetery, public Square, levee, or other public place—or to commit any nuisance to public decency, in any public place or in any open lot, or on or under any wharves. No person shall make a violent noise or create disturbance, or offense against public peace by intoxication or otherwise (Leovy 1857, 172-173).
During that same year, the city unveiled a 35,000-dollar General Andrew Jackson equestrian monument (financed by the state and private citizens) in the Square (fig. 5) and called for “great preparations” to the plaza’s grounds (*The New Orleans Bee* February 7, 1856).

![General Andrew Jackson Statue](source: collection of author)

**Figure 5  General Andrew Jackson Statue** (source: collection of author).

On the day of the statue’s inauguration, a procession over two miles long paraded from Canal Boulevard,

Filling the Square; the streets all around; the vast space between Square and river; the balconies of the palatial Pontalba Buildings and of the public buildings in Chartres; the cupola of the old city hall; and the tower of the Cathedral of St. Louis, were persons from all portions of Louisiana, and from sister states. Veterans of 1814-1815 displayed a revered, tattered banner, wrought in gold by fair daughters of the city, under which the Louisiana militia fought on the Chalmette plains (*The Times Picayune* February 12, 1856).
Over 60,000 people joined in this, “one of the most imposing ceremonies the populace of New Orleans has ever attended” (The New Orleans Bee February 12, 1856). The Council’s efforts seemed successful, to outsiders too for in 1857, Frederick Law Olmstead, designer of New York City’s Central Park, commented:

I was delighted when I reached the Old Place d’Armes, now a public garden, bright with the orange and lemon trees, and roses, and myrtles, and laurels, and jessamines of the south of France (Olmstead 1861, 581 in Honecker 1982, 112).

It appeared that Jackson Square had reached its full glory for image of the city.

City, State, and Nation Engender Dissonance in the Square

In 1861, Louisiana seceded from the union, and the city flew the emblem “Louisiana Seceded” from Jackson Square’s flagstaff. A year later, however, the Union Commander Farragut captured New Orleans. With 18,000 federal troops, then General Benjamin F. Butler put the city under marshal law, and raised the United States Flag in the Square (Huber 1982, Remini 1999). Other insidious violations then fell upon New Orleans’ place of pride. For example, Major General Benjamin F. Butler, occupation commander, inscribed an ever-lasting warning to the city, having “The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved” carved into the Jackson monument’s pedestal (Huber 1982, 88-89). Further, in 1863 in a three-month winter Jackson Square concert series, the brass band’s final song in their weekly performances was “Yankee Doodle,” sometimes followed by the “Star Spangled Banner” (The New Orleans Times October, November, December 1863). These concerts may seem minor, but as Smith argues, such performances are “performances of power…that bring spaces, peoples, and places into form” (Smith
2000, 615). In representation and practice, then, the Union aimed in its reordering of Jackson Square to reorder New Orleans’ cultural, social, and political form.

Throughout the Civil War (1860-1865) and the Reconstruction period (1865-1877), the city and the South’s political and military (and therefore economic) failings put their citizens under great duress. Poverty, social disorder, and local, severe political struggles⁴⁹ pervaded everyday life (Searight 1973). Nevertheless, papers described soothing scenes in the Square:

Last evening the lower inclosures [sic], especially Jackson Square, were full as they could hold, and presented an appearance of unwonted innocence and gayety. There are three wide concentric promenades in this Square, besides the circular inclosure [sic] wherein stands the beautiful equestrian statue of the Defender of New Orleans, and all of them were crowded with evening promenaders. The concentric flower beds between several promenades were blooming with rich blossoms, violets, verbenas, petunia, hyacinths, and roses of every hue and variety, which made a beautiful setting for the concentric circles of joyous and innocence… (The Daily Picayune April 24, 1866).

So, though the Union enacted strategic tactics in Jackson Square, New Orleanians perhaps relied on the landscape to imagine a gentler city. In this landscape, they could envision a particular pre-War order in the face of their defeat and the messiness of everyday life. Recalling Denis Cosgrove, Steve Daniels, and Rich Schein, Mitchell ⁴⁹Butler closed schools and churches that defied loyalty to the Union. New Orleanians refusing to pay homage to the Stars and Stripes were arrested, jailed, and sometimes deported. Also, in 1865, Louisiana had regained much of its original control and passed The Black Codes, which disenfranchised newly freed people of color. These laws, repealed in the Reconstruction period, were basically reinstated during Jim Crow acts of the 1890s (see Searight 1973, 125-140).
explains that landscapes, especially public spaces, allow us to see the world in a particular way (Mitchell 2003, 186). Further, Richardson expounds, “The struggle to construct a world so that we may be is a continual one” (Richardson 1982, 434), and Jackson Square has served actively in that struggle.

After Reconstruction, southern social and political elite relied on their ability to pass laws in order to regain control (Rable 1984, Richter 1996). Some ordinances that followed initially seemed practical,

> Political meeting, religious gatherings, formations of processions, military drill, or any assemblage calculated to trample the walk and flower beds, and deface the general aspect of the Squares and parks are hereby expressly prohibited within their limits (Jewell 1887, 400).

Yet as the 1881 law above suggests, some laws included overtones and implications that infringed on civic needs in the name of protecting the beauty of the city’s public squares and parks.

The struggle over the image of Jackson Square arose again when in the late nineteenth century commercial interests brought railroads to the levee, adding a large-scale economic quality to the French Quarter but not a refined one. Additionally, the city leased the land in front of the Square facing the river (now Washington Artillery Park) to Morgan’s Louisiana and Texas Railroad which built warehouses there—even though a petitioning group tried to stop the plans (Huber 1982). The warehouses extended the entire length of the Square and effectively truncated any view of the
Mississippi River,\textsuperscript{50} creating in the day-to-day and at the pedestrian level a more insular Jackson Square. As Gerry Mooney has shown at a neighborhood scale, when new patterns impose on a landscape that which is brought together may be unsettling (Mooney 1999, 60). Indeed, the encroachment of foreign industrial development creeping ever closer to the regally imagined center of the French Quarter was unsettling for city elites (Kelman 2003). Additional railroad companies from outside New Orleans and Louisiana came laying numerous tracks between the river and Jackson Square and threatening New Orleans’ image and identity.

Ruddick argues that public spaces are not inherently a local matter; that scale of meaning varies depending on who contests the space and how (Ruddick 1996a). The examples in this section have illustrated not only that the identities and meanings of the Square occupied multiple scales—city, state, and national—but also that Jackson Square occupied multiple social realms—cultural, economic, and political.

**Commissions’ Control and Care of Jackson Square**

During the late nineteenth century, New Orleans also experienced the greatest influx of immigrants the city had ever seen (Searight 1973, 101). Because (in part) of the strain the growing population placed on government, in 1882, the City Council began to give control and care for each of the public squares and places to private boards of

\textsuperscript{50} The view remained completely obstructed for over 80 years when the city was forced to raze the warehouses due to structural problems that left the levee vulnerable to collapse and thus endangered the city to flooding (Kelman 2003). Another barrier, the twelve-and-a-half-foot floodwall running along the entire length of the city’s waterfront, built in the early 1950s, remains today, removing any at-grade view of the river.
commissioners. The number of commissioners per place varied from one to nearly a dozen and the Council appointed the boards (Jewell 1887, 393-402). In customary style, Jackson Square was among the first to receive a board (1881), which consisted of seven members (Jewell 1887, 395). Members had an immense amount of power with regard to the physical and social character of each place. In their management, the board had:

> the power to organize themselves by the election and appointment of such officers… and committees as they may deem proper, and adopt such rules and regulations or by-laws as they may consider useful or necessary… They shall have the power to fill vacancies created by the Board for any cause whatever (Jewell 1887, 395-396).

The board assumed “the sole and exclusive control, management and supervision” of Jackson Square, which was “designated as a place of resort for the amusement and recreation of the people” (Jewell 1887, 395). Since board members paid for improvements “at their own expense, or with such other means as they shall themselves provide, through private contributions or otherwise, without cost to the municipal corporation,” they were undoubtedly financial and social elites. And, the city retained “only the power and duty to properly police said square or park…” (Jewell 1887, 395). From 1882 to 1894, the city created the same kind of boards for all squares, parks, places, and for some streets, avenues, and walks. Thus, as never before, private and public interests blended and as never before private elite interests were accountable for public

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51 The ordinance also provided that the board could not “change the designation of [Jackson Square]… as a place of public resort, the enjoyment of which shall be open and common to all, subject only to the police power to preserve order and protect property…” (Jewell 1887, 396).
places. This first budding of public-private partnerships, which Mitchell shows more fully formed in modern-day studies, would begin a narrowing of who was to be included in the public and in public spaces (Mitchell 2003).

In 1909, from the seeds of various street, park, and Square boards, the New Orleans Tree Society, and the City Beautifying Committee, New Orleans established one Commission, the Parking Commission, to care for public green spaces (PCR 1909). Following the theories of the parks’ movements, the Parking Commission’s objective was to provide beautification for the city (PCR 1909). Its members, appointed by the Mayor, were (and would continue to be) successful and influential New Orleanians. The Commission’s objective was to supply shade and beautification for the city, but more than that its members avowed that the Parking Commission,

diligently searches out its true relationships in the beautiful or fine arts, where it rightfully belongs and studiously possesses itself of that largeness of thought and trained facility of imagination, inspiring within itself the idealizing faculty, whereby the true architect and painter project visually the creations of genius before work is laid on drawing board or brush on canvas; then, of very necessity, as like begets like, there will begin throughout this city a development in pure art; dignified in orderly elegance and grace, beautiful in unity, becoming more apparent and impressive with each succeeding year…(PCB 1909, 8).

The Commission went on to state, “The Parking Commission is a new department [,] a realm of human activities called the fine arts” (PCB 1909, 8). By connecting itself with

52 In 1902, the city dissolved individual commissions. Then Jackson Square fell under the control and care of no other board or agency, but in events like the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase (1903) and in annual celebrations like the Battle of New Orleans, the city ensured at least some attention to the Square (Wilson 1968, Huber 1982).
architecture and painting, the Commission revealed its high culture frame of mind in reforming New Orleans’ public environments, specifically its streets, parks, and squares.

The Commission’s bylaws reveal philosophical, intellectual, and moral goals as well. For example, the Commission believed its goals to be the “real and practical uplifting and betterment of the whole community, physically, mentally, [and] morally (PCB 1909, 8, my emphasis). That said, its members saw the “city as a vast picture, a flat surface of line, color, lights-and-shades, the properties or elements of a painting” (PCB 1909, 9). So, it was from a high and distant position that the New Orleans Parking Commission posited that beautiful parks would improve the lower class populations.

Throughout its early tenure, the Parking Commission reiterated these sentiments and formed “cooperative systems” with the city’s work in sewer, water, and paving to advance “the orderly comeliness of streets, avenues and public places,” finding this order imperative to the “salvation” of New Orleans (PCR 1911, 6). The Commission also relied on the cooperation (through education) of New Orleanians, who the Commission observed were “docile under instruction” (PCR 1913, 4). Thus, the Parking Commission hoped that its instruction would propel a healthful, ordered image of New Orleans to those inside and outside the city:

We all know that fineness of appearance has greatly to do with a healthful morale; that it influences mightily the respect and invites the companionship of the world. The beauty of a city is infallibly the outward sign and visible

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53 The Parking Commission under various names continued into 1996, when the City the Council dissolved the commission and put its tasks under the Parks and Recreation Department and the Sanitation Department (PCM July 9, 1996).
evidence of the intelligence and loyalty of its citizenship, of its prosperity and acceptable fitness as a place of abode (PCR 1913, 4).

This superior understanding the Parking Commission believed it had over the people of the city and its top-down approach to design and care for places like Jackson Square, however, promoted image more than use, appearance of health more than health, and elite interests more than egalitarian interests.

**Preserving Jackson Square**

In 1921, the city gave control and care of Jackson Square over to the Louisiana State Museum, which in 1911 had taken ownership of the Cabildo and Presbytere. Two years later, the State Museum echoed the Parking Commission’s ideas of beautification, proposing work on Jackson Square:

> making it conform more to the original picture... there is now hope that commerce will remove some of the obstruction from the river path so as to open the road and view to the mighty Mississippi which was a factor in deciding the choice of municipal location and the situation of the formal gateway not to the city but to the Mississippi Valley (Scrapbook #47, Louisiana State Historical Museum in VCSG).

Here, the significance of the role that Jackson Square played in the image of New Orleans was tantamount with city identity itself. Furthermore, with the preservation movement in the French Quarter, codified in 1937 through the Vieux Carré Commission, pressure increased to control the historical neighborhood’s *tout ensemble*, or total character, that went beyond architecture and into activities. As Duncan and Duncan argue, “Living in history is a powerful nostalgic desire that suggests the essence
of the past can in some sense be recaptured through the landscape (Duncan and Duncan 2004, 149). Once a community establishes that a place is “historical” as Jackson Square was early in its history, preservation and aestheticization processes work feverishly at the expense of egalitarianism especially with regard to public space.

And, as Christine Boyer notes, “One American city, above all others, holds a central place in the invention of American traditions and in the development of cultural tourism that the nostalgic art of historic preservation has spurred” (Boyer 2001, 323). That city is New Orleans. In fact, New Orleans was “the first large American City to see its future primarily in terms of preserving its past” (Hudson 2001, 190). As the center of the French Quarter, the Square’s design symbolized an elegant and ordered image of the historical city and a perfect picture to lure tourists. Indeed, the desire to preserve Jackson Square stemmed in large part from the desire to develop tourism based in an idealized past (Board of Curators of the Louisiana State Museum Minutes August 21, 1921 in Honecker 1982, 146, *The New Orleans Item* October 19, 1922).

Beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century, numerous city and tourist guides and postcards advertised New Orleans, majestically picturing and grandly describing Jackson Square (fig. 6). By the mid-twentieth century, artists had begun to paint and sell their works to tourists on the Square’s surrounding sidewalks (*The Times Picayune* November 21, 1948).
With tourism in the French Quarter growing significantly each year, together the Parkway and Park Commission, the Vieux Carré Commission, the City Planning Commission, and several preservation groups such as the Vieux Carré Property Owners & Associates, Inc. attempted to maintain control of Jackson Square’s image. Efforts at renovation were indeed more successful than efforts at significant change. For contrary to the *Vieux Carré Courier*’s (April 30, 1965) headline, “Some squares never die, just change,” few significant design changes have materialized in Jackson Square. Instead, even the huge 1967 effort at a new landscape design for the Square (*Vieux Carré Courier* July 21, 1967) and the heated eleven-year battle (1964-1975) over the “Son et Lumiere” (Sound and Light) show for tourists failed (*Vieux Carré Courier* February 19, 1964, *The Times Picayune* January 5, 1941, “French Quarter Sites Draw Tourists” in *The State Item* July 6, 1948, “Tourists Spend 40,000, 000 a year in City” in *The States Item* July 23, 1955, “New Orleans as a Tourist City” in *The States Item* July 16, 1959, “Tourism Industry in New Orleans Increasing” in *The Times Picayune* January 27, 1963, and “Tourism Greatest Yet in 1963” in *The Times Picayune* February 22, 1964.

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Times Picayune September 11, 1975). Through each renovation of Jackson Square, roughly one per decade, tradition in the park’s landscape has reigned.

This safeguarding of tradition developed as a successful icon in New Orleans’ tourism industry, in perpetuating certain imaginings of the city, and became important in other related campaigns. In the “Second Battle of New Orleans” (1958-1969), Jackson Square was the material focus and symbol used by individual citizens and preservation groups to oppose an expressway near the French Quarter (Baumbach, Jr. and Borah 1967).

For over four years, the Vieux Carré Courier, the French Quarter’s own newspaper, ran front-page articles against the expressways and employed artist-enhanced photographs to illustrate the aesthetic impacts to the historical Square. Further, the paper invoked deleterious social situations an expressway would create that of a “muggers’ and degenerates’ paradise… behind Jackson Square at night!” (Vieux Carré Courier January 20, 1967).

Opponents appealed on local, state, and national grounds. They argued that the daily quality of life for Quarterites would be diminished and that tourism for the city as a whole would be reduced because of damage to the tout ensemble of the neighborhood and Square (which the city and state were required by law to protect). And, allies of the

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55 Ironically, the Vieux Carré Commission initially supported the expressway development and the “Son et Lumiere” (Vieux Carré Courier August 5, 1966, The Times Picayune July 24, 1975).

56 In 1936, Louisiana citizens voted to amend the state constitution to give authority to the city to create a commission to preserve the French Quarter’s character, once
fight against the expressway pleaded that irreversible harm to national heritage would occur because,

Jackson Square is the heart of the French Quarter—best known historic area within any city in the United States. Today, few if any urban squares in the United States rival Jackson Square in either architectural or historic importance (Baumbach and Borah 1967).

Once again, the people of New Orleans were victorious in the battle for New Orleans, thwarting the expressway development next to the French Quarter, and with this triumph, the sacredness of Jackson Square as symbol and place of social activity intensified.

As the popularity of the French Quarter grew, those protecting and preserving the image of Jackson Square increased their focus, narrowing the kinds of activities allowed to take place there. The Parkway and Parks Commission found it necessary, as the city continues to do, to close Jackson Square park area during major celebrations like Mardi Gras, Halloween, and New Year’s Eve. And, after major renovations to the Square in 1969, the Commission, supported by Mayor Schiro, initiated a strict policy that stressed Jackson Square was for “promenading and not big enough for large gatherings” (PCM November 18, 1969). The timing of this policy coincided with the Commission’s decision, upheld by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, to deny the use of the Square for a Vietnam Protest. At this time, echoing the 1881 ordinance, a commissioner asserted,

endowed with police powers (Vieux Carré Commission Files, New Orleans Public Library).
Jackson Square is a historical landmark and it was not intended to be used for this sort of activity; it is to be a garden and a promenade space. Commission should take a definite stand that the Square is really a garden and not to be used for meetings or marches (PCM October 21, 1969).

As James and Nancy Duncan have shown, at quite a different scale, efforts at preservation may and often do privilege a particular past, present, and future (Duncan and Duncan 2004). The implications in a public space like Jackson Square include not only illegitimating a large portion of the public today but also, as I elaborate in chapter five, in the past.

**“New” Threats in Preserving Image**

In 1970, the city converted three streets surrounding the Square into a Pedestrian Mall, which allowed more sidewalk artists to set up and more activities to occur around Jackson Square (*Vieux Carré Courier* September 18, 1970). Five years later, the city raised the streets six inches, to sidewalk level, and slated them, creating a plaza and patio ambiance (*The Times Picayune* May 17, 1976). Though disputes occurred over these changes, the Vieux Carré Commission and the city believed that the Pedestrian Mall kept with the traditional character of the area, not imposing on the park area (*The Times Picayune* May 17, 1976). With the advent of the Pedestrian Mall and the renovations, the Commission aimed “to restrict the use of the Square by confining it to as few groups as possible, mostly for promenading” and that its use be limited to “well established French Quarter organizations only, such as the Patio Planters [and] Spring Fiesta” (PCM January 27, 1970). The Commission hoped that the Pedestrian Mall
would in part assume some planned events that the Jackson Square park had previously accommodated (PCM March 31, 1976).

But a bigger community problem, transients and hippies, seemed to have developed from the late 1960s, first in Jackson Square park and later its Pedestrian Mall. To be sure, some thought of their presence as an “invasion” that threatened the tout ensemble of the Square and French Quarter (Huber 1982, 107). In 1967, Jackson Square artists began a petition requesting that the City Council devote more police protection to the area. Artists cited,

‘Vile language,’ indecent exposure, and vandal manners of the hippies and near-hippies who congregate there. ‘Tourists are being driven away by the hippies’ uncouth antics,’ said Margret de Loo, who represents a large segment of the outdoor exhibitors and portrait artists. Residents of both Pontalba buildings also are complaining that hippies have taken over the Square, have become abusive…panhandle from tourists [, and]…listen to…‘foul’ music. Emboldened by the hippies, the standard winos of Decatur are said to have joined the obstreperous crowd… (Vieux Carré Courier August 4, 1967).

The Vieux Carré Courier also reported that “hippies are gradually taking over the downtown river corner [of the Square], as well as other parts of Jackson Square. The police seem to be hamstrung by the American Civil Liberties Union” (Vieux Carré Courier September 15, 1967). Nevertheless, the city answered the above situations with added, though, inconsistent police presence and new ordinances, restricting, for example, “eating and sleeping in the [S]quare” and using the bushes… roughly” (Vieux Carré Courier March 1, 1968). And despite the American Civil Liberties Union’s supposed constraint on city and police actions, officers began arresting people,
particularly the “furry people”\textsuperscript{57} for begging, sleeping, eating, and other acts under various vagrancy laws.\textsuperscript{58} Additionally, timed “crackdowns,” “focusing specifically on winos and panhandlers” began to occur regularly (\textit{Vieux Carré Courier} June 11, 1971).

By early 1971, the Commission directed its attention to the persistent problem of,

\begin{quote}
A large number of transients congregating daily in Jackson Square….some are not wearing shirts, and it appears that visitors and local citizens are not using the Square because of them….the Square belongs to all citizens and there should be some decorum in the way they dress…. (PCM February 16, 1971.
\end{quote}

The city and elite’s reactions to the invasion of “hippies and near-hippies” were blatant acts of racialization that positioned them as out of place in a public space (\textit{Vieux Carré Courier} August 4, 1967). Resembling the nineteenth century Baroness Pontalba’s disgust for “human vermin,” the government and elitist citizens’ actions and words again revealed clues that they conceived Jackson Square with a limiting imagination. Mooney argues that more than clues these are,

\begin{quote}
Practices and a language of distancing [that] are often utilized to construct such…social groups as ‘alien’, ‘foreign’, as the ‘other.’ In other words, these groups and the worlds, which they inhabit, are actively ‘disconnected’ through processes of constructing them as disorderly (Mooney 1999, 64).\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{Vieux Carré Courier} referred to these groups as “furry people” (\textit{Vieux Carré Courier} September 15, 1967).

\textsuperscript{58} See chapter five for a summary discussion on vagrancy laws in New Orleans. And, see chapter seven on actual police actions in Jackson Square and its Pedestrian Mall today.

\textsuperscript{59} See also Allen 1999, Massey 1999.
Designating groups as “furry,” “uncouth,” and “foul,” for example, is inherently a social, geographic, and ordering process because as David Sibley explains Western society seeks to purify and separate communities (Sibley 1995). He is referring to suburbanization but his discussion has application in the comparatively micro space of Jackson Square. The result has been a continued denial of the social legitimacy of groups not associated with the cultural, economic, and political mainstream in Jackson Square.

**Tapering Image, Refining Interests**

The classist practices of those with greater cultural, economic, social, and political powers associated with Jackson Square arose (and continues to occur) between even “acceptable” individuals and groups. Early on, for instance, Square sidewalk artists squabbled not only over spots on Jackson Square’s fence but also over the kind of art that was acceptable to display. Some artists literally felt pushed out by those persons selling prints and reproductions and argued that only original artwork, specifically paintings and drawings, were worthy of the Square (*The States Item* August 4, 1954, *The Times Picayune* August 8, 1954). In actuality, cultural and economic factors have intertwined in the over 50-year ongoing debate. Then, the city was forthright in the nature of its position. According to then Councilman Schiro,

> The original plan was to provide color and atmosphere for tourists in the French Quarter who like to see artists at work and prefer to buy paintings from the water colorists, lithographers, and etchers who live in the neighborhood. We thought when we granted permission to use the fences—at no charge—the artists would be happy and the tourists would enjoy the spectacle and all would go well. But now that this dissension has arisen, the
artists will either have to get together and work it out, or we’ll have to rule that the fences can’t be used for display by anyone (The States Item August 4, 1954).

As time went on, the arguing expanded to include other groups, first with street musicians and entertainers and then with Tarot and palm readers (The Times Picayune February 21, 1977, The Times Picayune May 31, 1991). When the city raised and slated the Pedestrian Mall, the disagreements intensified as more and more people arrived in the Jackson Square area seeking to earn tourist dollars. For example, some Square artists complained that the musicians were usurping tourist dollars and, citing a city ordinance, said that music wasn’t a legal enterprise on streets in New Orleans, only art was officially permitted (Vieux Carré Courier February 21, 1977). Additionally, at least one artist claimed that “Street music is beneath the dignity of Jackson Square” (Vieux Carré Courier February 10, 1977).60 Years of struggle ensued, but street musicians and other street entertainers won their right to perform in public for donations based on the first amendment. Those against street performances refocused their argument on sound and crowd control, and the city increased limitations on street musicians and entertainers, restricting their locations, time of play, and volume (see, for example, The Times Picayune October 19, 1984, February 7, 1986, November 3, 1990).

In the 1990s, the number of Tarot and palm readers, who had been coming to the Pedestrian Mall as early as the late 1970s (fn 04.19.04), increased, competing for space with artists (The Times Picayune May 31, 1991). Artists were not the only ones

60 Arguing this distinction between high and low culture and thus the proper image of Jackson Square, ironically, was an artist whose forte was caricatures of tourists.
against readers. Pontalba storeowners were too, as one explained, “We had executions out there and livestock grazed, and now Tarot card readers. They need to go!”\(^{61}\) (fn 11.19.04). And, Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson adamantly opposed the readers’ practices and presence, proposing restrictive ordinances on the Square and publicly taking a no compromise position. In fact, her office displayed a sign stating, “Read my mind: No more Tarot” (The Times Picayune June 22, 2003). The artists pushed for Clarkson’s ordinances, in part, “to return the Square back to the artists” (fn 10.26.04). Sandra, a high-end doll shop owner, who also supported Clarkson’s view, dolefully said that Jackson Square had lost its spiritual and mystical qualities and that the area was deteriorating and scary. “My store—that’s what I imagine,” pointing to the porcelain dolls around her, “that’s the kind of world I want to surround myself in, an old world, maybe behind the times, but that’s okay” (fn 08.11.01). Jon Goss explains, “We readily accept nostalgia as a substitute for experience, absence for presence, and representation for authenticity” (Goss 1993, 28 in Mitchell 2003). In fact, the examples above show a preference and desire for limiting nostalgia, absence, and representation over genuineness, presence, and multiplicity of practices.

With increased disputing over space, artists and Clarkson tapped into discourses involving the plight of artists and importantly the already strong French Quarter

\(^{61}\) The shop owner also explained that about ten years ago the Louisiana State Museum asked that the store specialize, so now they just sell toys. The man explained that they used to sell souvenirs too, but not like the stores on Bourbon Street—his shop sold “nice stuff” (fn 11.19.04). Here, the Louisiana State Museum shows a desire to make the area more refined while the shop owner distinguishes his store as high-end unlike other locations in the French Quarter.
preservation movement (fn 10.26.03, City of New Orleans Ord. 021095, Mayor Council Series April 16, 2003). Sidewalk artists alleged that they were intrinsic to Jackson Square and that artists held a special position in society. Therefore, members of the Jackson Square Art Colony asserted that they merited priority to space and privilege concerning how the city governed the area (fn 08.15.04, WSBM 1350 AM August 23, 2004).

The idea of privileging art and artists is not new and was well established before historic preservation principles. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Western society has maintained images of the artist as a noble and exceptional member of society (Levine 1988). Howard Becker explains that in the United States, the position of artist holds an honorific place for those gifted, talented, and special individuals who create art because they do “something that needs to be done for society” (Becker 1982, 14) and are therefore of “great importance to society” (Becker 1982, 16). In New Orleans by the 1890s, the presence of this attitude was reflected in which members of the artists’ association could vote. Those who started the association deemed which members were active and which members were passive. Only active members could vote on matters for the society “to insure [sic] the continuations of the association in the spirit it was started” (The Daily Picayune January 1, 1893). Throughout their history in the city and today, various artists (both officers of the artists’ committees and general members not holding an office) use this high place in society, ubiquitously imagined in the ideal, to negotiate their position in the Square. By doing so, they participate in elitist practices long active in perpetuating a narrow image of Jackson Square.
For instance, during a more recent radio interview between the representative of the artists’ committee and the representative of the readers, Leif, the artists’ spokesperson insisted that any potential compromise concerning space in the Square needed to include measures that would ensure preservation of the Art Colony and its future (Radio WSM 1350 AM August 23, 2004). When Ben, the readers’ spokesperson, asserted that tourists enjoyed the readers, Leif said that mud wrestling might attract tourists, insinuating that tarot reading was comparable, but it was a question of whether or not you wanted that kind of thing in the Jackson Square area. Though Ben maintained that there had been a tradition of Tarot on the Square, Leif scoffed. He claimed that readers were not a traditional part of Jackson Square or the French Quarter, “You have to think about and ask yourself what kind of atmosphere you want for Jackson Square and the Quarter” (Radio WSM 1350 AM August 23, 2004).

Later, Leif recalled that the French Quarter and Jackson Square had the highest level of historical designation—National Historic Places—and that their significance was so great that the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that special care and rules could be taken to preserve it. He added that was the reason more Lucky Dog, flower, and other vendors were not operating in the French Quarter or Jackson Square (fn 08.15.04).

Additionally, Leif said that the Vieux Carré Commission had the power given to them by the Louisiana Constitution to remove the readers from the Square because, according to him, they were not a part of the French Quarter’s *tout ensemble* or historically quaint character. He explained, for example, that musicians and readers were in different classes. Readers were “con artists and fakes” and “barely one step above the
homeless” (in 08.15.04). Invoking two extremely powerful social forces imaginings of an ideal past (Levine 1988) and classism associated with high culture (Bright and Bakewell 1995), Leif attempts to justify the exclusion of certain groups from the Square because they disrupted the proper order of people and places (Sibley 1995, Pile et al 1999).

Leif’s comments mark two enduring matters concerning Jackson Square. First, the quaint character refers to that which privileges only certain activities and people in Jackson Square’s past that support time-honored, dominant imaginings. Those like Leif, who supported Councilwoman’s Clarkson’s plans for the Jackson Square area, made no mention of the other sustained activities and types of people that, in fact, have also been part of Jackson Square’s history. Second, nor did they make mention of equal access and equal rights or even public space. Rather, they looked to nostalgic images to uphold particular social ideals in practice.

Moving Away from Normative “High” Imaginings

This latest battle between artists and readers reiterates habitual practices of inclusion and exclusion at various scales in Jackson Square. It also suggests as, for example, the park commissions and Mayor Schrio’s actions do, that tourism is a tool used to exclude certain classes and activities from Jackson Square because of perceived economic advantages. But, both of these matters indicate that a broader public than one imagined by powerful authorities contest the Square. Furthermore, as Ruddick (1996b) shows in other public spaces, its meaning is constructed through that contestation. Thus, the use of Jackson Square for elite interests based largely in image has never been
absolute. Reoccurring activities from early in its history reveal that in truth, Jackson
Square may be defined as much through contestations in the everyday. In the next
chapter, I turn to these facets of the Square’s daily life. By tracing particular issues
through time, consistent alternative practices emerge that go against and sometimes
work within the dominant and limited imaginings of Jackson Square revealed in this
chapter.
Chapter Five

Disorder in the City’s Front?

On the Levee, just south of Jackson Square, you may see a canvas enclosing and exhibition of the most attractive character. This canvas is covered with pictorial illustrations of the wonders it is supposed to conceal. You behold immense bears attacked by the hunter, other bears are about to make a meal of the buffalo. Then the scene changes to the tropics, and you perceive a boa constrictor of great length and many contortions; he has enveloped a horse in his folds, and his mouth is very wide open, resembling a magnified carpet-sack in the same outstretched condition.

Music adds to this attraction—the hand-organ is accompanied by a very feeble flageolet, which pipes out a little stream of melody. This is backed by a key- bugle, a trombone and a large drum. A man harangues the audience upon the wonders within, and the audience is being worked in about as fast as the boa constrictor would work in the horse which he suffocates upon the canvas. Not finding ourselves upon the free list, and desiring to preserve our incognito, we press through the miscellaneous assemblage of nationalities and colors, pay our two dimes, and are ushered into the miraculous sanctuary.

What do we see? An audience extracted from the crowd without. We find a floor of sawdust and canvas roof. There is the home of the happy family, consisting of some very meager monkeys, one or two vociferous parrots, and a sort of prairie wolf, of a sorry complexion, who is walking against time, and has worn away his hair by rubbing against the cage. He has the anxious and furtive look of an irreclaimable reseal, and looks as though he had been a graduate in several State prisons.

In another compartment we see a duck keeping amicable company with an animal that seems an overgrown rat. Next an African civet, which we did not disturb. The animal labelled [sic] we believe, the Brazilian tiger, and two others of the same species, which being in a state of repose, we did not awaken. A very large cage had from the inscription born him residence of a large Russian bear, who was, however, absent on leave, and his residence is now, we presume, for rent. Another bear, of a brown color, restless disposition, and painful expression of face, occupied the adjacent apartment, and completed the animal exhibition. That interesting reptile, the boa constrictor, had
shrunk greatly from the dimensions represented without. He was apparently indisposed, and received visitors in his bedroom, wrapped in a blanket.

A young lady in a high stat of spangled jacket, embroidered skirt and red bootees, was seated on the sawdust, holding in her arms a sick monkey of a doleful aspect. The monkey seemed to suffer from an ophthalmic infection, and the young lady was applying some remedy which the patient did not relish, as he resisted and chattered like a Christian sufferer under similar circumstances.

Our sympathies for this libellous [sic] little imitation of man were alleviated by a look into the camera, in which we beheld very vivid reminiscences of the late war. Vicksburg was being bombarded, but by some “devilish cantrip slight;” one of the scenes represented an attack by red-coat artillerists upon some fortified city, with an elephant looking down upon the artillerists in dignified approbation.

Now there may have been “camels” employed in buoying crippled boats in the siege of Vicksburg, but we are not aware that any other Asiatic animal participated in that signal conflict. Then followed by a series of land and naval combats “The Monitor of 2 guns” fought “the Merrimac with 10.” Admiral Farragut filled the air with bombs which invariably bursted [sic] in a brilliant star, and sank ships in every direction. For Donelson was illustrated by very gaudy pyrotechnics and a series of Federal victories celebrated, from Island 10 to the last fight when the series was painted.

Such, however, is the lot of the vanquished. History, poetry, orations and pictorial presentation will teach this version of the struggle, and it will settle as fact in the public mind. This is one of the means of communicating this version; it is too small a specimen to comment on.

We were next summoned to witness some cup-and-ball jugglery, by a gentleman with a dish face and a Tartarian aspect. This was succeeded by a dexterous handling of some knives, and then the young lady—not of the lions, but of the indisposed monkey—presented herself and held up her arm as a target. Froth with the Mongolian threw his knives above and below her arm, sticking them in the board against which she was standing. Then the young lady held out her other arm with a like result. She then exposed her beautiful neck in like manner, and the audience was horrified to see the knives quiver in the board above and below the jugular of the damsel in red boots. She
took it very coolly, submitting her throat to the Mongolian with as much composure as we do ours to the barber and apparently with as little dread of the results.

This terminated our view of his performance, and we emerged not with the proud complacency with which we quit the opera, but assuming immediately the aspect of a spectator looking with contempt on all side shows and miscellaneous congregations (Daily Southern Star January 25, 1866).

Counter to the illustrious celebrations and images of Jackson Square, this sideshow, located on the levee adjacent to the plaza, exposes an alternate manner in which people used and imagined the distinguished landscape. Ironically, the author laments how the public will remember the Civil War through this sideshow and “poetry, orations, and pictorial presentations” that depict similar versions of the struggle. He also shows his distaste for “side shows,” feeling that they are far below “cultural” experiences like the opera. One may wonder how the author felt about the sideshow juxtaposed next to the city’s front.

In this chapter, I trace aspects of life in public space that form different meanings, beyond dominant ordering and imaginings, of Jackson Square. By explicating these practices each independently from the beginning of increased Anglo immigration, I show how other activities and everyday life blurred conventional ideas governing a “divide” between public-private places, urbane-uncultivated spaces, and high-low culture in public spaces generally and the Square specifically.

To locate repeated practices in the past, that lie outside well-known events like O’Reilly’s seizing of the colony or Jackson’s welcoming in the Square, I turned to
newspapers, City Council proceedings, and ordinances⁶² to construct its day-by-day. In what follows, I first outline images of Jackson Square that differ considerably from those in chapter four. Then, I map four areas of the everyday in public space and Jackson Square, including a variety of private activities, tending to animals, selling, and entertaining that reveal hybrids of public space, which include daily cultural, economic, and social practices. Mitchell and others have broached these hybrid qualities of public space but the thrust of their work on civic public spaces (e.g. streets, squares, and parks) is predominantly politically focused (see, for example, Goheen 1994, 1998, Mitchell 1995, 1996, Domosh 1998, McCann 1999, Smith 2000).⁶³ Susan Ruddick (1996a) and Loretta Lees (2001), however, have offered a more wide-ranging critical approach that includes cultural, economic, and social aspects in public space as have anthropologists such as Setha Low (2000, 2005), Helen Regis (1999, 2001), and Miles Richardson (1978, 1982). Setha Low argues, “design, style, and nostalgia” and “people’s social exchanges, memories, images, and daily uses of the material settings” construct public space, which then becomes a site of civic expression (Low 2000, 128). Importantly, however, she also explains that those activities and design create meaning in the public space itself (Low 2000, 128).

⁶² I also used other archival material such as city guides and popular writings; the majority of my data, however, came from newspapers, City Council proceedings, and ordinances.

⁶³ Other geographers have studied specific cultural and social aspects of public space. See Daniel Arreola (1992) for an historical typology of plazas in South Texas; See Gill Valentine (1996) for an example concerning children and public spaces; See Linda McDowell (1999) for an example concerning gender and public spaces.
Encompassing larger social scales, including neighborhoods, districts, and cities, David Sibley (1995), Doreen Massey et al (1999), and Steve Pile et al (1999), for example use, more holistic approaches, that aid in understanding shared social spaces. In doing so, these geographers elucidate particular patterns and rhythms in the city. It is from these geographers and anthropologists that I take cues from for my discussion in this chapter. By tracing the less prestigious and (sometimes) mundane activities and rulings on particular issues through time, a pattern of life in public space emerges that goes against dominant representations of Jackson Square, revealing slippage from ideal performances. Indeed, few of these patterns include “serving some public service or public role” (Jackson 1984); instead, expressions of the Square and its meanings are repositioned.

As the last sections of chapter four indicate, activities such as Tarot reading, which go against an elite ideal, exist today. Thus, I also provide recent observations, revealing a public space that “lives” even now through the everyday. Thus, I keep with my goal to provide a less interrupted account of Jackson Square’s cultural geography. That said, I save the more personal facets and microgeographies from my ethnographic data for chapters six and seven. In chapter four, I focused on both representations and practices that support particular dominant images, but in this chapter, the thrust of my data comes from practices and representations, illustrating alternative cultural, economic, political, and social patterns that over time have materialized. My goal is to

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64 Though to be sure, I draw on elements from those geographers’ analyses who concentrate more exclusively on the political aspects of public space.
understand how counter needs of public space form, exist, and change. These patterns may be the “underside” of the Square but they are no less valid, for they show a long history of other roles, needs, and uses of public spaces like Jackson Square.

For even as government and influential members of the colony in New Orleans directed cultural, economical, political, and social patterns, ordinary colonists also negotiated public spaces, like Place d’Armes, through their own needs and struggles. For example, the construction of the French Market (1784) stemmed from the Cabildo’s (government’s) desire to stop men from selling fish in the Square (Wilson 1968, 52); the early ordinance (1786) that prohibited gambling and games of chance in public places grew from concern for the morality of the city’s citizens (CCDA June 2, 1786); and another which stated that “No dead animals to be thrown in the streets. They should be buried,” obviously came from a concern for the health and appearance of the city (CCDA June 2, 1786). These facets show, at times, a colony and Square more freewheeling than ordered, more colorful than dignified, and more unmanageable than controlled. Indeed, counterparts to efforts for an ordered and grandly imagined city in Place d’Armes were ever-present.

Other Images of the Plaza

Though in 1816, Place d’Armes marked a visible ideal of the plaza for some as an “attractive Square,” others maintained a different impression. For example, just three years later, architect Henry Boneval Latrobe commented that,

The Square itself is neglected, the fence ragged and in many places open. Part of it is let for a depot of firewood, paving stones are heaped up in it, and along the whole of the side next
to the river is a row of mean booths in which dry goods are sold by yellow, black and white women, who dispose, I am told, of incredible quantities of slops and other articles fit for sailors and boatmen, and those sort of customers. Thus a Square which might be the handsomest in America is rather a nuisance than otherwise (Latrobe 1905, 164).

Indeed, the man who supplied the city with firewood stored his overstock in Place d'Armes. Though in that February the Council ordered him to remove the wood (CVP February 20, 1816), earlier the Council may have given him permission—because in 1820 a similar situation arose when the Council ordered iron panels for the new Place d'Armes fence to be placed on the ground floor of city hall until the workers assembled the fence (CVOR April 20, 1820). The city’s front then was at best in transition from joint utilitarian and refined spaces to an exclusively urbane public place. The backside of the city sometimes played out in the city’s front, a disordering phenomenon. Irving Goffman discusses the separation between stage and back stage, comparing that spatial relationship between front and back areas of tourist sites. These two areas are integral to each other but at the same time distinct (Goffman 1959). And, Cresswell explains, “The separation of ‘aesthetic objects’ from everyday life makes the object sacred” (Cresswell 1996, 77). In the Place d’Armes example above, the workings of the back region (everyday life) and the city’s front (an aesthetic object) materially blend, causing the meaning of the plaza to come into question and thus to be socially disordering.

65 That said, even in 1834, the Council addressed the issue of people depositing “Mississippi mud, bricks, lime, lumber, or any other thing which may encumber or cause a nuisance” on Lafayette Square—they would be fined (GDB 1836, 189 (October 11, 1834)).
And during the 1840s, while some referred to Place d’Armes as “that old delightful promenade,” others saw the Square with conflicting lenses. For example, then popular writer Oakey Hall described Place d’Armes as a “beggars’ retreat,” with only “one or two respectable trees, a hundred or two blades of grass, a dilapidated fountain, [and] a very naked flag-staff” (Hall 1851, 89). He referred to the “ugliness” of the plaza but:

… with judicious expenditure of a few thousand dollars might be made an inviting promenade; it is now but a species of cheap lodging-house for arriving emigrants, drunken sailors, and lazy stevedores; occasionally the review-ground of the most forlorn looking body of military… [that] I have seen outside a New England village upon “training day” (Hall 1851, 88, 90).

Though Hall shows disgust for, for example, emigrants and stevedores, compelling his readers to infer who should be acceptable members of the public and what activities were desirable in public spaces, “undesirable” persons were nonetheless part of the plaza’s life. If Cresswell depicts the meaning of place as coming to be through actions and reactions to those actions (Cresswell 1996), then clearly according to Hall’s reaction to, for example, the “lazy stevedores” and “forlorn” military, the plaza had become the wrong kind of place in image and practice—its meaning in jeopardy.

And, notwithstanding event celebrations and commemorations like General Andrew Jackson’s in 1840 (and Major General Zachary Taylor’s in 1847), by 1848, the day-to-day Place d’Armes yielded an unbecoming picture:

Time worn buildings of the Spanish architects of the eighteenth century crumbled and mouldered [sic] away in the immediate vicinity of the Place d’Armes. The latter wad in desolution [sic]. The basin of its little central fountain and fish pond, formly [sic]
Indeed, in this rendering, the sophistication of Place d'Armes appears to have moldered away into a muddled disarray. A once hoped-for majestic image and life for the plaza apparently had languished.

In 1850 (before new work on the plaza began), the newspaper *Le Courier* (October 15, 1850) echoed the Baroness’ distaste for “human vermin,” by stating that the Square was a “camping ground” for “loafers.”66 Despite these harsh judgments against “undesirables” in public squares in 1853, a year after reunification of the three municipalities into one,67 *The Daily Crescent* (February 5, 1853) reported that in Lafayette Square, “Iron seats have been placed in this Square for the vagrant hordes who have heretofore been compelled to sleep on the grass.” This after government offices, including the Council's, moved (in 1852) to Gallier Hall, whose doorsteps led directly to

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66 The paper also said that the Square should be made “a pleasant place of resort for families and a playground for children.” Certainly, the Square never became an authorized playground for children. Instead, at that time, most Place d'Armes lithographs illustrated children promenading in much the same way as adults did (October 15, 1850). Nevertheless, *Le Courier’s* opinion reveals that no consensus existed among the social and political elite over proper activities in the city’s Square/the city’s “front.”

67 New Orleans divided into three municipalities in 1836. The municipalities became known as the First Municipality, comprising the French Quarter and thus Place d'Armes (and where most of the affluent Creole population resided), the Second Municipality, comprising the Uptown area and thus Lafayette Square (and where most of the Anglo-American population resided), and the Third Municipality, comprising the area south of the Quarter and thus Washington Square (and where most of the less-affluent Creole population and immigrant populations resided) (Lewis 1976).
Lafayette Square. A seemingly socially curious installation of benches for “vagrant hordes” from a socially select government in fact reveals the presence of uncertainty: not-fully formulated ideas and ideals held about the character of public space and who was included in “the public.” And though Jackson Square had moldered away and despite the Baroness’ previous objections, the Council later authorized putting similar benches in Jackson Square (VCSA 1852, vol. 53, 206).68

Recall that in part, this uncertainty followed a broader sentiment taking hold in the United States and Western Europe concerning the relationship between physical and moral health and the natural environment (Levine 1988). In Norman’s New Orleans and Environs, for instance, referring to public Squares, the author states, “Nothing is more conducive to health than these pleasant resorts for wholesome exercise. Here the toil-worn citizen, may breathe fresh air, enjoy a delightful morning or evening promenade, and catch an imaginary enjoyment, in miniature, of the blessed country” (Norman 1845, 181). The goals of refining Jackson Square and a healthful place for citizens to transform themselves seemed incongruent because “human vermin” (undesirables) would contaminate the plaza, particularly because its material landscape remained in flux. Indeed, authorities’ and elites’ intentions were “shrouded in ambivalence” for converting the lower classes (Levine 1988, 177).

Even after the Baroness’ apartment buildings were completed and her elegant plans for the Square installed (1852), the delight of Jackson Square was, at times, elusive.

68 Additionally, the Council authorized benches for Washington and Clay Squares (VCSA 1852, vol. 53, 206).
In 1854, the Square’s character was both praised, as being in “top shape,” (Wharton 1999) and criticized, as being a place of “neglect” (Courrier August 22, 1854). Furthermore, as Sibley and others point out, landscape design provides assumptions about which activities are acceptable and which are not (Sibley 1995, Cresswell 1996), but not all followed those assumptions concerning Jackson Square. Just one year after Olmstead’s favorable opinion of the Square’s beauty, Creole vigilantes turned Jackson Square into an armed camp; while the American group, The Know Nothings, took control of Lafayette Square. The standoff lasted four days and during this time “dense throngs of inquisitive persons [pressed] up against the line of sentinels, all tending to give it a look of anything but a peaceable city” (Weekly Gazette and Comet June 3, 1858).

Then again, in 1874 prior to the September 14 New Orleans Massacre between the White League69 and the Metropolitan police, the Metropolitan Police used the Square to store artillery (The Evening Telegraph (Philadelphia) September 11, 1866). In this example, larger cultural, political, and social conflicts in the city encompassed Jackson Square, forever linking it to one of the bloodiest clashes in the city’s history, certainly countering an ordered and refined place that the landscape was to inspire. Drawing from Bourdieu, Cresswell describes how bourgeois ideals continually aim “to purify” culture by means of the landscape. But in the New Orleans massacre, the city’s moral purity was tarnished and Jackson Square as a place of sublimation thrown into question.

69 The White League is white supremacist group formed during the mid-nineteenth century in part to counter Reconstruction efforts (Rable 1984).
And, though in 1882 the Council appointed a commission for the care and beautification of Jackson Square, the railroad companies that built warehouses and laid railroad tracks in front of the Square destroyed, for some, the “charm and beauty… [of] the handsomest Square is New Orleans” (The Daily Statesman April 20, 1882).

To be sure, Jackson Square enjoyed high points despite the railroad companies’ interference. But, even the Parkway and Park Commissions’ grand physical and social plans (starting in 1909) for green spaces in the city weren’t enough to maintain the city’s front in a consistent manner.

Though with the Depression in the 1930s, Jackson Square “became shabby and the resort of undesirables” (Huber 1982, 107), the optimistic Louisiana State Museum\(^{70}\) reported that:

> With the extensive improvements we have in mind, Jackson Square will again be returned to its former splendor and become a recreation spot for the residents of the Upper and Lower Pontalba… it will again become a center for the elite… Through cooperation of the Police Department we have been successful in ridding the park of practically all undesirable characters, moochers, dope peddlers, muggle smokers, street walkers and others of the same character. The Square is now comparatively safe during the day and night hours, and is now closed at night (Louisiana Museum Report March 20, 1935, in Huber 1982, 107).

Thus, tension between order and relative disorder, between elite images and the material and social realities of the everyday continued to define Jackson Square.\(^{71}\)

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\(^{70}\) At that time, Jackson Square was under control of the Louisiana State Museum but shared the Parkway and Park Commission’s philosophies (See Huber 1982, 106-107 for some of the museum’s activities that reflect its goals).
The idea of order and disorder is a slippery one. As Mooney suggests, we need to ask “Whose order?” (Mooney 1999, 55). The descriptions in this section show potential alternative images of the Square and hint at alternative practices, that is to say alternative orderings, which the needs and circumstances of everyday life create.

In the sections that follow, I show in more detail those alternative practices that counter the purity and order put forth by prevailing authorities. With each topic, I begin near the beginning of the nineteenth century and follow through with that issue to present-day. As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, however, I aim to show an historical pattern, so I defer current detailed ethnographic discussions for chapters six and seven.

71 In fact, since 1869 occasional pranksters preyed on the Square. On April 1, 1869, The Daily Picayune reported a “Discovery of Hidden Treasure, $500,000 in Gold and Silverware, A Unique Depositry [sic] of Burglars.” The lengthy article ended with “As yet, but one person has identified any part of it—Mr. A. Prifool claims to be the owner of the casket of jewels.” In 1921, pranksters shot a cannon ball from the cannon under the Cabildo building, crossing over Jackson Square, and entering the second story of a house across the river in Algiers (The Times Picayune February 20, 1921). In 1934, vandals stole General Jackson’s head from the equestrian statue in the Square (The Times Picayune February 23, 1934). And, in 1958, someone attempted to remove the General’s head again, but with limited success. Though Jackson kept his head, for at least a while, he tilted his head skyward (The Times Picayune August 24, 1958). In the same year, The States Item reported that Jackson’s stirrup was broken, that he had lost a spur from a boot, and that his sword was missing (September 9, 1958). In 1961, an explosion occurred in the Square blowing out windows in one of the Pontalba apartment buildings and destroying part of a cannon located in the Square. Finally, in 1962, pranksters once again stole Jackson’s sword though it was recovered later on railroad tracks about 275 miles away in Monticello (The States Item September 12, 1962).
Making a Buck

As the port to the Mississippi valley and the greater North American continent, a wide array of people and activities constituted the plaza (and other public places). Located on the river’s levee where workers unloaded goods and visitors and immigrants arrived, Jackson Square became ideal spot for independent selling.

Also early on, however, store merchants voiced their opposition against mobile vendors, petitioning the Council to stop peddlers of goods (CCDA October 6, 1797). Over time, the Council enacted restrictions on various forms of mobile selling. Restrictions included taxation (on carts, CVP July 13, 1805, and on goods CVP February 5, 1818), how items could be sold (CVOR May 18, 1810), locations of selling (specific to Place d'Armes CVOR March 13, 1813), and what could be sold (CVP May 27, 1815), but much selling in public places persisted even as laws continued to narrow the scope of public selling.

In fact, selling in the Square only increased as the Mississippi River proved to be a major, and for a time, the route for transporting goods and people. In the early nineteenth century, according to William Coleman, Jackson Square became a place, where:

on holidays all the population of the town gathered; Fiery Louisiana Creoles...rude trappers and hunters...lazy émigré nobles… energetic Germans... dirty Indians...some slaves, negroes of every shade and hue...and lastly the human trash, ex-galley slaves and adventurers, shipped to the colony to be gotten rid of. Here too, in Jackson Square the stranger could shop cheaper if not better than in the boutiques around it, for half the trade and business of the town was itinerant. Here passed... peddling merchants... who instead of carrying their packs upon
their backs, had their goods spread out in a… vehicle which they wheeled before them...milk and coffee women carrying their immense cans well balanced on their turban heads. [And] all through the day went up [and down] the never-ceasing cries of various street hawkers... (Coleman 1885, 12-13).

Some sellers even set up temporary stalls on the Square’s sidewalks, but beginning in 1816 with “the good of the public in mind,” Council ordered multiple restrictions such as selling items inside the plaza rather than the sidewalks surrounding it (CVP September 14, 1816). The passage above shows that these peddlers provided much competition for store merchants, so that “the good of the public,” then may be taken as “the good of the store merchants” at least in part. Thus, even though the Council used egalitarian language, because peddlers were competition to store merchants, based on their pressuring of the Council, the public that the Council referred to was actually a hierarchical public, where some members’ needs or wants superseded those of others.

On March 1, 1819, the Council ordered the mayor to stop all selling in Place d'Armes and to “notify persons who sell goods in the public square to stop by July 1” so that the square is free for public use” (CVOR). Just two years later, no seller was to locate “on any part of the levee within limits of New Orleans to sell merchandise” (CVOR March 16, 1821). In October, those merchants on the levee petitioned to remain on the levee, and though no records of the petition’s impact were recorded, proceedings in 1823 through 1831, reveal that selling in the public places, including Place d'Armes and the levee, had continued (CVP March 25, 1823, GDA 1831, 149 (November 17, 1828), GDB 1836, 159 (February 19, 1831)). Then in 1835, council
passed an ordinance that allowed only peddlers to sell “dry goods, hardware, silverware, jewelry, shoes, [and] crockery ware…..” Thus, to sell legally in public spaces, one had to be on the move with one’s goods.

In 1852 with the consolidation of the three municipalities, under “Laws not repealed by consolidation” council reiterated:

Police [are] to prevent the stopping or obstruction of the streets, public squares, sidewalks, levees, public roads, or any part of the port of New Orleans and to order any objects [goods] which may encumber said places or prevent or embarrass the public use of the same to be removed or sold (DLNR 1852).

And in 1881, the city legally eliminated even the most mobile of sellers in public spaces commanding that “bootblacks, candy sellers, peanut vendors, patent medicine men, or peddlers of any other description [cease] to ply their avocations in or around said squares or parks” (Jewell 1887, 400). With these laws, selling certainly must have stopped (for a while) or at least slowed (for a while), but evidently new ordinances “needed” to be decreed. For again, in June 1882, the Council forbid bootblacks around squares and parks (Flynn 1896, 565).

But, still unsuccessful in its effort to rid the city of street vendors, in 1906, the Council deployed a different means of control, passing an ordinance that prohibited “the erection of stands or booths on sidewalks for sale of merchandise without a permit from the mayor” (NOSO 18). Later (1930), Council expanded their permitting reach, requiring permits for “soliciting, selling of merchandise, holding parades, meetings… when using the streets” (NOSO 41). Through the 1930s, multiple laws increased regulating and permitting processes disallowing vendors on most sidewalks (NOSO 41);
Yet, still vendors sold, at least at times, on Jackson Square (Winans 1934). By 1956, the first City Code manual outlined an elaborate system of permits for various forms of assembly and selling (CCNO).

As pointed out in chapter four, in the 1970s, even street vendors such as hot dog and flower sellers, which had long been part of the Quarter and Jackson Square, were almost eliminated in order to preserve the *tout ensemble*. After a seven-year string of ordinances and lawsuits, only limited Lucky Dog hotdog carts, a few drink and ice cream vendors, a hat seller, and one shoe shiner, remained in Jackson Square, all grandfathered in to a legal place on the Square (*The Times Picayune* June 26, 1976). The *tout ensemble*, however, preserved an imagined exclusionary ideal. In using the rhetoric of the *tout ensemble*, preservationists (more fully) separated “unlike categories,” meaning they separated an abundance of “lowlbrow” street vendors from a nostalgic past. By doing so the imagined past became more real in the present than in the past, reaffirming the ideal reading of the past and illegitimating real portions (people and activities) from the past and present (DeLyser 1999). As Sibley suggests,

> Problems [often] arise [because] separation of things into unlike categories is [usually] unattainable. The mixing of categories by intersections in space creates liminal zones or spaces of ambiguity and discontinuity (Sibley 1995, 32-33).

But, the nature of urban places is that they are heterogeneous (Massey et al 1999).

So though today vending by anyone besides those above remains illegal in Jackson Square, vending of goods by others like Roy, the Candy Man, continues. Roy sells homemade pralines on the Decatur Street side of Jackson Square. Sometimes, he
sits on the ledge of the retaining wall where it meets the Square’s fence, but Roy also
sometimes sells from an old conference chair. On it, he has written, “Roy the Candy
Man’s Chair.” He leaves his chair out day and night on the southwest corner of the
Square by the Pontalba building restaurant. No one meddles with his chair even though
his praline operation is illegal—a testament to his long-standing presence there, which
has earned Roy respect from Square regulars and (likely) apprehension from police to
end an elderly man’s income (fn 02.02.04 through (at least) 04.20.04). In another
example, a middle-aged woman covertly sells clothes she makes to entertainers and
artists, many of whom are her regular customers. Discretely moving about the Square
and making stops at setups, she sells items that are specific to her client’s act or art (fn
10.25.03). These cases, beyond those associated with grandfather clauses, show that
Jackson Square persists in attracting independent selling and that those members of the
public need or desire such an outlet—an outlet that is directly and indirectly supported
by tourism.

**Lodging in Public Space?**

Events like the 1788, 1794 fires and the 1795 slave rebellion eclipsed much
“progress” in New Orleans’ urban refinement (CCDA March 26, 1788, December 16,
1794, Honecker 1982). Though New Orleans rebuilt after each fire, it took a toll on
struggling colonists, and homelessness increased (CCDA December 16, 1794).

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72 Gutter punks also intermittently sell items on Jackson Square, which I address in
chapter seven.
Because of this need for shelter, the Cabildo (government) allowed colonists to erect temporary huts on the levee in front of Place d'Armes (CCDA December 12, 1789). These temporary structures, however, became permanent in a sense because those in need remained much longer than the government had planned for them.\(^7^3\) Perhaps in part this had to do with notions of proper uses of public space not fully worked out. Because from 1789 to 1801, at least four times the Cabildo ordered the huts demolished; yet, they never were (CCDA December 12, 1789, December 16, 1794, August 23, 1797, June 5, 1801).

Then again, in 1805, the matter of the temporary structures on the levee became an issue, but before the council ordered them demolished, they appointed a committee to make a report on the situation. The committee found the “houses, shanties, [and] cabins… on the levee prejudicial to public use and salubrity since they obstruct passage and circulation of air. They must be removed within six months. The mayor will give notice” (CVP July 3, 1805). It appeared that government had narrowed the uses of (open) public space, though neither council nor the mayor followed through with this mandate.

Later, the Council directed the mayor to sue persons occupying the huts and sheds (CVP January 16, 1811), but by January 1812, the year the first steamboat arrived in New Orleans, the Council had to repeat its order to remove the huts in front of Place

\(^7^3\) So permanent were they that through social and political maneuvering the Friar at St. Louis Cathedral charged and collected rent on the scanty homes (CCDA December 11, 1789).
d’Armes (CVP January 18, 1812). Though it is possible that the government didn’t have the means to raze the structures, it is also likely that both authorities and colonists were unsure of acts that left people without shelter, easier to ignore these resolutions than to undertake particular issues of public space.

Other domestic human activities in public spaces proved difficult to control in New Orleans. The Council outlawed swimming and bathing in front of the plaza during the daytime (1817) stating that:

Any person who shall strip naked, for bathing or show himself naked in any indecent apparel, or shall bathe during daylight in the Mississippi, or in basins, canals, or lakes or anywhere public within the city limits shall be arrested, fined or jailed (CVOR May 20, 1817).

But, twice (1824 and 1877), the Council was compelled to narrow their scope to include the evening hours (CVO July 17, 1824, Jewell 1887, 539-540).

Furthermore, issues dealing with garbage and other wastes plagued the city. The Council was forced to stipulate, “No throwing of [fecal] matter into the streets or any frequented places” (GDA 1831, 345 (August 9, 1828)), and later found it necessary to enact a law that barred anyone to “empty refuse from balconies and galleries onto the street (Jewell 1887, 325).

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74 The huts are not mentioned again in council proceedings, and thus their removal likely, yet in 1873, “a tent city… beneath the municipal wharves” existed at least on portions of the levee (Kelman 2003, 137).
The Council tried to curtail certain domestic activities in public places by passing various ordinances. For example, an 1856 ordinance, prohibited carpet shaking in public places, and stated that it was:

unlawful to hang up on trees, posts, fences, or on lines suspended from either or to spread upon the ground any articles of clothing or bedding for the purposes of drying or to shake carpets on any public square, street, promenades, or other public grounds belonging to or under the control of the city (Leovy 1857, 174).

But as the turn of the century drew near, and the wealth of New Orleans remained and continued to grow Uptown (Lewis 1976, Kelman 2003), even the stylish Pontalba apartment buildings became tenements “with clothes line strung on the handsome galleries… [with] reports of clothes lines in Jackson Square” (Chase, Deuthsch, Dufour, and Huber 1964). Though the city government and elite frowned upon these activities, people, and circumstances nevertheless became endemic to the Square.

Clearly, from the discussion above, during the nineteenth century, the larger public and government’s ideas had not fully evolved regarding which activities could and should be included in public spaces. Counter to what Jackson (1984) and Mitchell (1995, 2003) imply in their discussions, the history of public places includes a variety of individuals and groups that partook in a variety of private activities (and public activities which I address later in the chapter) repeatedly and over long periods. Jackson and

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75 Richard Sennett speaks to some of the variety of people and activities in public spaces when he discusses Greek agoras, which were “great public squares” (Sennett 1994, 3). Indeed, the agora in Athens (400 B.C.) was at least three and a half times the size of Jackson Square (approx. 350 by 350 feet) (Sennett 1994, 53). Quoting archeologist John Camp (1986, 72), Sennett notes that in the Athens agora crowds watched “swords-
Mitchell look to the political circumstances of public spaces historically and what dominant authorities envisioned, but by looking, for instance, at everyday cultural and social practices and circumstances, we see that the histories of those public spaces like Jackson Square (and the levee) are more multifaceted. Though surely contested and directed largely by dominant authorities, Jackson Square’s history shows how day-to-day living was not always disputed or controlled and ordered by prevailing authorities.

**Banished But Not Gone**

That said, early on, the city (government and citizens alike) singled out particular peoples for exclusion, or highly restricted their activities in public spaces. In 1781, the city council barred “all kinds of masking and public dancing…during Carnival season by negroes” (CCDA January 19, 1781) and later (1817) banned “slave activities” such as quarreling or gathering, except for religious services, in public (CVOR October 15, 1817). Further, no enslaved person could occupy a stall, be a hawker, or peddle goods of their own in any public place (GDA 1831, 149). After the city completely extricated enslaved persons from public spaces, the excision of free people of color followed.
In 1841, the state ordered any free person of color having no proof of residing in Louisiana before March 16, 1830, to leave (GDC 1845, August 31, 1841). Those free people of color who remained, however, enjoyed less access to public places as any “found wandering the streets during the night at unseasonable hours may be arrested” (DLNR 1852, 20).

And, long after the abolition of slavery, the city under “Moral Law” ordered provisions for “two distinct and separate restricted districts—one for white and one for colored” (NOSO 24). This also manifested, of course, in the segregation of schools and parks, which included Jackson Square. Indeed, today, Square locals Marvel, Slats and Chester, three black men who grew up during the struggle for desegregation, remember that they never came to Jackson Square as children or teenagers. They explained that their parents “told them how things were” (fn 10.24.03, 07.23.04). In effect, over the years, the city whitened and blackened particular areas in New Orleans. By the 1960s,

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78 The author does not know the page number in the digest; however, the date is provided. This issue is listed in the index under “Free People of Color not entitled to remain in this state.”

79 This phenomenon brings up an important aspect of the relationship between people of color being in the French Quarter. Persons of color who grew up before the civil rights movement, explain that unless you had an instrument case or a name tag (meaning you worked, most often, as a maid in a hotel), a person of color could not walk in the French Quarter without getting stopped by police (fn 09.06.02, 09.11.02, 10.09.02, 10.24.03, 01.29.04). In fact, in my own observations in the Quarter and Jackson Square, I witnessed situations like this, which I address in chapter seven.
the U.S. Supreme Court overturned all segregation laws, which white elite leaders and citizens in New Orleans vehemently fought.80

By 1970, poor blacks, numbering 2,200, had long lived in the French Quarter (Vieux Carré Courier June 18-24, 1971). Even though the preservation movement was underway there, well into the twentieth century the Quarter remained in a state of decline and neglect (Lewis 1976, Jakle 1985). Hence, cheap housing was available. In 1971, however, a “Black Exodus” occurred that black Quarter residents blamed on white gentrification, which was associated with an implicit racism. By June, an estimated 860 blacks remained (Vieux Carré Courier June 18-24, 1971). Today, the French Quarter is the whitest neighborhood in the city (Census 2000).

People of color were (and are) not the only group to face watchful elite. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, many Anglo-Americans began to arrive in New Orleans looking for economic opportunities. The influx of “strangers,” to this French Creole city prompted the City Council to require all “strangers” and “foreigners” to register with the city (CVOR February 21, 1806). And as years passed, the provisions of registering became stricter. For example, initially foreigners had to register within ten days of entering the city but by the end of the next year, foreigners had to register within 24 hours (GDA 1831, 159). More dramatic and lasting was the Council’s attempt to restrict and remove those, of any ethnicity, the city found undesirable.

For example, in 1820, the Council discussed a means to get rid of the great number of vagabonds in the city (CVP July 14, 1821). Later the state passed an act that deemed all persons vagrants who:

- not having visible means to maintain themselves, live without employment; all persons wandering abroad... in the open air, and not giving good account of themselves; all persons... [that] place themselves in the streets...or other public places (Acts of State Legislature 1855, in Leovy 1857, 181).

This act became part of the enduring legal disenfranchisement of those homeless or poor from public places. In fact, during the time the city formed the first park commissions, the City Council introduced additional laws such as the “Move On” ordinance (1887) centered on public spaces aimed at those same “vagabonds” and “idle persons” (Jewell 1887, 486).

A few years later (1881), the presence of those unwanted persisted, so the city explicitly stated, “Vagrants, loungers, and tramps are hereby forbidden to make any of said squares or parks a place of rendezvous” (Flynn 1896, 564). Alternately, over the years, broad and vague vagrancy ordinances allowed law enforcement to arrest people and hold them in police custody under the guise of the so-called deviant act of vagrancy (Daily Times Delta January 2, 1866, The States Item January 11, 1964, The Times Picayune July 17, 1964). In reality, the law enabled the city to remove from public places those individuals deemed unsuited for the city’s image simply, for example, for not having valid identification.

In 1968, the city’s assistant attorney proposed an ordinance to prohibit “eating and sleeping in [Jackson Square] and washing in [its] fountain pool... and loud noises,
drinking from any bottle, using the bushes and other plantings roughly” (*Vieux Carré Courier* March 1, 1968). The attorney also noted, “Decisions by the [U.S.] Supreme Court [had] hampered justice” in dealing with the “gang[s] of young vagrants” (*Vieux Carré Courier* March 1, 1968). Thus, though the country’s highest court judged vagrancy laws unconstitutional, in New Orleans, vagrancy continued to be defined as an illicit act.

The U.S. Supreme Court, however, repeatedly reduced the powers of vagrancy laws in New Orleans (and other cities), notably in 1972 and in 1983 (*The Times Picayune* February 25, 1972, May 14, 1983). Until 1983, New Orleans police made arrests for those individuals refusing to show identification to a police officer, but the Supreme Court found the law too vague and that police had abused it, focusing on particular ethnicities and classes of people and therefore unconstitutional (*The Times Picayune* May 14, 1983). And, until 1986, city law prohibited sleeping in public places, which had been punishable by up to 40 days in jail for the improper act (*The Times Picayune* December 2, 1985). Today, the legacy of decrees such as these lives, for example, in the city’s current so-called “obstruction of the sidewalk” ordinance that the city uses to remove the persistent presence of “undesirables,” often those homeless, in Jackson Square (City Code check online). And today, police check the identification of those in Jackson

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81 In chapter four, I discussed actions that authorities took in the late sixties and early seventies when hippies beset Jackson Square with “love-ins… strumming banjos, glugging wine from jugs, cursing the natives” (*Vieux Carré Courier* April 14, 1967). At one point, the Mayor cancelled an organized music concert, fearing that the police would be overburdened by said hippies (*Vieux Carré Courier* February 19, 1971).
Square that appear to be transient, homeless, or poor (Based on the author’s year of fieldwork in Jackson Square, 2003-2004).\textsuperscript{82}

In spite of the city’s long history of unjust treatment of the dispossessed, those homeless, transient, and poor continue, as they have consistently for at least 200 years, to visit and hang about in Jackson Square. Not only do homeless, transients, and gutter punks sleep on the benches in the park and Mall areas, but readers and artists occasionally sleep (as they sit) at their setups as well.\textsuperscript{83} Of course, this is not surprising considering the long hours that these persons put in on Jackson Square. Other “at-home” activities, by the homeless and other locals, take place in the Square. For example, a variety of activities such as private arguments, family lunches at setups, babysitting and child care,\textsuperscript{84} braiding a friend or family member’s hair, and recovering from a hospital stay all take place regularly, making traditional ideal divisions between public and private and between work and off time unclear.

Mitchell explains,

For those that are always in the public, private activities must necessarily be carried out publicly. When public space thus

\textsuperscript{82} In 2004, the U.S. Supreme court ruled it legal to check identification of “reasonably suspicious” persons (Dorf 2004).

\textsuperscript{83} Police officers, however, almost never “check” or arrest artists for doing so. However, near the end of my fieldwork, the artist Antonio, explained to me that officers padded him down. Antonio drinks heavily, is poor, and is often unclean. In fact, Antonio could appear to be homeless. He also visits with those that are homeless and transient. Evidently, because Antonio fits too well with undesirables, officers treated him as such (fn 06.01.04).

\textsuperscript{84} Across all groups in Jackson Square, parents bring their children to work with them.
becomes a place of seemingly illegitimate behavior, our notions of what public space is supposed to be are thrown into doubt (Mitchell 2003, 135).

These unsettling situations are more than unsettling, they are disordering and thus that is why, in part, laws and ordinances are instantiated to foster a reordering, a preferred order in public space. In Jackson Square, others besides the homeless, some closer to the mainstream, some closer to the margin, participate in private activities, which perhaps is even more disordering to social ideals. When homeless persons act against a normative urban order, such as sleeping on a park bench, we are not particularly surprised. Though perhaps unattractive and somewhat disquieting, today, we might even expect to see homeless persons participating in private activities in public places. Our expectations are challenged, however, when we see those closer to the mainstream or in the mainstream acting in similar ways. The divisions between us and them (between center and margin), meaning who we are and who we aren’t, are troubled and therefore personally trouble us.

Animal Nemeses?

In the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the city also had a variety of animal and animals-related “nemeses.” In part, this had to do with the maturing of the city, and the changing role of agriculture in city life. Within the city limits, people herded livestock or let them roam, tamed mules, kept hogs, washed horses, and let dogs wander (CVP September 15, 1804). Unsurprisingly, problems developed, particularly in the French Quarter, whose compact urban design left little open space, whether private or public. Though initially the city’s 1786 need to state the unlawfulness of throwing dead
animals in the street may seem outrageous, the tight quarters made such needs and actions not necessarily shocking (CCDA June 2, 1786).

As early as 1804, the Council forbid allowing “horses, cows, hogs, [or] goats… to roam by day or night in the streets or public places (CVP September 15, 1804). At about the same time (1807), however, the city ordered that, “stray animals be kept at the stables of the city hall” (CVP November 11, 1807), revealing that urban refinement and rural rudiment coexisted. Such uneasy coexistence continued in the city and indeed in Jackson Square. Several years later too much distance remained between the new turnstiles of the plaza, allowing cattle to infiltrate the grassy open space (CVP July 18, 1812). In addition, dogs and “quite a number of [other] stray animals [were] found daily in the streets, levees, and public squares” (CVOR July 18, 1812). The Council implored the police to deal strictly with the problem, going so far as to sanction the provision of poisoned sausages for stray dogs (CVP August 14, 1819). The problems persisted causing the Council to pass a number of ordinances throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries restricting various kind of animal activity.85

At least one animal “nuisance,” noncompliant pigeons, however, has remained in Jackson Square. Pigeons have long populated the Square (Vieux Carré Courier March 19, 1965). In 1954, The Item, made a kind report on the flocks, noting that several persons regularly fed the pigeons, “Not less than half a dozen men and women bring

85 See, for example, GDA 1831, 85, 307, 311, GDB 1836, 61, 71, 233, Leovy 1857, 207, Jewell 1886, 323-324, 478-479, 531-536, CCNO.
them food regularly every morning” (The Item August 19, 1954). The feeders and pigeons were established patterns in Jackson Square,

Moving along the street with a shuffling gait was a familiar figure none other than the woman of the market, who every day at dawn passes through what was once Gallatin St. carrying a rosary in one hand, and a bag containing a crucifix and the statuette of a saint in the other.

She was clad in usual shine white jacket and skirt, the same shapeless white hat with veil, white shoes and stockings…. The frenzy of the pigeons was extreme. They hovered above her so densely, it seemed they would sweep her off her feet. When they settled again on the walk at the gate, they tumbled over each other in greedy fluster.

The woman stood quietly at the entrance [of Jackson Square], looking down on the flurry of bobbing feathers, then drew a small sack of grain out of her bag and began to scatter it. She threw the grain before her in a straight line, then crossed over toward the river, and scattered it in a line toward the Cathedral, thus forming a cross. A half smile on her lips, she watched the flock gobble up the cross of grain. Then, facing the Cathedral, she made the sign of the cross, and shuffled out of the Square.

[An] old man [said,] ‘It is true…. She may be an eccentric, but she is a very good woman. I have seen her now, everyday at this same hour, maybe four, maybe five years. She comes to give food to the pigeons (The Item August 19, 1954).

However, not all shared in delight over the pigeons. For example, in 1956, a priest who had been at St. Louis Cathedral for 38 years, explained that in the early 1940s the pigeons had become pests and nuisances. Now, when he walked through Jackson Square and on nearby sidewalks, he blew a whistle to make them disperse (The Times Picayune November 18, 1956).

Nonetheless, this method had not been his initial choice,

His first method of getting rid of them was most direct: He would shoot them. He would rest his gun on the wrought iron
fence bordering Jackson Square and aim at the birds on the
cathedral spires. He had a special permit from the city to destroy
the birds. This method was not without its complications.

Once a police officer came up as [he] was aiming over the
iron fence. Planting his hands on his hips, the policeman asked,
“Father, are you shooting that gun?”

“Yes,” the priest replied, and showed the special permit.
There were no more questions until one day he received a letter
from the Archbishop. The Archbishop had received an angry
complaint from a bird lover and wanted an explanation. Father
explained he considered the birds [to be] causing a general
nuisance, and the Archbishop was satisfied.

Gradually, the pigeons left, and for 10 years there was little
trouble. About three years ago the pigeons began returning.
Father called the city to ask for a permit to rid the Square of
birds, but was told this time, “Father, it’s against the law, to
shoot firearms in the city limits” (*The Times Picayune* November
18, 1956).

With no recourse but temporary measures, such as the whistle the priest used to rid the
pigeons from the Square, by the early 1980s, their numbers peaked.

Pigeon feeders had carried on their work but slightly changed their ways from
previous feeders like the woman above. For example, James Greer a “pigeon feeder,”
asked for donations from tourists who wanted to feed the birds. Greer estimated that
about 125 pounds of birdseed a day supported the pigeon population. In doing so, the
city found that he was selling birdseed without a permit and sent the birdman to jail.
Because the pigeons carried disease, damaged historical structures, and had become,
according to the City Council, an annoyance to citizens of New Orleans and tourists,
police cited Greer for disturbing the peace (*The Times Picayune* September 29, 1983, *The
Times Picayune* September 30, 1983).
Tension, however, developed between pro-pigeon and anti-pigeon groups and culminated most brutally when 200 pigeons appeared dead in Jackson Square the morning of Friday, November 12, 1983. Autopsies showed that the birds had been given corn laced with diazonin.86 Two days later, the city imposed a 25-dollar fine for anyone who fed pigeons in New Orleans, thinking that the pigeon population and birdfeeders like Greer would decrease, and after a few creative attempts to skirt the ordinance,87 the birdfeeders of Jackson Square disappeared (The Times Picayune November 14, 1983). The pigeons, on the other hand, remain, and locals and tourists alike occasionally feed the Jackson Square pigeons but no birdfeeders offer seed for donations.

For the last thirteen years, however, a new pigeon man, Istawa, has performed in Jackson Square (fn 08.04.04). Better known as Birdman, he makes a living on the Square entertaining tourists with a magic act involving (caged!) pigeons. Perhaps more entertaining to some tourists are those pigeons that simply live in the Jackson Square area. Often when children enter the Pedestrian Mall on Chartres Street, the long wide

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86 The diazonin incident, however, was not the first mass murdering of pigeons in the Square. In September 1970, the police department charged two of their own officers with an early morning shooting of almost two dozen pigeons. The citizens who reported the crime exclaimed that the “Jackson Square pigeons were the most famous pigeons in the country,” and that “Pigeons were the symbol of ultimate freedom” (Vieux Carré Courier October 2, 1970).

87 For example, James Greer no longer able to spread feed on the ground of Jackson Square constructed a platform to put the feed. “But Greer never got to test the legality of his new device…. It took up so much room that pedestrian traffic came to a standstill.” Police took Greer to jail for obstructing a sidewalk. “His pigeon feeding rig was confiscated” (The Times Picayune December 9, 1983).
expanse seems not only to beckon them to run but also to chase the pigeons, seemingly mesmerized by the feathered flocks. For example, running on the Mall and then along the steps of the Presbytere, a young girl in a yellow sundress squealed with excitement as she ran at the pigeons, with them, and twirled around as they finally fluttered away minutes later (fn 08.07.04). Oblivious to all, the band playing, tourists passing, and performers entertaining, children like the yellow-sundress girl, appear unable to listen even to their parents’ callings. Instead, for a few minutes, these children run freely in the city, zigzagging through the Pedestrian Mall with no conscious path and no intended finish in mind.

In the section above, the hybridity of urban public space’s history moves strikingly to fore. Sarah Whatmore and William Cronon both argue that binaries between society and nature, wild and domesticated, and human and animal are false notions because they geographically separate that which is inherently socially integrated (Cronon 1995, Whatmore 2002). Indeed, contrary to both romantic and rational ideologies associated with the parks’ movements, in the city and Jackson Square “nature” is not integrated peacefully nor tamed to taste. Additionally, wildness, for example, occurs in the city’s unsuccessful attempts to control domesticated animals.

Further, though Valentine has shown that society naturalizes public spaces as adult spaces, children enter into the everyday of Jackson Square (Valentine 1996). And, children, in a sense, are “set free” from the control of adults, if only for minutes or moments. In Jackson Square, not only are children integrated into public space, but they
become a part of that space through the hybrid developments of animals and public space and through the normative practice of tourism.

Entertaining the Public

In chapter four, I revealed (but did not point out) one of the earliest forms of entertainment in Jackson Square: hangings. As in other urban places, hangings brought out the majority of people in New Orleans to witness the act, gossip, take a break from work of the day, and visit with one another (Huber 1982, Honecker 1982). Hangings, however, were only one form of entertainment. For example, gambling in public places, mentioned earlier in this chapter, which the Council had declared unlawful since the eighteenth century, turned up in new forms, like Lucky Bag and banking games (Acts of the State Legislature 1855 in Leovy 1857, 183-184). In fact, the early law didn’t do much to stop gambling and games of chance in public places; consequently, the City Council repeatedly passed new, more specific, ordinances (CVP May 27, 1815, CVOR May 20, 1817, Jewell 1886 538, 543 (June 27, 1882)). Gambling proved so tempting to individuals that in 1884, the Council included a mandate that “Police allowing gambling in their districts shall be expelled from the force” (Jewell 1886, 328).

As popular as gambling in public spaces was, other forms of entertainment had also long appeared in and around Jackson Square. For example, in 1820, a peep show occupied a space on the levee in front of the Square (CVP March 25, 1820); and decades later carnival sideshows like the one that opened this chapter brought in hundreds of visitors (Daily Southern Star January 25, 1866). Individuals also seemed
inclined to entertain, as when a man constructed a stage, of sorts, for a performance in Place d’Armes (CVOR January 3, 1829) and when another presented the City Council (1839) with an application to allow his wife to walk on a tight rope from the Square to the top of St. Louis Cathedral (Huber 1982, 53). Through the years, these events and performances interweaved with more elegant events such as honoring funeral services for Jefferson and Adams (1826), commemorative Te Deum masses for the Battle of New Orleans (e.g. 1829), and a huge funeral service in Place d’Armes for General Andrew Jackson (1845).

And daily, numerous street musicians played, contributing to the creation of jazz. Coming into vogue during the late nineteenth century on the streets of the French Quarter, early spasm bands, as the groups were sometimes called, consisted mainly of black and Creole men and boys (Berendt 1983). Their instruments could include “a cigar-box fiddle, old kettle, cowbell, pebble-filled gourd, bull fiddle constructed of half a barrel, harmonica, and numerous whistles and horns” (Federal Writers’ Project 1938, 88).

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88 Individuals also entertained themselves. For example, in (circa) 1912, a woman was photographed roller-skating in Jackson Square around the General’s equestrian statue (The Vieux Carré Courier September 11, 1970, the was photo courtesy of Mrs. Jorda Derbes). Almost 60 years later, groups of individuals roller-skated for fun through the French Quarter. Unfortunately, the city put a stop to the activity (The Times Picayune October 7 & 11, 1979).

89 Place d’Armes was not the only place for performance. For example, in 1828 a man had permission from the Council to construct a circus for a bullfight in Washington Square (CVP November 15, 1828).

90 Originally the Council wanted the funeral service held in St. Louis Cathedral, but the Bishop refused because Jackson was not Catholic (Huber 1982).
Thus, in the late nineteenth century with the ideal of a cultured image in mind, the city approved laws that restricted street band locations (Jewell 1886, 325 (May 4, 1886)) and then their hours of play in public places (Flynn October 1890 in CCNO 581). By the early twentieth century, a New Orleans City Guide writer explains that “However abhorrent the clamor produced by this assortment of instruments might have seemed to music-loving Orleanians, the band[s] attained sufficient popularity” (Federal Writers’ Project 1938, 137). In the late 1930s, the same guide refers to similar street groups called “soap-box” orchestras, whose instruments included “perforated tin cups, pie pans, bucket lids, and bottles… attached to a wooden box.” The author continues that the makeshift instruments are played “by… Negro boy[s], usually between the ages of ten and fifteen… [and] other Negro children, who, in ragged, unkempt garments, dance to the music. New Orleans visitors are attracted by the surprising amount of rhythm and harmony pounded from these crude… orchestras” (Federal Writers’ Project 1938, 138). Not only then did “uncultured” musical entertainment composed by people of color continue, but also this genre appealed to tourists.

In the 1950s, Babe Stovall, celebrated as “an authentic part of… jazz,” played regularly in Jackson Square, drawing large crowds (Vieux Carré Courier March 1967). As tourism increased, street music in the Square increased. Further, after street musicians

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91 Informal contests in improvisation regularly occurred on the street. These “bucking” and “cutting” contests held on the streets went on until one musician “would throw away his instrument in a gesture of defeat” (Federal Writers’ Project 1938, 137).
were banned (for a time) from other public spaces in the Quarter like the Royal and Bourbon Street Promenades, more street musicians found their way to Jackson Square.\footnote{92 The city created the promenades to increase tourist traffic for the businesses along these streets, but business owners complained that street band audiences crowded entrances and that street music took tourists attention and dollars (\textit{The Times Picayune} February 21, 1975, November 15, 1977).}

As explained in chapter four, in 1970 with the opening of the Pedestrian Mall around Jackson Square and its subsequent raising and slating in 1975, musicians and other forms of street entertainment again increased in the area. But contrary to some artists and preservationists’ arguments, musicians and a variety of popular entertainments and activities as shown in this section have a long history that in some cases may be traced back farther than the Art Colony’s history can be traced in Jackson Square and the French Quarter.\footnote{93 In 1883, artists formed the city’s first art association, the Southern Art Union, but differing opinions concerning the direction of the association led most members to resign. In 1893, a new artists’ association formed called the Artists’ Association of New Orleans. They eventually rented a building for meetings and showings. No mention is made concerning the location of the first building, but significantly, the second building was located on Carondelet Street (\textit{The Daily Picayune} January 27, 1893), which then was part of the American section of town. Today, Carondelet Street is part of the central business district. Certainly, later (1920s) the French Quarter reportedly attracted artists and writers (Wallace 1996, Irvin 1998), but based on the newspaper article above, the beginnings of the art colony occurred in the American section of town.}

From chapter four, however, we know that preservationists, artists, and government officials have repeatedly invoked “imaginings of an ideal past” and “classism associated with high culture” to justify the exclusion of certain groups from the Square. These entertainers “disrupted the proper order of people and places,” meaning conventional social order. This occurs not only through the fear of
displacement but through the fear of contamination. But, as Becker argues, “Artworlds do not have boundaries around them,” (Becker 1982, 35) though as Levine points out, historically, elites have long tried to separate art and (high) culture from other worlds (Levine 1988). Thus, perhaps that is why some preservationists and others are incessant in their effort to maintain the “special” qualities of the French Quarter, Jackson Square, and the Art Colony.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, in this chapter, I’ve shown that counter to arguments by government officials like Jackie Clarkson and members of the Art Colony, a large variety of people and activities (cultural, economic, social, and political) have a history and indeed a place in Jackson Square. Preservation of the French Quarter’s _tout ensemble_ has in part been a matter of privileging an idealized past and projecting that onto Jackson Square, attempting to create an exclusionary landscape. Only government and social elites have officially defined the quaint character of the French Quarter, but the life of the Square was and is far more encompassing than that character suggests. In fact, deeper consideration of the character of artists’ work and artists’ practices troubles the ideals of high culture that the city and artists themselves associate with the Art Colony and its separation from the masses. In the next chapter, I examine artists’ work and their practices in more detail to show how they disrupt traditional ideals associated with high culture. Additionally, I delve into practices of one “lowbrow” group, readers, to show that they trouble more than the high image of the city’s front. Indeed, in Jackson Square, readers disturb conventional ideals of public and private spaces and of
knowledge, authority, and status through their practices in public space, revealing that they too may have special talents and roles in society.
Chapter Six

Unsettling Perceptions of High and Low Culture
and Center and Margin in Society

Haley is a native New Orleanian and since the year 2000, she has been a Jackson Square artist. In 1985, Haley had moved to New York City and started a production company that contracted with the ABC network. She worked in New York for 15 years but when Disney bought ABC, according to Haley, ABC went downhill. Haley explained, “I said, Shit on this; I’m moving back home!” Since she had always painted as a hobby, she thought that she would try painting on Jackson Square. Though she holds a degree in business from Tulane University, Haley had never taken any art classes and wouldn’t because she believes that then she could not call herself an authentic folk artist (fn 01.18.04).

Always with her long blonde hair up in a ponytail, Haley usually wears dark rimmed plastic framed glasses, jeans, and a T-shirt and looks relaxed yet stylish even as she smokes Old Port Tipped cigars. Frequently eating pistachios from the shell, she sometimes makes little piles on the armrest of her nylon lawn chair.

When I first met Haley, she sat at her setup working on a pencil outline for a painting. As we talked about her work, she stopped and pointed at the outline of a Mardi Gras parade, costumed and masked men on horses. She smiled, “Look at it; it looks like the fuckin’ Klu Klux Klan!” I laughed and agreed. “Isn’t that awful?” Haley added, but then said, “I do have a good joke though.” She proceeded to tell me: “A man finds a genie in a bottle. After rubbing the bottle, the genie appears and says that she
will grant him one wish. Late that night the man gets a knock on his door. It’s the Klan with a rope. He asks the genie, ‘What is this?’ The genie replied, ‘you said that you wanted to be hung like a nigger, didn’t you?’” Haley laughed, and I smiled nervously. She said that it was horrible but that is was a good joke.

Then, Butch, a reader, yelled down to Haley, “30 minutes.” He wanted her to watch his setup while he was away from it. She waved but then turned to me and said, “I’m not gonna fucking watch his stuff all day.” According to Haley, the police will take setups after 10 minutes if no one is there. I said some people on the Square didn’t like Butch. Haley answered, “You know who I hate more than him? Is Sandy—that fat fucking pig artist that stretches out on the corner! We’re supposed to take only two spaces along the fence. She stretches out and acts as if she doesn’t [take up more than two spaces] because she’s on the corner. She’s a fucking hypocrite and Leif Ruther (another artist) is a fucking idiot.” Haley added that the artists’ committee, which both Sandy and Leif were on, was a bunch of fascists.

Next, Haley gave me details about several of her paintings hanging on the Jackson Square fence. She also displayed painted toilet seats in Mardi Gras and Saints football themes and explained that she painted all four sides. She was famous for them.

Then Haley recounted for me that a long time ago the city and the Square artists had together decided that they were only to sell originals, only display originals. But, she also sold prints. She had to in order to survive. According to Haley, if she kept the original, she could keep making prints and many tourists could not afford $150, $300, or $500 but could spend $25 or $30 on a print. Haley also described postcards and
Christmas cards she made but then explained that sometimes she had too much money tied up in product. That is what had happened to her with the Southern Decadence Festival painting. She had spent $4000 on prints and had only gotten back $1000 from selling them, even though it was the official poster for the festival. Next, Haley showed me other prints from her other paintings, tucked away in her cart, out of sight. She sold some in sets because the paintings, like the First and Second Line pieces were meant to be displayed together. Lastly, Haley confessed that she was a “terrible, horrible salesperson” but that you had to be more than an artist when out in Jackson Square (fn 11.11.03).

A couple of months later, Sandy “caught” her selling prints to a tourist and tried “to bust her sale.” She said that Sandy had walked up as Haley was getting into her cart and said, “You know you’re not supposed to be selling prints….” The tourist, who wanted to purchase a print, said, “If you’re trying to ruin her sale, you’re actually doing just the opposite.” Haley didn’t understand why Sandy and the artists’ committee were so “hell bent” on not allowing artists’ to sell their own prints. She explained that all her work up on the Jackson Square fence was original. “It’s not like I only sells prints, but I have to pay my rent too. Besides, with every original piece I sell I give the person a print of their choice. Is that illegal too?” she asked (fn 01.18.04).

In this chapter’s opening with Haley, several “unsettling” issues arise that frequently occur in Jackson Square concerning image and the day-to-day. To begin, the quaint and refined image that the artists purportedly contribute to in Jackson Square seems fragmented with for example, Haley’s cigar smoking, pistachio piling, off-color
joke telling, and name-calling. In addition, Haley’s display of toilet seats and possibly even including folk art in the Square compromises an elite image of the Square. Her multiple roles as artist, business manager, and salesperson also unsettles the artist’s privileged place in society. Finally, internal matters (as in the argument Haley and Sandy had) of the Art Colony are on view publicly in a venerated place for New Orleanian identity—private troubles acted out openly in public space. In what follows, I explain how normative social practices in and renderings of Jackson Square are supported and challenged. Though other groups in the Square could provide insight as well, I address these issues in more detail with artists and with readers, illustrating how individuals deal with dualisms of high and low culture and social center and margin in negotiating collective and individual identities. For as Setha Low (and others) have noted performances in public squares may have important personal meanings for individuals (Low 2000).

Here, I explicitly explore performances, relations between representation and everyday practices in Jackson Square, which also reveal processes that unsettle conventional social notions, that inform and constitute place. This unsettling resonates with Tim Cresswell’s idea of transgression: activities that disturb normative ideas and ideals associated with place. Unlike resistance, Cresswell explains that in transgression, intention by the actor to disrupt norms is largely absent or, I would add, at least secondary to the activity itself (Cresswell 1996). Therefore, unlike direct legal and confrontational struggles, transgression or unsettling is not always easy for all to identify. But, in analyzing artists’ and readers’ everyday activities and experiences over
time, significant social and cultural functions of the Square come to the fore that work with, against, and between preferred meanings.94

**Art and Tourism Together**

On the Pedestrian Mall, artists arrive early in the morning to obtain a good spot along Jackson Square’s fence. On the fence, they hang finished pieces, set up their work areas, which from the earliest days of the Art Colony included canvas chairs, patio umbrellas, easels, and carts filled with finished paintings, drawings, and art supplies (fig. 7) ([*The Times Picayune* November 21, 1948]). While on the Square, some paint, others read, talk with other artists on the Square, and even watch portable televisions (fig 8). However, artists themselves must be present at their setups because they are required to be their own representatives and must have prices clearly marked and sell only their original art—no prints. As mentioned in chapter four and as Haley explained, the artists themselves along with the city enacted these rules ([*The States Item* August 4, 1954, *The Times Picayune* August 8, 1954, fn 11.11.03, and see CNO Sec. 110-121). And, recall that

94 As we saw in the literature review in chapter two and in the dominant representations of Jackson Square in chapter four, “preferred” meanings emerge from ruling mainstream middle and upper classes (in public space, see, for example, Jackson 1984, Mitchell 1995, Cresswell 1996, Goss 1996, Stacheli and Thompson 1997, Goheen 1998, McCann 1999, Lees 2001, Mitchell 2003). In significant ways, however, most Jackson Square locals do not fit into the mainstream. The most common difference shared among insiders is that they all work outdoors in a public square. Additional dissimilarities may include religion, profession, work ethic, itinerancy, and a variety of lifestyles. Yet, the reason that these alternative ways of living and “doing” may be experienced openly and publicly is because of the normally mainstream practice of tourism. In fact, in New Orleans, tourism in part perpetuates the ability of the Square insiders to make unconventional life choices.
artists use the prevalent representation of artist as special to negotiate more space and better positions in the Square.

Figure 7  Artists’ Work Along the Jackson Square Fence (source: photograph by Veronica Sheehan, used with permission).

Figure 8  Artist Painting (source: photograph by author).
Artists selling their work on the Square, however, may go against the ideal of distinguished artists touted in representations of Jackson Square (See, for example, Davey 1964). Because of their multiple roles and the need and desire for (more) income, competition, tourist-content art, and strategies associated with commodities weave with artistic ideals, making for constantly shifting relationships between ideals and practices. Therefore, in some ways their spaces are less like a gallery or studio and more like retail areas with product display, price, and “salesperson.” The blurring of roles, however, is problematic to the ideal of art and artist because both (traditionally) depend on hierarchal relationships in society (Becker 1982, Levine 1988). Becker asserts that art has an “honorific title” which accords artists a high cultural place in the world (Becker 1982, 37). Defining what qualifies as art hinges on the what having,

aesthetic value, however it is defined…[being] justified by a coherent and defendable aesthetic[,]…recognized by the appropriate people as having aesthetic value, and displayed in the appropriate places (Becker 1982, 139).95

Becker explains that when the above do not co-occur definitional troubles arise. Trouble goes further than defining what art is and into even who is an artist. Moreover, the troubling can go beyond the immediate world of art and artist in Jackson Square because, recall, the Square expresses certain refined meanings of New Orleans and holds particular dominant meanings in itself. In turn, arguing that preserving Jackson Square

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95 Defining what art is a difficult endeavor and invariably definitions are vague, but as Levine has shown, cultural categories, such as “art,” which may seem nearly impossible to define are nonetheless extremely powerful cultural forces (Levine 1988).
also includes preserving the Art Colony is a means to maintain cultural exclusivity at various social scales.

Nevertheless, Square artists forge a sense of the ideal (that of maintaining a culturally unique place in society) even as they negotiate their everyday world of making a living in a tourist site.\textsuperscript{96} Indeed, using various tactics to gain tourists’ attention and money, some artists openly compete for tourist dollars through their signs, announcing speed, quality, and price. For instance, realizing a fast tourist pace, some portrait artists’ signs advertise “7 minute portraits,” and at least one portrait artist can compete in terms of speed, offering “5 minute portraits.”\textsuperscript{97}

On the other hand, Bob Clift, a portrait artist on the Square since the late 1960s, explained that real portrait drawings have “value,” and that “you can take a photograph [of a person] in 3 seconds, but a portrait takes time, sometimes all day.” Bob had posted a new sign that pointed in the direction of the portrait artist who usually set up adjacent to him. The sign read:

Looking for quality and value? Unlike some artists who sell you a printed copy and pass it off as original art, all of my work is drawn by hand from start to finish and is of the highest quality. Which would you rather own? Bob Clift (fn 11.03.03).

\textsuperscript{96} Barbara Babcock and Barbara Tedlock discuss how (Western) society places cultural value on tourist art which resides below high art, often interchangeable instead with commodities and thus losing its special place in the world (Babcock 1995, Tedlock 1995).

\textsuperscript{97} Caricature artists also work on the Square, providing a humorous interpretation of the tourist, further transgressing notions of art.
Minutes before, Bob said that some artists (referring to this artist next to him) were “painting photographs and that that wasn’t real art.” He angrily added, “We’re all in competition out here” (fn 11.03.03). Thus, Bob, first distinguished portrait art as superior to photography, then emphasized that fine portraits take a long time, and finally that his techniques are authentic where those of the portrait artist next to him are not. In so doing, he hoped to win tourist appeal and successfully compete with other portrait artists on the Square.

Jackson Square artists usually also tie their work to holiday or vacations, as well as to place to attract tourists. Certainly, touring individuals and groups seek images of French Quarter architecture, jazz, and the St. Louis Cathedral, for example, fostering tensions between high art and souvenir art. Longtime Square artist, Jan explained, “I’m convinced that tourists are buying a memory of their time in New Orleans” (fn 08.16.04). Indeed, Shirley, on the Square since 1966, once told Haley (by comparison a newcomer to the Square) that an artist should not tell too much about any particular piece, “The artist shouldn’t tell their story about the piece, because the tourist wants to make their own memory of it” (fn 12.07.03). Though her work has nothing to do with New Orleans’ French Quarter, Shirley feels that she must temper her images of fairies, mermaids, and other fantasy creatures because if she painted exactly the way she wanted, her art would be too much, too wild, too different for Jackson Square tourists (fn 12.07.03). Similarly, Jan sometimes modifies her paintings of French Quarter houses and Light Post People (who echo moments of New Orleans’ “letting it all hang out”
tourist reputation) if they don’t sell and has wondered what her art would be like if she
didn’t depend on tourists in the Square for income (fn 08.16.04).

In fact, most artists talk of their art and of tourists in terms of product and
customer, thinking and thus creating with ideas of what a tourist might buy. For many,
this means French Quarter balconies, historical buildings like St. Louis Cathedral, black
jazz street musicians, and rural Louisiana scenes. As Saul, a Square artist for 30 years,
said, “If artists are to survive, they must develop a product line” (fn 07.22.04).

But, the idea of a product line may manifest in ways that categorically counter
the idea of original (and high) art. For example, Vincent sometimes uses an assembly-
line approach to painting. In his work area on the Square, Vincent first pencil-sketches
similar “jazz musician” designs on several canvases, and then paints the yellow parts,
then the red, then the blue and so on. This method standardizes his art process in
content and production, disrupting the ideal of art. Other artists continuously paint
from postcards and many artists paint or draw the same or very similar pieces time after
time once they find a “best seller” (fn 04.05.04). Artists may even copy each other’s
work, if one artist does well with a particular image or style. Remember from chapter
five, however, that Square artists call upon privileged representations of art and artist to
distinguish themselves above others in the Jackson Square area. Yet the artists’ practices
above work against exceptional ideals of art and artist.

Accordingly, it is unsurprising that Jackson Square artists themselves differ and
change their ideas about what art qualifies as real art and what practices unsettle high art.
Many artists fully depend on the Square for their income and at times out of necessity
discount their prices at least during the slow months of July and August. Discounting sometimes likens itself to “making a deal” thereby transgressing images of high art and artist, where expected divisions of labor (creating and selling) are not only lost but open for all to see (Becker 1982). Furthermore, the informal character of dealing on the street disrupts highbrow representations of Jackson Square (Levine 1988). For example, when two female tourists walked up to get a closer look at Arturo’s paintings, he approached them and calmly said, “I give pretty girl discounts, pretty girl prices.” One of the women inquired about a piece marked $150. Arturo said he could sell it to her for $125. Then resentfully, she asked, “Is that as pretty as I am?” Arturo apologetically countered, “Okay, okay, $100, $100.” The tourist smiled but walked away. Arturo sighed, shrugging his shoulders (fn 04.05.04).

Minutes before Arturo had tried to sell a piece to the “pretty girl” tourist, he had complained, “The worst is when one artist sells stuff really cheap, then the tourists expect everyone to sell cheaply – they think it’s like a flea market, and that lessens the artists’ income and position” (fn 04.05.04).

Consequently, ideas of high art and souvenir art, or, more often, art teetering between such definitions, become and remain active through performances or tourism-in-action, between the material and nonmaterial interactions of practices and representations of tourists, artists, and Jackson Square. In doing so, these performances challenge expectations of the position of art and artists, their markers, and the social reality of Jackson Square. For both tourists and Square artists then, their art may not first, always, or fully mean high art associated with high culture. Rather, art may also be
a holder of memory and a “product” that the artist needs to sell so that she can pay her rent.

These tensions may be extremely difficult for artists in conceptualizing their sense of self as they negotiate their positions on Jackson Square. For example, Dan, a recent arrival on the Square, insisted that he would not sell his art below a certain price. He would rather “take it to the dump” than “degrade” himself or “lose integrity” in his work by “going low with a price” (fn 11.08.03).

According to Dan, he feels more about art—“it should move you when you create it and should not be about the tourists.” His pieces invoke a dream-like quality, none of it with obvious connections to New Orleans, the French Quarter, or tourism. Dan explained that he had channeled the muses from his dreams into his art, and didn’t force the process by thinking, “what can I paint?” Lamenting that few artists on the Square move beyond French Quarter scenes, Dan said, “Sometimes all this makes me sick, but then again, I’ve had it good here in terms of selling my art” (fn 08.07.04).

Then Dan explained that someone recently stole his van containing all of his paintings and art supplies. He said on the upside that the incident made him work “really hard to produce more art.” But, when the police informed him that they caught the man who stole his stuff, and he’d be getting back most of his work, surprisingly, Dan added that he might discount a bunch of those pieces “to make a wad of cash to pay some off medical bills” that he had coming in (fn 10.22.04). Then, pointing to an eight by ten painting of a woman’s shoe, he half-joked, “I’ll make you a deal on that one, 15 bucks!” I replied that I was into one of the larger paintings. He agreed, “Yeah, a
larger piece—a real piece.” Even for Dan, then, the need for income intertwines with his ideals of art. Not only does he feel the urge to discount his work, but also contradicting his sentiments that he doesn’t paint with the tourist in mind, he did display the red shoe painting, a “cheaper” piece that wasn’t “real” art. Thus, tensions between the need to make a living and the need to “protect” the position, the value and values of high art, are constantly in flux and at play as artists alter and amend their thoughts, actions, and interactions with their art, tourists, and tourism in Jackson Square.

Creating Art, Creating Artist

This may look altogether bleak for the “place” of a Square artist. Yet, many artists feel positive about their art. They have the ability to employ creative understandings of their relationship between an array of everyday practices and images of the ideal, successfully negotiating these tensions.

For example, later in that same conversation with Arturo, the artist who gave pretty girl discounts, explained that he found himself about 20 paintings short but said that he’d be “fully stocked by Friday,” adding, “Good artists are constantly working.” Here, Arturo elevated himself as a good artist even while referring to his art as “stock” and to his need to “constantly work” in order to supply tourist demand, declaring “Being creative is stressful” (fn 04.05.04). For Arturo, the economic pressure he feels to produce does not necessarily mean his art is lessened or less creative. Instead, to him the demand highlights his talent and position as an artist.
In creating art for Jackson Square customers, other artists work within their techniques to produce paintings and drawings that matter to them. Though Jake has painted French Quarter watercolor scenes to sell in the Square since the late 1960s, he adds details in his work that only he knows or cares about, keeping even repetitive paintings “important to [him]”. Calling me up to the fence where his painting hanged, Jake showed me the tiniest of brush strokes in the cast iron work of a French Quarter balcony. “Ahh,” I said as I realized his care and passion for his work (fn 09.28.04).

Haley, the folk artist from the beginning of this chapter, distinguishes herself as the only true folk artist and one of only a few native New Orleans artists on Jackson Square. Thus, she believes that she has something to say about the “absurdity of life” in her city (fn 12.07.03). To Haley, while still appealing to a wider national audience, her art provides New Orleanians an avenue to reflect on internal social situations that perhaps only insiders may fully “get,” making her work special. Yet, when sales are slow, an anxious Haley frequently explains that tourists don’t “get” her stuff because “only people who grew up here truly understand my humor” (fn 11.11.03). She admits that she has to balance what she paints with survival, that she has to think about what tourists want “without going to a level of megalopolis rip-offs, [and] not selling out.” So though she paints her “Second line,” “Napoleon,” and “Toulouse Street Hookers” repeatedly because they do sell well, Haley described in detail how each painting was different each time, what she learned from each in the process of painting, and that her painting style continued to evolve over time (fn 12.07.03).
The artist Thomas perhaps is the best example of this continual amending of ideas and ideals through practice and representation. On the Square for three years, he calls his work abstract surrealism, and on the Square there’s nothing else quite like it. Bright oranges, reds and sometimes yellows, purples, and blues, circles and lines and people (though few) make up the bulk of his work. With the exception of particular images of the Cathedral painted in a similar style with added clocks, dials, reminding me of imaginative Dr. Seuss illustrations, none of it resembles anything in New Orleans or the French Quarter.

Initially, Thomas felt torn deciding whether to work on the Square. He didn’t want to “sell-out” and paint “what tourists wanted.” Then, he realized that he hadn’t established a style to sell-out from, so his fears quelled a bit. At the same time, when Thomas tried to paint what he thought tourists wanted, he didn’t do well at it—didn’t sell much. Finally, when he started painting what he wanted to paint, Thomas made money. Here, he appears to be more in control of his art rather than tourism dictating his work.

That said, I asked him about his Cathedral image. Known as a touristy image, Thomas explained that he took a long time before he began to paint the Cathedral even though he knew tourists loved it. For him to paint a cross was particularly difficult because he believed that “Christianity was one of the worst things in the history of humanity.” Thomas then thought that he didn’t have to compromise his painting or his principles because he understood he had something to say about the Cathedral—“I could do anything I wanted with it” (fn 12.05.03).
Six months later, however, Thomas told me that he was trying to be less “stubborn with his work,” painting more what tourists might buy. For example, he told Derek, another Square artist, who paints French Quarter houses with deep blues and rich reds that he (Thomas) had created an “Derek rip-off!” This contradicted his earlier statements about painting “what he knows” and that in doing so he had better sales. Thomas now found that he would need to find another outlet for some of his work, painting without “selling to the tourist” in mind so he could maintain at least some part of his ideal as an artist (fn 05.09.04).

The artists above provide merely a few examples of how artists’ practices continuously change as they engage with ideas of tourism, tourists, and normative ideals art associated with what to and how to create. They resourcefully work within tourism to create meaning that moves beyond, resides next to, or is simply different in bases from ideals of art (Becker 1982, Levine 1988). Simultaneously performing as business owners, product suppliers, and salespeople, artists negotiate the ideal image of “artist.”

Indeed, phenomena like the above repeatedly occur in similar way across multiple groups in Jackson Square informing identities of people and site. As Philip Crang argues, tourism work continuously informs and constitutes the identities of individuals as well as the place, where divisions between real life and tourism are thoroughly blurred (P. Crang 1997) and also illustrates as Cresswell insists that the social and spatial tightly united (Cresswell 1996). These examples above associated with Square artists also follow Gregson’s work that shows how disrupting individual conventional roles disrupts larger social practices and ideals (Gregson and Rose 2000).
Further, as Rose has elucidated, the *repeated* doing of negotiated social practices in fact changes persons and spaces, and I would add places as well (Gregson and Rose 2000).

These performative phenomena in part constitute the world of Jackson Square, for as Cresswell states, “Places are duplicitous in that they cannot be reduced to the concrete or the ‘merely ideological;’ rather they display an uneasy and fluid tension between them” (Cresswell 1996, 13). In Jackson Square, performances challenge particular normative social ideas and ideals of position of both persons and place, and therefore challenge, at a variety of scales, the Square’s taken-for-granted social meanings. Thus, an artist’s position and place in the world filters down *and* up through tourism and place. And, despite strong preservation forces, city and private tourism industry influences, and dominant cultural representations of art and artist, life in Jackson Square reveals itself not as a timeless world but rather as dynamic.

**Reading Rooms with Tourists**

Recall that despite efforts to eradicate street entertainment and other popular activities, they have persisted, and that in 1970 with the creation of the less restrictive Pedestrian Mall, more street entertainers began arriving,98 taking advantage of the additional public space adjacent to Jackson Square.99 Then, in 1975, the slating of the

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99 Additionally, since at least the early twentieth century, the French Quarter has been at the center of New Orleans’ tourism industry and the city’s policies and projects of the 1950s and 1960s fuelled tourism in the Quarter and in Jackson Square. With more tourists, economic opportunities inadvertently increased not only for street artists on the Square’s sidewalks but also for those seeking alternative ways to make a living.
Mall fixed it as truly pedestrian with benches and large potted plants, welcoming the public and encouraging an even greater variety and number of entertainers to perform there (fn 07.22.04). Hence, tourism and Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall, open and public, brought back independent and sometimes unusual activities.

Now, for over 25 years, night and day, seven days a week, all year long, tarot and palm readers have set up on the Pedestrian Mall, offering a form of spiritual guidance for a donation (fig. 9). As a Jackson Square group, they form a mosaic of people and because of their connection to occultism one might imagine they are from mysterious places or distant lands. In fact, occult practitioners have their roots in covert, secret societies from The Dark Ages and The Golden Dawn factions from the late nineteenth-century (Giles 1992). These societies’ ceremonies were underground and only the initiated could perform rituals, adding to their perceived impenetrability. Traditionally then, followers of the Tarot and Palm have practiced indoors or at least in private places, developing into a normative expectation in the present.

![Figure 9  Tarot Card Reader](source: photograph by author).
Further, though occult society members included not only magicians but also respected artists, scholars, and poets, their emphasis on imagination, alchemy, and experience beyond material dimensions meant first the Church and then Enlightenment cast these traditions and people to a marginal place external to a “real” world—a place where they remain today (Giles 1992). In a symbolically revered public space, anchored by a venerated Catholic church, readers present a challenge to conventional social practices merely by being present.

**Private, Secret Spaces**

But Jackson Square readers are more than merely present. Creating small unique spaces throughout the Pedestrian Mall, readers portray distinctive themes or styles to draw tourists. Readers’ areas or “setups” include signs, chairs, cards, and trinkets, which together complement readers’ individualized appearances, including their bodies, clothes, acts, and interactions (fig. 10). Together readers and their temporary setups, small in scale, contrast to ceremonial Jackson Square and the stately structures that surround it.

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100 Though a few readers, like Bridgette, purposely do NOT portray themselves differently from tourists. Bridgette is white, middle-class, educated, and her business-casual dress reveals this about her. Further, she usually has no sign, few trinkets to hold the cards down, and a simple cloth to cover her TV stand table, which in the context of Square readers, distinguishes her from others and their setups.
Inadvertently enhancing this contrast, a city ordinance requires readers to locate at least 20 feet from the Jackson Square fence (CNO Sec. 110-121). To optimize limited space, readers situate their setups next to each other’s, forming an eccentric line of sight to (some) mainstream visitors and local residents. Tourists walking by are closer to readers than artists who are close to the Jackson Square fence where they hang their work. Therefore, readers may easily entice tourists to look, watch, stare, or sit for a reading. But, they do more than this to tempt tourists.

For example, Velvet’s setup imparts a Victorian-feel with lush reds and purples intricately designed in cloths that cover her table and chairs. On her table, small iridescent pebbles reside next to a ruby-colored velour pouch that contains her tarot cards. Additionally, two brass ornate candlesticks hold slender cranberry-tinted candles that glow while sage burns from a small wooden tray. A sinuous haze surrounds Velvet, situated in front of St. Louis Cathedral, and the aromas from her setup mix with the
incense emanating from the Cathedral. Velvet’s setup seems to become a small chamber of the majestic church, unsettling hallowed ground.

Of course, readers present their bodies distinctively too. Dressing in dark indigo, scarlet, pink, or turquoise blouses, skirts, and shawls, Velvet’s layered fashion kindles more mystique. Crimped blonde hair drapes over her shoulders, and necklaces, rings, and bracelets adorn her skin. For shoes, however, she usually wears flip-flops. Certainly, Velvet departs from authentic Victorian fashion, but, in fact, this incongruity marks readers in the Square: their setups and attire are never pure in form or theme. Their inspirations stem from individualized interpretations and whimsy, sometimes of imagined thematic representations such as those Victorian, sometimes not.

For example, “The Goddess,” a white woman in her seventies, sometimes dresses in antebellum fashion and boa wraps. Alobar, a white man in his sixties wears gym clothes and his long hair is bright magenta. Denise, a black woman in her twenties, wraps her hair (and body) in colorful fabrics and keeps a necklace made in part of real chicken bones around her neck.

Some readers take on names that situate them in another place. Indeed, Velvet does as do Feather, Swamp Witch, Godwin, and Apache while some readers simply use their first given names as Chris, Nancie, and Mary do. Still others evade any direct name, instead promoting qualifications or specialties as “Pro Psychic,” “Empathetic Tarot,” or “Shaman.” Of course, combinations exist, such as “Michael Ph.D.” These names, usually displayed on stylized signs attached to a table or chair, further separate readers from the conventional world.
Some readers’ signs are meant to make one stop, think, and even imagine. For example, Miss Lana’s declares that,

If you are unhappy with your life sit down with Miss Lana. I can feel energy in your palm. The vibration speaks to me. Come let me read for you! Miss Lana Top Palm Reader in New Orleans – 50 years experience. I will read your past, present, and future. Everybody wants something (fn 10.20.03).

And, even while new readers sporadically arrive on the Square, various longtime Square readers alter their appearance, setups, names, and signs from time to time, both of which create an ever-curious and ever-changing Jackson Square troupe.

Readers with no “message” on their signs, may offer, “Good Evening,” or “Hello, if you have any questions, I’m here.” Others make only a simple invitation with their hand for tourists to sit with them. Some readers, however, provide enticements that are more mysterious. On occasion, Clark uses a method called, “Rolling.” First, he makes eye contact with a tourist walking by, next in a skillful rhythmic motion, he “snaps” a card showing it to the tourist. Then, taking his sight off the tourist, he fixes his eyes on the card, contemplating its significance. Clark may pique a tourist’s interest, drawing the person in to sit for a reading.

Generally before a tourist decides on a reader they take a least one lap around the Square, sometimes stopping to talk amongst their friends or family just to the side of setups to discuss readers they may desire. A tourist may quietly inquire, “How
much,” to which most readers reply, “We work on a donation basis….”

Many readers supply a range, “I usually get donations from $20 to $40, and you pay at the end.”

Without saying a world, tourists either walk away or take a seat with the reader. It seems that once they decide to partake in this historically clandestine activity, they enter the meeting devoid of words, moving into the chair silently, indeed, slipping into this “marginal,” secretive space quietly so not to be noticed by anyone besides their supporters.

Before a reading begins, the reader explains to the tourist how the session will evolve. Clark, for example, commences each reading by saying he uses the Mahoven method, the oldest method of reading the Tarot. Then, he tells his client the significance of each position in the Mahoven layout. Clark continues that during the reading he will explain each drawn card and then ask if the person understands what he’s just illuminated. If not, together they will further discuss the meaning of the card and its position as it relates to the client. In addition, Clark has developed a methodical and elaborate shuffling system for each reading, asking his client to look directly into his eyes before each shuffle. Though Clark’s technique is probably the most involved, all readers confidently engage with their clients personally, using both material and verbal techniques, as together they explore topics and issues emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.

101 The city allows readers to practice reading in the Square based on the freedom of religion; thus, they must work on a donation basis. They have won several court battles based on this logic. That said, near the end of my fieldwork, a rumor spread on the Square that the police weren’t enforcing the “donation” stipulation to their practices (fn 09.09.04). Unfortunately, I never found the underlying cause of this rumor.
Most meetings, or sessions as some readers call them, with most readers cover past, present, and future matters such as character traits, health, love, family, finances, education, and employment of the client and last between 15 and 45 minutes. Sometimes, a reader will look into an individual’s past, drawing on moments of happiness or pain to elucidate their influence on present day or future relationships and situations. Often the tourist asks for clarifications or has detailed questions about present circumstances in her or his life. Sessions may produce nervous laughter, silence, frustration, joy, shock, surprise, and occasionally even tears in the clients. Along the Mall, a pattern of whispering exchanges between readers and clients develops, creating, at times, secretive spaces. More than transgressing the proprieties of public space through private activities, purposefully private and secret spaces are created by the reader and the tourist, together.

The secretive, intimate spaces set the tone not only for clients, but for readers too. For example, Clark explained that Steven, his teacher of the Tarot, taught him that in order to help a client through the cards, he must fall in love with each one. Later, Clark insisted, “You have to massage them [the client] with love. If I get in a zone with a client, they will throw money at me” (fn 08.22.04). While reader Hattie asserted, “We give feel good entertainment and comfort” (fn 12.14.03). Jordan said that if a tourist has a bad experience with a reader that he would give that tourist a reading for free “just so they’ll have a good experience with the place. It’s bad business for tourists to go away unhappy” (fn 02.02.04). Though Jordan’s concerned with business, he studied
extensively with Jerik through the House of Scorpio and Jerik’s brother, Val, has fine-tuned his skills. Clearly, Jordan is serious about his abilities as a reader.

Perhaps these comments may seem contradictory, connecting, even bonding, love or caring and money—something that spins against norms, at least ideally, particularly because occultism is closely linked, associated, or a part of religious and spiritual practices and beliefs. In Jackson Square, however, often a short distance exists in practices of care, spirituality, and making a living. For Clark, Hattie, and Jordan are sincere in all facets of their sentiments, and though the level of sincerity surely varies among readers and tourists in a reading, the close interweaving of money, worth, knowledge, entertainment, talent, compassion, and comfort always manifests.

Certainly, a range of readers exists, from those who consider what they do a part of their religion or spirituality to those who consider their abilities secular or supernatural, to some who feel they are street entertainers, to the indefinable, work on Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall. Thus, a range of abilities, skills, talents, and personalities are present that undermine norms of religion, knowledge, and abilities.

Repositioning in the Square

In fact, the appeal of this mosaic shows in the kinds of clients readers have sit with them. Time after time, readers of a particular gender, age, ethnicity, education, and position have clients of very different backgrounds, positions, and personal

102 Indeed, the Pedestrian Mall has had those who may be termed “Wacky Readers,” such as Hubba Bubba who occasionally shouted, “Get Naked!” or “Hubba Bubba!” and Carson, who sometimes loudly stated, “You know Carson, a chicken is not a cow!” (fn 08.18.04)
characteristics. For instance, during the black American Baptist Convention, a black minister conventioneer sat for Chris, a white, male, sometimes homeless, transvestite. And, a white man in his fifties walking alone around the Square, observed each reader, then at the beginning of his second lap immediately sat down with a young black female reader. After they introduced themselves, the man said he had questions about his business. These tourists experiencing a different place, a different world, also desire to acquire knowledge from different people in that world, potentially unhinging normative orders of position.

The readers then are legitimated not only personally but also publicly. Of course, most individuals listen intently to their reader, sending surrounding monuments and busy activities to the background while at the same time binding the context to the meaning making of the session at both personal and larger social scales. Even those persons getting a reading for “fun,” and who may state that they don’t believe in occultism or aren’t sure, still show a glimmer of “maybe” in their eyes, “maybe this person has the ability to see or understand something that I can’t.” Further, during a reading, others approach only rarely. Instead, they abide by the proprieties that these secretive spaces prompt, reinforcing them as personal and confidential. Such spaces enable unconventional performances between those nearer and those farther away from the norm to emerge. The following experiences with the readers Godwin and Miss Lana

103 Readers in the square have described this repeated occurrence to me, and I have observed it.
show how intricacies of position develop and function between the unusual and ordinary and through the material and ephemeral in both representation and practice.

A self-proclaimed Pagan and Warlock, Godwin’s long black hair, pointed fingernails, black velvet suit, and prosthetic fangs place him in a different time and place if only in fantasy. During my reading, he placed a few stones on each drawn (Gothic-styled) card to secure them. Drawing from the cards, Godwin discussed my life in terms of work and relationships. Near the end of our session, however, he leaned in toward me and declared that he had already known everything about me. Continuing, he stated that he was a reader and a psychic. Before the reading, he said that he had looked through my eyes and into my soul, learning the whole of me. I felt uneasy but said nothing (fn 05.01.02). Silence followed, marking the lack of both physical and social personal space between us. In these few moments, Godwin’s proclamation of ability and knowledge (about me!) shaped an unexpected and transgressive social situation, effective from a sensual personal scale, and accentuated by the grand scale of the architectural symbols of power and knowledge surrounding us. Here, the context, which I previously described falling to the background, also importantly can serve as reinforcement of the personal scale created by reader and client.

The readers’ relations with tourists, offering them guidance, potentially having more knowledge acquired through occultist practices and special talents, as Godwin asserted, destabilize conventional ideals of how knowledge is gained, held, and given.

104 See Revill 2000 and Smith 2000 for discussions on constructing space through sound and silence.
Accordingly, this upsets religious and civic powers that “govern” ideas of knowledge situated in both the past and present. Thus, these performances, the weaving of practice with the traditional material and abstract representations of Jackson Square, level the field a bit, both conceptually and literally. One person nearer the margins of society may have a greater presence, at least for a few moments, in practice than the imposing monuments do.

This performative “interconnecting” of daily practices and representation of authority and knowledge illustrate that both lie on the same spectrum conceptually. My reading with Miss Lana further develops the connections between practices and representations that manipulate, unsettle, and create social space.

The first time I met Miss Lana she called to me, “Come on Honey, you need a reading... you’re getting wet—come sit with me.” She explained that 200 years of psychic abilities existed in her family and that practicing the palm and Tarot along with her other female family members, her daughters and nieces, is part of their religious system as gypsies (fn 08.10.01).

In her seventies, Miss Lana seemed the family matriarch. Well under five feet, her beaded blue-green blouse, long skirt, and grayish-red hair, drew attention to her position rather than her stature. Silver charms dangled from her bracelet as she motioned me to sit directly next to her. I had never had a reading and it was early even in my preliminary fieldwork—so intrigued was I that I did as she asked.

Miss Lana took my hands, gently turned them palm side up, and whispered, “I tell you what I see, no hard or bad feelings okay?” First, we settled on the “donation”
amount for my reading. Later, I learned that gypsy readers on the Square are the only group of readers that consistently settle on a payment amount before the reading begins.

She explained that two palms were $25, which would tell me things over the next five years, or one palm for $20, which would tell me important things for the next one or two years. The informal setting made me bold, so I dickered her price. I said, “How about $15 for one hand?” Miss Lana slyly stared at me and offered, “How about the two hands for $20; you should have as complete a reading as possible.” I agreed.

Miss Lana directed me to, “Make two wishes. Make sure they’re good ones, for the next one or two years.” I was alone so I thought, “what the heck.” I silently made my two wishes. “Now, tell me one of those wishes.” I wasn’t expecting her to ask. I felt silly; my wish seemed girlish and cliché. “To fall in love,” I said somewhat sheepishly. Placing my wish in her memory with an “ahh,” Miss Lana explained she’d ponder over it for later in the reading.

“How about $15 for one hand?” Miss Lana slyly stared at me and offered, “How about the two hands for $20; you should have as complete a reading as possible.” I agreed.

Miss Lana directed me to, “Make two wishes. Make sure they’re good ones, for the next one or two years.” I was alone so I thought, “what the heck.” I silently made my two wishes. “Now, tell me one of those wishes.” I wasn’t expecting her to ask. I felt silly; my wish seemed girlish and cliché. “To fall in love,” I said somewhat sheepishly. Placing my wish in her memory with an “ahh,” Miss Lana explained she’d ponder over it for later in the reading.

“Hmm, long life line. People in your family live a long life…” Thinking about my grandparents and great-grandparents, she was half-right. Those on my father’s side lived into their 90s, but those on my mother’s side lived only into their 50s. Miss Lana moved on, “You have been hurt very deeply in the past—someone took everything from you.” Taking her left hand, pointing to her heart, Miss Lana continued, “absolutely everything…” Shocked with the liberty she took to make a particularly deeply personal statement, I said nothing but listened to her elaborate.
Next, she came to my wish, “You’ll meet someone within the next year maybe even the next six months. You know this person. He’s tall, blonde—has glasses like you. Do you know someone like this?” Unsure, I replied, “Well, Hmmm maybe I do…” as I search my memory to locate someone. Miss Lana added, “He’ll be shy and quiet, but not with the world just with women. Give him a chance…”

After about 15 minutes, as a final point, she said matter-of-factly, “You have been very bored lately. Don’t worry: things will get better. I see a change for you. In two years, you’ll be working for a big corporation. I see it, I tell you. Things will get better, forget the rest of this year, just let it go, but in the new year, things will change...” After my reading, I thanked her, she beamed, telling me to come back in a year, “People come back to me—I don’t remember them, no I don’t, I see so many people, but they always remember me!” (fn 08.10.01). In fact, many readers do have annual clients. Some tourists hope to find readers who read for them once several years in the past, showing that readers can have a lasting place in the memory of and meaning to tourists.

Sitting next to Miss Lana, with her holding my hands, her motherly and certain word, quickly changed the space of the Square to a personal and private one for me, and yet simultaneously publicly demonstrated her unconventional social, religious and economic practices in Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall.

Moreover, that readers’ practices occur, through tourism and in a celebrated square, surrounded by historical governmental, religious, and commercial buildings—all normative representations of hegemonic memorializing and moralizing (Howson 2004)—matters because the unconventional practices effectively work from within
these traditional representations, both highlighting and undermining them. And, although none are the same, thousands of ostensibly mainstream visitors, like me, participating in tarot and palm readings, help produce these repeated unorthodox performances. Thus, readers and tourists together become in part constitutive of Jackson Square.

Indeed, the material and symbolic intertwine with feelings and thoughts in a process that creates the ever-emergent world of Jackson Square. Though seemingly timeless through its monuments alone, the Square is, in fact, an ever-contested and ever-patterned embodied place. Cresswell helps explain,

> Embodiment refers to the process whereby the individual body is connected into larger networks of meaning at a variety of scales. It refers to the production of social and cultural relations through and by the body at the same time as the body is being ‘made up’ by external forces.... Bodies are used to act out roles in various settings which confirm and resist (at different times in different places and sometimes simultaneously) wider expectancies (Cresswell 1999, p. 176, my emphasis).

In Jackson Square, the manner of embodiment, of intertwining the human, nonhuman, material, and nonmaterial, occurs through different social and spatial scales from representations of state apparatuses to practices of two individuals from disparate subject positions actually touching hands to, metaphorically, one reaching into the other’s soul.

In Jackson Square, groups assert a social and economic place within the larger public spaces of and around Jackson Square. Yet, Jackson Square locals closer to the
margin in society have an alliance with the mainstream tourism industry that moves those locals to the center, and therefore challenges as well as renews subject positions and notions of social and economic center and edge. As Tim Edensor suggests, a variety of performances that form within tourism “can both renew existing conventions and provide opportunities to challenge them” (Edensor 2001, 78). Importantly, different actors, both the tourists and the Square locals, work to “renew” and “challenge” particular conventions within these shared performances (Edensor 2001).

If as Thrift asserts, “place is a part of us,” so must we be a part of it. It follows that people, their bodies and their subjectivities, constitute, shape, and become inseparable from the making of place. Heidi Nast and Steve Pile explain that in fact social-spatial relationships “come together to make bodies and places, through the body and through places” (Nast and Pile 1998, 5). Thinking of place as embodied clearly implies movement, implies process, and suggests different scales in practice and representation that together create ever-emergent identities of person, group, and place.

**Conclusion**

As Coleman and Crang argue counter to “dramaturgical metaphors [that] suggest performance occurs in place, reduced and fixed,” through tourism, embodied performances, rely on sight, sound, contact, and participation to “unfix” the fixity of “preferred” representations and practices that pervade Jackson Square (Coleman and Crang 2002, 10). The microgeographies in Jackson Square, therefore, show that the public use of and need for public space is more than solely political and more than solely at one scale. They reveal significant kinds of day-to-day social, religious, cultural,
and economic expressions and formations through, at times, the transgressive performances of individuals and groups that are in part creative of public space, tourism, and the historical site itself. In doing so, a world of its own comes to be. Of course, Jackson Square comes to be through other kinds of performances too, and in the following chapter, I show how individuals, groups, and organizations negotiate and control spaces within Jackson Square in the everyday.
Chapter Seven

Negotiating Space, Controlling Place Day-by-Day

It was a Friday late in April, and Jackson Square possessed a usual playfulness. Recurring calliope melodies from a cruise ship seemed to bounce off the Big Band’s jazz tunes and to mix with Joe and Kara’s folk songs. Loud voices from street entertainers and their audiences provided brief interludes or fortuitously became crescendos to the eclectic music.

On the Square’s fence, artists hung their work; from their setups, tarot card readers enticed tourists to sit for readings; in their regular spots, the lucky dog vendor and Jeri the wreath seller sold their goods, while Marvel the bootblack, shined shoes. Additionally, mobile face-painters, henna-tattoo artists, clowns, and comics walked their common routes around the Square. These same people sometimes took naps, cared for children, and visited with one another and other Square locals. The regular homeless persons and gutter punks of Jackson Square hung out on benches, talked with others, and listened to the music that played. And, all day long, thousands of tourists in small and large groups—families, friends, schoolchildren in uniforms, and senior tour-bus groups—strolled in and around the Jackson Square area. To be sure, this scene marked a normal day in the Square.

In front of the Presbytere near where Joe and Kara perform daily, however, a conflict disrupted the day. A small crowd of people, Square regulars and tourists,

105 These sounds also included “loud” silences by audiences that were bewildered or awed, for example, from a street entertainer’s performance.
formed around the incident. I had just gotten off work from The Kite Shop and was making my usual rounds about the Square. When I arrived at the scene, two police cars were already there, parked on the Pedestrian Mall at the intersection of Chartres and St. Ann Streets with lights flashing. A bluegrass band, Aces, situated directly adjacent to Joe and Kara’s setup played as Kara and a couple of readers filled me in on what had happened.

Joe and Kara had been splitting sets with the bluegrass band, street musicians that usually played on Royal Street’s promenade. A couple of (male) gutter punks had been acting recklessly on the benches behind Joe and Kara when one of them almost fell onto Kara and Lily, Joe and Kara’s five-week old baby. Kara said, “Hey back off, I have a baby,” but the gutter punk was unmoved. As a result, Joe firmly stated, “Back off, and you need to leave.” To which the gutter punk replied, “What are you going to do?” Joe said matter-of-factly, “Nothing, but you need to leave.” With this, the gutter punk hit Joe three times after which several readers and gutter punks jumped into the situation—most trying to break up the fight. Kara maced the gutter punk, who had thrown the first punches; nevertheless, he managed to get out of the mix and run away. But, the clash was not over because a few minutes later the same gutter punk came back with a hammer intending to hit Joe. Again several locals became involved, no one was hit with the hammer, and once more the gutter punk ran away.

As I listened to Kara and the readers, a police officer located the gutter punk, who had first hit Joe, and arrested him. Then, two more police cars arrived. Meanwhile others (both police and a few Square locals) continued to search the Jackson Square area
for the assailant’s accomplices. A policeman interviewed Joe and others at the scene as locals and tourists stood and sat on the benches, talking about the event and watching it unfold. Tourists also continued to stand and sit on the Presbytere’s steps throughout the entire incident, listening to Aces play.

Within 20 minutes after I had arrived, the police took another suspect into custody and then congregated around their cars. As Kara talked with me and others, she began to breastfeed Lily. When things settled down, Joe walked over to be with Kara, putting his arm around her and their baby. He was noticeably upset and angry about what had happened.

In response to the unruly and violent affair, Aces spontaneously performed, “I Fought the Law, and the Law Won.” At the end of the song, the singer called out, “How’s that for you N.O.P.D.?!?” The police officers grinned as locals and tourists alike burst into laughter and applause. And, less than an hour from when the confrontation began, the police cars left, the area calmed completely, and the crowd around the unfortunate event dispersed to their usual places and activities in the Square. As I walked home down Chartres Street, I heard Joe’s voice, mellow and crisp, singing James Taylor’s “Fire and Rain.” By this time in my fieldwork, I understood that a disruptive and, at moments, violent (yet relatively brief) clash also marked a usual day in Jackson Square (fn 04.23.04).

Numerous issues arise from this day, and the many others like it, about how Jackson Square is controlled and negotiated socially and spatially at the ground level. In this chapter, I examine the roles of particular groups and individuals in terms of
authority, status, and ability to negotiate and control activity, people, and space in the everyday. As Cope, Ruddick, and Domosh show in their studies, I illustrate how the spaces of everyday life expose complexities of inclusion and exclusion (Cope 1996, Ruddick 1996, Domosh 1998). Building upon previous chapters concerning the construction and transgression of order and disorder in the Square as a public space, park, and tourist site, I explain how everyday practices perpetuate informal negotiating and controlling of an ever-emergent multifaceted world of Jackson Square.

Six broad groups including artists, entertainers, gutter punks and homeless, musicians, readers, and tourists directly use the Square in a sustained manner. Additionally, four other groups including the cathedral, city/police, preservationists, and shop owners (and Pontalba residents) have a direct interest and significant influence in how areas of Jackson Square are used and by whom.

In the Square particular groups, such as artists and readers, may officially locate only in specific places. We know from the literature review and chapter five on disorder, however, that official laws do not translate perfectly in the everyday. Thus, though official locations generally do hold true in the day-to-day of Jackson Square, those locations do not hold perfectly and not without regularly occurring conflicts, disagreements, negotiations, and alliances between and within groups over activity, space, and indeed over the kind of person doing what and where. Thus, ultimately, how space continually emerges everyday in Jackson Square elucidates processes of inclusion in and exclusion from public space and the public (see, for example, Sibley 1995, Staeheli and Thompson 1997, Domosh 1998, Low 2000, Smith 2000).
Certainly, a multitude of relationships between individuals and groups involving space, activity, and people occur in the Square. In this chapter, I focus on only a few relationships of control and negotiation and my emphasis lies in understanding matters concerning those near and on the margin. As Gerry Mooney has explained, “little thought is given to their internal social and spatial differentiation and heterogeneity, to the strategies which [they] adopt to ‘cope’” (Mooney 1999, 73).

In the social sciences, James Scott (1985) first gave attention to the ordinary means in which lower classes (i.e. those marginalized groups) use everyday acts to resist the hegemony of upper classes. Additionally, Scott discussed how informal networks and implicit understandings over time bring about some change to peasant life. Though his study and subsequent studies center on peasantry in Malaysia and the politics of class relations, much can be gleaned from his work and from feminist, political, and cultural geographers who have extended his arguments (see, for example, Moore 1997, Thrift 1997, Domosh 1998).

Recall that Domosh (1998), for example, employs the idea of micropolitics in corporeal acts of the everyday to reveal gender and “race” transgressions in the nineteenth century on Fifth Avenue in New York City. She also explains differences between Scott’s idea of resistance and Cresswell’s idea of transgression, where resistance acts rest with intention and transgressive acts rest with being noticed and the question of intention remains open. In Jackson Square during my fieldwork, the question of intention often remained unclear. Nevertheless as both Cresswell and Domosh point
out, transgressive acts, though obscure in intention, may nevertheless be politically strategic, and I would add culturally, economically, and socially constitutive.

As I will show, such is the case in Jackson Square. Furthermore, other aspects of Scott’s work have import to understanding Square locals’ everyday acts. As this chapter proceeds, I draw from his (and others’) less political observations but also diverge from some of his understandings concerning what he terms “tactics” from those on and near the margin in society. In particular, I work from Ruddick and Hester Parr’s studies dealing with homeless people, creating identities, and public space. Unlike the emphasis of Scott’s work, I want to show how transgressing norms in everyday acts has significant implications that are not dependent on the political receiving the most consideration and instead highlight the cultural, economic, and social.

I seek to expose nuances of authority, status, and ability that affect (and effect) how Jackson Square’s day-to-day is maintained and opened to new patterns. My analysis centers on everyday relations that musicians Joe and Kara, the Monsignor from St. Louis Cathedral, readers, and gutter punks and homeless have with others. As different cultural, economic, and social issues come to the fore, the multi-dimensionality of urban public space is also brought to the forefront.

Making Joe and Kara’s Spot

I begin by going back to Joe and Kara and their spot. Indeed, over the last five years, the spot between the benches in front of the Presbytere has been the only place on Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall they perform, and most locals in the Square
associate it with them (fig. 11). Associating Joe and Kara with this one place has not arisen, however, simply because they have regularly played there.

Figure 11  Joe and Kara in Their Spot (source: photograph by author).

Instead, a complex order has developed between Joe and Kara and others in that area of Jackson Square. And, contrary to what the opening anecdote might suggest Joe and Kara enjoy a rapport with most of the gutter punks and homeless as well as with entertainers and readers who normally (in part) occupy that area of the Square.

For example, without further commitment, Joe and Kara occasionally invite a gutter punk to shower and sleep at their house for a few nights. Or, if a gutter punk needs medical attention, they sometimes provide bus fare for the trip to Charity Hospital. These acts are all in the normal course of Joe and Kara’s day in Jackson Square as are gutter punks and homeless asking for advice from them or simply wanting to talk. Since Joe and Kara are friends or friendly with most gutter punks and homeless,
they usually respond in a considerate, but in my observations, not always sympathetic manner.

As when early one evening, Scuff, a gutter punk who was known to become unruly especially when drinking, was talking with Kara and other Square locals. After a few minutes, Joe looked at Scuff seriously and said, “You’re okay with this one [beer], but the next one you have to go,” meaning at that point, Scuff had to leave the Square (fn 10.24.03). Scuff, a leader within his own group of gutter punks, replied that he understood and followed through with Joe’s instruction.

In this corner of the Square, Joe and Kara impart a stable, strong, and talented presence engendering reverence from the most disenfranchised—the homeless and gutter punks. And though not always apparent, Joe and Kara constantly endeavor to be aware of what happens around them. According to Joe, “If you play, you create an environment and are responsible for it. You need to control the environment, the ambiance.” In the case of the incident with Aces, Joe suggested that “that band doesn’t pay attention or doesn’t care [about the environment they in part create], which allows bad things to happen” (fn 05.09.04).

In this area of the Jackson Square Pedestrian Mall, Joe and Kara have established a particular status and informal authority that gives them the ability to control and negotiate a space so that they can earn a living playing music. Their “low-profile” cultural and social tactics, as Scott (1985, xvi-xvii) calls similar political tactics, do not exclude others, such as gutter punks and homeless, perceived as the most volatile in the Square, from being there too. Thus, they provide entertainment for tourists but
also a base for some marginalized persons, offering at times guidance, attention, and friendship. Here, in the everyday of public space, “there is no clear definition between work and community”—no space or time between care, friendship, and professional and personal responsibility (Cope 1996, 180). All of these aspects interconnect with the making of authority and status in Jackson Square that lie outside of formal controls and thus with the making of a particular order in its everyday. Cope reveals similar situations with textile workers in factories, but here in the Square the boundaries blur more because the flows of, for example, “finances, position in the social relations of production[,]…family, affinities, social identifications, [and] cultural ties” occur in one small place (Cope 1996, 180). Thus, these microgeographies become even more tightly interdependent, concentrated, and, importantly, accentuated in their publicness.

Whose Spot?

Though Joe and Kara are strongly associated with the area between the benches near St. Ann and Chartres Streets, they have no legal hold on the spot. Because that area of the Pedestrian Mall is less restricted than other places in the Mall, some street entertainers, musicians, and readers, who do not subscribe to or are not aware of convention, sometimes compete for the space. Thus, even though they can not begin to play music until 10:00 a.m. (CNO Sec 66-203, The Times Picayune April 17, 1990), Joe or Kara arrives on the Square as early as 2 a.m. to save “their” spot. As the opening of this chapter illustrates, Joe and Kara split sets with other musicians, but only those who are well-known street musicians and those who are willing to get up early to hold the spot.
This doesn’t mean that it is always easy for Joe and Kara to maintain their policy because they have no legal means to do so.

For example, Kara recalled that for a while, other musicians showed up as late as noon, hoping to split sets with them. They did that for a while, “trying to be fair, but at some point what the other musicians were doing wasn’t fair” (fn 05.09.04). Once, Kara, financially stressed, exhausted from getting up so early, and faced again with musicians requesting to split sets at noon, burst into tears. Joe told the musicians to leave and that if they wanted to split sets, to come out early and help hold a spot. The musicians didn’t like it, but they did leave.

As Joe and Kara are a stabilizing force in their area of the Square, they also are part of disagreements and conflicts like the situation above. And with disagreement and conflict, the possibility of disorder is present, but as Mitchell argues, some tolerance for risk and danger needs to be part of public space (Mitchell 2003). He argues for this potential of disorder because it is through “struggle that the right of public space can be maintained and the only way that social justice can be advanced” (Mitchell 2003, 5). Yet the situation with Joe and Kara isn’t, in the first sense, a political protest nor is it about social justice. Their situation is, however, about the ability of public space to be something more than a place for political representation; it is about Joe and Kara’s internal negotiations of control that involve identity, status, community, and making a living. These relationships sustain a particular social and spatial order though the shape of that order remains open.
On the other hand, no member of the Big Band, a larger group whose musicians vary, ever come out early to hold their spot between the benches in front of the Cabildo (fig. 12). In fact, on the quite rare occasion that someone is in the Big Band’s spot, they “just [blow] them away with their music” until they leave (fn 02.01.03). With as many as fifteen musicians in the Big Band showing up to play, they have numbers and volume on their side.

Figure 12 The Big Band (source: photograph by Veronica Sheehan, used with permission).

Additionally, Kara explained that the Big Band was “an establishment on Jackson Square and that they’d been there forever” (fn 10.24.03). Infrequently, Joe and Kara and

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106 This isn’t to say that anyone can play as a member of the Big Band. To play with the Big Band, one has to be asked or invited by a Big Band member.

107 Time after time, the Big Band demonstrated its status in the Square. For example, the Band continued to play even when police cars occasionally parked directly in front of where they set up. And once, the usual lead vocal, Glen, yelled out, “Com’on, move!” when a police car drove too slowly by them (fn 12.14.03).
the Big Band split sets if construction or an event is going on near one of their respective spots. As Kara explained, when the city was working on the slate sidewalk of the Pedestrian Mall, she and Joe or the Big Band sometimes approached the other, saying, “Hey we got to make some money,” and the other would say okay and vice versa” (fn 05.09.04). Together, these performers work to fairly negotiate space, and in doing so are part of continually creating the social and cultural community of Jackson Square. The Big Band and Joe and Kara directly using the Square as a space of “production and consumption” complicates Madanipour’s (1999) argument that such processes strip the emotional and cultural character of public spaces. They show the multidimensionality (cultural, economic, political, and social) of public space and that those on the margin may have a role in the processes of production and consumption.

108 Other entertainers (those not musicians) and Jackson Square locals negotiate spaces on Chartres Street, though all have significantly less hold on any space than Joe and Kara and the Big Band. For example, Jim Derek the escape artist usually places a chain around the small area where he performs. More commonly, entertainers lay down a “ring of fire,” which is actually water from a lighter fluid bottle (fn 08.04.01). Not only does this denote a space, the technique also entices audiences that think the performer will really ignite a ring of fire. Further, it allows the entertainer to compress his crowd around the arc waterline. Entertainers also “take turns.” Usually when one person is performing, others do not (except for the musicians who provided an often near-continuous sound and presence). And, if numerous entertainers are out to perform, they sometimes vocalize an order of performing. For example, Birdman sometimes loudly announces, “I’m next.” Others, such as Jim Derek may sound off, “I’m better!” just after another performer finishes. All of these methods help gain audiences and aid negotiating time and space in Jackson Square.

109 Of course, these examples bring up matters concerning privatizing public space, though to be sure, not from, for example, a corporate scale. Though I do not discuss these matters in this chapter, I do offer that these examples show that with private citizens using public space, there inherently emerges a simultaneity of public and private space (See for example, Valentine 1996).
Following Ruddick’s (1996b) discussion regarding public space and identity, these musicians also illustrate that the character, that is the identity of the Square, is in part constituted in their practices there. In turn, Joe and Kara and the Big Band’s identities form through this public space.

**Square Pegs in a Round World**

Joe and Kara maintain a level of respect within the Jackson Square area, demonstrated, for example, by the majority of Square locals associating the spot in front of the Presbytere with them. This regard, however, does not always translate to those from outside the Square. Again, going back to the beginning scene of this chapter, as she and Joe performed, Kara effectively cared for their newborn child on the street. This was nothing new for Joe and Kara because when their older child, Logon, was a baby\textsuperscript{110} they brought him to the Square where he stayed in a playpen or his parents and friends in the Pedestrian Mall held him. Despite that, in July, a tourist told Kara “to her face” that it was too hot for the baby to be out, to get the child out of the sun, and then the tourist called the police to report Kara and Joe for having the baby out in such weather. It was a hot July, so Joe and Kara played under a canvas tent, keeping the sun out, and they rigged a small fan that misted water on Lily to cool her (fn 07.17.04).

Though extremely insulted by the stranger’s comments and actions, Kara conceded to Joe’s reasoning. He explained, “That was that. Things happen, and I don’t want to chance anything. So, the baby isn’t coming out until September” (fn 07.17.04).

\textsuperscript{110} As Logon became older and was able to walk, Joe and Kara had a difficult time watching him as they performed, so they hired a sitter to stay with him while they came to work.
Joe feared they already had two strikes against them—they looked like hippies and were street musicians. Understanding that child services base their policies in conventional ideas of what is appropriate care for infants and that the agency (and others) might not agree with his and Kara’s parenting practices, he felt that serious circumstances could unfold for them and their children. Unwilling to take the risk of losing custody of their children, Joe and Kara acquiesced to mainstream principles even though they believed that they were taking good care of Lily. Hence, though Kara observed with delight, “You get all kinds here [in Jackson Square]. It’s its own community,” both she and Joe realized the limits that this community has in social self-governance (fn 10.24.03). Those limits came from trajectories of a normative social world’s expectations entering their everyday, sometimes personal, practices.

Geographer John Allen discusses urban life as rhythms of “the regular comings and goings of people about the city” (Allen 1999, 56) but also “fluid, crossing-cutting” (Allen 1999, 66), meaning multiple rhythms or social trajectories simultaneously occurring and intersecting in city life. Sometimes intersections of these rhythms, as with Joe and Kara and the tourist who called the police on them for having Lily out in the heat, clash with real and potentially lasting consequences for those closer to the margin of society.

Indeed, Square locals well recognize the margin. After Kara’s comment above about getting all kinds in Jackson Square, a man, local to the Square, interjected, “…it’s like one big dysfunctional family!” Those locals sitting on the benches and listening to the conversation laughed in agreement (fn 10.24.03). This man and the crowd around
him affirmed that Jackson Square locals’ relationships and social practices are not included in society’s standard ideals. Further, Joe explained, “Everyone on Jackson Square is pretty transparent—we’re all square pegs. They might be here for artistic, spiritual, or money-making reasons, but none of it matters because none of us fit into what society wants us to fit into” (fn 02.18.04). This may seem ironic, that those near the margin in fact engage in practices publicly. Parr notes, however, “There are contradictions in uses of public space,” in that some individuals create alternative spaces “in order to achieve a relative freedom,” while at the same time these individuals are quite aware of dominant notions of order coded in public space (Parr 1997, 443).

Though they don’t fit into society, Square Fare, as one reader identifies people who are part of Jackson Square’s culture, are not thoroughly isolated from other social worlds even though Square locals continuously refer to the Square as its own world with its own rules (and even, recall, having its own weather). Therefore, as Gregson (2000) shows in her study of car-boot sales (flea markets), Square locals work with conventional ideals even as they (and others) challenge and sometimes choose to exclude themselves from those conventional social worlds filled as they are with normative ideals of, for example, work and parenting. Because Jackson Square is an enduring setting, these performances not only challenge and reinforce ideal social roles associated with people they also challenge and reinforce ideal social roles associated with place.
Church and State Together Today

Even as Square locals like Joe and Kara negotiate alternative family lifestyles in public space, other worlds are juxtaposed directly next to Square Fare, and the Monsignor and St. Louis Cathedral have many concerns over the use of Jackson Square and its Pedestrian Mall (fig. 13).

Figure 13  St. Louis Cathedral (source: photograph by author).

As a result, formally, in 1998, the city restricted play of those performing on Chartres Street in Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall during any church service and installed on each end of the area “A Church Quiet Zone” sign (CNO Sec. 66-208). That said, the sign on the Cabildo side has since disappeared and the one on the Presbytere side (by Joe and Kara’s spot) has long been covered with graffiti and stickers, both serving as material reminders of tension between the Church and (some) Square locals. Though the absence of one small sign and the defacement of another may seem too small a
detail to attribute to larger issues regarding space in Jackson Square, David Sibley argues that such seemingly trivial issues convey matters about “power relations and the role of space in social control” (Sibley 1995, xiii). In fact, struggles of use and control between the Monsignor and Square locals over this area greatly shape not only its character and quality but fundamentally who can use the space and how.

“Love in His Eyes” and “Here Comes the Devil”

Though the Monsignor has no legal power in the Square, his status translates into the ability to shape and control space, activity, and people there, relying on his position in the Church and the city’s long history of Catholicism and government mixing to influence matters in the Square both directly and indirectly. Joe’s comments made about a meeting that the Monsignor had called with all street performers on Chartres Street will illustrate this point. According to Joe, the meeting went well, adding that the Monsignor had a particular look that “put you in your place so that you say ‘yes, Sir, no, Sir.’” Further, Joe said that he got along with the Monsignor in part because “he knew one of his own,” and that “so much is said in how you shake the Monsignor’s hand,” explaining that “you keep your hand underneath his as a sign of respect.” Laughing, Joe exclaimed, “The Catholic secret handshake,” and went on to say that he trusted the Monsignor because he “could see love in his eyes.” Sitting in the meeting with the Monsignor, Joe admitted that he felt young and back in his school days but also seemed to take comfort in this association with his past. So though he had wanted

111 Joe’s history of being raised Catholic and attending Catholic schools in part fosters his hierarchical relationship that the Monsignor attempts to advance in Jackson Square.
to request the Monsignor to take down the “Church Quiet Zone” sign, Joe did not ask. Later, in a serious tone he declared, “In New Orleans, Napoleonic Law rules!” (fn 11.08.03). Of course, it is not the Monsignor’s (or any clergy’s) decision to take down a municipally installed sign but rather a city decision; yet, Joe did not see it that way. Here Joe illustrates what Scott contends that those near the margin “typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority” (Scott 1985, xvi). And, perhaps, this is what the Monsignor was counting on by calling the meeting, which he held in the cathedral. Contrary to Scott’s argument that those with less social and political power publicly show deference to elites “that is to say, in power-laden settings—a carefully calculated conformity prevails” in Jackson Square, as we have seen, this statement washes over its complexities in the day-to-day (Scott 1985, xvii).

Indeed, not all those invited to the Monsignor’s meeting attended, notably not one member from the Big Band, which suggests that not all Square locals have the same reverence for the Monsignor. In fact, the Monsignor’s relationship with those in Jackson Square varies greatly, from amicable to hostile, depending upon the Jackson Square group in question. Moreover, the Monsignor has regular interactions with only a few individuals, mostly artists, on the Square. Two long-time Square artists, Jan and Dave, explained that the Monsignor liked the artists and the police but not many others. “He likes to hang out with the cops; he even put a sign on the Cathedral property allowing them [the police] to park there,” Dave noted. (fn 08.22.04). And, Jan remarked, “The Monsignor’s really into surveillance—he should’ve been a cop!” (fn 08.22.04).
Jan and Dave both commented on their uneasiness with the Monsignor’s relationship with the police. They felt that something was “strange” and “weird” about a holy man being eager to, in a sense, patrol the Square area. They felt that perhaps the Monsignor should have more interest in “helping people” (fn 08.22.04).

The way he interacts with Jackson Square itself affirms these artists’ insight concerning his penchant for surveillance. In over a year of fieldwork, I never observed the Monsignor walking in Jackson Square or its Pedestrian Mall. Instead, when he was outside, he stayed within or very near the confines of St. Louis Cathedral’s fence, occasionally peering out and over the Square. Thus, in the day-to-day, the Monsignor physically located himself in a place of symbolic status and authority. Even from this position, however, conflicts arose publicly. For example, during a pause in the procession into the Cathedral for a mass, the Monsignor looked out to the line of readers on Chartres Street and told the deacon next to him that the Tarot readers were an abomination. One of the readers, Don, incensed at the comment, shouted back to the Monsignor, “at least readers don’t hide pedophiles like the Church does” (fn 07.04.04). They argued, each from his respective position in the Square. Just before the Monsignor entered the Cathedral’s door he yelled, “Well your father is a pedophile,” having the last word (fn 07.04.04).

Instances like that above caused a number of readers to distrust the Monsignor; a long-time respected Square reader, Clark, has gone so far as to dedicate an entire chapter in his book about life in Jackson Square as “Here Comes the Devil,” referring to the Monsignor (fn 08.02.04). The incident with Don and Jan and Dave’s feelings
about his interactions with police show that “attempts to create order [can] produce disorder” (Mooney 1999, 60). Certainly, the Monsignor instigated the disorderly scene with Don, but other disorders emerge from these situations as well. Jan and Dave’s unease about the Monsignor’s behavior is rooted in established (ordered) ideas of social roles. This misgiving also culminated in Clark’s experiences, which inverted the Monsignor’s status from holy man to the devil. Here, though the conceptual and material images of the Monsignor may put him on an accepted social pedestal, the lived experiences of those in the Square demonstrate a far different awareness that upturns, at times, his position and thus order.

**On the Ground but Undetected**

According to Don and other readers, the Monsignor contacted the police directly after his clash with Don because shortly later, a policeman arrived and issued Don a ticket for disturbing the peace—without asking any questions of anyone. The police failed to ticket the Monsignor. Later, Don explained to me that the Monsignor’s name didn’t appear anywhere on the ticket (fn 08.07.04), and during his court hearing, the judge asked why the Monsignor was not subpoenaed (fn 09.29.04). Not only then did the Monsignor have the last word, importantly, he has the ability to give rise to subsequent “law enforcement.”

Though some people with official authority, like the judge, or status in the Square like Clark,112 question the Monsignor’s power, inside the day-to-day world of

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112 For over 25 years, Clark has been a reader and taught Tarot reading in New Orleans, and since the 1980s, he has consistently read Tarot on Jackson Square. Because of this
Jackson Square, police frequently heed his wishes. For example, the Monsignor repeatedly has police officers tell readers to move their setups from locations facing (or near) the Cathedral even though those locations are legal spots, falling within areas allotted to them via the December 2003 decree commonly known as The Artist Set Up Area Ordinance (CNO Sec. 110-121). Under that same ordinance, the area in front of the Cathedral is supposed to be clear during special events associated with the Cathedral, but the Monsignor wrongly interprets this to include the time during weekly masses. The police, however, regularly accept his understanding of the law, and order readers to move their setups.113

The implications of the Monsignor’s ability to manipulate people, activity, and space are significant in at least three respects. First, his pressure on police officers abets officers violating readers’ civil rights concerning the first and fourteenth amendments. Second, by restricting the space of the readers, the number of readers is restricted. Since and his ability to earn large donations—sometimes as much as $250-$350 per session—he has earned a great amount of professional respect among readers. Moreover, Clark is friendly and helps other readers (and Square locals) out in professional and personal ways, earning him additional high opinions from a variety of Square locals.

113 The Monsignor’s directions also influence police actions because they themselves sometimes do not know the details of ordinances governing the Square and surmise that the Monsignor’s position endows him with credible knowledge. Though the police are ever-present in Jackson Square, on-foot, on horses, on motorcycles, on scooters, in golf carts, and in police vehicles, the same officers do not always patrol the area. And, when a conflict occurs in Jackson Square, any police officer from the French Quarter precinct can respond. On the weekends, reserve officers even less familiar with French Quarter ordinances are on patrol. During my fieldwork, the City Council and French Quarter police headquarters maintained an inability to communicate with police officers current city ordinances dealing with the Square.
readers find certain locations better for attracting potential clients, individual readers’ income diminishes because they have fewer clients to sit for them. Likewise, if readers locate too closely to each other, each reader becomes less distinguishable to potential clients, meaning their spatial distribution is not optimal for drawing clients, and thus again their income reduced. Third, as mentioned above, though the Monsignor acts as an agent in violating those civil rights and negatively impacting readers’ income, he works on the ground but off the radar of official actions—cloaked in the social shield of the church. The long-standing clout that the Cathedral and thus the Monsignor have in the Square shows that conventions in social worlds, as Becker puts it, dictate cooperative networks that “do not exist in isolation but come in complexly interdependent systems” (Becker 1982, 29). Nevertheless, he points out that change can occur. Becker is referring to art worlds, but his ideas apply to Jackson Square, where change can and does occur because sometimes convention itself provokes innovation whether knowingly, or unknowingly (Becker 1982).

The readers and other entertainers restricted to the Chartres Street portion of the Pedestrian Mall, however, continually work together to maximize the space for themselves in several ways.\footnote{The haphazard enforcement, an amalgam of the Monsignor’s and police officers’ actions, commonly (illegally) limits space not only for readers but also for other Jackson Square entertainers.} In the past, readers set up only one setup deep, but if readers, who arrive first, locate their setups at the very edge of their north most boundary line, then another line of readers can set up behind them. Certainly, this
arrangement is not economically ideal for the readers, but the solution does allow more readers to be present.\textsuperscript{115} Though artists complain about the “messy” situation (in 02.25.04, 09.04.04), the readers clearly set up within the law. And when artists complain, they rarely directly complain to readers, instead they call the police; whereas readers and entertainers, for example, often directly confront, as Don did, those they are in disagreement with whether that is over space or other issues. In Jackson Square, Scott’s framework is inverted because it is those with more political and social authority who avoid public displays of their power, which echoes Parr’s observations that seemingly contradictory practices occur in public spaces.

Mooney discusses how “new” disorders are created by disenfranchised groups’ coping mechanisms arising from the “new” orders imposed by the more powerful (Mooney 1999). Though he is speaking from the scale of the city, his insight can be applied to the microgeographies in Jackson Square. Thus, despite strict material boundaries imposed formally by law and informally through the Monsignor’s influence on police, readers create and importantly command spaces, which though seemingly disorderly in the minds of those with prevailing authority and status is actually an ordered, unifying presence of and for readers. As I discussed in the chapter on disorder, Mooney suggests that when thinking about the orders and disorders of cities, we need to ask “Whose order?” and “Whose disorder?” and how both work to socially exclude

\textsuperscript{115} Additionally, if no spaces are available for readers to set up, then some calmly wait for another reader to leave, without pressuring the reader already situated. Or, readers work out deals with each other regarding one space. For instance, one will read during the day until a designated time when the other reader takes her or his place.
and include (Mooney 1999, 55). In Jackson Square, order and disorder are on the same side of each side of the coin.

Taking the Law into Your Own Hands

That said, rather than deal with ticketing and even arrest, readers and others often chose to move when police order them from the edges of their allotted space. But, in the summer of 2004, the situation proved so frustrating that a cadre of readers walked a copy of a letter from the city attorney to the French Quarter precinct that explained space allocation among Jackson Square groups. Hoping to speak with the police officer(s) regularly assigned to the Square, they wanted to call attention to the lack of understanding police officers have of Jackson Square ordinances. Though those officers weren’t available, the readers requested that the officers assigned to the Square call one of them concerning this very important matter. The selected reader left a detailed message and, of course, his phone number. The officer never called (fn 04.22.04).

Predictably then, police officers continue to listen to the Monsignor or act according to their own interpretation of ordinances.116 These continuing circumstances propel some readers, musicians, and entertainers to have on hand the most recent court rulings regarding space allocation in order to show the police that they have set up in legal spots (fig. 14).

116 Police officers also listen to others that officers perceive have higher status, such as artists and shop owners.
As Loretta Lees shows how unintended users and unintended uses manifest in Vancouver’s new public library and appropriate its meaning, she calls attention to material space (a library) and practices (of users) intertwining. Suggesting that the implications of this intertwining are more significant than material representations alone, even when the material is heavily imbued with symbolic meaning, Lees echoes Ruddick’s assertion that identities of both people and place are constructed through
public space (Lees 2001, Ruddick 1996a, 1996b). In Jackson Square, the tactical practices of readers sometimes work with material representations of authority (e.g. a piece of legal documentation) at their side (literally) in effectively negotiating space. By claiming public space in this way, readers also negotiate the ongoing construction of their and the Square’s identities.

More than attending to their space allocation in the Square, readers have played an important role in upholding a calm and safe atmosphere. Spending more time in Jackson Square than any other group (except for the homeless), some readers become skillful through a variety of means to quell disturbances. And—perhaps because they are readers—they believe in their ability to understand and deal with people and with unsettling situations in Jackson Square. In part too, their relative mobility to set up at various locations in the Pedestrian Mall, despite more recent curtailing of their allotted space, provide them opportunities to do so. If, for example, an argument surfaces between Square locals, readers first attempt to expel those in dispute from the Square. In such a situation, readers nearby would shout out, “Take it somewhere else!” or “Not here! Not here!” (see, for example, fn 08.22.04).

And, because readers generally back each other up and look after one another, people listen to their demands. Additionally, they are a force because their number relative to other groups (except artists) is usually large. Indeed, numerous clashes end quickly or those involved do take it somewhere else, rather than allowing the situation
to escalate in Jackson Square and creating a poor climate for tourist business. Though continually constructed as a threat by the artists’ committee and Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson (The Times Picayune May 21, 2003, fn 10.26.03, The Times Picayune June 22, 2003, fn 07.11.04, 07.22.04), readers in fact are an ordering force, in a normative sense. Yet as Rachel Pain and Sibley argue, stereotypes supersede realities and thus dominant labels of readers, not the readers themselves, threaten disorder to mainstream life and values (Sibley 1995, Pain 2005). At the same time, however, readers are “fearful” that conflicts in Jackson Square will reduce their tourist appeal and therefore their income.

**Sleepless in the Square**

Before light on an April morning in the Pedestrian Mall, I talked with three long-time Jackson Square readers. Godwin, Clark, Eddie, and I stood between benches on the Presbytere side next to their setups while a black homeless man sat on the bench closest to us. Head tilted, arms crossed, feet flat on the ground, the man made no sound; he was sleeping. As the readers and I talked, a police car rolled onto the Mall, paused by us, and then moved through the Mall. About 10 minutes later, the same police car drove through, passed the readers and me, but stopped at the bench where the homeless man slept. An officer got out of the car and without saying a word, walked

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117 As with other groups, the readers have an internal hierarchy; readers gain status in the number of clients they get, the amount of money they receive for each reading, the time they have spent reading in the Square, assertiveness, friendliness, and how successful they have been in the past with negotiating discord in the Square. When disputes occur between readers, it is usually a “senior” reader who steps in to help resolve the conflict.
over to the man, and kicked his feet. Moments later, the officer cuffed and arrested him, hauling the homeless man away in the police car. The man made no protest (fig. 15).

![Homeless Man Sleeping on a Bench in the Pedestrian Mall](source: photograph by author).

During this same time, my friend and fellow graduate student, Watson, had been sitting nearby on another bench. His posture and pose compared with the homeless man. Eyes closed, Watson was sleeping too. The police officer never approached Watson—from his clean-cut appearance he looked like a typical middle-class white tourist (fn 04.05.04).

If in the day-to-day readers (and others closer to the margin), often struggle to set up and maintain the limited space legally open to them, then gutter punks and homeless,\textsuperscript{118} who are emphatically on the margin (Mitchell 2003), struggle daily to maintain even basic rights, such as merely being in Jackson Square. In a city reliant in part on tourism, an industry of escape, gutter punks and homeless present an aesthetic

\textsuperscript{118} Those persons who appear to be homeless or who appear to be a gutter punk often suffer similar treatment.
problem for New Orleans. They “simply” don’t look good, and therefore the city and others aim to remove them (fn 01.26.04). Moreover, gutter punks and homeless can be unpredictable even volatile—sometimes because of chemical dependencies, sometimes because of mental illnesses, sometimes because of extremely difficult if not tragic histories, and sometimes because of a combination of these circumstances. More than a “source of pollution,” as I will show these groups are viewed as a source of economic threat to tourism (Sibley 1995, 55). Taking these two issues, unaesthetic presence and volatility potential, together provide the city\textsuperscript{119} a pretext to (physically) clear Jackson Square of gutter punks and homeless, which throughout my fieldwork, New Orleans was accomplished largely through direct and indirect police activity.

As shown in the first anecdote of this section, the first method involves police making unwarranted arrests, targeting those, who disturbing society’s “paramount obsession” of an urban “pretty picture,” appear unfit to be in public view, (Mitchell 2003, 185). Parr shows that similar discourses of impurity with homeless in Nottingham overcomes “the possibility of the [homeless] individuals concerned being genuinely regarded as valued citizens and unconditionally allowed to occupy public space” (Parr 1997, 441). Once arrested, a gutter punk or homeless person can spend more than 20 days in jail, for “obstructing the sidewalk” or “begging,” particularly if the person pleads not guilty. Because gutter punks and homeless generally have no money, they cannot

\textsuperscript{119} Other cities (for example, Atlanta, Austin, Houston, Los Angeles, San Juan (Puerto Rico), and Santa Monica) have also used similar arguments and means to exclude certain groups from public spaces (The National Coalition for Homeless and The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 2006, 28, 32, 33, 34, 38, 40).
make bail and therefore stay in jail until their hearing or court date. If, however, a gutter punk or homeless person pleads guilty then they usually get out of jail, depending on processing, within one to five days. The judge might also require them to pay fines of approximately $100 over a short time period or once again, the police arrest them.

Other Square locals repeatedly witness what the reader Marsha clearly expressed, “that folks [are] getting arrested for just sitting there. They [the police] wouldn’t arrest us [the readers] because we have money to fight” (fn 10.22.04). In part because gutter punks and homeless in the Square usually have no money to fight, they can easily be excluded from the public and from public space. Ironically, the city receives money from the state for their incarceration (The Gambit Weekly November 19, 2002). As Staeheli and Thompson show, sometimes those in the mainstream deny citizen rights to those individuals and groups who do not act according to the responsibilities of citizens (Staeheli and Thompson 1997). They are referring to illegal acts such as graffiti, but here in Jackson Square we see that not making money or having money is a means to treat some as denizens, meaning less than full citizens.

“Sweeping” the Square

Unwarranted arrests of gutter punks and homeless occur on a day-to-day basis, but the police department also perform “sweeps”¹²⁰ before major holidays such as

Halloween and Mardi Gras. Sweeping an area means the police have an intended mission to arrest all those that are known to be, appear to be, or are associated with gutter punks and homeless persons (Vieux Carré Courier June 11-17, 1971, July 16-22, 1971). Because many gutter punks and homeless associate in small groups, sweeping proves effective for mass “cleanup.” For at least several days then, Jackson Square (and the French Quarter) appears free of society’s dispossessed and socially marginalized people. In addition, from discussions with readers, who are friends and acquaintances with gutter punks and homeless, a fear of arrest keeps some gutter punks and homeless away from the Square during these holidays (fn).

The other central means the city uses to rid Jackson Square of gutter punks and homeless is an indirect form of sweeping. This method includes the process of “checking.” Checking consists of verifying identification and often padding down a gutter punk, homeless person, or anyone who looks like either, for no genuine justifiable reason.

For example, late on a Sunday afternoon in August, a police car arrived on St. Ann in the Pedestrian Mall and parked near the north bench diagonally at the Jackson

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121 Twenty-five years later, the actions reported in the Vieux Carre Courier still regularly take place in the French Quarter and Jackson Square (Based on over a year of author’s fieldwork).

122 I also witnessed police officers in cars stopping black males and scraggly-looking white males on the sidewalks of the French Quarter asking for identification. For example, after being “checked” by an officer in his car, a black boy about 13 years of age, abruptly changed his direction and headed back toward Rampart Street (to a mostly poor black neighborhood) (fn 11.19.04).
Square gates. Two officers casually got out from the car. Christian sat on one side of the bench. On good days, Christian occasionally talked easily with other Square locals about the Bible and various topics. On bad days, however, Christian seemed to cocoon himself in his mind, talking to the air and making peculiar noises. Though neither a gutter punk nor homeless, his behavior and ragged clothes made him appear so and thus a target for police. On the other side of the bench, a severely hunched-back homeless man, whose eyes seemed permanently bulged, sat. The man rarely spoke or made eye contact with anyone and usually stayed for hours in the same position. I regularly saw these always quiet, calm men in the Jackson Square area.

The officers approached Christian and the hunched-back homeless man, asking for identification. They complied. Then after letting these men go about their day, the officers walked up St. Ann and onto the Chartres Street area of the Mall. A few minutes later, three gutter punks walked back with the officers to their car. Knowing the exercise, the gutter punks cooperated. After the officers checked their identification, they let the gutter punks leave. At this same time in the same area of the Pedestrian Mall on St. Ann, other people walked, sat, and talked, but none looked like they fit into the category of homeless or gutter punk. The officers got into their cars and drove away, never checking anyone else (fn 08.01.04).

When gutter punks and homeless see police officers checking others, they usually disperse from the Square. For example, while in the spring as I worked at The Kite Shop, officers arrived in a golf cart outside the shop where a group of gutter punks had been hanging out all day. I had worked that day since 10:00 a.m., and the gutter
punks had made no disturbances. When the three officers turned their attention to just one of the gutter punks, the others in his group immediately left (fn 05.08.04). Time after time, if gutter punks or homeless see checking occurring in Jackson Square, they leave. Sometimes, even if they spot police officers in the Square, gutter punks and homeless move on. Conspicuously, they have internalized that they are out of place.

Thus, the city, through its police officers, directly and indirectly removes gutter punks and homeless from the Square. Effectively, from these examples, they gave no struggle; there was no negotiation of space. The city rhythms that John Allen eloquently discusses seem to come to a resounding denouement (Allen 1999). Here, it is not only that the aesthetic desires of the city come to the fore, those preferred rhythms remove other members of the public from taking part in the most mundane flows and rhythms of Jackson Square.

Unfortunately, a few police officers also use threats to deter gutter punks and homeless from residing in Jackson Square. Slats, a long-time homeless man in Jackson Square has had officers make direct threats to him such as “See you nigger, we’re killing you!” (fn 01.29.04) or have driven by him saying that he was a “dead nigger” (fn 10.24.03). And when Tiger, another long-time homeless man, had become a part of the Bring Back the Benches movement, officers loudly said, “You know Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated” (fn 09.11.06) as they drove by him walking on the sidewalk. Other threats, such as “why don’t you go to the projects” (fn 01.29.04) or “why don’t you go back home” (fn 09.06.02) also illustrate how homeless and those appearing
homeless or undesirable are made to feel out of place, that is to say excluded, in Jackson Square.

From the above discussion, perhaps it is surprising then that gutter punks and homeless come to Jackson Square at all, or that Samuel, eight years homeless on Jackson Square, told me, “I’m protective of this yard” (fn 04.07.04). Additionally, recall from chapter three that The Colonel and Wheelie referred to Jackson Square as their home and that “they know where they come from” (fn 11.04.03) even though these men have suffered similar exclusionary treatment as those discussed above.

I want to discuss two possible but interconnected reasons why these marginalized people repeatedly inhabit the Square, a seemingly illogical phenomenon. Ruddick explains that though society marginalizes homeless people in part through public spaces, homeless persons themselves also challenge this process and construct for themselves meaningful identities and communities through public space (Ruddick 1996b, 65). Thus, the attachment, for example, that Samuel, The Colonel, and Wheelie have for Jackson Square has evolved through their actions in Jackson Square that go beyond mere occupation. Again, drawing from Ruddick (1996b), the symbolic meaning of the Square is as important as it is as a physical space for fundamental needs.

I now discuss how homeless and gutter punks are able to occupy space meaningfully in the Square. To begin, police treatment of gutter punks and homeless remains inconsistent. For example, police do not always do checks, sweeps, or isolated arrests. It is this inconsistency and in knowing police methods of clearing public areas that gutter punks and homeless continually come back to Jackson Square. As these
dispossessed groups struggle constantly in order to (even) occupy public space, they do so somewhat differently from other groups. Rather than the active means that readers and musicians employ in negotiating and controlling space, gutter punks and homeless use relatively passive means, avoiding, maneuvering, and networking to maintain the ability to be in Jackson Square. These are even “lower-profile” manipulations of and in space than what Scott discusses, but they are efforts and actions that homeless persons successfully use to maintain an ephemeral but repeated place in public spaces (Ruddick 1996b).

Indeed, two examples already given, pleading guilty to an unwarranted charge of obstruction of sidewalk, for example, and leaving the Square temporarily are two unfortunate ways both gutter punks and homeless sometimes ensure shorter-term as opposed to longer-term removal from public space. Further, the timing of sweeps, around holidays, is well known; thus, those associated with either group often avoid Jackson Square, only to return immediately as a group of five gutter punks did after a Halloween weekend. Unconcerned that police officers would show up on that particularly quiet Monday, the gutter punks stretched out on benches and lay on the ground in the Pedestrian Mall, far more relaxed behavior than usual for them, as if they had commandeered that corner of the Mall (fn 11.03.03).

Here the reappearance of gutter punks shows what Lees explains as the significance of “both architectural form and behavior [which] are processual and based in everyday life, in dwelling” (Lees 2001, 75). Therefore, what comes to the fore here is
not gutter punks’ political struggle for public space but their day-to-day social maneuvering illustrating that they too dwell in Jackson Square.

Additionally, inconsistency in policing sometimes allows for gutter punks and homeless to go beyond occupying spaces in the Square. For example, occasionally gutter punks and homeless attempt to vend items such as jewelry, art (without an artist’s permit), and crafts. Where they set up, which officers are on duty, and how they vend, determines their success. Bear in mind that the city prohibits selling on the Pedestrian Mall by anyone except artists with a permit, but some activities performed or items exchanged for donations are allowed (CNO Sec. 30-1451). Cases dealing with the exchange of material items for donations have proved to be a nebulous area of law and of convention. Sarah, a hippy-looking young woman, sold her jewelry along the benches on Chartres Street—well away from (sometimes) finicky artists, but because she “sold” pieces for a particular price, police shut down her venture.123

Crash and Chris,124 on the other hand, have successful stories. Crash, a personable, well-spoken man, always set up at least 20 feet from the Jackson Square fence on the Chartres Street part of the Pedestrian Mall, making hemp jewelry for donations. He worked in the same spot most of the summer, and police rarely hassled him there. Then after a couple of months, officers “kicked him out of the Square for

123 Police didn’t arrest Sarah, but officers, at various times, have arrested individuals for vending in the Jackson Square area (fn 11.04.03).

124 They do not consider themselves gutter punks though in fact they “fit” into the category Crash and Chris both are white, relatively young, and arrived on the Square homeless.
one day” (fn 08.25.04). As they did so, however, the two officers explained that Crash could come back but not to set up in front of the Cathedral. He took this to mean that the Monsignor had complained, and Crash should let him simmer down a bit before he plied his trade again. Here, Crash successfully maneuvered and networked directly with police and indirectly with the Monsignor, avoiding a permanent end to his work.

Using yet another tactic, Chris, a clean-cut, quiet individual, set up making flower bouquets from fronds on the steps of the Pontalba buildings. Before he did so, Chris asked permission from the owner of the shop located opposite from the area he wanted to be. After getting permission, which Chris did not legally need, he was sure to only have fronds with him, no chair, or table, and only asked for donations in exchange for the frond bouquets. Chris effectively negotiated the space with the politically more powerful shop owners, and indirectly with the police because if an officer objected to his presence, suggesting that he was obstructing the sidewalk, Chris announced that the shop owner said it was okay for him to be there. Far from the “small arms-fire” that Scott details between rich and poor (1985, 22), Chris shows how those on the margin may directly negotiate with those (shop owners) who usually denounce freewheeling vending in the Square area.

Carefully working in the interstices of status, authority, and control’s social maze, Crash and Chris carve out spaces of economic opportunity. These spaces shift and sometimes change dramatically depending in part on daily circumstances concerning those with greater ability to control the area. They show that even in extremely controlled spaces, the order of public space is dynamic (Massey 1999).
Gutter punks use other tactics to avoid interactions with police. Many gutter punks have dogs and sometimes cats. Certainly, pets provide gutter punks with companionship and maybe even protection on street, but these animals serve another purpose. If a police officer checks and arrests a gutter punk who owns a pet, then the officer has to deal with the animal, which can prove to be a huge hassle. On the other hand, animals, extremely captivating for some persons, attract tourists to pat them and talk with their owners. Moreover, tourists and residents alike bring their pets to the Pedestrian Mall, frequently making for friendly, funny, and at times prickly pet interactions. These repeated interactions are typical in the landscape of the Pedestrian Mall and therefore naturalize both tourists and gutter punks, together. Even prickly pet encounters naturalize gutter punks in the landscape because inevitably, the resident or tourist and her pet move on, yielding the space to the gutter punk and her or his pet.

The unintended consequences of these micro economic (tourists buying from gutter-punk-types) and micro cultural moments (tourists interacting with gutter punks and their pets) patterns the day-to-day Jackson Square area as one less rigid and more integrated than government and tourist industry authorities suggest is viable for the city’s image. It appears that the Bring Back the Benches protesters from chapter two, who said that tourists desire diverse people and activities in the Square area, in fact have a valid argument—tourists and those different from them (on and near the margin) find and importantly co-create a meeting ground through public space.

Furthermore, many gutter punks and homeless regularly work informally for readers and artists in the Square. Both readers and artists employ individuals from each
group as cart pushers, helpers for setting up, keepers of setups when an owner takes a break, and gophers for drinks, cigarettes, and food. Samuel has a set of keys to the artists’ corral of carts, daily pushes carts, and helps artists (and readers) set up in exchange for one to three dollars. As countless others do, he earns a little money, and Samuel gains a sense of belonging to and ownership of Jackson Square, recall that he is “protective of this yard.” Further, by doing a needed service in the Square, his sense of self is elevated. When Samuel awaited his court date, for his arrest on false begging charges, he insisted that having the keys to the artists’ corral “showed that he can be trusted and that he has responsibility”¹²⁵ (fn 12.14.03). Sometimes, as other homeless and gutter punks do, Samuel spends all day at artists or readers setups visiting between assisting artists and others with various tasks.¹²⁶ Thus, those with more status in Jackson Square, particularly those in the guarded Art Colony, legitimate and inadvertently protect not a political place for gutter punks and homeless but rather a social, cultural, and economic place. Though as Mooney following Castells explains, “certain sections of the populations… are actively disconnected from ‘mainstream’ urban society” may hold true on one hand, for gutter punks and homeless people in the Square, these groups are

¹²⁵ When Samuel asked an artist in the Square that he repeatedly worked for to come to the courthouse to be a character witness, the artist refused, showing that empathy for the homeless only goes so far (Mitchell 2003). This limit of empathy occurs in other ways too such as artists (and occasionally other Square locals) who say they do not want to stop someone from trying to make a living or from being able to eat, only to complain about readers, street entertainers, gutter punks, and homeless affecting their sales. Sometimes, these complaining individuals go so far as to call the police on the individuals they feel are causing them a problem (fn 02.01.03, 03.02.04, 03.27.04).

¹²⁶ Police officers rarely, if ever, check or arrest gutter punks or homeless who sit with readers and artists.
also quite relevant and integral to maintaining the everyday there (Castells 1996, Mooney 1999). Allen suggests, “Those excluded in one context may themselves work to define their own sense of membership and inclusive identity in another” (Allen 1999, 79). This context that Allen refers to is a geographic context, but in the Square the spatial situation remains the same, while the socio-economic condition changes, thus creating opportunities for inclusion.

Variability in policing also occurs in schemes that possibly have unintended consequences similar to those above. For example, on an August afternoon, police Captain Naville, assigned to Jackson Square for over a year arrived at the Mall in front of the Cabildo with a police van. Obviously familiar with the social lay of the Square, Naville knew that area was where many long-term Jackson Square homeless resided and the Big Band played, and that the area sometimes became littered. With additional officers, brooms, towels, and bags, Captain Naville walked over to the homeless men hanging around the Jackson Square fence and benches and announced, “Gentlemen, we’re going to clean this end of the Square up!” For over an hour, several homeless men swept, bagged, and wiped down that part of the Pedestrian Mall (fn 08.21.04). Officers arrested a few homeless men but importantly not all of the homeless who were there. By having the homeless men in effect clean up their spot in Jackson Square and by allowing some of them to remain, Naville, like the artists, validated their presence in the area and affirmed their sense that they are a part of Jackson Square. Perhaps, the validation even meant more because Captain Naville and his officers embodied official authority.
While the homeless men are decisively on the margin of society, their interrelationship with formal authority and material practices integrate them into the everyday world of Jackson Square (Mooney 1999). Contrary to Darrell Crilley’s argument that homeless have no part to play in the public, in Jackson Square’s everyday, gutter punks and homeless have meaningful roles, however obscured or even forsaken those roles may be by the mainstream (Crilley 1993 in Mitchell 2003). Furthermore, as Ruddick asserts, the implications of practices such as those above, reveal the “inherently spatial character of the constitution of identity,” (Ruddick 1996b, 41) and show both Ruddick and Cope’s ideas that identities at various scales, including the personal, are constructed in and through public space and in the accumulatory moments of the everyday.

These processes commonly produce feelings of attachment to Jackson Square in homeless who are “veterans” of the Square. As individuals and in groups, homeless people sometimes stay in the area when police arrive and even during holidays when they are most susceptible to arrest (fn 03.30.04). They do, however, modify their behavior, hoping police officers will not bother them. For example, on New Year’s Eve night, Ethel, a long-time homeless woman in Jackson Square, refused a drink from a fellow homeless friend saying, “No, they’ll be watching us tonight. No, I’m not drinking tonight. I got too many dreams for this next year” (fn 12.31.03). Predictably that same night, as on many French Quarter nights, thousands of tourists, drinking heavily and many intoxicated, strolled around the Pedestrian Mall without police intervening. This
example and those already discussed sadly show that gutter punks and homeless are often excluded as equal members of the public.

These same instances, however, show that even the most disenfranchised persons attempt to maneuver around inequities in order to, at a minimum, remain on the margin instead of disappearing into social oblivion both metaphorically and literally. Maybe this is too small a distinction. For one could contend that in jail, gutter punks and homeless have three meals a day, a warm (or cool) place to sleep, and television to watch. By convincing ourselves that homeless people are not really citizens, we can then deny them their rights and their feelings. As Mitchell points out,

We work hard to convince ourselves that homeless people are not really citizens in the sense of free agents with sovereignty.... (Mitchell 2003, 183).

Yet, on numerous occasions, those homeless in the Square expressed sincere sentiments of independence. For example, toward the end of the year, Rick, one of the homeless cart pushers had the New Year’s goal to spend fewer days in jail and that for certain he wasn’t “going to spend Christmas in jail” (fn 12.14.03). And, many times Boss, who in his words watched over the Square, proclaimed that he went to jail “only when I want to go to jail” (fn 12.06.03). While Rosie said that when she was arrested and put in jail, she felt dead (fn). Perhaps, without a conventional home, job, and social acceptability, those on the margin place added significance on liberty because they likely possess few other standard cultural markers of self-worth and independence. For like Ethel, those on the margin value self-determination, and, in spite of everything against them, persist to dream.
To be sure, my intention in this discussion thus far has not been to romanticize homelessness, as the following reality should be placed next to the more optimistic examples in this section. It relates directly to Mitchell’s discussions concerning economic systems that decrease social services and increase homelessness (Mitchell 1995, 1996, 2003) and to Mooney’s observation that, “social periphery is not [always] the same as locational periphery” (Mooney 1999, 65).

In the Pedestrian Mall on a mid-spring night, two homeless men argued. Standing on the Cabildo side, they fought a few benches away from the reader, Ben, who I was visiting at his setup. As the dispute heated, a police car drove from the St. Ann Street side onto Chartres Street. Seeing the two men arguing, an officer from the car shone a spotlight on them. The homeless men appeared to know the drill because they walked over to the police car where the officer asked for identification. They obliged his request. After about 10 minutes, the officer allowed the men to leave, and he drove away. A few moments later, however, these men were quarrelling again, this time closer to the Jackson Square fence. One of the men walked away and sat down on a bench, his back to the fence. Then the other homeless man acquired, seemingly from nowhere, a two-by-four board about three feet long and threw it at the homeless man sitting on the bench. The board missed the man, landing instead 30 feet past the man by the Cabildo steps. Almost immediately, police arrived again, arrested the man who threw the board, while the officers allowed the other man involved in the clash to remain in the Pedestrian Mall. The man who remained walked over and sat down on the same bench. Then he pulled the hood of his sweatshirt over his face, hid his hands in its
pockets, and rocked back and forth. The man seemed to want to disappear or at least withdraw himself from the situation. At the same time, it appeared that he had nowhere else to go (fn 04.26.05).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to show everyday practices of control and negotiation in Jackson Square that speak to issues of inclusion and exclusion from the public and public space. In doing so, the world of Jackson Square reveals itself as an ever-emergent public space with significant cultural, economic, and social processes that go beyond what scholars most commonly understand as political representation. These processes show the destabilizing of dominant social urban orders via active, passive, deliberate, and unintended means. The opening scene of this chapter shows not Olmstead’s “aesthetic colony” but rather a living Square with a multiplicity of dynamic social trajectories both in practices and in representations, where in the everyday Square locals find meaning in Jackson Square and in themselves.
Chapter Eight

Conclusion: Connections to Other Worlds

On Saturday, January 18, 2004, people from all over New Orleans came to Gallier Hall, the old city hall on St. Charles Street where only the most prestigious New Orleanians were laid out upon their death. But, the life of the person honored was not a French explorer, confederate general, or past mayor of the city. He was the talented and beloved street musician Anthony Lacen, better known as Tuba Fats, whose favorite spot was on a bench with the Big Band in Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall (fig. 16).

Figure 16  Tuba Fats on the Bench (source: photography by author).

Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson and other prominent citizens went to the service at Gallier Hall, but thousands of others came not so much to enter Gallier Hall but to participate in Tuba’s jazz funeral. When I arrived near the corner of Poydras and St. Charles Streets the jazz funeral had already begun to make its way through the business
Eventually, the funeral paraded its way into the French Quarter and through Jackson Square (fig. 17). Nick Spitzer, folklorist¹²⁷ and host of Public Radio International’s American Routes, later commented that,

Players from the great brass bands were there for the funeral parade: Treme, Rebirth, Dirty Dozen and many others. All were filled with sorrow, but they were also exalting Tuba Fats with signs and pictures, in fine suits and fancy dresses, hot colors, and cool hairdos…. [P]eople made their way with the horse-drawn casket to the French Quarter. On Bourbon Street, unwitting tourists joined the throng. At St. Louis Cathedral, a priest blessed the bier. Friends and strangers marched together and sang the old secular and sacred songs: “Didn’t He Ramble,” “Down By the Riverside” (The Times Picayune February 3, 2004)

Figure 17  Tuba Fats’ Jazz Funeral in Jackson Square (source: photograph by Ellen Salter-Pederson, used with permission).

¹²⁷ Spitzer is the Mellon professor in the humanities at Tulane and on the faculty of University of New Orleans’ College of Urban & Public Affairs (The Times Picayune February 3, 2004).
Once in Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall, the crowd took moments of pause. After several seconds of silence, however, the bands burst into “Rambo!” and dancing and singing filled the Square (fig 18). As the jazz funeral continued hundreds of participants stayed in Jackson Square’s Pedestrian Mall near Tuba’s bench talking, remembering, and letting the loss settle in.128

Figure 18 The Dancing Crowd in the Pedestrian Mall (source: photograph by Ellen Salter-Pedersen, used with permission).

Since news of his death a week before, persons from a variety of backgrounds had spontaneously made the bench where Lacen played for years a shrine. Each day

128 Tragically, near the end of the jazz funeral at the corner of Ursulines and North Robertson Streets in Treme, Joe Glasper shot a man in front of his bar, Joe’s Cozy Corner Bar. Joe shot the man for selling beer in front of his bar (Love and death in the second line, Spitzer The Times Picayune February 3, 2004). Ironically, Joe had been a leader in the Treme community and had long been against violence and guns (Personal communication with Helen Regis April 2005; Rachel Breunlin 2005). In his article, Nick Spitzer commented, “The conundrum of life in New Orleans is how to keep the traditions that celebrate people and their communities, but rid ourselves of equally persistent legacies of violence and lawlessness” (Love and death in the second line, Spitzer The Times Picayune February 3, 2004).
that passed that week, the shrine had grown. It included flowers, newspaper articles, a crucifix, pictures of Tuba with friends, and continuously lit candles. Some left anonymous notes like, “I love you, Tuba” and “One Tuba over all the others,” which lay next to those signed such as “Our city will not be the same without your warm smile and beautiful music. You are missed. Rosana and John Reynolds” (fn 01.18.04). Others placed poems,

Met you in ’87 when I came from San Diego  
Living and fun were easy then  
Happy when you came back from your world tours  
We missed you here!  
Saw you just before you went to Heaven—  
Same Tuba  
Heaven gave us, the world, the biggest heart  
When it gave us you  
I’ll look for you in the Square and say,  
“Hey, Tuba, hope to be hearing, Hey Baby!”  
I cannot hear any music in the city, Tuba (fn 01.18.04).

Throughout the week and on the day of his jazz funeral, people individually, in twos, and in small groups solemnly walked up to the bench to pay homage to Lacen. On the Friday before the funeral, local radio station WWOZ dedicated music all day long to Tuba and local jazz musicians came to the station recalling their time with him. One musician explained that Tuba Fats connected jazz with Jackson Square, the French Quarter, and the world.

In addition, since the shrine began to form, no one on the Square or outside of the Square had meddled with it. No one moved it to play music. No one shifted it so he could sit down. No one set up in front of it. No police officer removed it. In fact, the shrine remained for over a month until rain and wind carried off most of it. Eventually,
the Sanitation Department cleaned up what remained, though wax from the candles lingered on the bench for months.

That said, the Monday that I found out that Tuba had died over the weekend, members from the Big Band played as normal only they did so one bench over from the beginnings of Tuba’s shrine. Several of the old timers were there, and I think in part it was their way of dealing with the loss of their friend. On the other hand, as usual, the Big Band members took turns working tourists for tips—because these musicians still needed to make money to support themselves. Additionally, readers set up directly next to either side of Tuba’s bench so that as many readers as possible could fit on the Pedestrian Mall. And, eleven days after the jazz funeral, a woman on a bench near the shrine sold Tuba Fats t-shirts. Joan was selling “Gold Tuba” for $20 and “Red Tuba” for $25 each displayed a picture of Tuba, a bible, and a poem. Joan said that, unfortunately, she had missed Tuba’s funeral because, “I had my nephew’s funeral that I had to tend to. I know how he [my nephew] got killed. He was into drugs. He got killed buying drugs.” She explained that she was “selling these shirts for Tuba” and directed me to write down two telephone numbers so I could place my order. Later in our conversation, Joan explained that her friend Doris died in June of 2003 on the steps of the Cabildo. Her boyfriend had shot her there.

The vignette above speaks to several issues/matters from the body of this dissertation (chapters four through seven). Largely, my goal of this work with Jackson Square has been to show how individuals and groups on and near the margin and their practices, not merely “preferred” individuals and groups and their practices, constitute
this public space. Indeed, jazz funerals are cultural practices of working-class black New Orleanians, and as Helen Regis writes, “these parades transform urban public space, creating an alternative social order” (Regis 1999, 472). Further, these parades connect classes, “races,” and groups (i.e. “unwitting tourists”) in ways that are similar to how life in Jackson Square connects a variety of people. Thus, Tuba’s jazz funeral going through the Square and the memorial to him in the Square exemplify the disordering of a governing order. I now turn to a summary of chapters four through seven and discuss how this anecdote relates to each one.

In chapter four, “Ordering and Imagining the City in a Public Square,” I showed how from New Orleans’ earliest moments elites aimed to order the urban population and construct an image of the city using Jackson Square. In doing so, exclusionary discursive imaginings and events come to the fore, which then highlight how those with greater authority and influence promote image over broader public use of the Square. This chapter showed the construction of preferred representations of Jackson Square that seemed to overshadow other facets of the Square’s history.

At the beginning of the anecdote in this chapter, Tuba Fats is juxtaposed next to historical structures and past and present illustrious political figures. Though to be sure, Tuba Fats was ambassador between a diversity of groups in New Orleans, he did this work not through images or as a figurehead but on the ground level—on the Jackson Square bench. Significantly, Councilwoman Clarkson did not continue participating in Tuba’s jazz funeral, choosing instead to remain in the sphere of representation. Indeed,
some Square locals later quipped that she had only been there for a “photo op” to show (insincerely) her alliance with people of street (fn 01.18.04).

In chapter five, “Disorder in the City’s Front,” I traced aspects of life in public space in New Orleans that form different meanings, beyond dominant orderings and imaginings, of Jackson Square. Explaining how other activities and everyday life blur conventional ideas governing a “divide” between public-private places, urban-uncultivated spaces, and high-low culture, I explained how multiple realms of public space—those of cultural, economic, and social everyday spaces—are constitutive of public space.

The practices involved during the jazz funeral in Jackson Square, specifically those with the bench, were off the official record of remembering Tuba, but perhaps those activities more accurately show how Tuba connected not only jazz but also people to each other, to the Square, to the French Quarter, and to the world. More than an icon, Tuba Fats worked in the spaces of the Square next to tourists, readers, entertainers, and homeless persons, imbuing them with meaning in practice. These representations and practices were, at times, simultaneously private and public as well as privatized and publicized, as he interacted both with individuals personally, and with crowds collectively.

Of course, images associated with public space are meaningful and powerful, and thus alternative material imaginings (orderings) next to official symbols create powerful social tensions that contest the dominant (or representational) meanings of Jackson Square. The shrine, the memorial to Tuba, was treated with reverence and many
of those who did not know or know of Tuba were drawn to the shrine, looked, read, paused, and thought. Some of those same people walked up briefly to General Jackson’s equestrian statue in the center of Jackson Square for picture taking and quickly moved on, not seeming to ponder the General’s significance. Together, these practices associated with General Jackson and Tuba Fats unsettle “dominant” representations of the area.

In chapter six, “Unsettling Perceptions of High and Low Culture and Center and Margin in Society,” using two groups, artists and readers, I described how Square locals support and challenge present-day normative practices and renderings of Jackson Square. Focusing on how individuals deal with dualisms of high and low culture and social center and margin through their culture group, work, and interactions, I addressed their negotiating collective and individual identities. Ultimately, these facets are in part creative of Jackson Square at multiple social scales. The continuing of work directly next to the memorial relates to chapters five and six, where alternative practices appear and mainstream ideals concerning what is socially appropriate are unsettled. Simultaneously, the Big Band worked and grieved. Simultaneously, Joan matter-of-factly discussed the deaths and murders of her loved ones as well as sold t-shirts for Tuba.

In chapter seven, “Negotiating Space, Controlling Place Day-by-Day,” my aim was to reveal how the spaces of Jackson Square are controlled and negotiated on the ground. My focus was on informal roles those individuals and groups on and near the margin of society have in terms of processes of inclusion and exclusion. While the news
of Tuba’s death was becoming known on the Square, Square locals continued to work
and negotiate—ever so gingerly—space around the bench, showing real finesse in
negotiating and controlling microgeographies of the Pedestrian Mall. Further, the fact
that no one violated the shrine of Tuba Fats reveals his (and the Big Band’s) status,
authority, and ability to shape and give meaning to the Square.

The processes of unsettling, including, and excluding here and in chapters four,
five, six, and seven reveal cultural, economic, and social realms that pattern Jackson
Square. As public space emerges, we see that the political is in part constituted through
the everyday appropriation of space and place in the interplay of these realms.

Thus, this last anecdote of Tuba Fat’s jazz funeral speaks to the cultural,
economic, and social facets of public space, which do not replace, but rather are held
with equal significance as the political. Tuba’s funeral also demonstrates how multiple
social scales in these three realms constructed in and between representation and
practice create meaning. To be sure, Tuba’s funeral was an “event.” But it was also a
common, known practice for thousands of people, and the social practices in and
around the funeral and bench reveal how, at times, events become a part of the
everyday. This moment in the lived landscape of Jackson Square speaks to us about
the possibility of ongoing change in the “orderings” of people and place, not primarily
or solely through representations but as well through the lived cultural, economic,
political, and social day-to-day.

129 See Smith 2000 for an example of events becoming a part of everyday experience.
Since Hurricane Katrina, the idea of order in New Orleans has taken on meaning in dramatic new proportions. President Bush addressed the nation in Jackson Square after Hurricane Katrina, calling the country and the city to pull together to rebuild New Orleans, to rebuild order. Once again, official authority called on Jackson Square to present an image of grace and strength. The city had no electricity, water, or gas, but the President brought in generators to light up the Cathedral and Jackson statue behind him. Meanwhile the government delayed in supplying adequate resources for people, mostly poor and black in, for example, the Superdome and Convention Center. The Jackson Square area looked beautiful and serene—quite unlike the reality of the city. In fact, the absence of people revealed Katrina’s violence and destruction to the world of Jackson Square. Though Bush invoked real images of second line parades and jazz funerals, he gave no mention of the lived landscape of Jackson Square. What had happened to people that I had come to know and care for in Jackson Square? He made no mention of Square locals. Where had they gone? In particular, I worried about the homeless persons, gutter punks, and some of the entertainers and readers that lived on the margin of society. What had become of them? The manner in which President Bush handled his speech and presence in Jackson Square regrettably revealed to me personally, like never before, how heavily the government relies on imaginings in the public landscape. In that moment, I also remembered and felt the power of persons on and near the margin to shape, through everyday cultural, economic, and social qualities and happenings, the public landscape. Public space, we see, even in moments where the landscape may seem completely appropriated by federal politics, is contested in
practices and meanings from a variety of scales, realms, and people by drawing on both historical and current-day precedents. Indeed, in this dissertation, I have attempted to provide not a past and present of Jackson Square but rather a continuous account of the Square, which points to the ongoing relevance of a historically enlivened cultural geography.

I’ve been back to Jackson Square a few times since Katrina hit. I saw Joe and Kara and one of the Big Band members, Danny, who, for the time being, plays with Joe and Kara. On those days, several of the artists were back and as were a sprinkling of readers. Even one of the long-time homeless men of the Square, Boss, was there, sweeping the area and taking care of “his Square” (fn 10.05). And, just a few days ago, my friend Zie, who had been down to the Square over the last weekend, told me about a man sweeping the Pedestrian Mall. To be certain, the man was Boss. Looking up from his broom he said, “It looks real nice don’t it?” (fn 03.19.06). This fortitude of the world of Jackson Square comforts me and I suspect comforts others—and that I feel is the strength and type of ordering that New Orleans must rely on for rebuilding and recovering. It comes from the ground up. It comes from the everyday. And, it comes from a long and rich history of enacting public space even in the face of its representations and in the face of tragedy. Though New Orleans, the Gulf Coast, and the United States have never endured the scale of devastation as that brought on by Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and Jackson Square have recovered from destructive fires (1788, 1794) and cholera (1832) and yellow fever (1853, 1878) epidemics that

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130 The author failed to record the day of the month for this field note.
financially, physically and psychologically shook the city (Colten 2005). Each time, the Square served as more than symbol, it served also as a lived landscape in the everyday.

To be sure, a chief aim of my work in this dissertation is to allow the voices of those on the margin and near the margin of society in public space to come to the fore. But, I have gone beyond merely showing these groups in Jackson Square. I have shown how over time, these groups are constitutive of the Square, and that Jackson Square has in turn become a part of them. Nevertheless, my research shows too that national ideals of public space with free access for all are not goals actively pursued in mainstream society or in city government. Yet urban planners, municipal governments, and other policy makers ought to note that issues and contestations will continue to surface over public space when the day-to-day cultural, economic, political, and social facets concerning those on and near the margin are not considered with egalitarianism.

My research began, as noted in chapter one, as a study on a place—a specific urban landscape—not on a theme or issue, such as homelessness or gender in public space. More recently, however, much cultural geographic research has focused on specific themes. Because of this, I believe place has the potential to be relegated to a background context position or role. With place in the background and therefore also its representations, it is easier to concentrate on the study of practices. Indeed, scholars in the social sciences have placed much emphasis on practice, as in the practice of everyday life in its changing and fluid nature, so much so that examining representations is often associated with fixity in meaning and significance. In response, geographers have sometimes ignored or disregarded important connections between representation
and practice and the performances they create. Thus, my research, which considers representations and practices together, enters one of cultural geography’s current leading debates over the significance of and between representation and practice (Lorimer 2005).

As I have discussed, public space is replete with an ideal discourse (particularly in this country) of certain representations and practices such as equal access for all people, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech. At the same time, historical plazas like Jackson Square are heavily imbued with ordered and elegant representations associated with, for example, colonial government, commemoration, and religion. In Jackson Square’s everyday, we see that the ideal and the lived may be far from the same. That said, the practices in the Square are in part constituted by its representations in material and immaterial forms. Thus, both representations and practices in and of the landscape must be studied—in both the past and present—to render a thorough understanding of a landscape’s/a place’s meaning and significance.

When, through an historical geography of the Basilica Sacré-Coeur131 in Paris, David Harvey questioned the meaning “interred” its structure, he suggested that only the living with the complex knowledge of the Basilica’s past could “disinter the mysteries” it holds (Harvey 1979, 382). Harvey’s aim was to uncover the revolutionary past of the communards in hopes of triggering a revolutionary present. Only then, he

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131 The building of Basilica Sacré-Coeur began in 1875 and finished only in 1919. Envisioned by some “as an act of penitence for moral decadence of the Second Empire of Napoleon III as well as the supposed excesses of the Paris Commune of 1871,” the structure serves as numerous political symbols (Harvey 1979, 362).
argued, could Sacré-Coeur be transformed “into the noisy beginnings of the cradle” (Harvey 1979, 382).

I argue that we look also to the historical and current-day everyday geographies of public spaces. Then, rather than understanding such structures and places as entombed with meaning to rescue and to liberate, we may appreciate that quite possibly through time these places provide liberating meaning through the interplay of representations and day-to-day practices. This approach, I contend, offers an ability to grasp the multifaceted, transformative, and persistent significance of public spaces like Jackson Square.
A digest of laws of the legislature, relating to New Orleans which are not repealed by the Consolidation and other Acts of Session. 1852. In City Digest: Including a sketch of the political history of New Orleans; the decisions of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, relative to the powers of the corporation of New Orleans; the consolidations and other acts; organizing the new corporation of New Orleans, and a digest of Old Laws, relative to the City, now in force, with copious index and marginal notes, ed. Alexander Walker. New Orleans: New Orleans Public Library.

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Appendix A

Archival Abbreviations

**CCDA**

**CCNO**

**CNO**

**CVOR**

**CVP**

**DLNR**
*A digest of laws of the legislature, relating to New Orleans which are not repealed by the Consolidation and other Acts of Session.* 1852. In *City Digest: Including a sketch of the political history of New Orleans; the decisions of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, relative to the powers of the corporation of New Orleans; the consolidations and other acts; organizing the new corporation of New Orleans, and a digest of Old Laws, relative to the City, now in force, with copious index and marginal notes*, ed. Alexander Walker. New Orleans: New Orleans Public Library.

**Federal Writers’ Project**

**Flynn**
GDA

GDB

GDC
*A digest of the ordinances and resolutions of the general council of the city of New Orleans.* 1845. New Orleans: J. Bayon.

Jewell

Leovy

NOSO

PCB

PCM

PCR

VCS

VCSA

VCSB
VCSC
Vita

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