

TIME, SPACE, AND THE MARKET

RETROSCAPES RISING



STEPHEN BROWN AND JOHN F. SHERRY JR.
EDITORS

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2003 by M.E. Sharpe

Published 2015 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Time, space, and the market : retrosapes rising / edited by Stephen Brown and John F. Sherry, Jr.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7656-1012-4 (cloth: alk. paper) — ISBN 0-7656-1013-2 (pbk.: alk. paper)

1. Marketing—Case studies. 2. Time and economic reactions—Case studies. 3.

Nostalgia—Case studies. I. Brown, Stephen, 1955– II. Sherry, John F.

HF5415 .T568 2002

380.1—dc21

2002030850

ISBN 13: 9780765610133 (pbk)

ISBN 13: 9780765610126 (hbk)

To that retroscape we all have fled and watered,
The University

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Introduction

Boats Against the Current

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No Then There

Of Time, Space, and the Market

STEPHEN BROWN

When asked, in the early 1930s, to comment on the less than picturesque aesthetics of Oakland, California, Gertrude Stein famously quipped that there's "no there there." If Stein were passing judgment today, she'd probably conclude that there's no there anywhere, since "Oaklandization" has accelerated in the interim. Today's McCities come equipped with the exact same corporate chains and fast food McFranchises; our McShopping malls, airport terminals, and convention centers are cut from the same placeless cloth; and, thanks to the McNet's much trumpeted dislocation of spatial relations, our awareness of there-ness has all but evaporated. Place is history. Or so it seems (Hannigan 1998; Ritzer 1999; Sorkin 1992).

Although it is often contended that areal differentiation is disappearing in our world of "non-places" (Augé 1995), closer examination reveals a countervailing commercial trend. Far from experiencing a spatial apocalypse, we are witnessing a renewed interest in place, as the recent rise of dramatic servicescapes like Niketown, ESPN Zone Chicago, and Bass Outdoor World readily attests (Sherry 1998a; Sherry et al. 2001). True, these spaces tend to be rapidly replicated in towns and cities across the globe—there are now nineteen Niketowns, for example—thereby giving with one hand what they take away with the other. But the fact of the matter is that making sense of place is back on the executive agenda. Staging time, space, and the market is a corporate priority. Generating *genius loci* is the order of the day (Sherry 2000).

One of the principal ways in which this sense of place is being reanimated is through evocations of times past. That is to say, many of today's much-lauded servicescapes are actually retrosapes (Brown 2001). Niketown, for

example, has been aptly described as “one part nostalgia to two parts hi tech” (Hannigan 1998, p. 92) and “a hi tech cross between a store, a museum and a media experience” (Ritzer 1999, p. 111). The Irish theme pub comprises a combination of carefully sanitized Emerald Isleisms culled from the imaginary history of that troubled land (Brown and Patterson 2000). Celebration, Disney’s renowned new town in central Florida, is an evocation of 1950s Americana, an Eisenhowerian idyll that never existed outside Burbank studio back lots (Ross 1999). Las Vegas, likewise, is more than a congeries of kitsch locales—Rome, Egypt, Paris, New York, Hollywood, and so forth—but ersatz environments at a particular point in time, be it ancient Rome, predynastic Egypt, *fin de siècle* Paris, Prohibition-era New York, the Golden Age of Hollywood, or the Wild, Wild West that wasn’t (Gottdiener 1997).

As these examples illustrate, retrosapes come in all shapes and sizes, from individual rooms (the Colonial “look”) and retail stores (American Girl), through shopping malls (Faneuil Hall) and neighborhoods (Old Pasadena), to central business districts (Vieux Carré), “new” urban communities (Kentlands, Maryland) and, if you take the tourist brochures on trust, entire countries, or sizeable regions thereof (Merrie England). Retrosapes, furthermore, are not confined to physical places or tangible topographies. Consider the Internet. Although it is usually portrayed as the latest thing, a newfound land behind the screen, the merest glance across its virtual landscape reveals that the Net is irredeemably retro. Apart from its general sense of steam-driven sluggishness, as well as its armies of amateur genealogists and tenders of family trees, the Net is replete with retro home pages, many of which are akin to cyber Victorian parlors—overstuffed, overwhelming, over-indulgent. And then, of course, there’s e-commerce. The very term carries retro connotations, since “commerce” is next to “comestible,” “purveyor,” and “emporium” in the lexicon of ye-olde-shopping speak. Just as retro realtors, insurance agents, and auto dealers importune us with allusion to epochs untainted by crass commercialism (“faithfully serving the local community since 1954” etc.), so too their virtual equivalents adopt suitably antiquated linguistic camouflage (see Brown 2001).

Increasingly apparent though it is, this recent rapid rise of retrosapes has attracted comparatively little attention from the marketing academy. There is, as we shall see shortly, a substantial scholarly literature on servicescapes (Sherry 1998b) and retromarketing is emerging as an important area of academic endeavor (Brown 2001). But the overlap remains unexplored by marketing researchers, if not by our anthropological, sociological, and geographical brethren (though even here retrosapes *qua* retrosapes remain unstudied). However, given the latter-day profusion of retro goods and services and, moreover, given the space-time stereotyping that the imagineers of retrosapes

are frequently accused of, surely it is time to ask—*pace* Stein—whether there is No Then There.

This question, to be sure, can be answered in a number of ways. Inventories of retrosapes can be assembled; classifications of retrosapes can be constructed; definitions of retrosapes can be formulated; histories of retrosapes can be written; distinguishing features of retrosapes can be identified; comparative studies of retrosapes can be conducted; questionnaire surveys of consumer attitudes to retrosaped environments can be mounted; rigorous retroproneness scales can be developed, under carefully controlled experimental conditions, and validated in a representative sample of retroenvironments. The designers, creators, and architects of retrosapes can also be investigated by marauding tribes of ethnographically minded marketing researchers, and the cultural significance of their cosmos-building beliefs reported. The designers' beliefs can be reported, too.

Although all of these approaches have merit, it is arguable that they leave something to be desired. Space is special. Geography matters. Location is not just a dot on a map or a digitized coordinate from a circling satellite. Place is more than a marketing P. Meanings, messages, memories, and motives inhere in places—marketplaces in particular (Brown 1992)—and it is our belief that *genius loci* can't be fully captured by "established" research procedures, valuable though these are. Philosophers, poets, playwrights, painters, and photographers can capture it, but conventional marketing and consumer researchers are constrained by the scientific norms, hard-fact expectations, and self-perpetuating dispassion of the prevailing positivistic paradigm.

The present text, then, comprises a congeries of creatively written essays. Some, we believe, are works of art in themselves. But they all represent attempts to do something different, something atypical, something innovative, something imaginative, something more than run of the marketing mill. Granted, there are risks in such unorthodox approaches—ridicule, rejection, remonstrance, rancor—but if they encourage marketing and consumer researchers to reflect on their own reactions to retrosaping, then this anthology will have served its purpose.

Despite its title, *Time, Space, and the Market* is not a philosophical tract. It is situated, rather, at the confluence of three streams of marketing scholarship. The first of these is the veritable cascade of publications on servicescapes. Place, as noted previously, is being recuperated by marketing and consumer researchers (Cova 1999). Recent years have seen studies of shopping centers (Csaba and Askegaard 1999), gift shops (McGrath 1989), flagship stores (Peñaloza 1999), swap meets (Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988), farmers' markets (McGrath, Sherry, and Heisley 1993), heritage parks (Goulding 2000), bridal salons (Otnes 1998), brandfests (McAlexander and Schouten 1998)

and many more besides. Some of these analyses, admittedly, incorporate retroscaped components. A good example is O'Guinn and Belk's (1989) naturalistic investigation of Heritage Village USA, a religious theme park redolent with the revivalist spirit of ole-time, God-fearing, Bible-belted, Southern Baptistry. As a rule, however, the retro side of servicescapes has gone unremarked hitherto.

The second stream of scholarship surging into the present volume is the latter-day literature on nostalgia in general and retromarketing in particular. For the past ten years or so, the marketplace has been inundated with yestertat. Replicas, remakes, reissues, rereleases, relaunches, reproductions, retreads, re-creations, reinventions, and reenactments are the order of the day (Carlin 1997; Harris 2000). Marketing academicians, naturally enough, have sought to steer a course through this memory maelstrom and they've identified a range of possible causal factors: the aging of the baby boom generation, that pines for the products of yore (Holbrook and Schindler 1994, 1996); the *fin de siècle* effect, humankind's compulsion to look back at centurial transitions (Stern 1992); and attempts by time-pressed, anxiety-stricken, future-shocked consumers to cocoon themselves from the trials and tribulations of today's fast-changing world (Brown 1999). However, the spatial manifestations of this retromarketing *mentalité* have attracted comparatively little academic attention thus far.

The third scholarly tributary flows from marketing's misty methodological mountains, our scholarly Shangri-La. A postmodern putsch is underway in the land where the blinded by science lead the blinded by science, and hordes of heretical methodologists are trying to seize control (Belk 1995; Hirschman and Holbrook 1992; Sherry 1991). Or so the story goes. Be it true or false, they say that the revolutionaries have thrown open the theoretical floodgates and released a raging torrent of qualitative research techniques. Sourced in the wholesome headwaters of the humanities and liberal arts, this methodological *tsunami* has swept through the marketing floodplain and enriched the impoverished scholarly soil with its intellectual alluvium. The present book is anchored in—or, rather, floats uneasily on—these storm-tossed waters of academic inundation. It is not a Noah's Ark, admittedly, but it's not the Nautilus either. Pequod, perhaps.¹

The confluence of these rivers of marketing research, needless to say, is sometimes stormy, occasionally threatening, and at times impassable. But, it is mostly plain sailing. A compass, nevertheless, is called for and pre-postmodern marketing matelots should note that *Time, Space, and the Market* is organized in accordance with the traditional tripartite division of geographical scale—*micro*, *meso*, and *macro*. Micro, in this case, refers to rooms, buildings, individual retail stores, and shopping centers. Enclosed retroscapes, in essence.

Meso ranges from heritage parks and beachfronts to holiday resorts and river valleys. Open yet bounded retrosapes, in other words. Macro, finally, is the most ambitious of all. Geographically, it includes nation-states, virtual worlds, ancient cultures, and, in the penultimate chapter, the basic organizing principle of the universe. The big picture, in short.

Appropriately enough, this micro/meso/macro classification is itself inherently retro, insofar as it used to be the *bête noire* of geographers and spatial scientists. Much printers' ink has been expended on verifying the classification, drawing boundaries between the individual categories, and debating whether concepts, patterns, or processes could be transferred from one tier to another (Watson 1978). No doubt geographers still engage in such stolid typological pursuits, but the latter-day emergence of chaotics, where fractals and analogous self-replicating patterns are discernible at all spatial scales (be they snowflakes or coastlines), has effectively consigned the micro/meso/macro classification to the trashcan of history (Johnson 2001). This does not mean that the present volume comprises a chaotic assemblage of chapters, out of which a semblance of sense will eventually emerge like a kind of marketing Mandlebrot Set.

Actually, that's a perfect way of describing *Time, Space, and the Market*. The conventional title, cover, and structure of the text masks the stylistic, spatial, and scholarly diversity it contains.

Take the first chapter in the first section, where John Sherry steps up to the plate, albeit a pseudo plate in the deep dark heart of ESPN Zone Chicago, a retrothemed sports emporium close to Chicago's Magnificent Mile. Comfortably ensconced in the uterine embrace of the Throne Zone, a La-Z-Boy-bedecked, giant TV screen-garlanded, Dolby Surround Sound-surrounded holodeck of holies, Sherry surfaces from the amniotic fluid of anamnesis, adjusts his metaphorical jock strap (XXL, he maintains), and strikes out across the forgotten topography of memory to provide a pungent, plangent, paronomastic paean to place marketing in all its pulchritudinous manifestations. He reflects on his extensive retro research experience, which ranges from the archetypal retroscape, Niketown, to his recent work in the birthday-besuited environs of Black Rock City, an annual assemblage of anachronistic anarchists in the Nevada desert, and comes to the conclusion that he's an inveterate internee of pseudo agoras, a cosmonaut of consumer research adrift in the multiple universes of the marketplace.

And Sherry's not the only one, as Belk shows in Chapter 3, where he takes us on a textual tour of the "dollhouse for adults" that is *The Sims*. A phenomenally successful computer game, *The Sims* requires players to start a family, oversee its development, maintain a harmonious household, and ensure that its members make their way in the wide, if pixilated, world

beyond. The virtual brood has to be fed and watered, spit and polished, and lifted and laid—literally—though, in fairness to the simulants, they are required to earn their keep, engage in appropriately neighborly acts, and avoid the downward spiral to dysfunctionism, destitution, and dipsomania. However, the irony of *The Sims* is that even though its players are building the faux future, they do so by rebuilding the phony past. The houses, furnishings, personal possessions, and moral codes contained in the computer game are deeply retrospective, a virtual throwback to an imagined 1950s of burgeoning burbs, pearly picket fences, happy-clappy nuclear families, and ever-optimistic beliefs in bright new tomorrows. It's Disney's Tomorrowland for yester-minded baby boomers. Retrotopia is here. Retrotopia is now. It's a small world after all.

Clicks and mortar are hard to beat and *The Sims* is singularly seductive. However in Chapter 4, Goulding drags us back to the equally endearing bricks and mortar of small time retroperators, retropreneurs, and retromovers and shakers. Based partly on her personal experience as a part-time trader in 1950s sunglasses and partly from a qualitative study of retro apparel outlets, she makes an important distinction between authentic and inauthentic retrowear. The former comprise reproduction pants, corsets, bustiers, mini-skirts, stilettos, and so on, whereas the latter are the real things, thrift shop throwaways gathering dust in forgotten corners of independently owned retro retail stores. Indeed, the discovery-cum-recovery of such hidden treasures is an important part of their consumer appeal, as is the social side of the retroshopping experience. Conjoined by a shared interest in retro chic, consumers use the retail stores as waystations on the road to suitably retrothemed nightclubs and restaurants. Social and subcultural considerations aside, Goulding contends that retro represents a form of consumer resistance, a refusal of the blandness and ubiquity of chain store fashions, a quixotic search for authenticity in the irredeemably inauthentic world of retrocouture.

The retro rag trade is all very well—rampant recycling, remember, has long been a characteristic feature of fashion—but surely the tavern is a haven of peace and quiet, a port in the storm of modern life, a tranquil tabernacle of comfort, constancy, conviviality, and the *craic*. Not so, according to Patterson and Brown in Chapter 5, who reflect on the rise of the Irish theme pub, a Celtic-twilighted composite of little people-peopled, faux fairyland-filigreed and peat-briquetted, begorra-bespoken, bejabbers-bejasus, better be Beamish. No, make mine a Guinness. Yet despite the cavils of the critics, who disdain such *Erin go brach* retroscaping, and notwithstanding the mini industry that has developed around the manufacture of pseudo-shillelaghs, sham o'shanter, and plastic paddy paraphernalia, an empirical study of customer introspections reveals that retroscapes resonate. For all the almost an-

tiques, genuine fakes, and half-timbered Hibernalia that such ersatz establishments contain, they nonetheless convey a profound sense of place to reminiscence-prone patrons. In many ways, the Emerald Isleisms inscribed in imitation imbiberies like Scruffy Murphy's and Molly Malone's are (in the words of Ireland's unofficial ambassadors, U2) even better than the real thing. Or should that be stuck in a memory you can't get out of?

The melodious motif continues in the final chapter of the first section, where Pauline Maclaran practices her scales on the piano of past times. Ostensibly a melancholic marketing tale about the decline and fall of Powerscourt Townhouse Center, a nostalgia-steeped servicescape in the central shopping area of Dublin, she extemporizes on her musical theme to compose a personal yet universal scholarly symphony. Taking the abandoned Powerscourt piano as a symbol of this once flourishing now floundering shopping complex, she introduces a contrapuntal personal narrative about a baby grand piano, a family heirloom imbued with memories of a great aunt, which was bequeathed to the author, can't be abandoned, and looms reprovingly over her everyday existence. Looming is the operative word, since the much loved piano is too big, too bulky, too unobliging in today's mobile, minimalist, MTV-mediated milieu. Parlor-sized pianos have their place, as do festival shopping malls and the concert grand pianofortes therein, but time moves on, nothing lasts forever, a change is as good as a rest, and clichés are not just for Christmas. The clarion call of new and improved is hard to resist, albeit the music of memorable marketplaces is always playing in the background and is permanently preserved in the amber of remembrance.

Maclaran's solo on the Powerscourt piano is accompanied in Chapter 7 by Troester's tom-tom beat of time-was powwows. These drums, however, are even more distant than those of Jim Reeves, a sixties country crooner who met an untimely end and is now playing twice nightly in the Grand Old Opry in the sky. Circa 1954, a big-talking backwoods booster called Anthony Wise created Historyland, an off the beaten track tourist attraction in the wilds of Wisconsin. Historyland was a cross between Disney's Frontierland and living history museums like Colonial Williamsburg, Greenfield Village, and Plimoth Plantation. It not only celebrated the traditional culture of the Chippewa, an indigenous Native American tribe, but it tapped into the locality's lucrative, if short lived, history of logging, rolling, and lumber-jackscapades. Tree felling contests, authentic Indian encampments, and the relentless promotional tattoo of Tony Wise ensured that his facility flourished throughout the fifties, when the Wild West was where it was at for Hollywood filmmakers and network TV executives. Historyland, sadly, was constructed of marketing smoke and mirrors. Hopelessly underfinanced, it went under in 1989, was subsequently razed to the ground by the local fire

department, and nothing is left today except a photograph-bespattered, roadside diner run by polyester-clad senior citizens.

Anthony Wise was no Kubla Kahn and Historyland no Xanadu, but his retro pleasure dome has its parallels in the sunless sea of the sunshine state. In Chapter 8, the plight of Huntington Beach is taken up by Hope Schau, a long-time resident of this small but beautifully formed settlement on the southern edge of the Los Angeles conurbation. The epicenter of the easy-living, sun-kissed, surfboard-and-lodging lifestyle, Huntington Beach shot to fame in the 1960s when it surfed the surf music wave courtesy of Jan and Dean, the Beach Boys, and similar foam-flecked, me-too musos. The wave subsided, the town mellowed into a low-rent, beach-bum nirvana, and everything was cool. Way cool. Until mendacious, money-grubbing marketing men spotted an opportunity to reinvent Huntington Beach as a retro resort, a silicon simulacrum of the seminal sixties surf city scene. The local council capitulated. The million dollar condos went up. A museum of surfboarding was built. A faux boardwalk, complete with faceless chain stores, cappuccino capitalists, Jan and Dean diners, pay-by-the-pound-of-flesh parking lots, and a brand new old-fashioned pier, was constructed in very short order. For some, it is paradise regained. For others, it is marketing at its most meretricious. For Hope Jensen Schau, a marketing professor who grew up in Huntington Beach, it offers an opportunity to examine the intracommunity tensions that this beachfront bonanza precipitated.

Bad as the Huntington Beach beachfront is, or appears to be, it is a veritable repository of authenticity compared to the beachfront that is featured in Chapter 9. On this occasion, the “beach” is adjacent to the Big Kahuna wave pool in Noah’s Ark, a retro themed water park in Wisconsin Dells, a retro themed holiday resort in the sclerotic heart of cream cheese country. Worse, our guide to this polypropylene paradise is a Genuine Gaelic Griswold, a bumbling Irish academic who grumbles, gripes, and generally makes life hell for his patient, much-put-upon family. He complains about his kids’ retro musical preferences; makes an exhibition of himself in the retro hotel lobby; disdains the retro ridiculousness of the Wisconsin Dells experience; and, after encountering the acme of retro in a Classic Denny’s Diner, eventually comes to realize that families matter, holidays can be fun, and plastic retrosapes aren’t so bad after all. Retro, *pace* Congreve, has charms to soothe a savage breast.

From the breast to the Brule. A seventy-mile river valley in northern Wisconsin (our retro state of choice), the Brule is renowned for its excellent fishing, hunting, and get-away-from-it-all-ness. It is the veritable Happy Valley of outdoor types and backwoodspersons, a sacred river in a secret setting, known only to the piscatorial cognoscenti. However, it is much more than

that to the one and only Morris B. Holbrook, doyen of the introspective essay and sometime chronicler of Manhattan's concrete canyons. According to our retroprospector non-pareil, it is a yestertime of the first water, a place where childhood memories, ancestral pastimes, consumer behavior, and an unexpected inheritance coalesce into a personal retroscape that is almost surrealist in its intensity. When a collection of his grandfather's carefully catalogued photographs falls into Holbrook's hands, it serves as a celluloid equivalent of Proust's *Madeleine*, a mode of involuntary transportation to the sights, sounds, and smells of times past. Combined with the entries in his grandfather's evocatively written log, our contemporary time traveler conjures up the consumption rich yet marketing poor milieu of his childhood vacations, as well as the ghost of a much-admired raconteur and multitalented photoessayist, Arthur Tenney Holbrook.

Memories are not only involuntary, as Marcel Proust found with his dinkie-driven, nibble-nourished reveries, but they are impermanent. They fade. They falter. They fuse. They leave only the faintest Freudian trace on the mystic writing pad of remembrance. The same is true of retrosapes. To some extent at least. As Robert Kozinets shows in his excursus on Burning Man, an annual, seven-day festival held in the Nevada badlands, retrosapes can appear and disappear in quick succession, like familiar landmarks in a desert sandstorm. Black Rock City is a temporary encampment of 25,000 people, which springs up overnight, engages in an aestheticized orgy of potlatch-like practices, immolates itself in a frenzy of profligate pyromania, and rises Phoenix-like from the ashes the following year. It is an ephemeral conglomeration of *communitas* and the carnivalesque, a cupidity-free zone where marketing in all its money-first forms is resisted and reviled. Black Rock City is also a site of postmodern primitivism, a liminal space where Silicon Valley Girls (and Guys) attempt to get back to nature, get in touch with the inner aesthete, and find utopia in nearly noble savagery. Unlike our hunting and gathering ancestors, however, who slashed and burned and left an exhausted environment in their wake, Burning Man is nothing if not ecoconscious, a nu-hippy happy valley, an impermanent monument to old style new agery and neoneolithic nostalgia.

Equally nostalgic, if rather more firmly established, is the fabulous fiftieth state. For Borgerson and Schroeder, in fact, Hawaii is the archetypal retroscape, a paradisaical apotheosis of the happily unspoiled past with gratifyingly modern amenities. Almost. In the first chapter of the third section, they show how this arcadian image of Hawaii was constructed—retrofitted, rather—in the 1950s, thanks to the market-building, move-the-merchandise, monochrome-is-history, color-film-finagling activities of the imperious Kodak corporation. It was furthered by the fifties fad for all things aloha, popular music in particular. A

meditation on the authors' compendious collection of Hawaiian records reveals that the album cover artwork unfailingly draws upon and contributes to Hawaii's paradisaic sense of place. Meanwhile the music is a milieu where country and western meets Tin Pan Alley in an admittedly melodious mish-mash of musical traditions, none of which are native to the islands, though they are regarded as indigenous in retrospect. Retrospection, indeed, is the essence of Hawaii. It is a primitive paradise only a plane flight away. It is an invented tradition that keeps reinventing itself, as the recent luau revival by latter-day leis-lubbers and tiki-baristas bears eloquent witness. It is a retroscape from the trials and tribulations of today's high-pressure workplace, nonstop rat race, headless chicken steeplechase.

Talk of headless chickens can mean only one thing. Gastronomy alert! In Chapter 13, Patrick Hetzel chows down on the retroscape of French cuisine. It is a milieu where antiquity is all, vintage is vital, tradition is ever on tap, and old-and-improved is the order of the day. True, the Gallic gastroscape is seasoned with a soupçon of contemporaneity—fresh ingredients, innovative recipes, *nouvelle cuisine*, and the seasonal flux of gustatory fashion—but the past is a platter that is perpetually piled high, a piping hot dish that never goes cold, a yesterbuffet for backward-glancing bon viveurs and tipsy trufflers of time was. For Hetzel, this epochal epicureanism is epitomized by the establishments of Alain Ducasse, a two-time, three Michelin star holder, who stands on the shoulders of prior gastro giants such as Alain Chapel, Alexandre Dumaine, and Fernand Point. His restaurants are located in Grand Hotels, they are redolent of *la belle époque*, their design adopts a Louis XIV aesthetic, the ambience alludes to *le grand siècle*, the service is to die for, and the menu comes straight from Heaven, where past and present coalesce and time shall be no more.

Now, time may be no more in the heavenly hereafter, but in the here-and-now and the then-and-there it is still alive and well. What's more, it always has been and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future, according to Costa and Bamossy in Chapter 14. Taking the latter-day rise of retrosapes as their point of departure, they argue that time, space, and the market have long been with us, late and soon. It is an integral part of human history and culturally ubiquitous to boot. Despite appearances to the contrary, humankind's chronotophilia didn't start with the Hard Rock Café in 1971, or Main Street USA in 1955, or Coney's Island's Luna Park in 1904. With this in mind, they identify four types of retroscape: spectacular hyperrealities constructed for profit-making purposes (Las Vegas, etc.); itinerant stage sets, complete with costumed performance artistes and their props (e.g., medicine shows); ritual reenactments of salient—often supernatural—events in a society's past (bonfire nights et al.); and natural scenery, prospects, panoramas, and the like,

which are regarded as retrosapes by human observers (the American West, for example). These various forms are found in all societies, though the precise character of the preferred retroscape differs from culture to culture and time to time. These preferences, what is more, are explicable in terms of consumer wants, needs, and behaviors, as well as the historical and economic circumstances of the societies concerned.

Societies change, however, as do the retrosapes that characterize or typify extant societal arrangements. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the recent rise of e-commerce in general and commercial Web sites in particular. In Chapter 15, Venkatesh contends that Web sites represent a postmodern return to the printed catalogues of yore, the “Big Books” of Sears, J.C. Penney, Montgomery Ward, and analogous universal providers. After an historical overview of the printing industry and concomitant commercial revolution, he argues that whereas traditional catalogues are constrained by their physical bulk, semi-immutability, and static representation of the commodities concerned, today’s no less compendious Web sites are virtual, changeable, and inherently interactive. Yet despite important differences in ethos, aesthetics, and consumer use patterns—Web sites are visited, printed catalogues are visitors—most marketing and consumer researchers continue to make direct comparisons between the two, using identical metrics and assessment criteria (visual appeal, entertainment value, escapism, enjoyment, efficiency, excellence, economic value, etc.). Such approaches have their merits, but Venkatesh brings an alternative perspective to bear on the issue, inasmuch as his chapter combines personal introspection, philosophical speculation, empirical analysis, and historical context into a remarkable retro mode of postmodern marketing discourse. In so doing, he offers a contemporary version of William Blake’s poetic apothegm concerning the world in a grain of sand. The silicon-chipped World Wide Web, he contends, can best be comprehended in poetic prose, compelling narratives, and imaginative bon mots.

When it comes to poetic prose, compelling narratives, and imaginative bon mots, few consumer researchers are better equipped than John Sherry. Before we get to Sherry’s concluding chapter, however, the barrier of Brown’s reflexive ruminations on retromarketing research has to be overcome. Commencing with an encounter between the author and Professor Philip Kotler, the peerless pedagogue, Chapter 16 takes us on a journey into Stephen’s murky marketing past. More specifically, it dredges up deeply painful memories of a memory-based research project that went disastrously wrong. True, this abandoned study of time, space, and the market eventually led to *Time, Space, and the Market*, albeit by a circuitous route, but that doesn’t make the memories any less distressing. Ironically, and appropriately, the lessons learned from Brown’s aborted exercise chime with the recent reflexive turn

in memory research and, moreover, with Turner's (1999) thesis that reflexivity is the fundamental organizing principle of the universe.

Now, reflexivity may or may not be of cosmological significance, but it is central to our understanding of retroscapes. The *locus classicus* of retroscape research, John Sherry's (1998a) seminal essay on Niketown Chicago was the original inspiration for the present volume, and it is entirely appropriate that he should bring this book to a close with a few reflexive words on time, space, and the market. Writing in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, which further reinforced Western society's (re)turn to the comforts and security of an imagined past, he summarizes the retrofuturistic mind-set that currently prevails in the United States, whether it be the retrogladiatorial contest that was Super Bowl XXXVI or the retrospectacular opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. In this regard, it is perhaps entirely appropriate that Sherry's imperishable essay on Niketown—I'm almost tempted to call his signature research method *Being-in-the-John*—has lasted longer than the retroscape it evokes and encapsulates. Whereas Sherry's wonderful article has recently been republished in a geographical textbook (Wrigley and Lowe 2002), Niketown Chicago itself has been completely remodeled, extensively refurbished, and generally consigned to the trashcan of store design history. Anyone expecting to find the monumental mountain bikes, tropical fish tanks, and two-story mural of Michael Jordan that John so eloquently describes, will be sorely disappointed. The pen, as Bulwer-Lytton nearly said, is mightier than the swoosh.

Note

1. There is, of course, a fourth and final estuary that flows into *Time, Space, and the Market*. And that is our contributors' streams of thought. This volume could not have set sail without its peerless scholarly complement, who set aside the time and created the space to write evocatively about the marketplace. They responded instantly to the lightest touch of the editorial tiller and, a few mutinous mutterings notwithstanding, they were as good a cerebral crew as we could ever hope to assemble. The lash proved unnecessary, much to the disappointment of one or two contributors, let alone the malevolent editors! This book, moreover, would never have made it safely into port were it not for the skillful piloting of Harry Briggs and his collegial coastguards at M.E. Sharpe, for which we are very grateful. Anchors aweigh. . . .

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Part I

Micro Retrosapes

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2

Bespectacled and Bespoken

Gazing from Throne Zone to Five O'Clock and Head

John F. Sherry, Jr.

Look on my works ye Mighty and despair!

—Shelley, *Ozymandias*

Apologia

Like that traveler from an antique land, bone-weary yet vaguely energized from a set of recent journeys I've allowed to interfere with the writing of this essay until the eleventh hour, I find myself alone late at night, in an empty quarter of the world's busiest airport, sharing space with vigilant armed soldiers younger than my children, who patrol the corridors of O'Hare in defense of my privilege to inhabit the much-maligned and misnamed no-place of this lonely terminal. As I watch the pair prowl past the banks of ambient television screens, oblivious both to the sonorous soundbites of the airport newschannel and the schizo-frenetic badinage of color commentators across the cornucopia of contests blaring from the concourse sports bar, the inspiration for my essay finally dawns. The image of the callow warrior, the anti $\text{\`{a}}$ flâneur impervious to the potion poured in his ear and the spectacles poised over his eyes, strikes me as the funhouse mirror image of my sensuous self, a doppelgänger through the glass darkly, whose ghostly presence merits meditation even in my languorous state. For sadly, no matter how tired I feel, the siren song of the marketplace has always been the swansong of sensible self-regard. As I am drawn inexorably to the flickering cathode

beacons of the Fox Sports Skybox, I muse, like Homer Simpson, that I've turned out TV, and trust I've found the hook upon which to hang my story.

I'm the only soul in the Skybox, the hour so slow that even the bartender has deserted his station. *Being-in-the-Skybox* invites reverie, if less eloquently than Proust's Madeleine. The Skybox is a dense metaphor, playing off of its literal emplacement in an airport, its passing resemblance to the luxurious glass palaces perched atop arenas and stadiums, and the surround of television monitors engulfing its patrons. I'm boxed in on a number of levels, packaged effectively as part of the consumption spectacle. I smile in recollection of the masterful intertextual cross-promotion that Fox Sports always manages to wage during the male bonding ritual of its Sunday NFL pregame show, and for a fleeting moment I'm *in-the-television*, branded as effectively as the network. I struggle to follow the Duke-Kentucky ball game on a number of monitors, as a host of other sports vies for my attention, which seems to wander back hypnotically to a *vérité* account of soccer hooliganism, the twist being that the actual players themselves are engaged in wanton acts of violence. Vintage sports photos adorn the walls of the Skybox, and autographed framed jerseys of Michael Jordan and Sammy Sosa remind me of the city's graces. The girdered ceiling of the Skybox evokes a sense of theatrical props, warehouse space and satellite struts, giving the interior a retrofuturistic feel. A faux al fresco patio, complete with flagstone flooring and bistro seating comprises a vestibule of sorts to the Skybox proper. I'm outside even as I'm inside. I'm bucolic even as I'm high tech. I've got one foot in the future and one in the past, the present evanescent as my vision treks across the tubes. The fourth wall of the Skybox, the real if not virtual window into spectacle, abuts the concourse itself, casting passersby as unwitting actors in a reality series, the comic relief that is the foil to athletic drama, the distraction from commercials distracting viewers from the games. Only tonight, I alone am both the viewer and the viewed, the subject and the object.

With this realization, this essay is born. A native account from deep within the heart of spectacle seems a doable proposition. Immersion in spectacle characterizes much of our experience, yet we lack an introspective chronicle of our suspension in that medium. Yet, wait. It's not just spectacle that's monopolized my recent research efforts. I've also been quite captivated by antispectacle as well, although there seems to be no adequate term to capture this phenomenon arising from the temporary autonomous zones of populist playfulness (although Mark Dery's notion of a pyrotechnic insanitarium comes close). When consumers produce such a mindscape, unfettered by the marketer's intention, and released from the hegemony of the gaze, we are blessed with something akin to a communal sensorium, part holistic sensation and part oceanic merger, that roots us in the present no matter how time

is invoked in the process. A noncommercial Erehwon of immediacy, consumed in its creation and created in its consumption. A groundbox rather than a Skybox. Breaking back into this box is a noble pursuit. It is also appropriately playful.

What follows, then, is a thick inscription of a personal odyssey through the precincts of spectacle and sensorium, a subjective personal introspection on the playgrounds of my most recent scholarly inquiry. A kind of multisite autoethnography merging emic and etic, stopping I trust, just short of emetic. I contrast my experience of retail theatre in themed flagship brand stores with my participation in the comedy of the commons at the Burning Man Project. I bookend my chronicle with another place-based reverie rather than offer a programmatic conclusion, which more befits the eccentricity of this essay. My account resembles more an ethnographer's journal than field notebook, and unfolds more kaleidoscopically than I would prefer. I seek to provide the reader a sense of what it is like to be me as I inhabit retrosapes that appeal to my multiphrenic self, in the hope that such idiography may illuminate the affecting presence—both reassuring and disconcerting—of consumption sites. My own reaction to being in these places has considerable range: hypervigilance, overstimulation, suspension of disbelief, tranquility, comfort, nostalgia, romanticism, anger, exultation, sheepishness, and abiding rightness contend with one another and ramify to still other dimensions. The “no then there” quality of retrosapes that fixes us in the amber of a past eternally present, and gives us that bittersweet back to the future feeling I imagine to be a contemplative chronogasm, I find difficult to capture in prose. Herewith is my attempt.

Even instant replay is a form of nostalgia: a brief visit to the immediate past for reexamination, before slapping it onto a highlight video for further review and re-review on into the indefinite future.

—George Carlin, *Brain Droppings*

Throne Zone: The Eternal Return

I've spent a good portion of my professional life these last few years immersed in the flagship brand stores of marketers whose livelihood is linked directly to sports. I gravitate to this category for a number of reasons, chief among them being my lifelong involvement in sport as both a participant and spectator. I find sport to be a cultural focus of the United States, and a source of root metaphors for understanding the dynamics of everyday life. Sport is a social cynosure for us. It is widely observed that sport is the nearest we come to a civil religion in our country, and is a secular ritual without parallel

in contemporary society. Sport affords individuals the opportunity, at a minimum, to experience personal mastery and a sense of flow; it is also a vehicle of hierophany and kratophany, permitting us the occasional experience of transcendence. Perhaps of greatest relevance to this essay is the inherent conservatism, indeed the essentially reactionary essence, of sport, as we experience it in the United States.

Because it is equal parts paleolithic procurement and liturgical license, hedged about by rules frequently honored more often in the breach, sport is among our preeminent venues of retail theatre. Agon and agora collide in spectacular fashion in the precincts of Niketown, ESPN Zone, Galyans, Bass Outdoor World, REI and similar servicescapes that have comprised my recent fieldsites. As much as it directs consumer behavior, the *mise-en-scène* of merchandising seems always to encourage improvisational (if not guerilla) theatre as well. When consumers are invited to indulge the ludic impulse, coproduction or cocreation of consumption is an inevitable outcome. Sport is a retroritual, and play is a regressive mechanism. Regression to glory days real or imagined is a flagship staple. Regression to childhood is a consumption quest. A back to the future, modern primitive utopian fantasy is the themed promise, whether exalted in the guise of pantheon, museum, or gallery (as at Nike Town) or democratized on field and screen (as at ESPN Zone). Sport binds us back to the source, and demands a retroscape that will return us semiotically and technologically to primal urges.

To achieve their world-building aims, these stores must hybridize other cultural venues high and low, exotic and familiar. They must bring the outside in, encompassing landscapes within their market-space. Inside these stores, I can climb rocks, rappel, shoot weapons, fish and paddle, and toss and kick balls IRL; virtually, I can skydive, race motorcycles and stockcars, golf, and bowl. I can study exhibits and venerate shrines at my leisure or frantically scan images of current and past contests or commercials as they pulse across endless banks of monitors. (I am reminded of the re-exteriorization of sportsworld I observed on a recent neighborhood excursion that took me past a frontyard birthday party of young boys scrambling around a rock-climbing tower erected on a flat Midwestern lawn, the real virtual rockface allowing the kids to simulate the indoor climbing that simulates the outdoor climbing their impoverished topography denies them. Marketers will always bring the mountain to Mohammed.) I can observe traditional gender-based behavior unfold, and spontaneous *communitas* emerge around games. I can domesticate this public space, converting hermetic to hestial place. ESPN Zone is a classic encapsulization of this multiphrenic, fragmented, kaleidoscopic, spectacular experience, and its retroscape provides an opportunity to reconsider my own practices of inhabitation, which I've neglected in other published accounts.

Exhibit 2.1 **Ultimate viewing area**

The focus of participative contest—of the most physical although not necessarily most active sort—at this eatertainment venue is the Arena, a megaplex of virtual reality-, video- and actual games that allows players to compete and perform on a communal stage. The Arena is reminiscent both of an arcade and of a carnival midway; the miniature courts, rinks, alleys, fields, and tracks enshrined within its ersatz stadium give something of a *wunderkammer* feel to the area as well. Ubiquitous television monitors apprise patrons of the progress of contests in a host of sports around the globe, punctuating the flow of flâneurs around the space. Hyperstimulation and sensory overload are the order of the day, the feeling of being overwhelmed dominating the experience of most visitors.

The focus of the spectatorial gaze—a far from passive enterprise—is the Screening Room, a virtual fortress of solitude walled off from the open air ambience of the rest of the servicescape. This marked enclosure is the inner sanctum of the site, and is effectively restricted to paying adults. It is home to a working broadcast booth, an ornate bar, an eating area decorated with nostalgic art and memorabilia, a terraced-and-tiered arrangement of dining and drinking booths whose table tops sport individual monitors, a pair of “Skyboxes” devoted to private parties, an “ultimate viewing area” whose “Throne Zone” consists of a bank of leather reclining chairs outfitted with state of the art audio systems and remote controls, and, on the focal wall, a battery of twelve large screen monitors flanking an enormous center monitor whose screen measures twelve by sixteen feet. The screens broadcast a wide variety of sporting events, and a message board above the screens scrolls crawlers laden with advertising, contest updates, and sports trivia across the entire visual field.

To dwell in this inner sanctum, to inhabit a throne, is to agree with informants who describe the experience as a sports fan's wet dream, a player's players' club, the zone within the Zone. True fanatics dream of the day they will be able to purchase a personal seat license (like the ones NFL stadium season ticket holders possess) granting them instant access to reclinerworld. While the Screening Room may serve as a cultural forum for the public channeling of our ADD syndrome—the sensory overload-induced hyperactivity of the Arena being replaced by the information overload-induced caroming of the glance—the retro aura of the seat is almost sedative hypnotic in its effect. The dweller moves through several realms at once. The ultimate viewing area is a dimly lighted space. Its galleried seating is reminiscent of a theatre, perhaps even a drive-in. The dweller is immersed in a cinematic dreamworld of images, a semisomnolent state interrupted by the occasional big play or its acknowledgment by the cheers of anonymous seatmates. The electronic hearth on each tabletop discourages conversation, inviting instead a kind of Homeric basking between bites of pub grub (Mmm . . . Open faced club, sand wedge).

For those ensconced in the recliners, the throne is a constant reminder that it is good to be king. The dweller reclines splendidly, in regal isolation, enveloped in plush leather, wrapped in surround sound, and taxed only to manipulate the armrest handset that controls choice of audio feed. Serving women bearing food and drink cater to the dweller's carnal desire, replenishing stores on a regular basis. The transfer of nourishment from hand to mouth is most often accomplished without lifting the gaze from the screens, as if the dweller were in a trance. Short of administration via IV-drip, the dweller is lost in a primal retrograde male fantasy. Constant feeding by a vigilant nurturing woman while bathed in the glow of the Ur-boob tube, entranced by alpha-masculine images of monumental inconsequentiality. . . . This into-body experience of altered consciousness is disrupted every so often by the high fidelity verisimilitude of a cracking bat or a bone jarring tackle, jolting the dweller from an oneiric utopia to a physical dystopia, often causing flinching, head-ducking, or other startle reflexes in transit. And sometimes not, as overserved dwellers occasionally doze in the recliners, where they are allowed to sleep off their surfeit. This caretaking is not merely postprandial, but postcoital, if informants' constant allusions to the correlation of screen size and masculinity are properly credited. Grappling with phallic lack and indulging delusions of grandeur are by-products of the polymorphous perversity of play in the ultimate viewing area. In the throne, the dweller becomes the apotheosis of the couch potato, the ultimate lazy boy. As I inhabit the recliner, I return not merely to my living room or den, the domestic locus of my patriarchal bliss. I return to the womb, enfolded in the embrace of a cybernetic medium, a culture of remediation.

Exhibit 2.2 **Throne zone**

But wait, there's more. Beyond the womb. Beyond the den. Ripped untimely from the tacking fantasies of the glance, the dweller multitasks from screens to digital script, assimilating crawler lines into overall awareness. The Screening Room bears strong resemblance to a Las Vegas book. Fantasy leaguers track the performance of their dream teams as a welter of statistics ticks across the banner. Gambling, that universal game of first resort, while not permitted on the premises, is impossible to prevent. When storied rivalries unfold in images and numbers, partisan fans may form a *communitas* of contest, engaging each other from the totemic comfort of their clustered clan, challenging, taunting, pledging, and sending drinks across the gulf of allegiance binding them as a spectacle. Sometimes it's carnival in the inner sanctum.

And sometimes the inner sanctum warps to meet the outer limits. The timeless, folkloric aura of the chair emanates from the recliners in the Throne Zone. The privilege of infallibility as the cleric speaks *ex cathedra*, the sense of absolute authority as the executioner flips the switch on Ol' Sparky, and the patriarchal eminence of Louis on the throne or Archie in the Barcalounger® (from pater pathos to bunker bathos) as each tends to his own all rest squarely on the chair. More than one informant has spoken to me of the Enterprise fantasy that the smart recliner engenders in the technophile. Like Kirk on the bridge, the dweller in the chair commands technology enabling one to boldly go where no man has gone before: the idiosyncratic mindscape of sportopia. Better still, like Robojock on the Holodek, the dweller realizes his cybernetic self, and becomes a *gundun*, or perhaps a postmodern centaur: a Chiron of the gridiron, a Hawking of hockey, a *tel-athlete* beyond the pale. The