

Word: An Introduction

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Je näher man ein Wort ansieht,
desto ferner sieht es zurück.¹

[The more closely you look at a word,
the more distantly it looks back.]

Urban lifestyles occur where word meets street. These lifestyles are negotiated in a tension between community and individual. Community-based urban lifestyles are fast-paced, serialized (images flash by passengers travelling by train, a pedestrian's eye moves quickly from one advertising billboard to the next) and commodity-driven. Urban life is also compelled forward by individuals who seek what is marginalized, creative, non-linear and new. Out of this paradox between community norms and individual pursuits, meaning is made. In this collection, we have labelled this meaning 'word on the street'.

To locate the meaning of the phrase 'word on the street', we can look to its synonyms. In current use, the phrase is synonymous with the term gossip, a term defined negatively as idle talk. Looking to the origins of the word gossip, we find that in Old English, the term 'godsibb' was neutral in connotation: it specified a close relation – a

1 Karl Kraus cited by Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2.1, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 362. Reproduced in *Selected Writings: 1927 - 1934*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 453.



god-parent.² Later, the term came to define the gathering of family friends at a child's birth. It was not until it was associated with the gathering of women that it took on a negative meaning in use today.

As is true for gossip, the information that the word on the street communicates is neither reliable nor verifiable. There is an element of ambivalence about the accuracy of its truths. In fact, in everyday speech, the phrase works in such a way as to cover over the source of rumour. It does this by dissipating that source, diluting the trail of speakers completely by implicating everyone on the street.

Dr Dre's 1991 release 'Bitch Niggaz' speaks to this dissipation:

Word on the streets
Everybody always tryin to run up on me
hollerin about word on the street is dis nigga said dis.³

In this track, the missing origin of the word on the street sets in motion a frenzied fire of gossip trails. Dre goes on to associate this type of talking frenzy with women, accusing the men who participate in the 'word on the street' of being 'bitches', thus invoking the phrase's historical, negative connection between women and gossip.

In the last five years, mainstream media have co-opted the phrase 'word on the street'. This is without question due to the influence of hip-hop culture in both America and Europe. In its mainstream, *written* form, the phrase loses the sense of gossip because the information reported is reliable. Yet due to its urban origin, the term retains its other original sense: it reports the latest news and the freshest insight. It is, for instance, often employed by online versions of local press to identify the 'what's happening around town' sections of newspapers;⁴ it is also used more generally to personalize information, giving general news a local twist. In 2007, the phrase also became associated with advertising word-of-mouth campaigns. Proctor & Gamble, for instance, sent individuals marketing materials and samples and invited those individuals to tell their friends about the company's new products.⁵

2 Etymological references are from the Oxford English Dictionary <www.oed.com> [accessed 3 February 2010].

3 Dr Dre, 'Bitch Niggaz', on *2001*, featuring Snoop Dog, Hittman and Six-Two, produced by Dr Dre, Mel-Man, Lord Finesse and Scott Storch (Aftermath/Interscope, 1999).

4 Cf. John Henrikson, 'Word on the Street', in *The News Tribune* <<http://blogs.thenewstribune.com/street>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

5 Barbara Kiviat, 'Word on the Street', *Time*, 12 April 2007 <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1609809,00.html>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

In its current form, the phrase 'word on the street' maintains a connection to the urban communities that made it popular while also being slowly appropriated by mainstream discourse. This double-duty of meaning sets the tone for this collection of essays.

In this collection, we investigate the ways that meanings are created, called into question and altered within specific language communities. For this reason, we have defined the term 'word' very broadly so as to include a variety of discursive actions. 'Word' not only designates the material words found on the street in the form of graffiti and road signs; it also includes the words reported from the street in journals and in literature. Spoken words that emerge from the street such as rap and folk music are considered as are embodied or 'performed' meanings in the form of *capoeira*, skateboarding, recycling and *flânerie*.

While we have defined the term 'word' broadly, we have defined the term 'street' narrowly. 'Street' specifies as urban the communities to which words belong. Thus, the street in this collection is a city street; it is a pedestrian street. It is sometimes crowded with people and sometimes deserted enough to allow Baudelaire's *flâneur* to stroll along easily. It is not a road upon which traffic is jammed but an unmediated surface that enables direct contact between meaning (word) and physical space.

In addition, 'street' is understood as a space that is already imbued with meaning. The urban streets we inherit are those upon which, for example, visibility politics have been performed. The suffragette movement in the UK, for example, was conducted through visibility politics and performed upon the streets of London. Thousands of women took to the streets wearing the colours of their organizations,⁶ making themselves vibrantly visible in a public realm from which they had been excluded. Later in the twentieth century, the gay and lesbian community protested the violent attempts to erase its members from society by rioting in the streets. Today, in cities around the world, this same community celebrates its new-found visibility at annual street parties.⁷ In both of these contexts, the street functioned as a political site in which invisible individuals came together to become visible.

6 Barbara Green, 'From Visible Flâneuse to Spectacular Suffragette? The Prison, the Street, and the Sites of Suffrage', *Discourse* 17.2 (Winter 1994-1995).

7 Moira Rachel Kenney, 'Remember, Stonewall was a Riot: Understanding Gay and Lesbian Experience in the City', in *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History*, ed. by Leonie Sandercock (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1998).



The streets are also spaces in which the individual confronts his or her anonymity. Many writers in the nineteenth century described their first experiences on the big-city street. Walter Benjamin in 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire' [Some Motifs in Baudelaire] is particularly adept at capturing the varying experiences of these early urban writers.⁸ 'Angst, Widerwillen und Grauen weckte die Großstadtmenge in denen, die sie als die ersten ins Auge faßten. Bei Poe hat sie etwas Barbarisches. Disziplin bändigt sie nur mit genauer Not.' [Fear, revulsion, and horror were the emotions which the big-city crowd aroused in those who first observed it. For Poe, it has something barbaric about it; discipline barely manages to tame it] (138, 190). By contrast, Benjamin describes Baudelaire's experience: 'die Erscheinung, die den Großstädter fasziniert – weit entfernt, an der Menge nur ihren Widerpart, nur ein ihr feindliches Element zu haben -, wird ihm durch die Menge erst zugetragen.' [far from experiencing the crowd as an opposing, antagonistic element, the city dweller discovers in the crowd what fascinates him] (130, 185). Our urban streets are without doubt still these contradictory spaces in which we, as individuals, are at times horrified and alienated and at other times fascinated by what we find.

This collection of essays picks up on this dialectic. In some instances, the street is idealized – it is a romantic space in which collective and individual exist in harmonious balance; in other instances, however, the material reality of the street intrudes upon the city-dweller. In such cases, the street is a filthy, offensive or dangerous place, negotiated at great risk by the vulnerable individual.

It is perhaps this tension that has inspired recent philosophical explorations into the material meaning of the street. Henri Lefebvre is notable in this regard. The *Internationale situationniste* in particular drew on Lefebvre's 'theory of moments' developed in *La Somme et le reste*.⁹ Lefebvre's work became the basis for the situationists' 'revolutions of everyday life' from which the *dérive* is well known.¹⁰

8 Walter Benjamin, 'Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire', in *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1969). Translated as 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Henry Zohn (London: Belknap Press, 2006).

9 Henri Lefebvre, *La Somme et le reste – Tome I* (Paris: La nef de Paris, 1959).

10 Michel Trebitsch, 'Preface: The Moment of Radical Critique' in Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life Vol II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. by John Moore (London: Verso, 2008), xxiii;

In his *La Production de l'espace* [*Production of Space*], Lefebvre connects spatial economy to verbal economy:

Dans la rue, chaque passant est censé ne pas attaquer ceux qu'il rencontre; l'agresseur qui transgresse cette loi accomplit un acte criminel. Un tel espace suppose une «économie spatiale», solidaire de l'économie verbale bien que distincte...¹¹

[In the street, each individual is supposed to not attack those he meets; anyone who transgresses this law is deemed guilty of a criminal act. A space of this kind presupposes the existence of a 'spatial economy' closely allied, though not identical, to the verbal economy.]

The city street plays a central role in Lefebvre's thought for it is on the street that spatial practices evidence dominant signifying ideologies.

Thinkers since Lefebvre have used his connection between spatial practice and signifying practice to explore how cultural and political revolution might take place at street level. Michel de Certeau, for instance, cites Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* as a fundamental source for his *The Practice of Everyday Life*,¹² a work I explore in more detail below.

This collection of essays, *Word on the Street*, inherits this rich array of discursive practices performed on the street. The collection encompasses a broad spectrum of languages and so considers diverse streets in different cities all over the, mostly Western, world. Though they cover different languages and cultures, the essays are organized around common themes. One of the most important is the consensus that the word on the street is most evident when understood within the context of the everyday. Both Walter Benjamin and Michel de Certeau are influential in this regard. It is to a brief introduction of their work that I now turn.

Benjamin

originally published *Critique de la vie quotidienne II: Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté* (Paris: L'Arche, 1961).

11 Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974), 69. Translated as *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 56.

12 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendell (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1984); originally *L'Invention du quotidien. Vol. I. Arts de faire* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1980).



Walter Benjamin began to develop his theory of language early in his academic career. In his biography of Benjamin, Momme Brodersen notes that he found 'the widespread opinion that it is possible to influence people through writing, insofar as this writing invites action' restrictive.¹³ For Benjamin, the traditional view was restrictive because it defined writing as a means to an end. This view lacked a certain 'magic' that was fundamental to language (88).

In considering the 'magic' left out of the traditional theory of writing, Benjamin extended the definition of language to include a wide array of meaning elements. James Rolleston considers the breadth of Benjamin's definition of language in 'The Politics of Quotation'.¹⁴ Rolleston notes:

For him, everything speaks: buildings, administrative organizations, utopian fantasies, advertisements, social chatter. The speaking is not equal in volume or presence; indeed, it may be precisely the wearing out, the lifelessness, of a given language that can tell us most about the process of social change. (15)

For Benjamin, language is not simply a tool used to provoke social change as was the case in the traditional interpretation of writing; it is a system in which a rich array of historical information is embedded. To write history *thoroughly* means that one should be attuned to traces of social and cultural change within language.

In his later work, Benjamin found in the street a material site in which meaning was imbedded. His early work thus evolved into an investigation of material meaning. This is particularly evident in terms of his historical writings in which he pays careful attention to the voices of the marginalized. In his 'Introduction' to *The Writer of Modern Life*, Michael J. Jennings notes that Benjamin's strategy was to pull vivid images out of context and re-integrate them into a text 'based on a principle of montage'.¹⁵ Benjamin was convinced that 'these images, often based on seemingly inconsequential details of large historical structures, [had] been ignored as the dominant class

13 Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography*, trans. by Malcolm R. Green and Ingrida Ligers, ed. by Martina Dervis (London: Verso, 1996), 87; originally *Spinne in eigenen Netz : Leben und Werk* (Morsum/Sylt: Cicero Press, 1990).

14 James L. Rolleston, 'The Politics of Quotation: Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project', *PMLA*, 104.1 (1989).

15 Quotations in this paragraph from Michael W. Jennings, 'Introduction', in *The Writer of Modern Life*, 12.

ascribe[d] truth value of its own, ideologically inspired versions of history.' For Benjamin, language (words, buildings, objects and figures) is more than a tool used to interpret history; language is also a strategic mode of interrupting dominant ideology.

The street figures prominently in Benjamin's work because it is a site on which obsolescence is on display. In 'Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', Benjamin paints a picture of Baudelaire's *flâneur* walking through Paris:

Noch waren die Passagen beliebt, in denen der Flaneur dem Anblick des Fuhrwerks enthoben war, das den Fußgänger als konkurrenten nicht gelten läßt. Es gab Passanten, welcher sich in die Menge einkeilt; doch gab es auch noch den Flaneur, welcher Spielraum braucht und sein Privatisieren nicht wissen will.¹⁶

[Arcades, where the *flâneur* would not be exposed to the sight of carriages - which scorned to recognize pedestrians as rivals - were enjoying undiminished popularity. There was the pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur* who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of a gentleman of leisure.]

What is particularly interesting for Benjamin is the coincidence, the synchrony, of two temporally distant modes of walking on the street: the pedestrian pushes into the crowd while the *flâneur* enjoys the leisure and space of the arcades.

Benjamin's history of walking on the street goes on to trace the slow decline of the *flâneur*. As modernity intrudes into the city-space, the *flâneur* is erased in the interest of commodity:

War ihm anfangs die Straße zum Interieur geworden, so wurde ihm dieses Interieur nun zur Straße, und er irrte durchs Labyrinth der Ware wie vordem durch das Städtische. (58)

[If in the beginning the street had become an *intérieur* for him, now this *intérieur* turned into the street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of commodities as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city.] (85)

Where the *flâneur* and pedestrian had been part of a certain synchrony in the time of Baudelaire (1850), Benjamin is witness to the prevalence

¹⁶ Benjamin, 'Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire*, 57. Translated as 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire', in *The Writer of Modern Life*, 84.



of the pedestrian over the *flâneur* in 1920. The Paris arcades – though still standing – speak to Benjamin of the gradual traces of the *flâneur's* disappearance.

The figure of the *flâneur* presents Benjamin with a locus through which he studies the economic and cultural shifts that were taking place all around Baudelaire. The absence of the *flâneur* from the streets of his own Paris also presents Benjamin with a locus. This locus of absence allows him to comment on the cultural and economic shifts taking place in his lifetime. Benjamin turns to Baudelaire's Paris in order to examine the artificiality of Paris – an environment created by commodity-based culture – within which he found himself.

The writers in this collection are interested in the urban word as it occurs upon the urban street. In this context, Benjamin's studies of Baudelaire are highly influential. Not only do the contributors examine the traces of historical shifts in culture by examining synchronous words occurring on the streets, they also take for granted that ordinary, urban language is an authentic mode of performing such research. For Benjamin, Baudelaire paves the way for studies into everyday language. In 'Second Empire' he writes, 'Les Fleurs du mal sind das erste Buch, das Worte nicht allein prosaischer Provenienz sondern Städtischer in der Lyrik verwertet hat.' [*Les Fleurs du mal* is the first book of poetry to use not only words of ordinary provenance but words of urban origin as well] (108, 128).

The word on the street in Baudelaire is particularly modern for Benjamin because its traces are those of the marginalized individual on the cusp of being obliterated by the crowd. For Benjamin, these are the words of a modern-day hero plucked from the refuse of the street.¹⁷ As such, they contain a certain 'magic' of both the individual and communal street life. This magic plays out temporally: it runs the risk of disappearing in much the same way that the phrase 'word on the street' erases accountability. Yet, this magic is particularly resistant to disappearance and so re-emerges in alternative forms in much the same way that the media's adaptation of the phrase 'word on the street' has become grounded in accountability.

17 Benjamin, 'Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire', 86; 'The Paris of the Second Empire', 108.

Certeau

Though separated by an interval of thirty years, Michel de Certeau's work has much in common with that of Walter Benjamin. Certeau, like Benjamin, was interested in examining the practice of writing history as well as the way that street and word collide to create and alter meaning. His 1975 *L'Écriture de l'histoire* [*The Writing of History*] is well regarded in this respect.¹⁸ In this work, Certeau argues that writing history has, since the seventeenth century, been caught in a double bind between the language of science and the language of fiction. The scientific approach to writing history is based on the assumption that the past can be represented as reality through a systematized procedure of representation that excludes various voices and ideologies. For Certeau, the scientific mode of writing history leads to a univocal, and often dogmatic, representation of the past.

Certeau's *L'Écriture de l'histoire* calls scientific, historical writing into question. He finds that the elements of language and rhetoric that pass for scientific explanation are in fact those grounded in the time (the present) of the historian. Thus, the language of history works to create a fiction that dissolves the distance in time between the past object of inquiry and the present writer. Certeau writes:

Lui aussi rejeté soit vers son présent soit vers un passé, l'historien fait l'expérience d'une praxis qui est inextricablement la sienne et celle de l'autre (une autre époque, ou la société qui le détermine aujourd'hui). Il travaille l'ambiguïté même que désigne le nom de sa discipline. *Historie* et *Geschichte* : ambiguïté finalement riche de sens. En effet la science historique ne peut pas désolidariser entièrement sa pratique de ce qu'elle saisit comme objet, et elle pour tâche indéfinie de préciser les modes successifs de cette articulation. (58)

[Also thrown back either toward their present or toward a past, historians experiment with a praxis that is inextricably both theirs and that of the other (another period, or the society that determines them as they are today). They work through the very ambiguity that designates the names of the discipline, *Historie* and *Geschichte*, an ambiguity ultimately laden with meaning. In effect, historical science cannot entirely detach its practice from what it apprehends to be its object. It assumes its endless task to be the refinement of successive styles of this articulation.] (45)

18 Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. by Tom Conley (NY: Columbia University Press, 1988); originally *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).



Historical writing is the recurrence of a consistently unresolved ambiguity.

In addition to their interest in historical writing, Certeau and Benjamin also have in common an interest in the link between linguistic practices and spatial practices. In *L'Invention du quotidien* [*The Practice of Everyday Life*], Certeau connects language to the urban street. He writes, 'L'acte de marcher est au système urbain ce que l'énonciation (le *speech act*) est à la langue ou aux énoncés proférés' ['The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered'] (180, 97). For Certeau, language and urban spatial practices are structurally similar. By investigating the structural similarities, Certeau finds that dominant ideologies use space and language in analogous ways.

According to Certeau, as is the case in the scientific writing of history, dominant ideologies work to erase individual practices by favouring univocal realities within spatial practices. In *L'Invention du quotidien*, Certeau describes this dominance in terms of cartography. For him, the map totalizes the city. Rendered from a panoptic viewpoint, it presents the city as a complete, and thus non-fragmented, whole.¹⁹ In so doing, the map represents the space of the city as finite and unchangeable. Certeau names the city constructed by the map 'la Ville-concept' ['the concept city'] (177, 95).

The concept city is dangerous because it consistently re-produces itself by denying individual, or fragmented, spatial elements. For Certeau, the concept city is organized *rationally*. The rational maintains itself by repressing an infinite array of elements: physical, mental and political. The concept city works to limit all uses of space to those originally prescribed by urban developers and city planners. The consequence of this prescriptive map is to submerge the city in historical permanency. As such, the map falsely suspends the city in time by limiting it to the time of the map's origination.

Certeau underlines the fact that this is not the entire story of the city. Individual practices work to disrupt the concept city by using space in ways for which it was not prescribed. This process, which can be called 're-deployment', works in a similar way to speech acts. Re-deployment begins by first fragmenting the city into its component parts: language is made up of words and phrases in the same way

¹⁹ Certeau's argument about panoptic practices is made in response to Michel Foucault. For a discussion of Certeau's response, see Bryan Reynolds and Joseph Fitzpatrick, 'The Transversality of Michel de Certeau: Foucault's Panoptic Discourse and the Cartographic Impulse', *diacritics*, 29. 3 (1999), 63–80.

that a city is made up of streets and buildings. These individual components can be taken up and re-deployed by individuals in a way that resists dominant linguistic and spatial practice. Certeau provides an example:

Les locataires opèrent une mutation semblable dans l'appartement qu'ils meublent de leurs gestes et de leurs souvenirs; les locuteurs, dans la langue où ils glissent les messages de leur langue natale et, par l'accent, par des «tours» propres, etc., leur propre histoire; les piétons, dans les rues où ils font marcher les forêts de leurs désirs et de leurs intérêts. (25)

[Tenants make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories: as do speakers, in the language into which they insert both the messages of their native tongue and, through their accent, through their own 'turns of phrase', etc., their own history; as do pedestrians, in the streets they fill with forests of their desires and goals.] (xxi, translation altered)

Pedestrian movement is one instance of spatial redeployment. 'Ils sont des marcheurs' [they are walkers], Certeau writes, '*Wandersmänner*, dont le corps obéit aux pleins et aux déliés d'un «texte» urbain qu'ils écrivent sans pouvoir le lire' (173-4). [*Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thick and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read] (93). In contrast to the 'concept city', the pedestrian creates what Certeau calls a 'migrational city'. A migrational city is *spatialized*, not *rationalized*, by infinite trajectories of so many bodies moving upon the city streets. Importantly, the migrational city is created from the forgotten spaces left outside *rational* city planning. In other words, the spatial fragments that pedestrians make use of are often those that have been neglected by city planning and urban development. They are the buildings, underpasses and annexes forgotten and in decline.

Many of the essays in this collection are inspired by the revolutionary potential found in Certeau's connection between individual linguistic practices and spatial practices. Certeau's influence can strongly be felt in instances in which historical authority is called into question by the everyday.



The Essays

Throughout this collection there are instances of individuals inhabiting the left-over spaces of the street. In 'Signscapes and Minority Languages: Language Conflict on the Street', Guy Puzey explores three localized instances in which minority languages appear on official road signs. He discusses the conflicts that arise when minority languages fail to remain relegated to minority spaces. In E. Dimitris Kitis' essay on street slogans, 'The Subversive Poetics of Marginalized Discourse and Culture', we find a grammar belonging to the politically motivated street slogans that appear on the outskirts of Thessaloniki in Greece. For Kitis, these slogans open street space into public space because they allow an anonymous group of media scapegoats, 'hoodies', to participate in public debate. These two essays form the first section of the book entitled 'Signs & Counter Signs'.

An interview with Iain Borden, entitled 'SkateSpeak' follows this section. In the interview, Borden discusses skateboarding and the city street. For Borden, skateboarding is an anti-capitalist discursive *act*. At times, it is an embodied appropriation of the architecture of the street. Skaters alter the meanings of structures such as handrails, benches and ramps because they approach each surface with detailed focus requiring immediate attention. Skaters do not act upon a street from a panoptic point of view; instead, they act upon a series of distinct street surfaces. Thus, they neither *produce* a total picture of the street, nor do they *consume* the street as a whole.

The second section of this book is entitled 'Crossing the Street'. In this section, four essays explore the significance of pedestrian movement. Most draw specifically on Certeau's connection of walking and meaning and so conceive of the movement of the pedestrian as that which opens space and therefore meaning up to something new and different.

In his essay, 'Recycling the City: Walking, Garbage and *Cartoneros*', James Scorer discusses the movements of *cartoneros* on the streets of Argentina. He reads both the streets of Buenos Aires and Daniel Samoilovich's poem *El carrito de Eneas*. In so doing, he discovers that the walk of the *cartoneros*, motivated by the desire to find recyclable goods, reconfigures the city. For Scorer, the *cartoneros* build bridges of movement, tying diverse city dwellers to one another through the paths of recyclable materials.

In 'Walking the Streets: Cityscapes and Subjectscapes in *Fin-de-siècle* Vienna', Anne Flannery also finds that walking the streets ties

diverse aspects of the city together. In her essay, the literary figure Lieutenant Gustl, from Arthur Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*, takes a night-time walk through the temporal junction of imperial and early twentieth-century Vienna. Flannery maps Gustl's night-time movements. In so doing, she demonstrates that walking provokes the collapses of distance between Gustl as subject and *Gustl* as text.

Susanna Ott explores the movements of the twentieth-century *flâneur* through one of the nineteenth century's most successful inventions: the camera. In her essay 'Fragmenting the Street: *Flâneur* Aesthetics in Twentieth-century Photography', Ott considers the techniques of a handful of photographers working in the late nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She explores the aesthetics of each using the theoretical framework of Charles Baudelaire's and Walter Benjamin's *flânerie*. She proposes an aesthetics of *flânerie*, which not only records culture as it takes place upon the street but, in turn, also produces culture.

The last essay in this section is Stuart Kendall's 'Desiring Urbanism'. In his discussion, Kendall questions what he terms 'the semiological model' of both Certeau's pedestrian and Roland Barthes' walker. In place of these semiological models, Kendall brings together the psychogeography important to the Situationist drift and Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic, creating a city dweller embedded in and created by an environmentally sustainable community.

The third section of the collection is entitled 'Street Level'. The three essays in this section stage the street as an influential and localized space. In her essay, 'From "Cultural Factor" to Propaganda Instrument: The Shop Window in German Cultural History 1907-33', Nina Schleif traces a history of the influence of the shop window on German culture in the early twentieth century. She argues that the shop window was not simply an aesthetic reflection of culture in Germany, but played a direct role in educating the public about aesthetic, moral and political ideals, including those of National Socialism.

Where Schleif examines discursive practices used by the state to direct public thinking, Nadia Ilahi, in her essay, 'Gendered Contestations: An Analysis of Street Harassment in Cairo', examines the absence of state discourse. According to Ilahi, Egypt is currently at an ideological junction between an increase in popularity of traditional Islamic practices and the influence of Western culture. This tension between Islamic tradition and Western influence has provoked a rise in what she terms 'street harassment' on the streets of Cairo. In response to this increase, the Egyptian Center for Woman's



Rights (ECWR) is working to normalize the term 'sexual harassment'. Ilahi follows this trend by exploring specific instances of the various types of 'street harassment' women face in Cairo. In so doing, she demonstrates the ubiquity of the crime.

In the final essay of this section, Laura Elder discusses the journalistic style of Heinrich Heine, the mid-nineteenth century man-on-the-street for the German journal *Allgemeine Zeitung*. In 'When the Street becomes Theatre: Heinrich Heine's Art of Spectatorship in *Juste-milieu Paris*', Elder argues that though his subject matter was varied and diverse Heine's *style* of journalism was heavily influenced by everyday events taking place upon the streets of Paris. Through a combination of political focus and theatrical performativity, Heine constructs a new discourse, a new style of writing the word on the street.

An interview entitled 'Black Urbanism' follows this section. In this interview, Sophie Fuggle and John Oduroe discuss black urbanism. Black urbanism is a process of critique that examines the impact and contribution made by black and minority ethnic communities to contemporary urban practices. In this interview, Oduroe talks about black urbanism in the light of his own interest in the spatial practices of socially marginalized communities. He connects marginalization to the term 'street', exploring the dialectics of the street in ways similar to both Benjamin and Certeau: the street is simultaneously a space in which fruitful sources of difference emerge and a space that affronts and confounds traditional ways of thinking and being. Oduroe's work explores this dialectic specifically in terms of race, citing black urbanism as both a method of interpretation and a way of imagining future potential.

The fourth and final section of the collection is entitled 'Word Up'. Here, three essays examine the street as a site of public debate. In each essay, the streets are spaces in which individual practices appropriate established discourse to create new, individualized discursive practices. Importantly, each essay considers the potential risk of this appropriation and, in so doing, speaks to the potential failure of the individual.

In 'Escape from the Street: Language, Rock-and-Roll and Subversive Youth Space in Late Socialist Lviv', William Risch explores the danger of the street in the Soviet city of Lviv during the mid- to late-sixties. Risch argues that hippies in Lviv were forced to find alternative spaces away from the streets in order to entertain various Western ideologies made available to them through Polish channels. In tracing

the history of the spatial subversions, however, Risch also traces the history of how the Soviet order reformed the hippie movement.

In her essay, 'Street for Sale: Signs, Space, Discourse', Sophie Fuggle examines three potentially anti-capitalist discourses: the Brazilian dance-fight technique *capoeira*, pavement art and street wear, all of which occur at street level. She finds that while these practices originate on the street, they do not stay there; each is to some extent appropriated by an established capitalist order. Furthermore, Fuggle argues that when appropriated, capitalist discourse maintains the word 'street' as an authentic sign of otherness whilst simultaneously divesting the term of its diversity. This appropriation of the street results, according to Fuggle, in the privatization of street space.

By contrast, Patricia Anne Simpson, in her essay, "'Miking" the New German Street', argues that the street is, despite the prevalence of advertising and consumerism, the site of a debate-based public sphere. In her essay, rap functions as one side of a public debate waged upon the German street. In particular, she finds that artists Eko Fresh, Bushido, Sido and Massiv use rap as a vehicle to tackle social issues such as welfare reform, ethnic affiliations, immigration issues as well as criminalization laws in Germany. Simpson argues that rap is a discursive practice which, though appropriated by the music industry, maintains a creative and thus vital connection to public life on the street.

In each of the essays, the translations of original texts are the authors' unless otherwise noted.

In the margin

We are witness to a revival of the street in popular culture. The term 'street' is turning up everywhere. From the 2001 release of 'Has it Come to This' by *The Streets* to Jamie Oliver's 2008 street-level attempt to provoke British local councils into adopting his Ministry of Food campaign,²⁰ the street is, without doubt, a hot topic. One reason for this popularity could be a heightened fascination with individual and everyday practices. The street is the place where urban individuality is expressed and theorized. It might also be that despite the presence

20 *The Streets*, 'Has it Come to This', *Original Pirate Material* (UK: Locked On, 09274355682, 2002); Jamie Oliver, 'Ministry of Food', Channel 4, 21 October 2008 <<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/jamies-ministry-of-food/4od>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



of prescriptive elements such as road signs and maps and despite the plethora of advertising that seeks our constant attention, the street is ultimately still the site where individual voices come together to create a public realm. This is certainly true of street protest as well as street festivals.

One has to wonder, however, if the popularity of the street in current popular culture might inadvertently homogenize the street, thereby subverting its revolutionary potential. In this regard, there are two areas that this collection does not directly address, but which offer potential for future work. The first area is the sublimation of the street. Sublimation here indicates the process by which street discourse, which is often provocative and rebellious, is turned into main-stream discourse acceptable to the general population. The sublimation of the street is seen, for example, with increasing frequency in the art world. The second area ripe for investigation is the street as a site made inaccessible to the marginalized. In particular, this second topic speaks to those left out of street discourse because they are physically, mentally or otherwise unable to *walk* upon the urban street.

Though these two aspects may seem unrelated, one can imagine that through various processes of sublimation and exclusion, the twenty-first-century street is becoming an increasingly homogenized space. This is particularly true when we think about the street as a discursive space.

The art world has taken to the street. Since the early 80s, street art has been increasingly displayed in art galleries. This trend began in New York City during a time in which the city was cracking down on graffiti. The increase in anti-graffiti measures taken by the city made writing graffiti a territorial and thus often violent endeavour. The Fun Gallery, founded in New York in 1981 by Patti Astor and Billy Stelling, introduced many street artists to the fine art world.²¹

After 2000, the street art and fine art junction led to an increasing commodification of graffiti art. In the summer of 2008, two paintings by the well-known graffiti artists Banksy sold for over an estimated £120,000 at auction.²² That same summer, the London Tate Modern hosted a Street Art exhibition in which it invited six urban artists to

21 @149st, 'The Fun Gallery', 2003 <<http://www.at149st.com/fungallery.html>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

22 'Banksy Works Lead London Urban Art Auction', 18 June 2008 <<http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/27907/banksy-works-lead-london-urban-art-auction/>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

display their work on the museum's river façade.²³ In addition to the display, the museum hosted a 'Street Walking Tour' in which a map of street art was provided to visitors. The tour featured artists such as Nano 4814, 3TTman, Spok, El Tono and Nuria.²⁴

The map of urban art as well as the highly profitable sale of graffiti are only a small indication of how quickly street art is being sublimated by the larger auction houses and museums. Only ten years ago, for instance, in his essay 'Night Discourse: producing/consuming meaning on the street', Tim Cresswell noted that 'public art is often transitory and cannot be bought.'²⁵ How quickly times have changed.

Cresswell takes his essay title from a 1992 essay by Karrie Jacobs, published in *Angry Graphics*.²⁶ Both Cresswell and Jacobs define night discourse as the painting, pasting and general alteration of public space by individuals or groups during the night. For both, it is a particularly risky, because illegal, form of discourse. As such, it is also a potentially rich expression of public opinion. Jacobs writes:

Night discourse is a much more blunt, more argumentative form of communication than its daytime counterparts, the editorial page of the newspaper and the Sunday morning public-affairs television show. (8)

In the last fifteen to twenty years, however, the street discourse of the night has become consumable. Some critics wonder if because it can now be bought, street art is losing something of the blunt, argumentative style that makes it so provocative. In a 2008 article for the *Guardian*, Alice Fisher observes:

Commerciality and creativity have never made cosy bedfellows, but when Street Art is defined by its origins on the street, and so many artists made their names with audacious free displays and anti-

23 Tate Modern, 'Street Art', 'About' <<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/streetart/default.shtm>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

24 Tate Modern, 'Street Art', 'Walking Tour' <<http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/streetart/tour.shtm>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

25 Tim Cresswell, 'Night Discourse: producing/consuming meaning on the street', in *Images of the Street*, ed. by Nicholas R. Fyfe (London: Routledge, 1998).

26 Karrie Jacobs, 'Night Discourse', in *Angry Graphics: Protest Posters of the Reagan/Bush Era* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1992).



establishment ideas, it's hard to imagine that it will be unaffected by the shift to galleries and private collections.²⁷

The shift of street art from street to gallery is troubling on two levels. For one, it indicates the loss of a discursive practice that is unique and individual because grounded in the anonymity of the street. This is without doubt a long standing historical practice. Traces of modern-day forms of graffiti have notably been found in Pompeii (79 A.D.),²⁸ while rumours from tour guides in the ancient Greek city of Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) suggests that a wall-carving depicting a foot, a hand and woman's head is an ancient sign for what is claimed to be a nearby brothel. Secondly, the shift also indicates that, on a larger scale, the street itself is being substantially altered – not only is the art for sale, but the street itself is on the market. Fisher cites the art collective Faile's Patrick and Patrick, which participated in the Tate Modern show and Banksy's 2008 Cans Festival, as saying:

At least it's no longer undermined as something on the street, something without value. Money fuels interest – it's an injection in the butt that fires people up and makes them realise they should pay attention.

Though two could never be made to speak for all street artists, one does wonder if the shift from street to gallery will effectively close down the lively, opinionated and brave discourse we associate with street art.

Where street art offers *visible* evidence of shifting discourses, those who are notably absent from or *invisible* on the street also warrant theoretical attention. Because this collection is limited to the pedestrian street, an assumption has been made about the people who inhabit the street. A certain level of physical, mental and emotional independence has been assumed of those who 'speak' the street. We acknowledge, however, that the body excluded from the street – whether it is aged, sick, infirm, scared or imprisoned – is a body ripe for exploration.

27 Alice Fisher, 'How the Tate got Streetwise', 11 May 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2008/may/11/art.exhibition>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

28 These are well-documented. Cf. Jack Lindsay, *The Writing on the Wall: An Account of Pompeii in its last days* (London: Muller, 1960) who cites the verse: 'O wall,/ so many men have come here to scrawl,/ I wonder that your burdened sides/ don't fall' (160).

How to think through the exclusion of human bodies and thus human voices from particular social contexts is perhaps one of the most important ethical questions in critical theory and philosophy today.

In the final chapter of *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler frames the question of exclusion when she writes:

When we consider the ordinary ways that we think about humanization and dehumanization, we find the assumption that those who gain representation, especially self-representation, have a better chance of being humanized, and those who have no chance to represent themselves run a greater risk of being treated as less than human.²⁹

If, following Butler, we accept that humanization is tied to self-representation, we might turn to publications that purport to give a voice to homeless self-representation. For instance, *The Big Issue* in the UK and *L'Itinérant* in France could offer insight into the voice of this otherwise marginalized group. Though homeless people are physically present on the street, they are notably invisible to the eyes of the general public. Due to this invisibility, their voices are strikingly absent from the public realm. Magazines such as *Street Sheet* and *The Big Issue* claim to offer this voice a microphone.

The Big Issue states that 'Editorially *The Big Issue* magazine is committed to giving homeless people a voice in the media and raising difficult issues that are overlooked in the mainstream press.'³⁰ In her study, 'Voices of homeless people in street newspapers: a cross cultural exploration', Danièle Torck explores claims of this nature in various magazines devoted to the homeless.³¹ Of the four magazines investigated, Torck concludes that only the San Francisco based *Street Sheet* gives homeless voices the opportunity to express opinions about political and social issues. The other magazines, by contrast, limit the contributions by homeless people to either poetry in the case of *L'Itinérant* or to 'narrative and expressions of feelings' in the case of *The Big Issue* and *Z-Magazine* from Amsterdam (387).

Torck's study demonstrates that, even in magazines that purport to give homeless people a public voice, there are degrees of omission

29 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (London: Verso, 2001), 141.

30 The Big Issue, 'About Us' <http://www.bigissue.com/About_Us_2.php> [accessed 3 February 2010].

31 Danièle Torck, 'Voices of homeless people in street newspapers: a cross-cultural exploration', *Discourse & Society*, 12.3 (2001).



by which the homeless body, present yet invisible on the street, is disallowed from fully participating in political discourse.



I. Signs & Countersigns



Signscapes and Minority Languages: Language Conflict on the Street

Guy Puzey

The power of signs

Signs are an integral part of the street. As they are perhaps the most overt presence of text on the street and are intended to be read, they constitute convincing evidence that public spaces can be seen as texts. Walter Benjamin's 'Einbahnstraße' [One-Way Street] is a collection of short reflections, each of which is introduced by a phrase captured from a sign or a placard.¹ Benjamin interprets the phrases glimpsed on signs as symbols of societal phenomena that themselves can be seen as 'fragmentary visions of society trembling at the brink of dissolution.'² The phrase *Si parla italiano* [Italian spoken here] prompts this account of a linguistic experience:

Ich saß nachts mit heftigen Schmerzen auf einer Bank. Mir gegenüber auf einer zweiten nahmen zwei Mädchen Platz. Sie schienen sich

1 Citations in German are from Walter Benjamin, 'Einbahnstraße', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 17 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1999), iv. 1, ed. by Tillman Rexroth (1972); English translations are from Walter Benjamin, 'One-Way Street', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979); all photographs in this essay are by the author.

2 Marcus Bullock, 'Walter Benjamin 1892-1940', in *Encyclopedia of German Literature*, ed. by Matthias Konzett, 2 vols (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), 1, 80.



vertraut besprechen zu wollen und begannen zu flüstern. Niemand außer mir war in der Nähe, und ich hätte ihr Italienisch nicht verstanden, so laut es sein mochte. Nun konnte ich bei diesem unmotivierten Flüstern in einer mir unzugänglichen Sprache mich des Gefühls nicht erwehren, es lege sich um die schmerzende Stelle ein kühler Verband. (137-38)

[I sat at night in violent pain on a bench. Opposite me on another two girls sat down. They seemed to want to discuss something in confidence and began to whisper. Nobody except me was nearby and I should not have understood their Italian however loud it had been. But now I could not resist the feeling, in face of this unmotivated whispering in a language inaccessible to me, that a cool dressing was being applied to the painful place.] (94-95)

The Italian sign apparently reminds Benjamin of this particular occasion when, while some might have felt doubly excluded from the girls' conversation, he found solace. The fact that the girls felt the need to whisper signifies their recognition of his presence and their acknowledgement that he might potentially understand their language. This acceptance provides Benjamin with comfort and, at the same time, we notice his affection for linguistic diversity and inclusive multilingualism.

In semiotics, the word *sign* has a broad meaning, suggesting any object that denotes another object or concept apart from itself. In this essay, *sign* will be primarily used with the meaning of physical, material signs: road signs or street signs. The primary function of these signs is to communicate information, warnings and directions but, as Benjamin realized, the associative value of these concrete signs can shed light on many varied aspects of the world in which they are placed. Closer analyses of the different languages used on signs can reveal much about the politics of language. In this article I will compare street-side linguistic landscapes in Norway, Italy and Scotland in order to demonstrate how signs can be seen as clear manifestations of the intricate power relations between majority and minority languages and can help explain why linguistic controversies in different places develop in different ways.

Irrespective of whether a sign is installed by individuals, private enterprises or on behalf of public services, a choice is made – either consciously or subconsciously – to use a particular form of address. The content of many signs is entirely pictorial or numerical, but when meaning is conveyed through text, a choice of language must be made, and this can determine the sign's intended audience. For official

signs, it may seem obvious to use the official language of the place in question, but many states have more than one official language; in other places, there is no official language, or the language perceived as official may not hold any such legal or constitutional status. There is, for example, no law conferring on English the status of official language of the United Kingdom, but competence in English, Welsh, Gaelic or Irish is now a condition for naturalization as a British citizen.

If more than one language, or code, is to be used, code differentiation is necessary, and this implies code preference.³ It is thus in these linguistic choices that signs can expose the linguistic preferences and ideologies of the authorities or individuals behind the signs. It is important to remember that road signs in themselves can be seen as symbols of state rule and power, or claims to power. When the message of a sign is expressed in a language that some people do not identify with, there can be strong reactions.

Linguistic Landscapes

Although the term *linguistic landscape* has in the past been used to refer to the general linguistic composition or situation of a place, recent studies have applied the term specifically to language found in public spaces in the form of text. The standard definition of the term used in such studies is that of Landry and Bourhis: 'The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.'⁴

Landry and Bourhis argue that the linguistic landscape has first and foremost an informational function, potentially indicating the boundaries of a linguistic region, when these exist, as well as announcing in which languages services may be available and informing about the sociolinguistic context of a place. The linguistic landscape can also have a symbolic function. The use of a given language on signage can contribute to its 'subjective ethnolinguistic vitality' (27). The impression of a sociolinguistic situation given by

3 Ron Scollon and Suzie Wong Scollon, *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World* (London: Routledge, 2003), 120.

4 Rodrigue Landry and Richard Y. Bourhis, 'Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 16.1 (1997), 25.



the linguistic landscape could then influence individuals' linguistic behaviour, showing that the relationship between linguistic landscape and sociolinguistic context is 'bidirectional'.⁵ Linguistic landscape investigations have shown that reading the street can make an original methodological contribution to understanding the dynamics of societal multilingualism. Peter Backhaus has compiled a good overview of a large number of these studies.⁶

One recent survey of signs in Israel and East Jerusalem proved the value of the linguistic landscape for sociological research by considering the differences between 'top-down' signs and 'bottom-up' signs – signs erected by authorities and those erected by individuals respectively. It was found that Arabic text was used significantly less on top-down signs in Israeli communities than in Israeli-Palestinian communities or in East Jerusalem. In East Jerusalem, by contrast, Hebrew text was used less in bottom-up signs than in top-down signs, and a great number of bottom-up signs were bilingual Arabic/English.⁷

Another recent study concerning the use of Breton on signs and menus in fast-food restaurants in Brittany, however, showed how the linguistic landscape cannot always predict individuals' linguistic behaviour. While all but one of the primary-school pupils who were asked said that they would speak Breton at the restaurants in question, only one of the secondary school pupils surveyed said that they would.⁸ It would seem that the use of a given language in the linguistic landscape is rarely enough in itself to completely change linguistic behaviour. As the present study will show, it is in changing, or at least challenging, perceptions of language status that the linguistic landscape can exert the most influence.

5 Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter, 'Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages', *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3.1 (2006), 67.

6 Peter Backhaus, *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007).

7 Eliezer Ben-Rafael and others, 'Linguistic Landscape as Symbolic Construction of the Public Space: The Case of Israel', *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3.1 (2006).

8 Michael Hornsby, 'The Incongruence of the Breton Linguistic Landscape for Young Speakers of Breton', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 29.2 (2008), 135.

Norway: Sámi Road Signs⁹

The Sámi languages are a group of Finno-Ugric languages spoken in a cultural region known as Sápmi, covering large parts of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. In Norway, estimates of the number of Sámi speakers range from 10,000 to 20,000.¹⁰

From the late nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, the position of the Norwegian state towards the Sámi people was based on a *forhorskningspolitikk* [policy of Norwegianization], which aimed to integrate the Sámi into Norwegian society. The use of Sámi languages in schools was, for example, forbidden in 1898.¹¹ Progress is now being made with the availability of Sámi-medium education, the passing of the Samelov [Sámi Act] in 1987 and the establishment of the Sámi Parliament. In 1990, the Sámi Act was amended to include sections on language use. Although Sámi now has the status of an official language, most measures regarding its official use only apply to a limited area, the *forvaltningsområde for samisk språk* [Sámi-language administrative area].¹² This area currently consists of eight municipalities. North Sámi is an official language in six of these, Lule Sámi in one and South Sámi in one.

When the proposals were made for the protection and support of the Sámi language, there were initially few negative reactions. There were no press campaigns against Sámi, and the language policy proposals did not generate the same opposition as earlier proposals for Sámi rights in other sectors.¹³ There has, however, been some localized resistance to the official use of Sámi language, and road

9 As there is no established English form of the place known in North Sámi as *Gáivuotna* and in Norwegian as *Kåfford*, the bilingual name *Gáivuotna-Kåfford* will be used.

10 Lars Anders Kulbrandstad, 'Minoritetsspråk og minoritetsspråkbrukere i Norge' [Minority languages and minority-language-users in Norway], *Språknytt* (2003), 19.

11 Kjell Venås, *Mål og miljø: Innføring i sosiolingvistik eller språksosiologi* [Language and environment: An introduction to sociolinguistics or the sociology of language] (Oslo: Novus forlag, 1991), 52.

12 Susann Funderud Skogvang, *Samerett: Om samenes rett til en fortid, nåtid og framtid* [Sámi law: On the right of the Sámi to a past, present and future] (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2002), 134.

13 Bjørn Aarseth, *Norsk samepolitikk 1945 – 1990: Målsetting, virkemidler og resultater* [Norwegian Sámi policy 1945-1990: Objectives, means and results] (Nesbru: Forlaget Vett & Viten/Norsk Folkemuseum, 2006), 392.



signs displaying Sámi place-names have borne the brunt of this hostility.

Although Landry and Bourhis argue that ‘well-established language boundaries can stabilize relations between rival language groups’, conflicts of linguistic identity can occur even within such clearly defined areas, particularly at their extreme peripheries (25). One such place is Gáivuotna-Kåfjord, the only municipality of Troms county that is a Sámi administrative area. It is one of the very few municipalities outside Finnmark – the county where the Sámi culture is strongest – that has Sámi road signs, although these signs are limited to municipal boundary signs and two tunnel names.¹⁴ Tromsø, the administrative centre of Troms and the northernmost city in the world, has also had a lively and ongoing debate about extending the use of Sámi in its linguistic landscape.¹⁵

There have been strong feelings on both sides of the debate concerning the application of the Sámi Act in Gáivuotna-Kåfjord. As Pedersen shows, the Sámi part of the bilingual boundary sign has been destroyed or removed at least five times. The nature of the attacks against the boundary sign has occasionally been violent, with the Sámi place-name being shot at. At other times the sign has been painted over or simply removed.

When replacement signs are installed, they are often destroyed or removed very soon, sometimes after only a few days.¹⁶ At one time, the roads authority placed 10mm-thick Plexiglass over the sign, but even this was not enough.¹⁷ Troms-produkt AS, a company that manufactures road signs for northern Norway, also investigated

14 Aud-Kirsti Pedersen, ‘Haldningar til offentleg bruk av minoritetsspråklege stadnamn i Noreg’ [Attitudes to official use of minority language place-names in Norway], in *Namn i flerspråkiga och mångkulturella miljöer*, ed. by Lars-Erik Edlund and Susanne Haugen, NORNA-rapporter 83 (Umeå: Institutionen för språkstudier, Umeå universitet, 2009).

15 Guy Puzey, ‘Planning the Linguistic Landscape: A Comparative Survey of the Use of Minority Languages in the Road Signage of Norway, Scotland and Italy’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2007) <<http://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/1842/2118/1/2007PuzeyGDissertationMSc.pdf>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

16 ‘Samisk skyteskive’ [Sámi target], in *Brennpunkt* documentary series, dir. by Stein Åge Isaksen (NRK, 2001).

17 Ola Solvang, ‘Setter opp nye sameskilt’ [Putting up new Sámi signs], *Nordlys*, 5 December 2001, 14.

the feasibility of steel-plated, bullet-proof signs.¹⁸ Within the municipality, bilingual signs at the school in Djupvik have also been targeted, but the tunnel signs have not.¹⁹

The boundary sign has become a symbol for the animosity between the two cultures and ‘of the consequences of the assimilation politics’.²⁰ One of the destroyed signs is now exhibited in Tromsø University Museum (see fig 1).



Figure 1. A bilingual municipal boundary sign from Gáivuotna-Kåfjord. The Sámi text Gáivuona suohkan [Municipality of Gáivuotna] has been obliterated using firearms and paint. Tromsø University Museum, April 2007.

Although this conflict may appear primarily ethnic, Arild Hovland also explains the ‘uoverensstemmelse’ [disagreement] in Gáivuotna-Kåfjord by the fact that, in terms of settlement, ‘Kåfjord er ikke ett sted, men mange’ [Gáivuotna-Kåfjord is not one place, but many].²¹ The municipality encompasses many small hamlets and hence many

18 Danny J. Pellicer, ‘Vil lage skuddsikre sameskilt’ [Want to make bullet-proof Sámi signs], *Nordlys*, 13 February 2001, 14.

19 Ragnhild Enoksen, ‘Nordlys fant ødelagt samisk skoleskilt’ [Nordlys found destroyed Sámi school sign], *Nordlys*, 21 October 1999, 43; Pedersen, ‘Haldningar’.

20 Svanhild Andersen, ‘Saami Place Names and Place-Making in a Minority-Majority Context’, from the symposium *Landscape, Law and Customary Rights*, ed. by Michael Jones and Audhild Schanche, *Dieđut*, 3 (2004) (Guovdageaidnu-Kautokeino: Sámi Instituhtta, 2004), 127.

21 Arild Hovland, *Moderne urfolk – lokal og etnisk tilhørighet blant samisk ungdom* [Modern indigenous people – local and ethnic belonging among Sámi youth],



local identities, which are stronger than the municipal identity. Feelings appear strongest not about simple municipal identity, however, but rather when some locals react to what they perceive to be the establishment of an alternative Sámi hegemony. Hovland claims that the local 'samiske eliten' [Sámi elite] have, through their interpretation of Sámi history, 'etablert et annet narrativt hjem' [created another, different, narrative home] (153).

The contested sign is now back in place after a long period of absence, and the Sámi Act seems to be gaining wider acceptance in Gáivuotna-Kåfjord. As it happens, however, it is *Stadnamnlova* [the Place-Name Act] 1990, and not the Sámi Act, which requires Sámi and Kven place-names to be used together with Norwegian names in official contexts. The Kven population of Norway speaks a dialect of Finnish. 'Samiske og kvenske stadnamn som blir nytta blant folk som bur fast på eller har næringsmessig tilknytning til staden, skal til vanleg brukast av det offentlege t.d. på kart, skilt, i register saman med eventuelt norsk namn.' [Sámi and Kven place-names that are used among those who are resident in the place in question, or among those who have economic connections to the place, will normally be used by government bodies on e.g. maps, signs and in registers, together with any existing Norwegian name].²²

The language order to be used in most of Norway is Norwegian/Sámi/Kven, but in the Sámi administrative area the order is Sámi/Norwegian/Kven.²³ This should, in theory, apply across Norway, and so bilingual and trilingual road signs should be found in many municipalities. When Aud-Kirsti Pedersen contacted a total of ninety municipalities about the official use of minority place-names, however, some seemed to believe that they did not need to deal with Sámi place-names as they were not in the Sámi administrative area. It can therefore be seen that territorial limitations may occasionally lead to confusion.

The requirement that the Norwegian place-name is always to be used is problematic as it presupposes that the Norwegian name is

NOVA Rapport 11/1999 (Oslo: Norsk institutt for forskning om oppvekst, velferd og aldring, 1999), 152.

22 *Stadnamnlova* [Place-Name Act] 1990, Lov 18. mai 1990 nr. 11 om stadnamn, § 9.

23 Botolv Helleland, *Adresser og stadnamn. Del 2: Stadnamn i offentleg og privat bruk* [Addresses and place-names. Part 2: Place-names in official and private use] (Oslo: Kommuneforlaget, 1993), 159.

the most authoritative.²⁴ In fact, many Norwegian place-names are simply Norwegian pronunciations of Sámi place-names.²⁵

Italy: The Lega Nord and Road Signs

In Italy, political communication in public spaces is widespread, especially through posters. Electronic media also have a role to play in party propaganda; activists of the Partito Democratico [Democratic Party], for example, notably make extensive use of Web 2.0 technology.²⁶ Nevertheless, parties continue to fall back on the medium of the poster. This choice owes much to the continuing vitality of Italian street-life.²⁷

Although it is illegal to do so, many political placards are defaced by individuals who sympathize with other parties. Many of these additional messages act as rebuttals to statements made in the poster, and some 'fulfil a function not unlike that of the Pompeian city walls, on which the citizens aired their political views' (Cheles, 125). The presence of political graffiti in Italy extends far beyond defacing posters, however.

The Lega Nord [Northern League] is a political party formed in 1991 from various regional autonomist leagues. Since the inception of the regional leagues – which had their first successes in the 1985 local and provincial elections – the movement has been making use of graffiti as a central part of its communication strategy. Even the party's posters reflect this in their style, which has been described

24 Kaisa Rautio Helander, 'Treatment of Saami Settlement Names in Finnmark in Official Norwegian Place Name Policy', from the symposium *Landscape, Law and Customary Rights*, 116.

25 Kaisa Rautio Helander, 'Stedsnavn i flerspråklige områder i Norge: Hvordan norske, samiske og finske stedsnavn brukes i offisiell og uoffisiell sammenheng i Norge' [Place-names in multilingual areas in Norway: How Norwegian, Sámi and Finnish place-names are used in official and unofficial contexts in Norway], in *Ortnamn värda att värda: Föredrag från Riksantikvarieämbetets symposium Ortnamnskultur, Stockholm 5-7 maj 1993*, ed. by Göran Ulfsparré (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1994), 123-24.

26 Partito Democratico, 'PD 2.0' <<http://www.partitodemocratico.it/gw/producer/index.aspx?t=/servizi/web2.htm>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

27 Luciano Cheles, 'Picture Battles in the Piazza: The Political Poster', in *The Art of Persuasion: Political Communication in Italy from 1945 to the 1990s*, ed. by Luciano Cheles and Lucio Sponza (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 171.



as a 'printed equivalent of graffiti' (Cheles, 161). The party's founder and leader, Umberto Bossi, has said:

ho una grande considerazione degli 'attacchini', quei pionieri della Lega che nei difficili e combattuti inizi portarono, con le scritte sui muri e con i manifesti redatti direttamente da me, la voce della Lega non solo nel Nord, ma in tutta Italia.²⁸

[I hold in high regard the 'billposters', those pioneers of the Lega who, during the difficult and hard-fought infancy {of the party}, carried the voice of the Lega, through graffiti on walls and posters drawn up by me personally, not just to the North, but to all of Italy.]

The style of graffiti is well suited to mimicking the colloquial, even crude, style of rhetoric for which the Lega is known.²⁹ Furthermore, a graffito can last many years on the walls of northern Italy, so its statement can be more durable than that of a speech or even a poster. The carefully considered positioning of graffiti can also give the message great visibility. One way in which Lega graffiti was made more visible was by targeting state property, not least road signs, which Lega activists systematically 'dialectized'. Bossi himself is said to have been involved in these actions.³⁰

Bossi proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Padania at a ritual held at the mouth of the River Po in September 1996. As part of the attempt of the Northern autonomist movement to establish an 'otherness' for the North and a shared 'national' identity for its invented nation of Padania, symbolic boundaries needed to be defined. For the Lega, these were largely based on what Tambini calls 'sets of polar oppositions' that constituted 'criteria of purity' (18-19).

Initially, linguistic differences were a central element in the Lega's challenge to Italian national unity. At one point, Bossi and the Lega Lombarda attempted to involve dialectal writers in the movement.³¹ Although the importance of dialects to the autonomist cause has

28 Umberto Bossi, 'Presentazione' [Prologue], in *La Lega ce l'ha crudo! Il linguaggio del Carroccio nei suoi slogan, comizi e manifesti* [The Lega has a crude one! The language of the 'Carroccio' in its slogans, rallies and posters] by Roberto Iacopini and Stefania Bianchi (Milan: Mursia, 1994), vi.

29 Cf. Roberto Iacopini and Stefania Bianchi, *La Lega ce l'ha crudo!*.

30 Damian Tambini, *Nationalism in Italian Politics: The Stories of the Northern League, 1980-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), 40.

31 Roberto Biorcio, *La Padania promessa* [The promised Padania] (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1997), 191.

perhaps diminished over the past two decades, the dialectization of Italian place-names on road signs continues to this day.



Figure 2. Varese and Milano have been dialectized here with Lega Lombarda stickers. Germignaga (Varese), December 2006.

The Province of Varese is seen as the Lega's heartland: Bossi hails from there, and there the movement had its first electoral successes. The standard strategy adopted to translate place-names to Varesino dialect is simply to remove the vowel endings of the Italian names, usually either by covering these letters with paint, or by affixing stickers over them (see fig 2). The colour of paint customarily used, 'Padanian' green, is usually enough to reveal the political affiliation of those responsible for these actions. When stickers are used, these are often Lega party logos or the *sole delle alpi* [Alpine sun], a purportedly Celtic symbol used as the badge of Padania. In



fact, the Celtic mythic image seems now to have achieved a greater importance for the Lega than dialect.³²

The Lega's dialect campaigns have been very effective in terms of the publicity the party has obtained both in public spaces and in local news media. It seems that very little official action has been taken to counter the defilement of road signs, but private individuals occasionally repaint the removed characters or remove the Lega stickers. Opposition to the dialectization of signs has been more intense when official signs have been installed in dialect.



Figure 3. This sign marks the limit of the built-up area of Gemonio, where Umberto Bossi has his family home. It features the dialectal name *Gimon* as well as the municipal crest. In this case, blue spray paint has been used in an attempt to 'Italianize' the dialectal place-name. *Gemonio (Varese)*, December 2007.

In the late 1990s, some municipalities with particularly high proportions of Lega councillors began to install municipal boundary signs in dialect. Among the first to erect such signs was Lazzate (Province of Milan), where Mayor Cesarino Monti, later a senator,

32 Guy Puzey, 'Forza Scozia!', *Scottish Left Review*, 42 (2007), 14-15.

once chained himself to one of the signs to prevent it from being removed.³³

In another municipality, Vertova (Province of Bergamo), Mayor Giampiero Testa was fined by the Carabinieri and ordered to remove the signs, as the Codice della Strada (CdS) – the Italian equivalent to the Road Traffic Act – did not permit languages other than Italian to be used on road signs outside officially bilingual areas. The Carabinieri's order was overturned upon Testa's appeal to the magistrate's court because it was ruled that the brown backgrounds of the signs identified them as tourist signposts in which references to *folclore locale* [local folklore] are permitted.³⁴

By July 2002, almost one hundred northern Italian municipalities had put up bilingual signs.³⁵ Then, in order to support the planned installation of bilingual signs in the city of Bergamo, the Lega Nord proposed an amendment to the CdS to allow greater local choice concerning forms of place-names on tourist signposts. The new version of the CdS, including this provision, was approved by the Chamber of Deputies in July 2003.

Official bilingual signs have been seen as a provocation by many in northern Italy. In some cases, the dialectal names have been 'Italianized' with spray paint in a reversal of the graffiti campaign carried out by Lega activists (see fig 3). When messages in dialect were displayed on luminous electronic signs in Varese, the local branch of the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista [Communist Refoundation Party] released a statement calling it 'ridicolo e offensivo' [ludicrous and offensive]:

se ci sono seri dubbi sulla correttezza dialettale della frase, non ci sono invece equivoci sul suo intento: affermare la 'padanità' e la pochezza provinciale di Varese, città purtroppo da decenni all'onore delle cronache per il razzismo di tanti suoi abitanti.³⁶

33 Brunella Giovara, 'Varese diventa Varés, il dialetto sui cartelli stradali' [Varese becomes Varés, dialect on road signs], *La Stampa*, 18 July 2003, 11.

34 Simone Mattei, 'Segnaletiche in dialetto locale' [Signs in local dialect], *Corriere del Ticino*, 5 October 1999.

35 Pietro Pacchioni, 'Cartelli in dialetto, la Lega li vuole anche sui monumenti' [Signs in dialect, the Lega wants them on monuments too], *Corriere della Sera*, 11 July 2002.

36 Circolo di Varese di Rifondazione Comunista, 'Rifondazione: "Cartelli in dialetto ridicoli e offensivi"' [Rifondazione: 'Signs in dialect ludicrous and offensive'], letter in *Varese News*, 1 November 2002 <<http://www3.varesenews.it/varese/articolo.php?id=7564>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



[if there are serious doubts over the dialectal accuracy of the expression, there are on the other hand no uncertainties about its aim: to assert the 'Padanianness' and the provincial narrow-mindedness of Varese, a city that has unfortunately been hitting the headlines for decades due to the racism of many of its inhabitants.]

As highlighted in this letter, the Lega Nord is known for its extreme anti-immigration views. In this case, the commandeering of dialect campaigns by the Lega Nord would appear to have had a detrimental effect on the potential for official use of dialects. The fact that those calling for dialect signs are almost exclusively from a single political background – and particularly one that is identified with ethnocentrism and xenophobic views – goes against any idea of inclusive multilingualism.

Scotland: Gaelic Street Signs

Scots Gaelic is a Celtic language, closely related to Irish, that has a history of extensive use in most parts of Scotland. Today 1.2% of the Scottish population can speak Gaelic, and 1.9% have some ability in Gaelic.³⁷ The only places where a majority speaks Gaelic are in the Western Isles and parts of Skye. In this study, the use of Gaelic on signs in the Highland market town of Dingwall will be examined.

The Royal Burgh of Dingwall, in the Highland Council administrative area, has a long history as a centre of regional power. The town lies approximately 14 miles from the City of Inverness at the point where the River Peffery meets the Cromarty Firth. In the 2001 Census, a population of 5,026 was reported.³⁸ Gaelic is understood by 7.17% of Dingwall residents born in Scotland, and the language is spoken by 5.2% of the total population of the parish over three years of age.³⁹ The area surveyed in this study was the part of the town lying south

37 GROS, *Scotland's Census 2001: Gaelic Report* (Edinburgh: General Register Office for Scotland, 2005), 9.

38 GROS, *Scotland's Census 2001: Key Statistics for Settlements and Localities Scotland* (Edinburgh: General Register Office for Scotland, 2003), table KS01.

39 GROS, *Scotland's Census 2001: Key Statistics*, table KS06; GROS, *Scotland's Census 2001: Gaelic Report*, table 3.

of the River Peffery, which is essentially the oldest part of the town. The fieldwork was carried out in November 2006.

The quantitative element of this investigation was focused on street-signs, that is to say signs placed in outdoor public places with the primary purpose of showing the name of the urban spaces where they are located. Signs that only showed directions to other streets were not included, and each separate sign was taken to be one unit for this investigation. The results of this survey are presented in Table 1. Since many streets have more than one sign, it is also important to consider the number of separate urban spaces and their respective signage. These figures can be seen in Table 2.

LANGUAGES	INSTANCES	% OF TOTAL
English only	123	76.4
English/Gaelic	37	23.0
Other (Ledvargid)	1	0.6
Total	161	100.0

Table 1. Languages of street signs in Dingwall as percentages of all street signs.

The majority of street signs in Dingwall are clearly monolingual: that is to say the generic elements used, such as ‘street’ or ‘road’, are in English with no Gaelic text. Only one sign had a name, *Ledvargid*, without a transparent generic element, and that therefore cannot easily be classified as either Gaelic or English. *Ledvargid* is not listed in Watson’s *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty*.⁴⁰ I am grateful to Wilson McLeod for suggesting its possible origin in the Gaelic *Leathad a’ Mhargaid*, ‘market slope’: *Ledvargid* is indeed on the slope leading down to the former site of the market. Due to its Anglicized orthography, however, this sign cannot be classed as Gaelic.

Thirty-seven signs were bilingual English/Gaelic (see fig 4). The Gaelic names on these heritage-style signs were the result of consultation between the Highland Council and members of the Scottish Place-Name Society. One point in particular that had to be decided in these consultations was the translation of *Place*. As the traditional *Ionad* is now also used for ‘Centre’, the adoption of the Irish *Plàs* was suggested.⁴¹ The final decision was evidently in favour of *Ionad* (see fig 4).

40 W. J. Watson, *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty* (Inverness: Northern Counties, 1904).

41 Peadar Morgan, ‘Signage of the Times’, *Scottish Place-Name Society website*, spring 1999 <<http://www.spns.org.uk/oldnotes.html#spring99>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



Aside from street signs, there are other examples of Gaelic on signs in Dingwall. Any Gaelic text usually only makes up a small part of these other bilingual signs, but they warrant investigation nonetheless.

Significantly, many localities in the Highlands display Gaelic welcome messages on their boundary signs, and Dingwall is no exception. There are a total of four different sign designs welcoming drivers to Dingwall, three of which feature Gaelic. Bilingual road signs have also been introduced on several trunk roads, but none of these are to be found in Dingwall town centre.⁴²

TYPES OF SIGNS ON STREET/SQUARE	NUMBER OF STREETS	% OF TOTAL
Monolingual English only	52	64.2
Bilingual English/Gaelic only	16	19.8
Both monolingual and bilingual	12	14.8
Other (Ledvargid)	1	1.2
Total	161	100.0

Table 2. Languages present on street signs of individual streets/squares in Dingwall.



Figure 4. The black cast iron with the gold lettering and border creates a heritage effect for this bilingual street sign. Dingwall, November 2006.

The Highland Council corporate identity features integral Gaelic text and can be seen on many signs in the town. Apart from council buildings – some of which have bilingual names, such as the Service Point (*Ionad Frithealaidh*) – it is also in evidence on signs warning of penalties in ‘alcohol free zones’ and for irresponsible dog owners, as well as on mobile objects such as bins and council vehicles. Some newer council notices, including no-smoking signs and bus

42 Puzey, ‘Planning the Linguistic Landscape’.

timetables, are also at least partly bilingual. The only Gaelic text on the bus timetables, however, is 'Busaichean on stad seo' [Buses from this stop]. Other public-sector buildings in Dingwall with Gaelic signs include the offices of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage. The use of Gaelic on public buildings is of great symbolic importance, but it is unfortunate if Gaelic speakers already know that they cannot necessarily expect to be able to use Gaelic even in offices that have Gaelic signs as that would indicate a public perception of the signs as generally tokenistic in nature.

Signs outside many educational and cultural establishments in Dingwall are bilingual. These include signs at the Highland Theological College (*Colaisde Diadhaireachd na Gaidhealtachd*), Dingwall Library (*Leabharlann Inbhir Pheofharain*), Dingwall Primary School (*Bun-sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain*) and at the construction site of the new Dingwall Academy (*Acadamaidh Inbhir Pheofharain*), although these last two institutions lie on the other side of the River Peffery from the area investigated. As would be expected, there is a great concentration of Gaelic signs around *An Taigh Gàidhlig*, the Gaelic Community and Resource Centre.

Small amounts of Gaelic can also be seen as mottos on war memorials (the Seaforth Highlanders' motto 'Cuidich 'n Rìgh' [Serve the King]), on a sign at the Army Cadet Force (the same motto for the now defunct Highlanders regiment), at the Air Training Corps (the Highland Wing's motto 'Amais àrd' [Aim High]) and at the Police Station (the Northern Constabulary's motto 'Dion is cuidich' [Protect and Serve]).

An increasing number of businesses in Scotland – including First ScotRail, the three main Scottish banks and some high-profile supermarket chains – now use bilingual signs, although most do so only in parts of the Highlands and Islands. In Dingwall, the largest private businesses with Gaelic signs are Tesco (see fig 5) and the First ScotRail station. Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG), a charitable organization that exists to promote Gaelic, supports such initiatives by offering translation advice as well as 50% grants, up to £700, for internal or external signs. CnaG claims that a Gaelic sign 'attracts attention', 'establishes your Scottish identity' and 'boosts recall levels'.⁴³ In the case of many businesses, however, the use of signs is the only recognition given to Gaelic. It would most likely prove difficult, for example, to find Gaelic-speaking staff able to help

43 'Comunn na Gàidhlig, Sanas: Soidhnichean Dà-chànanach, Cuideachadh's Taic-airgid = Sanas: Bilingual Signs, Support and Financial Assistance', leaflet (Inverness: Comunn na Gàidhlig, 2006).



customers book a train ticket, pay-in a cheque or purchase groceries. As shown by Wilson McLeod elsewhere, much more action is needed to promote Gaelic in Scottish business.⁴⁴



Figure 5. A bilingual sign at the Tesco supermarket. Dingwall, November 2006.

Multilingual Road Signage: Promoting Multiculturalism?

In Norway, the strong symbolic connotations of the linguistic landscape are clear, since the attempts to exclude Sámi text from road signs seem to be aimed at marking territorial identity as more Norwegian than Sámi even though the territory is populated by both groups. As the road signs in question feature the names of entire municipalities, these territorial claims go well beyond the roadside verge to encompass the entire community. Exclusion of the Sámi language would be a denial of the right of the Sámi to their culture in an area historically inhabited by them as well as a refusal to recognize the mistakes of the Norwegianization process. In Italy, the linguistic changes promoted by the Lega Nord could conceivably have historical

⁴⁴ Wilson McLeod, *The State of the 'Gaelic Economy': A Research Report* (Edinburgh: Roinn na Ceiltis agus Eòlas na h-Alba, Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann [Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh], 2001).

justifications, but these are damaged by the political motivations that are clearly the main driving force behind the campaign. In Scotland, Gaelic speakers are not clearly separated from English speakers, and there has been little party political involvement in sign campaigns up to now. Gaelic town-centre street signs and business signs, in Dingwall at any rate, have not been nearly as controversial as bilingual signs on trunk roads, but they provide an interesting example of how the linguistic landscape can be used in attempts to reverse language shift. Their main limitation in this role is that, too often, they are not reinforced by the promotion of active Gaelic use in public institutions or in the workplace. In all three cases, despite these differences, it can be seen that the street is an important locus for the negotiation of linguistic changes, and for the staking of claims based on linguistic identity as well as for the struggles that ensue when such claims are made.

The language of the street itself, the linguistic landscape, can speak volumes about the linguistic practices of those who own, govern, contest and inhabit the street. In the cases documented here, bilingual content on official signs is frequently limited to place-names. The logic often followed in monolingual signage, according to which the language offering greatest comprehension is used, should not affect place-names, as names do not need to carry meaning: their main purpose is to connote. Names do, however, carry meaning in terms of the linguistic identity they represent. All the endonyms of a place – the names that are used by the people living there – should be represented as much as possible. To deny any one of them denies an element of that place's linguistic identity, both historical and contemporary, as Hicks notes: 'place-names, and therefore signage, not only represent existing linguistic territory but also past, ancestral territory'.⁴⁵ Therefore we can include the symbolic functions of place identity and attachment, or perhaps toponymic identity and 'toponymic attachment', within the linguistic landscape.⁴⁶ Further work linking linguistic landscape studies and research into place-names could contribute much to each of the two fields.

45 Davyth Hicks, 'Scotland's Linguistic Landscape: The Lack of Policy and Planning with Scotland's Place-Names and Signage', *Research on Language Policy and Planning* seminar (2002) <<http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/celtic/poileasaidh/hicksseminar.html>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

46 Laura Kostanski and Ian D. Clark, "'Place Attachment and Toponymic Attachment: Are They the Same?" Reflections on an Australian Case Study Conducted in 2004', paper presented at the *Names Across Time and Space* conference organised by the International Committee of Onomastic Sciences, Pisa, Italy (2005).



Returning to Walter Benjamin's account of multilingualism in action, he appears to suggest that inclusive multilingualism should be regarded as positive and progressive. Where controversies arise regarding multilingual signage, as has happened in all three of the countries studied here, this is likely to be due to perceptions that link the minority group to conspiracy. In the case of the 'Sámi elite' or the 'Gaelic mafia', this can be argued against. However, as long as road signs in northern Italy act as an arena for political conflict, public consent for bilingual signs will continue to be limited.

The Subversive Poetics of a Marginalized Discourse and Culture

E. Dimitris Kitis

How can you know your brother when you do not know
that hooded man, who is in fact your brother?
Eubulides of Miletus¹

Setting the Scene: Locus, Style, Function

If you were to stroll casually along the streets of Thessaloniki in Greece, you would undoubtedly not fail to notice a profusion of ‘vandalism’. An attentive pedestrian might also note that a particular type of graffiti is prevalent in certain sections of the city. It is usually encountered in specific inner-city neighbourhoods, which have been hit by urban planning (a cocktail of de-commercialization, suburbanization and depreciation in the housing market). These districts tend to be architecturally and demographically compact.

The type of graffiti prevalent in these areas focuses on the use of language and is not extensively decorative. It consists mostly of apophthegmatic statements and phrases. Overall, it consists of simple print in aerosol paint and is usually black or red. The messages expressed are routinely marked by an encircled-A (standing for ‘Anarchist’) or a black or red star signifying anarchism; both act as ‘tags’ which help to distinguish these from similar slogans of fascist

¹ Timothy Williamson, *Vagueness: The Problems of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 8.



content. The term *street slogans* will henceforth be used to define this material and differentiate it from the graffiti associated with hip-hop and other subcultures.²

In this paper, I will argue that street slogans constitute a type of anti-language based on a powerful and subversive poetics. This anti-language contributes to the forging of new linguistic affiliations and thus injects semantic change and novel discursive practices into the standard language of the community. Street slogans, as I define them, are messages that express resistance to economic, legal, political and religious authority or, as Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Language and Symbolic Power*, street slogans are part of 'a struggle over the specifically symbolic power of making people see and believe, of predicting and prescribing, of making known and recognized'.³ They attack social order and organization through an incessant and deliberate re-contextualization of the language of the community. The poetic gambits of this marginal(ized) discourse include a combination of linguistic devices that primarily effect spatio-temporal contexts and frames of knowledge. I will analyse some of these devices within the socio-linguistic framework of conflict. The essay will then conclude with a discussion of the intertextuality that occurs between hegemonic discourses and street slogans, showing that the conflict between the two is constantly shifting linguistically.

Sociality as Discursive Acts

It is well-established that language is the main fabric of sociality. It is a commodity shared by all members of a speech community, uniting members but also distinguishing them according to their level of competent use. The interpretation of discourse is a perennial process. It depends on spatio-temporal context and also intertextual considerations that spark changes in meaning. Yet, there is an element of language that is also rigid. Thus, interpretation of language must

2 Jane M. Gadsby, 'Looking at the Writing on the Wall: A Critical Review and Taxonomy of Graffiti Texts', (1995) <<http://www.graffiti.org/faq/critical.review.html>>[accessed 3 February 2010]; Nancy MacDonald, *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. by John B. Thompson, trans. by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 181; originally published *Ce que parler veut dire : l'économie des échanges linguistiques* (Paris: Fayard, 1982).

also consider that communication between members of society and between members and authorities is effected through a language that is definite and structured. I must also take into account that communication between members of society and between members and authorities is effected through a language that is particular and distinct.⁴

Societal coherence is borne out in discursive acts. For example, we inform, order, apologize, promise, offend and marry in language and through language.⁵ Indeed, all our institutions are discursive institutions, not because regulations and laws are written in language, but because we both support and oppose institutions in language, that is, with our discursive presence or absence. Language is thus flexible, malleable and adaptable, while also being a fixed and stable code that we share and appropriate in order to operate and perform socially.

Street Slogans as Anti-Language

Taking this as the frame of sociolinguistic communication, we might assume a broadly homogeneous society whose members speak, or at least understand, a homogeneous language. Another way of thinking about the frame of language, however, is to divide society into two linguistic situations: a society and an anti-society using two corresponding linguistic forms, a language and an anti-language.⁶ This is a hypothetical example, but one that approximates reality, as has been shown, for example, in research on social accents.⁷ This view of an idealized antithesis between a 'standard' language and an anti-language is made in contrast to the more familiar conceptions of 'non-standard' language: dialect, creoles and argots. The latter ideas about 'non-standard' language do not adequately address the relationships between variability in language to differences in power. Scholars in the field do not adequately include in their analysis

4 Umberto Eco, *The limits of interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); published in Italian as *I limiti dell'interpretazione* (Milano: Bompiani, 1990).

5 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

6 M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 185.

7 Cf. Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 2001).



the underlying social inequality that this variability produces and reflects.⁸ The notion of an anti-language embodies such social activities as opposition, protest, conflict and resistance because it takes into consideration the linguistic deviation from mainstream forms. Because of this, the discourse of an anti-language reflects and produces social change and inequality.

In *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, M.A.K. Halliday argues that speakers of oppressed languages 'tend to excel at verbal contest and verbal display' (185). Street slogans in Thessaloniki predominantly make use of modern Greek and are thus generally intelligible to 'standard' speakers. However, they also oppose certain 'standard' forms and varieties. This opposition gives an aura of outlandishness to their language. In this context, street slogans can be considered to be inherently oppositional. Their use of Greek, for instance, inherently seeks to position their authors as 'freedom fighter' rather than 'terrorists'.

The writing of street slogans is a discursive practice in which the authors of the slogans perform roles that produce anti-meanings or, in effect, counter-information. These anti-meanings – while purportedly conveyed 'in writing' – are in effect unsaid or unarticulated meanings that audiences may not be fully aware of, but which are nonetheless invoked.

Halliday notes the conscious attempt of an anti-society to set up its own alternative universe through an anti-language. He writes:

An anti-language is the means of realization of a subjective reality: not merely expressing it, but actively creating and maintaining it. In this respect, it is just another language. But the reality is counter-reality, and this has certain special implications. It implies the foregrounding of the social structure and social hierarchy. It implies a preoccupation with the definition and defence of identity through the ritual functioning of the social hierarchy. It implies a special conception of information and of knowledge. (172)

Street slogans in Thessaloniki may thus be perceived as an anti-language that performs a critique of mainstream society. Halliday maintains that an anti-language may also be seen as presenting and reinforcing another reality, albeit one in opposition to the mainstream. In this argument, slogans function as a discourse that follows explicit conventions and as a form of discourse that

8 Cf. James Milroy and Leslie Milroy, *Authority in Language* (London: Routledge, 1999).

constitutes an 'interactional' discourse genre as defined by Grice's cooperative principle.⁹

Slogan texts also generate structures of meaning beyond their explicit content. If we assume that an edict of cooperation underlies all conversations, then we can assume that language constructs reality mostly through the implied meanings of utterances that are not necessarily included or part of what has actually been written. With this in mind, we can look for instances of poetic licence within street slogans because poetic devices actively contest 'standard' language and serve to define street slogans as an anti-language. The underlying question will be: what is the nature of this poetics and what part does it play in enforcing or energizing counter-reality?

Street Slogans Disrupting Constructional Meaning

As users of languages, we know exactly how words combine with other words. We know what sort of collocations are permitted, what position words can occupy in the linear syntactic domain (licensed constructions or grammar) and also how to apply words in a broader semantic sense so that they reflect meanings and conceptualizations of our world and reality, as for example in the use of metaphor. To illustrate this point, one can think of meaningful constructions that are appropriate, others that are awkward and still others that are simply unacceptable. The chief characteristic of the various ways that one constructs meanings is that it often exceeds the meanings of an individual context.¹⁰ People's knowledge of constructional meanings can be acquired throughout their discursive lives, but it far exceeds their exposure to raw data. Such linguistic knowledge both reflects and feeds on background knowledge organized in frames and scripts.¹¹ Of course, this excessive knowledge is shared among speakers of a language. If it were not, speakers would not be able to communicate effectively. In the language of street slogans, it is this acquired knowledge that is targeted by writers who strive to

9 Paul H. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

10 P. Kay, *Words and the Grammar of Context* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 1997).

11 Roger Schank and Robert Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structure* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1977).



subvert established representations: street slogans function to pervert our shared frames of knowledge. Consider, for instance, the following street slogans:

1. Δόξα τα λεφτά έχουμε Θεό. Α
doksas ta lefta, ehume Θεο
'Praise money, we have God'
(old town, Raktivan St.)
2. Εμπρός για το χάος Α
Empros για to haos
'Onward to chaos'
(old town, Raktivan St.)
3. Πωλείται πτυχίο καλών τεχνών
Polite ptychio kalon tehnon.
'Degree in fine arts for sale'
(city centre, St. Dimitrios St.)

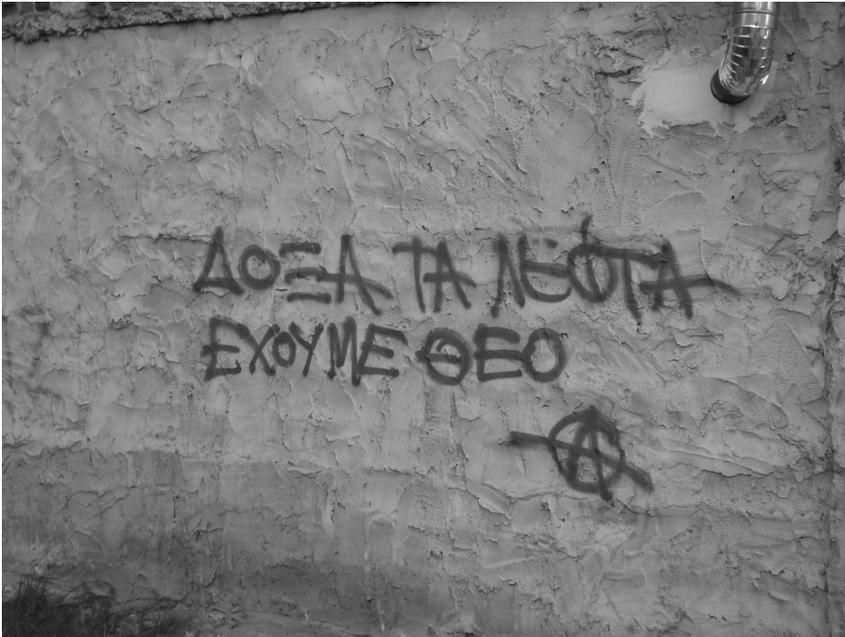


Figure 1. 'Praise money we have god, (with capital-A)'. Street slogan in the old town, Thessaloniki. Photograph by the author.

Example 1 subverts a cherished and popular Greek saying that is often uttered by working people in everyday discourse: 'Praise God,

we can make ends meet'. In its altered form, money acquires the acclaimed position of universal appreciation and, hence, praise.

Example 2 mimics a directive speech act:¹² a cry rallying people to a cause. Instead of a cause, however, the slogan rallies people to chaos. Although it is a grammatically correct sentence, the sequence of words stands out. These words would not normally co-occur. In effect, this is an unlicensed collocation that reflects an incongruity of meaning and act. The effect of this altered rallying cry is to disrupt and destabilize the realm of 'standard' language.

Example 3 has a similar impact. It dislocates entrenched, taken-for-granted knowledge of the world. Degrees are not for sale – in the sense of a direct remit for purchasing the final degree – yet the terms are reminiscent of advertising discourse and the world of marketing in which everything is for sale and has a monetary value. The slogan may either be aiming to ridicule the education system or institutional art, or it may even be aiming to castigate transactional practices in both.

These poetic subversions provide an alternative account of social reality by altering a few word order combinations. They disrupt predictable meanings by replacing expected collocations with incongruent co-occurrences, thus subverting our beliefs and our commonsense understanding of the world. Through these examples, we can see how slogan-writers effect reality by generating a counter-reality.

Street Slogans Sporting Disruptive Attributions

Another method of effecting poetic subversion is by disruptive attributions. Attributive phrases are those that assign an attribute to a particular entity. They are particularly dependent on word ordering and are typically used with descriptive language. The statement, 'George is conservative', is a simple example of an attributive phrase.

Street slogans capitalize on our knowledge of acceptable attributions. Instead of conforming to permissible configurations, street slogans express incongruous attributions which aim to subvert our knowledge of the world. Their aim is to de-familiarize and alienate established knowledge and ultimately to destabilize their audiences.

12 John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).



Street slogans commonly assign attributes to their subjects. Similarly, verbs in the slogans mostly denote states rather than processes. Processes can be transactional, as when they signify activities or events (e.g. 'John is running', 'John hit Tom'); in such cases, the subject is an agent in the event. In street slogans, such active attributions are rare. States may be of two types: either expressed as a permanent feature of the carrier, as in 'John is tall'; or expressed as a transient characteristic, as in 'John is angry'. The prevalent form of street slogans is based on attributive clauses containing predicates that signify 'irreparable' states rather than states that are erasable or transient. The slogans thus work to inculcate new perceptions of the world as permanent states. Consider the following samples:

4. *Το κρέας είναι νεκρό*
To kreas ine nekro
'Meat is dead'
(University campus/School of Agricultural Studies)

5. *Σεκιουριτάς σημαίνει χαφιές...με βούλα*
Sekiuritas simeni hafies...me vula
'Security officer equals snitch ...with a stamp'
(city centre, Egnatia St.)

6. *Τρομοκρατία είναι η κρατική βία*
Tromokratia ine i kratiki via
'Terrorism is state coercion'
(city centre, Filipou St.)

7. *Τρομοκρατία είναι η μαύρη εργασία*
Tromokratia ine i mavri ergasia
'Terrorism is sweatshop labour'
(city centre, Tsimiski St.)

8. *Τρομοκρατία είναι ο βασικός μισθός*
Tromokratia ine o vasikos misθος
'Terrorism is minimum wage'
(city centre, Tsimiski St.)

9. *Τρομοκρατία είναι μια ζωή με δόσεις*
Tromokratia ine mia zoi me dosis
'Terrorism is a life of instalments'
(city centre, Tsimiski St.)

Example 4 features a disruptive attributional phrase that makes an incisive comment on non-vegetarian dietary practices. Also, this slogan generates humour in its linguistic twist, as it is reminiscent of Nietzsche's notorious dictum 'God is dead'. In a similar way, Example 5 equates security guards – commonly referred to as 'securitas' in an Anglophone form – to snitches who boast a seal of (official) approval.¹³

In slogans 6 through 9, 'terrorism' is equated to a series of objects. This substitution both echoes and undermines the sort of declarations commonly heard since 2001. In Example 6, for instance, the Greek term *via* can mean 'force' or the more negative 'coercion' and often takes on the connotation of both 'regulation' and unregulated 'violence'. When combined with the noun 'terrorism', as it is here, *via* seems to prioritize the 'violence' connotation rather than the 'enforcement' one. This slogan effectively replaces state power enforcement with an unregulated and unjustified exertion of sheer (brutal) violence, made evident by the term 'terrorism'. In effect, the slogan deconstructs institutional power by putting the blame for violence on legal rationality.¹⁴ This reversal applies equally to the remaining examples. Terrorism is equated to acceptable commodities or goods, such as salaries, work and loans. All of these are undermined through semantic modification by being equated with terrorism.

The intention of the slogan authors is undoubtedly to shift the attention of readers away from government rhetoric of 'terrorist' violence (criminal, leftist, Islamist, etc.) onto everyday aspects of economic structural violence, thus turning legitimate practices into unjustified and immoral states. It is the governments, they are saying, who are the rogue actors. All these attributional statements based on terrorism drive this point home by capitalizing on our inherent knowledge of the function of identity statements. They do this by forcing us to share the writers' strong views of a world that is portrayed as inherently unfair and hostile. It is at this juncture

13 I should note here that a University security guard rushed to correct me when I called him 'securitas' within the hearing of 'active students' involved in a sit-in. He requested that I refer to him simply as a 'guard' because the term 'securitas' is perceived as 'inviting counter-violence'. This is a clear instance where the subversive discourse of slogans has become the norm.

14 Paul Ricœur 'Fragility and responsibility' in *Paul Ricœur, The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. by Richard Kearney (London, Sage Publications, 1996); originally published 'Fragilité et Responsabilité', in *Eros and Eris*, ed. by Paul van Tongren et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).



that Halliday's concept of an anti-language can be coupled with a corresponding concept of anti-society. The prospect is to link the poetic subversions to a presumed revelation of extra-linguistic entities and states of affairs.



Figure 2. 'Robbery = interest rates & foreclosures, (with capital-A).' Smashing of CCTV camera and spraying slogan outside bank. Photo acquired from: <<http://athens.indymedia.org/>>.

Street Slogans and Anti-Authoritarian Culture

Street slogans can be found in abundance throughout Thessaloniki. They point to the existence of a community of writers with a shared agenda beyond random individualism, obscurity or artistic prowess.

Importantly, the street slogans in Thessaloniki often coincide with violent actions. These acts and the corresponding spraying of street

slogans are attributed to a loose association of anti-government (anti-establishment) groups or youths in Greece often referred to by the media as *κουκουλοφόροι* [*kukulofori*, 'hoodies'], *γνωστοί-άγνωστοι* [*gnosti-agnosti*, identifiable-unknowns], *γκαζάκηδες* [*gazakides*, 'primus stovers'],¹⁵ anarchists or simply perpetrators, anti-authoritarians or offenders.¹⁶

Many would be inclined to cite the November 1973 student uprising at the Athens Engineering School [Polytexneio] as the watershed from which sprung an anti-authoritarian culture.¹⁷ However, this culture spread beyond the university to the streets through various direct actions and media.¹⁸ In this context, it would seem that the street slogan is just one instrument of a multifaceted leftist street culture.

My objective in this essay is to link the perspective of discourse analysis to the extra-linguistic societal milieu. The examination of 'the discursive twist' in street slogans needs to be placed in a framework of particular ideological complexes. To gain wider insight, an account of the locus of street slogans needs to be considered because the meaning of slogans is not dependant on the texts alone; their physical

15 'Primus stover' was a term attributed to these groups because they used primus stoves as home-made incendiary devices.

16 A group of around ten anarchists attacked a building belonging to the Ministry of Finance at 40, Amalias Ave. around 10:30 pm. They broke the central glass window with crowbars and stones and spray-painted slogans on the walls. From Pathfinder news <<http://news.pathfinder.gr/greece/news/443751.html>,24/11/2007>[accessed 3 February 2010].

17The uprising was staged on the heels of the May 1968 student protests in France and the civil rights/peace movements in the US, but was essentially waged against the totalitarian junta of colonels that ruled Greece at the time. The rule of the junta (1967-74) is commonly perceived as having been a CIA-inspired and -backed project that shaped a 'popular' anti-Americanism in post-dictatorial Greece. See Lou- is Klarevas, 'Were the Eagle and the Phoenix Birds of a Feather? The United States and the Greek Coup of 1967', *Hellenic Observatory*, Discussion Paper No. 15 (2004) <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/hellenicObservatory/pdf/DiscussionPapers/Klarevas.pdf>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

18 The culture was spread by media such as blogs, internet sites and newspapers, counter-information events and radio stations. It was also spread by: the creation of youth-autonomous spaces (squats), occupations of university facilities, anti-war demonstrations and anti-capitalist/liberal reform rallies, solidarity actions staged in support of immigrants and incarcerated comrades. The list should also include violent actions such as assaults on banks, police stations, government buildings, newspaper, media and political party offices, as well as the torching of government and diplomatic cars.



context on the street is just as important. The content demonstrates that the writers are familiar with local knowledge and local concerns. Slogans are also habitually replicated in multiple locations, literally overwhelming many urban walls with their sprayed message. Specifically three central areas of the city, the University campus, the upper town (old town) and city centre – all in immediate proximity to each other – have high concentrations of street slogans. The writers' local knowledge is projected spatially and temporally. For example, there is a profusion of slogans in the vicinity of the upper town. These include themes such as the praise of a nearby squat, the chastisement of the state of education (a University is in the vicinity), the challenging of the legality of interest rates in working class neighbourhoods as well as the condemnation of controversial social security reforms.



Figure 3. 'Freedom to B. Botzatzis, (with capital-A)'. Aftermath of protest directed at the newspaper Makedonia/Thessaloniki. The protest was in solidarity to B. Botzatzis and against the mass-media. Photo acquired from: <<http://athens.indymedia.org/>>.

In order to highlight these points and draw some wider conclusions about street slogans, the following examples serve as a point of illustration. All of the following feature the names of anarchists or people related to the anti-authoritarian sub-culture:

10. *Λευτεριά στον Β. Μποτζατζή*¹⁹ *αλληλεγγύη Στους 3 διωκόμενους*
Lefteria ston B. Botzatzis alileghii stus 3 diokomenus
'Freedom for B. Botzatzis solidarity to the 3 persecuted'
(old town, Akropoleos St. pictorial)

11. *Πολιτικό άσυλο στον Zulkuf Murat Bora Bahoz απεργία πείνας από 17/5*
Politiko asilo ston Zulkuf Murat Bora Bahoz apergia pinas apo 17/5
'Political asylum to Zulkuf Murat Bora Bahoz Hunger strike from 17/5'
(city centre, Thessaloniki)

These slogans cite the names of an incarcerated comrade and an asylum seeker and connect them to the loaded words 'Λευτεριά' [lefteria, freedom], 'πολιτικό άσυλο' [politiko asylo, political asylum] or 'αλληλεγγυη' [alileghii, solidarity]. These concepts carry deep socio-cultural resonances and position those named in a positive light.

The explicit references to individuals in these slogans are typical and consistent with a solidarity ethic espoused by anti-authoritarian groups. Inscribing names on street walls is a formulaic way to implicate an oppressive authority in the unjust incarceration of local individuals. By persistently marking everyday public space, the writers attempt to create a common background in which the referent is made recognizable as a victim of the government and media. By suggesting that the individual has been unjustly incarcerated, street slogans actively support a different script of events: their anti-language competes with institutional media (TV, the press, internet and government rhetoric) by supplying a local version of events.²⁰

19 Botzatzis is a postgraduate philosophy student who was arrested for the arson of a car showroom. The slogan 'Λευτεριά στον Β. Μποτζατζή' [Freedom for B. Botzatzis] could be found at multiple locations in Thessaloniki and other cities following his arrest.

20 Title of 'mainstream' newspaper article, which incriminates Botzatzis: 'Έξαρθρώθηκε ο πυρήνας των «γκαζάκηδων»' [The 'primus stovers' nucleus is broken up], *Kathimerini*, 30 November 2007.



Hegemony and Intertextuality

In order to evaluate the overall ideological implications of street slogans and grasp the urgency of their poetics, we may want to consider the hegemonic language used by established institutions like the mass-media.²¹ Perhaps what has made anti-authoritarian culture so infamous is the oft-cited epithet ‘hoodies’. In reports from the media, this word is usually used in place of less provocative words such as ‘youths’ or ideologically weighty terms such as ‘anti-authoritarian’ and ‘anarchists’.²² Indeed, the term ‘hoodies’ seems to eclipse all other terms in the media’s effort to categorize the central participants in situations of anti-authoritarian conflict, such as confrontations with the police or the damaging of property. In effect, the term ‘hoodies’ is used by the mainstream media to identify a variety of unidentified groups which otherwise elude any type of definitive identification.²³

Consider the following two newspaper headlines:

12. *Επίθεση κουκουλοφόρων σε φυλάκια του ΑΠΘ*

Epithesi kukuloforon se fylakia tu APTH

‘Attack by hoodies on guard-houses of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki’

13. *Άγνωστοι επιτέθηκαν σε φυλάκια του ΑΠΘ*²⁴

Agnosti epitethikan se fylakia tu APTH

‘Unidentified assailants attacked guard houses of AUTH’

‘Hoodies’ in Example 12 and ‘unidentified’ in Example 13 both point to the same perpetrators. Neither term names them; both are equally opaque. The headline might just as easily have read ‘Attack

21 Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991).

22 Loukas Velidakis, ‘Επίθεση κουκουλοφόρων σε φυλάκια του ΑΠΘ’ [Attack by hoodies on Aristotle University of Thessaloniki guard-houses] 11 June 2008 <<http://www.contra.gr/Life/News/201897.html>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

23 ‘Cf. the term ‘les koukoulofori’ used by highly reputed foreign press *Le Monde*, 9 December 2008, reporting on the recent December 2008 riots in Greece spreading globally.

24 ‘Άγνωστοι επιτέθηκαν σε φυλάκια του ΑΠΘ’ [Unidentified assailants attacked guard houses of AUTH] 11 June 2008 <<http://news.pathfinder.gr/greece/news/479973.html>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

on guard houses of AUTH' without leaving out any significant information. Yet both headlines attribute agency.

The terms 'hoodies' and 'unidentifieds' do not carry the same weight because 'hoodies', unlike 'unidentifieds', are automatically associated with violence.²⁵ The 'othering' of 'hoodies' reinforces the positive agency of a law-abiding majority. Therein lies the hegemonic potential of the media's use of the term. 'Hoodie' is used to confine interpretations of reported anti-authoritarian acts to the actions of a disturbed minority. However, although the term has been coined and is used pejoratively by the mass-media, 'hoodie' has also been (re)-appropriated by the street slogan writers themselves:

14. *Είμαστε όλοι κουκουλοφόροι*
Imaste oli kukulofori
'We are all hoodies'
(city centre, Egnatia St.)



Figure 4. 'We are all hoodies, (with black star)'. Street slogans contest media discourse. Photograph by the author.

25 Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), 135. At this point, we can cite a recurring advertisement in the local paper *Islington Tribune* picturing a hooded youth with the caption 'We are not always trouble'.



The writer of the slogan in Example 14 borrows the designation ‘hoodies’ and deploys it in a different context from that of the newspaper headlines. This is a case of intertextuality par excellence in which the meaning of a negative term is poetically transformed. The writers redeploy the negative and referentially empty media nominal by transforming it into a positively-valued, empty referent. This works to identify everybody with the term ‘hoodie’ thus to subvert the hegemonic assignation of media discourse.

What emerges is a previously unnoticed wit that punctuates our secure perceptions of surrounding reality and often inculcates new perceptions. Much of this potency is owed to an acutely penetrating discursive creativity. Combinations of lexical items disparately primed and yet squeezed into seemingly distorted configurations are novelties that will be claimed by the semantics of ordinary language.²⁶ Indeed, novelty and subversion soon become normality and conformity as linguistic forms create new affiliations that can better describe our perceptions and interpretations of our environment.



Figure 5a. ‘The Aegean belongs to its fish, (with capital-A)’. A renowned anti-nationalist slogan in Greece’. Photo acquired from Giorgos A. Peponis, *Οι Τοίχοι Ανήκουν στο πλήθος!* (Athens’ To Pontiki).

26 Michael Hoey, *Lexical Priming* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

Overview

At a graffiti contest held during the 2004 Athens Olympics, Evangelos Venizelos, the then Culture Minister of Greece, stated that graffiti 'once a sign of rebellion' is now considered an 'intensely communicative art form' and 'a symbol of cultural unity'.²⁷ Nevertheless, slogan-writing, like all other illegal graffiti, is considered anti-social and, as such, is a punishable offence. For example, graffiti is lumped together with litter, excrement and excessive noise in a 2006 European Parliament resolution.²⁸ Overall, in the context of economic interest and city development, graffiti is believed to decrease property values and harm tourism and business by 'sullyng the image' of a city. Such views are regularly reflected in statements made by public servants or corporate spokespeople.²⁹ For some critics, graffiti is simply a visual pollutant which ought to be prevented or removed.³⁰

By contrast, supporters of graffiti deplore the preoccupation with cleanliness, order and private property and argue that such images are propagated through moral panics and 'epistemic clampdowns'. Street slogans in some developed countries can be thought of as evidence of democracy at work. Their presence reminds us that literacy and public opinion are not the exclusive privilege of the well-to-do. A spray-can can be bought for next to nothing and applied to a wall any time or anywhere within a vast urban landscape. The medium is de facto anonymous and unregulated. We could also say that the street slogan genre is a domain of discourse that, while organized, is difficult to monopolize and is thus accessible to underrepresented and disenfranchised individuals or interest groups. This is perhaps why vandalism is so irksome to local government and to the average tax payer who provides the revenue to combat the phenomenon.

27 'A Sociological Analysis of Graffiti', *University of British Columbia* <http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/pdfs/seeds_05/winter/graffitti/A%20Sociological%20Analysis%20of%20Graffiti.pdf> [Accessed 3 February 2010].

28 'Thematic strategy on the urban environment', *European Parliament: The Legislative Observatory*, INI/2006/2061.

29 A spokesperson for Transport for London recently claimed that vandalism creates a 'general atmosphere of neglect and social decay which in turn encourages crime'. See 'Iconic Banksy image painted over', *BBC News*, 20 April 2007.

30 M. J. Whitford, *Getting Rid of Graffiti: A Practical Guide to Graffiti Removal and Anti-graffiti Protection* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1992).



Το Αιγαίο ανήκει στα πιάτα του

Βορειοανατολικό κατεύθυνεται η Μίνα Κασανιά. Νησί παίρνει, νησί αφήνει, καταγράφοντας χαρακτηριστικές συνταγές από το καβέσι. Οι πέντε που μανιέρεται σήμερα για εμάς είναι από τη Χίο, τη Σαμοθράκη, τη Μυτιλήνη, τη Σάμο και τη Ρήμιο.

ΦΩΤΟ: STYLING: ΠΑΝΩ ΔΕΜΕΤΣΟΓΛΟΥ, ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΑ: ΔΕΛΙΑ ΜΟΥΝΤΑ, ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΕΣ: ΓΙΩΡΓΟΣ ΔΗΜΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ

**Χιάτικη
ντοματσαλάτα
με κρέταμο
και ματσέλο
σε φρέσκο
σεφενάκι**

ΥΛΙΚΑ ΓΙΑ 8 ΑΤΟΜΑ
1/2 κιλό κρέταμο (για 8 άτομα)
250 γραμμ. ντοματίνια,
κομμένα σε 6 ροδέλες
2 τσέρπια του κρεμμύδι (χωρό
μυστίλη)
1 κιλό σέφενάκι (σε φρέσκο)
200 γραμμ. κρέταμο τούραρι
(60 θέρπια)
60 γραμμ. κόκκινη [σε άμυρα]
8 κ.σ. ελαιόλαδο
αλάτι και φρέσκο σερπέριο
σε κούρα

ΕΚΤΕΛΕΣΗ
Βάζουμε ένα μικρό σπασμένο
πυρέκι στη φωτιά και βάζουμε
πολύ το σερπέριο με ένα κουτί
Αιγαίο. Πιάνεται άμεσα και
μας μανιέρο και το αφήνουμε
σε ροδέλες. Το κρέταμο να
είναι από την άλλη μεριά και
αφήνουμε να μαγειρευτεί
το κρέταμο και το σερπέριο
να είναι καλά. Προσθέτουμε
τα ντοματίνια και το κρέταμο
και το αφήνουμε να
μαγειρευτεί για 10 λεπτά.
Καθαρίζουμε τα σπασμένα
και κόβουμε στα 8. Προσθέτουμε
το κρέταμο που μαγειρεύτηκε
και ανακατεύουμε καλά.
Ανακατεύουμε με ελαιόλαδο
και σερπέριο. Βάζουμε
με στη μέση. Βάζουμε ένα
κουτί Αιγαίο και σερπέριο
σε κούρα.

Tip
• Κρέταμο ή σερπέριο σε κούρα
συνδυάζονται με πολλά ντοματίνια,
όπως στο «Φρέσκο» της Νέας
Υρκίας και στην «Σοφιστική 1
και Αρτοποιία 1». Αίμα, τμήτ. 210
3254 4224 ή στο «Μεσογειακό»,
52 και Κολομβία 1 Πάνα, τμήτ.
210 3723 146. Αν θέλουμε
μπορούμε να το αντικαταστήσουμε
με φρέσκο σερπέριο (κρέταμο).



Figure 5b. ‘The Aegean belongs to its dishes’. The paraphrased street slogan features as a heading of the recipe section in a lifestyle magazine. Photo acquired from Vima Gourmet 21 July 2008.

In the street slogan practice, youth-writers emerge as subversive poets with an incisive off-the-cuff discourse and a cutting-edge wit in their armoury. In attempting to overturn commonsensical knowledge, they also seek to overturn a well-entrenched belief-system. They aspire to ‘bring down’ hegemonic systems by processes of de-familiarization and de-habituation for the aggregates of people. One way of impacting people is by appropriating public space and turning it into a discursive platform that upholds an oppositional discourse. It would not be unfair to say that the primary aim of these street slogans is to communicate a message of political disillusionment or defiance in the simplest way possible. The writers’ ultimate target appears to be the deconstruction of our humanized institutions and their institutional powers or the de-legitimization or de-humanization of all rationalized and hegemonically coerced political and social powers.

SkateSpeak: An Interview with Iain Borden

Elisha Foust

Iain Borden is Head of the Bartlett School of Architecture and Professor of Architecture and Urban Culture. His research explores not only the functionality and design of architecture, but also how people who live in cities perceive and use architecture. He has published an in-depth study of skateboarding in modern cities.¹ His recent work is into the automobile and how people experience the city through driving. We met at his office in London in the summer of 2008.

EF: One of the topics that this book pursues as a theme is the street as a site on which creative, individual practices are appropriated, commercialized and made popular for economic gain. When those practices lose their commercial or commodity value, however, they often return to the street – the street reabsorbs what is no longer commercially viable. Could you talk about the history of skateboarding in this context?

IB: It is quite interesting in the history of skateboarding. The first phase of skateboarding took place in the very late 1950s and early 1960s. It took off particularly in the beach cities of the Western USA: in Santa Barbara, in Santa Monica, in Santa Cruz and on the west seaboard of California, but also in places like South Wales, where there is an area known as ‘The Mumbles’. Effectively skating was born from surfers wondering what to do when the surf was flat and creating surf-like experiences when they could not go surfing.

Early skaters adapted the skateboard from a primitive child’s toy, the scooter, which was made from a pair of roller-skate wheels and

¹ Iain Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body* (Oxford: Berg, 2006).



trucks, an apple or fruit crate and a piece of wood. They removed the crate and handle bars and were left with the plank of wood with wheels attached. They used this to replicate surf moves. Throughout the early 1960s this type of skating gained popularity and in 1965 *Life* magazine pictured it on the front cover.²

At this point, skateboard manufacturers started to emerge. A company called Vita Pak created very large commercial skateboards and mass-produced them. Anticipating that skateboards would be hugely popular, they geared up for a huge sale of skateboards around Christmas of 1965, which never quite emerged. There was an immediate commercial bomb.

Skateboarding returned, as you say, not to streets, but to rather strange architectures. It was then that skateboarders began trying to ride empty swimming pools, old drainage ditches and some of the really big water management construction projects in California created to manage water run-off. Skateboarding returned to those strange landscapes. We are not particularly talking about downtown architectures at this point; we are talking about suburban architectures and the outside of suburban architectures.

Then in the early 1970s two new kinds of technology were invented. One from a surfer called Frank Nasworthy, who adapted roller-skate wheel technology, which is based on polyurethane, to skateboards. These wheels made skateboards much smoother and gave them grip. The other thing that changed was the truck mechanism, which is the bit of metal that connects the wheels to the board. What is called a 'double action truck' was invented. This gave the truck two urethane bushes. These bushes enabled a more stable and more responsive steering mechanism than was possible before.

Around 1973 skateboarding started to take-off again and became increasingly popular to the point that the first purpose-built skateboard parks emerged. Also during this time, skateboard magazines started to take-off: there was *Skateboarder* in America and a *Skateboard!* in Britain.

Another crash in popularity occurred around 1979-1980. From 1980, skateboarding went through a decline. During this time, it became a marginal activity. Being a skateboarder was a hardcore thing to be; you really had to want to be a skater.

Because all these wonderful skateboard parks had closed down in the early- to mid-eighties, many skaters in Britain, Germany, Brazil and particularly in the US started to get into street skateboarding. Throughout the 1980s there was a lot of ramp-based, vertical

2 'Skateboard Mania – and Menace', *Life*, 14 May 1965.

skateboarding which was like the skateboarding that took place in skateboards parks but was instead based on wooden ramps. Alongside of this ramped-based skating emerged a style of street skating where the skaters used the ollie, a popping movement, to ride up onto street furniture. From 1990 onwards, street skating became the dominant form of skateboarding.

A lot of the older, larger companies went out of business as the smaller, seemingly independent companies took over. This is particularly true of board manufacture. Skateboarding has been through various peaks and troughs, but currently it has seen twenty years of a relatively constant popularity throughout the world.



Skate City, London South Bank. Photograph by Elisha Foust.

EF: I would like to talk about the meaning of an 'authentic' identity in skate culture. Is there a particular claim to an authentic identity that is based upon a location such as the street as opposed to other locations such as modern-day skate parks?

IB: Yes, this was especially true in the 70s and 80s when skateboarding was counter-cultural: to be a skater was to be opposed to mainstream society. A skateboarder was someone who was not into team sports, did not wear a suit or have an office job. A skater during this time did not subscribe to dominant cultural values. In America, this meant not playing Little League baseball. In the UK, it meant not playing football. Skateboarders were always slightly outside.



You see a lot of that in skateboarding discourse in the 70s and 80s. They very much set themselves up in opposition; thus 'authenticity' for skateboarding was slightly self-referential. It meant that you were an authentic skateboarder *if* skating was your whole life. Skateboarding defined your attitude to life.

What has obviously changed throughout the 1990s and in the 2000s is that all kinds of subcultures now exist and are thus less totalizing and less complete than they once were. For all kinds of different reasons – some to do with the internet, some to do with people getting older, some to do with a greater degree of communication – subcultures are much more fractured and more marginal than they used to be. It is now possible for someone to be a surfer, a skateboarder, an opera fan and to be gay. It is possible to support Manchester United or the Chicago Bears while also being an artist and a bank manager. You can be all those things at different times of day on different days of the week. Therefore authenticity is not about a *complete* lifestyle. It is more about a particular attitude that one adopts when one is engaged in that particular practice.

One of the things that defines a skateboarder as authentic now is when skateboarding is done not because it is the popular thing – because your mates are doing it or because it is the thing that goes with a pair of shoes you are wearing or that goes with the video game you are playing – but when it is done out of a sense of *enjoyment*.

One thing that has been inherent to skateboarding throughout its history is that it has not been tied to competition. It is a sport or an activity based on pleasure. One of the unique things, for instance, about skateboarding competitions is that they are slightly anti-competitive. If people win, that is great. But often you see people lend each other boards and cheer other competitors just as much as you see them being psyched-up for themselves. Even at the highest level when there is a lot of money or prestige at stake, there is a strong sense that the event is about the pleasure of skateboarding and the amazingness of the activity.

The first time you ever see a skateboarder who says 'I'm interested in this to win; I want to win above all else; I want to be the best skateboarder that has ever been known', he or she would be completely unpopular. Even someone like Tony Hawk, who is the most successful skater of all time, does not project a *persona*. He is genuinely into skateboarding and happens to be extremely good at it. To be authentic in skateboarding is to be someone who is, as it were, genuinely interested and connected to the activity itself. That does

not necessarily mean that you are particularly good; it means that you enjoy it.

There is a flip side to that. The inauthentic skater is the person who is into it because they are emulating other skaters or they are trying to replicate what they have seen done on a video, rather than enjoying themselves skating.

EF: Today there seems to be a wide diversity of people who skate. Is skateboarding an activity in which ethnic, economic, age and sexual differences have become somewhat blurred?

IB: In the 1950s you were supposed to go to school, maybe go to college, get a job, get married, have kids and be serious. Obviously one of the big things that has changed in general social makeup is the rise in leisure and pleasure time. This means that people do not have to grow up. I can be a professor of architecture and still be a skateboarder. That idiom of being an adult, and I will talk about being an adult male because I am an adult male, has changed. Maybe twenty years ago a 45-year-old man like myself who said he was into skateboarding would be looked upon as an object of, if not of ridicule, suspicion. But now if you tell people that you skate, it is just like saying that you are into surfing or BMX riding, mountain biking, playing football, etc. One is now allowed to play as an adult, which is a big difference when we compare it to what being an adult meant in the 50s or even 60s. That is why you get more men in their 30s, 40s and 50s skateboarding, surfing and mountain biking than you did 20 or 30 years ago. There is a sense that people of all ages are allowed to play and that play is not just something that kids do. Play is something that is important; it is a serious thing that we all need to do to enjoy our lives. Skateboarding is just one of the ways of doing that.

Skateboarding, despite the fact that there are lots of people doing it, is still often regarded as a marginal activity. There is not really an English Skateboarding Association in the same way there is the Football Association. Skateboarding is more of a loosely structured conglomeration of individuals rather than a defined hierarchical sport. What holds skaters together is skateboarding rather than a hierarchy divided into lower and upper divisions or rigid structures in which expert and novice level are categorized. In that regard, skateboarding is flat: you are just interested in skateboarding. That tends to produce a kind of camaraderie, which is often unspoken amongst skateboarders when they get together. It is not based on age



or necessarily on expertise; it is just based on the fact that you are all into it.

With regard to gender, one of the things that I have never come to grips with is why there are not more female skaters. There are lots of women snowboarders and surfers, for example, but there seems to be something about skateboarding that stops a substantial number of young women from participating. One reason for this might be that as teenagers, women grow up more quickly than boys. There is a lot of pressure on young women to become adults. Notwithstanding the things I have just said about play, I think women become sexualized younger than men.

The other thing that people talk about is that skateboarding disfigures your knees, arms and wrists. You end up with cuts everywhere. Somehow or other expectations of what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man are different. Bleeding knees and elbows are not considered feminine on a fourteen year old girl or a young woman. I do not know why women do not skate, but those are two reasons that might be possible.

EF: In your research on skateboarding, you point to the way that skaters inhabit spaces that are often considered uninhabitable. You use the idea of zero degree architecture – inspired by Henri Lefebvre’s work – and apply it to skateboarding.³ In this sense, skateboarding becomes a spatially discursive activity because it places new meaning into left-over spaces. Would you talk about how skateboarders fill non-coded areas by re-forming zero degree space into meaningful space?

IB: The first thing I want to say is that I do not think they perform a *deliberate* act of coding. Where skateboarding is different from graffiti is that graffiti is obviously a very deliberate and conscious attempt to assert a kind of visual coding into the city. For skateboarding, the codes come through the performance and the act of skateboarding. It is not a conscious activity on the part of the skateboarder to add meaning to the city for other people, but I do think it is an act in which they attempt to insert meaning for themselves. In that sense skateboarding is a very individualist and quite internally driven discourse – an almost private performance.

Having said that, I do not think it is an accident that skaters like to skate in inner-city or public locations where they can be seen by other people. The South Bank is a prime example of this. Though the space underneath the Hayward Gallery is slightly apart from the main

3 Borden, 185.

thoroughfare running along the south bank of the River Thames, it is a space which can be seen. You often find that skaters like to skate in or at the edge of public plazas or public squares in cities. They do that for the same reason that people like to walk in the city or to sit in a square. They are simply announcing their presence as an urban citizen who has a right to use the city and to use public spaces in a pleasurable manner.

This is pertinent when one considers that many skaters are young men aged between twelve and eighteen. That is the age when one starts to become aware that one is not a child, but part of a society beyond that of the family unit. There is school, organized sport, family events and then there is the city street. Skateboarding is a way of entering into the public realm in a way that allows one to move outside of school, family, sport and into the world of urban relations. That is why skateboarding is important; it allows people to produce themselves as urban citizens.

One thing that is interesting about skateboarding is that because it is sometimes considered to be a partially illegal or marginalized activity, it enables people to negotiate urban life and how urban space is used. Using a public square or a piece of pavement is always a negotiation between people of different ages, cultures, body movements and shapes and so on. One thing that skateboarding teaches skaters is that their right to use the city is always a negotiation with other city users.

It is a good way for people to learn to be urban citizens: to do what they want while understanding the parameters and the concepts and constraints that the city brings with it. With the right to skateboard comes the responsibility to not be a complete and utter jerk and annoy lots of other people. This is partly because they do not want to be annoyed, but is also because you and your fellow skateboarders will get stamped upon by authority if you ignore urban regulations.

EF: You have brought up the criminal aspect of skateboarding. Not only are fines and citations given to skateboarders, but more and more often you see cities responding to skateboarding by installing skate-stopper devices to keep skaters outside of certain territories. What is the relationship between skateboarding and the authority of the city?

IB: It is a difficult relationship because most often people cite three reasons why skateboarding should not be permitted. One is that it causes physical damage to objects; second is that it causes physical



damage to other urban citizens; third is that it is a nuisance. I will deal with each one in turn.

Skateboarding can produce scratches and marks and leave paint trails on objects. I do not have much sympathy for this argument against skateboarding because it is possible to design public spaces, benches, ledges and so on that skateboarders can use in a way that is not damaging. It seems to me that if you are going to design a public plaza or square, you should design it to be not skate proof, but skate friendly. That is actually the way to do it. You design ledges with reinforcement or build benches out of resistant materials. If you build them out of soft wood you might as well make them out of paper and then complain that they break when people sit on them.

The second complaint people make about skateboarding stems from the fear that skaters accidentally hurt people. During the last thirty years in which I have researched skateboarding, I have lost count of the number of times that newspapers and radio programs report that people are afraid of being hit by skateboarders. The fear is that a skateboarder will run into a vulnerable person. I have never read a report of that actually happening. There is undoubtedly a perception that skaters run into people, and one should not dismiss fear or perceptions as being real. By contrast, however, we frequently read about people being knocked over by cars, motorbikes and cyclists.

The most significant complaint falls into the third area – the nuisance of skateboarding. One instance of this is noise. Skateboarding can be pretty noisy, particularly when it takes place on a kind of half pipe or mini ramp. That kind of noise is repetitive and constant. Noise is one of the biggest reasons why skateboarding is inappropriate in certain places, especially residential areas. I do not, however, understand why noise should be a problem in a busy urban plaza or square. There, it is part of the general cacophony of the city.

What most urban managers are concerned about is disorder. Skateboarding is not a commercially related activity in that it is not undertaken by people who are buying cappuccino or consuming a muffin. Nor is it undertaken by people on their way to work or a job. It is purely pleasurable. Additionally, it is an activity undertaken by that 'most dangerous' group: teenage boys and young men. Most of the time, skateboarding is prevented by skate-stopper devices because of a fear of disorder rather than, as it were, because of any concrete thing that skateboarders are doing.

People often think that skateboarding is disrespectful of the world in which it takes place. Skateboarders use spaces in ways for which

they were not intended. People interpret that as an act of disrespect towards the object on which they are skating.

For example, there is a park in the East End of London called Thames Barrier Park. It is a very beautiful and landscaped park designed by Alain Provost. Although it is a park, it is not a terribly formal space. There are always people there playing soccer, playing football, walking their dogs and playing Frisbee.

At one end of the park is a memorial, commemorating the people from the East End who died during the Second World War. It does not look like a memorial. It is made up of a large wavy canopy with wavy concrete benches underneath it. Skateboarders skate on those benches. As a consequence, there are 'no skateboarding' signs up everywhere. One of the arguments against skateboarding on the memorial is that it is disrespectful to those whom the architecture honours. However, it is not designed in a formal way. In fact, it is a celebratory piece of architecture. I cannot imagine anything more wonderful than people fifty years later gaining pleasure through something that also recognizes death and suffering. The dominant interpretation is that this is disrespectful, whereas I think that it is wonderful to see. It gives pleasure to the skaters and to the people who watch them in the same way that skaters in the under-croft beneath the Hayward Gallery give pleasure to themselves as well as people walking by. I wish our urban managers had more faith in the fact that a large percentage – and I would suggest a predominant percentage of the general public – like to see things like skateboarding in the city.

One of the great things about cities is that they are big surprise machines. Every time you turn a corner, something different is occurring. It might only be a different bit of traffic flow, but every now and again you come across skateboarders and people doing all kinds of different art, culture or music. What makes cities interesting is that we are familiar with them and yet they are always strange and different to us. Skateboarding helps make public spaces strange and different. We need spaces like that. Otherwise we have only shopping malls full of Benetton and Starbucks.

EF: Skateboards tend to operate in 'space left over after planning'. They make use of found spaces. These spaces are not only good places to set up skating but by inhabiting them, skaters prevent dangerous activities from happening. For instance, you cannot do a drug deal in the under-croft of Hayward because there are so many people inhabiting that space – either skating or watching skating. In a way, skaters perform a service by



filling up unused space and inadvertently preventing criminal activities from occurring.

IB: One of the biggest examples of that is Burnside in Oregon. In Portland City, some skaters found a space underneath a freeway – it was a freeway flyover. They thought it would be great to have a skate park there. They started building a skate park out of concrete that they had either paid for themselves or received from donation. They called it the Burnside Project. It has been going since the mid- to late 80s.

The city authorities first took a very dubious view of Burnside. It was typical space left over after planning – nothing was happening with it except some rather shady activities. Homeless people were there, but there was also drug dealing and prostitution. One of the things they have realized since is that having skaters there has helped to make the area safer because there are now people present. The city has since installed floodlights in support of the Burnside Project.

A great defence against crime is human eyes and human presence. That is definitely one of the benefits of skateboarding.

The other thing about the skateboarder's use of those spaces is – to come back to the previous comments about zero degree architecture – that they find value in an area in which there was no value. Be it the slope of an underpass, the forgotten part of an urban plaza or a bit of land left under the Hayward Gallery, there are pieces of land that no one else would find interesting. Skateboarders help to create an area of interest.

Additionally, skateboarding is attuned to the rhythms of a modern city rather than a medieval city. I do not know if there are skateboarders in Venice, but it is not something you expect to find in a densely-patterned, cobbled street. It is the sort of activity that one tends to find in twentieth and twenty first-century urban planning, in urban designed or sometimes non-designed spaces. It seems to be a product of that kind of architecture.

EF: When it comes to the street, skaters experience the street in a fractured and immediate way. They move rapidly from one thing to the next. It is a very immediate process. In this respect, both television and film represent skateboarding well. In the opening credits of The Simpsons,⁴ for example, Bart travels down the city street on a skateboard. The skateboard sequence

4 *The Simpsons*, produced by James L. Brooks, Matt Groening and Al Jean, Gracie Films and 20th Century Fox Television, originally broadcast in the US on 14 January 1990.

introduces the viewer not only to the streets of Springfield, but also to the individual characters that make up the television show. The sequence mimics the skater's gaze by focusing momentarily on each character and quickly moving to the next.

IB: One thing that is going on in skateboarding is an absolute, almost purely physical and sensory experience. Cycling is quite similar to skating through a city. It is about attuning to ripple, surface, speed, wind, grip, slide and the way in which the street comes up through the wheels of your vehicle and enters your body. To me that is an incredibly visceral way of engaging with a city street.

Skateboarding also engages a sense of anticipation and expectation. On a skateboard, the next encounter is only four or five metres in front of you. You are constantly looking at what is coming at the same moment that you are absorbing the surface through your feet and into your body. You are looking ahead to see what surface is about to be encountered and wondering if it is going to let you continue on the journey. Is it going to turn to sand? Is there a wall? Is it going to turn into brick paving and suddenly give a different sensation or change the way in which you can skate? Additionally, there are moving pedestrians and cyclists to consider. Skateboarding has a lot in common with other movements through city space. Because of the nature of skateboard wheels, skaters are attuned to a particular sense of roughness and smoothness of surface.

That surface is also translated into sound, so you get a sound rhythm of what you are doing, which is pretty powerful. You are creating your own visual or aural sound track as you move through the city.

The other thing that skateboarding does – though it does not happen as much as I would like – is journey through the city. Bart Simpson's journey from school back to home is a good example of this. There is a video I often show of Matt Reason skateboarding through Philadelphia.⁵ The interesting thing is that it is a journey of pleasure rather than a journey of a destination. Some skaters do skate from school to home and from home to work and so on, like Bart does, but most people do it as a journey of pleasure. In a way, it is a journey based on psychic geography, which is a route taken for the purposes of pleasure rather than a route taken for the purposes of an objective aim.

5 'Matt Reason - Profiles' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4stuQAXgk_8> [accessed 3 February 2010].



One of the interesting things about the architecture of journeying on a skateboard is that skaters go from one mini monument to another. They do not travel from the Arc de Triomphe to the Eiffel Tower to the Musée d'Orsay, for instance. They travel from that ledge that they know, to that bench that they know, to that surface that they know, to that slope that they know, to that car park that they know. They do not always take each element in the same order or in the same pattern. Instead, they make up a different journey through the city. They create new routes.

When I was into skateboarding in the late 70s, *Skateboard!* magazine ran a feature on skaters who were skating through Bristol and the different routes they would take. They drew some maps of different kinds of routes. Actually that has been one of the few times that I have seen anyone try and represent that in magazines. Normally it is not thought through in those terms; it is performed as a personal journey and repeated by skaters in cities all over the world.

The other characteristic, which is reminiscent of the memorial in the Thames Barrier Park, is that skateboarding involves an implicit critique of cities. If you buy a guidebook to London, for example, it will say that you must go and see the Tower of London or that you must go and see the new GLA Headquarters designed by Foster and Partners; or it will direct you to Tower Bridge built in the late nineteenth century and give you the dates of historical significance. None of that is important to a skater. The skateboarder is really only interested in the architecture for its phenomenal, archaeological potential.

Sometimes you can find guides to London in which people do not write about going to the GLA headquarters. They write instead about a particular ledge next to it that had some skate stoppers built into it, but also has a bit on the end that can be used. Skateboarding reads the city differently. It is a reading based not on a set of historical or political monuments but on a set of places that are good to skate. It is a different edit of the city that is not based on objective knowledge. It is instead based on a personal knowledge.

Perhaps that is another reason why people do not like skateboarding. I sometimes question why they have included skate barriers around More London or around the GLA. I think it is because skateboarders do not really care about what is happening in the GLA building. Therefore, they seem disrespectful. Somewhere in skateboarding, there is an implicit critique on the part of skateboarders, which amounts to a 'we don't care' attitude at least while there is skating

going on. Skaters do not care about what is going on inside that building or who designed it.

EF: Speaking about the critique that skateboarding performs, one of the things that you talk about in your research is skateboarding as a critique of capitalism. How is this critique performed?

IB: Skateboarding obviously does not produce anything. By that I mean that in the act of skateboarding there is nothing of value manufactured. Skateboarding is a critique of production. Skateboarding is also a critique of exchange because it denies that space should be used for the purposes of exchange.

When you skate, you do not consume anything. You do not pay for things when you are skateboarding in the streets. That is skateboarding's anti-capitalist edge. Also, skateboarding is not interested in the knowledge systems of capitalism. It is not interested in the idea of history, the idea of democracy, the idea of politics or even the idea of art as high art. It is unknowing because it is an act.

That is the obvious one, but this is not to say that skateboarding is positioned outside of capitalism. Is there anything outside of capitalism? No. What skateboarding does do is give a temporary escape from it. The spatial escape from capitalism occurs in a certain time, in a certain space and with a certain attitude. This is the same reason that people enjoy rambling around the countryside, or surfing, or kite flying or painting. These are physical activities that take people mentally outside of the normal institutions of capitalism. By that, I mean work, the family, the sense of history, of democracy, the church and all those large institutions embedded in contemporary society.

Skateboarding enables you mentally and physically to step outside of these institutions. We are not of course entirely outside that system because at some point we have to stop skating and do something else; it is not revolutionary in that sense. I do think, however, that it is utopian because for that moment it gives a glimpse of what a non-capitalist space in time might be.



II. Crossing the Street



Recycling the City Streets: Walking, Garbage and Cartoneros

James Scorer

‘Wirewalker, trust your feet!’¹
Philippe Petit

In liquid modernity the movement of people goes hand-in-hand with the movement of goods, money, vehicles and information through a myriad of different channels, routes, lines and paths.² The globalized flows of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call Empire, the postmodern new world order, lead to continual deterritorializations and, hence, possibilities for resistance to that order. Flows should not be romanticized, however, particularly now that ‘the settled majority is ruled by the nomadic and exterritorial elite’ (Bauman, 13), and that power is no longer confined to finite places, whether institutions, cities or nations – in sum, when power itself has gone nomadic.³ In addition, the city continues to be rife with restrictions and limitations. Neoliberal economics not only unties, unfixes and releases but also constricts and limits: ‘neoliberalism in practice is *not* simply about mobility: it too requires some spatial fixes.’⁴

In this article I will focus on the tensions between these flows and

1 Philippe Petit, *To Reach the Clouds: My High Wire Walk Between the Twin Towers* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), 168.

2 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

3 Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, *The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 64.

4 Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 86. Examples of such ‘spatial fixes’ range from identity cards and work permits to chain-link fences and detention centres.



fixes with reference to present-day Buenos Aires. Argentina, during the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, is a particularly significant case for evaluating the rigours and shortcomings of the Washington Consensus and its neoliberal project.⁵ To curb the persisting threat of the hyperinflation that dogged the 1980s, the administration of Carlos Menem (in power from 1989 to 1999) introduced the *Plan de Convertibilidad* [Convertibility Plan], pegging the Argentine peso to the US dollar at the rate of one to one. To sustain this wildly overvalued currency the government was forced to borrow increasingly large sums from the World Bank and, latterly, to rely on 'rescue' packages from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Simultaneously, the Menem administration set about restructuring the State by introducing measures such as reducing public spending, decentralizing administration, deregulating the market and introducing widespread privatization.

The period came to be characterized by polarization and fragmentation, culminating in a tale of two cities: for the wealthy minority the 1990s were the best of times, the overvalued peso enabling the purchase of imported goods and expensive foreign holidays; for the vast majority, however, the 1990s were the worst of times, a period marked by the collapse of the welfare state and dramatic increases in unemployment and the cost of living.⁶ This internally divided city also began to see an increase in the number and variety of protests against the government and its policies, particularly *piquetes* (roadblocks), *fábricas tomadas* (worker-occupied factories) and *cacerolazos* (marches involving the symbolic banging of empty saucepans with cooking utensils).⁷

On 19 December 2001, President Fernando de la Rúa attempted to stem the growing crowds around the country by declaring a state of

5 The Washington Consensus is the name given to the set of policies agreed upon by several financial institutions based in Washington (most notably the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the US Treasury). The policies were designed to combat economic crises in developing countries.

6 Maristella Svampa, *La sociedad excluyente: La Argentina bajo el signo del neoliberalismo* (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2005), 32-5.

7 To what extent these individual forms of protest can be seen as a collective struggle has been questioned by some critics, notably Ignacio Lewkowicz, *Pensar sin Estado: La subjetividad en la era de la fluidez* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2004). Indeed, as the investigative group Colectivo Situaciones asks, '¿por qué habría de verse dispersión en donde lo que hay es multiplicidad?' [why should we see dispersion in what is really multiplicity?], *Contrapoder: Una introducción* (Buenos Aires: De Mano en Mano, 2001), 36.

emergency. In Buenos Aires, the crowds assembled in and around the political heart of the city, the Plaza de Mayo, defying De la Rúa's order and chanting 'boludo, boludo, el estado de sitio te lo metés en el culo' [you dickhead, stick the state of siege up your arse]. Heavy-handed police repression in the course of the following day, which resulted in some twenty-nine deaths, failed to stem the demands of the crowd, and the President, following the resignation of his Economy Minister, Domingo Cavallo, eventually fled Government House in a helicopter. Despite the succession of presidents that followed, however, the political upheavals of the new millennium did not, it now seems, greatly alter the economic outlook of most inhabitants of Argentina; the wealth divide of the 1990s persists in Buenos Aires today.



Figure 1. Cartoneros at Acassuso Train Station, Gran Buenos Aires. Photograph by kind permission of Carolina Favre.

One of the more obvious faces of the neoliberal wealth divide, increase in unemployment and urban poverty in Buenos Aires over the past decade, has been an escalation in the number of *cartoneros* in the city. The 2001 devaluation of the Argentine peso considerably raised the cost of importing raw materials such as paper and plastic, making local recycling economically advantageous. Moving through the city, particularly the dense and heavily populated areas of Capital Federal, *cartoneros* sift the rubbish left out on pavements in



refuse sacks or plastic bags ready for the waste collection companies. *Cartoneros* look for recyclable material, principally metals, glass and cardboard, which they transport on a variety of trolleys and carts. The recyclables are then taken to central collecting points where they are bought by weight. Thus *cartoneros* rely on flows of goods, on products that have been bought, used and thrown out, only to be reinserted back into productivity and use through the fluid process of recycling. Movement and flows, therefore, from trains and trucks to information and goods and, crucially, walking, are vital to the practices of *cartoneros*.

In this article I will consider how *cartoneros* are situated within the globalized flows of the city streets, asking how they reinforce and alter flows and boundaries, deterritorializing and reterritorializing the city as they untie and retie themselves to the pathways of striated space. I will ask how *cartoneros* interact with and alter the neoliberal city, emphasizing that their urban paths are a continual construction of new trajectories and not just a Sisyphean act.⁸ Raúl Zibechi has suggested that the insertion of bodies into space is the point of commonality for social struggles surrounding the 2001 crisis.⁹ In the light of his observation I wish to suggest that, by putting so many bodies into circulation through the city, *cartoneros* force us to consider acts of movement that offer alternatives to and reconfigurations of established urban flows. I focus on walking in terms of bodies in motion, not least because, as Rebecca Solnit has suggested, 'when corporeality gets mobile, it walks.'¹⁰ Noting that flows also create limits and restrictions in the city, I go on to discuss garbage and recycling in terms of flow. Bodies in motion and practices of re-use create a further tension with narratives of and about walking and recycling. In what ways does culture, itself recycled, (re)inscribe bodies within spaces? I will consider how an extended poem by Daniel Samoilovich, *El carrito de Eneas* [The Trolley of Aeneas], situates and uses *cartoneros* to reflect on contemporary cultural expressions in the wake of the 2001 crisis. At its heart lie concerns over the flows and rhythms of the city streets, the constructive and multitudinous practice of the *cartoneros* and the ways this fluidity is assimilated back into the territorialized urban space.

8 Sergio Chejfec, 'Sísifo en Buenos Aires', *Punto de Vista*, 72 (2002).

9 Raúl Zibechi, *Genealogía de la revuelta: Argentina: La sociedad en movimiento* (La Plata: Letra libre, 2003), 34.

10 Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London: Verso, 2002), 27.

Moving Through

It would be misleading to suggest that the bodies of the *cartoneros* create a conscious protest *movement*, just as it would be dangerous to romanticize walking as always being on the side of ‘openness’, the ‘dispersal of power’ and ‘public ownership’ (Solnit, xi). Forced marches, the policeman’s beat and army parades are a reminder that we should, so to speak, tread carefully. In Buenos Aires, for example, street vendors, shantytown tours, prostitutes, lunch hour bankers and parkour groups – as well as protest marches – all incorporate walking into their activities, and all of them use walking in slightly different ways. Indeed, they remind us that walking is not only a leisure activity for which the prerequisites are ‘free time, a place to go, and a body unhindered by illness or social restraint’ (Solnit, 168). Walking can also be integral to work – or, indeed, not having work – *creating* a place to go and emphasizing how one’s particular body is actually hindered by ‘social restraint’.

Michel de Certeau’s *L’invention du quotidien* [*The Practice of Everyday Life*] is one of the most influential and well-known reflections on walking in the city.¹¹ Rather than follow Certeau’s emphasis on walking as a paradigmatic tactic, a form of resistance to the strategies of discipline in the city, I prefer to apply his use of Brownian motion to walking, the latter thus understood as a practice of erratic, non-sequential clusters of movement. Hence, although Certeau compares walking with texts, he never entirely assimilates walking with linear narrative: footsteps comprising a story ‘sont le nombre, mais un nombre qui ne fait pas série’ [‘are myriad, but do not compose a series’] (147/97). The ‘texts’ written by walking ‘échappent à la lisibilité’ [elude legibility] (141/93), resulting in ‘une ville *transhumante*, ou métaphorique, [qui] s’insinue dans le texte clair de la ville planifiée et lisible’ [a *migrational*, or metaphorical, city [slipping] into the clear text of the planned and readable city] (142/93). It is the physical innumerability of footsteps, the becoming corporeal, that infiltrates city streets to create tactile ‘*lignes d’erre*’ [wandering lines] (57/34). This understanding of walking as a fluid motion, I suggest, can be tied to the practices of *cartoneros* in Argentina. *Cartoneros* indicate, at least potentially, how walking can be set free in and thus set free the liquid city.

11 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), xxiv; originally published as *L’Invention du quotidien. Vol. I. Arts de faire* (Paris: Union générale d’éditions, 1980).





Figure 2. *Carritos* in Belgrano, Capital Federal. Photograph by the author.

A brief glance at the aforementioned *piquetes*, a form of blockade first used by the organized unemployed in the 1990s, demonstrates, however, that movement results not only in fluidity but also in stasis and blockage. Despite both practices placing bodies in spaces, it is the notion of restricting which sets *piqueteros* apart from *cartoneros*: if *cartoneros* are associated with flows, an alternative traffic within the city, then the stationary bodies at the *piqueteros*' strategically-placed roadblocks are antagonistic to the flows of the city, restricting the movement of traffic and affronting capital's need for flux.¹² Indeed, the disruption posed by the *piquete* has resulted in it being configured as 'cortar la ruta' [blocking the road] in opposition to 'transitar la

12 Though walking is often regarded as a form of anti-establishment protest, stasis and loitering have been perceived as threatening as is demonstrated by the use of treadmills in nineteenth-century British prisons to punish vagrancy. See Solnit, 261. In Argentina, the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, who circle the main square in Buenos Aires every Thursday lunchtime to demand the return of those who disappeared during the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, are a case in point: despite their continual walking it is clear that *they are not going anywhere*.

ciudad' [going through the city].¹³ Astor Massetti, however, uses the *piquetero* march to problematize the use of the roadblock/transit dichotomy to define *piqueteros*. As an urban intervention the march places bodies within the city streets to break down the 'ghettoization' of urban space and confront socio-spatial isolation; he concludes that *piqueteros* should also be understood in terms of going through the city and not just blocking the road.

To take Massetti's point one step further it is not just the march that generates fluidity: the act of marching, of 'going through' the city, is at the same time another form of blocking the city. The march is as much a restriction on urban movement as movement itself. In similar fashion, the paths created by *cartoneros* when walking both produce and restrict flow. Above all, however, when *cartoneros* walk they reveal how the street 'becomes the setting for [...] the building up of political solidarity'.¹⁴ They reconstruct the street as a site of commonality by employing innumerable habitual steps: 'habits form a nature that is both produced and productive, created and creative – an ontology of social practice in common.'¹⁵ Their practice of walking transforms the city streets and, 'without leaving visible signs, culturally modifies the meaning of space and therefore the space itself.'¹⁶

Francesco Careri's description of Richard Long's 1967 *A Line Made by Walking* – 'a straight line "sculpted" on the ground simply by treading on grass [...] disappearing from the ground when the grass returns to its original position' – emphasizes the temporarily tactile way in which walking perpetually transforms space (Careri, 142). The bodies of the *cartoneros* create a similar mesh of alternative trajectories on the city streets, which in turn become 'an immense aesthetic territory, [...] an intricate design of historical and geographical sedimentation on which to simply add one more layer' (150). Hence, walking as an act of amalgamating footsteps becomes a practice of expansion:

On ne peut le compter parce que chacune de ses unités est du qualitatif: un style d'appréhension tactile et d'appropriation kinésique. Leur grouillement est un innombrable de singularités. Les jeux de pas sont façonnages d'espaces.

13 Astor Massetti, *Piqueteros: Protesta social e identidad colectiva* (Buenos Aires: FLACSO/Editorial de las Ciencias, 2004), 8.

14 Ana Dinerstein, 'Roadblocks in Argentina: Against the Violence of Stability', *Capital and Class*, 74 (2001), 6.

15 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 198.

16 Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice* (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2002), 50.



[{Footsteps} cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces.]¹⁷

Walking as moving-through comes to be an illegible, aesthetic practice that lies beyond representation. It emphasizes the here and now of physicality: the 'innumerable collection' of bodies moving in common, the transformation of discarded bodies into recycling bodies and bodies recycled.

Garbage and Recycling

In the city of today, walking continues to be an important part of garbage collection, from *cartoneros* to the collectors who run alongside the refuse lorries. Sorting and collecting rubbish from city streets is hardly a new activity: scavengers have always been part of this practice in the city. In Buenos Aires, for example, *cirujas* (derived from *cirujano*, meaning surgeon), a pejorative term believed to stem either from the prong used to pick up discarded rubbish or the ability to cut up bones collected from the streets, became well-established towards the end of the nineteenth century. An estimated 3,000 people were living off 'rubbish' in Buenos Aires in 1899.¹⁸ This figure has now risen to approximately 100,000.¹⁹ The dramatic increase in *cartoneros* post-2001 not only harks back to pre-modern modes of rubbish collection but has also resulted in a greater number of people walking through the city and hence in an increase in the physical presence of bodies on the streets of Buenos Aires.

Just as the informal collection of rubbish is not a new phenomenon in the city, nor is recycling. At the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, an ordinance in Buenos Aires required citizens to sort their organic rubbish, and the aforementioned *cirujas* collected

17 Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, 147; *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 97. Emphasis added.

18 Fundación Metropolitana, 'Historia de la gestión de residuos sólidos en la Región Metropolitana Buenos Aires', *La Gran Ciudad* (2004) <<http://www.metropolitana.org.ar/archivo/lgc/04/insert.pdf>> [accessed 3 February 2010], 7.

19 Themis Chronopoulos, 'Neo-liberal Reform and Urban Space: The Cartoneros of Buenos Aires', *City*, 10 (2006), 168.

bones, glass, metals and paper, either reusing them or selling them on to factories.²⁰ However, the nature and quantity of rubbish has changed over time: the growth of mass production, mass distribution and consumer culture over the course of the twentieth century generated more objects, more trash and an ideological transition from re-use to discarding.²¹ It is unsurprising that, within this culture of consumption and disposal, the rubbish dump is the end of the road for the consumer's product: '[i]n the dump's squalid phantasmagoria, the same commodities that had been fetishized by advertising [...] are now stripped of their aura of charismatic power.'²²

Recycling, however, highlights the fact that garbage can also be reinserted back into the cycle of materials and goods. Indeed, the processes of recycling create, in comparable fashion to walking, another set of Brownian urban flows. Engaging in this activity of re-cycling, *cartoneros* have reconfigured the monopoly on rubbish, generating a body of knowledge on, for example, the comparative value of recyclable materials, the amount of rubbish produced in different parts of the city and the most effective and economical ways of constructing durable carts and trolleys. They have reconfigured discourses on rubbish and the city and, at the same time, the very nature of the street. On one level, the dramatic increase in *cartoneros* in the wealthier areas of the city 'has spearheaded debates over the use and definition of public space'.²³ On another, their use of shopping trolleys to gather recyclables transforms the city street into a supermarket aisle – except that in this instance the object is not to be consumed and discarded but recycled, inserted back into the flows of the city streets.

The value of such rubbish has been a particularly contentious issue in Buenos Aires. The question posed by the sociologist Horacio González – '¿De quién es la basura en una sociedad?' [Who owns the rubbish of

20 Fundación Metropolitana, 6-7.

21 Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), 17.

22 Robert Stam, 'Hybridity and the Aesthetics of Garbage: The Case of Brazilian Cinema' (1997) <http://www.tau.ac.il/eial/IX_1/stam.html> [accessed 3 February 2010].

23 Chronopoulos, 171. It should also be noted that fear of *cartoneros*, nearly always configured as originating from 'outside' the city, plays into the wider discourse of the 'threat' of Gran Buenos Aires (the parts of the city lying outside the autonomous city centre) to Capital Federal (the independent, federal centre). For Capital Federal, Gran Buenos Aires has always been 'el "afuera" más inmediato y amenazador' [the most immediate and threatening 'outside'] (Adrián Gorelik, 'El paisaje de la devastación', *Punto de Vista*, 74 (2002), 8).



a society?]²⁴ – is especially important when some 12.3 million tons of rubbish are produced annually in Argentina and the cost of collection in Capital Federal alone is 13 million pesos every month.²⁵ Rubbish is big business. No wonder the major refuse collection companies are so worried about informal garbage collection, especially when it is estimated that already in 1995 *cartoneros* gathered between ten and fifteen percent of the city's rubbish – worth approximately ten million pesos (then equivalent to US dollars). Indeed, Mauricio Macri, a right-wing candidate for the 2003 mayoral elections for Capital Federal and a family member of Grupo Macri, which owns the rubbish company Manliba (Mantener limpio Buenos Aires [Keep Buenos Aires Clean]), objected vehemently to *cartoneros*, threatening that they would be imprisoned for 'steal[ing] from the trash'.²⁶ Despite losing the 2003 elections, Macri eventually won the June 2007 mayoral elections. The Mayor of Buenos Aires is considered to be the third most politically influential post-holder in Argentina after the President and the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. Macri's comments bear comparison to the 1988 ruling by the US Supreme Court that 'citizens may not reasonably expect their trash to be private and that law enforcement officers looking for evidence do not need a warrant to search the trash' (Strasser, 7). Indeed, the public nature of rubbish might explain some of the unease generated by *cartoneros*. A discarded object often reveals a great deal about a person. City dwellers neither want a stranger to be in possession of *their* rubbish nor want to be confronted with the potential return of *what is no longer theirs*. Rubbish, it seems, should stay out of sight and out of mind. Nevertheless, the work of *cartoneros* was formalized by city legislature in 2002.

The recycling of goods is just one way in which the city is recycled. Garbage – and the recycling of garbage – has a well-established tradition in Latin American culture.²⁷ Robert Stam has argued, for example, that cultural discourses in Latin American and the Caribbean have been 'fecund in neologistic aesthetics, both literary

24 *Días de cartón*, dir. by Verónico Souto (Cartón Lleno Films, 2003).

25 Esteban Magnani, 'Pirámides...', *Página/12*, 26 March 2006, section CASH, 2.

26 Chronopoulos, 180.

27 Naturally, there are equally well-established links between culture and rubbish in Europe, not least, for example, in Walter Benjamin's 1938 work 'Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire', in which he reflects on Charles Baudelaire's poetic visions of the chiffonier or ragman and the figure's relationship to commodity capitalism and poetic inspiration. *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

and cinematic [which] revalorize, by inversion, what had formerly been seen as negative'.²⁸ Examples might include the Brazilian Hélio Oiticica's collection of objects from the streets of Rio de Janeiro, the sculptures of the Chilean Francisca Nuñez or the work of the Argentine artist Ricardo Longhini, whose work includes sculptures composed of the physical remnants – stones, bullet-shells, glass – of the December 2001 protests in Buenos Aires.



*Figure 3. Private Property, Plaza Congreso.
Photograph by kind permission of Carolina Favre*

Stam argues that such aesthetics redeem 'the low, the despised, the imperfect, and the "trashy" as part of a social overturning'. Beginning with what the Brazilian underground filmmakers of the 1960s called the 'estética do lixo' [aesthetics of garbage], Stam suggests that garbage 'captured the sense of marginality, of being condemned to survive

28 Stam, 'Hybridity and the Aesthetics of Garbage'.



within scarcity, of being the dumping ground for transnational capitalism, of being obliged to recycle the materials of the dominant culture', thus turning the 'trash of the haves [into] the treasure of the have nots'. The recycling performed by *cartoneros* is not the same as that of the aforementioned artists. Nevertheless, recycling rubbish from city streets to create art indicates that we might see art created not only by but also within the recycling practices of *cartoneros*. The website liquidacion.org is a case in point: it plays on the notion of value by offering objects found by *cartoneros* for sale over the internet, thus reinserting garbage back into market circulation. Each object is accompanied by a recording of where and by whom the object was found, illustrating how the very fact of being collected by a *cartonero* transforms 'worthless' rubbish into an aesthetic object of value.²⁹

I will now turn to Daniel Samoilovich's 'epic' poem *El carrito de Eneas*, which uses rubbish (and its collection) as, to borrow Stam's words, 'a metaphorical figure for social indictment – poor people treated like garbage.'³⁰ Without making garbage the solution to marginality, *El carrito de Eneas* places *cartoneros* in a network of recycling and flows in order to rethink cultural production in the wake of the 'fall' of the city in December 2001 and in so doing, it moves towards the founding of a new metropolis.

El carrito de Eneas

El carrito de Eneas is set in the aftermath of the fall of the city: the myth of Troy, the paradigmatic demise of a city, is recycled to become the fall both of Buenos Aires post-2001 and of the very idea of the city.³¹ Constitución, for example, formerly a square of colossal statues, a market and temple where sacrifices were made

29 <www.liquidacion.org> [accessed 3 February 2010]. Though comparisons can be made between [liquidacion.org](http://www.liquidacion.org) and the global freecycle network (www.freecycle.org), [liquidacion.org](http://www.liquidacion.org) places greater emphasis on the individual history of the collector, making the object inseparable from the recycler.

30 Newspaper articles on Daniela Cott, a *cartonera* turned model, add a further twist to 'poor people treated like garbage' by reading her story as a socially discarded 'garbage body' recycled by the fashion industry. See, for example, BBC, 'Daniela Cott: From Rubbish to Riches' (2008) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/world-service/outlook/2008/04/080402_model_outlook.shtml> [accessed 3 February 2010].

31 Daniel Samoilovich, *El carrito de Eneas* (Buenos Aires: Bajo la luna, 2003).

to the gods, has lost its civic, political and spiritual significance.

The old city wall, a symbol of the city's political entirety and security, has been destroyed, leaving:

los muñones
de la antigua muralla (11)

[the stumps
of the old wall]

These lines are suggestive of an incomplete, amputated body of the city. Walls that used to be built like the old fortresses of the Incas – 'un eléctrico pucará en las fronteras' (15-16) [an electrical *pucará* at the frontiers] – are now:

pircas de cartón,
aunque éstas endebles, negociables

[stone walls of cardboard,
but weak, negotiable]

These cardboard walls of the city, vulnerable and unstable, have become the latest commodity.

The collapse of the mythic city is emphasized by the way in which the poem places itself in dialogue with the epic tradition from the very first line:

Mira, Marforio, mira allá abajo,
en el aire fosco, ácido (11)

[Look, Marforio, look down there,
in the gloomy, acidic air]

This is an opening reminiscent of Homer's *Iliad*, which relates to the fall of Troy.³² The comparison between the mythic city of Troy and contemporary Buenos Aires is bathetic and estranging:

Ese que ves acostado en la alta pila
de corrugado es el propio Aquiles

32 The back cover of *El carrito de Eneas* suggests that references such as that to the city 'allá abajo' aligns the narrator of the poem with President De la Rúa looking down on the city from his helicopter as he flees Government House.



[The one you see lying there on the tall pile
of corrugated iron is Achilles himself]

Myth is constantly mixed with the quotidian realities of the
contemporary city:

Cassandra
que fue princesa entre los teucros, ahora
especialista en todo género de latas (13-14)

[Cassandra,
princess among Trojans, now
a specialist in every kind of tins]

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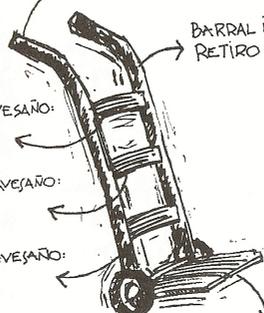


Figure 4. Index page from *El carricho de Eneas*. Image reproduced with kind permission of Miguel Balaquer

Myth in the poem makes the *cartoneros* of Buenos Aires precisely un-mythic: 'La mitologización no los vuelve ejemplares, sino que les quita patetismo mediante el sarcasmo y así los desnaturaliza' [the mythologizing does not make them models but rather removes pathos through sarcasm and, in this way, de-naturalizes them].³³ There is nothing majestic about these figures struggling to survive in these city streets.

The fall of Buenos Aires, however, holds within it the possibility for a new city: here, for example, Agamemnon and Hector work side by side as *cartoneros* (16). The emphasis on the new city is evident in the poem's principal object: Aeneas' trolley. This is a variation on the myth in the *Aeneid* in which Vulcan makes weapons for Aeneas, the most significant of which was a shield. Here Vulcan makes the trolley for Aeneas in his smithy. Jorge Monteleone reminds us that, in this sense, the book follows the tradition of relating the stories of figures depicted on a hero's shield, as in Hesiod's description of Hercules or Homer's of Achilles. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, furthermore, the particular significance of Aeneas' shield is that it foretold the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus, who the poem states are the descendants of Aeneas. Referring to the big bang and a tsunami, Samoilovich's epic stresses a new beginning, a new city, and it is the *cartoneros* with their own trolleys who will participate in creating this future city, born from 'los despojos de la patria' [the leftovers of the fatherland] (51), a cosmopolis recycled from collapsed identities.

The role of the *cartoneros* in the founding of this new city is immediately evident on the poem's contents page. Rather than a list of chapters, a drawing of a hand-held, two-wheeled trolley broken down into its various parts represents the sections of the poem. The two side-bars and the base represent Plaza Constitución, Retiro and Plaza Miserere, the major transport hubs in the city and those that see the greatest numbers of *cartoneros*. The three crossbars represent glass, paper and tin, the three main products collected by *cartoneros*. The trolley both foreshadows the city to come (like Aeneas' shield) and constructs a city that revolves around *cartoneros* and their practices. Furthermore, by associating each section of the poem with a piece of the trolley, the illustration also creates a link between the trolley, the city streets and the book itself. Indeed, the link is intensified by the way in which the walking of the *cartoneros* is connected to the rhythm of the poetry. To use walking as art reveals 'the rich potential relations between thinking and the body; [...] the way walking reshapes the

33 Jorge Monteleone, 'Cartoneros de la cultura', *La Nación* (5 October 2003) <<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/532782>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



world by mapping it, reading paths into it, encountering it; the way each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place'.³⁴

It is this bodily connection that enables the *cartoneros* in the poem to animate – to give rhythm to – the city.

Cartoneros reveal the importance of recycling the city's ruins:

es un buen reciclaje el que hace falta [...]
la Nueva Troya (Samoilovich, 53)

[what New Troy {...]
needs is a good recycling]

Aeneas' trolley is illustrated with stories related to recycling – from the story of the invention of paper, to the process of making tin. Paper is the material on which the poet creates and which the *cartonero* collects. Indeed, the paper collected by *cartoneros* might well have been recycled to create the very paper on which the poet writes.³⁵ Furthermore, poetry, a point surely not lost on Samoilovich, who edits *Diario de poesía*, the principal Argentine publication dedicated to poetry, is a medium sometimes said to have suffered its own 'fall' due to the rise of prose. Even if the poetry market in Argentina were to remain robust, *El carrito de Eneas* suggests that poetry too must recycle itself and engage with this burgeoning city.

It is through paper that poets and *cartoneros* recreate the city.³⁶ The dream of paper sustains both the *cartoneros* and the poets, as they both 'feed' off the paper. Paper becomes a point of commonality, transformed from rhyming dictionary to yogurt carton. It becomes a body of words, fluid and nomadic:

sus propios cadáveres
son pasajeros, reciclables (42)

34 Solnit, 276.

35 See, for example, Eloísa Cartonera, the publishing house that prints stories on cardboard bought directly from *cartoneros*.

36 Paper has become even more contentious in Argentina ever since two companies, one Spanish (Ence) and one Finnish (Botnia), proposed (and built) new paper mills on the Uruguayan side of the Río Uruguay. Those living on the opposite side of the river in Argentina, together with environmental groups from both countries, have protested the potential health hazard of these mills. To some extent, such demonstrations can be read as reactions against multinational companies treating Latin America as a rubbish dump.

[their own bodies
are transient, recyclable]

Just as their varying pathways create a nomadic city of fluid streets and trajectories, the *cartoneros'* recycling of paper is a mark of creative bodies. Paper here becomes like walking: it is myriad, moving beyond order, series, representation and sequentiality to be recycled into circulation and flow. The recycling of paper by *cartonero* and poet is part of the common process of constructing a philosophy of multiplicity: a recycling that creates the nomadic city.

The City Streets Recycled

During the 1990s and after the economic collapse of 2001, Buenos Aires, like many other post-industrial cities, underwent sustained regeneration, from the transformation of Puerto Madero, the old port area now replete with exclusive restaurants, boutiques and hotels, to smaller-scale projects like La Fábrica, a working factory 'recycled' into a cultural centre at weekends, the factory storeroom used as a theatrical stage. Critics such as Adrián Gorelik are right to be wary of those projects that sprang up in the wake of the 2001 crisis and which market and sell poverty as part of this recycling of the city.³⁷ Indeed, the market runs the risk of making the city blind to the hardships and poverty of those such as *cartoneros*.³⁸

Nevertheless, to participate in the construction of a new city is not necessarily to fall into the trap of charitable pity, as illustrated by Maxi, the protagonist of César Aira's novel, *La villa*, who goes into the streets outside his house to pull the carts of the *cartoneros*: 'Nunca se le ocurrió verlo como una tarea de caridad, o solidaridad, o cristianismo, o piedad, o lo que fuera; lo hacía, y basta' [It never occurred to him to see this as a task of charity, or solidarity, or Christianity, or piety, or whatever; he did it and that was that].³⁹

By inserting different trajectories and flows within urban spaces, *cartoneros* transform the city and its streets. Through their varied trajectories and mappings they have altered the means of moving through and inhabiting the city streets of Buenos Aires,

37 Adrián Gorelik, 'Modelo para armar: Buenos Aires, de la crisis al boom', *Punto de Vista*, 84 (2006), 33.

38 Chejfec, 26; Gorelik, 'El paisaje de la devastación', 6.

39 César Aira, *La villa* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2001), 9.



simultaneously reconfiguring the conceptualization of rubbish. They have created a series of affective ties between diverse urban dwellers, challenging those who attempt to systematize the limits that separate the inside from the outside of the city. If, as Horacio González suggests in his documentary, 'los cartoneros hoy son la ciudad, y la Argentina es cartonera, Buenos Aires es cartonera' [today *cartoneros* are the city, and Argentina is *cartonero*, Buenos Aires is *cartonero*], then *cartoneros* are those who, just as in Samoilovich's poem, draw our attention to 'nuestra propia pasividad [...], nuestra propia incuria' [our own passivity [...], our own negligence]. Such is 'la gran experiencia cartonera, invitándonos a pensar todos en común como rehacer el país' [the great *cartonero* experience, inviting us all to think in common about how to remake the country].⁴⁰ The physical innumerability of the bodies of *cartoneros* and their rhizomic footsteps, whether on asphalt or paper, are precisely an example of such a 'social practice in common'.⁴¹ They demonstrate ways in which bodies can become involved in a reciprocal recycling of movement, animating the city streets and putting them into motion. They are Brownian motion, tactile flows that persistently probe the established norms of the city streets. They are flows disrupting flows.

40 *Días de cartón*.

41 Hardt and Negri, 198.

Walking the Streets: Cityscapes and Subjectscapes in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna

Anne Flannery

Was, ich bin schon auf der Straße?
Wie bin ich denn da herausgekommen?¹
[What, I'm already on the street?
How did I ever get here?]

When one embarks on a walk through a city, as Arthur Schnitzler's character Leutnant [Lieutenant] Gustl does in *fin-de- siècle* Vienna, one is sometimes compelled to roam for hours, exploring small streets and hidden spaces not originally intended as destinations but that become so during the time of the journey. The social and spatial relations created by the fictive representation of a walk are essential for understanding the theoretical underpinnings of reading in conjunction with walking through the urban landscape. Walking becomes a way of reading the city as a text inscribed with old and new orders shown in its architecture, signs, traffic, pedestrian walkways and districts. In Schnitzler's Vienna, these inscriptions represent both the imperial order of the Habsburgs, which is in the process of decay, and the metropolitan order of the early twentieth-century modernized city.

These two cultural orders are not only visual but represent a distinct cultural divide. The character Gustl bridges them by embodying

1 All quotations from *Leutnant Gustl* (1900) are taken from Arthur Schnitzler, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer, 1999). This reference: 344. The translations are from Arthur Schnitzler, *Lieutenant Gustl*, trans. by Richard L. Simon (New York: Continuum Press, 1982); this reference: 258.



the imperial culture – with its almost religious devotion to honour and empire – while also internalizing the order of the metropolis – with its uncertainties and hyper-stimulations. The first few lines of *Leutnant Gustl* present the character of Gustl as a man who is in conflict with the culture that surrounds him and also with the fleeting nature of time that passes before him. In his night-long walk through Vienna this conflict becomes readable space. By tracing Gustl's steps, Schnitzler makes Vienna recognizable not just as an urban space, but more strikingly as the site of a conflict of identity that permeates history and redefines the contours of city and subject.

The stream-of-consciousness narrative technique of *Leutnant Gustl* produces a very peculiar lack of distance between the text and the subject. This dream-like collapse of distance is integral to understanding the key role Gustl plays not only in his own narrative, but also in the development of the 'walker' in the larger context of literature. In her essay, 'Walking Through Thought: Thomas Bernhard's *Walking* and Peter Rosei's *Who was Edgar Allan Poe*', Bianca Theisen unpacks the literary history of the walker by sketching the art and function of walking in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.² Walking, beginning with the solitary walker of the late eighteenth century, goes through a metamorphosis in the nineteenth century and is almost unrecognizable by the time it appears in *Gustl* and Vienna at the dawn of the twentieth century. This 'new walker' is the result of a fast-paced progression. In the early-Romantic era of the eighteenth century, the walk represented a process by which the identity of the individual was consolidated. The solitary walker thought big thoughts and the walk literally led him away from the tedium of everyday life into nature where a connection with an awesome and powerful God was thought possible. As the nineteenth century progressed and cities began to modernize, the *flâneur* appeared. This figure wandered the city, visually and intellectually processing seemingly uninteresting details. Documenting the city on foot, the *flâneur* was willing to get lost, but never accomplished a true loss of self in the city's labyrinth of streets and passageways. The *flâneur* illuminated the inconsistencies that appear in the city's physical and social landscape, but was not permeated by them.

Schnitzler's *Gustl* is an intriguing reconfiguration of nineteenth-century tropes of walking and the city. Where Theisen speaks of the

2 Bianca Theisen, 'Walking through Thoughts: Thomas Bernhard's *Walking* and Peter Rosei's *Who was Edgar Allan Poe*', in *Writing Travel: The Poetics and Politics of the Modern Journey*, ed. by John Zilcosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

extreme function of walking and its consequential dissolution of the idea of the concept, I focus on the system of communication that exists between city and walker. This system and its resulting dialogue reveal the dismantling and restructuring of the walker around the year 1900. The Romantic solitary walker and the *flâneur* are semantically and conceptually undone and restructured within the figure of Gustl. It becomes clear through his inner monologue that the narrative of his thoughts is a space of conflict between the imperial and metropolitan orders. The streets of Vienna are similarly contrasted: they appear in a modern metropolis — with its famous boulevard, the *Ringstraße* — and, at the same time, as part of a monument to a fading empire.

The narrative of *Gustl* is not simply an observation of the subject within a modern urban context; rather it is the representation of the subject's unconscious observation of his own subjectivity within the social space in which he finds himself. Gustl walks through the streets of the city and internalizes them every step of the way because he no longer possesses the prerequisite subject-object distance necessary to describe the distinct characteristics of society, space and self. In this text, it is the walk that enables these conflicts and distinctions to be presented in the form of an interior dialogue. Though Gustl's inner monologue is well known, I am claiming that there is a dialogue taking place within his stream-of-consciousness that brings together the subject and the city through walking. 'L'acte de marcher est au système urbain ce que l'énonciation (le *speech act*) est à la langue ou aux énoncés proférés' [The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered], writes Michel de Certeau in *L'invention du quotidien*.³ To explore this question of city and subject, I will draw upon Certeau's concept of a 'rhetoric of walking'. The acts of reading and inscription performed by the walker reveal the structure of an urban subject and its city as texts inextricably bound to each other.

This analysis will unfold in three parts. I begin with a close reading of *Leutnant Gustl* in order to create a map of the subject Gustl. I then focus on an historical analysis of Vienna, which will work to illuminate Gustl's close reading of the city. Lastly, I examine Michel de Certeau's 'rhetoric of walking' as well as his theory of '*metaphorai*' in order to explore the theoretical implications of the walker in city literature. In addition, I will demonstrate that *Leutnant Gustl* is

3 Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien Vol 1. Arts de faire* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1980), 180. Translated as *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), 97.



not only representative of a reordering of the historical and social landscape of the Austrian Empire, but is a text that rewrites the meaning of the walker in literature.

A Close Reading of Leutnant Gustl

The imperial and metropolitan orders that are in conflict within the figure and text of *Leutnant Gustl* will be made clear in the following brief retelling of the story and mapping of Gustl's walk through the streets of Vienna. Gustl is a junior officer in the Austro-Hungarian army. While on leave he decides to spend an evening at a concert. He is tired and time is pressing on him. All the while he is not even exactly sure where he is. It is here in the *Musik-Verein* that his story begins:

Wie lang wird denn das noch dauern? Ich muß auf die Uhr schauen... schickt sich wahrscheinlich nicht in einem so ernsten Konzert. Aber wer sieht's denn? Wenn's einer sieht, so paßt er gerade so wenig auf, wie ich, und vor dem brauch' ich mich nicht zu genieren. (335)

[How much longer is this going to last? Let's see what time it is... perhaps I shouldn't look at my watch at a serious concert like this. But no one will see me. If anyone does, I'll know he is paying as little attention as I am. In that case I certainly won't be embarrassed.] (251)

Gustl is bored. While the concert continues, his eyes dart about the hall from one face to the next, each one reminding him of a pretty girl or a piece of gossip.

The concert finally ends and Gustl makes his way into the lobby to retrieve his coat. The hall is full of people. Because he is wearing his officer's uniform, Gustl has difficulty manoeuvring through the crowd. He runs into a baker whom he has seen before at his *Stammcafé* [local café]. The baker insinuates that Gustl is being too impatient in the crowded hall and refers to him as a *dummer Bub* [stupid boy]. Given his status as an officer, Gustl does not tolerate this correction by the baker. He reflects on the dishonour this incident will bring him when it is released to the public and the fact that he cannot 'get satisfaction' by challenging a baker to a duel. While Gustl is distracted by this potential disgrace, he is propelled toward the exit and out onto the street. There, he wonders, 'How did I get here?'

At this point the narrative takes a new turn. This time the story takes place on the streets of Vienna through which Gustl wanders from the *Ringstraße* to the *Prater* and back again. While walking his thoughts run through a wide range of trivial topics including cigarettes and gossip as he contemplates the reality of his own suicide. At the end of this journey, in the early morning, he makes his way to his usual café just in time for breakfast where he discovers that the cause of all his trouble has disappeared: his enemy, the baker, has died in the night.

In addition to this retelling of Gustl's story, a thorough understanding of the character and text involves the mapping of Gustl's Vienna. Gustl's journey through the streets begins at the *Musik-Verein*, which is located at the corner of the *Canovagasse* and the *Lotheringerstraße*. In order for Gustl to find himself on the *Ringstraße*, he would have to enter it at the *Kärntner Ring*. Gustl follows the *Ring* in a north-easterly direction towards the *Aspernbrücke* and while on his way points out the *Café Hochleitner*. By crossing the *Donaukanal* via the *Aspernbrücke*, Gustl is able to make his way to the *Prater* — where he spends a good portion of the text — and falls asleep on a park bench for an undisclosed length of time. After this episode, he wanders to the *Nordbahnhof* where he contemplates by which time zone he should commit suicide — the time of the European train systems or the empire — a dilemma that reinforces the text's theme of old and new orders. Gustl slowly makes his way back to the *Ringstraße*, leaving it only momentarily to enter the *Burghof* and the *Volksgarten*. He re-emerges on the *Ringstraße* in order to visit his usual café where he remains until the end of the story.

Two important ideas are illuminated through mapping Gustl's Vienna. First, his trajectory is symbolic in that he remains on the periphery of Vienna's city centre. Gustl is not high enough in rank or social status to be permitted into the inner circle of Viennese culture. In accordance with his social position, Gustl must wander the outskirts of the historical, political and social centre of Vienna. He enters it only for a few moments without actually passing through the emperor's gates or penetrating the centre of the city. This exclusion points towards a second idea: that within the story of *Leutnant Gustl* there exists a system of spatial organization that simultaneously codes both the city (as a social and cultural norm that informs this walk) and the space of Gustl's thoughts.

What does it mean to have a visual perspective on a place that is many times larger than any singular perspective can contain? Certeau contends that when one sees a city on any one of its many levels, 'le spectateur peut y lire un univers qui s'envoie en l'air' (171-



2) [the spectator can read in it a universe that is constantly exploding] (91). For Certeau, the bird's eye view offered by the 110th floor of the World Trade Center, for example, introduces the problem 'de «voir l'ensemble», de surplomber, de totaliser le plus démesuré des textes humains' (172) [of seeing the whole, of looking down on, and totalizing the most immoderate of human texts] (92). When trying to understand a place, one's perspective is of utmost importance. From overhead, one may be able to see a picture of the city that can be 'arrêtée, un moment, par la vision' (171) [momentarily arrested by vision] (91). However, it is necessary to fall to street level, like Gustl, if one is to become aware of a different, non-totalizing, spatial order that is both read and *written* (181, 98).

While trying to understand this combination of reading and mapping in the text, one must address the very peculiar problem of not being able to quote aptly from the text; the stream-of-consciousness technique necessitates that the text remain an unbroken whole. Since Gustl's experience of the city lacks any decisively descriptive moments of Vienna, it is necessary to consider the role of Gustl as a failed *flâneur*, one who does not document the city, but rather embodies it. Through his lack of description and his active relationship with the city, Gustl becomes the antithesis of an observer of the city. He is not an observer who acts as foil to the modern world around him in the sense that Baudelaire or Benjamin understands a *flâneur* to be.⁴ Gustl takes no critical distance from the streets of Vienna. He cannot recognize the city as object. Rather, he internalizes the city as a part of his consciousness, which is always with him and does not therefore warrant description.

Das ist nicht schlecht, jetzt bin ich gar im Prater ... mitten in der Nacht ... das hätt'ich mir auch nicht gedacht in der Früh, daß ich heut' Nacht im Prater spazieren gehn werd' ...Was sich der Sicherheitswachmann dort denkt? ...Na, geh'n wir nur weiter ...es ist ganz schön ... Mit'm Nachtmahlen ist 's eh' nichts, mit dem Kaffeehaus auch nichts; die Luft ist angenehm, und ruhig ist es ... sehr ...Zwar, ruhig werd' ich's jetzt bald haben, so ruhig, als ich nur wünschen kann. Haha! [...] es ist bitter, es ist bitter ... Ich will mich auf die Bank setzen ... Ah!—wie weit bin ich denn da? (350)

[Not bad, I'm already at the Prater in the middle of the night... That's another thing I didn't think this morning, that tonight I'd be taking a walk in the Prater ... Wonder what the watchman there thinks ... Well,

4 Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Howard Eiland et al (London: Belknap, 2006).

I'll walk on. It's rather nice here. Can't go and get supper, can't go to the café. The air's nice out here anyway... it's quiet, very ... Well, I'll have plenty of quiet soon, as much as I could ever want. Ha ha! [...] It's bitter, oh, it's bitter... I'll sit on that bench ...Ah ...How far have I come?] (264, translation altered)

This compressed distance between Gustl and the city draws the reader into the text. In Certeau's words, Gustl is one of the, '*Wandersmänner*, dont le corps obéit aux pleins et aux déliés d'un «texte» urbain qu'ils écrivent sans pouvoir le lire' (Certeau, 173-4) [*Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it] (93). Gustl embodies this description perfectly because even he does not know where his next step will fall: he is constantly surprised by his own location. Thus, his 'reading' of the city is an act of re-writing. He does not read the city, but rather it interrupts the writing of his interior monologue and he is forced to engage with it and inscribe it upon his text.

Gustl occupies a border between the imperial culture he represents as an officer and the modernization that the city space impresses upon him as he walks its streets. In other words, within Gustl's stream-of-consciousness the distance between his external environment and his unconscious has collapsed.

Vienna: Museum and Modern Metropolis

The collapse of the boundaries between the internal and the external in both the text and the figure of Lieutenant Gustl are better understood when the genealogical mapping of the modernization of Vienna is considered from an urban planning perspective. This mapping illuminates the significance of Gustl's inability to penetrate the city's historical core as evidence of a tension between the modernization of the city's streets and the political body of the empire. Among the crumbling papers of the *Stadterweiterungsfond* [City Expansion Fund] in the State Archive in Vienna, one can locate the modernization of the city in fragments. Imperial decrees, drawings of how the trees along the *Ringstraße* should be distributed and maps of a new waterworks project can all be found tied together with a mangled piece of string. From this disorder arises the modern paper city that is the origin of the physical Vienna, which exists today outside of the archive's walls.



By means of these documents one learns that in the years immediately preceding the revolution of 1848 the city of Vienna appeared to be an island surrounded by a decaying ring of space. The historical core of Vienna was walled and surrounded by a glacis or ring of land used as a buffer-zone against attacks from opposing armies. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Emperor Josef II allowed this land to be used for recreation by the city's inhabitants since its original use was no longer a concern.⁵ However, during the Revolution of 1848 this ring of land became politicized once again. The military saw it as a strategic tool against rebellions and the new emperor, Franz Josef, envisaged it as an investment in the modernization of the city. This process of modernization involved tearing down the old city walls and creating a space that bridged the historical city centre and the new suburbs.

Many different perspectives were incorporated into the filling of the empty space that existed between the city centre and the private suburbs: it had to be beautiful, economically fruitful and secure. The military also maintained a vested interest in this space and was influential in its final design:

With fortifications gone, Austrian army spokesmen, like their contemporary counterparts in the construction of the boulevards of Paris, favoured the broadest possible street to maximize the mobility for troops and to minimize barricading opportunities for potential rebels. Hence the street was designed as a broad artery totally surrounding the inner city in order to facilitate the swift movement of men and material to any point of danger. Military considerations thus converged with civilian desires for an imposing boulevard to give the *Ringstraße* both its circular form and its monumental scale. (Schorske, 30-31)

The first period of building began in 1861. The city's core was encircled by a space as vast and in some ways as empty as the field of grass that had preceded it. The construction of the ring involved careful attention to imperial and economic considerations as well as the aesthetic tradition of Vienna. Consequently, the ring was formed in conjunction with these concerns: it was wide enough to be used as a defence against rebels and the architecture of the buildings that were to border the *Ringstraße* were in many cases designed to honour the Emperor. The circular shape of the ring embraced the city centre and prevented it from being penetrated by anything that did not cohere

5 Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle: Vienna Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 29.

with the historical, cultural and architectural image presented in the *Innere Stadt*. As a result, the centre of Vienna preserved a coherent cultural order through the regulation of architecture, ornamentation and traffic, all of which were separated from the impoverished suburbs on the other side of the *Ringstraße*.⁶

This intersection of orders and the representation of those orders — tradition in the context of modernization — can be found in the modernization of the city of Vienna and also within the layers of text that make up the world of *Leutnant Gustl*.

Not only did the construction of the *Ringstraße* work to preserve the historical past, the ‘new’ residential, commercial, governmental and religious buildings that border the *Ringstraße* were designed to signify an epoch of the past. Schnitzler is sensitive to this use of space. On the first page of *Leutnant Gustl* he writes:

Was ist das denn eigentlich? Ich muß das Programm anschauen... Ja, richtig: Oratorium! Ich hab’ gemeint: Messe. Solche Sachen gehören doch nur in die Kirche! Die Kirche hat auch das Gute, daß man jeden Augenblick fortgehen kann.—Wenn ich wenigstens einen Ecksitz hätt’! — Geduld, Geduld! Auch Oratorien nehmen ein End’! (335)

[What’s that they’re playing? I’ll have to have a look at the program... Yes that’s what it is: an oratorio. Thought it was a mass. That sort of thing belongs in church. Besides, the advantage that church has is that you can leave whenever you want to. I wish I were sitting on the aisle! — Steady, steady! Even oratorios end some time.] (251)

Vienna is here represented as a space ordered by a social hierarchy. The control of the Church — which during this period one would expect to be inescapable — is of little concern to Gustl. Instead of life being controlled by the injunction of a deity, polite society is what dictates how one acts in public. This order is housed within cultural spaces such as the *Musik-Verein*, places that command a more stringent code of behaviour and are more powerful than any church. This social order is also perceived in Gustl’s private life, even when alone on the open and deserted streets of the city, he contemplates the consequences of his actions in the concert hall. The cultural order of the imperial tradition has a hold on Gustl’s public interactions within cultural spaces as well as within his private thoughts.

The *Ringstraße* was designed to connect the old city to its suburbs, but it also functioned to separate the two, at least symbolically. The

6 Technical Museum Vienna, *The Sharpened Eye, Joseph Petzval: Light, the City and Photography* (Vienna: Technical Museum, 2003-2004), 45.



public and private buildings on this street serve a dual function. The designs of the buildings imitate classical, gothic and baroque styles of architecture. These styles represent a past age that does not belong to Vienna.⁷ The architecture of the buildings does not stem from utility, but is organized around 'cultural self-projection'. Schorske explains: 'the term most commonly used to describe the great program of the sixties was not 'renovation' or 'redevelopment', but 'beautification of the city's image' [Verschönerung des Stadtbildes] (26-27). This programme of beautification also claimed that 'each building was executed in the historical style felt to be appropriate to its function' (27). The designs of each building placed in the frame of the *Ringstraße* project two images: one being the representation of its function and the other the representation of Vienna as an historical epoch.

Going Round in Circles? A Rhetoric of Walking

The narrative of *Leutnant Gustl* is not simply an observation of a protagonist within a modern urban context; it is the representation of the protagonist's unconscious observation of his subjectivity within the social space in which he finds himself. It is this representation of the walker's simultaneous and unconscious observation of the urban space and his own subjectivity that presents Lieutenant Gustl/*Leutnant Gustl* as the new walker — one who is rewritten as a text.

This walker becomes a metaphor, a singular mode of *metaphorai* [mode of transportation] to use Certeau's term. 'Pour aller au travail ou rentrer à la maison' [To go to work or come home], Certeau writes 'on prend une «métaphore»' [one takes a "metaphor"].⁸ In this way the walkers 'traversent et ils organisent des lieux; ils les sélectionnent et les relient ensemble; ils en font des phrases et des itineraries' [traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them], and in this way 'ce sont des parcours d'espaces' [they are spatial trajectories]. A spatial story is one in which a movement is codified and employed differently as one moves from one location to another. For Certeau 'tout récit est un récit de voyage — une pratique de l'espace' [every story is a travel story — a spatial practice].

7 Patricia McBride, 'In Praise of the Present: Adolf Loos on Style and Fashion', *Modernism and Modernity*, 11.4 (2004).

8 All references in this paragraph are to Certeau, 205-6, 115.

Certeau describes this mode of story telling as ‘une rhétorique de la marche’ [rhetoric of walking]. Its purpose is to blur and multiply the norm. The composition of this rhetoric is dependent on two assumptions, a ‘rhétorique habitante’ [residing rhetoric] and a ‘style de l’usage’ [style of use].

Within urban spaces, the residing rhetoric is akin to the normative aspect of linguistic systems. That is, it is a foundational system inhabited by city-dwellers. As such it dictates the movements of walkers in much the same way that linguistic rules govern the speech of individuals. Certeau defines this normative aspect of language and spatial practices as a ‘sens propre’ (185) [proper meaning]. In terms of the urban environment, he finds that normative, or ‘proper’, rhetoric is imbedded in street space.

Within this space, however, there is room for an individual’s style, or mode of being in the world. This style appropriates the elements of coded norms in the urban space and puts those elements to work in new ways. The ‘rhetoric of walking’ is therefore an individual and thus unique arrangement of normative elements. This system, according to Certeau, allows for the manipulation of the residing rhetoric by the individual, who navigates the codes of ‘proper meaning’. At the same time that walking illuminates the ‘proper meaning’ of a place, it re-writes the prescribed intention of that space:

Liant gestes et pas, frayant sens et directions, ces mots opèrent au titre même d’un évidement et d’une usure de leur affectation première. Ils en deviennent des espaces libérés, occupables. Une riche indétermination leur vaut, moyennant une raréfaction sémantique, la fonction d’articuler une géographie seconde, poétique, sur la géographie du sens littéral, interdit ou permis. Ils insinuent d’autres voyages dans l’ordre fonctionnaliste et historique de la circulation. (191)

[Linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions, these words operate in the name of an emptying-out and wearing-away of their primary role. They become liberated spaces that can be occupied. A rich indetermination gives them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement.] (105)

In this passage Certeau clarifies the function of proper names (meanings).



My original observation of Gustl as a failed *flâneur* — one who embodies the conflict of social and cultural orders present in urban space — is complicated when we consider Certeau's 'rhetoric of walking'. Gustl is not the classic *flâneur* who creates tension through observation and illumination of spatial and social conflicts. Rather, he fails to retain the necessary distance for such a categorization and consequently becomes the embodiment of these tensions. Likewise, Certeau's 'rhetoric of walking' reworks the idea of the walker. According to Certeau, the walker has the capacity to reorder and manipulate urban space and, in doing so, to allow that space to transform him- or herself. The text becomes a different organism when the organization of space within that text changes. Certeau sets up *seeing* and *walking* respectively as modes of organizing and reading space.

Seeing is a mode of observation and surveying by which a space is confronted and established as a visual entity. In other words, seeing allows space to be clearly and objectively defined. In one sense 'seeing' orders space into a series. For instance, street signs, buildings and lamp posts can be codified as individual elements. As such, each element can also be taken outside of the context in which it is found.

In attempting to make sense of the labyrinth of city space, the walker alters specific points of reference so that they become individually relevant to his or her path. For instance, in *Leutnant Gustl*, the *Musik-Verein*, the Leidinger Café and the Prater are marked by Gustl. He uses them to create a distinct personal map within the larger Vienna. Because of this marking, Gustl individualizes Vienna.

Consequently, when reading *Leutnant Gustl*, the reader joins Gustl on his walk through the streets of the city. The city becomes a vast labyrinth of streets coded with Gustl's personal and historical memory. Gustl can never immediately comprehend where he is in Vienna because the act of walking places him at street level. Through the act of seeing space as serialized Gustl reforms that space through which he walks element by element. As such, he never has a complete, or panoptic, view of the city.

Using Certeau to read Schnitzler, we can see that for Gustl walking is more than a passive encounter with the street. It is a means of communication. It is the walker and the act of walking that enables the reading of an urban space of and through the subject.

Concluding with Metaphorai: The Subject Becomes Text

Leutnant Gustl is not simply the narrative of a protagonist observing the streets of Vienna; it is the representation of the protagonist's unconscious observation of his subjectivity within the social space in which he finds himself. It is this representation of the walker's simultaneous and often unconscious observation of the urban space and his own subjectivity that presents Lieutenant Gustl/*Leutnant Gustl* as the new walker — one who is rewritten as a text.

For Certeau, certain linguistic elements in stories allow for the traversal of space within a text. The walker bridges the gap between the metaphorical city and the visual city by employing vision and movement to actualize the textual possibilities of the city street. As already, the walker becomes a *metaphor*, a means by which to 'traverse and organize places; [walkers] select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them', and in this way 'they are spatial trajectories' (115). In context, Certeau is specifically referring to stories as *metaphorai*. A spatial story is one in which a series of codes creates the movement from one location to another.

In this instance, Certeau writes about stories performing the practice of travel. However, when the subject of the story constitutes the text of the story (as Gustl does because the text is a record of his thoughts), he as a walker performs this function:

En somme, *l'espace est un lieu pratiqué*. Ainsi la rue géométriquement définie par un urbanisme est transformée en espace par des marcheurs. De même, la lecture est l'espace produit par la pratique du lieu que constitue un système de signes – un écrit. (208)

[In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e. a place constituted by a system of signs.] (117)

As Certeau explains, seeing is the *knowledge* of an order of place and walking is a spatializing *action*. If a story consists purely of the embodiment of the spatializing action, then the narration of that story will be devoid of description. This is how *Leutnant Gustl* can be defined. Additionally, the walker can be written as a type of *metaphor*. In which case Lieutenant Gustl the character of the story is revealed to



be *Leutnant Gustl* the text as the reader is led to interpret the cultural space of Vienna through Gustl's stream-of-consciousness. As a text, Gustl has thoroughly internalized the city, linking one location to the next. As a walker he is a roaming border between the imperial culture and modern Vienna and as such represents a limit: 'les bornages sont des limites transportables et des transports de limites, des *metaphorai* eux aussi' (225) [boundaries are transportable limits and transportation of limits; they are also *metaphorai*] (129).

What I have shown in my reading of Schnitzler's text is that his treatment of the subject within the context of urban space is intricately structured and goes beyond a simple critique of Viennese culture. The figure of Gustl and the space of Vienna represent similar sites of social and historical conflict. Through his use of stream-of-consciousness as a narrative form, Schnitzler illuminates the tenuously entwined relationship between the city of Vienna with its embodiment of the past and present and the conflicting orders within the subject of Lieutenant Gustl. My mapping of *Leutnant Gustl* in conjunction with a historical reading of Vienna shows how this relationship between Vienna and Gustl creates a tension between orders that eventually results in the collapse of distance in the text.

The historical reading of Vienna is meant to be a narration of the modernizing of Vienna and, more specifically, the unique construction of the *Ringstraße*. This ring is the embodiment of culture, power and politics as well as a site of 'cultural self-projection' (Schorske, 26-27). All these elements are inscribed upon Gustl and this leads to a narrative that brings into question the textual autonomy of the city street and the subject. By 'textual autonomy', I am referring to the structure of the subject and the city as independent entities. How can one be described without the other? They are structured linguistically and spatially together.

During his walk upon the city streets, Gustl writes the city. He does this in contrast to the way the city was originally written by the Emperor and those with political and cultural power. Through walking, two things occur in Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*. First, the city is inscribed with a subversive interpretation of the established text. Secondly, Gustl becomes an author of a spatial story: by rewriting the city street he becomes the organizer of space, connecting one point to another and ultimately becoming the trajectory of the narrative that is *Leutnant Gustl*.

Fragmenting the Street: Flâneur Aesthetics in Twentieth-Century Photography

Susanna C. Ott

Flânerie is an intermedial phenomenon which manifested itself in both literature and the visual arts from the start with Baudelaire's observations on the illustrator and draughtsman Constantin Guys. Impressionist and realist painters such as Edouard Manet or Gustave Caillebotte found their subject matter on the street, documenting the public life of Paris in the Second Empire. They underlined the fragmentary character of their subjects by using 'photographic' aesthetics with radical cut-offs and subjective perspectives.

Following the introduction of the small portable Leica at the Leipzig sample fair in spring 1925, the camera became an essential accessory for the twentieth-century *flâneur*, offering a means of instantaneous recording. Photographers like Eugène Atget and Brassäi in France, Americans such as Walker Evans and William Eggleston and more recent photographers like Zoe Leonard or Max Regenbergh have explored the streets by walking aimlessly and taking pictures of whatever caught their attention.

Their ambition has changed, however, over the decades. While Atget considered his pictures mere documents, the surrealists saw theirs as realizations of their postulate of uncovering the *merveilleux quotidien*, the marvels in everyday life. In the USA of the depression era, Evans drew attention to seemingly insignificant details of street life such as billboards or barber's shops. Street photographers in the 1950s and 1960s used *flâneur* aesthetics to question their cultural identity. A prominent – and for today's aesthetics most influential – example of colour photography is William Eggleston who, in the



style of a dandy-*flâneur*, depicts the streets and public spaces of the American South.

With *flânerie* having such a rooted tradition in photography, it is surprising that to date there has been no comprehensive study of this phenomenon. Many artists consider themselves as, or compare their working method to that of, a *flâneur*, and many writers light-heartedly use this title without going into any detail. Olivier Asselin examines selected works of Canadian photographer Charles Gagnon, which he describes as the results of a *flâneur's* peregrinations.¹ His main argument is that Gagnon's pictures can be seen as 'found allegories' provoked by coincidence. James Trainor examines the motif in his essay 'Walking the Walk: The artist as *flâneur*',² emphasizing performance and public art, with photography only playing a role where it documents the related events, not as an autonomous medium. When it comes to the formal aspects of visual *flânerie*, one has to revert to studies of impressionist painting that link the artists' thoughts closely to the theoretical background of Baudelaire and Benjamin, such as Katherine Golsan's essay 'The Beholder as *flâneur*: structures of perception in Baudelaire and Manet' or David Trotter's 'Modernity and its discontents: Manet, Flaubert, Cézanne, Zola'.³ There are, of course, numerous studies of the *flâneur* in literature and cultural theory. The collection of essays, *The Flâneur*, edited by Keith Tester (1994)⁴ and Harald Neumeyer's extensive study *Der Flâneur: Konzeptionen der Moderne* (1999)⁵ have played a substantial role in the researching of this article.

The aim of this article is to shed light on different forms of photographic *flânerie* in twentieth-century photography. For Katherine Golsan *flânerie* establishes a special kind of perceptual aesthetics which plays a paradigmatic role for the conception of modernity as well as postmodernity.⁶ My intention is to define the characteristic aspects of this aesthetic and to examine the changes it

1 Olivier Asselin, 'Le *flâneur* et l'allégorie: fragments sur les photographies de Charles Gagnon', *Journal of Canadian Art History*, 20:1-2 (1999).

2 James Trainor, 'Walking the Walk: The artist as *flâneur*', *Border Crossings*, 22:4 (2003).

3 Katherine Golsan, 'The Beholder as *flâneur*: Structures of perception in Baudelaire and Manet', *French Forum*, 21 (1996); David Trotter, 'Modernity and its Discontents: Manet, Flaubert, Cézanne, Zola', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 19:3 (1996).

4 Keith Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London: Routledge, 1994).

5 Harald Neumeyer, *Der Flâneur: Konzeptionen der Moderne*, 252 (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1999).

6 Golsan, 165.

can be said to have undergone over the decades from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. First, I will outline the theoretical foundations which are relevant for the purposes of understanding the visual products of photographic *flânerie*. Then I will examine the work of selected photographers whose approach can be seen as paradigmatic for this aesthetic evolution. Lastly I will cast an eye over contemporary photography and present four recent artists who programmatically follow in the *flâneur* tradition.

Key Thinkers in Flâneur Theory

Charles Baudelaire was the first to deal with the aesthetics of *flânerie* on a theoretical level. A sharp observer of the mid nineteenth-century art world, he published many critiques and reviews in journals and magazines in which he unfolds his aesthetic principles. In his essay 'Le peintre de la vie moderne' (1863),⁷ Baudelaire describes the drawer Constantin Guys as the prototype of the *flâneur*, aimlessly wandering the streets of Paris and recording his impressions in elegant sketches.

Baudelaire's *flâneur* is interested in the changes accompanying the transformation of Paris from a medieval city into a modern metropolis.⁸ He is driven not by idleness but by curiosity and is interested in all the phenomena of modernity. Even though he mixes with the masses on the boulevards, he remains an uninvolved observer. However, the *flâneur* is not a passive consumer. In a creative process, he converts his perceptions into an artistic product:

les choses renaissent sur le papier, naturelles et plus que naturelles, belles et plus que belles, singulières et douées d'une vie enthousiaste comme l'âme de l'auteur. La fantasmagorie a été extraite de la nature. (353-354)

[things are reborn on the paper, natural and even more than natural, beautiful and even more than beautiful, singular and gifted with an enthusiastic life just like the author's soul. The phantasmagorial has been extracted from nature.]

7 Charles Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', in *Critique d'art suivi de Critique musicale*, ed. by Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

8 Even though more recent studies have cast an eye on female *flânerie*, the *flâneur* usually was depicted as a male figure in the nineteenth and the larger part of the twentieth century. See Catherine Nesci, *Le flâneur et les flâneuses: les femmes et la ville à l'époque romantique* (Grenoble: Université Stendhal, 2007).



Thanks to his imagination, the *flâneur* transforms his impressions into pictures which reinforce nature to the point of surreality. A crucial point for our examination is that the *flâneur*'s records are not meant as neutral documents but represent personal interpretations of reality.

One of the most important thinkers of the early twentieth century, German-Jewish cultural critic Walter Benjamin, referred directly to Baudelaire's thoughts when he examined the *flâneur* as a prototypical figure of nineteenth-century culture. The increasing traffic forces pedestrians to crowd the narrow pavements. Large department stores dedicated exclusively to consumer culture replace the *passages* [arcades], depriving the *flâneur* of his natural habitat where he could linger and abide.⁹ People succumb to the allure of consumption, and the *flâneur* as a part of the crowd has no choice but to follow this frenzy. His gaze becomes more and more attracted to the insignia of consumer culture, such as shop windows and advertisements, as well as its underside, refuse and dirt. While Baudelaire's *flâneur* was fascinated by charming details of contemporary women's fashion, Benjamin's *flâneur* finds his subject matter literally on the street: 'Der Dichter findet den Kehrlicht der Gesellschaft auf ihrer Straße und ihren heroischen Vorwurf an eben ihm. [...] Lumpensammler oder Poet – der Abhub geht beide an.'¹⁰ [The poet finds the refuse of society on its street and derives its heroic subject from this very refuse. [...].Ragpicker or poet – the refuse concerns both.] While for Baudelaire's *flâneur* the street represents a poetic universe, Benjamin turns it into a hostile cosmos full of enigmatic signs which cannot be read casually.

Even though Baudelaire and Benjamin did not have photography in mind when talking about the – at the time mainly literary – *flânerie*, their thoughts are easily applicable to photography. According to the theoretical basics we have outlined, I suggest using the term '*flâneur* photographer' for artists whose work features the following seven aspects:¹¹

9 '[Der *flâneur*] irrte durch das Labyrinth der Ware wie vordem durch das städtische.' [The *flâneur* wandered through the labyrinth of goods as he had once wandered through the labyrinth of the city]. Walter Benjamin, 'Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire (1938)', in *Charles Baudelaire: Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp,1974), 53.

10 Benjamin, 'Paris des Second Empire', 78.

11 The term '*flâneur* photographer' has never been used in critical literature before.

Central to *flânerie* is the aspect of aimless movement. The *flâneur* photographer is a drifter who walks or drives without a specific objective in mind. He finds his subjects literally on the streets. *Flâneur* photography thus forms a sub-genre of street photography.

Flâneur photography concentrates on vernacular subjects found in everyday life as well as ordinary people pursuing their day-to-day business. If *flâneur* photography features the unusual, it does so by focusing on the beautiful or uncommon aspects of everyday life, as in Baudelaire's terms.

Flânerie is interested in the changes our environment undergoes due to its constant modernization and the specific impact of consumer culture, as pointed out by Benjamin. A characteristic feature of *flâneur* photography is the accentuation of the subjective perspective of the perceiving and selecting individual. The subjective perspective can be seen, for example, in a focus on point of view. *Flâneur* photography focuses on fragmentary details isolated from their context rather than on overviews or panoramas; its approach is not encyclopædic but selective. The *flâneur's* attitude is that of an uninvolved observer. *Flâneur* photography is not driven by any kind of activism, be it social or political. Finally, *flânerie* is based on a specific cognitive interest. The *flâneur* experiences the modern city as a place full of unfamiliar, even enigmatic visual phenomena. He thus strives to gain an understanding of the urban sign.

In the second part of this article, I will introduce artists who can be seen as prototypical *flâneur* photographers and whose work demonstrates the above-mentioned features. Special attention will be paid to the changes the *flâneur* aesthetic appears to have undergone as well as to the way the pictures represent the reality of the streets in which they are produced.

Eugène Atget: Historical Documents From a Pedestrian's Perspective

Amongst the earliest and most influential examples of photographic *flânerie* are Eugène Atget's images of Paris. From 1890 Atget took pictures of his home town. To earn money, he worked as a freelance photographer for commercial agencies selling pictures of monuments and topographic vistas to tourists. In 1907 the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris commissioned him to document the old town of Paris, which had remained unscathed by Haussman's restructuring



but was nevertheless threatened by the progress of modernization. After he had finished this commission, Atget kept working and started to sort his pictures thematically, grouping them into albums of 60 images. He presented different kinds of vehicles in *La voiture de Paris* and various signs and traditional shops in an album entitled *Enseignes et vieilles boutiques de Paris*.

The difference between Atget's pictures and those of earlier photographers taking pictures of the city is first and foremost his unusual choice of subject. Atget was primarily interested in the unspectacular and the usually overlooked aspects of Parisian everyday life. The pictures are mostly empty of humans, featuring inanimate things such as shop windows, dark street corners or apparently insignificant architectural details like the baroque handrail of an apartment building's staircase.

For *Avenue des Gobelins* (1925), Atget took a picture of a fashion shop window. Several mannequins representing children and adults reach out towards the passer-by with extended hands. The figures are arranged as if they were greeting a potential customer, which gives the ensemble a quaint liveliness. The window is photographed from a side angle, reflecting a large building on the other side of the street, a failure in terms of the prevailing standards of good photography. At the lower margin a wood-encased wall and part of the pavement protrude into the picture. The unusually skewed perspective and the narrow framing mimic the cursory gaze of a passer-by. This choice of perspective is particularly remarkable because Atget used an old-fashioned large format 18x24 cm camera with a tripod which required laborious mounting and long exposure. We can therefore assume that the seemingly careless framing and the casual pedestrian's perspective were, in fact, intentional.

Eugène Atget's photographs document the disappearing features of old Paris but at the same time, by choosing consumer goods and advertisements as subject matter, he records the signs of the still young capitalist society as discussed critically by Benjamin. While his early commissioned work was primarily documentary in nature, in his final years Atget no longer considered himself a mere documentarist, but an 'auteur-éditeur' [author-editor] with a recognizable style, working as a creative individual.¹² As in *Avenue des Gobelins*, Atget's choice of perspective is often surprising since it does not follow any classical scheme but uses close-ups and distorted angles which

12 Thomas Weski, 'Gegen Kratzen und Kritzeln auf der Platte', in *How you look at it: Fotografien des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Thomas Weski and Heinz Liesbrock (Köln: Oktagon, 2000), 25.

Fragmenting the Street

indicate the subjective point of view of a perceiving individual and appear to mimic the casual gaze of an impartial passer-by. In their unusual focus on details of everyday life and their seemingly casual perspective, these photographs record the *flâneur's* gaze.



Figure 1. Eugène Atget, Avenue des Gobelins, 1925. Photograph courtesy of George Eastman House, International Museum of Photography and Film.

The framing marks the pictures explicitly as fragments isolated from the reality of the city.



Surrealism: The Poetry of Chance

Atget played a key role in the emergence of surrealist photography in the 1920s. This is somewhat surprising given he did not consider himself a surrealist in any way. Man Ray, the most prominent surrealist photographer, knew Atget because he was his neighbour and acquired about 50 pictures in which he saw surrealist potential. Some of Atget's pictures were then published by André Breton in the magazine *La Révolution surréaliste*, the mouthpiece of the surrealist movement, and were very well received.¹³

Surrealism was the first important movement in the twentieth century that incorporated the medium of photography into its artistic practice, such as in André Breton's photo-text *Nadja* (1928) in which the pictures are not merely used as illustrations but enter in a dialogical relationship with the narrative. Inseparably connected to Paris, the surrealists explored the city by strolling through districts that were off the beaten track and neighbourhoods of ill-repute. Following the *flâneur* tradition, they visited abattoirs, flea markets and amusement parks. They were not interested in the picturesque or sensational, but in banal, seemingly insignificant subjects that could be enriched with meaning and lead to surprising associations. The surrealist photograph was considered a kind of *objet trouvé* [found object].¹⁴ In this sense, Brassai discovered graffiti as a cryptic sign language whose meaning remained forever undecipherable to the beholder. In his famous night shots he showed the city as a place full of mysterious shadowy zones boding unexpected events.

The surrealists particularly admired photographs representing *le merveilleux quotidien*. The capturing of these 'everyday wonders' transforms reality into a surreal, mysterious world – a concept that refers to Baudelaire's idea of the *flâneur* as an artist who extracts the phantasmagorical out of reality. As such, the surrealist gaze is always magically charged. Brassai's picture *Pilier de métro* (1934) illustrates such a phenomenon. It shows a simply modelled pillar by night, which in itself would not be particularly interesting. But standing in the light of a lantern, the pillar casts a strong shadow on a wall which brings to mind the burlesque silhouette of a man's profile.

13 The first picture was published in the second volume on 15 January 1925. *La Révolution surréaliste* 2 (1925).

14 Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz, *Bystander: A history of street photography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 158.

The trigger for the deployment of the marvellous is not in the image, but in the beholder's imagination. Yet because of the medium's supposed authenticity, the photograph seems to bear witness to the surreal.

A surrealist *flâneur* photographer like Brassai is primarily interested in vernacular phenomena. Unlike Atget, though, his aim is not to document the ephemeral or to focus on consumer culture, but to detect the marvellous and mysterious in everyday life. Strolling through the city, the artist is looking for these surreal fragments of reality, isolating them from their context with the camera. Seen together, these pictures create an alternative, surreal cosmos. The surrealist *flâneur* follows Baudelaire's postulate of reinforcing nature to the point of surreality by means of the artist's creativity, while the interpretation is left to the viewer's imagination.

Walker Evans: Fragments of a Capitalist Reality

In the 1930s Eugène Atget's work became known in the USA, where it received positive feedback and influenced the aesthetic evolution of photography for decades. American photographer Berenice Abbot came to know Atget's work when she spent some time as Man Ray's assistant in Paris. After Atget's death, she bought parts of his archive and brought them to the United States. In 1929, she showed the pictures to Walker Evans, who though just beginning his career in photography at that time would become one of the most influential figures in American photography in the twentieth century. Evans was impressed.¹⁵ His aesthetics had, up to then, been related to the school of Neues Sehen as practised at the German Bauhaus, with its impact on radically new perspectives and constructivist structures. From 1929 onwards, starting with a series of pictures taken in New York, the influence of Atget's work is clearly perceptible. Storefronts, shop windows and portraits of people in the street taken incognito established Evans's subsequent subject matter.

Evans radicalized the formal aesthetics, as conceived by Atget, by systematically focusing on his subjects using close-ups. The frame of the image *Roadside Gas Sign* (1929), for instance, is set in such a manner that the overlapping letters of old advertising messages fill the whole picture space. Like Brassai's graffiti, the words are

15 Belinda Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), 47.



fragmented, isolated from their context. Their original meaning is only partially decipherable. What is emphasized is how different consumer goods court the public's attention. Through the close-up and fragmentation, the vernacular subject matter is charged with meaning. With his selective view Evans isolates vernacular subjects from their context, glorifying them by allowing them to fill the whole picture space.

Like Atget, Evans's choice of subject places a strong emphasis on consumer culture, which plays an important role in the American culture and cityscape. In the mid 1930s Evans began a long-term project to 'compose a critical portrait of America's historical present, at once resolutely unspectacular and shockingly real',¹⁶ which resulted in the publication of his famous photo book *American Photographs* in 1938.¹⁷ The subjects are manifold, with a special emphasis on typical *flâneur* issues such as the masses, consumer culture (especially billboards) and the impact of the increase in motorization on the urban landscape.

Walker Evans's aesthetic seems to reflect Walter Benjamin's critical judgement of the influence of capitalism on the environment while at the same time bringing to mind the Baudelairean metaphor of the *flâneur* as a mirror or kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness. 'On peut aussi le [flâneur] comparer, lui, à un miroir aussi immense que cette foule, un kaléidoscope doué de conscience' [One can also compare him to a mirror as immense as that crowd, a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness].¹⁸ Even more than was the case with Atget or Brassai, Evans's accentuation of the fragmentary nature of the images refers to the selective perception of the *flâneur*. Compiled in a book, the juxtaposed pictures allow associations to grow amongst themselves. This corpus of visual fragments does not merely document or represent reality as it is. Rather the selected pictures rearrange and reconstruct reality as perceived by the *flâneur*, leaving the interpretation to the viewer.

The 1960s: Motorized Flânerie in Search of Identity

16 Rathbone, *Walker Evans*, 158.

17 Walker Evans, *American Photographs* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1938).

18 Baudelaire, 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', 352.

When Benjamin's text 'Die Wiederkehr des Flâneurs', written in 1929, was first published in 1967, the discussion of the *flâneur* experienced a revival. However, by the late 1960s the metropolis had lost its status as a paradigm of modernity. Along with this, the once mandatory connection of the *flâneur* to the urban context was no longer applicable. As already anticipated by Baudelaire, the *flâneur* became an explorer of global terrain and its representation.¹⁹ He is no longer only a pedestrian, but widens his radius using the car. Especially in the USA, the focus of the motorized *flâneur* shifts to suburban and remote provincial areas that he could not have reached easily before.

The first to systematically undertake his *flânerie* by motor vehicle was Swiss-born photographer Robert Frank. He followed Walker Evans's lead with his project *The Americans*, documenting American everyday life from an outsider's perspective.²⁰ With the support of a Guggenheim fellowship, Frank drove cross-country from 1955 to 1956 with no specific destination, sometimes accompanied by beat poet Jack Kerouac. During these trips, he took around 28,000 pictures. Frank was mainly interested in the physical facts of the American roadside. Parallel with the expansion of the *flâneur's* motorized terrain, Frank's field of perception shifts from the urban to a wider cultural context including the identity of its inhabitants.

Formally, Frank transformed Walker Evans's generally neutral viewpoint into a more radical subjectivity. Blurs, extreme cut-offs and crude graininess create a casual look that gives the impression of snapshots taken in passing. Many of Frank's shots are taken from a car window, integrating parts of the car. Very often he applies skewed angles that indicate subjective points of view. These features, though they contradict the prevailing ideas of good photography which had to be skilfully composed, well-lighted and sharp, explicitly mark his pictures as taken from a human – the *flâneur's* – perspective.

Street photography became an important movement in the 1960s. Artistic motivation becomes existential, cultural and self-reflective in this decade. 'The idea was that you bought some free time for yourself, and you took off across America in search of yourself and what it was like to be living in this country', recalls photographer Joel Meyerowitz.²¹ Whereas many street photographers focused on political or social subject matter, a number followed the *flâneur* tradition of uninvolved observation, registering everyday life, their

19 Bruce Mazlish, 'The *flâneur*: From Spectator to Representation', in Tester, 57.

20 Robert Frank, *The Americans* (Zürich, Berlin and New York, NY: Scalo, 2000). The book was first published in Paris in 1958.

21 Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 390.



surroundings and reflecting on aspects of cultural or personal identity.



Figure 2. Lee Friedlander, *Madison, Wisconsin*, 1966. Photograph copyright of Lee Friedlander. Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.

One of the most highly acclaimed photographers of the American art scene of the early 1970s, Lee Friedlander, questions the interplay of the photographer and his environment by including his own shadow in his compositions.²² From 1962 onwards he developed a complex style which featured strong reflections (mostly windows) and splits of the picture-space into multiple layers with one thing in front of the other. The beholder needs time in order to make sense of the compositions and unravel the details of the material presented. Aside from playing wittily with our perception, often revealing surprising visual puns, these pictures seem to reflect the increasingly complex structures of society as they are perceived by the *flâneur*.

In *Madison, Wisconsin* (1966) from the series *Portrait, self* (1970), Friedlander shot the framed portrait of a black woman standing behind a window, possibly of a photographer's studio. The photographer's body is reflected twice on the glass pane. The reflection of his torso

22 Friedlander was a key figure in curator John Szarkowski's ground breaking 1967 'New Documents' exhibition, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City along with Garry Winogrand and Diane Arbus.

with his hands holding the camera almost covers the left half of the picture, while the shadow of his head falls exactly over the woman's portrait, giving the strange impression that she might be looking at the man standing in front of her. While the subjectivity of earlier *flâneur* photographs was indirect, manifesting itself only formally by point of view, the *flâneur* photographer now stars as the visible protagonist in his pictures.

Robert Frank and Lee Friedlander mark the beginning and the end of the 1960s era which brought revolutionary social and cultural changes and was particularly important for the evolution of an American art photography scene. They paradigmatically represent a new interest in identity, be it cultural or self-reflective. Formally, they radicalized the *flâneur* aesthetics of their predecessors. While Frank carried the subjective point of view to hitherto unknown extremes, Friedlander introduced himself as reader and interpreter of his cultural environment by placing himself into the context of the picture.

William Eggleston: Transposing *Flânerie* into Colour

William Eggleston, for many the most important figure in twentieth-century colour photography, was the first to transfer *flâneur* aesthetics systematically to colour photography. The son of a plantation owner in Tennessee, Eggleston never had to make a living from photography. He used the medium to document his day-to-day surroundings in Memphis, wandering the streets of the city or travelling across the American South by car, adopting the style of a dandy-*flâneur*. Like Friedlander, Eggleston sometimes integrated his own shadow into the composition. Even though he focused heavily on relics of consumer culture, he was interested in the surprising and beautiful in everyday life as evoked by Baudelaire and the surrealists. His pictures of puddles on the street, rusting tricycles and ordinary people caused a stir in the art world when the Museum of Modern Art dedicated its first major show of a colour photographer to Eggleston in 1976. The vernacular subject matter struck the public as 'banal' and 'boring', while Eggleston's seemingly unformed style, which



refers to the casual, random gaze of the *flâneur*, was condemned as 'snapshot chic'.²³

The picture *Untitled* (1972) embodies this aesthetic. It shows an entrance leading to a closed door painted with the silhouette of a nude woman. The camera angle is slightly tilted to the right, so that the symmetry of the whole picture is affected. Part of the door and the painted figure are in the dark. The unfavourable lighting (according to classical standards) and the distorted camera angle give the picture the look of a casual snapshot. At the lower right-hand corner, the photographer's shadow is visible with his hand on the camera's release. This reference to the space outside the picture frame underlines the fragmentary nature of the picture.



Figure 3. Max Regenberg, *Randnotiz # 1995*, L.B. System Berlin, 1995. Photograph copyright of Max Regenberg.

In fact, references to the off-picture space and open compositions are typical of Eggleston. With their strong subjective perspective, their seemingly uninvolved focus on vernacular subject matter and consumer culture and their deceptively casual style, Eggleston's pictures strongly represent a *flâneur* aesthetic. His photographic

23 Hilton Kramer, 'Art: Focus on Photo Shows', *New York Times*, 28 May 1976, 62.

projects usually consisted of several hundred or even thousands of images, building huge corpora of visual fragments.²⁴ Seen together in interaction, the pictures actively construct a picture of the American South – a picture seen through the eyes of the *flâneur*.

Contemporary *Flânerie*

William Eggleston's aesthetics received worldwide acclaim in the 1980s and his work still has a major influence on young photographers today. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, *flâneur* aesthetics has not lost any of its attraction for young photographers. Many of them follow either the Baudelairean or the Benjaminian tradition, as the following few examples will demonstrate.

German photographer Max Regenbergr can be situated within the context of American *flâneur* photography, particularly that of Eggleston and Stephen Shore. Since 1980, he has focused on the interplay of billboards and public space. Even though Regenbergr's approach is conceptual, pointing to the omnipresence of advertising in public space, his pictures do not have a sociocritical appeal. Rather, the juxtaposition of the advertisement's messages with the surrounding urban landscape often provokes surprising, humorous or absurd associations. One example can be found in *Randnotiz #1995, L.B. System Berlin* which features the billboard of the larger-than-life nude torso of a woman lasciviously stripping off her bra in front of a deserted building site with no one in sight who could respond to her erotic invitation.

American photographer Zoe Leonard pursues a similarly systematic approach. For her project *Analogue* (1998-2007), Leonard strolled through the streets of cities like New York, Warsaw and Kampala, taking pictures mainly of storefronts of old mom-and-pop-stores,²⁵ tracing the quirky beauty of a fading way of life endangered by gentrification. Like Regenbergr's pictures, hers brings to mind

24 Eggleston's idea for his first large project, *Los Alamos* (1966-1974) was to produce a compendium of pictures which went beyond what anyone could remember looking at, forming a kind of analogue to the real world; see Nathan Kernan, 'William Eggleston's Democratic Photography: The Los Alamos Project', *Art on Paper*, 6 (2001).

25 Small, old-fashioned stores that belong to a private owner usually selling groceries or household articles.



Walter Benjamin's interest in consumer culture and the function of *flâneur* photography as cultural memory.



Figure 4. Paul Albert Leitner, Schmelzgasse from Wien: Momente einer Stadt, 1995-2006. Photograph copyright of Paul Albert Leitner.

Paul Albert Leitner, on the other hand, calls himself a classic *flâneur*, explicitly referring back to Baudelaire. From 1995 to 2006, his 'fotografische Wanderungen' [photographic peregrinations], as he calls them,²⁶ took him all over his home town of Vienna. For his ongoing project *Kunst und Leben: Ein Roman* [Art and Life: a novel] he has travelled to Cuba, Romania and Poland, among other places. Leitner considers his photographic walks 'inspections'. His aim is to present 'die Welt als eine Erzählung in Bildern' (189) [the world

26 Paul Albert Leitner, *Wien: Momente einer Stadt* (Salzburg: Edition Fotohof, 2006), 188.

as narrative in pictures]. Like Eggleston, he strives not only to read and understand reality but actually to build an analogous world in a creative act of selection and artistic interpretation.

Rut Blees Luxemburg is 'attracted to the *heimlichkeit* of a space in public.'²⁷ In both *London: A modern project* (1997) and *Liebeslied* [Love song] (1999/2000), she sought out encounters on the streets with that which, according to her, goes 'beyond the [*sic*] appearances' and thus aims to decipher the mysterious signs of the urban cosmos. Usually walking alone and working by night, she takes pictures which are structured by artificial lighting and shadowy zones. In her series *Piccadilly's Peccadilloes* (2007) she focuses on puddles on the asphalt in which the luminous signs of the underground entrances along the Piccadilly line cast colourful shadows of fragmented words, turning familiar signs into mysterious hints and transforming the street into poetry.



Figure 5. Rut Blees Luxemburg, Cockfosters from the series Piccadilly's Peccadilloes, 2007. Photograph courtesy of Rut Blees Luxemburg and Union Gallery, London.

27 'A Conversation Between Rut Blees Luxemburg and Dave Campani' (1999) <http://www.union-gallery.com/content.php?page_id=653> [accessed 3 February 2010].



The aesthetic criteria of *flâneur* photography defined in this paper have traced the evolution of street photography over the past century. The main characteristics of this criteria have proved relevant for all photographers discussed here: aimless movement, uninvolved observation of vernacular physical facts of everyday life, emphasis on the subjectivity of the perspective and a strong focus on fragmentary details. Two tendencies can be particularly discerned: on the one hand, there is a deciphering of urban reality and a revealing of the marvels in everyday life as conceived by Baudelaire (and as realized in surrealism and by Friedlander, Eggleston and Luxemburg); on the other hand, *flâneur* photographers have followed Benjamin's interest in the effects of capitalist consumer culture on our lives and in the documentation of the related transformation of the urban landscape. This is particularly true for Atget, Evans, Regenberg and Leonard.

Despite these threads, *flâneur* aesthetics has also undergone some notable shifts over the decades. Firstly, photographers have placed increasing emphasis on the subjectivity of their perspective, from Atget whose slightly skewed camera angles hinted only indirectly at the perceiving individual to 'Eggleston who integrates himself into his pictures in the form of his shadow.'

Another aesthetic dimension that has undergone a remarkable change is the presentation of the pictures in groups. *Flâneur* photographers built up increasingly large corpora, beginning with Atget and his collections of only 50 to 60 pictures and ending with Eggleston's several thousand photographs.

By bringing together visual fragments, these photographers actively construct a parallel reality. Like Benjamin's and Baudelaire's *flâneurs*, twentieth-century *flâneur* photographers are not only observers and readers but also producers of culture, often presenting themselves as such in their work.

Desiring Urbanism

Stuart Kendall

Gazing across Nîmes from atop its Roman Coliseum, the eye surveys gothic spires, modern apartments and the decorous slate roofs and ironwork of the *belle époque*. Constructed and reconstructed again and again in ancient times, the Coliseum has lately been reincarnated as an amphitheatre: its sand court paved, its stone walls wired for light and sound. The building bears the scars of each incarnation: as Coliseum, as fortress, quarry, relic and tourist site. But which of these sites asserts itself as foremost before the tourist's imaginative eyes? What attracts and activates our urban imagination?

Shifting my eyes, gazing now out of my own window down my short street, I survey the copper siding of a new complex of sustainably built condominiums in the recently revitalized downtown of a once famous American frontier town: all of this framed by the three-foot-thick stone walls of my 150-year-old house; the foundation stones themselves are dense with fossils. The condominiums have been for sale for months, ready for occupancy, but no one here can afford to buy them. Or rather, no one who can afford to buy them wants to live here, in this part of this town.

Both places are densely layered with history and technology, with human engagement and meaning. All places are like this — some more, some less. These complex, contradictory and heterodox environments are the streets we walk on our way to work, the roads we take to school and the places in which we marry, love and leave. Perhaps the ubiquity of the streets suggests that we should not need a sophisticated critical language to account for our experiences there. Museums collect our cultural treasures, our objects of veneration, the chronicles of our lives, do they not? How might we begin to reverse this equation, to contemplate an aesthetics of everyday life?



This paper follows the routes of several explorers who, over the past fifty years, contemplated this aesthetic: Ivan Chtcheglov aka Gilles Ivain, a member of the *Internationale lettriste* [Lettrist International], a group of avant-gardists in France who later grew into the influential *Internationale situationniste* [Situationist International]; the semiologist Roland Barthes; the sociologist Michel de Certeau; and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a philosopher and a psychoanalyst, respectively. Summarizing the work of each figure in turn, each section of the paper will elaborate critical concepts necessary for a revitalized approach to our engagement with the streets.

The Northwest Passage

Fifty years after publication, Ivan Chtcheglov's *Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau* [Formulary for a New Urbanism] still reads as an eclectic science-fiction fantasy of an impossible urbanism: 'Nous nous ennuyons dans la ville, il n'y a plus de temple du soleil. [...] Il faut construire l'hacienda' [We are bored in the city; there is no longer any temple of the sun. [...] we must build the hacienda].¹ The disjunctive phrases echo those that began Apollinaire's 'Zone' fifty years earlier: 'A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien' [You are weary of this ancient world].² While Apollinaire's 'Zone' mixed Catholic Romantic melancholy with Modernist urgency, recalling Baudelaire's fables of *flâneurs*, streets and streetwalkers, Chtcheglov proposed a far more supple and appealing passage into urban transience and transcendence. But what can be salvaged from Chtcheglov's urban fantasy for our time? What critical tools might we require to update Chtcheglov or to reinvent urbanism for ourselves?

For Chtcheglov, cities are geological: 'l'on ne peut faire trois pas sans rencontrer des fantômes, armés de tout le prestige de leurs légendes' [You can't take three steps without encountering ghosts bearing all the prestige of their legends] (15). Time echoes through the solid forms of buildings and streets. Architectural styles and technologies – and other temporal markers – intersect with and cut into one another. Old temples are rebuilt in wood, stone and stucco

1 Gilles Ivain, 'Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau', *Internationale Situationniste*, 1 (1958), 15.

2 Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Zone', in *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry*, ed. by Paul Auster, trans. by Samuel Beckett (New York: Vintage, 1983), 2-3; originally published in *Alcools* (Gallimard, 1920).

and reused as stockades, arms depots, ruins and attractions. Every architectural element lends character — for good or ill — to an urban ambience, signalling the history embodied by and on a specific building in a specific city. Chtcheglov goes even further:

L'architecture est le plus simple moyen d'*articuler* le temps et l'espace, de *moduler* la réalité, de faire rêver. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'articulation et de modulation plastiques, expression d'une beauté passagère. Mais d'une modulation influentielle, qui s'inscrit dans la courbe éternelle des désirs humains et des progrès dans la réalisation de ces désirs. (16)

[Architecture is the simplest means of *articulating* time and space, of *modulating* reality, of engendering dreams. It is not only a plastic articulation and modulation expressive of ephemeral beauty, but a modulation producing influences in accordance with the eternal spectrum of human desires and progress in finding ways of realizing them.]

With modernism, abstraction and cold technological mechanization took command of the city. Our dreams and fantasies nevertheless continued to be filled with and motivated by images and evocations of older cities, even as our cities themselves were emptied of both symbolic and sensual *texture*. Chtcheglov writes:

Le fait plastique à l'état pur, sans anecdote mais inanimé, repose œil et le refroidit. Ailleurs se retrouve d'autres beautés fragmentaires, et de plus en plus lointaine la terre des synthèses promises. Chacun hésite entre le passé vivant dans l'affectif et l'avenir mort dès à présent. (16)

[Pure plasticity, inanimate, storyless, soothes and cools the eye. Elsewhere other fragmentary beauties can be found – and the promised land of synthèses receding ever further into the distance. Everyone wavers between the past which is emotionally still alive and the future which is already dead.]

Thus, while our dreams are filled with the rough and jagged fantasies of indigenous architectures and ancient capitals, of cities that have never existed, our eyes often encounter and our feet often carry us through dull and banal modern or pseudo-modern abstractions: cityscapes without character or interest. Marc Augé calls such spaces 'non-lieux' [non-places].³ They are everywhere and nowhere: the

3 Marc Augé, *Non-Lieux: introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).



chain restaurants and retailers poured like plastic over the innards and outskirts of our cities and towns.

In contrast to these static forms, Chtcheglov hopes that future cities will be modifiable and evidence architecture as a means of both acquiring knowledge and promoting action — a means, in other words, of modifying life:

Un élargissement rationnel des anciens systèmes religieux, des vieux contes et surtout de la psychanalyse au bénéfice de l'architecture se fait plus urgent chaque jour à mesure que disparaissent les raisons de se passionner. (18-19)

[As every day we lose more reasons to get excited, there is an ever more urgent need for a rational extension of the ancient religious systems, of old tales and above all of psychoanalysis used for the benefit of architecture.]

He imagines 'bâtiments chargés d'un grand pouvoir évocateur et influentiel, des édifices symboliques figurant les désirs, les forces, les événements, passés, présents et à venir' [buildings with great evocative and influential power, symbolic edifices representing desires, forces and events past, present and future] (18).

But this futurist fantasy was more than fifty years out of date, proposing a Coney Island of the mind well after the heyday of its original and utterly timely coincident as it was with the construction of Disneyland in Anaheim, California, re-casting the future suburb as city back-lot. Of course, Chtcheglov's cities of tomorrow were intended to be real cities of dreams, cities capable of making dreams reality.

The task of fulfilling that fantasy, of making those dreams into realities, fell to a few members of what would eventually become the *Internationale situationniste*. But the Situationists never settled into an urbanism that was either singular or definitive. They did not even focus their research on one city, though Paris figured prominently, nor did they propose any single model for an ideal city, the way that Corbusier and other modern abstractionists did. In the middle of their trajectory — in 1961, four years after the foundation of the movement — the Situationists abandoned architecture and urbanism altogether, changing the purpose of their programme to 'réaliser la philosophie' [the realization of philosophy] following the Marxist imperative to change the world.⁴ They shifted the terrain of their

4 Guy Debord, 'Les thèses de Hambourg en septembre 1961', *Œuvres/ Guy Debord* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 585.

activity from places and things to the realm of ideas and declared that urbanism did not exist, that it was only an ideology and that architecture was nothing more than the production of that ideology in space, 'satisfaisant faussement un besoin faussé' [falsely satisfying a falsified need].⁵

For those first few years, however, the members of the *Internationale situationniste* devoted themselves to what they called psychogeography: 'Etude des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus' [The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behaviour of individuals].⁶ Psychogeography, for them, was the 'science fiction of urbanism', a field combining rational, experimental investigation and fantastic imagination, unifying the approaches of the arts and the sciences.⁷ These reflections evolved and opened into another kind of study, unitary urbanism: 'Théorie de l'emploi d'ensemble des arts et techniques concourant à la construction intégrale d'un milieu en liaison dynamique avec des expériences de comportement' [A theory of the combined use of arts and techniques as means contributing to the construction of a unified milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behaviour] ('Définitions', 13). Even this theory remained both analytic and embryonic, a method of investigation and experimentation rather than a creative exposition or concrete development.

The term 'psychogeography' codifies the notion that the specific dynamics of a place carry and convey a mood powerful enough to shape the behaviours of those who pass through it. Behaviours here include not only what one does but how one feels, one's ideas as well as one's actions. Unitary urbanism suggests that designers — urban planners, architects, interior designers, artists — can create such spaces purposefully, without succumbing to the fantasies of cybernetics. The field of cybernetics was predicated on many of the same principles as the Situationists' design, with one crucial distinction: cybernetics proposed the complete control and anticipation of human actions whereas the Situationists sought to create a life rich in unexpected experiences.⁸

5 *Internationale Situationniste*, 6 (1961), 16.

6 'Définitions', *Internationale Situationniste*, 1 (1957), 13.

7 *Internationale Situationniste*, 2 (1958), 13.

8 Guy Debord, 'Correspondance avec un cybernéticien', *Internationale Situationniste*, 9 (1964).



The contrast in values here is between maximum efficiency and maximum intensity. This basic conflict likewise distinguishes design education from art education: the first remains guided by the ideology of utilitarian functionalism, the second by a playful evocation of process and experiment. It is unsurprising that the design fields should often be remembered when their products most resemble those of the arts and that the arts should often be most interesting when they mirror and impact on everyday life, which is to say the realm of design. The Situationists endeavoured to combine these two incompatible strategies – rational investigation/planning and pure experimental play – and for this reason, among others, their odyssey remains profoundly relevant still today.

Their primary method of urban investigation was the 'dérive' [drift], defined as a 'mode de comportement expérimental lié aux conditions de la société urbaine: technique du passage hâtif à travers des ambiances variées' [mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances] ('Définitions', 13). The practice began in 1953, but received its fullest elaboration three years later when Guy Debord codified it in *Théorie de la dérive*.⁹ As the name indicates, the method requires a small group of 'explorers' to walk through the psychogeographical ambience of a city in search of overlooked microclimates within larger zones, hidden connections between zones and also to determine the true nature of any given milieu as a source of emotion, dream and physical sensation. One might conduct such research alone, but to do so was to risk simply following one's own lights rather than tracing those of the city. Too many participants in a drift might risk both dissension and distraction. Two or three participants seemed ideal. The drift was to last one day, defined as the time between two periods of sleep. It could be pursued under any weather conditions, though heavy rain obviously discourages free exploration. The data collected on a drift should also be supplemented with historical and other forms of research to render a complete representation of a place, not only in its psychogeographical ambience but in its historical and technological aspects as well. The drift is thus just one part of a larger strategy of understanding and ultimately effecting the psychogeographical landscape of a city, but it is a crucial one, for it emphasizes the physical and emotional impact of space on human life rather than simply describing that space through

9 Originally published in *Les Lèvres nues* 9 (November 1956); reprinted in *Internationale Situationniste*, 2 (1958).

idealized abstractions, as modernist architects and cyberneticists too often did.

The practice of the drift has obvious precursors in the practices of Thomas de Quincey, in Baudelaire's *flâneur*, in Rimbaud's wanderlust and in Surrealist wanderings through forgotten neighbourhoods and markets. It can be distinguished from these practices, however, by its intention, which was to be a research method in experimental urbanism. The Situationists were not interested in wandering through the world, they wanted to change it. The drift was no idle pastime. It sought what they called the 'Northwest Passage': a passage into the city that leads out of fragmented time and space into an urban utopia, where topology is transformed into topophilia. The fable of the Northwest Passage functioned as a productive fantasy, an urban mirage that launched a thousand drifts.

All Cities are Semiological

As a means of understanding the physical and emotional impact of space, alongside its historical and technological dimensions, the drift can contribute enormously to our understanding of how individuals and communities function in urban environments. As a first step in adapting the technique to contemporary needs, we might relinquish the fantastic Northwest Passage and pursue an entirely different purpose: that of sustainable community. The phrase 'sustainable community' implies not only that the buildings and urban planning that constitute the formal space of that community maximize sustainable practices — from building with sustainable materials to harnessing sustainable sources of energy and the re-use of refuse. It also implies that architecture and urban planning serve to create community, in the sense of human closeness and in the sense of communal monumentality, through architecture as a symbolic communal icon. Sustainable practices require maximum efficiency while sustainable communities also require maximum intensity.

Urban planning influences the time of everyday life, like the time spent in one's commute to work or the time spent shopping for food. Architecture and urban planning are also the repositories of our communal histories of these practices: they structure the continuities and discontinuities of our lives as practices of living. Sustainable communities are not only ecologically sustainable; they are also communities rich in communal time and memory. As such, they



include both representations and the possibility for new articulations of a communal value system or mythos rooted in sustainable practices. Sustainable practices will not be supported over time if no one believes in them.

We should also recall the true complexity of urban milieux and their psychogeographies. To equate urbanism with geology, as Chtcheglov did, is to propose urbanism as a science of layered signs. Such a semiology requires a hermeneutics of cityscapes made up of urban signage. Signage here includes not only environmental signage such as street signs, billboards and graffiti, but also includes other markers that distinguish a place and all the layered strata attributable to those markers, such as the contours of its natural topography, the architectural and urban styles that mark its histories, the textural (wood or stone, adobe or plaster, etc.) and technological valences of its constructions, the patterns of its people, their habits of motion, of indoor and outdoor living, of congregating or dispersing at certain hours of the day or seasons of the year.

To engage with a city is to read and explore its histories, technologies and culture, each of which is a distinct system of interacting with incongruous elements. All these markers are plural and heterogeneous. Urbanism may be unitary and utopian — the projection of fantasy into place — but cities are diverse, discursive physical spaces, which is to say imaginary, symbolic and real.

Semiologists have often set their sights on cities.¹⁰ By chance, but unsurprisingly, the city emerged as a field for semiology in the same years as it emerged as a field of environmental signs: the 1960s. In 1967, a decade after the Situationists launched their movement, Roland Barthes gave a lecture on semiology and urbanism.¹¹ He outlined several problems and promises confronting and motivating the activity of semiology in the city. France had by then passed through a period of rapid modernization: magazines suddenly had glossy colour photographs, cars threatened to become as ubiquitous as televisions and other durable electronic goods. The poststructuralist generation was not born in houses with refrigerators, but it wrote in them. Barthes' lecture, delivered in the same year he published

10 Cf. *The City and the Sign*, ed. by M. Gottdiener and A. Lagopoulos (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Jean François Augoyard, *Pas à pas: Essai sur le cheminement quotidien en milieu urbain* (Paris: Seuil, 1979); Alain Médam, *Conscience de la Ville* (Paris: Anthropos, 1977); and *La Sémiotique de l'espace: Architecture, urbanisme, sortir de l'impasse* (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1979).

11 Roland Barthes, 'Sémiologie et urbanisme', in *Roland Barthes, Œuvres complètes II, 1962-1967* (Paris: Seuil, 2002).

Système de la mode (1967), reflected the newness of these technologies and the urbanisms that accompanied them in several ways, not least of which was the admitted inadequacy of his approach.

Foremost among its promises, according to Barthes, semiology proposed a means of integrating data from various sciences — psychology, sociology, geography, demography, etc. — into a complete semantic map of urban milieu. Many problems prohibit this easy integration. Urban signs fail to coincide with urban functions, intentions, or urban realities. Cities simply mean different things from those they were intended to mean, either in whole or in part. City centres, for example, are often functionally empty yet symbolically significant. Similarly, Barthes could not conceive of a convincing lexicon that might include all distinct types of urban signifiers. Nor could he force the model of the city into that of the process of signification as conceived by semiology at that time. If the city is a language, as he claimed it was, who speaks that language: builders, planners, walkers? Barthes viewed the walker as a reader. Finally, he foresaw an infinite play of meanings and metaphors in urban milieu. With their micro- and macro-climates, their zones of industry, recreation, memory and residential living, cities simply could not signify just one thing to all interpreters. He concluded that by collating our various interpretations, we might in the end come to understand the meaning of cities, a suggestion derived in its way, intentionally or not, from the drift. Yet Barthes' approach to the city remains residually ideological, driven as it is by the will to transform experience into information, concrete signs into abstract meanings. As a science of signs, it is ultimately passive rather than creative.

A few years later, Michel de Certeau followed in Barthes' footsteps, transforming his hermeneutic model into a heuristic one through inversion.¹² While the city is a language that Barthes and his pedestrians read, Certeau's pedestrian activates that language by walking through it. In Certeau's reading, the gait appropriates and thereby creates spaces as well as a *specific* physical relationship between the individual and the space: each individual body brings a different *style* of walking that cannot be fully anticipated. Simply put, the best-laid plans for an urban milieu often run awry when we simply walk through them. To stroll is to subvert the ideological structures of the city, the intentions of its planners, architects, zoning commissions and review boards. In this analysis, the consumer of space becomes its producer. Certeau credits place names with motivating motion

12 Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*. Vol. 1, *Arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).



through city streets, but he spends no time analyzing the way this information is conveyed to its creators (in his sense of this term, its walkers). He also argues that individuals store meaning in spaces, which remain forever unknown to others. His urban dreams are anti-communitarian. In addition, his formula fails to account for the fact that certain spaces are antipathetic to dreams, that, in the words and imagination of Chtcheglov:

il y aura des pièces qui feront rêver mieux que des drogues, et des maisons où l'on ne pourra qu'aimer. D'autres attireront invinciblement les voyageurs. (19)

[There will be rooms more conducive to dreams than any drug, and houses where one cannot help but love. Others will irresistibly attract travellers.]

Certeau's heuristic grants far too much power to the feet of the pedestrian. A walk in the yard will not set prisoners free but time behind bars will certainly change them.

Both these seminal semiological attempts to understand urban spaces as spaces that signify activated by pedestrians as either reader-consumers, as in Barthes, or writers-producers, as in Certeau, ultimately mistake urban spaces for abstract ones. They do not fully account for the radical heterogeneity of urban sign-systems, whether in the limited sense of environmental signs, or in the broader sense of Chtcheglov's geological model of the city. In the semiological reduction, all signs are simply signs. In the geological city, all things — buildings, streets, geological features and signs themselves — activate the semiological imagination without functioning simply as a sign. A poster is not a street sign nor is an environmental sculpture, but all three are active in the semiological city. Semiology is of course a specialized method of reading, which is to say it is a mode of interpretation. For the task of interpretation to be productive — and hence to prove its worth in a productivist intellectual economy — it must produce interpretations: signs must be read, meanings must be discovered. Fortunately, our task is not to interpret the world but to change it. To change the world is to be active within it.

Desiring Urbanism

Both the semiological models of interpretation outlined above reduce the urban milieu to a field of signs fit for reading. The Situationist notions of psychogeography, unitary urbanism and drift suggest far more active kinds of analysis and creative engagement with cities. Where the semiologists tended to abstract interpretations from cities, the Situationists approached urbanism with a utopian intent. Theirs was a revolutionary urbanism in search of a lost time, embodied by the notion of the Northwest Passage. Our own search for an urbanism suitable for a sustainable community must be found without recourse to either abstraction or utopia. It must be an immanent urbanism.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari offer us a helpful model of the walker out for a stroll in *L'Anti-Cedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie*.¹³ Their walker is neither a semiologist nor a Situationist but rather a schizophrenic, or in their language, a *machine désirante* [desiring machine]. The phrase 'desiring machine' indicates a node in a network of immanent energy expressing itself through conjunction or disjunction with other nodes. We can think of this machine as a human being or as merely part of one, an organ. We can also think of a desiring machine as a group of human beings, a corporation, community or nation. Or, we might not think of it as human at all. In this case, it might be a plant or a system in the environment. In any instance where energy is dispersed and collected, spent or harnessed, there exists a desiring machine.

With the desiring machine, Deleuze and Guattari provide a model of a being that is in contact with the world. It is pure immanence. The being is a vortex of energy within the world, like an eddy in an ocean. Where networks of energy isolate themselves from the whole, break off as discrete economies of energy or meaning, they seem to be desiring machines. Their isolation, however, is only ever partial or momentary. Desiring machines eventually reconnect with the immanent whole through some expenditure or exchange. Independence, whether in the form of the autonomous individual or in the notion of discrete economies of energy or meaning, is an illusion. For Deleuze and Guattari:

il n'y a pas de sphères ou de circuits relativement indépendants: la production est immédiatement consommation et enregistrement, l'enregistrement et la consommation déterminent directement la

¹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Cedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972).



production, mais la déterminent au sein de la production même. (9-10)

[There is no such thing as relatively independent spheres or circuits: production is consumption and recording without any sort of mediation, and recording and consumption directly determine production, though they do so within the production process itself.]

Moreover, 'le schizophrène est le producteur universel. Il n'y a pas lieu de distinguer ici le produire et son produit. Du moins l'objet produit emporte-t-il son *ici* dans un nouveau produire' [The schizophrenic is the universal producer. There is no need to distinguish here between the act of production and its product. Or at least, the pure 'here' of the object produced is carried over into a new act of producing] (13). The process of desiring production is a process of continual transfer and transformation: energy is constantly in search of allocation; every allocation is an expenditure and each expenditure changes the amount of energy allocated. Additionally, every allocation opens new potential networks for energy allocation.

Transferred into the zone that concerns us, the city street, the formulation of the desiring machine allows us to say that the street changes the stroller, that every moment is an engagement of energy and imagination capable of transforming the individual traversing the street. The Situationist drift proposed a similar process of engagement and invention, of personal transformation. Roland Barthes' walker, on the other hand, simply read the street as if from a distance, without transformative engagement. Michel de Certeau's walker seems similar to the walker as desiring machine because his formula grants agency to the walking individual. His over-emphasis on the individual, however, denies the agency of the ambience, the agency of the street as an organ in the city of dreams.

In this way, Deleuze and Guattari's model of desiring production can be grafted onto our remarks about the geological city and the drift and recast subjectivity in the city as 'desiring urbanism'. The geological city is the schizophrenic city, the city of a thousand faces: geographical, historical, architectural, technological, semiological. The schizophrenic is always out for a drift, always lost in the psychogeography of the place, always open to the vagaries of any given micro-climate, open to the libidinal implications of any enunciation, environmental or otherwise. Indeed, who but the desiring machine can negotiate the heterogeneous economies of the semiological city? The schizophrenic out for a stroll enjoys — in the

sense of libidinal investment — architecture, open space, reading ads and following street signs, each in turn or in some cases all at once.

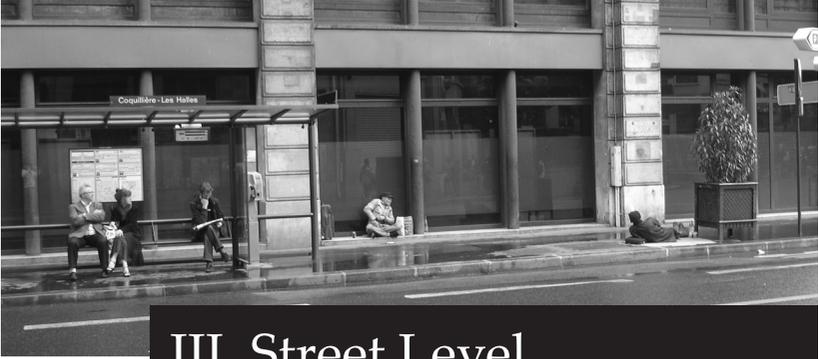
Desiring urbanism is a positive model for the citizen of the sustainable city because it is a model of complicity. As in Chtcheglov's *Formulaire*, desiring machines make every investment and suffer every loss. They actualize every implication and make every connection. They thrive on interconnections and hidden connections. They map with metaphors, anticipating architectures with plans, urbanisms in outlines, revelling as much in impossible fantasies as in realities. They do not cut themselves off from zones or valences of value just because they fall outside their area of specialization: geology, historiography, semiology, etc. This is because desiring urbanism is also a method of recording: it registers space on the shape of the body, observes the incarnation of activity in our exhaustion and traces space in our aching feet and in our taste for the infinite at the limits of urbanism (mountains, deserts, oceans).

Bland hypermodern office plazas, corporate non-places and other zones of emptiness in contemporary cities threaten desiring urbanism because they deny its need for linkages. They channel its need for connections down too narrow pathways. They simply do not offer enough architectural or urban interest to excite the desire of desiring urbanism and desiring urbanism turns inward or away from the milieu entirely.

Desiring urbanism mixes maximum efficiency with maximum intensity: it demands everything, all the time. Significantly, this plethora is not utopian, it is immanent, *if* we have eyes to see it. Sustainability, in this model, promises infinite interconnection, infinite investment, rather than restricting economies of meaning: all things connected to all things, reforming space into a multiplicity based on a universal array of connections, rather than limiting space to office plazas and cityscapes, constructed under the illusion of isolation.

As a next step, desiring urbanism will require a schizoanalysis of the geological city: a maximal reading of heterogeneous urban systems, sign systems in particular. Such a reading would require an engagement with the histories of architecture and urban planning, the technologies of the city and the various urban sign systems from billboards and posters to environmental and way-finding signs, as they occur in context.





III. Street Level



From 'Cultural Factor' to Propaganda Instrument: The Shop Window in German Cultural History 1907-33¹

Nina Schleif

die Auslage –
ein Miniaturabbildchen
des ganzen, großen kulturellen Lebens.
Von Newton bis Rembrandt reicht dieses weite Leben –
von nackter Wissenschaftlichkeit bis zu
herzinnerstem Künstlertum.²

[the window display –
a miniature image of the whole great cultural life.
From Newton to Rembrandt this wide life spans,
from naked science to the most heartfelt artistry.]

In the first three decades of the twentieth century the shop window was promoted in Germany as a *Kulturfaktor* [cultural factor] that could educate and 'enlighten' the public on good taste and good art. It was thought that applying art to the decoration of shop windows would improve the quality of display and, as a consequence, of culture. Prompted by the efforts of the Deutsche Werkbund (the official German arts and crafts movement founded in 1907), shop window art became an aesthetic as well as ethical movement. New shopping architecture also helped to change the look of Germany's streets. Professionalization soon reached all aspects of shop window design, even provoking satires on the subject. Although earlier

1 For my parents Gertrud and Gerhard Schleif.

2 Max Deri, 'Seh-Fenster und Schau-Fenster', *Farbe und Form* (November 1927), 182.



efforts had generally raised the aesthetic standards of shop windows and thereby changed the urban landscape, after World War I the Werkbund's high moral ideals survived mainly in the rhetoric of shop window experts. Yet the changes had been significant enough to bring displays to the attention of advertising, applied psychology and nationalist propaganda. With continued focus on aesthetics, the historical discourse of the shop window shifted from moral to economic and, eventually, to political values.

The history of the changes of German shop windows has been thoroughly analyzed by economic historian Uwe Spiekermann.³ He describes how around 1900 department stores increased the size of their shop windows. After this increase began a 'qualitative Entwicklung des Schaufensters' [qualitative development of the shop window] that soon affected even product design (581). Small retail merchants who were financially, technically and aesthetically capable tried to follow suit.



Figure 1. Wertheim Department Store. The Arcades as viewed from Leipziger Platz.⁴

3 Uwe Spiekermann, "Basis der Konsumgesellschaft": Entstehung und Entwicklung des modernen Kleinhandels in Deutschland 1850-1914', in *Schriftenreihe zur Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte*, 3 (Munich: Beck, 1999).

4 Alfred Messel, *Wertheim Department Store (1896-1904)*, c. 1912, Berlin. Illustration from *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes* (Jena: Diederich, 1912), 92.

Shop Window Architecture

In 1906 architect Karl Widmer documented the growing importance of the shop window in urban architecture and described recent changes in shop window architecture caused by the growing need for distinction from competitors:⁵

Indem der Inhalt des Ladens so immer mehr an die Straße drängt, wachsen die Schaufenster bis zu wahren Riesenfenstern an, in denen sich ganze Zimmer aufbauen lassen. Und schließlich trennt Innen und Außen nur noch eine Wand von Glas, durch die sich der ganze Raum der Straße präsentiert. (Widmer, 522)

[As the contents of the shop keep increasing till they almost spill into the street, shop windows grow into gigantic displays into which whole rooms can be set up. In the end, indoors and outdoors are only separated by a glass wall through which the entire room is presented to the street.]

Here, Widmer evokes the image of the *Passage*, the French arcade. His description prefigures Walter Benjamin's famous metaphor for the dawn of the nineteenth century, the arcade, which he paid homage to in his voluminous fragment *Das Passagen-Werk* [*The Arcades Project*].⁶

Straßen sind die Wohnungen des Kollektivs. [...] Diesem Kollektiv sind die glänzenden emaillierten Firmenschilder so gut und besser ein Wandschmuck wie im Salon dem Bürger ein Ölgemälde [...]. Von [den Kammern der Stadt] war die Passage der Salon. Mehr als an jeder anderen Stelle gibt die Straße sich in ihr als das möblierte ausgewohnte Interieur der Massen zu erkennen. (I, 533, M 3a,4)

5 Karl Widmer, 'Zur Kultur des Schaufensters', *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 18 (1906), 522-3.

6 Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, 2 vols, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983). English translations taken from Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002). For a critical discussion see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), esp. 37-40. In German — in contrast to French and English usage — the term *Arkade* refers to a covered passageway that is open on one side and lined with columns. The term *Passage*, on the other hand, denotes in German and French a covered passageway lined with stores on both sides.



[Streets are the dwelling-place of the collective. [...] For this collective, glossy enamelled shop signs are a wall decoration as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois [...]. Among [the chambers of the city], the arcade was the drawing room. More than anywhere else, the street reveals itself in the arcade as the furnished and familiar interior of the masses.] (423, M3a,4)

There were not as many *Passagen* in Germany as there were in France, but the arcade, an architectural solution with similar architectural and urban implications, could be found everywhere. The arcade was significantly popularized by architect Alfred Messel's design of 1896-1905 for the Wertheim department store on Leipziger Straße in Berlin. Messel's design helped to elevate German department-store architecture to French standards. In size and layout the building was modelled on the Paris *Grands Magasins*, and the arcades running along Leipziger Platz (1904) were modelled on the Palais Royal (fig 1). Messel's arcades started an architectural craze. Art historian Karl Scheffler (1869-1951) took the idea one step further and suggested that Wertheim extend his ambitions from architecture to consumer wares. The department store magnate would thereby create 'eine umfassende, vernünftige, sachliche, wohlfeile und darum auch sittliche Volkskunst im besten Sinne' [a comprehensive, sensible, objective, affordable and therefore also ethical folk art in the best sense].⁷ And, he boasted: 'wenn sich die Firma ihrer großen sozialen Kulturmission ganz bewusst würde' [if the company understood fully its great social cultural mission] it could outdo even the emperor's efforts in urban planning and architecture in Berlin. This remark, from 1908, may have been the first expression in Germany of the idea of the 'great cultural mission' that department stores were to accomplish in urban, if not in national, life. Furthermore, the Wertheim store was viewed as an epitome of modernity. It reflected a new fascination with speed, in traffic as well as in changing fashions; with opulent light-and-colour experiments illuminating the city; with the growing importance of trade within an ever more complex national economy; and finally, with the leadership of Berlin in terms of fashion, taste, style and art. The Wertheim store changed street culture not only in the capital but also, through emulation, in other German cities. The Werkbund was quick to realize the potential of this development.

7 Karl Scheffler, 'Das Geschäftshaus', *Moderne Baukunst* (Leipzig: Zeitler, 1907), 63.



Figure 2. 'Objective' shop window, c. 1912. 'Much is achieved with little means.'⁸

The Deutsche Werkbund

Shortly after its foundation in 1907, the Deutsche Werkbund made it its mission to systematically trigger, direct and promote improvements in displays, product design, retailers' attitudes and consumer taste. For its members, the shop window constituted one of the most pressing and influential factors on the Werkbund agenda.⁹ The organization directed its attention to all aspects of the shop window: its urban setting, architecture and display and also its significance in the present as well as its utopian potential. Photographs document the fact that the Werkbund's efforts did raise the quality of shop window aesthetics and, in effect, improved the look of shops all over Germany (fig 2). The Werkbund's influence in the 1910s reached far into the 1920s with regard to the cultural role and prominence of

8 Illustration from Adolph Beuhne, *Das Schaufenster* (Munich: Callwey, 1912), fig. 60.

9 In the past, Werkbund scholarship has paid little attention to this fact. Only Frederick J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture Before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 51 and 212, has addressed the importance of the shop window within Werkbund discourse up to World War I.



the shop window in Germany (fig 3). Early on it seemed to be the ideal instrument for advancing the Werkbund's objective, namely the 'Veredlung der gewerblichen Arbeit im Zusammenwirken von Kunst, Industrie und Handwerk durch Erziehung, Propaganda und geschlossene Stellungnahme zu einschlägigen Fragen' [ennoblement of the retail trade by the combined efforts of art, industry and craft, through education, advertising and a common position on relevant questions.]¹⁰ The Werkbund turned its attention to the shop window with the goal of inducing art, industry, crafts and the retail trade to join forces. In short, decorators and store owners were hoping to use the shop window to gain direct control over the quality of commodity production, distribution and consumption.

One of the earliest discussions of the shop window and its relation to art was published in 1897 by Alfred Lichtwark (1852-1914), director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle.¹¹ He was one of the most active proponents of an anti-elitist approach to art. Lichtwark wanted as many people as possible to come into contact with art hoping thereby to lift the general level of taste. In this connection he observed:

Die Ladenauslage gehört zu den künstlerischen Erscheinungen, die sich dem Städter auf Schritt und Tritt aufdrängen. Sie ist in dem unaufhörlichen Wechsel ihrer Zusammensetzung ein beständiger öffentlicher Lehrkursus über die Wandlung des Geschmacks, und ohne uns dessen immer bewusst zu sein, empfangen wir von den Ladenfenstern die nachdrücklichsten Belehrungen. (31)

[The shop display is one of those artistic phenomena that force themselves on the city-dweller at every step. Constantly rearranged, it is a permanent public course of instruction on how tastes change. Without realizing it, we get our most memorable lessons from shop windows.]

Because of his position as museum director, Lichtwark's remarks carried great weight. It is therefore not surprising that his views fell on fertile ground in Werkbund circles. His ideas, by referring back to the pedagogical art ideals of Semper and by anticipating urban economic and social developments, formed the historical link between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and thus became the foundation for an institutionally promoted intellectual and artistic approach to shop windows in Germany.

¹⁰ *Die Durchgeistigung der deutschen Arbeit: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes* (Jena: Diederichs, 1912), part VI.

¹¹ Alfred Lichtwark, *Blumenkultus: Wilde Blumen*, 2nd ext. edn (Berlin: Cassirer, 1907).

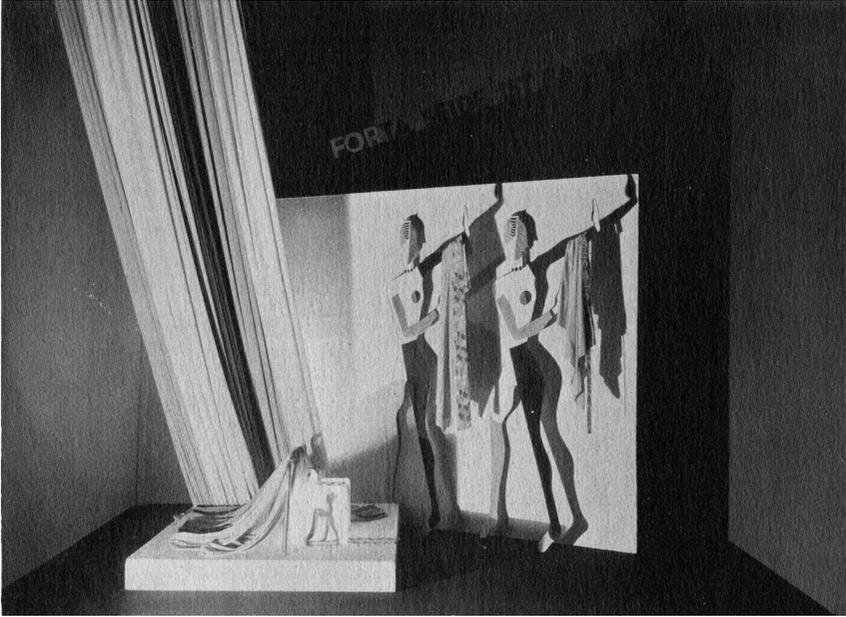


Figure 3. Reimann Schule, Window display for silk, c. 1929.¹²

It was the shop window's most ardent promoter and a prominent Werkbund member, Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874-1921), who in the 1913 yearbook summarily and exhaustively discussed the ethical qualities of shop windows.¹³ This text was the Werkbund's official statement on the shop window as a street phenomenon and it marked the culmination of that fascinating era when artists, architects and art historians thought they had discovered in the shop window an instrument for their highbrow artistic and cultural ambitions.

(Un-)Critical Reaction

The writings on shop windows published by Werkbund members were, considering their prosaic subject, surprisingly passionate. Shop window euphoria in Germany reached its peak in 1913 and 1914. There was hardly a magazine in the country that did not print articles on the subject. The attention paid to this urban phenomenon

12 Illustration from *Farbe und Form* (November 1929), 144.

13 Karl Ernst Osthaus, 'Das Schaufenster', in *Die Kunst in Industrie und Handel: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes* (Jena: Diederichs, 1913).



was never greater and soon the first satires on the subject appeared. Using the made-up word *Schaufensterologie* [shop-windowology], one conservative critic ridiculed the 'finstere, fast zähneknirschende Entschlossenheit zu radikaler Kulturarbeit' [sinister, almost teeth-grinding determination to do radical cultural work].¹⁴

Other observers overlooked the ethical and educational ambitions of shop windows and gave themselves over to a surprising hedonism: 'Ach, wer doch so reich wäre, alles das kaufen zu können ...' [oh, if only one were rich enough to buy all this ...].¹⁵ The *Kulturfaktor Schaufenster* [cultural factor shop window] was here identified as a motor for the economy. Unwittingly this throwaway remark anticipated the consumerist view of the nationalists in the 1920s and the National Socialists in the 1930s.

Yet the quoted passages also reveal that many Germans liked to spend their leisure time window-shopping, enjoying the ever more lavish and extravagant displays. Analogous to Émile Zola's metaphor of department stores being the 'cathédrale[s] du commerce moderne' [modern cathedrals of commerce],¹⁶ Germans had come to experience window-shopping in Berlin as going on a pilgrimage.¹⁷ The public discourse on this issue served to endow them with a certain pride and willingness to contribute to the national cause by consuming. Some of that optimism was captured in German painter August Macke's bright and colourful street scenes.¹⁸

The attempts to control consumer behaviour and taste also motivated Marxist authors, stimulated by the Werkbund's activities, to consider the advantages of the shop window. Avant-garde artist Sergei Tretyakov (1892-1939), for example, proposed putting the shop window to use in the course of the supposedly upcoming socialist revolution. He thought it could be used to demonstrate how products functioned. To socialist intellectuals — this is true also of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin — the shop window was a symptom of the final stage of capitalism before its fall and the

14 Philipp Vockerat, 'Schaufenster-Künste', *Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte*, 28 (1913), 231-2.

15 M. Findling, 'Kultur im Schaufenster', *Der Berliner Kritiker* (30 July 1913), 12.

16 Émile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (Paris: Éditions Fasquelle, 1883), 258.

17 Camillus and Walter F. March, 'Europe Excels in Prestige Windows, U.S. in Selling (Trims)', *Women's Wear Daily* (26 November 1927), 14.

18 Cf. Sherwin Simmons, 'August Macke's Shoppers: Commodity Aesthetics, Modernist Autonomy and the Inexhaustible Will of Kitsch', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 63.1 (2000).

general return to 'true culture'.¹⁹ For them, as for the adherents of Werkbund ideology, the shop window seemed fraught with political and social implications. One consequence was that references to Karl Marx and his thoughts (and discourse) on commodity fetishism became commonplace, even in conservative writing, not so much as an expression of the authors' radical standpoint as a sign of the ubiquitous intellectual appropriation of the shop window. It had become, in early twentieth-century Germany, an embodiment of the most divergent ideas of the nature and the future of modern culture.

Professionalization

One consequence of this popular interest in the shop window was that even before World War I it was subjected to institutional and professional attention. In Berlin, trade schools were opened. The Höhere Fachschule für Dekorationskunst [Technical College of Decorative Art] (a subsidiary of the Reimann Schule) was founded in 1910 by the Werkbund and soon attracted international students.²⁰ The term *Reklamekünstler* [advertising artist] was coined.²¹ Its most famous proponent was Peter Behrens who worked for AEG and received international acclaim, thus ennobling the status of all *Reklamekünstler*. Women too could make a career of advertising art. Two of the best-known and most respected were Elisabeth von Stephani-Hahn, artistic director of the shop windows at the Wertheim department store and author of a textbook, *Schaufensterkunst* [Shop Window Art]; and Else Oppler-Legband, artistic director of the Höhere Fachschule.²² Many magazines reported on the achievements of German shop windows, but two were devoted exclusively to

19 Cf. Sergej Tretjakov, 'Schaufensterreklame' (1931), in *Russen in Berlin: Literatur, Malerei, Theater, Film 1918-1933*, ed. by Fritz Mierau, 2nd ext. edn (Berlin: Reclam, 1990).

20 Cf. Swantje Wickenheiser, *Die Reimann-Schule in Berlin und London (1902-43) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Mode und Textilentwurf* (Bonn: Wickenheiser, 1993).

21 Between 1910 and 1913 a series of six volumes, *Monographien deutscher Reklamekünstler*, was published on the work of the well-known artists F. H. and Clara Ehmcke, Julius Klinger, Lucian Bernhard, Peter Behrens and Julius Gipkens. Most of the monographs included one or more examples of the artists' work in shop windows.

22 Elisabeth von Stephani-Hahn, *Schaufensterkunst: Lehrsätze und Erläuterungen* (Berlin: Schottländer, 1919).



them: *Farbe und Form* (1920-34), published by the Reimann Schule, and *Schaufensterkunst und Technik* (1925-34), published by the national association of shop window decorators.

In 1909 in Hagen, a small industrial town, Karl Ernst Osthaus founded and opened the Museum für Kunst in Handel und Gewerbe [Museum for Art in Trade and Retail], which he thought of as an 'Organ der Propaganda für unsere Ziele' [an advertising tool for {the Werkbund's} goals].²³

The museum:

hat zur Voraussetzung den modernen Weltmarkt und die modernen Verkehrsverhältnisse, sowie den modernen Glauben an die politische und soziale Gegensätze überbrückende Weltmission der Kultur. (43)

[takes as its starting-point the modern world market and modern traffic conditions, as well as the modern belief in the great mission of culture to bridge political and social divides throughout the world.]

This was an affirmation of advertising, capitalism, urbanization and the conviction that culture had aesthetic and social obligations. Within this world view shop-window decoration naturally attained a place of honour. On the practical side, the museum supported artists who wanted to work in the economic sector: it arranged lectures, exhibitions and — most importantly — *Schaufensterwettbewerbe* [shop-window competitions].

The goal of all these efforts was, from today's standpoint, initially rather high-flown: to educate the public. A central catchword in the ensuing discourse on how to achieve this was *Sachlichkeit* [objectivity], a term that invited all kinds of idiosyncratic interpretations.²⁴ In general, however, it can be said to have denoted a decision to turn away from the tastes of the past and to embrace everything new. In the context of shop windows, it was Osthaus who gave the most memorable definition of what was not *sachlich* when he wrote:

Man kennt den bandagierten Mann, dem sämtliche Leib- und Beinbrüche auf einmal verbunden sind, er kündigt inmitten von

23 Karl Ernst Osthaus, 'Das Deutsche Museum für Kunst in Handel und Gewerbe', in *Die Durchgeistigung der deutschen Arbeit: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werkbundes* (Jena: Diederichs, 1911), 43.

24 There is no single term in English for *Sachlichkeit*. The term is bestknown in connection with the 1920s German art movement *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity], a realist style with socially critical tendencies. The term itself means factualness, something without decorative elements distracting from the essential (however that might be defined).

Zahnzangen, Stechbecken und Suspensorien die Vielseitigkeit chirurgischer Geschäfte. Man freut sich schon, wenn er nicht der Werkstatt des Polyklet entsprungen ist. Und jene Bismarcktürme aus Schokolade oder Seife, Tempel aus Stearinkerzen und mit Raffaelischen Engeln in Schmalz verzierten Schinken, sie alle sind uns in recht peinlicher Erinnerung. (Osthaus, 'Das Schaufenster', 61)

[We all know the bandaged man, whose multiple ruptures and fractures have all been dressed at once. In the midst of dentists' forceps, bedpans and suspensors, he proclaims the versatility of surgical suppliers. It's a relief he does not come from the studio of Polyclitus. And those Bismarck towers made of chocolate or soap, those temples of stearine candles, and those hams decorated with Raffaelic angels of lard — what an embarrassment to recall them.]

In the 1920s the term *sachlich* was still often applied to shop windows. Earlier it had denoted an ethical quality supposedly inherent to commodities or decoration. Now it became a catchword that served to justify any and all positions on shop windows.

Another word that appeared frequently in connection with shop windows was 'taste'. The Werkbund had propagated taste as an important moral and aesthetic parameter. Conservative critic Joseph August Lux, a disciple of Ruskin, claimed: 'eine Krisis des Geschmacks ist [...] zugleich eine moralische Krisis' [a crisis in taste is {...} also a moral crisis].²⁵ Before World War I, this view was often applied to shop windows but later there was a drift away from ethical implications.

Same Rhetoric, Changed Ambitions

After World War I, the call for artistic shop windows and the claim of their educational value became a common – if nominal – practice in Germany. Yet the texts had lost their contentious tone. Perhaps this was because the Werkbund had changed its idea of what constituted quality. A prominent critic, Walter Curt Behrendt (1884-1945), observed that the 'Erweiterung ihrer Absatz- und Wirkungssphäre' [expansion of its markets and influence] had become the new ideal

²⁵ Joseph August Lux, *Der Geschmack im Alltag: Ein Buch zur Pflege des Schönen* (Dresden: Kühnmann, 1912), VI.



of the Werkbund.²⁶ In the retail trade, this change of philosophy had very concrete effects. There was a shift away from the attention previously paid to product quality to a focus on advertising quality. This change was so generally accepted that one could no longer speak of a debate or discussion on this subject within the Werkbund, even though there was more rather than less writing about shop windows in evidence. But now the rhetoric had become empty jargon because, while it appropriated the diction of pre-war writings, the meaning of terms like *Kulturfaktor Schaufenster* had altered if not completely reversed.²⁷ As author Bruno Jahn remarked:

Solche Leitsätze, wie man sie häufig hört: ‚Das Publikum muss durch das Schaufenster zum Geschmack erzogen werden!‘ sind ja sehr gut und schön, und ihre Erfüllung wäre gewiss recht wertvoll.²⁸

[This principle that one hears all the time, ‘Shop windows must educate the public’s taste!’ is fine and good and it would certainly be very valuable if it were fulfilled.]

According to Jahn, financial profit had become more important. In order to increase profits, customers’ tastes needed to be explored rather than shaped. Shop windows were no longer to educate but to seduce passers-by.

In window displays, the use of art was now subjected to advertising strategies. This was partly due to the fact that in the 1920s applied psychology gained a strong foothold in Germany. Decorators and retailers pondered how to build their shop windows using advertising factors (as opposed to ‘cultural factors’) in city streets. They looked to ‘science’ for help.

Psychological Windowfare

German display experts and psychologists were eager to find answers and give psychological explanations for how shop windows

26 Walter Curt Behrendt, *Der Kampf um den Stil im Kunstgewerbe und der Architektur* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1920), 97.

27 Cf. Mark Jarzombek, ‘The Kunstgewerbe, the Werkbund, and the Aesthetics of Culture in the Wilhelmine Period’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 53 (March 1994).

28 Bruno Jahn, *Reklame durch Schaufenster: Ein Leitfadens* (Berlin: Schottlaender, 1926), 8.

could increase profit. The assumption that psychological insights into advertising could be turned into profit served to motivate retail merchants to apply these insights to shop-window aesthetics. The decisive impetus came from Harvard psychologist Hugo Münsterberg (1863-1916), who had introduced his ideas to a German audience in 1910 during a Berlin guest lecture series published in 1912.²⁹ The 'scientific' application of psychological theories to all areas of economic and social life was called *Psychotechnik* [psychotechnics] by Münsterberg.

Numerous tasks awaited the 'psychotechnician', instrumentalizing the aesthetic effects of shop windows. According to Münsterberg, *Psychotechnik* could measure the effect of the 'Quantität des Dargebotenen' [quantity of things displayed].³⁰ He thought the results of such experiments would have implications far beyond the cultural realm:

Das sind natürlich höchst triviale Beispiele, aber für das Weltschaufenster einer Nation gelten im letzten Grunde dieselben psychologischen Grundgesetze wie für das Zufallsschaufenster des nächsten Eckladens. (433)

[Of course these are very trivial examples, but for any nation's shop window the same psychological laws finally apply to the accidental shop window of the neighbourhood corner shop.]

Having been prepared for such encompassing views of the shop window, Germans easily accepted and adopted this position.

Münsterberg's writings seem to have found followers only after World War I when experts were looking for a scientific approach to shop windows and becoming convinced that 'solche Aufgaben zahlenmäßig lösbar [seien]' [such tasks could be solved by numbers].³¹ Under the label 'experimentelle Ästhetik' [experimental aesthetics] they tried 'die Bedingungen des Schönen in Form, Farbe und Linie nach Maß und Zahl festzustellen' [to establish the principles of beauty in relation to form, colour and line by measurement and number]. In 1920s Germany, the belief in the powers of psychology had come to replace the earlier moral and educational ideals in matters of shop-

29 Hugo Münsterberg, *Psychologie und Wirtschaftsleben: Ein Beitrag zur angewandten Experimental-Psychologie* (Leipzig: Barth, 1912).

30 Hugo Münsterberg, *Grundzüge der Psychotechnik*, 3rd edn (Leipzig: Barth, 1928), 431.

31 'Editorial', *Praktische Psychologie*, 1, 1/2 (1919), VI.



window decoration and indeed this belief was easily adapted for commercial purposes.

In 1918 psychologist Edmund Lysinski (1889-1982) experimented on the effects of shop windows. His fame was based less on the actual results (which were rather unspectacular) than on the fact that his experiment was the first to test Münsterberg's ideas about broadening the range of validity of *Psychotechnik* on the street. Lysinski experimented with two similar shop windows in Mannheim. He subjected each, for one week, to certain decorative criteria. The psychologist had set himself the task of determining the 'Wirksamkeit des Schaufensters und [...] der Faktoren, auf denen sie beruht' [effectiveness of the shop window and the factors that govern it].³² The 'method' used was to watch pedestrians' reactions outside the store and, if they entered, to question them inside. Most replies, however, were found to be inconclusive. In the end, Lysinski could say nothing about the aesthetic effect or the emotions evoked in customers. Münsterberg's hope of discovering the 'aesthetic limits' of shop window decoration was not substantiated by Lysinski's experiment.

In 1920, Dresden psychologist Walter Blumenfeld (1882-1967), another of Münsterberg's German followers, published his test results on the advertising effects of shop windows.³³ He concentrated on the values of attention, memory and will in relation to the shop window. In contrast to Lysinski, Blumenfeld understood that these parameters were different in each window. Adopting Münsterberg's concept of the 'Psychophysik der Augenbewegungen' [psychophysics of eye movements], Blumenfeld observed the gaze rather than the body movements of passers-by. By closely watching customers in front of the shop windows, Blumenfeld inverted the traditional roles of looking by turning the subject (the shopper) into an object of study.

In retrospect, Blumenfeld's conviction that the 'Gedächtniswirkung' [memory effect] belonged 'zu den wichtigsten Aufgaben des Schaufensters' [to the most important tasks of the shop window] makes him a precursor of today's marketing strategists (89).

32 Edmund Lysinski, 'Zur Psychologie der Schaufensterreklame', *Zeitschrift für Handelswissenschaft und Handelspraxis*, 12 (1919), 7.

33 Walter Blumenfeld, 'Zur Psychotechnik der Werbewirkung des Schaufensters', *Praktische Psychologie*, 2.1 (1920).

Instrument of Propaganda

There was yet another factor that contributed to the instrumentalization of art for anti-idealist goals. As economic historian Dirk Reinhardt shows in his dissertation *Von der Reklame zum Marketing: Geschichte der Warenwerbung in Deutschland*,³⁴ *Psychotechnik* saw its greatest success in the 1930s when the discipline profited from the fact that the Nazis persecuted psychoanalysts. Politics had come to play a greater role in shop window design. After the catastrophic social and economic effects of World War I, psychology had been recommended to Germans seeking relief, if not healing. This ideological connection was now also adopted in relation to shop windows which were utilized to present visions of a better life. In everyday life, these visions could be realized neither by psychology nor by the growing nationalism. Artists like Otto Dix and Otto Griebel observed this development and commented critically on it in paintings of shop windows.³⁵ However, professional window decorators – as was evident in specialist magazines – refrained from addressing growing economic problems. In their articles, they still called for an aesthetically improved shop window, suggesting that this would save struggling businesses. In this situation the idea of the *Kulturfaktor Schaufenster* became tainted with a very unfortunate nationalistic hue and took on a sinister new meaning that the earlier users of the term could not have anticipated.

By the late 1920s, the professional guilds of German shop window decorators, as well as the magazines they published, were eagerly catering to nationalist tendencies. The wish to demonstrate national superiority came to dominate aesthetic, moral and educational goals and had very concrete effects, as window shoppers soon discovered. The ‘art of shop window decoration’ was still considered a ‘Bild des Lebensstandards eines Volkes’ [image of a nation’s standard of living], yet this was, ironically, a perverted appropriation of Werkbund diction, now denoting the opposite: a demonstration of alleged German superiority.³⁶

In 1925, when he wrote the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler had decried shop windows. As is evident in this excerpt, he was familiar with Werkbund ideas:

34 Dirk Reinhardt, *Von der Reklame zum Marketing: Geschichte der Warenwerbung in Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie, 1993).

35 Cf. Nina Schleif, *SchaufensterKunst: Berlin und New York* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004).

36 Herbert Casson and Hans Geiger, *Schaufenstergestaltung: Das Schaufenster-Lehrbuch* (Berlin: Singer, 1930), 103.



Unser gesamtes öffentliches Leben gleicht heute einem Treibhaus sexueller Vorstellungen und Reize [...]. In Auslagen und an Anschlagssäulen wird mit den niedrigsten Mitteln gearbeitet, um die Aufmerksamkeit der Menge auf sich zu ziehen [...]. Das Ergebnis dieser Art von Erziehung kann man an der heutigen Jugend in nicht gerade erfreulicher Weise studieren.³⁷

[Our whole public life today resembles a hothouse of sexual images and allures [...]. In displays and on advertising pillars they work with the lowest methods in order to attract the attention of the masses [...]. The result of this kind of education can be observed in today's youngsters and it is not exactly appealing.]



Figure 4. Jewish-owned men's apparel store smeared with anti-semitic slogans.³⁸

Elsewhere Hitler called for a 'Reinemachen' [cleansing] of the streets. German shop-window decorators followed that call and

37 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 2 vols (Munich: Eher, 1933), I, 278.

38 Photo dated 1938, Berlin, Leipziger Straße 51. © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Herbert Hoffmann).

sometimes even anticipated it with ultra-nationalistic displays (279). In the course of events, however, Hitler changed his ideas about shop windows as he had done, according to historian Heinrich Uhlig, about department stores.³⁹ In 1933 he gave a speech in which he promoted shop windows (in language eerily reminiscent of the above-quoted leftist view) for 'notwendige [...] Erziehungsarbeit an der Bevölkerung' [much-needed educational work of the people].⁴⁰ Today we know that this meant more than simply branding Jewish shops by smearing their windows (fig 4). It also promoted a general enthusiasm for special windows celebrating National Socialism and its 'Führer' (fig 5). The Nazis used shop windows for political propaganda to an unprecedented extent and it was therefore not surprising that in 1941 the 'Reichspropagandaleitung' [Propaganda Department of the Reich] was put in charge of the *Schaufensterwettbewerbe*.⁴¹ Exactly one hundred years earlier the German poet and critic Heinrich Heine, in the face of the communard uprisings during his exile in Paris, had described shop windows as potential catalysts of political change; now the Nazis systematically exploited this unfortunate link.⁴² The history of German shop windows in the Third Reich is yet to be written, but judging from these few remarks one may expect highly relevant insights.

After World War II

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the shop window in Germany had an unprecedented and since then unrepeated

39 Heinrich Uhlig, *Die Warenhäuser im Dritten Reich* (Cologne: Westdeutscher, 1956).

40 Adolf Hitler, 'Rede vor dem Generalrat der deutschen Wirtschaft' (1934), as cited by Walter Daldrop in *Erscheinungsformen der Reklame, ihre neugeordnete praktische Anwendung und moderne Ideengestaltung* (Würzburg: Rappert, 1936), 33. Daldrop erroneously dates the speech to 1934.

41 Reichspropagandaleitung, Rundschreiben no. 31/41, 'Vereinbarung über Schaufensteraktionen und Schaufensterwettbewerbe', Berlin, 14 March 1941, National Archives and Records Administration Washington DC, Hoover, T581, Roll 6. I am grateful to Kirsten Weiss for pointing out this source to me.

42 Heinrich Heine, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke. Düsseldorfer Ausgabe*, ed. by Manfred Windfuhr and others, 16 vols (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973-1997), 13.1, no. XXXVII, 139. I am grateful to Lara Elder for pointing out this source to me.



cultural function. Much idealist and utopian hope was projected onto this street phenomenon, possibly too much, because under the Nazi regime it became a perfidious propaganda instrument. After World War II the shop window was used merely as a marketing tool for the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the post-war economic boom. Only in the late 1970s did it become once more the setting for political activism, hosting anti-reactionary happenings and performances.⁴³



Figure 5. Shop window decoration on the occasion of the Reichsparteitag.⁴⁴

43 See *Künstlerschaufenster: Katalog zu 'Kunst im Schaufenster'*, ed. by Peter Pakesch and Peter Weibel (Graz: Styria, 1980).

44 Photo taken in Nuremberg, 1935. © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Lala Aufsberg).

Gendered Contestations: An Analysis of Street Harassment in Cairo

Nadia Ilahi

The city offers untrammelled sexual experience; in the city the forbidden - what is most feared and desired - becomes possible. Woman is present in cities as temptress, as whore, as fallen woman, as lesbian, but also as virtuous womanhood in danger, as heroic womanhood who triumphs over temptation and tribulation.¹

Street harassment in Egypt is a widespread phenomenon experienced by women from a variety of backgrounds, circumstances and social levels on an almost daily basis. Harassment hinders women's mobility and infringes on their access to public spaces. Gender inequity and multiple exclusions of women from public spaces produce an urban setting made up almost entirely of men. As a result, women are forced to perform a model femininity to retain their respectability in the street. This paper explores street harassment through a small sample of foreign and Egyptian women living in Cairo. The research draws heavily on data gathered between autumn 2006 and spring 2008 and includes in-depth, informal interviews conducted with women and men in English and Arabic as well as data obtained by a small sample of surveys distributed in the autumn of 2006 in various parts of Cairo.

The street is a gendered space that operates within notions of class and race. It is also a site that forces interactions between different groups of people. I consider street harassment in the context of the diverse body politic. In so doing, I compare the Egyptian state to

1 Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 6.



feminist agendas operating within civil society. I also examine the intersections of gender, race and class within the Egyptian state.

Women's responses to interviews and survey questions reveal that women negotiate urban street space through a variety of strategies. This examination of street harassment is an attempt to underscore and further understand the collective experiences of women in their everyday lives as social actors negotiating public space. What I find is that the behaviours of women, at times, contests the framework of what constitutes masculine and feminine identities by reshaping the way women inhabit the urban areas of Cairo.

The public sphere can be defined in Habermasian terms as 'the entire realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed.'² The public sphere is a space for debate and deliberation as well as the 'construction of public subjects through techniques of marking, differentiation and identification.'³

In what ways are urban spaces gendered? Wilson argues that 'both western and non-western societies have regulated women's movement in cities, although to varying degrees' (16). By fleshing out the gendered ambiguities that cities have come to personify, Wilson draws upon the notion that women nefariously represent urban chaos in contrast to their male counterparts. She traces the city from eighteenth-century London to postmodern Los Angeles and in so doing renders the city as a gendered space. Wilson's reading of the *flâneur*, for example, etches the gendered notion of freedom of movement into the context of the city street:

George Sand was one of the most successful of nineteenth-century French writers. [...] She described how, disguised as a man, she could experience the pleasure of being a *flâneur* - a stroller, that quintessentially Parisian way of relating to the modern industrial city of the nineteenth century: 'no one knew me, no one looked at me. [...] I was an atom lost in that immense crowd'. (52)

Much of what Wilson describes necessitates an exploration of women's relationship to sexual harassment as a localized experience. The female *flâneur* in Europe, for instance, will experience the city streets differently from women in parts of the Middle East.

2 Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, 'The Public-Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article', *New German Critique*, 3 (Autumn, 1974), 49.

3 Salwa Ismail, 'Islamism, Re-Islamization and the Fashioning of Muslim Selves: Refiguring the Public Sphere', *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 4.1 (2007), 7.

In Egypt, Cairo's streets are a major point of convergence for all kinds of people. The streets are home to the unrelenting traffic of humans and vehicles at all hours of the day. The social activities that take place include not only the buying and selling of goods but also people-watching and public protests. Women are commonly seen in the streets of Cairo unveiled and are potential victims of gendered hostility. According to Wilson, 'women opposed the problem of order, partly because their presence symbolized the promise of sexual adventure' (6).

This outdated view, which defined women as problematic because of their unbridled sexuality, disappeared from respectable European discourse in the early twentieth century. However, this view is currently maintained by male inhabitants of public spaces in parts of the Middle East today. According to masculine-centred, Islamic doctrine the charms or seductive powers of women are viewed as a source of '*fitna*' or social chaos that usurps male conservative rationale. Writing about early Islamic societies, Bruce Dunne notes: 'Social segregation was legitimized in part by constructing "male" and "female" as opposites: men as rational and capable of self-control; women as emotional and lacking self-control, particularly of sexual drives.'⁴

If women are still taken to represent a particular cogent discord in the Middle East, masculinity is shaped in opposition to the feminine. Simone de Beauvoir centrally frames this argument in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, underscoring the ways in which the female subject is cast as inadequate to man both biologically and culturally. Privy to the importance of context, Beauvoir notes, 'these facts take on quite different values according to the economic and social context.'⁵

The discursive behaviours of men and women are based on particular appropriations of gender norms. Judith Butler frames the notion of gender performativity by demonstrating ways in which 'reified and naturalized conceptions of gender might be understood as constituted and, hence, capable of being constituted differently.'⁶ Gender in a Middle Eastern sense is never perceived as fluid; rather it is narrowly understood as a binary, sexed structure. Because of this

4 Bruce Dunne, 'Power and Sexuality in the Middle East', *Middle East Report*, 206 (1998), 9.

5 Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, vol. I/ vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1949) ; English translations from *The Second Sex*, trans. by H.M. Parshley (New York: Random House Inc, 1968), 53.

6 Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 4 (1998), 520.



narrow definition, behaviours are prescribed for each sex. Gender performance, as Butler conceives it, is one way of defining sexual harassment in Egypt. Butler notes that 'those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished' (520).

For instance, in the nascent stages of this research, I found that women who respond verbally or physically to men who harass them are seen as acting outside their appropriate gender category. Local practice dictates that women should ignore those men and walk away in order to retain their respectability.

Defining the Problem

Cynthia Grant Bowman defines harassment as verbal and non-verbal behaviours aimed at women and employed by men in public places such as the street, pavement or the metro station.⁷ Bowman argues that harassment hinders women's mobility and participation in the public domain. 'In this sense,' she writes, 'street harassment accomplishes an informal ghettoization of women – a ghettoization to the private sphere of hearth and home' (520).

Emmanuela Guano draws on a variety of interesting parallels when she explores public harassment in Genoa.⁸ By examining the discourse and practices associated with gender performance, Guano argues that women modify their public behaviour in order not to draw unwanted attention from men, thereby resisting 'their exclusion from the public domain even as they reproduce the restrictions that weaken their claim to it' (66). Guano's insights are particularly relevant and useful in the case of street harassment in Cairo where traditional gender binaries between men and women seemingly exclude women from a public sphere that is marked as masculine (50).

Furthermore, in her brief comparative study of street harassment in the United States and the Arab world, Elizabeth Arveda Kissling states that the multiple functions of street harassment, which range

7 Cynthia Grant Bowman, 'Street Harassment and the Informal Ghettoization of Women', *Harvard Law Review*, 106 (1993), 524.

8 Emanuela Guano, 'Respectable Ladies and Uncouth Men: The Performative Politics of Class and Gender in the Public Realm of an Italian City', *Journal of American Folklore*, 120 (2007), 66.

from complimenting women to social control, all 'work together to produce an environment of sexual terrorism.'⁹

In this present study, one foreign informant, 'Erika', said:

I have been groped, stared at, catcalled, and made to feel very unwelcome on the streets of Cairo. I find that in general the worst incidents happen in the street and so I try to take taxis and not walk in the street, which is very annoying because I like walking in the city. I am always conscious of my body in Egypt and feel ashamed if I draw any attention to it. Is it a coincidence that these guys have been doing this or is it becoming normal?¹⁰

'Erika' is not alone. Women walking in the streets of Cairo experience street harassment as the norm. Although the street is inhabited by both men and women, it is a space imbued with gendered limitations due to male performances such as catcalling, making lewd comments, staring, groping and following women. All these activities turn street space into a contested category.

One example of gendered limitation happened in 2006 during the *Eid el fitr* holiday, a celebration that marks the end of *Ramadan*, the Islamic holy month of fasting. A series of vicious attacks against women took place in the centre of Cairo. The events occurred during the opening of a new film. The *Arab News* reported that Dina, a famous Egyptian belly dancer, was dancing wildly at 'the entrance of the cinema with scant regard of the professional etiquettes expected of artists.'¹¹ It was believed that when the tickets sold out, the men who could not get in rioted, first charging the box office and then attacking veiled and unveiled female passers-by. Egyptian bloggers were among the first to lament the fact that the state media ignored the issue. When finally forced to respond, the media described the harassment of women as an isolated incident rather than a widespread, urban social issue. The bloggers criticized Egyptian society as a whole for its myopic attitude towards the harassment of women. In an email, one casts Egypt as an 'imaginary' and 'traditional' society. These two terms were then played against the contradictory images of Egypt – a place

9 Elizabeth Arveda Kissling, 'Street Harassment: The Language of Sexual Terrorism', *Discourse Society*, 2 (1991), 451.

10 Unless otherwise noted, the comments of participants are from fieldwork or personal communications collected in 2006.

11 'Egyptian Belly Dancer Dina Investigated for Dancing "Wildly"', *Arab News*, 11 November 2006 <<http://www.arabnews.com?page=9§ion=0&article=88655&d=18&m=11&y=2006>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



dialectically hovering between tradition and modernity, culture and religion.

Over the years, Egypt has undergone a significant series of changes. On the one hand, the influx of satellite television and internet access has made global communication possible. On the other hand, the rise of religious conservatism and the Islamic movement has marked a cultural backlash against the ills of Western modernity. Treacher and Shukrallah illustrate this point. They note that 'by selectively appropriating this past, lending it divinity and imposing it on the present, the struggle of socially disadvantaged groups and classes is diverted from the centres of power to "imagined" areas of conflict (e.g. women's dress).'¹² This tension creates a 'naturalized' dichotomy in which women are relegated to the private sphere and men are proprietors of the public sphere – a strict sexed hierarchy, to say the least.

Furthermore, the increasing occurrences of street harassment hinder women's mobility on the streets of Cairo. These occurrences are largely ignored by patriarchal state structures. Local Egyptian feminist organizations such as the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) are actively working on a campaign to eradicate sexual harassment. A study undertaken by the ECWR surveyed over 1,000 Egyptian men and women and concluded that 62% of Egyptian men surveyed admitted to harassing women.¹³ ECWR defines harassment as any uninvited behaviour that is sexual in nature and makes women feel uncomfortable or unsafe. This includes activities such as calling out in an obscene or threatening way, following or stalking, fondling, indecent exposure, masturbation and assault.¹⁴

The term 'sexual harassment' is a relatively new concept in Egypt because it is commonly thought of as a Western problem. A more nuanced examination of the term is required in order to understand its use and efficacy in a wide range of cultural settings within Egypt. Firstly, the meaning of the term 'sexual harassment' translated into Arabic has serious and negative connotations. From the inception of

12 Hala Shukrallah and Amal Treacher, 'Editorial: The Realm of the Possible: Middle Eastern Women in Political and Social Spaces', *Feminist Review*, 69 (Winter 2007), 16.

13 Rasha Mohammad Hassan, Aliyaa Shoukry and Nehad Abul Komsan, 'Clouds in Egypt's Sky: Sexual Harassment: From Verbal Harassment to Rape', an unpublished sociological study, 2008.

14 Egyptian Center for Women's Right, 'Together, Demanding a Law to Protect Women from Sexual Harassment', 1 June 2008 <http://ecwronline.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=english> [accessed 3 February 2010].

my study, Egyptian men and women were reluctant to call it 'sexual harassment' or in Arabic, *taharush-al-ginsy*, because this phrase describes forced sexual assault and rape. Part of the basic problem the ECWR faces is finding a way to define the term in an Egyptian context.

The sources I use to define street harassment are without question European and American based. To describe street harassment in Egypt using a Western contextual understanding of the term risks a culturally-biased interpretation of the issue. Sherry Ortner negotiates this problem by assigning 'universal oppression' to women.¹⁵ In so doing, she challenges the distinction of universal and particular.

Like Ortner I argue that to properly identify the problem of male harassment of women in Egypt, we must situate harassment in a cultural and historical moment. Ortner posits 'that each culture, in its own way and in its own terms, makes this evaluation' (7). She constructs three types of data-set in which she defines female cultural groups as subordinate and oppressed in terms of elements of cultural ideology, symbolic devices and social rules and gestures. All of which work to weaken the roles women occupy in various societies.

In Egypt, sexual harassment is largely overlooked by the state. It is ignored because women do not commonly report cases of harassment to the police. This is because the police may be some of the worst perpetrators. Therefore women feel that it is pointless to seek help from them. One respondent frustratingly commented: 'I live in Garden City where all the streets are blocked off with officers. Needless to say, I am harassed with all sorts of comments from them on a daily basis.'

Even men feel powerless at times when dealing with law enforcement. Ahmed, an astute observer, laments:

I was walking along the Nile and noticed a man standing facing the water. He had his eye on two veiled women who were seated on a bench nearby. As I approached, I noticed he was masturbating. My first instinct was to react violently, throw him in the river, but I saw a policeman standing nearby. I ran up to him and told him what was going on, sure that he would apprehend the man and make an example out of him. I was so angry when he met my words with a blank face and muttered, 'You'll have to find another police officer elsewhere; I don't patrol this area.'

15 Sherry B. Ortner, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' *Feminist Studies*, 1.2 (1972).



Apathy on the part of state police and the absence of any anti-harassment laws complicate the notion of reporting because together they send the message to men that public violence against women is acceptable. Because there are no statistics that substantiate the instances of harassment, government officials vehemently deny its seriousness. Women neglect to report street harassment because those who do are commonly blamed for the crimes. Their dress as well as their behaviour is often cited as the cause of the incident. This suggests a tacit acceptance of sexual violence by the state against all women regardless of their social location.

The Intersection of Gender, Race and Class

Investigative research undertaken in the autumn of 2006 suggests that racism is linked to street harassment. Race is a somewhat problematic issue to discuss in Egypt. Though Egypt is situated in both Africa and the Middle East, many Egyptians scoff at the idea of identifying themselves as African. Tensions between Egyptians and Africans play out in a range of milieux. Although race cannot be easily defined, for the purposes of this study, I will situate race as a shared, lived experience by women in Cairo. In the simplest terms, race will have to be viewed in terms of what women's narratives say.

The many Egyptian and foreign women who took part in my research believed that all women, irrespective of race or socio-economic background, suffer some degree of harassment. However, those whose features are racially marked – by skin colour and ethnicity – report higher frequencies and more severe degrees of harassment. Non-Egyptians, for instance, are particularly vulnerable to unwanted sexist and racist remarks in public places. One respondent observed: 'I think skin colour makes a huge difference, my women friends who look more explicitly foreign [those who are very white or very dark skinned] get tons more remarks and harassment than I do because I look Egyptian.'

Street harassment combined with racism causes some women to feel unsettled on the streets of Cairo. In order to acclimatize themselves to the street, these women often modify their movements and daily activities. Many reported that they have altered their dress and movements. For instance, they may wear scarves to cover their chests or purposely veer away from and avoid eye contact with men considered

to be potential threats. These are important strategies women employ in order to diffuse harassment.

The events of 2005 involving the violent removal of Sudanese refugees camped in Mohandessin, a suburb of Giza, underscores underlying racial tensions in Egypt. One cannot overlook the treatment of many Sudanese refugees; in Egypt, these refugees face barriers to society in the form of harassment and discrimination. In 2008 *Al-Ahram* – an Egyptian state-sanctioned newspaper – featured an article entitled, ‘Radical Refugees’, which describes the public racism Sudanese asylum-seekers face in Cairo:

They bitterly complain of the hostility meted out to them on the streets of Cairo. ‘We are called names and children make faces at us. We want to be relocated to a country where there is no racism’, said one of the protesters. ‘We want to go to a country where no one hurls racist remarks at us.’¹⁶

Other informants in my study recounted racial harassment in the streets. They described being called names such as *sarmada* [black/dirt] and *abd* [slave] in Arabic racist slang. African-American women and women from sub-Saharan Africa attest to their problematic street encounters with men, who think they are prostitutes because they are black. Cases like this highlight the objectification and commodification of black bodies. Jane, a young Kenyan woman told of being followed home by a man:

He actually followed me up the stairs to my flat and then took off his trousers exposing himself to me in the hallway. I screamed and chased him out of the building. I was mortified and no one tried to stop him as he fled through the street.

Laura Beth Nielsen argues that ‘members of traditionally disadvantaged groups [women] face a strikingly different reality on the street than do members of privileged groups [men].’¹⁷ She explains the tension that women and African-Americans of both sexes feel in their encounters with street harassment when they are the target of hate speech in public places. In a study involving in-depth interviews with people in Northern California, Nielsen concluded that acts of

16 Gamal Nkrumah, ‘Radical Refugees’, *Al-Ahram*, 17-23 November 2005 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2005/769/feature.htm>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

17 Laura Beth Nielsen, ‘Subtle, Pervasive, Harmful: Racist and Sexist Remarks in Public as Hate Speech’, *Journal of Social Issues*, 58.2 (2002), 279.



hate speech, like street harassment, are not 'isolated incidents; rather, they are embedded in social structures and hierarchies' (279).

Women face similar circumstances all over the world. Tying Nielsen's study to my own, I am critical of how the Egyptian state minimizes the seriousness of violence against women by caricaturing harassment as confined to isolated incidents. Harassment against women in Egypt is endemic. During my research, women constantly told me that they cannot simply walk in the streets in peace. 'You have to psychologically prepare yourself to go out and run a simple errand because of the harassment you are most likely going to face,' comments 'Selma', a student at Ain Shams University. The diminished social positions of women in Cairo are woven into their experiences of the city streets.

Like race, class is tied to public street harassment. Surprisingly, despite their economic privilege, upper-class women are not necessarily protected by their social status. Shilpa Phadke demonstrates the division of public space by class. She argues that women from higher classes *are* barred from public space, but not in the same way as women from lower classes. Because of their access to economic capital through private infrastructure and cultural capital through education, middle-class women have different access to public space.¹⁸ Middle-class women, for example, can afford the protection of private transport on the street. By contrast, those women who rely on public transport suffer harassment daily. 'Hind', a woman from Shobra, a large, poor district in Cairo, admitted to slapping a man who grabbed her from behind on a bus:

He was sitting behind me on the bus and I remember feeling his hand on me. I reached around, slapped him in the face calling him '*hiawan*' [animal] and the whole scene drew so much attention, he got kicked off the bus.

Having a car, chauffeur, or someone to run errands is a strategy often used by women from higher classes to avoid street harassment. 'Reham', an Egyptian woman I interviewed, explained to me that her car affords her a sense of safety from people in the street as well as the opportunity to dress less conservatively. In her case, the car is a mobile (but not impenetrable) private space which she can appropriate in order to negotiate her mobility.¹⁹ The privilege of having a car in order to spend less time on the streets, however, further reifies the

18 Shilpa Phadke, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Women and Men: Risk and Reputation in Mumbai', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42.17 (28 April-4 May 2007), 1513.

19 Men still harass women who are driving or being driven in cars by following them.

gendered public/private dichotomy. These women are hardly seen except through windows and compound-like structures that work to maintain a strict sense of sexed separation.

Women in the street are not fully shielded by their class status and professional privilege. Having a car may provide temporary refuge from street harassment, but once outside its confines women are still exposed to unwanted attention. 'May', a student from the Faculty of Dentistry of Cairo University, made the following comment:

A colleague of mine had just parked her car and this guy came up to her and showed her his penis. Then, she just got out of the car and ran. The word had spread that this guy has been doing this to several girls who parked in that area.

'May's testimony about her friend reveals the blatant and crude behaviours that define street harassment. It also gives an account of women's responses when confronted publicly in such a manner. Women's narratives urge us to question why street harassment has become endemic to the streets of Cairo.

Causes of Harassment

My interviews with both men and women suggest three major themes at work behind the harassment of women in Cairo: a harsh economy, gender disparities and socio-cultural-religious factors.

The global financial crisis has brought increased food and petrol prices along with high rates of unemployment to Egypt. This crisis can be read in people's attitudes and behaviours and might account for an increase in the occurrences of street harassment. Amin underscores this point in his talk on Egypt's high unemployment problem.²⁰ The problem started in the late 1980s with the decreased migration of employed workers to the Gulf region of the Middle East. According to Dr. Amin, since that time there has been a 50% rise in population. Among these numbers are youths between the ages of 15-24 years old, who spend the majority of their time in the streets – idle and out of school.

20 Galal Amin, 'Socio-economic Interpretations of the West el Balad Events', presented at the IGWS Sexual Harassment Forum, Cairo (4 December 2006).



Additionally, due to the expense of housing, furnishings and basic security, men and women have to delay marriage. The men and women I interviewed spoke about young people's general inability to afford marriage because of the high costs involved. A *New York Times* article recently noted, 'here in Egypt and across the Middle East, many young people are being forced to put off marriage, the gateway to independence, sexual activity and societal respect. And so, instead of marrying, people wait and seek religious outlets for their frustrations.'²¹ Respondents in my study think street harassment might be another outlet for the growing frustration of male sexual repression created by delaying marriage.

Due to the limitations of my research, I did not delve into examining how sexually frustrated women cope in a society in which the laws that forbid pre-marital sex are absolute. However, in understanding how particular aspects of masculinity are produced, the notion of 'sexual repression' is relevant to this discussion.

The increasing trend in religious conservatism may also be responsible for the rise in cases of street harassment. Interestingly, the *New York Times* article mentioned above suggests that young people are adhering in increasing numbers to a traditional Islamic lifestyle as a way to cope with economic instability. 'More young people are observing stricter separation between boys and girls, sociologists say, fuelling sexual frustrations' (1).

One religious response to street harassment is to urge women to veil. The veil or *hijab* is worn freely and electively by Egyptian and non-Egyptian Muslim women in Cairo. The styles of *hijab* range from conservative – covering the whole body – to extremely chic – covering only a woman's hair. The *hijab* is generally popular. However the *niqab* – face cover – provokes the assumption that a woman is hiding something, possibly her beauty. The *niqab*, however, is also worn by prostitutes who wish to manoeuvre through public spaces unrecognized. Thus, the wearing of the *niqab* provokes suspicion about the woman beneath.

In an increasingly religious climate, the absence of veiling becomes a tool used to blame women for the harassment they experience. For example, an email campaign urging women to veil in Egypt

21 Michael Slackman, 'Generation Faithful: Stifled, Egypt's Young Turn to Islamic Fervor', *New York Times*, 17 February 2008 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/17/world/middleeast/17youth.html?pagewanted=1&ei=5124&en=8fb6470cb5fbb4b1&ex=1361854800>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

warns: 'a veil to protect or the eyes will molest.'²² The accompanying picture aligns men with flies and women with sweets. The first of two images depict a veiled woman as an untouched and covered sweet, representing the ideal Muslim woman. In the next image, silhouettes of unveiled women wearing tight clothing are compared to sticky uncovered sweets. This message clearly suggests that women are responsible for the behaviour of men.

In some of my discussions with men, I came to gather that they often have difficulty accepting that their behaviour towards women on the street is harassment. One man I spoke to named 'Maged', a tailor from Cairo, conveyed this sentiment. He reported that his behaviour only aimed to engage women in sexual discussion or to have fun and flirt with them. When I read him a list of the types of behaviours that make women uncomfortable, he exhaled cigarette smoke and leant towards me to say: 'they say no, but they mean yes. These women walk suggestively, wearing makeup and we men are supposed to just ignore it.'

Women's dress and behaviour come under scrutiny and criticism. The responsibility for harassment is usually placed on women. If they do not dress conservatively, women are said to be 'asking for it'. A male informant named 'Wael' confessed in an interview that he routinely harasses women. When I asked him why, he replied:

You can tell the type of girls that are looking for it. You can feel it off of them. They walk swaying their hips and looking at men. A woman who doesn't want to be harassed would not do that.

Veiling is one practice used by women to confront gender inequity in public spaces. The appropriation of the veil by some Muslim women is used to signify their religiosity. In these terms, the veil substantiates a woman's right to public participation. Ismail mentions 'that such practices discipline the self while also opening up spaces for resistance' (15). Importantly, I must note that not all Muslim women veil and that the practice of veiling does not necessarily imply a particular political position. This paper draws upon the practice of veiling in Egypt specifically to demonstrate that the veil is co-opted by some women to reaffirm religiosity or to contest exclusion and harassment within public space.

22 Ellen Knickmeyer, 'In Egypt, Some Women say that Veils Increase Harassment', *Washington Post*, 17 August 2008 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/16/AR2008081602063_pf.html> [accessed 3 February 2010].



The veil and its growing popularity is one of the ways in which women negotiate moving through the public sphere. In her essay 'Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance', Arlene MacLeod cites the prevalence of veiling in Cairo as 'accommodating protest' in terms of women's simultaneous resistance and subordination to gendered dimensions of power.²³ In her study, Macleod situates women's decision to veil within the matrices of 'power, protest and accommodation' (535). Working-class women, for instance, subscribe to Islamic notions of femininity by wearing the veil in order to manoeuvre through space, attain employment and protest against their identities being rigidly defined by others. Veiling and avoidance of eye contact serve as a form of what Jane Khatib-Chahidi calls 'fictive invisibility', where women methodically try to draw less attention to themselves in order to maintain their respectability while also obtaining public freedom.²⁴

Fear, Space and Modification

Because women fear street harassment in Cairo, the street can be a scary space for them. Both Hille Koskela and K. Day examine women's fear as shaped by violence and sexual harassment in public places. In terms of gendered power relations, Koskela finds that 'by restricting their mobility because of fear, women unwittingly reproduce masculine domination over space.'²⁵ Day situates the definition of masculinity in an opposition to women's fear in public spaces. For her, whether men act like 'bad boys' or are 'chivalrous' depends on the sense of a woman's vulnerability in maintaining these roles.²⁶

My interviews with women revealed ways in which, through fear of being harassed, they modify their movement within urban spaces. One woman noted:

23 Arlene Elowe MacLeod, 'Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance: The New Veiling as Accommodating Protest in Cairo', *Signs*, 17 (1992).

24 Jane Khatib-Chahidi, 'Sexual Prohibitions, Shared Space and Fictive Marriages in Shi'ite Iran', in *Women and Space*, ed. by Shirley Ardener (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

25 Hille Koskela, 'Gendered Exclusions: Women's Fear of Violence and Changing Relations to Space', *Human Geography*, 81 (1999), 113.

26 K. Day, 'Constructing Masculinity and Women's Fear in Public Space in Irvine, California', *Journal of Feminist Geography*, 8 (2001).

I ask my husband to respond verbally or switch places with me so I am further away from the harasser, ask male friends to do the same. I try to make sure I am not walking by myself or riding the metro by myself, and I ride in the women's car on the Metro. I've stopped going to certain places, like Talaat Harb in downtown for instance.

Dressing differently, avoiding eye contact and not walking alone are examples of how women modify their daily movements in Egyptian urban spaces. These alterations marginalize women because the act of performing their 'worthiness of being protected' outweighs their right to basic tenets of safety and legal recourse. These strategies reproduce sexed norms within society by confining women to their homes unless they are accompanied outside by a male. Fear acts as a mechanism that drives women back into the private sphere of their homes.

Agency, Resistance and Negotiating Public Spaces

Street harassment serves as a means for maintaining normalized sexual dichotomies. Though it is prevalent on the streets, it is ignored and minimized by the Egyptian state. Because men consistently harass women *on* the streets of Cairo, the space *of* the streets is masculinized. This 'masculinization' of space confines women to traditional feminine roles, drastically limiting their access to the public realm. In addition, to borrow from Phadke, women may reinforce the spatial limitations placed upon them because by altering their dress, or relying on male companions for their safety, they are effectively complying with male public dominance.

However, Egyptian feminists in Cairo subvert sexed dichotomies by assertively fighting against sexual harassment. They continue to oppose the lack of Egyptian law protecting women's bodies. The Egyptian feminist movement could benefit women by creating a safe environment for women and also by focusing on directing efforts that encourage alternative forms of masculinity and femininity. Space in Egypt is defined by different sets of experiences for men and women. Further research is therefore necessary to illustrate how particularly Western feminist notions of reclaiming space might be beneficial to women on the streets of Cairo.



When the Street became Theatre: Heinrich Heine's Art of Spectatorship in Juste-Milieu Paris

Lara Elder

A Journalist on the Streets of Paris

In 1831 Heinrich Heine finally acted on his own premonitions: having dreamt every night of packing his bags and travelling to Paris 'um frische Luft zu schöpfen' [to breathe fresh air],¹ he left his politically stultifying native Germany and the likelihood of unemployment or even potential arrest by the Prussian authorities to pursue ideals of freedom and socio-political emancipation in the French capital. Arriving in Paris in the wake of the 1830 July Revolution, Heine sensed the energy bound up in what was a rapidly changing social, political and economic landscape. He saw the potential for a new creativity to pervade all aspects of life and enthusiastically announced that 'eine neue Kunst, eine neue Religion, ein neues Leben wird hier geschaffen' [a new art, a new religion, a new life is being created here].² Implicit in his statement is the notion that he himself will be involved in the creation of this new form of art. Heine's enthusiasm for Paris is not only manifest in the ideological affinity felt for the city

1 Letter to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, 1 April 1831. References to the correspondence are to *Heinrich Heine: Werke, Briefwechsel, Lebenszeugnisse. Säkular-Ausgabe*, ed. by Nationale Forschungs-und Gedenkstätten der klassischen deutschen Literatur in Weimar and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, 27 vols (Berlin and Paris: Akademie-Verlag and Editions du CNRS, 1970 ff.), XX, 435.

2 References to Heine's works are to *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke. Düsseldorfer Ausgabe*, ed. by Manfred Windfuhr and others, 16 vols (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973-97), XII/i, 103.



he calls 'das neue Jerusalem, das geweihte Land der Freiheit' (VII/i, 269) [the new Jerusalem, the holy land of freedom], but also in the descriptions he gives of the physical, everyday reality he observes there. The titles of Heine's early Parisian critical writings announce him variously as art critic (*Französische Maler* [*French Painters*], 1834), theatre critic (*Über die französische Bühne* [*On the French Stage*], 1840) and political commentator (*Französische Zustände* [*French Conditions*], 1832). However, Heine is, above all, an observer of society and its actions; his first encounter with the city is as a spectator in its public spaces and on its streets. This paper focuses on *Französische Zustände*, for it is in these articles that he engages most directly with the urban reality of Paris.

By the time of Heine's arrival in Paris the 1830 revolution had found its resolution, albeit an uneasy one, in a system referred to as *juste-milieu* [happy medium]. This term was originally used to describe the 'middle way' between Liberalism and Conservatism of Casimir Périer's 1831 government under the bourgeois monarch Louis-Philippe. However, *juste-milieu* soon came to be associated, not least in Heine's writing, with a politics that was precariously non-committal and vacillating. The term appears time and time again in his articles on French life in which he describes it as a principle of 'Halbheit, jenes Schwankens zwischen Himmel und Hölle' (XII/i, 121) [half measures, that continual oscillation between heaven and hell]. The reality of *juste-milieu* Paris did not quite meet Heine's eager expectations of a society born out of recent revolution. Its bourgeois-centric, *laissez-faire* economic principles and politics only further undermined the chances of emancipation for the broader constituent of the French populace, and civil unrest was rife.

An encounter with the kaleidoscopic landscape — physical and ideological — of *juste-milieu* Paris demanded a spectatorship and writing strategy able to capture and respond to the ephemeral data of life in this city; a city already the epicentre of considerable and rapid economic, industrial and cultural change. Able to respond with alacrity to topical urban themes, journalism emerged as the form most ideally suited to the times, as Judith Wechsler has noted.³ It was also well suited to Heine's own purpose in mapping and responding to contemporary Paris for the benefit of his German readership.

Following the success of a first series of articles in Baron von Cotta's *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* [*Morning paper for the educated classes*] (these were subsequently published in book form as *Französische*

3 Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 13.

Maler), Heine was enlisted as a regular contributor to the publisher's flagship political journal, the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. In spite of strict German censorship laws, this paper pursued liberal aims and was unique for its time in its cosmopolitan outlook: Cotta had gradually extended his network of foreign correspondents to cover the corners of Europe but also places further afield, including America. The stringent censorship, which inevitably accompanied such a high-profile publication, was a drawback amply offset, Heine felt, by the paper's wide distribution and cult status, which gave it unparalleled influence across the German-speaking world. Marx called it 'das einzige Organ mit mehr als lokaler Bedeutung' [the only organ with more than local significance].⁴ Censorship was a challenge rather than a barrier to the wily journalist seeking to smuggle in contraband political ideas. Among the various correspondents employed to summarize the French daily press for a German audience, Heine provided the spark of fresh, first-hand news. Through his lively, general reports on French life, *Französische Zustände*, he established his reputation as Cotta's 'man on the ground (or street!)' in Paris.

How Heine wrote was conditioned in part by the project of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. In practice, however, he had free rein because his articles appeared in a 'Beilage' [cultural supplement] outside the formal framework of the paper. His experience on the ground (street) was the most influential element in his approach to writing. In recognizing a tendency for political, social and cultural change to leave visible, or indeed legible, traces in the public arenas of Paris, Heine developed a particular method for observing (or reading) and reflecting on (or writing) the city; this we might call his *art of spectatorship*.

Reading Paris — A Theatrical Perspective

Using a rather well-worn comparison Heine writes, in one of his letters *Über die französische Bühne*, 'das Leben ist hier in Frankreich viel dramatischer, und der Spiegel des Lebens, das Theater, zeigt hier im höchsten Grade Handlung und Passion' (XII/i, 243) [life here in France is much more dramatic and the mirror of life, the theatre, displays the highest degree of action and passion]. He is, of course, comparing French life to the lives of his German readership.

4 Franz Herre and Konstanze Erdmann, *Ein Weltblatt aus Bayern: Die Augsburger „Allgemeine Zeitung“: eine Dokumentation* (Munich: BR, 2000).



This apparent cliché — theatre as a mirror held up to life — is in fact thoroughly pertinent to Heine's way of writing for his German audience about both French theatre and everyday life in Paris. If the emotional intensity of French drama appears excessive to a German spectator, he explains, it is only because the latter is not used to the dramatic nature of French life itself. Through the medium of his articles, Heine presents *juste-milieu* society as one in which theatre and life are barely distinguishable from one another. He notes with a certain wry humour: 'was [...] im theatralischen Gewande so greuelhaft unnatürlich vorkommt, ereignet sich täglich und stündlich zu Paris in der bürgerlichsten Wirklichkeit' (XII/i, 244) [what seems so atrociously unnatural in theatrical garb is happening in Paris every day, every hour, in the most bourgeois reality].

Besides providing an appropriate metaphorical framework within which to recount the political charades of the July Monarchy and the flamboyant street skirmishes with their banners and barricades, the concept of theatre also sets up a very particular relationship between writing and a daily experience of the world. Heine uses it to extend the limits of his textual analysis beyond those of conventional criticism; as though spectator and reviewer of a 'drama of Paris', he reads, interprets and writes about life on a *street-become-theatre*. On one occasion he remarks: 'Die ganze französische Geschichte kommt mir manchmal vor wie eine große Comödie. [...] Im Leben wie in der Literatur und den bildenden Künsten der Franzosen herrscht der Charakter des Theatralischen' (XII/i, 265) [The whole of French history sometimes seems to me to be like a great drama. As in their literature and fine arts, theatricality characterizes the life of the French.] Indeed he frequently refers to Paris — both the city as a whole and areas within it — as a 'Schauplatz' [scene/stage]. In *Französische Zustände* the Place Vendôme is the stage for a military review, the Rue St Martin and streets in general the stage of popular unrest and even the Louvre nearly becomes 'der Schauplatz nächtlicher Frevel' [the setting for a night-time outrage].⁵ Reinforced by the stage-metaphor, these are all emphatically public spaces. They are backdrops against which dramatic events, or rather more specifically dramatic spectacles, unfold.

If Paris is seen as a stage, then the physical features of its urban landscape become props. When filtered through the analytical gaze of our socio-political critic, such props can acquire a significance that

5 For reference to the Place Vendôme see 'Tagesbericht: 12 Juni', *Düsseldorfer Heine-Ausgabe*, XII/I, 204; to the Rue St Martin see 'Tagesbericht: 7 Juni', XII/i, 197; and to the Louvre see 'Artikel 3', XII/i, 101.

transcends their objectivity. In *Französische Zustände*, Heine reads and writes meaning into the fabric of the street quite literally: he observes that the cobblestones, which had only recently been torn up and hurled as weapons by the July Revolutionaries, are being calmly reset 'damit keine äußere Spur der Revolution übrig bleibe' (XII/i, 82) [so that no external trace of the revolution should remain]. In the first instance he reads the stones as symbols of revolution: they acquire meaning by being used as props for political action on the street, becoming the agent in a metaphorical battle between the opposing forces of subversion and restoration. However, in writing, Heine goes a step further, equating these stones directly with the people that threw them, so that they are now 'wie Pflastersteine, in die Erde zurückgestampft, und, nach wie vor, mit Füßen getreten' (XII/i, 82) [stamped back into the ground like cobblestones and trampled on as before]. In this way Heine implicitly accuses Louis-Philippe and his regime not only of ingratitude towards the proletariat that secured him power but also of politically regressive and, as the violent image of stamping conveys, oppressive behaviour. With this writing strategy Heine successfully undermines the attempts of the ruling powers to draw a line under the revolutionary period, reminding his German reader, through a simple metaphor for injustice, that true revolution, the emancipation of the people, remains unattained.

Forty years after the student riots of May 1968, BBC Radio 4 has tracked that year in sound, day by day, by reviving audio and video material from its archives in a season of programmes, which ask the question '1968: Myth or Reality?'.⁶ Implicit in this commemorative project are questions of cultural impact relating to what is regarded as one of the twentieth century's most symbolic moments in France. May '68 has come to define, rightly or wrongly, the potential of idealist intellectuals to change political reality. In many ways this was the practical implementation of what Heine often seemed to preach to his German readers. It is interesting to note the particular durability of the cobblestone as a symbol connecting the revolutionary history of Paris to the decades and indeed centuries still to come. Protesting against the police invasion of the Sorbonne, students in '68 tore paving stones from the street in a gesture of self-conscious metaphorical defiance. These stones were thrown with a practical aim but also a poetic force, as attested by the proliferation of slogans alluding to literary references. One such slogan adopted the words of poet Maurice Blanchard 'la plus belle sculpture, c'est le pavé de grès [...] c'est le pavé que l'on jette sur la gueule des flics' [the most

6 Lucy Dichmont, editor/producer, *1968: Myth or Reality?* (BBC Radio 4, 2008).



beautiful sculpture is a sandstone cobble, the cobblestone thrown in the face of the cops].⁷ In May '68 Heine's symbolic treatment of these props is repeated.

Returning to my central question of an *art of spectatorship*, Heine's *word on the street* — his ability to read and write meaning into supposed objective reality — depends for its success on combining several versions of a spectator's role. One critic has identified a tripartite structure to Heine's theatre criticism which we might just as effectively apply to his reports on French life. At the most basic level he is an observer of the theatre buildings themselves, hence of outside surfaces: a 'Betrachter von außen' [spectator from without].⁸ He recounts what he sees in order to recreate scenes and their context for the benefit of his German reader. Secondly he observes, from the perspective 'eines Betrachters aus dem Zuschauerraum' [of a spectator in the auditorium], the drama of French life and politics as played out in all its theatrical reality on the *street-become-theatre*. However, Heine also crucially extends his observational field beyond that of the ordinary theatregoer to see 'nicht bloß, was auf dem Theater gespielt wird, sondern auch, was hinter den Coulissen vorgeht, hinter jenen Coulissen, wo die Kunst aufhört und die liebe Natur wieder anfängt (XII/i, 256) [not only what is being staged, but also what is going on behind the scenes, behind that façade, where art gives way to dear Nature once more].

As Paris correspondent for the *Allgemeine Zeitung* Heine was required to remain close to events unfolding in the French capital. At the same time, he was to maintain sufficient critical distance from these events in order to successfully communicate the essence of Paris to an uninitiated, distant German reader. Exploiting his unique position, he peers behind the scenes and surface décor of Paris to cut through the endemic 'Schaulust' [literally 'desire for display', or 'joy of watching'] of the Parisian street crowd. In so doing, he exposes the workings of theatrical deception rife in *juste-milieu* society.

7 'Chant des Ardeurs premières', in *La Poésie Surréaliste*, ed. by Jean Louis Bédouin (Paris: Seghers, 1964), 71.

8 Ina Brendel-Perpina, *Heinrich Heine und das Pariser Theater zur Zeit der Julimonarchie* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis-Verlag, 2000), 56.

Heine's Paris Drama

Heine's position as foreign correspondent certainly affects the manner in which he approaches and responds to rapidly changing, eternally unstable *juste-milieu* Paris. However, his style of journalism is also directly shaped by the theatrical reality of the city. Casting a superficial glance over *Französische Zustände* we encounter a text which seems to pursue the journalistic 'ideal' of objective reporting. However, when Heine's particular method of spectatorship is reflected back on his own writing, when the reader looks beneath the surface to examine the structure and workings of the political reportage, quite another dimension to his text emerges.

Paris may be the 'Hauptstadt der Revolution' (XI, 56) [capital of revolution], but for Heine it nevertheless retains the poetic qualities of a 'schöne Zauberstadt' (XII/i, 102) [beautiful city of enchantment]. As observed, he often refers to political uprisings in the capital as scenes in a great drama of French revolution, a tragic drama which is, in his eyes, still being written. While he may claim to research and recount events with the studied care expected of an objective reporter — 'wie mein Amt es erheischt, gewissenhaft angestellt' (XII/i, 184) [assembled with the diligence my office demands] — Heine nevertheless confesses that his reactions in the immediate face of events are not always dispassionate. On first hearing of the street violence sparked by the occasion of Lamarque's funeral procession, he writes:

In der Kirche Saint-Merry hat man mir diese Geschichte erzählt, und ich mußte mich dort an die Bildsäule des heiligen Sebastian anlehnen, um nicht vor innerer Bewegung umzusinken, und ich weinte wie ein Knabe. Alle Heldengeschichten, worüber ich als Knabe schon so viel geweint, traten mir dabey ins Gedächtniß.

[This story was recounted to me in the Church of Saint Merry and I had to lean against the statue of Saint Sebastian to prevent myself fainting with inner emotion, and I cried like a child. All the heroic tales over which, as a boy, I had already shed so many tears, came back to me.]

The structural architecture of both setting and text here creates an anecdotal moment of self-staging in a manner reminiscent of the chorus in Greek tragedy, a literary comparison Heine goes on to draw. Though this interpolated scene reveals a reporter able to distance himself from his own initially emotive response, the reader



who seeks reassuring objectivity from this text is left uneasy. If Heine can so readily cast himself in the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy, then what is to stop his reportage drifting towards a more theatrical discourse? On closer inspection, we notice the abundant literary references in Heine's account of events — the rioters are Bacchanalian revellers, brandishing *thyrses*, intoxicated in pursuit of freedom — as well as a carefully conceived structure which moves, by way of a breathless linguistic and syntactic crescendo, from portentous scene-setting through lamentational interjections ('ach!') to an exclamatory climax bemoaning the ill-fated Lamarque.

His emigration to the French capital may have coincided with a shift in the balance of Heine's output from poetry to prose, but despite gloomily predicting that 'all mein künstlerisches poetisches Vermögen zu Grunde ginge' [all my artistic and poetic powers could go to rack and ruin],⁹ the move by no means signifies sudden evaporation of all artistic or literary features from his writing. Though daily reality on the Parisian street may thrust politics to the fore, these politics and French society with its inherently theatrical disposition ironically also encourage his latent literary impulses. As spectator on a *street-become-theatre*, Heine is, perhaps unsurprisingly, often on the brink of becoming playwright in place of reviewer by reworking experiences at street level into his own drama of Paris. This lends a whole new relevance to my concept of his *art of spectatorship*.

On close inspection, much of Heine's early journalism is composed in a style, structure and language that render it loosely reminiscent of drama. Such instances are too numerous and intricate to be outlined here. However, there is one particularly illustrative passage, which merits consideration.

Unlike most of those with sufficient means, Heine chose not to flee Paris during the 1832 cholera epidemic but to record its progress from the front line. As a result he claimed that his report reflected 'unverfälscht die Farbe des Augenblicks' (XII/i, 133) [the genuine colour of the present moment]. Initially Heine seems bent on removing the slightest trace of anything in his language that might be deemed literary or rhetorical. Even his serving man's blackly humorous comment 'wir werden einer nach dem andern in den Sack gesteckt!' (XII/i, 132) [we are being bagged up one after the other!] is not, Heine stresses, to be misconstrued as a figure of speech — 'in den Sack gesteckt' can also mean deceived or betrayed — for bodies literally were being dropped into sacks. Yet this is anything but an unadorned piece of reportage. For a start, with people boycotting the streets and

9 Letter to Varnhagen von Ense, *Säkular Ausgabe*, XX, 428.

the normal progression of life and politics in Paris suspended, the cholera epidemic dried up the source of material on which Heine's articles depended: 'Mehrere Abende lang sah man sogar auf den Boulevards wenig Menschen [...]. Die Theater sind wie ausgestorben. Wenn ich in einen Salon trete, sind die Leute verwundert, mich noch in Paris zu sehen, da ich doch hier keine nothwendigen Geschäfte habe' (XII/i, 138) [For several evenings few people were to be seen even on the Boulevards [...]. The theatres are dead. Whenever I visit a salon, people are surprised to find me still in Paris, given that I have no urgent business to keep me here]. Interrupting the business of normal journalism with its 'Todtenstille' [deathly quiet], the cholera epidemic created a new kind of narrative space.

Heine's report is carefully constructed and stage-managed in a succession of scenes that weave together many different characters and plots and display great flexibility in narrative pace and use of language. Thematically this drama traces the progression of Paris from a stage of cheerful street celebrations to the setting for tragedy and death. Within this, various events are recounted in a series of short, dovetailing episodes, each one built around an incident epically elaborated.

One such scene recounts the detrimental impact of health directives on the *chiffonniers* [rag-pickers] and peddlers whose livelihoods depended on rubbish-filled streets. Rather than presenting a dispassionate analysis of cause and effect, Heine emphasizes the disarray surrounding the authorities' sudden introduction of safety measures, and a drama of near epic proportions ensues. He introduces his principal characters, the *chiffonniers*, with a few deft strokes. Once defined, the group is marshalled into a counter-revolution:

Die Chiffonniers barrikadierten sich bei der Porte St. Denis; mit ihren groben Regenschirmen fochten die alten Trödelweiber auf dem Châtelet; der Generalmarsch erscholl; Casimir Périer ließ seine Myrmidonen aus ihren Boutiken heraustrommeln; der Bürgerthron zitterte; die Rente fiel; die Karlisten jauchzten. (XII/i, 135)

[The rag-pickers barricaded themselves at Porte St. Denis; the old peddler women fenced with their crude umbrellas on the Châtelet; the general march sounded; Casimir Périer had his Myrmidons drummed out of their boutiques; the bourgeois throne shook; the index fell; the Carlists rejoiced.]

Here the rag-pickers become one of a succession of set-pieces in an epic drama in miniature, written and stage-managed in accordance



with what transpires to be our playwright's underlying intention: to ridicule *juste-milieu* society. The satirical effect of this episode depends on a technique of epic exaggeration, whereby Heine highlights the comic disparity between heroic actions and their humble or even ridiculous perpetrators. The language of epic heroism is deliberately disproportionate to the reality of the events recounted, and a fast-paced, snappy syntax heightens this parodic melodrama. Parody is even inherent in the epic language itself, for the Myrmidons — originally a nation of brave warriors led to the siege of Troy by Achilles in Homer's *Iliad* — had come, by this time, to denote the bodyguard minions and sycophantic upholders of a regime.

The dramatic intensity of Heine's prose through most of the cholera report serves to heighten the effect of the 'deathly quiet' graveyard scene with which it ends. Though instigated by an everyday event — visiting a friend — this final scene is set in territory which is neither completely imaginary nor completely real, as Heine finds himself accompanying his friend's body to burial. On arriving at the cemetery, he is at pains to stress that he is no longer dreaming and yet the 'reality' mediated to his readers is all but viewed from the perspective of a corpse — 'ich erblickte nichts als Himmel und Särge' (XII/i, 141) [I saw nothing but coffins and the sky]. Slippage between two realities is almost imperceptible: death becomes merely another way of experiencing the world, an alternative perspective. As Heine drifts into macabre daydreams, he imagines that he is witnessing a 'Todtenemeute' [riot of the dead] in which the carriages, sometimes tumbling over in their haste, are guided not by impatient horses but by the dead themselves, eager to be the first to reach the grave.

The overall effect of this scene is reminiscent of that achieved in Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors*,¹⁰ in which death — present in the symbol of an anamorphic skull — emerges when the viewer shifts his or her angle of observation and looks away from the figures and their real-world setting. In an insightful analysis of this work, Stephen Greenblatt remarks that 'to move a few feet away from the frontal contemplation of the painting is to efface everything within it, to bring death into the world',¹¹ and suggests that

in the context of our normal relationship to a painting — indeed in the context of the physical stance we conventionally assume before

10 Hans Holbein the Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve* ('*The Ambassadors*') (London: National Gallery, 1533).

11 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 1982, 2005), 20-21.

any object we have chosen to perceive — the marginal position is an eccentric flight of fancy, virtually a non-place, just as the skull exists in a non-place in relation to all the other objects Holbein depicts.

Regardless of whether the experience Heine recounts is factually accurate, the way in which he presents it, slipping between perspectives and different conceptions of reality, seems to exemplify just such a 'flight of fancy' and one which is facilitated by his own literary version of anamorphism. Having apparently had a narrow escape from being buried himself — an experience to which he alludes but then rather provocatively abstains from describing — Heine gazes back across the city from the lofty safety of a hilltop. Here, in a kind of dramatic epilogue laden with biblical references and the heavy pathetic fallacy of a misty sunset, he laments the terrible weight of suffering on 'das kranke Paris [...], die Heilandstadt, die für die weltliche Erlösung der Menschheit schon so viel gelitten!' (XII/i, 142) [sick Paris, the holy city, which has suffered so much for the worldly salvation of mankind].

The entire drama of the cholera episode can be said to lead to this one moment, a moment in which Heine's art of spectatorship reaches a new peak as he adopts the far-sighted gaze of the artist or poet. From this hilltop his perspective literally transcends that of the observer on the street — from here he can look back over (or review!) the whole city. The hill at Père-Lachaise did offer one of the best panoramas of Paris. It was a physical property soon seized on as a literary device by others besides Heine.¹²

Metaphorically speaking, Heine became the ultimate outsider: no longer the eager-eyed tourist nor the foreign correspondent looking on with a critically detached eye, but a historiographer in poetic garb, standing apart from the pressures of the moment and reflecting on the fate of Paris in its wider political and historical context. At precisely the moment when the raw closeness of events threatens to overwhelm Heine and upset the equilibrium of objective reportage, he retreats to a literary dimension, a narrative space in which he can at least appear to regain some authorial composure and control. It is through this final, perhaps unexpected, extension of Heine's method of spectatorship that his journalism can, in occasional moments of poetically heightened self-awareness, transcend its primary concern with the exigencies of everyday life

12 Eugène de Rastignac gazes down on Paris from the Père-Lachaise cemetery in the final scene of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), which was published in serial form during the winter of 1834-35 and subsequently in book form by Furne in 1843.



on the street and consider itself in a broader historical dimension, conscious that, as a text, it too belongs necessarily 'zur Geschichte der Zeit' (XII/i, 133) [to the history of the times].

Self-Fashioning and the Street

At the heart of Heine's 1830's journalism lies a dynamic relationship between urban spectacle and political commentary, a fact that only becomes fully apparent when, as readers, we consider him not in the isolated categories of art critic, theatre critic or political commentator, but as first and foremost a spectator on the streets of *juste-milieu* Paris. *Französische Maler*, *Französische Zustände* and *Über die französische Bühne* — superficially on entirely divergent subjects — emerge as common sources of a new discourse, which views not only works of art and literature but also everyday life as a text to be read and written. In Heine's Paris the street represents on the one hand the presence of an immediate political reality — it is the territory over which political battles are fought and the balance of power tested — and on the other hand a site of artistic production — a space which lends itself to carnival, theatre and metaphor. Heine embraces these different dimensions in a discourse concerned with both journalistic objectivity and theatrical creativity. Thus he is able to perform the role of upstanding correspondent while smuggling revolutionary ideas, his own particular *word on the street*, past the keen eyes of the German censor in a disarmingly light-hearted weave of incident, anecdote and commentary.

In the later Paris-based collection of journalism, *Lutetia* (1854), Heine had arrived at a highly distilled version of this technique, proclaiming the text 'ein Produkt der Natur und der Kunst' (XIII/i, 18-19) [a product of nature and art]. *Lutetia* oscillates continually between these two poles. The success of its principle lies in its structural duality. It is at once objective reportage and an artistically constructed 'dramaturgy of signs'.¹³ It simultaneously satisfies the often conflicting requirements of the literary punter and historian and hides its polemical message for the German reader in a discourse which constantly evades categorization and conclusion.¹⁴

13 Klaus Briegleb, *Opfer Heine. Versuche über Schriftzüge der Revolution* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 154.

14 See Anthony Phelan, 'Scheherazade's Snapshots: Lutetia', in *Reading Heinrich Heine* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The early journalism might also be read not so much as a chronicle of the times but as a document tracing Heine as he begins to fashion an identity for himself as a writer in Paris. This identity is suspended, perhaps indefinitely, somewhere between the spheres of politics and art. Hauschild and Werner remark that conditions in Paris are for Heine 'in gewisser Weise Produktionsvoraussetzung, indem sie ihm sowohl den Stoff zum Schreiben wie auch insbesondere den psychologisch und gesellschaftlich unabdingbaren Kontext des Schreibprozesses bereitstellen' [to a certain extent the conditions of production in that they furnish him both with material and also, and above all, with a psychological and social context indispensable to the writing process].¹⁵

However, Heine is also conscious that he is involved in more than responding to and shaping a picture of Paris. Implicit in his *art of spectatorship* is the knowledge that, as correspondent for the 'Weltblatt aus Bayern' [world paper from Bavaria] with its large and diverse German-speaking readership, he too is subject to its processes. Klaus Briegleb asks of Heine's street scenes: 'Ist ihre Serie aber nicht die biographische Spur des Autors in seinen Schriften?' (Briegleb, 154) [does their sequence not reveal the biographical trace of the author in his texts?]. The answer is yes and not by accident. In the act of writing his *word on the street*, Heine is conscious that he is also creating and documenting a version of himself: a German émigré and self-styled intellectual idealist, who inhabits, reads and writes the streets of *juste-milieu* Paris in accounts that are superficially entertaining and fundamentally thought-provoking.

15 Jan-Christoph Hauschild and Michael Werner, 'Der Zweck des Lebens ist das Leben selbst': Heinrich Heine. Eine Biographie (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1997), 200.



Black Urbanism: An Interview with John Oduroe

Sophie Fuggle

While studying in London on a Fulbright scholarship, John Oduroe, an architect from Washington, D.C., co-founded the Office of Metropolitan Alternatives along with Paul Goodwin. The group is dedicated to examining and promoting the possibilities of a black urbanism and, more specifically, the impact black diasporic culture could potentially have on architectural design, practice and policy. After leaving London in 2008, John travelled around Brazil looking at *favela* architecture and culture. Since returning to the United States, he has been involved in various design projects, both practical and theoretical, all of which actively engage with the idea of a black urbanism. He is currently teaching a course exploring the parallels between architecture and dance at the Children's Studio School for Art and Architecture in Washington, D.C. Sophie Fuggle interviewed John in spring 2009.

SF: First of all, how have black communities been conceptualized in urban thought up to now?

JO: I would argue that the notion of the 'ghetto' has become the dominant frame of reference through which black urban communities are discussed today. When I use the word 'ghetto,' it's not to simply reference appalling images of urban blight and social decay. Rather, I'm referring to perspectives that view black communities, or any other marginalized spatially-segregated, racially-homogenous communities, as somehow external to city in which they exist. The notion of the 'ghetto'—whether deployed from within or outside a community—is used to distinguish and alienate certain places from



the general form of the city as a whole. It is a discursive construct that has come to take on different meanings according to the social context in which the term is deployed. For some the ghetto is used to signify a place of deep social, physical and moral decay. They are the forgotten, abandoned, or ignored 'no-go zones' dangerously perforating our city centres and eroding the urban periphery. For others the ghetto represents something more positive. It is a place signifying cultural authenticity and a source of social identity and community solidarity. What I find most interesting, and perhaps most dangerous, about both of these examples is the way in which black communities are often imagined as a kind of geographic paradox: foreign bodies independent of, but simultaneously embedded within, the general form and function of the mainstream city.

SF: How do you set about defining what black urbanism might mean and how would this differ from other concepts of 'urban' and 'street' which imply a black or Latino influence?

JO: Black urbanism in my view attempts to describe how the people, spaces and spatial practices found throughout the African diaspora have impacted the form and function of modern cities. If, as I described earlier, the notion of the 'ghetto' has dominated and also limited the ways in which we understand the experiences of being black in the city, then I hope a revised understanding of black urbanism might be able to open up an alternative perspective on the matter. These perspectives would reject the insularity of the ghetto framework and, instead, contextualize black urban experiences within the general history of modern urban development. While the ghetto perspective has indeed drawn attention to many of the pathological ills plaguing inner-city communities, it also casts a long shadow over the many productive relationships that have emerged from these places and transformed the ways in which such communities occupy the city.

I was formally introduced to the concept by Paul Goodwin, a researcher at Goldsmith's Centre for Urban and Community Research. While hosting a discussion at the Greater London Council in 2007 entitled 'Re-visioning Black Urbanism', Paul described 'black urbanism' as the process of moving the discourse regarding black communities and their inhabitants beyond:

[T]he limited, singular understanding of [the black urban experience represented in ideas about 'ghettos']. My goal is to understand black urbanism in a more *active* and *open* sense, to understand it as a *process of engagement* and *building* of urban spaces – real and imagined. [...]

The implication of this is a more *active* and *positive* definition of black urbanism, one in which black communities are positioned at the very heart of the process of designing and creating the neighbourhoods and spaces of the metropolitan areas they have done so much to help revive over the past half century.¹

Paul's ideas, particularly those relating to the development of the spatial imagination in black communities, resonated with my own interests in the aesthetics of socially marginalized communities. I have had a long standing interest in the social, political, economic and cultural factors that inform the look and feel of what we design and the places we choose to build. However, outside of issues like gentrification or discriminatory housing practices, I would argue that experiences from the urban margins have been largely absent from these conversations. For this reason, much of my academic work has explored what these places and experiences might tell us about contemporary approaches to urban development, design and architectural form making.

In this way, my vision of a new kind of black urbanism is not solely focused on exploring historical relationships between black peoples and cities, but also, discovering new and emerging ways that the social margins are contributing to the production of urban space. It aims to describe inventive solutions crafted to meet the challenges of living in the social margins. Might these creative acts of survival offer architects, planners and designers a wealth of new inspiration? For example, what might we learn about the challenges and benefits of adaptively reusing existing buildings, derelict industrial spaces or hazardous topographies from peoples who perhaps have never had the political and economic resources to build and develop communities from scratch? What might their domestic spaces—perhaps the only space where permanent physical transformation was feasible—reveal about a peoples spatial needs, requirements or desires? What might we learn from communities where contingent and flexible social networks compensate for the lack of stable and reliable physical infrastructures? Do the new forms of cultural production that emerged from within black urban communities—new styles of music, new forms of dance, new cuisines, etc—have spatial or visual analogies?

These few scattered examples begin to describe spaces and places whose aesthetics arise from contingent acts of re-appropriation, improvisation and subversion, rather than self-conscious

1 Paul Goodwin, *A Manifesto for Black Urbanism* (2007) <<http://diffusion.org.uk/?p=225>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



preoccupation with newness and zeitgeist. Black urbanism in this way might be regarded as a kind of postmodern design that has been lived and practiced long before Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* or the failure of the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Complex.² A revised black urbanism might focus on elaborating and introducing this perspective into mainstream discourse on urbanism.

My take on a revised black urbanism is definitely related to the popular notions of 'street' and 'urban' culture you've mentioned. Their incorporation into mainstream culture marked the emergence of entirely new ways to discuss and engage with aspects of black inner-city life. They represent contemporary attempts to address western culture's historic ambivalence towards racial and ethnic difference. On the one hand, difference is celebrated as an exciting source for inspiration and innovation and on the other hand, it is viewed sceptically as a threat to tradition and imagined senses of normality. Its existence is read as both the evidence of a free and prosperous society, but also as a mark of its deprivation and inevitable decay.

Hip-hop, since its inception, has been subject to this kind of paradoxical analysis being both praised and derided for its unapologetic representations of life in America's inner-city. To its early supporters, it represented something new to popular music: an aesthetic based around the ideals of accessibility, street level 'do it yourself' action and direct communication with the masses. To others; however, it was sharply criticized for its loud and aggressive aesthetics. It focused too heavily on negative 'ghetto issues' that were at the time completely foreign to the typical American.

Yet as hip-hop grew in popularity through the eighties, entrepreneurs were eager to expand its marketability beyond the black and Latino communities where it first appeared. This could not be accomplished without first confronting the reluctance of mainstream white populations to publicly identify with motifs so closely associated with the black underclass. In my view,

2 Robert Venturi and Vincent Scully, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York, NY, Harry N. Adams, Inc, 1977). Pruitt-Igoe was a massive modern urban housing project first completed in 1955 in the city of St. Louis, Missouri. Shortly after its completion, living conditions in Pruitt-Igoe began to decay and by the late 1960s, the extreme poverty, crime, and segregation brought the complex a great deal of worldwide infamy. Less than 20 years after construction, the first of the complex's 33 buildings was demolished by the federal government and the remaining 32 buildings were destroyed over the next 2 years. The high profile failure of Pruitt-Igoe housing project was claimed by postmodern architectural historian Charles Jencks to mark 'the day modern architecture died.'

marketers overcame this challenge by deemphasizing the role of race and focusing on the significance of the urban landscape within hip-hop culture. Particular emphasis was placed on the notion of the street as the primary site where acts of struggle, defiance, competition and self-actualization were performed by the culture's followers. This angle was consistent with many of hip-hop's early innovations which were based around a kind of reckless DIY hijacking of public space. In these days, any street lamp could be hacked to power a sound system, any corner could become an impromptu dance stage through the use of a flattened cardboard box and any train car could be used as someone's art canvas. This rugged re-appropriation of the street was fearfully viewed by the mainstream masses as an affront to establishment values and senses of order. More importantly, however, this imagery offered white suburban youth a new wealth of material to fuel their adolescent fantasies of rebellion. Fashion and sportswear marketers were eager to brand their merchandise with a similar sense of gritty independence and anti-establishment ethos and thus clamoured to associate their products with these places and practices.

This conception of the streets of black America served as a kind of Rosetta stone helping to translate the look and feel of this culture into terms mainstream American could readily consume. Today's discourses on 'street' and 'urban' largely emerged from this interest in educating new consumers about the aesthetics, codes, symbolism, attitudes and ideologies found hip-hop culture. This discourse has offered mainstream America new glimpses into both real and imagined experiences of life within many inner-city urban communities. From these selected views, new aesthetic sensibilities were introduced into mainstream culture. Today when President Obama fists bumps first lady Michelle, or 'dusts off his shoulders' during a presidential debate, we all know what this means. These practices and aesthetic sensibilities that were born in inner-city communities have now become the foundation for the emergence of a new popular culture.

My approach to re-examining black urbanism is certainly inspired by the development of 'street' and the 'urban' and, more specifically, the opportunity to develop new and more inclusive ways of understanding and occupying the city that these discourses have made apparent. The emergence of these terms raises important questions regarding the ways in which cultural phenomenon developed in communities of difference and crosses over into the mainstream. In my view, understanding the emergence of ideas like 'street' and



'urban' will be essential to the process of actively encouraging similar kinds of miscegenation to occur within architectural and design practices.

SF: Is black urbanism, as you envisage it, specifically tied into reclaiming the erasure that the word 'urban' performs; this erasure being of the adjectives black or latino in front of 'urban'?

JO: I'd like to see a revised black urbanism do more than make claims to ownership over these kinds of discourses. While their relationship to black culture is important and worthy of exploration, what might be more significant is how rapidly these discourses have proliferated around the world to become a prominent aspect of our popular cultural lexicon. Their success begins to reflect the powerful potential for black aesthetics to offer all urban dwellers, regardless of race, new alternatives for understanding, imagining and inhabiting the city. In this way, it could be argued that the notion of 'blackness' in cities has been undergoing a slow transformation from a cultural characteristic based almost entirely on skin colour to a more open and deployable form of identification based on knowledge, experience and spatial practice.

A more useful black urbanism might be one that explores the ramifications of these cultural shifts as well as the historic circumstances which have made them possible. Rather than being preoccupied with righting the racists erasures of the past of blackness, a new black urbanism might prove more useful by engaging with the question of what exactly makes blackness so appealing to so many peoples. What is it about blackness that is most subversive and engages the most imaginations? There may be more to be gained from identifying the spaces and places where these perspectives are actively being practiced and exploring how they are transforming the ways in which we occupy and understand the city. Perhaps a more nuanced and open understanding of the nature and value of blackness today might inform new ways for communities to organize and cooperate. Could this kind of perspective change how communities are imagined and engaged within public development processes? What might this relationship between blackness and alternative experiences of the city tell us about western urbanism as a whole? How has it been physically manifested within the built and environment? Might this inspiration lead to new spatial or architectural vocabularies? These are some of the questions with which a broader and, dare I say, more radical sense of black urbanism can begin to engage.

SF: Should black urbanism be conceived as necessarily concerned with struggle and resistance?

JO: My perspective on black urbanism is greatly influenced by Paul Gilroy's ideas regarding the on-going transformation of how society understands and engages with the idea of race. In the first chapter of *Against Race: Imaging Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, entitled 'The Crisis of "Race" and Raciology', Gilroy describes this profound transformation and speculates about its potential political and social ramifications.³ For Gilroy, technological advancements in how we understand the body, manipulate and alter its appearance and market its image around the globe now allow, or even encourage, us to subvert skin colour and physical appearance, historically, the primary markers of racial identification. As these trends continue to complicate who and what we associate with a particular race, perhaps we will see the demise of our very understanding of race.

Following this work, I would argue that skin colour is not the primary factor informing the meaning of 'black' in the conception of black urbanism I am describing. Rather, the 'black' in black urbanism is a reference to the resistance against colonial and imperial power and the significance of these struggles to the formation of black cultures across the African diaspora. While skin colour and physical appearance continue to be increasingly unstable markers of blackness, the emergence of modern black cultures through resistance serves as one of the few experiences unifying the fragmented field of cultures that constitute the African diaspora.⁴ Resistance occurred not only in the forms of organized rebellion against imperial powers, but also and perhaps most poignantly, in the everyday ways in which colonized and enslaved peoples resisted dehumanization. This was done by continually re-inventing their understandings of the natural world and the cosmos to facilitate survival as well as make sense of the most horrific and unimaginable circumstances. Black cultures effectively emerged from the momentum generated by these seemingly minor acts of cultural re-invention, adaptation, re-appropriation, and improvisation. Each effort resulted in the creation of 'new differences' that would subvert the colonial oppressor's previous conceptualization of the enslaved. This would require the oppressor

3 Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imaging Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

4 Cf. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) and *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000).



to continually re-evaluate and re-establish the criteria distinguishing him from those he oppressed. In this way, black cultures, and by extension, black urbanisms, emerged from an iterative process of resistance against forms of categorizations enacted from oppressive powers.

It's important to note, however, that while black cultures might have emerged from these acts of resistance and defiance, they are not necessarily in binary opposition to conventional notions of western culture. It's perhaps more productive to read black culture as a kind of narrative offering an alternative perspective on the history and experience of modernity. At times its accounts parallel those of western hegemony, at times it elaborates upon them, and at other times it offers completely contradictory views. These accounts are encoded in the spatial, social and aesthetic dynamics specific to black communities around the globe, for example, the ways foods are prepared and consumed, the textures and tones of the music and arts, the styles of worship and attitudes towards spirituality and belief and the ways streets are lived and used.

Given this tangled historical relationship between western urbanism and black cultures, a black urbanism that is preoccupied with discovering some kind of authentically 'black' architecture, spatial heritage, or design aesthetic might be misguided. Alternatively, a more useful black urbanism might endeavour to elaborate on the notion of resistance and its specific role in informing the aesthetics of black urban cultures. Black urbanism could provide valuable insight to a wide range of urban spatial practices ranging from architectural or urban design, to social and political organisation.

SF: Black urbanism seems to embody the idea that what is happening on the street has the ability to affect and transform discourses and structures of power operating from above rather than being simply subject to those discourses. How does this happen in reality and, more specifically, how does this change the experience on the street?

JO: There seems to be a group of urban agents actively involved in the transformation of the city lodged somewhere between the grass roots and the upper structures of power. They are sometimes referred to as the 'creative class', but I like to think of them as the 'doers'. They're the architects, designers, planners, community organizers whose education, expertise and aesthetic preferences empower them to engage with and influence development processes controlled from above. In many respects, my vision for a revised black urbanism is

aimed at stimulating discussion within this population. I'm interested in how the action at this level of urban society can first appeal to and engage with the imagination of the masses and then, subsequently, spark interest at the upper structures of power.

The work of Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx), offers an example of this approach to urban transformation.⁵ SSBx works to advance environmental and economic regeneration of the South Bronx in New York City by addressing land-use, energy, transportation, water and waste policy. According to Carter, this work would not have been possible without first dismantling the perception that black communities were not concerned with environmental issues. The notion that environmentalism was the territory of the white middle classes facilitated the extreme deterioration of the streets and waterways of Carter's majority black South Bronx neighbourhood. In addition to the harmful impacts on public health, these perceptions threatened to alienate Carter's neighbourhood from the potential economic and social benefits green urban regeneration was stimulating in other cities around the globe. For Carter, resistance against environmental alienation was not simply about petitioning others for help; but rather, it was about putting stake holders 'on the offensive' to actively envision and create the kind of community in which they desired to live.

The success of this work hinged on SSBx's ability to convince neighbourhood residents of their right to enjoy the same physical, social and economic benefits offered by the kinds of green spaces experienced in more affluent parts of the city. These efforts have sparked the interest of governments and developers around the globe to explore the productive potential of linking environmental regeneration to the socio-economic regeneration of inner-city communities.

SF: How much space is there within urban regeneration projects to take into account the specific needs, both in terms of aesthetics and functionality, of a particular (black) community?

JO: This answer to this would depend on the context of the project and the community in which it is being built. In my view the question of 'how much space' there is, or how likely it is to achieve this kind of ideal, is not nearly as important as is the difficult work of identifying

5 Al Griscom, 'Majora League: An interview with Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx', *Grist* (2006) <http://www.grist.org/article/m_carter/> [accessed 3 February 2010].



local needs, negotiating conflicting agendas and discovering opportunities to address them within the design and development process. Generally speaking, these questions are regarded as public issues of which it is the state's responsibility to address. As such, they are contingent upon the ways in which a particular government chooses to interpret the meaning and value of 'difference', and moreover, the ways in which these viewpoints are translated into practicable planning policies and enforcement mechanisms.

SF: Is there a larger goal of black urbanism to participate not only in urban regeneration projects, but in urban development full stop? In other words, is the goal to have a 'black urban' architect installed in major architectural firms so as to consider the spaces not only needed but desired by black city-dwellers?

JO: As I suggested above, my conception of a revised black urbanism does not advocate for the construction of 'black' cities for 'black' people, at least in any racialized sense. I believe the value of this work extends well beyond colour lines, and with this in mind, I absolutely believe that all urban practitioners would benefit from a familiarity with the narratives a new black urbanism could communicate. Many are familiar with the estimates—soon more than half the world's population will be living in cities, with the vast majority of these new urban dwellers surviving below the poverty line of their respective societies. The future form and function of the western metropolis will be greatly defined by the spaces, places and practices that emerge in response to these demographic pressures. While some of these spaces will be formally organized and regulated, others will result from far more informal and contingent processes. You don't have to look much farther than market stalls and tent structures lining the sidewalks of White Chapel High Street, or the multitude of international churches, temples, and worship halls that have come to occupy the vacant storefronts of South London's high streets to get glimpses of what this future might look like. Once forgotten and undervalued spaces are being re-animated by immigrant populations eager to re-create aspects of their home lives. The street scene of the western city is actively being transformed as the fact of difference increasingly becomes a visible aspect of urban life.

Discourses on 'difference' should be a consistent and central feature in the debates regarding our cities. The ways in which concepts like adaptation, difference, identity and survival motivate urban dwellers to transform physical space will increasingly influence how

we perceive the form and function of cities. What more might deeper understanding of the ways in which race, ethnicity, and gender animate our experiences of urban space tell us about this possible future? This question is becoming increasingly relevant as urban populations continue to swell and challenge conceptions of the city. All this is a means of saying that I believe every urban practitioner should be—and perhaps inevitably will be—a kind of ‘black urbanist’ in the sense that they must be prepared to plan, design, critique and act in this emerging context.



IV. Word Up



Escape from the Street: Language, Rock-and-Roll and Subversive Youth Space in Late-Socialist Lviv

William Risch

In the early 1970s in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, 'flower power' triumphed over war. In late August 1970, the ruins of an abandoned Polish military memorial in the Lychakiv Cemetery became home to a gallery of hippy graffiti, including portraits of Jimi Hendrix and slogans like 'Make love, not war'.¹

This city cemetery corner was geographically distant from the public sphere of schools, universities, institutes and state houses of culture and clubs. It stood away from Lviv's main boulevards and public promenades. It was, without question, far from the street. As this article will demonstrate, in Lviv small, marginal groups of young people escaped the street and appropriated alternative spaces, such as the Lychakiv Cemetery, in order to resist the constraints of the Soviet public sphere. Where Michel de Certeau stresses the subversive potential of walking and other visible practices on daily life on the street, such public options were limited in Soviet cities

Note: Various Russian and Ukrainian citation abbreviations are used throughout the article. The full terms and the English translations of these abbreviations are as follows: DALO - Derzhavnyi Arkhiv L'vivs'koi Oblasti [State Archives of the Lviv Region], f. - fond [holdings number], op. - opys [register number], spr. - sprava [volume number], ark. - arkushy [page number].

1 Viktor Morozov, 'Nasha osin' z malen'kymy derevamy duzhe shvydko mynula...' [Our Fall, With Its Tiny Trees, Quickly Passed] in Hryts'ko Chubai, *Plach Ieremii: Spohady, poeziia, pereklady* [Jeremiah's Lamentation: Memoirs, Poetry, Translations] (L'viv: Kal'variia, 1998), 266.



like Lviv.² Hippies, bikers, punks and other 'bourgeois Western' figures met fierce opposition from both state and society. Police, Communist Youth activists and People's Volunteer Militia members apprehended young people with long hair, torn jeans and other 'suspicious' elements, meting out reprimands, haircuts, physical blows and even visits to the local law enforcement headquarters and mental hospital.³

This article argues that by escaping the street, alternative youths undermined the coherent, rational vision of the city created by urban planners, Communist Party activists and law enforcement organizations. Places like the Polish military memorial and the abandoned garden of a former Order of Barefoot Carmelites monastery – nicknamed the 'Holy Garden' – subverted the Soviet public's expectations that young people were the 'builders of Communism'.⁴ These spaces became refuges for fans of rock music and ideas linked to the capitalist West's hippie movement. A variety of languages, including those connected with 'nationalist' Galicia and the Soviet bloc, fostered alternative channels of information about rock music and Western counter-cultures. Along with rock music and graffiti art, these young people mocked the wider public. They were part of what Dick Hebdige has called the 'Refusal'.⁵ While not advocating the overthrow of the Soviet state, these youths occupied alternative urban spaces in order to subvert the rhetoric of state institutions, thus contesting the meanings of late socialism's values (Pilkington, 42).

Lviv, Late Socialism and Soviet Hippies

The partly Russian-phrased graffiti in a former Polish cemetery epitomized the transformation Lviv had undergone during World War

2 Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien. Vol. II. Habiter, cuisiner* (Paris: Inédit, 1980), 171-74.

3 Oleh Olisevych and others, "‘‘Iakshcho svitovi bude potribno, ia viddam svoie zhyttia ne zadumuiuchys’ – zarady svobody’’: Interv’iu z Olehom Olisevychem’ [‘‘If the World Needs It, I’ll Give My Life without Thinking, for the Sake of Freedom’’: Interview with Oleh Olisevych], *Jl: Nezaleznyi kul’turolohichni chasopys* [Its: An Independent Cultural Studies Journal] (Lviv), 24 (2002), 138.

4 Hilary Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 44-45.

5 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1988).

II. Prior to the war, Poles and Polish Jews made up the overwhelming majority of what was then Lwów. In 1931, the population was 50.4% ethnic Poles, 31.9% ethnic Jews and 15.9% ethnic Ukrainians.⁶ Soviet occupation and annexation in 1939, followed by German occupation from 1941 to 1944 and Soviet reoccupation thereafter turned this multicultural city into a predominantly Ukrainian one. The Holocaust virtually wiped out the city's Jewish population.⁷ From 1945 to 1947, Soviet leaders removed Lwów's Polish inhabitants in a 'voluntary' exchange of ethnic minorities with the Polish People's Republic.⁸ As part of Soviet Ukraine, Lviv acquired an ethnic Ukrainian majority. By 1959, ethnic Ukrainians constituted 60% of the population, with ethnic Russians comprising 27%, Jews 6% and Poles 4%. Twenty years later, 74% of Lviv's population was Ukrainian.⁹

Soviet and republic leaders, the local Communist Party, state functionaries and Ukrainian intellectuals transformed Lviv into a Soviet Ukrainian city. The names of Polish historical figures disappeared from the city's streets and were replaced with names from Ukrainian, Russian and Soviet history.¹⁰ The opera houses and theatres, conservatoire and university acquired the names of Ukrainian cultural figures. With the exception of the statue commemorating classic Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, monuments to Polish and Austrian historical figures disappeared. The Polish military monument in Lychakiv Cemetery, the burial site of soldiers who had fought for Polish control of Lwów during the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918-19, was plundered and fell into ruin.

6 Viktor Susak, 'Etnichni ta sotsial'ni zminy v naseleenni L'vova v 1939-1999 rokakh' [Ethnic and Social Changes in Lviv's Population, 1939-1999] (unpublished Master's thesis, Lviv National University, 2000), 13.

7 Dieter Pohl, *Natsionalsozialistische Judenverfolgung in Ostgalizien 1941-1944: Organisation und Massenverbrechens* [National Socialist Persecution of the Jews in Eastern Galicia 1941-1944: Organization and Mass Crimes], *Studien zur Zeitgeschichte*, Institut für Zeitgeschichte [Studies in History, Institute of History], 50 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1997).

8 Tarik Youssef Cyril Amar, 'The Making of Soviet Lviv, 1939-1963' (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 2006).

9 Roman Szporluk, 'The Strange Politics of L'viv: An Essay in Search of an Explanation', in *The Politics of Nationality and the Erosion of the USSR*, ed. by Zvi Gitelman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 222.

10 Yaroslav Hrytsak and Victor Susak, 'Constructing a National City: The Case of Lviv', in *Composing Urban History and the Constitution of Civic Identities*, ed. by John J. Czaplicka and Blair A. Ruble (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).



Lviv became a mostly Ukrainian-speaking city, though the Russian language had a significant place in the Communist Party as well as in state institutions.¹¹

Post-war Lviv was linked by reputation to the 'nationalist', politically 'unreliable' regions called Western Ukraine in which an armed uprising by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) against post-war Soviet rule cost over 100,000 Soviet and rebel lives.¹² Home to three rival national projects (Polish, Zionist and Ukrainian) under Austrian and Polish rule, Lviv became a carrier of 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism'. The Soviet state deported hundreds of local Ukrainians to Siberia for collaborating with German occupiers and later for helping the UPA resist Soviet rule. On the night of 21 October 1947, Soviet security police exiled 275 Lviv families with such alleged ties.¹³ In Western Ukraine, as many as 203,662 people were deported between 1944 and 1952. It was also alleged that most of these (182,543) were connected to the nationalist underground.¹⁴ Soviet leaders dissolved the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, deeming it too connected to the Roman Catholic Church and the UPA. Clergy who refused to comply with the decision faced Siberian exile.¹⁵

Although such terror ended after Stalin's death, Soviet public opinion associated Lviv with the nationalist insurgency. This fuelled tensions between natives of Western Ukraine, who made up about 60% of Lviv's post-war population, and Ukrainians from pre-1939 Ukraine, known as Eastern Ukrainians. Eastern Ukrainians, ethnic Russians and others from outside Western Ukraine

11 William Jay Risch, *Island of Freedom: Lviv and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union, 1944-89* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

12 Jeffrey Burds, 'Agentura: Soviet Informants' Networks & the Ukrainian Underground in Galicia, 1944-48', *East European Politics and Societies*, 11 (1997) and Burds, 'The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944-1948', *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, 1505 (2001).

13 *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini: Zakhidni zemli* [Cultural Life in Ukraine: The Western Lands], ed. by Iuriy Slyvka, Tamara Halaichak and Oleksandr Luts'kyi, 2 vols. (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka; L'viv: Natsional'na Akademiia Nauk Ukrainy, Instytut Ukrainoznavstva im. Ivana Kryp'iakevycha, 1995-96), I (1995), 476.

14 Amir Weiner, 'The Empires Pay a Visit: Gulag Returnees, East European Rebellions, and Soviet Frontier Politics', *Journal of Modern History*, 78 (2006), 337.

15 Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, *The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Soviet State (1939-50)* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1996).

occupied most of the leading positions in Communist Party and state institutions. Western Ukrainians remained under-represented well into the 1980s. While Eastern Ukrainians increasingly identified with Ukrainian language and culture, they considered the Russian language prestigious, dismissing Western Ukrainians and their Galician-Ukrainian dialect as 'backwards'. At workplaces, the alleged 'nationalist' behaviour of locals and their supposed ties to the former German occupiers and nationalist insurgents encouraged denunciations of state and Communist Party authorities.¹⁶

The young people who congregated at the Lychakiv Cemetery and the Holy Garden in the 1970s reflected these divisions. They mostly came from Russian-speaking, 'non-local' families who did not relate well to Galician Ukrainians.¹⁷ However, local values and behaviour drew them to the Ukrainian language and Galician-Ukrainian slang and customs. Like the 'locals', they took advantage of Lviv's proximity to Poland and the 'capitalist West'.¹⁸

Official discourse identified these young people as hippies due to their interest in promoting peace and encouraging free and equal relations between people. A city Communist Party report from February 1971 made such references to hippies who gathered at the Lychakiv Cemetery.¹⁹ A city Communist Youth report from October 1982 indicated that the Holy Garden hippies opposed all forms of violence and had an interest in religions such as Christianity and Buddhism.²⁰ As in other Soviet cities, Lviv hippies looked like their American and European counterparts: the men had long hair and wore torn jeans whereas both men and women wore colourful

16 Hrytsak and Susak, 140; Risch, *Island of Freedom*.

17 Vasył' Babiy, interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 23 July 2004; Aleks Chaika, Igor Zborovskii, and 'Vitalii', interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 24 May 2007; 'Tsepelin' and 'Vyshnia', interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 25 May 2007.

18 William Jay Risch, 'Thinking between Borders: Polish Media and Cultural Resistance in Post-1953 L'viv', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 40 (2006).

19 Derzhavnyi arkhiv l'vivs'koi oblasti (hereafter DALO), f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 115, ark. 2.

20 DALO, f. P-3, op. 47, spr. 27, ark. 29.



clothing and strings of beads.²¹ In addition, some of the youths associated with these gatherings used drugs.²²

KGB crackdowns on hippie movements in Lviv and other Soviet cities at the beginning of the 1970s changed the hippie scene.²³ Late 1970s Holy Garden gatherings were more about listening to rock music than ideas of peace and equality, as interviews with participants by the author suggest.²⁴ Rock music, football matches and wine became Holy Garden trademarks.²⁵ Members of the Uncles, a rock group at the core of Holy Garden gatherings, did not identify themselves as hippies.²⁶ Despite ambiguous identifications with Western hippies, the young people at both Lychakiv Cemetery and the Holy Garden rebelled against the public sphere of universities, institutes and state-sponsored houses of culture and clubs. They did so through language, rock music and the appropriation of urban space.

21 Volodymyr Iavors'kyi, interview with the author, tape recording, Kyiv, 7 November 1999, Institute of Historical Research, Lviv National University; Oleh (Alik) Olisevych, interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 30 December 2002, Institute of Historical Research, Lviv National University; Olisevych and others, 150-52; Yury Pelyushonok, 'Adam the Hippie', in *Strings for a Beatles Bass: The Beatles Generation in the USSR*, trans. by Olga Sansom (Ottawa: PLY Publisher, 1999); M. V. Rozin, 'The Psychology of Moscow's Hippies', *Soviet Sociology*, 29 (1990).

22 DALO, f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 115, ark. 5 (Lychakiv Cemetery); DALO, f. P-3, op. 47, spr. 27, ark. 29 (Holy Garden); D. Dombrovskaia, 'Plesen' zavoditsia v teni' [Mould Grows in the Shadows], *L'vovskaia pravda* [Lvov Truth], 16 March 1983, 4 (Holy Garden); Ihor Drak and Aleksei Kritskii, interview with the author, tape recording, Buddhist Center, Lviv, 26 February 2004 (Holy Garden).

23 Andrei Makarevich, *Sam ovtsa: avtobiograficheskaia proza* [Sheep Myself: Autobiographical Prose] (Moscow: Zakharov, 2001).

24 Ihor Zborovskii, interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 24 February 2004; Aleks Chaika, interview with the author, tape recording and field notes, Lviv, 21 February 2004.

25 Iuriy Peretiat'ko, *L'vivs'kyi rok 1962-2002* [Lviv Rock 1962-2002] (Lviv: FIRA-liuks, 2002), 9.

26 Il'ko Lemko, *Lviv ponad use: Spohady l'vivianyna druhoi polovyny 20-ho stolittia* [Lviv Above All: A Lvivian's Memoirs of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century] (Lviv: Piramida, 2003), 159.

Languages of Accommodation and Resistance

Lychakiv Cemetery and Holy Garden young people interacted with the wider world through languages from the capitalist West and Soviet bloc countries. These languages became alternative channels from which to gain information about the capitalist world and thus helped to join these young people to the relatively liberal cultural life of Soviet bloc countries. Galician-Ukrainian swearwords and stereotypes – elements of a world labelled ‘backward’ and ‘nationalist’ – helped mostly Russian-speaking young people shock and mock Lviv’s streets.

As was the case elsewhere in the Soviet Union, English slang connected the young people of Lviv to the world of Western rock music and hippies.²⁷ Lychakiv Cemetery graffiti (figs 1 and 2) utilized English hippie slogans like ‘Flower power’ and ‘Make love, not war!’²⁸ The Holy Garden’s Uncles played songs with English, and sometimes German, words, such as those in the song ‘Bashkir Rock’: “*vain, futbol end rok-n-rol*”. Here the German word for ‘wine’ (*wein*) replaced ‘vino’ in Ukrainian and the English word for ‘and’ (here ‘end’) replaced the Ukrainian equivalent, ‘i’ (Peretiat’ko, 9). Major hippie gatherings in Lviv and throughout the Soviet Union were known as ‘*seisheny*’, the Ukrainian and Russian equivalent of ‘session’.²⁹ Nicknames were also in English: ‘Alik’, ‘Moby Dick’ and ‘Label’ indicate the prevalence of English names and phrases in Holy Garden gatherings.³⁰

Lviv’s position with respect to different national (Polish, Ukrainian and Russian) and imperial projects (Austrian, Russian and later Soviet) meant that the Polish language was instrumental in enabling the young people in Lviv to communicate with the outside world. Unlike Soviet media, Polish media presented information about Western cultural and political trends.³¹ Newspapers, magazines, television and radio were informative about Western rock music and hippies.³² Polish tourists offered black market goods such as jeans and

27 Rozin, 51; Makarevich, 122-23.

28 Photographer unknown, from the private collection of Vladimir Surmach, Warsaw.

29 Rozin, 51; Iavors’kyi, interview.

30 Olisevych and others, 136; ‘Tsepelin’ and ‘Vyshnia’, interview.

31 Risch, ‘Thinking between Borders’.

32 Babi, interview; Aleksandr Balaban, interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 5 June 2007; Olisevych and others, 137; Iuriy Sharifov, interview with the author, tape recording, Lviv, 13 June 2007.



record albums.³³ These Polish connections gave other Soviet citizens from outside Western Ukraine the impression that Lviv was closer to the real West than to Moscow or Leningrad. Thus Lviv acquired the unofficial status of the Soviet Union's 'jeans capital'.³⁴ Hippies from as far away as Murmansk and Magadan came to Lviv in search of black market goods.³⁵



Figure 1. Lychakiv Cemetery, August-September 1970. Photograph by kind permission of Vladimir Surmach.

Soviet bloc states, which had more liberal cultural policies than those of the Soviet Union's, provided a window to the West for young Soviet citizens.³⁶ Nicknames suggest the importance of such connections in young Lvivians' lives. The Holy Garden's 'Johnny' [Dzhoni] acquired his nickname from 'Old Shatterhand', the hero of a

33 'Sasha' ('Shulia'), Lviv, interview with the author, tape recording, 28 June 2007.

34 John Czaplicka, 'Lviv, Lemberg, Leopold, Lwów, Lvov: A City in the Crosscurrents of European Culture', in *Lviv: A City in the Crosscurrents of Culture*, ed. by John Czaplicka (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute/Harvard University Press, 2005), 33.

35 'Tsepelin' and 'Vyshnia', interview.

36 John Bushnell, 'The "New Soviet Man" Turns Pessimist', in *The Soviet Union since Stalin*, ed. by Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch and Robert Sharlet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

series of West German westerns distributed in the Soviet bloc.³⁷ The Uncles bass guitarist Volodymyr Mykhalyk earned the nickname 'Džuboks', the title of Yugoslavia's rock music magazine (Peretiat'ko, 9). Lychakiv Cemetery gatherings included a young man nicknamed 'Breakout', the name of his favourite Polish blues rock band.³⁸



Figure 2. Andrei Istushkin, Lviv, August-September 1970. Photograph by kind permission of Vladimir Surmach.

By the end of the 1970s, Galician-Ukrainian slang permeated Holy Garden gatherings. The Uncles fostered an image of being marginalized, 'backward' Galicians. The group's name in Ukrainian was *Vuyky*, a derogative term for 'hicks' or 'bumpkins' who refused to speak Russian. A band member with a Russian surname, Ilya Semenov, adopted the nickname 'Lemko', a term used by urban Ukrainians to refer to mountain dwellers who spoke a western dialect of Ukrainian 'hillbillyish' (Peretiat'ko, 8-10). The Uncles played their own songs in Ukrainian, including the Holy Garden's 'anthem' of some two dozen verses.³⁹ This anthem and other Uncles songs contained lines with Galician-Ukrainian expletives and had

37 Zborovskii, interview.

38 Vladimir Surmach, interview with the author, tape recording, Warsaw, 7 July 2004.

39 Chaika, interview, 21 February 2004; Aleks Chaika, interview with the author by telephone, field notes, 20 November 2004; Zborovskii, and 'Vitalii', interview.



Aesopian overtones. One line from the anthem, '*Srav pes v chervoniy koniushynyi!*' [Shit on the red clover!], was aimed at the red Soviet flag, communism and Soviet power. Similar associations resounded in lines to Uncles songs such as '*Roztsvila chervona koniushyna!*' [There Grew a Red Clover].

Expletives were also used in greetings exchanged with other Holy Garden members. Each greeting began with one person exclaiming '*Srav pes!*' [Shit on!]. One such line condemned the iron curtain: '*Srav pes koliuchym drotom!*' [Shit on the barbed wire!]. Another line, presumably used among trusted friends, attacked the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: '*Srav pes na KPRS!*' [Shit on the CPSU!].⁴⁰ While post-Soviet accounts (namely Peretiat'ko's) connect such lines to an emergent anti-Soviet, Ukrainian nationalism, oral interviews with the author cast doubt on such claims. These lines were for laughs, a way of mocking daily life.⁴¹ However, the 'backward' and 'nationalist' connotations of such slang became a crucial means of shocking what Hebdige calls the 'silent majority' (18).

Rock as Refusal

Rock music, tolerated yet marginalized in the Soviet Union, crucially cemented gatherings at Lychakiv Cemetery and the Holy Garden.⁴² As graffiti from the Lychakiv Cemetery suggests (figs 1 and 2), the rock music of the late 1960s, an era of the 'militant blues', became the music of choice.⁴³ Lines on the walls referred to such blues-rock and psychedelic-rock groups as The Doors, Cream, People!, East of Eden and Mothers of Invention. Graffiti representing these groups as well as that depicting guitar heroes like Jimi Hendrix linked these young Lvivians to the counter-culture of late 1960s America, where rock signalled rebellion against the Vietnam War and the constraints of a modern materialist society. By the late 1970s, the rock scene had changed for the Holy Garden though the militant blues of the late 1960s was still important. Holy Garden hippies attempted a 'session' in memory of Jimi Hendrix on 18 September 1977,

40 Chaika, interview, 21 February 2004; Peretiat'ko, 10.

41 Chaika, Zborovskii, and 'Vitalii', interview.

42 Thomas Cushman, *Notes from Underground: Rock Music Counterculture in Russia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

43 David P. Szatmary, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock-and-Roll*, 4th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000).

the anniversary of his death.⁴⁴ In general, however, Holy Garden friends preferred to listen to later groups, namely Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, whose heavy metal hits achieved popularity after the hippie counter-culture had melted away in America. Holy Garden gatherings, however, scorned the newest musical trend, disco.⁴⁵

Regardless of changing musical taste, the youths' allegiance to rock-and-roll expressed their refusal to be part of the public sphere's cultural and educational institutions. The Lychakiv Cemetery circle of hippies became, for one member, one of the few places where he could talk about rock music. In the city's Polytechnic Institute, where he studied, there were only three or four people in his college who shared his passion for rock, as he told a Communist Youth hearing.⁴⁶ Rock inspired these young people to appropriate their own urban space.

Graffiti and the Word Off the Street

As state and Communist Party officials turned Polish Lwów into Ukrainian Lviv, they altered the city's undamaged architectural landscape and transformed it into a Soviet city. An immense cemetery for imperial Russian and Soviet war dead, the Hill of Glory, emerged on a prominent city plateau, commemorating the Soviets' victory in World War II and honouring Soviet continuity with its imperial Russian past. A major centre of leisure became a park modelled on Gorky Park in Moscow. Lviv's main boulevard was widened, given a Lenin monument and decorated with many Stalin-era façades.⁴⁷ Polish and Jewish architectural sites disappeared or were allowed to deteriorate. Lviv's centuries-old Jewish cemetery was demolished to make way for a market.⁴⁸ Lychakiv Cemetery's Polish war memorial fell into ruin. Roman Catholic churches, bereft of Polish parishioners, became storehouses, dormitory spaces or offices; these churches

44 Olisevych and others, 151-52.

45 Lemko, *Lviv ponad use* [Lviv Above All].

46 DALO, f. P-3568, op. 1, spr. 88, ark. 102.

47 Bohdan Tschertes, 'Stalinist Visions for the Urban Transformation of Lviv, 1939-1955', in *Lviv: A City in the Crosscurrents of Culture*, ed. by John Czaplicka (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2005).

48 *Kul'turne zhyttia v Ukraini* [Cultural Life in Ukraine], I.



were dismissed in one Soviet guidebook for being associated with the Polish feudal class's attempt to impose its world view on Lviv.⁴⁹

Like wild plants taking over abandoned urban space, hippies and other young people appropriated these neglected places for themselves.⁵⁰ Architectural spaces from Lviv's Austrian and Polish past became favourite haunts for hippies and other young people. The hippies who created graffiti art at the Lychakiv Cemetery also gathered at the Dominican Church, the High Castle and Market Square.⁵¹ They chose such sites because of their '*mystyka*' [mysticism], as one former hippie put it.⁵²

Members of the Uncles had been drawn to the abandoned Order of Barefoot Carmelite monastery and its garden since childhood (Lemko, 80-96). Graffiti marked off their space from the street. The hippie graffiti at Lychakiv Cemetery (figs 1 and 2) bore English-language slogans, the peace sign and names of Western rock groups from the late 1960s. Portraits of John Lennon and Jimi Hendrix adorned either end of the memorial complex's ruins. Such graffiti marked a refuge for young admirers of Western rock music and Western hippies.

The Holy Garden had no such graffiti tributes to Western hippies, but graffiti was used to mark off territory and mock the street's sense of propriety. The graffiti in the Holy Garden reflected the later, more amorphous hippie movement that had emerged in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1970s. A photo (fig 3) of a hippie 'session' held on 10 June 1976, which featured a performance from the Uncles, shows a brick wall on which is printed the German phrase '*Blaue Sieben*' [Blue Seven]. The photo also shows the English word 'fuck' with an eye painted below it on one of the band's stereo speakers. The Uncles' member Ilya Lemko, who had attended the neighbourhood's German-language school, presumably spray-painted the phrase 'Blue Seven' as a prank. The phrase makes fun of the American Western film, *The Magnificent Seven*, referring to it as 'The Queer Seven' – 'queer' or 'gay' in Russian slang (*goluboi*) means 'blue' in English or German. The band's speaker with 'fuck' painted on it adds to the sexual innuendo, while the eye painted below suggests voyeurism. Like the Ukrainian-Galician expletives, which made their way into Lviv street graffiti in the 1980s, graffiti such as 'The Queer Seven' and 'fuck' joined a

49 A. Pashchuk, I. Derkach, *L'viv: Putivnyk* [Lviv: A Guide] (Lviv: Knyzhkovo-zhurnal'ne vydavnytstvo, 1960), 8.

50 Alan Weisman, *The World without Us* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007).

51 DALO, f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 115, ark. 15; DALO, f. P-3568, op. 1, spr. 88, ark. 88.

52 Babi, interview.

collection of symbols suggesting a nebulous style of evading a clear identity, similar to that of Hebdige's British punks.⁵³

Marked by such graffiti, these spaces also provided the opportunity for young people to create alternative codes of masculinity. In such spaces, young men explored roles different from those available to them in the public sphere. For one Lychakiv Cemetery hippie, becoming a hippie meant escaping the violence, brutality and sense of hierarchy found in Soviet society.⁵⁴ A city Communist Party report and Communist Youth hearings indicated that Lychakiv Cemetery hippies criticized the Communist Youth and the People's Volunteer Militia, with one hippie calling the former '*p'ianytsi, proidysovyti, khulihany*' [drunks, tramps, and hooligans].⁵⁵



Figure 3. *The Uncles* hosting a session at the Holy Garden, 10 June 1976.

The Holy Garden similarly allowed young men to escape society's restrictions. For *Uncles'* member, Il'ko Lemko, the Garden, like other informal gathering places, manifested '*vidkrytist' i shchyryst stosunkiv*' [openness and honesty in relations]. Unlike the world of school or the

53 Ihor Chornovol, 'Halyts'ki hipi' [Galician Hippies], *L'vov's'ka hazeta* [Lviv Newspaper], 3 June 2005 <<http://www.gazeta.lviv.ua/articles/2005/06/03/5767/>> [accessed 3 February 2010]; Ida Vors, 'Kudy klykala surma? Ukrain's'ki hipi: patsient skorish mertvyi, anizh zhyvyi' [Which Way Did the Trumpets Call? Ukrainian Hippies: A Patient More Dead than Alive], *Politika i Kul'tura* [Politics and Culture] (Kyiv) 24-30 March 2000, 36; Hebdige, 120-21.

54 Surmach, interview.

55 DALO, f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 115, ark. 2, 7, 16; DALO, f. P-3568, op. 1, spr. 88, ark. 85.



institute or the factory, places such as Holy Garden had little regard for traditional Soviet family structures. Instead, *'Iakshcho ty maiesh nakacheni bitsepsy, vmiesh dobre hraty u futbol chy na gitari – ty zavzhdy liudyna nomer odyn'* [If you have pumped biceps, can play football or the guitar well – you are always number one]. (Lemko, 162) Lemko suggests that this hangout helped young men overcome the barriers posed by the privileges that Communist Party and Communist Youth activists enjoyed in Soviet society.

Oral interviews with the author indicate that men were in the majority at Holy Garden gatherings, outnumbering women by as many as five to one.⁵⁶ Photos of a hippie session on 10 June 1976 suggest a mostly male company.⁵⁷ A city Communist Party report on Lychakiv Cemetery hippies identified sixteen male and five female hippies.⁵⁸ While women attended these gatherings, they played a secondary role in them. As one hippie from Lychakiv Cemetery put it, they were 'satellites', that is, girlfriends or friends of the main participants.⁵⁹ In playing secondary roles, these women mirrored the gender divisions of mainstream Soviet society. In addition, they were not that different from the counter-culture 'groupies' and girlfriends in the West in the 1960s.

Overall, off-the-street hangouts such as the Garden and the Cemetery were not places of rebellion against the Soviet state. Like other young people in Soviet society, those in Lviv bonded collectively in a familiar spot, called the *tusovka* in Russian. This *tusovka* and the pleasure experienced there were not about resistance or rebellion; these were places to get together as a group, deconstruct identities through acts of momentary pleasure, and explore both resistance to and conformity with traditional society. Similar to young people active in the Communist Youth and other public organizations, the youths in Lviv learned to function within the Soviet public sphere as invisibly as they could.

Lychakiv Cemetery graffiti (fig 2) reveals such strategies. The Russian expression *'Пусть всегда будет солнце!'* [Let there always be sunshine!] and the Russian word for 'peace', *мир*, came not from Western hippie slogans, but from Soviet popular culture. Arkady

56 Iavors'kyi, interview.

57 A folder of photos from a 'session' at the Holy Garden on 10 June 1976, photographer and owner unknown, was provided by Alik Olisevych with other photos on a private CD.

58 DALO, f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 115, ark. 3-9. Some names were left off the list because they were children of KGB officers. Surmach, interview.

59 Surmach, interview.

Ostrovsky composed the song, 'May There Always Be Sunshine', with lyrics by Lev Olshanin, in 1962. Sung at Young Pioneer camps, the song describes a child's desire for peace.⁶⁰ While distancing themselves from the street, these young people appropriated its peace songs and other public slogans. Despite criticizing the Communist Youth, they appropriated the groups' practices of devising a statute, adopting an anthem, electing officers and collecting subscriptions from members, as a city Communist Party report indicates.⁶¹ An oral interview with the author reveals that none of these activities were as serious as the Communist Party report would suggest: the anthem was the Beatles' 'Yellow Submarine', the statute was a notebook of hippie ideals to live by and the subscriptions were money for ice cream and other sweets.⁶²

The Holy Garden also had its officers, statutes and anthem.⁶³ Mocking Soviet government agencies, they called themselves the 'Republic of the Holy Garden' or sometimes the 'Republic of Underdeveloped Bashkirs', referring to the Bashkir national minority, descendants of Turkic tribes with their own autonomous region in Russia.⁶⁴ At both the Holy Garden and Lychakiv Cemetery, young people thus took the word off the street, in this case Soviet institutions, practices and discourse, and inverted them as part of their appropriation of urban space. They created spaces where they could be '*svoi*' [among their own people] (Yurchak, 131-32). The Holy Garden's close proximity to Lviv's regional Communist Party headquarters – less than a block away – further intensified these young people's uneasy coexistence with the public sphere.

As they escaped from the street, young Lvivians crucially inverted the Soviet public sphere. They became foils to the Communist Youth, the Communist Party and the Soviet Union's republics, mocking them merrily in 'sessions'. They used their position on the Soviet western borderlands to shock and mock the world around them. Connections to Poland gave them greater access to Western rock music, fashion and counter-culture trends than that had by the young people in Soviet provincial cities. The 'backward' and 'nationalist' elements of Lviv were useful for disturbing other people's sense of propriety. Galician-Ukrainian expletives, the loud sounds of blues

60 'Pust' vseгда budet solntse' [May There Always Be Sunshine], in *Solnyshko* <www.solnet.ee> [accessed 3 February 2010].

61 DALO, f. P-3, op. 19, spr. 115, ark. 2-3.

62 Babiy, interview.

63 Chaika, interview, 20 November 2004; Lemko, 161-62.

64 Chaika, interview, 21 February 2004.



rock and hard rock and sexual expletives like 'The Queer Seven' and 'Fuck' spray painted on walls irked not just Communist Party and Communist Youth activists, but ordinary Lvivians. Escaping the street, rather than walking upon it, became an important way of resisting the urban space managed by state actors.

Street for Sale: Signs, Space, Discourse

Sophie Fuggle

The street sells. Bringing social classes together in the public spaces of town square and marketplace for the purposes of buying and selling, it has always functioned as a site of exchange of both goods and information. Moreover, the street does not merely act as a site for exchange but also enables the circulation and growth of trade and wealth.

This notion of circulation is described by Michel Foucault in *Sécurité, territoire, population*.¹ During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, cities in Europe were often built according to the model of a Roman camp – a fixed, enclosed space divided into a series of rectangles by roads and streets. At the centre of the city, where trade took place, there were more divisions and thus more streets to encourage and accommodate a greater circulation of people. In the eighteenth century, a new model of urban development emerged which posited the city as something organic, requiring space to grow alongside its increasing wealth and population. Furthermore, this new model demanded that the city be easily accessible to, not protected from, the outside world with which it traded.

However, increased circulation not only led to growth in trade and wealth but also facilitated a rise in negative repercussions of population growth such as disease, which spread easily from city to city. Similarly, prosperity encouraged an increase in begging, vagrancy and crime as access to a city was less strictly regulated. Consequently, respectable forms of trade gradually moved from the

1 Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).



public sphere of the street to private spaces such as shops, department stores, supermarkets and eventually the internet.

The inevitable outcome of this shift, which took place over the space of two centuries, is that what remains, following the removal of virtually all legal and socially acceptable forms of trade from the public site of the street, are the lower, undesirable forms of economic exchange: begging, peddling, mugging, prostitution and drug dealing. As a result, at least in dominant ideology, the street became synonymous with these activities, breeding terms like 'streetwalker', 'street crime' and generating a call to 'clean up the streets'.

Yet in a bizarre twist of postmodernist fate, the street is enjoying a recent resurgence as a site of exchange. While on the one hand we have reached the point where the private experience of consumerism is so technologically developed that it has become feasible to make a purchase using a mobile phone or other handheld device in the most public of places without fear of being witnessed or overheard by others, on the other hand, the street is celebrated once more for the public nature of the economic exchanges it offers. One of the most notable examples of this 'return to the street' is the revival of traditional farmers' markets on streets around Europe and North America.² While the physical street has become a fashionable place to buy local produce and crafts, the term 'street' has also undergone a semantic shift, functioning as a discourse used to sell a whole range of products, activities and concepts both on and off the street. Both street as site and street as discourse rely heavily on the notion of authenticity. People who choose to shop at a farmers' market do so because the product and purchasing experience are considered to be more 'authentic' than the mass-produced, automated service found at a supermarket. Likewise, the term 'street' is frequently evoked in fashion, music and politics to refer to something creative, original and potentially subversive. I would like to suggest three connected reasons for this 'authenticity'.

Firstly, the street provides the link between a local and global community. Events occurring elsewhere in the world do not impact us in the same way as those that happen on our streets. Statistics about crime mean nothing until someone is stabbed two blocks away from where we live or work. The street functions as our reference

2 For an excellent discussion of how the revival of historic trading-spaces such as markets and ports frequently involves a homogenization of these spaces rather than an affirmation of their particular history see M. Christine Boyer, 'Cities for Sale: Merchandising History at South Street Seaport', in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed. by Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

point for the world as a whole. As a result – and this is the second interrelated point – we are led to believe that by acting locally we make a difference globally.³ The locality of the street as site and discourse of exchange bridges the gap between producer and consumer. Current advertising discourses on consumerism make a distinction between a passive, unquestioning response to global marketing campaigns and an active engagement with local producers and manufacturers. Consumers, these discourses suggest, have the power to challenge modes of production and distribution through the purchasing choices they make. Of course, the binary oppositions between local and global, active and passive are imaginary constructs which function as a form of ethical branding.

Thirdly, the street is the site where we encounter difference and otherness in the form of strangers and is also a place of familiarity and identity. In 'Sémiologie et urbanisme', Barthes tries to separate these, assigning familiarity to the suburbs and otherness to the city centre.⁴ In the postmodern city, such a distinction is no longer possible since both exist simultaneously and interchangeably. The street has become the precise place where we can become other whilst remaining 'true' to ourselves.

I will consider three examples of how the street functions as both a site and discourse of economic exchange: the use of pavement art for alternative and mainstream forms of advertising; the street game originating in Brazilian martial arts, *capoeira*; and the application of the term 'street' to refer to certain types of fashion. All three of these examples focus on a specific demographic: young people aged 16-25. While the street represents a site and discourse of exchange for all ages and social classes, the part it plays in the formation of identity is perhaps most relevant for adolescents and young people as they strive to affirm their roots whilst seeking alternative and subversive spaces away from the private and institutionalized spheres of home, school and work.

Through consideration of these three examples, my intention is to show the ways in which street functions as an alternative discourse to other capitalist discourses of commodity and exchange. I also suggest that, in certain cases, the discourse of street

3 The slogan 'Think globally, act locally' is claimed to have been coined by Friends of the Earth founder David Brower in 1969 and has since been seized by various environmental organizations and more recently supermarkets.

4 Roland Barthes, 'Sémiologie et urbanisme', in *L'Aventure sémiologique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1985); originally published in *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 53 (December 1970 - January 1971).



risks completing the privatization of economic exchange by inverting the idea of street, turning a public space into something exclusive and accessible only to a select elite. Consequently, we should recognize the street as both a site and discourse associated with the construction of self and identity. On the one hand, it constitutes a space where we are subjected to the institutional and disciplinary forms of power identified by Foucault in *Surveiller et punir* (1975). On the other hand, the street – perceived as the site of ‘authentic experience’ – provides a physical and conceptual space in which individuals can construct their own identity in contradistinction to dominant institutional discourses of power.

Alternative Messages – The Art of Pavement Advertising

Within the space of the street, one encounters objects and surfaces invested with different values and meanings in relation to one another: the façades of buildings, lighting, signage, barriers, railings, steps, ramps, tarmac and paving stones. Together these fixtures and fittings form a collective sign, combining to give a certain impression of the street as a whole; separately they carry their own semiotic properties and are associated with their own specific discourses.

In this respect, the pavement, as a fundamental part of any pedestrian street, is worthy of consideration. Where the street, both as an abstract concept and physical surface, is a potential trajectory, the pavement is (literally) the concrete matter found at any one point along this trajectory. Pavement, then, has strong associations with territory and identity. It is the ground beneath our feet; it is what ‘grounds’ us, reminding us of who we are by showing us where we are. Though terms such as ‘turf wars’ and ‘stomping ground’ legitimize pavement as something one belongs to and fights for, pavement also possesses pejorative connotations.

Where walls and buildings demarcate the limits between public and private space, the pavement, even when privately owned, is where our physical encounter with the street takes place. As we simultaneously touch and are touched by the pavement, we are brought into contact with the otherness of the street and its potential to harm and contaminate us. While we can avoid any prolonged contact with other elements of the street, adjusting our gaze or blocking out sound, the tactile experience of the pavement cannot be

eluded. Thus it is a site we acknowledge just as much for its hostility, in the form of overcrowding, uneven surfaces, litter and excrement, as for its ability to facilitate our movement from one place to another.

The pavement is what we dismiss as 'beneath us' or 'underfoot'. It makes us dirty, but it is dirty because we tread on it. In this sense, the pavement is the literal site where all those who have been metaphorically downtrodden by society, dismissed as beneath or beyond helping, congregate, sitting and sleeping on a surface that we wipe off on our doormats before entering our homes and places of work.

Pavement art is possibly one of the lowest forms of art. This has less to do with its aesthetic quality and more to do with its physical location and the literal low-down position of the artist lying or squatting on the pavement to produce his or her work. Pavement artists (once known as screevers) were described by George Orwell in *Down and Out in Paris and London* as those who could not afford an easel or paper to draw or paint on.⁵ Using the pavement as canvas was their only option. Since the pavements they worked on were public property, they risked censorship from the police, were at the mercy of the elements and could not be guaranteed a set wage from passers-by. Yet the pavement-artist can succeed in creating a private space within a public one. While they cannot deny access to their work to those using the street or even stop people from stepping directly onto their pictures, the mere fact that people do step around and do make small financial contributions attests to the way in which screevers are able to transform a public walkway into their own private art gallery, turning the pavement from the site where the unwanted is discarded into a desirable commodity.

Unlike graffiti artists, who work on walls, fences and tunnels and often pride themselves on producing work in seemingly inaccessible locations, one does not need to trespass on private property or risk life and limb in order to produce pavement art. The pavement is the most easily accessed terrain available. The subversive statement made by those doing pavement art today is therefore somewhat different from that of graffiti artists.⁶ Graffiti is juxtaposed with official signs such as directions and advertising, the things we look up at such as billboards and road signs, official statements and injunctions. Whereas graffiti

5 George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (Harmondsworth & New York: Penguin Books, 1940).

6 This does not mean that graffiti and pavement art are mutually exclusive activities. There are some street artists (for example Banksy and Blek Le Rat) who experiment with both types of surface. Nor should it imply that the unauthorized pavement artist does not risk prosecution.



defaces these signs thus debasing their claims of bigger, better and higher, pavement art elevates the low and the base, suggesting that amongst the excrement and rubbish one can find aesthetic beauty. As Baudelaire famously put it: 'Tu [Paris] m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or' [You have given me your mud and I have turned it to gold].⁷



Figure 1. Parisian pavement artist. Photograph courtesy of Emmanuelle Groult

During spring 2008, a series of stencils appeared throughout Paris bearing the name Keny Arkana and the single word 'Désobéissance' [disobedience]. The curiosity generated by these stencils can be likened to the hype created by an expensive advertising campaign though they employed the tactics of guerrilla politics. As it turned out, Keny Arkana is a female rap artist and part of the alter-globalization movement *La Rage du Peuple*. *Désobeissance* is the name of her 2008 album. It is easy to see how this method of advertising is especially well suited to the philosophy of alter-globalization. The alter-globalization movement is not interested in rejecting globalization outright, but seeks alternative forms of exchange which resist the dominant ideologies of capitalist governments and large corporations. Alter-globalists opt for a socially responsible form of consumerism that operates from the ground up as opposed to forms

7 Charles Baudelaire, 'Projet d'un épilogue pour *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1861)', *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 250.

that originate from above.⁸ The space of the pavement transmits this message, symbolizing a struggle which takes place at ground level and evoking a personal, engaged form of consumerism denied by other (legal) forms of marketing and advertising.

Of course there is a certain irony to all this since the anonymity of the pavement artist and the ease with which a stencil can be reused hundreds of times make it as impersonal and mass-produced as mainstream forms of advertising. This begs the question as to whether pavement art is, from the outset, situated within a mainstream discourse of consumerism and marketing as opposed to constituting a more radical form of activity. For those promoting Keny Arkana's album advertising is about selling as many copies as possible and pavement art offers one of the cheapest means of doing this. It is not simply a matter of such art forms being appropriated by dominant forms of advertising. Rather than questioning and refusing dominant capitalist discourses, such art forms are from the start defined and determined in relation to such discourses. Their radicality lies only in their novelty-value and not in their potential for revolutionary action.



Figure 2. Désobéissance pavement stencil. Photograph by the author.

8 The manifesto of 'La Rage du Peuple' can be viewed at <<http://www.laragedupeuple.org>> [accessed 3 February 2010].



Nevertheless pavement art has yet to be harnessed by mainstream advertising in the same way that graffiti, stickering and viral marketing have been. There is much to suggest that it will remain this way because the street contains physical barriers that limit the advertising audience. If it is too crowded, for instance, the advert is obscured. Also, if the street is empty there are clearly not enough people around to 'get' the message. A deep-rooted preference persists amongst advertisers for billboards which sit magisterially above the manic blur of the crowded streets. Still, in cities such as Paris where attention to the pavement is crucial if one is to avoid the swathes of dog shit deposited there, advertisers would do well to consider its potential.

Two companies that have used the pavement as advertising space are Rogers, Canada's largest telecommunications company, and Absolut Vodka, both of which came under criticism for their pavement campaigns in Toronto. Absolut, as its name suggests, is concerned with total visual presence. By adopting pavement advertising, Absolut does not reject mainstream advertising such as TV commercials, expensive magazine spreads and billboards in favour of alternative space, but rather its aim is to achieve complete ubiquity. Such advertising has sparked a debate as to whether it gives the street artists hired to do the job a valuable opportunity to make a living from their work or whether it simply attests to the hypocrisy of large global corporations who should be called upon to clean up these advertisements by local authorities in the same way graffiti artists are expected to clean up their art or face fines and prosecution.⁹ Yet the more sinister and likely possibility is that local governments are already engaged in auctioning off prime surfaces to the highest corporate bidder – making these surfaces unavailable to graffiti artists and generating income rather than incurring the cost of cleaning up unauthorized street art. As storeowners file legal bids to have the homeless forcibly removed from the pavements outside their shop fronts and city councils require nightclubs to purchase permits for the privilege of having their patrons queue up on the street, the street is no longer simply the site where exchange takes

9 See in particular Matthew Blackett, 'Rogers Thinks the Sidewalk is My Space', *Spacing Toronto*, 6 October 2007 <<http://spacing.ca/wire/2007/10/06/2360/>> [accessed 3 February 2010] and Ron Nurwisah, 'Hey Absolut, Stop Hijacking Our Sidewalks', *Torontoist*, 30 August 2006 <http://torontoist.com/2006/08/hey_absolut_sto.php> [accessed 3 February 2010].

place but has itself become a commodity for sale.¹⁰ Public authorities may claim to be safeguarding public space for the interests of all its users, but what they are really doing is selling off this space section by section, forcing those users with little or negative equity into the gutter, that no man's land between road and street where society's excess and waste reside before being washed down into the sewer.

Exchanging Spaces – The Roda da Rua and the Academy

In my previous example, the street functions as advertising space and as such has come to constitute a commodity in its own right. However, as the next example demonstrates, the specific value of this space, as the site of financial exchange, is constantly shifting in relation to other spaces. *Capoeira* is a fight-technique disguised as a dance that was developed by African slaves in Brazil during the seventeenth century. The history of *capoeira* can be described as a series of exchanges of different physical and ideological spaces. Moreover, the indeterminate nature of this history can be linked to the indeterminate meaning of the word '*capoeira*' itself. Firstly, the emancipated slave was forced to exchange the plantation for the jungle or wilderness. One of the most commonly accepted explanations for the term *capoeira* is that it initially referred to a clearing in the jungle or plantation. The term is thought to derive from the South American Tupi language (*caa*: forest, *puera*: extinct).¹¹ Such clearings became the space where the slaves would go to practise their fight techniques concealed from the suspicious gaze of plantation owners

10 In 2007 and 2008 respectively the city councils of Toronto and Sydney looked into the possibility of introducing permits to regulate queuing outside nightclubs and theatres. See in particular 'Regulation of Queuing on the Public Sidewalk', 13 June 2007 <<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pw/bgrd/backgroundfile-5196.pdf>> [accessed 3 February 2010] and 'Fees for Use of Public Footpaths by Hotels and Nightclubs', 30 June 2008 <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Council/documents/meetings/2008/Council/300608/080630_COUNCIL_ITEM13.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2010].

11 Barbara Browning, 'Headspin: Capoeira's Ironic Inversions', in *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latino America*, ed. by Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 1997), 69.



and foremen. Furthermore, when a slave ran away, he was said to have 'caiu na *capoeira*' [disappeared into the wilderness].¹²

Concurrent with this shift from plantation to wilderness was the movement of *capoeira* from rural to urban spaces. Another popular explanation for the term is that it originated from the term *capão*, meaning capon, since not only did *capoeira* resemble a cock-fight to casual observers but the slaves who brought fowl to sell in the town plazas would often partake in a game of *capoeira* while they were waiting. While neither suggestion as to the etymology of the term has been recognized as definitive, the subsequent developments in *capoeira* acknowledge the value of both origins since the activity has come to embody a two-fold notion of clearing – creating space in which to live and move – and exchange – of space and ideology, as well as economic exchange.

The *roda da rua* [street games] which took place in Rio de Janeiro during the nineteenth and early twentieth century were strongly linked to a negative connotation of street as a site of the lowest form of economic exchange. Capoeira, which was illegal at this time, was largely associated with a criminal underclass made up of *maltas* [organized criminal gangs], *malandros* [street-wise guys] and *valentão* [tough guys] who were also mixed up in 'whoring, gambling and drinking.'¹³ As a result, the street games were often very violent, involving concealed weapons such as cut-throat razor blades hidden between one's toes.

Despite this pejorative image of *capoeira*, Dictator Gétúlio Vargas recognized its potential as a sport which could promote Brazilian cultural identity. However, it had to undergo various transformations in order to become the respectable sport so popular throughout the world today. When Vargas legalized *capoeira* in 1930 it was on the condition that it took place in 'closed spaces' with police permission. The opportunity was seized by two *mestres* [masters], Bimba and Pastinha, who are credited with defining the two main forms of *capoeira*, *regional* and *angola*, and initiating an 'academy culture' which still exists today.

During the 1930s, Bimba set up his *Centro de Cultura Física Regional* [Regional Centre of Body Culture], developing a new style of *capoeira* known as '*regional*'. *Regional* is a fast-paced game which emphasizes the technical and athletic aspects of *capoeira* and demands codes of

12 Nestor Capoeira, *Capoeira: Roots of the Dance-Fight-Game* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2002), 110.

13 Nestor Capoeira, *A Street-Smart Song: Capoeira Philosophy and Inner Life* (Berkeley, CA: Blue Snake Books, 2006), 193.

discipline similar to Asian martial arts, thus making it worthy of its new-found status as a national sport. Furthermore, by taking *capoeira* off the street and creating an institutional framework that included uniforms and diplomas (and later a grading system of belts known as *cordas*), Bimba succeeded in attracting students from the upper-middle classes. As *capoeira* began to assume the values of this wealthier, college-educated and lighter-skinned demographic, the street *roda* lost its function and prestige as a training ground where *capoeiristas* demonstrated their skill by outwitting an opponent before a crowd. The new breed of *capoeiristas* favoured a structured, hierarchical means of assessing level based on the ability to carry out a predefined list of movements in perfect, or near-perfect, imitation of one's *mestre*.

Where Bimba's so-called 'whitening' of the game led to the association of *capoeira* with Brazilian cultural identity and sporting achievement, Pastinha's version of *capoeira*, known as '*angola*', affirmed the African origins of the game. His *Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola* [Capoeira Angola Sport Centre], established during the 1940s, emphasized a slower, more playful and theatrical form of *capoeira* in contradistinction to *regional's* fast, acrobatic style. While debates within the *capoeira* community have gone on for decades as to which style is 'better' or more 'authentic', it is possible to see that both styles embody certain ideologies that target *capoeira* as a vehicle for discourses on cultural and national identities. What is at stake in these debates is not whether *capoeira* is an acceptable social practice but, rather, how best to develop *capoeira* as a sport or philosophy of life that remains faithful to the cultural memory of its Brazilian and African traditions.

Where students of *regional* were expected to wear a strict uniform of white *abada* (loose stretchy trousers), with bare feet and torso, intended to imitate both the clothing of the slaves and the uniforms found in other martial arts, those training in the *angola* style would wear ordinary trousers, shirts and shoes in order to convey a sense of social decency thus distinguishing students of *angola* from scruffy, poorly dressed street players.¹⁴ What was essential at this moment in *capoeira's* development was that its two 'official' styles were kept as far away as possible from its earlier association with the lowest forms of street culture, crime and violence. Thus not only was *capoeira* relocated from street to academy but also from Rio, where it had been

14 J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66.



strongly identified with the *malts* and the criminal underworld, to Bahia which came to represent the spiritual home of *capoeira*.¹⁵

By exchanging the street for the academy, not only did the economic value of *capoeira* increase, but the very nature of this exchange underwent a fundamental transformation. A traditional street *roda* is defined by its unpredictability. Anyone is entitled to play and the number of players and audience-members might vary from half a dozen people to a crowd of several hundred. A street *roda* might take place at any time of day or night and can last just a few minutes or go on for several hours. The size of the circle in which the *capoeiristas* play is not fixed and depends on the intensity of the crowd and the chosen site of the game. Also, money may be exchanged during a street *roda* in the form of gambling or tips from impressed tourists, but the amount made and how this money is to be split amongst players is never determined in advance.



Figure 3. *Capoeira in Bahia*. Photo courtesy of J. Anthony Martinez

Academy *capoeira*, conversely, is an intensely structured, regulated form of economic exchange. The student pays a fixed fee, either per lesson or on a monthly or annual basis, in return for a certain product which is fixed both spatially, in the studio or gym, and temporally, according to the class timetable. Frequently the class will

15 Nestor Capoeira, *Street Smart Song*, 94.

take a specific format involving warm-up, stretching, the practice of set movements and sequences followed by a training *roda* during which newly learnt sequences are put into practice. The *roda* itself is often also fixed, based upon a circle painted on the floor of the academy, and fluctuates in size according to the number of students participating in a given class.

For many years, those in the academy claimed that street games were dangerous and technically inferior to their own brand of *capoeira*. However, it is possible to see how this criticism of the street *roda* is really part of an ideology invested in protecting the financial interests of the academies. When academies organize their own outdoor *rodas*, usually in order to attract new students, these are strictly controlled by senior members, who ensure that no one outside the group can enter the game without prior approval. The reason given for this heavy regulation is that it ensures nobody gets hurt by either a foolish newcomer or an experienced troublemaker. However, what is really at stake is the fear that rival *mestres* and instructors will come and try to lure students away to their academies.



Figure 4. Capoeira training session. Photo courtesy of Emerson Souza Pinheiro.

Nevertheless, over the past decade, a new discourse has emerged which presents a far more symbiotic relationship between the public space of the street *roda* and the private domain of the academy. The differences between the two are now presented as complementary rather than hierarchical with the street *roda* offering a genuine



encounter with the other as opposed to the familiarity and security of the academy. After training with an academy for a few years, many *capoeiristas* tire of the repetitive training and homogeneous movements demanded by a *mestre* anxious to indoctrinate his students to a specific style and philosophy. The street *roda* becomes an attractive source of inspiration as it offers the site for *capoeiristas* to develop their own way of playing and the means of testing their own ability against opponents with different styles and movements. At the same time, many academies are involved in community projects, offering training and support to street kids who first encountered *capoeira* in the *roda da rua*.

Moreover, it is because of tourist money and street *rodas* that *capoeira* has been so successfully exported outside Brazil. Many (middle-class) *capoeiristas*, who arrived in Europe and North America during the 1970s and 1980s, survived by participating in street games and offering lessons to students in the park. Nestor Capoeira describes this experience as follows:

You get two or three other *camarás* [mates] together, and if there are some students or sympathizers – even if they have done *capoeira* for only a couple of weeks – you call them as well. Then you are off to the streets (mostly in summer). There's not much theorizing about the 'roots' or the 'philosophy' because what you will eat that day, and sometimes where you will sleep, depends on the money you're going to make in the street. (Capoeira, *Street Smart Song*, 211)

Just as the debate between *regional* and *angola* was really about transforming *capoeira* to appeal to different social classes with different agendas and values, the debate between the street *roda* and academy *capoeira* is not really about which is more 'authentic' or more 'respectable'. Both testify to the way in which *capoeira* is about transforming one's situation through a series of cleverly thought-out exchanges. Capoeira has always sought new ways and new spaces in which to buy and sell, from the slaves who 'bought' their freedom to the *mestres* who 'sold' *capoeira* to the rest of the world.

Wearing (Out) the Street

Having considered, through the example of the *roda da rua*, how the street operates both as a site of exchange and a space which is itself exchanged, my third example will look at the way in which

'street' functions as its own discourse associated with authentic experience and the commodification of this experience. The term streetwear attests to the fact that the saleability of 'street' lies in its ability to mean everything and nothing. When interviewed by former pro-skateboarder turned fashion journalist, Steven Vogel, for his anthology *Streetwear: The Insider's Guide*, various designers offered different and often opposing definitions when asked what streetwear meant to them; some refused to define it at all. Some designers see a clear link between streetwear and youth subcultures such as skateboarding, punk and hip-hop. In this sense 'street' refers to kids hanging out in their neighbourhoods, seeking to define themselves through these cultures. Similarly, some designers define streetwear as what people wear every day, emphasizing its functionality as well as its aesthetics. Other designers resist this association with the everyday, firmly distinguishing streetwear from the clothes worn by the average person in the street. Streetwear, for them, cannot be found in clothing chains and department stores. Streetwear does not belong to the high street or shopping mall and can only be found in 'global' cities like London, New York and Tokyo.

Despite different and sometimes conflicting definitions surrounding the term, it is possible to identify three main features of streetwear. First of all, streetwear is what is worn in order to take part in activities on the street. Most notable amongst these activities is skateboarding. This clothing is both functional – composed of comfortable, baggy trousers with multiple zipped pockets – and aesthetic: painted graphics are placed on the underside of the boards and printed onto t-shirts.

Secondly, streetwear can take the form of a direct commentary on the street itself. If fashion is generally considered as something that filters down from *haute couture* to the high street, streetwear reverses this logic, offering a direct political statement about what is happening on the street at a precise historical moment. During the mass strikes in London at the end of the 1970s, for instance, the streets were full of uncollected rubbish. Johnny Rotten of the punk band The Sex Pistols converted black bin liners into t-shirts worn alongside torn trousers, an aesthetic of trash that reflected the real-life aesthetic of London's litter-strewn streets.¹⁶

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, streetwear is what is worn on the street by those with no other end than being seen on the

16 Bonnie English, *A Cultural History of Fashion in the Twentieth Century: From the Catwalk to the Sidewalk* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), 103.



street. Streetwear takes the form here of a purposive purposelessness as seen, for instance, in the appropriation of jeans, the work wear of manual labourers, by suburban teenagers in the 1950s. The adolescents who appropriated jeans had no intention of doing manual work themselves but adopted this uniform as a visual rejection of the middle-class values of their parents.¹⁷ For countless groups of adolescents, streetwear represents a certain type of clothing and way of dressing which establishes solidarity with all those who consider themselves different or outside mainstream culture and values.

The street is, after all, the space where we perceive and are perceived by others. As Marvin Scott Jarrett writes:

Here in New York – as well as in other cultural capitals with a lot of people and not a lot of space – if you want to get somewhere, you'll probably walk. Urban life puts you on display for the world to see, and in that climate, how you dress speaks volumes about who you are – and who you'd like to be.¹⁸

On the street we are exposed to the gaze of the other. This gaze has the potential to deny us our freedom as subjects, reducing us to mere objects.¹⁹ Yet streetwear pre-empts and embraces this process, refusing the possibility of shared experience with all but a few. The outcome embodies what Foucault has described as an aesthetics of the self, a lifestyle constructed from a multitude of signs and symbols whose meanings are endlessly differed, exchanged and transformed.²⁰ This is how, for example, Japanese and more specifically Harajuku street fashion functions. The statements it makes about individual identity simultaneously builds a wall behind which confused and insecure adolescents can hide. Bonnie English explains:

The notion of attracting attention, yet hiding behind the safety of a group, suggests a personal insecurity that can both challenge and reinforce consumerism. As the notion of feminism is relatively unexplored in Japanese society, the diversity of street style dress

17 Kate Mulvey, 'Marlon Brando – Streetcool Streetwise', in *Key Moments in Fashion: The Evolution of Style*, ed. by Nigel Cawthorne and Others (London: Hamlyn, 1998), 102.

18 *Street: The Nylon Book of Global Style*, ed. by Marvin Scott Jarrett (New York: Universe Publishing, 2006), 8.

19 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 314.

20 See in particular *Histoire de la sexualité, tome 3: Le Souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) and *L'Herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France, 1981-1982* (Paris: Seuil, 2001).

allows for an investigation of different models of the feminine. Clothing can be a form of identity, an expression of creativity, a form of entertainment or performances, but at the same time it can act as a subtle model of non-conformity, a passive critique that counters the Japanese ideology of order, control, uniformity and impersonality. (English, 134)

Streetwear embodies the late-capitalist discourse of conformity through non-conformity. Many streetwear designers insist on the DIY aspect of street fashion, the importance of creating an individual look and remaining true to one's local community. This celebration of individuality which claims to offer a critique of consumerism is, in fact, nothing more than an intense form of consumerism as one carries out a painstaking search for the latest designs, vintage styles and limited editions. Streetwear is perhaps the ultimate example of the commodification of resistance and transgression:

The countercultural idea has become capitalist orthodoxy, its hunger for transgression upon transgression now perfectly suited to an economic-cultural regime that runs on ever-faster cyclings of the new; its taste for self-fulfillment and its intolerance for the confines of tradition now permitting vast latitude in consuming practices and lifestyle experimentation.²¹

Whereas the relationship between *haute couture* and streetwear is one of open co-dependence, with *haute couture* keen to identify itself with the authenticity and political activism of the street and streetwear designers aspiring to achieve the same attention to quality and detail that *haute couture* produces, the relationship between global, high street brands and streetwear is more complex.

This complexity is particularly true of the most famous item of streetwear, the trainer. The trainer, or sneaker, can be argued to embody all three features of streetwear mentioned above. Firstly, it provides a specific functionality making it an obvious choice for those spending prolonged time on the street and using the street for physical activities such as skateboarding and breakdancing. Moreover, trainers appeared on the street in response to specific social events and as such offer a visual commentary on these events. One of the main factors credited with the emergence of wearing trainers on the street, as opposed to wearing them exclusively to the gym or

21 Thomas Frank, 'Why Johnny Can't Dissent', in *Commodify your Dissent: Salvos from the Baffler*, ed. by Thomas Frank and Matt Weiland (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 34.



on the sports field, was the New York subway strike of April 1980. During the strike, thousands of New Yorkers were forced to walk to work and as a result many substituted jogging shoes for work shoes.²² However, it was the emergence of hip-hop in the early eighties that firmly designated trainers as 'streetwear'. Run DMC's 1986 song 'My Adidas'²³ paid homage to the shoe and forever tied its identity to the street. Worn alongside fur coats and diamonds, trainers emphasize that the roots of a rapper are the streets he or she has come from.

During the 1970s and 1980s, athletics and other sports were perceived by many as the only option available to black adolescents wanting to get out of the ghetto and secure a place at college. This version of the American dream specifically aimed at black youths has been subverted by hip-hop. Rappers wear their trainers in a way which disregards their function as sportswear and use them to make a different statement about what it means to be black growing up in cities like New York and Los Angeles. A rapper's trainers are always in pristine condition since they have never been worn for sports, only posing. During the late eighties and early nineties, rappers like Run DMC would wear their trainers with no laces and the tongues hanging out. Not only did he reinforce the idea that trainers did not represent sporting or athletic aspirations, Run emulated the way in which trainers were worn in prison where shoelaces were confiscated to stop prisoners harming themselves or others. Mark Tungate points out: 'Since a spell in the joint was considered mandatory by many rappers, the style became a sign of fellowship.'²⁴

While brands such as Nike, Adidas and Puma embraced the movement of the trainer from the gym to the street by endorsing rappers and, in the case of Run DMC, giving them their own limited-edition shoe, these brands nevertheless recognized the need to establish a visible distance between their corporate identity and the association of streetwear with criminal activity. This gap became more pronounced during the trainer wars of the 90s in which teenagers and kids were killed over pairs of limited-edition Air Jordans.²⁵ Companies like Nike continue to recognize and push the value of their products on the street, employing well-known figures from the streetwear scene such as Fraser Cooke as Global Urban Marketing

22 Emily Evans, 'The Trainer as Fashion Footwear', in *Key Moments in Fashion*, 170.

23 Run DMC, 'My Adidas', *Raising Hell* (Arista, 1986).

24 Mark Tungate, *Fashion Brands: Branding Style from Armani to Zara* (London and Philadelphia: Kogan Page, 2004), 186.

25 Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2000), 374.

Director, but at the same time they distance themselves from the street by claiming to focus on the functionality and performance of their shoes.²⁶ This focus on the technical aspects of design allowed Nike to abdicate its responsibility for the trainer wars. Nike insisted its shoes were intended for use in sports and thereby denounced any responsibility for violence provoked by their presence on the street.

While emphasizing the performance of shoes and clothing may ensure the longevity of a product on the street which would have otherwise been abandoned for its negative 'corporate' image, brands like Adidas and Puma continue to achieve success on the street by keeping their streetwear separate from sportswear and commissioning designers to produce exclusive lines and sub-brands such as Yohji Yamamoto's Y-3 for Adidas and Yashuhiro Mihara and Alexander McQueen's collections for Puma. Where streetwear once embodied a certain affiliation with the subcultures and groups that inhabited the streets of both the suburbs and city centres, actively engaging with the space of these streets and offering up a commentary on the events that occurred there, it has become increasingly detached from these associations and more inherently linked to what Ted Polhemus has termed the 'supermarket of style' defined as a language which 'reduces whole subcultures from the history of streetstyle to simple 'adjectives' [...] and juxtaposes these in a single outfit.'²⁷ While the value of streetwear continues to come from its reference to the street as the local site which gives meaning to the global, where events take place and movements begin, this currency is traded in increasingly private spaces, such as exclusive boutiques, glossy magazines and at exhibitions and shows where access is strictly limited. Streetwear designers are generally wary of the internet as a medium in which to present and sell their clothing, expressing a desire to remain loyal to the local community. What this actually garners is loyalty from those who can afford to travel between Tokyo, New York and London in search of rare and limited edition merchandise whilst retaining a spurious nostalgia for the street they grew up on, where they first encountered the subversive force of streetwear.

26 'Interview with Fraser Cooke', in Steven Vogel, *Streetwear: The Insider's Guide* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007).

27 Ted Polhemus, *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 134.



Has Street Sold Out?

The street is the site of active consumerism conceived in terms of an ethical engagement. In this context, ethical refers both to one's social responsibility and the means by which one constructs one's identity. Nevertheless it is evident from its appropriation by advertising and the evocation of 'street' by global fashion brands that the street not only constitutes a means of resisting capitalist discourses of exchange and consumption, but also represents a highly effective channel for such discourses. Positing individuality and non-conformity alongside familiarity and locality, the street is the stage where our desire to be other confronts our fear of difference. The street is at once the site where individual subjectivity is produced through disciplinary strategies operating on and through the body and the site where we carry out an ethics of the self, constructing our own truths and aesthetics of living.

In this sense, the street is the site where disciplinary power described by the Foucault of *Surveiller et punir* coexists alongside the construction of the individual self as presented in his final works. Our movement within the space of the street is heavily regulated by signs and crossings. We are monitored at all times and from all angles by CCTV. Thus considered, the street can be understood as caught up in a two-fold process of privatization. This process is carried out, first of all, by the businesses that want to regulate and control access to their commercial spaces, dominating the streetscape with their brand identity. At the same time that the street is threatened by an increase in disciplinary techniques, it is also undergoing privatization as a cultural discourse which makes it into something that increasingly eludes definition by becoming more exclusive and inaccessible. Yet while we appear to be progressing ever closer towards the society of control bemoaned by Deleuze,²⁸ the street is also the place where we can find alternative discourses, alternative truths and where we can celebrate our individuality. It is precisely this lack of fixed definition which will make it possible for street to be reappropriated by new social groups and subcultures in the future. The street is where resistance perceived as multiple resistances is possible, where strategies of power can be transformed into something different.

28 Gilles Deleuze, 'Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle', in *Pourparleurs* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990).

'Miking' the New German Street

Patricia Anne Simpson

Ich bin kein Gangster, kein Killer, ich bin kein Dieb,
ich bin nur ein Junge von der Straße.

[I'm not a gangster, not a killer, I'm not a thief,
I'm just a kid from the street.]¹

German identity is consistently fragmented, even more so two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall and unification. While one segment of the population willingly dons the mantle of European identity and looks beyond geographical limits to lessen the burden of the German past, other social groups confront the problem or opportunity of the diminishing importance of nationalism as a category for identity by staking a claim to the ground beneath their feet. Attempts to locate a geographically specific identity in the shifting landscape of the new Germany focus our attention on competing claims of who is German. These issues are performed in the street culture that has emerged from ethnically inflected popular forms, including hip-hop and graffiti, which give voice to new post-Wall constructions of 'Germanness'. In urban centres throughout the Federal Republic, the gold standard of authentic identity is the asphalt of Germany's streets.

One example from contemporary film paints a portrait of this new street, and I cite it to set the scene for my analysis of a revised experience of public space as represented primarily in popular music.

1 Sido, *Straßenjunge* (Aggro Berlin, LC 12347, 2006). The author is citing lyrics widely circulated in the public domain; she has made every effort to contact the artists through their representatives and gratefully acknowledges the sources here.



In the opening credits of the 2004 comedy remix of the Romeo and Juliet story, *Kebab Connection*,² the camera directs our gaze through an urban German street. The star-crossed lovers (an aspiring filmmaker of Turkish descent and an actress preparing for a crucial audition) find themselves in a contemporary blood feud based on ethnic difference and gender stereotypes: the cardinal rule for a Turkish boy is never to get a German girl pregnant, and no German woman has ever seen a Turkish man pushing a pram. We follow the progress of Ibo and Titzi, who sit together in a cinema, viewing Ibo's recent work, a kung-fu commercial for a relative's fast-food restaurant, 'King of Kebab'. Ibo's 'uncle' condemns the advert; it is full of unacknowledged humour and over-the-top violence – including the talking head of one combatant decapitated by the frisbee throw of a Turkish pizza. He utters the words: 'Echt scharf' [Really hot].³ The commercial, which opens the film without framing, invokes a self-conscious and stylized violence to improve food sales. The artificiality of the violent conflict over which customer will get the last kebab contrasts sharply with the following sequence. Ibo's 'uncle', who has also bankrolled the commercial, expresses outrage at the knife fight portrayed in the service of döner. The double edge is too sharp for him. He alludes to the stereotype of Turks with knives and flies into a rage. The opening sequence sets the tone for packaged violence, ethnic difference and cross-cultural love.

As Ibo and Titzi leave the cinema, they make a plan for dinner and separate on the street. Titzi climbs into her car, lights a cigarette and navigates through the traffic. From her perspective, we see congestion, a police officer ticketing a parked car and the blur of urban life. Meanwhile, Ibo cruises the pavements on his skateboard in close proximity to street life. A child chases a ball, a pavement stand displays a pyramid of fruit, and a woman wearing a headscarf pauses on a corner. These intimate shots steer the audience through an ethnically mixed neighbourhood, past graffiti that seems more colourful than criminal and into eye contact with pedestrians who seem calmly invested in pursuing everyday life. The range of activity the audience witnesses through the skateboarder's gaze redeems the sequence from romanticization: we see the unhappy, the indecent and the addicted, as well as shoppers, walkers and commuters. The opening credits roll over this sequence. The soundtrack is the Turkish

2 *Kebab Connection*, dir. by Anno Saul, written by Fatih Akin and Ruth Toma (Wüste Filmproduktion, 2004).

3 'Scharf' can mean 'sharp' or 'spicy'. It can also be translated as 'really cool'.

rapper Sultana's 2000 hit, 'Kuşu Kalkmaz', a hip-hop track that, with a blend of humour and earnestness, criticizes men who mistreat their wives and use prostitutes. The title of the song means 'your bird can't fly', a veiled sexual reference to impotence. The music cues a sexual thematic for the film. It also strengthens a relationship between street culture and hip-hop.

This film thematizes the street as the constitutive element of urban identity in the context of a Hamburg neighbourhood and beyond. Anno Saul's film is ultimately a romantic comedy about creativity, maturity and ambition. The identity politics are subsumed into a love story that points to but does not dwell on the potential for conflict and territoriality in urban Germany. This portrait of the street raises questions about turbulent ethnicity and appropriate forms of cultural representation.

The Street and the Public Sphere

This essay advances a post-Marxist debate about the shifting function of the street and its growing role in public discourse. Rap culture in particular asks questions about ethnic identity, economic deprivation, drugs, police and violence. Rap holds up a microphone to the issues of everyday life, enacted on the asphalt of Germany under the Berlin Republic.

In assessing the relationship between politics and the media, Fredric Jameson observed in 1974 that personal and political issues can be upstaged by an electronically — now digitally — generated 'reality'. For those who aim to take political action, the question is, Jameson writes, not

whether the street fighter or urban guerrilla can win against the weapons and technology of the modern state, but rather precisely where the street is in the superstate, and, indeed, whether the old-fashioned street as such still exists in the first place in that seamless web of marketing and automated production which makes up the new state.⁴

Based on an analysis of contemporary urban culture, I argue that the representation of the street as common ground in cultural forms

4 Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), xviii.



allows otherwise taboo actions to enter into public discourse in a way that revises a notion of Jürgen Habermas's debate-based public sphere. His theory, as articulated in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* [*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*], posits a forum for rational debate and argument originating in civil society that influences democratic structures of governance.⁵ This theory of a discourse that could mediate between civil society and the state is predicated on the exclusion of violence, the guerrilla street-fighting to which Jameson refers.

Through an examination of hip-hop culture, as articulated by rap artists Eko Fresh, Bushido, Sido and Massiv, I will focus on the capacity of street culture in Germany to revise a concept of the public sphere and its ability to accommodate non-violent political assertions of identity. It is not my intention to romanticize the street or to overestimate the ability of rap culture to regulate behaviour. Rather, I examine rap as one of the everyday auditory practices that can structure social life. Through 'miking' the literal street and figural habitus of marginalized identity, rap musicians, I claim, are creating the political venue that Jameson seeks.

I shall provide an overview of major moments in recent German street culture, consider the representation of the street in rap and conclude with a discussion of the new street in contemporary theory. Rap music, so often collapsed into the hypermasculine rhetoric and coastal conflicts of the US scene, assumes both local and historical attributes in German-language culture. While German rap engages in acts of rhetorical and representational violence, it also addresses social issues such as welfare reform, ethnic affiliations among minorities, consumer practices, prison and the criminalization of immigrants as well as American political hegemony and globalization. The musicians discussed in this chapter differ markedly in terms of ethnic origin, residence and style, but their music has a common tautology: it begins with the street and radiates outward to economic and political commentary on contemporary society. Rap provides a soundtrack to the new German street which functions as a forum for political discussion about marginalized identities. This popular commentary inserts a new dimension of rhetorical anger into a

5 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1989); originally published *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962).

public sphere predicated on non-violent participation. Rap mediates between conventional public discourse and the locality of the street.

Syntax of the New German Street

Postwar Germany is not generally known for the vibrancy of its street culture. Until 1989, it was a densely populated and ideologically divided country: the West was characterized by high-speed efficiency and a powerhouse economy, while the East offered vistas of deteriorated and poorly maintained though well-policed infrastructure. In both Germanys, public culture and private leisure remained largely separate with the exceptions of sanctioned sports events and political parades, as well as sporadic outbursts of violence. Western cityscapes displayed the logic of urban planning and commercial culture integrated with residences inscribed with personal and political graffiti. Eastern cities maintained surfaces with uplifting socialist murals, unrepaired war ruins and graffiti-free walls. East German border police had taken pains to preserve the pristine white of the GDR's interior wall space. Possessing a can of spray paint was illegal and painting graffiti was punishable by imprisonment. The mood of public culture changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, an event marked by the most euphoric public party Germany had ever hosted. Graffiti from the Western surface of the Berlin Wall is preserved in galleries. Today, Berlin has a reputation as Europe's most 'bombed' city, attributable in part to the surprisingly relaxed attitude of authorities towards graffiti — though this desultory moment in German crime control may soon pass.

The 2006 FIFA World Cup, hosted by the Federal Republic, marked a recent street celebration that boasted full national participation. The media coverage of these summer games portrayed Germany as a hospitable host to the world and also to the nation's own ethnic communities. The black-red-gold colours of the German flag were ubiquitous, screen-printed on everything from bath towels to key chains. News features emphasized the inclusiveness of the German fan-base participating in and driving this celebration. A national sigh of disappointment accompanied the German team's defeat by Italy in the semi-finals though fans quickly asserted their pride in the team's accomplishment and praised their third-place finish. The matches and their public success effected a remarkable change in domestic and international attitudes toward German nationalism. Ingeborg Majer-



O'Sickey, a German studies and film scholar, catalogues the various types of patriotism visible that summer: these range from 'feminized patriotism', with an emphasis on the calming factor of female fans, to 'party-otism', with its leavening effect on the fraught density of nationalism formerly dominated by the German right wing.⁶ These revised opinions signalled public pride in national identity as the new 'normalcy', with few dissenting voices.⁷

One street phenomenon predates the fall of the Wall and the FIFA World Cup. In July 1989, Berlin hosted the first Love Parade, an event that can reasonably be described as the world's largest dance party. The first Love Parade was organized around a political demonstration for peace, though this designation was due in part to the exigencies of German law which require the government to provide crowd control and clean-up for public demonstrations, but not for commercial events. Lorries drove through the streets equipped with speakers, DJs and all the attributes of a mobile dance club. Love Parade spread to other cities, Sydney and San Francisco among them. It experienced a two-year hiatus in Berlin due to lack of funds after the organizers were ordered to assume all costs after a 2001 court decision which ruled that Love Parade could not be considered a political demonstration. Techno and other forms of electronic dance music dominate the event. Attempts to introduce hip-hop failed for a variety of reasons, not least of which was the nature of rap culture itself.

Staking a claim to the street in an aggressive and territorial way, rap insists on a fundamental relationship between the practice of everyday life in the 'ghetto', the low-income housing projects, and the urban streets that are off the bourgeois beaten path. Hip-hop street culture defines itself in opposition to the annual dance party. It is not the exception; it wants to rule.

The Politics of Asphalt

The relationship between rap identity and the new German street is predicated on the assertion of ownership: private interests occupy

6 Ingeborg Majer-O'Sickey, 'Out of the Closet? German Patriotism and Soccer Mania', *German Politics and Society*, 24.3 (Autumn 2006), 94.

7 *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester: Camden House, 2006).

a public space. Hip-hop culture repudiates the carnivalesque street-parties associated with the official permission to suspend work and indulge in public play, a model like Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of carnival and the ability to suspend class hierarchy and social difference.⁸ The rap artist Eko Fresh, sometimes known as the King of Germany, articulates this conviction in a track from his *German Dream* release entitled 'Was es ist' [What it is].⁹ Credited with a timely resuscitation of German-language rap, Eko Fresh remains a perennially popular and successful rapper who is dedicated to diversity. Many rap fans, however, hotly contest this popularity on numerous blog sites, where they voice their preference for hardcore rap. Though he engages in the obligatory polemics of battle rap, Eko Fresh maintains a more moderate rhetoric than many of his detractors. He consciously inhabits the term 'rapper' as one that is more inclusive than that of 'gangster'.¹⁰

Eko Fresh raps about his Turkish-German identity, about growing up in a small apartment with a working mother and absent father and about his unapologetic rise to prosperity. In his music, he posits a relationship between national identity and place, between individual ethnicity and German rap identity. The affiliation of rap musicians to their neighbourhood grounds this music. Eko Fresh stresses the social divide between the celebration of Carnival in Cologne and his own territory: 'Ich leb' in Köln, bin jetzt 21 Jahre alt, aber wo ich wohne kriegst du nichts mit vom Karneval' [I live in Cologne, I'm now 21 years old, but where I live you won't even notice Carnival].¹¹ The lyric drives a wedge between the public party associated with the largely secularized festival to mark the beginning of Lent and the daily life of the street.

8 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 9; originally published *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaya kultura srednevekovya i Renessansa* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1965). Bakhtin writes: 'In the framework of class and feudal political structure this specific character [of feasts] could be realized without distortion only in the carnival and in similar marketplace festivals. They were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance.'

9 'Der neue König von Deutschland' [The new king of Germany], announces a headline in the *Tageszeitung* (25 November 2003), 15. Eko Fresh refers to himself frequently by this epithet.

10 Patricia Anne Simpson, 'Battle Rhymes: Measures of Masculinity', in *Mediating Germany: Popular Culture between Tradition and Innovation*, ed. by Gerd Bayer (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006).

11 Eko Fresh, 'Was es ist', *German Dream Allstars* (BMG, 82876686082, 2005).



Rap culture generates a language and image that celebrates and performs a specific identity. We hear this affiliation in the music and see it in fashion. A wide range of voices praise German-language rap for the immediacy of its language. In an interview, Frank Goldberg, Präventionsrat [Director] of an Anti-Violence campaign in Frankfurt am Main, praised rap for using 'die Sprache der Straße' [the language of the street].¹² The campaign itself recruited rap artists to produce anti-violence tracks, including a song that encourages listeners to 'count to ten' before acting on any violent impulses. Public administrators and policy makers have acknowledged the potential of rap to address a young audience about public culture. In Berlin, for example, the Hip Hop Mobile, an initiative supported by the Berlin Senate, offers portable workshops in DJing, rap, breakdance and graffiti.¹³ Since 1993, the unit has projected a positive image of hip-hop culture. On a less constructive note, rap music can be used both to vent anger and to fuel flames of discontent, which dramatizes attempts to speak to a target audience in the 'target' language, that of the street.

The authenticity and urgency of rap's idioms are also subject to consumer practices. The associations between representation of the contemporary street with rap, as well as with graffiti, are not just compelling but also marketable. Major labels and clothing stores reference 'streetwear' or 'street culture' in their designs, advertising and brand names. With a breathtaking seamlessness, the look and style can be consumed for a hefty price. In conscious contrast, the immigrant fashion designer label Picaldi takes pains to design and produce affordable clothing. This designer enjoys the support of Bushido and Eko Fresh. The targeted consumer listens to rap; the clothing has been described as 'Hartz-IV victim fashion'.¹⁴

Attributes of 'street cred' and 'authenticity' are categories of debate with regard to the sincerity of rappers, which is measured by proximity to their turf. Even the most commercially successful rappers continue to identify themselves with the pavement beneath their

12 Interview with the author, Frankfurt am Main, 22 May 2007.

13 See 'Hip Hop Mobile' <<http://www.hiphopmobil.de>> [accessed 3 February 2010].

14 Johannes Gemert, 'Nix Aldi Picaldi' (19 October 2006) *tageszeitung* on-line <<http://www.taz.de/index.php?id=archivsite&dig=2006/10/19/a0121>>, trans. by Lucy Powell (24 October 2006) <<http://signandsight.com/features/1012.html>> [accessed 3 February 2010]; Hartz-IV refers to unpopular reforms to the social welfare system and unemployment benefits designed by the Hartz Commission. I discuss this issue with regard to rap music in greater detail below.

feet both literally and figuratively. In consonance with the demands of the genre, Eko Fresh sings his autobiography. The experience of poverty is subjective, and it seems ethically suspect to define it in relative terms – urban European vs. ghetto American or vs. rural third-world, for example. While arguing for a renewed commitment to a social welfare system based on solidarity, scholars in 1995 still noted: 'Auch mit der "neuen Armut" bleibt die Bundesrepublik eine Wohlstandsgesellschaft' [Even with the 'new poverty' the Federal Republic remains a prosperous society].¹⁵

Subjective experiences of poverty notwithstanding, Eko Fresh returns to his roots in order to counter accusations that his music has become mainstream. His tracks document his rise from poverty to prosperity. He also raps about the constant battles for territorial influence. On 'Asphalt', one track of the 2004 release *Dünya Dönüyor – Die Welt dreht sich* [The world turns], Eko Fresh and Summer Çem acknowledge the shortened life-expectancy in their neighbourhood: 'Das ist der Asphalt. Nicht alle meiner Brüder werden alt' [That's asphalt. Not all my brothers will grow old].¹⁶ In 'Asphalt 2', from the *German Dream Allstars* album, Eko Fresh addresses a 'young man' in his potential audience about life on the street:

Junge der Asphalt, er ist jetzt in unsrer Gewalt
Alles dreht sich auf dem Asphalt
Dem Asphalt, dem Asphalt.

[Listen kid, the street is now in our power
Everything is happening on the asphalt
The asphalt, the asphalt.]

The synecdoche of asphalt to represent the street grounds the strength of rap in the immediately local. The shared space of the street creates a metonymic relationship between the rapper, the neighbourhood and fans. Proximity, the fact of connectedness on urban topsoil, strengthens what appear to be naturalized bonds between the rapper and his fan base.

In this track, Eko Fresh addresses a 'kid' who is guilty of betrayal in a part of town that has become self-policing. The kid shoots

15 Friedhelm Hengsbach SJ and Matthias Möhring-Hesse, 'Solidarität in der Krise', in *Eure Armut kotzt uns an! Solidarität in der Krise*, ed. by Friedhelm Hengsbach SJ and Matthias Möhring-Hesse (Frankfurt am Main: Fisher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 8.

16 Eko & Azra, *Dünya Dönüyor – Die Welt dreht sich* (Royal Bunker, RB219, 2004).



heroin and deals. The accusations in the text make it clear that this behaviour violates the code of neighbourhood honour and pride. Eko Fresh, the self-proclaimed Turkish mayor of the neighbourhood, metes out punishment. This lyric inserts a rapper's supremacy into a local hierarchy. He asserts the right to deliver retribution for public offences that he takes personally. Rap artists frequently portray themselves as street fighters, almost vigilantes, who patrol their turf in the absence of any higher authority. The primary sin of commission is betrayal. Eko Fresh will have the boy's legs broken: 'Boy, weil du bist weder dem Asphalt noch den Straßen treu' [Boy, because you haven't been true to either the asphalt or the streets]. In the moral code established and articulated in the song, the punishment is commensurate to the crime. Eko Fresh inserts a moment of judgement into this empowering track: the street is in our power, and drugs have no place here in Cologne-Gremberg. To deal means to betray the community and invite retribution. This track could be the rap version of a public service announcement — and the musicians are the street's clean-up crew.

This song lyric from 'Asphalt 2' on *German Dream Allstars* resonates with the narratives of the earlier tracks on *Dünya Dönüyor*. There Eko Fresh and Azra take a wide-angle view of their world as third-generation migrants and the rap culture their experiences inspire. Here, the focus narrows to the local from which all power emanates. The intimacy between the self and the street strikes a chord with the fan base. In a larger context, Eko Fresh associates his righteous stance on the street with his Turkish heritage, thereby adding ethnic identity and minority status to the construct. This affiliation explicitly comes to the foreground in 'Asphalt 2'; Eko Fresh makes it clear that he only shops in Turkish stores. The high moral ground is claimed. He echoes this sentiment in the track with Summer Çem, 'Landsleute' [Compatriots / Fellow Countrymen] and dedicates this piece to his countrymen:

Dieser Track hier ist für alle meine Türken im Knast
für alle Taxi Fahrer vielen geht es leider beschissen
für alle Türken die bei McDonalds arbeiten müssen
für alle Asylanten weil ihr keine andere Wahl habt
Ein Türke möchte nicht das Leben eines Amerikaners.

[This track is for all my Turks inside
for all taxi drivers so many are having a shitty time
for all Turks who have to work at McDonald's

for all the asylum seekers because you have no other choice
A Turk doesn't want the life of an American.]

In this verse, Eko Fresh identifies with his disenfranchised countrymen, both those who share the street with him and those beyond his immediate sphere of influence. The street is the basis for the politics of inclusion and community, but this local consciousness extends to a larger cultural critique. He lists those underemployed at McDonald's, those fleeing oppressive political and economic conditions and those migrants or citizens who remain in dead-end jobs in the German context. However, the final line rejects American lifestyles predicated on materialism. He carves criticism into this track and insists on the German Dream, a more palatable derivative of its American cousin.

The distaste for American culture, particularly the fast-food chain noted above, is a complaint that crosses musical, ethnic and economic boundaries. Right-wing bands and the genre known as hate music insist that the street falls within their jurisdiction. In 'Blut & Ehre' [Blood and honour] from the *Oi Dramz* [2004],¹⁷ the listener finds a similar anti-Americanism, a stance that has the potential to unite a diverse European demographic with varying degrees of militancy:

Du rennst durch die Straßen ohne Sinn
Suchst deutsche Kultur, doch landest bei McDonald's drin
So geht's nicht weiter, lasst uns neu beginnen.

[You run through the streets without purpose
Looking for German culture, but ending up at McDonald's
This can't go on, let's begin anew.]

The nature of this common critique is clear, but it is inspired from radically different ethnic identities vying for the same street. The lyrics of the controversial heavy-metal band Rammstein, for example, also show a surprising shared criticism of global warming, the rapacious appetite for oil and anti-Americanism based on an ethical stance against the Iraq wars.

Before I return to the specifics of rap culture, it is important to note that the street is contested territory; its inhabitants define themselves in discrete ethnicities but also in separate spheres of musical loyalty. While some would characterize the preferences of youth cultures as postmodern, i.e. uncommitted, others live and die by the same predilections. Music from ostensibly divergent genres such as rap,

¹⁷ *Oi Dramz, Oi Dramz* (Rock-O-Rama, 1992).



punk and right-wing rock all speak of defending one's turf. Here a difference emerges between the asphalt as a stable territory that signifies a rapper's origins and the street as a fluid and negotiated space, a site of exchange or confrontation. Hip-hop culture posits asphalt as a kind of ethnic homeland. Rap music broadcasts the politics of the street as home in a frequently hostile dominant culture.

Eko Fresh takes a political stance and in 'Landsleute' emphasizes a trend in hip-hop culture that seeks to reclaim its socio-critical roots. He dedicates the track 'Landsleute' to his compatriots in prison. This dedication foregrounds a concern for a criminalized immigrant population. In identifying with the marginalized, Eko Fresh is part of a larger trend in German-language rap. This participation also inspires the lyrics in a Bushido track in which the rapper speaks about his imprisonment for assault: life on the street has its consequences. Bushido, the most popular rapper in Germany today, gains accolades for his depictions of life on the street, though he has been criticized for homophobia. He is the founder of the hip-hop label Ersguterjunge, a sub-label of Sony BMG established in 2005. Eko Fresh and Bushido once engaged each other in rap wars, but since Eko Fresh signed with Ersguterjunge in 2007, he has participated on tracks and music videos with Bushido. Both speak publicly about certain social issues and institutions. They also address local audiences about national and global politics.

Bushido's live album, *Deutschland, gib mir ein Mic!* [Germany, Give Me a Mic] resonates with the need to rap loudly to a Berlin audience,¹⁸ he notes his mother is in the audience for the first time and revels in his home-game advantage. Every track on this album extols the city and his fellow rappers. He dedicates it to the audience: it is 'eure Hymne' [your hymn]. Bushido seals this identification between street life, the rapper and his audience in the Echo-winning album, *Von der Skyline zum Bordstein zurück*.¹⁹ There he focuses on fragmented identities, isolated in prison and separated from home. In 'No Window' Bushido sings about, among other things, the ethnic make-up of prisoners in Austria: every third person is named Youssef, Ali or Ahmed. Bushido adds that he hopes German Chancellor Angela Merkel can hear the song. He provides a microphone for a range of issues, from his personal, localized protest to general political commentary.

We hear a similar critique in the collaborative effort of Eko Fresh and Summer Çem. In Summer Çem's verse of 'Landsleute', he alludes to

18 Bushido, *Deutschland, gib mir ein Mic!* (Universal, LC 06748, 2006).

19 Bushido, 'Kein Fenster', *Von der Skyline zum Bordstein zurück* (Ersguterjunge, LC 06748, 2006).

public debate about Turkey's possible membership in the European Union. Through their music and attendant fame, rappers are 'coming of age' and voicing their political convictions in an attempt to influence public opinion. In this way, both Eko Fresh and Bushido politicize their audience through their choice of subject matter. Through this politicization, rap provides a commentary about life in the street, the bonds between ethnic minorities and the socio-economic policies that affect the experience of both rappers and their audience. The hook in the above song seals the sense of community:

An meine Blutsbrüder, meine Wurzel, mein Volk
ich liebe euch und trage in meiner Brust mein Stolz
Vielleicht ist mein Körper bald schon von Ehre umschlossen
doch ich bleibe Türke bis ich sterbe Genosse'.

[To my blood brothers, my roots, my people
I love you and carry my pride in my breast
My body may soon be wrapped in honour
But I remain a Turk until I die, comrade.]

Eko Fresh infuses this fraternal and communitarian identification with political critique in his tracks about welfare reform on the 2006 *Hart(z) IV*.²⁰ The album title refers to Peter Hartz, a former personnel director at Volkswagen who led the Commission charged with designing the plan for reform. Eko Fresh adds the parenthesis in order to play on the word 'hart' [hard], as in 'hard times'. These unpopular measures, aimed at reforming the labour market and the regulations governing unemployment compensation, heralded for many the dismantling of the social welfare system in Germany. Hartz IV, in particular, involved legislation collapsing social welfare assistance with unemployment benefits. The last measures, approved in 2005, put caps on unemployment benefits and rode the coattails of stricter legislation about asylum. Under these more stringent economic conditions, rappers were transformed into spokesmen for the oppressed or socially 'downsized'. Raps proclaim the need to take political responsibility, to voice opinions and participate in public debate about urgent issues, such as the unraveling of the social welfare net. In the idiom of Michel de Certeau's practice of everyday life, rap and its distribution reappropriate the

20 Eko Fresh, *Hart(z) IV* (Sony Subword, LC 11061, 2006); on fraternal bonds, see Patricia Anne Simpson, 'Manche Menschen werden Brüder: Popular Music and New Fraternities', *German Politics and Society* (Summer 2005).



product-system to achieve 'a therapeutics for deteriorating social relations and make use of techniques of re-employment in which we can recognize the procedures of everyday practices'.²¹ Rap therapy does not, however, imply a passive acceptance of that deterioration: it indicts the political public sphere while exploring and exploiting new models of production, distribution and consumption.

Tour Guides through the Streets

Eko Fresh is one of the more moderate musicians who espouse the potential of rap to generate and participate in a public debate about urgent social and political issues. He finds himself in the crossfire and cross-hairs of the more explicitly violent and hard-core representatives of gangsta rap in the Federal Republic. The Berlin label Aggro epitomizes the rhetorical violence and inflammatory disrespecting commonly associated with rap culture. By definition, battle rap is polemical and hyperbolic. The uninhibited and uncensored commentary on various blog sites attests to the creative capacity for insult among fans. This virtual and verbal battle is sometimes also acted out on the street. Much of the violent rhetoric, however, is performative only in terms of self-styled identities and self-perception. The verbal violence references but does not necessarily constitute daily experience.

The association between rap culture and criminalized agency exists and is exacerbated by certain musicians and their tracks. The Aggro label has a reputation for producing the most extreme music. It represents Sido, a popular rapper from Märkisches Viertel in Berlin. Like Eko Fresh and other rappers, Sido acknowledges his mother's sacrifices in his upbringing (his father is absent). Though he is somewhat evasive about origins, they are important to him. In his biography of Sido's life and career, *Sido: Ich will mein Lied zurück* [Sido: I want my song back] his biographer, Marcel Feige, notes, 'Seine Eltern — sein Vater war Deutscher, seine Mutter Inderin — ließen sich früh scheiden' [His parents — his father was German, his

21 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), xxiv; originally published *L'Invention du quotidien. Vol. I. Arts de faire* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1980).

mother Indian — divorced early].²² His name appears frequently in the press and, like many rappers, he laments the media's use of him and his songs as scapegoats for social problems in contemporary German society.

'Street Kid' is his anthem to life lived on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder. Its text defines his identity as conditioned by his street education.

ich bin kein Gangster, kein Killer, ich bin kein Dieb
ich bin nicht grundlos böse, ich bin nur ein Junge von der Straße
kommt mit mir, los ich zeig dir den Kiez [...]
doch wenn du Fleisch nur für dich behältst du Freak
halt es besser keinen bluthungrigen Hund unter die Nase

[I'm not a gangster, not a killer, I'm not a thief
I'm not angry for no reason, I'm just a kid from the street.
Come with me, I'll show you the neighbourhood [...]
But if you think you're gonna keep all the meat for yourself, you freak,
Better not hold it under the nose of a bloodthirsty dog.]

In this song, Sido provides some background for the rage associated with rap and its audience. He answers the question: Why are they so angry? His response takes the form of a direct attack on anyone who has meat and flaunts it in front of the impoverished and hungry street kid. Other lines in the text depict petty theft, for example, stealing a pair of shoes. Sido explains the nature of criminal behaviour and justifies it in terms of the gap between rich and poor. By contrast, the successful rapper's ostentatious display of wealth is cause for celebration — unless acquisitiveness and wealth alienate his fans.

Sido employs violent rhetoric as an artistic tool; his CDs have warning labels about graphic content. Many insist, however, that his fans cannot and do not differentiate between rhetorical and actual violence. In discussing a recent release, *Ich und meine Maske*, Sido strikes back at those who accuse him of glorifying drug use and criminal behaviour. He places responsibility for raising children at the feet of their parents and on the educational system. In defending himself and his music, he insists on its aesthetic rather than its physical commitment to representing a violent sphere. Sido distances himself from the image of the gangsta rapper; he maintains street cred through close connections to his upbringing, but critiques socially

22 Marcel Feige and Sido, *Ich will mein Lied zurück* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2006).



entrenched forms of violence and neglect that he deems worse than rap.²³

Another rapper who in fact embraces the label gangsta accepts the violence of street life. The son of Palestinian refugees, Massiv chose Berlin-Wedding as his turf. His 2006 release 'Ghettolied' [Ghetto Song] catapulted him to fame. His muscular build exemplifies his stage name. Sometimes thought of as a German answer to 50 Cent, Massiv represents the hyper-aggressive gangsta rapper within the political horizons of contemporary global politics. In addition to the almost obligatory tracks about drugs and women, he sings of poor taxi drivers, political refugees, imprisonment, slang and ethnic difference. He is the Arab in handcuffs who observes Ramadan. He uses rap as a vehicle to incite street violence: 'Wer will Krieg, komm, Blut gegen Blut' [Whoever wants war, come on, blood versus blood] he taunts in 'Blut gegen Blut' [Blood versus blood].²⁴ Massiv revels in the representation of violence on the street, yet in context this might be a reasonable response to political and economic conditions of contemporary Germany. Who can get by on 300 euros a month, he demands to know. He attacks George Bush verbally with the number of Iraqi refugees fleeing the war. Global and local rivalries are focused in his lyrics about the street.

Street Subjectivity

The rhetorical and literal engagement in local violence of German-language rap stands in sharp contrast to the street-fighting of the early 1990s. That period bore witness to escalations in violence against visible minorities, encounters between urban radicals and the police as well as frequent anti-immigrant attacks. In the political fall-out of the immediate post-Wall era, punk rock in particular portrayed the embattled street. Then, the enemy was the new German-German state and its police force which evacuated squatted buildings and imposed order on a transient but liberating sense of chaos.²⁵

23 These remarks are based on an interview with Sido, which aired on MTV Europe 17 May 2008.

24 Massiv, 'Blut gegen Blut', *Blut gegen Blut* (Sony BMG Entertainment [Germany], LC 00162, 2006 & 2007). I would like to thank both the artist and his manager for their help.

25 See Patricia Anne Simpson, 'Germany and Its Discontents: The Skeptiker's Punk Corrective', Special Issue of *Journal of Popular Culture*, ed. by Chris Lorey

Rap stakes its claim to the street, but with different combatants, inflecting the debate about national politics by shifting to a global register. Eko Fresh assumes responsibility for policing his own neighbourhood. Sido notes in 'Mein Block' [My block] that the police are ineffectual in his housing complex. Yet even in the commentary on immigration, failed integration, poverty and the erosion of social welfare benefits, rap remains 'authentic' in its insistence on a personal investment in local articulations of global problems. Massiv editorializes this relationship:

Wenn der Mond in mein Ghetto kracht
Das ist wie Strassenkampf, wer hat vor der Straße Angst,
Ich häng mit meinem Herzen und meiner Seele an der Straße dran.

[When the moon cracks into my ghetto
It's like street war, who's afraid of the street,
I love the street with all my heart and soul.]²⁶

Massiv asserts an insoluble bond between the street and his identity. This position, taken in many tracks and assumed by nearly all rap artists, in spite of other differences, is not merely formulaic. The insistence on the paved ground of identity recodes attributes of the national and 'German'. The reliance of rap on the street creates space for subjectivity based on ethnic difference and political critique; it references the potential for violence but channels it through music and personal style. Rap musicians practise 'quotations of voices' in the sense that they differentiate between rhetorical violence and an agenda for popular cultural concepts of national identity separate from sport, citizenship or origin (Certeau, 154).

Some scholars observe that rap music and exaggerated forms of nationalism are mutually exclusive categories, pointing to the origins of rap among the marginalized in the US and its critical stance toward the dominant culture.²⁷ German-language rap, though it originates on the street corners and youth clubs frequented by German-Turkish kids, accommodates a variety of political stances, among them responses to the claim that minority Germans are strangers in their own country. Former East German musicians and nationalist groups make similar assertions of alienation in the genre of rap. Rap can find itself a global

and John Plews, 34.3 (Winter 2000).

26 Massiv, 'Wenn der Mond in mein Ghetto kracht', *Blut gegen Blut* (Sony BMG, LC 00162, 2005).

27 Hannes Loh and Murat Güngör, *Fear of a Kanak Plant: Hiphop zwischen Weltkultur und Nazi-Rap* (Höfen: Hannibal, 2005).



audience by transforming the prevailing concept of the local and national. This potential — and rap's persistent popularity — give voice to the political critique of economic practices that disadvantage the economically disenfranchised in Germany. The insistence of rap culture on the local, combined with its propensity to represent violence, rediscovers the street as a locus of political action. Debate and rational argument that lead to political change inform Jürgen Habermas's public sphere. Responses to the potentially exclusive nature of that sphere come from perspectives that are informed by minority or marginalized social groups, and these change according to geographical and historical circumstance. Rap and hip-hop culture reinvent public debate: they bring issues of ethnic, racial and class discrimination to the table. They do so while noting the violence that debate ostensibly precludes. While rap culture participates for the most part in consumer practices associated with the entertainment industry and late capitalism, it also has the potential to use those corporate structures, in addition to new media and private labels, to reconfigure a fan base into a politicized community. Rap mikes the new German street. Its arguments are stylized and polemical; its message intentionally aggressive and menacing.



Notes on Contributors

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