Walking in the City: The Motif of Exile in Performances by Krzysztof Wodiczko and
Adrian Piper

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ABSTRACT

Walking in the City: The Motif of Exile in Performances by Krzysztof Wodiczko and Adrian Piper

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This thesis investigates two art performances involving walking in the city that are conceptualized as exilic works of art: Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Vehicle* performed in 1973 in Warsaw; and Adrian Piper's *Catalysis* performed from 1970 to 1971 in New York. My contention is that Wodiczko's and Piper's walks in the city can be examined by applying a threefold understanding of exile. First, these important performative artworks made manifest in the form of artistic walks are marginalized within, or exiled from, an institutionalized mainstream art. Second, the artists themselves communicate either personal or metaphorical states of exile. Third, the phenomena of contemporary metropolises, as diverse as the communist Warsaw and the capitalist New York of the 1970s are analyzed as alienating and exilic social dwellings *par excellence* in which most of the inhabitants do not feel "at home".

This paper also summarizes a much longer and more intense conflation of my personal and professional experience with walking. I, myself, am an exile, who literally walked away from a student trip in Florence, Italy. Since that crucial event, I have developed a very special relationship with walking, this most humble human activity that I no longer take for granted. In order to make my writing more conversational I traveled to Poland and the United States to walk the same streets that Wodiczko and Piper walked during their performances with my photo and video cameras. My visual and textual re-tracing of the artists' steps form a creative part of this dissertation. Since I wanted to exhaust the richness of these two exilic art works and to connect them to the contemporary urban experience, I employ my personal writing style and juxtapose it with the photographs I took in Warsaw and New York. These creative reflections on walking that enrich the academic form of expression are enclosed in two attachments following the chapters in which I theoretically analyze Wodiczko's and Piper's walking performance artworks.

Acknowledgements

For Richard

Preface

This is a thesis written by a scholar and an artist engaged in visual representations of *walking* and *talking*. My doctoral research was twofold: on one hand, studio art practice and, on the other, art history and critical theory. My thesis therefore consists of two parts: an art exhibition and an academic thesis.

During my doctoral research I produced a number of artworks related to the themes of my final exhibition and my written thesis topic. My exhibition, entitled *Prosthetic Self* featured only a selection of interdisciplinary artworks and was held at Oboro Art Gallery, located on 4001 Berri Street, suite 301 in Montréal, in March, 2004.

The core of the show consisted of a sculptural-audio installation. In particular, there were a hundred and five pairs of used wooden crutches leaning against the four walls of a small room in the gallery. (Appendix 30). This physical installation was accompanied by a twelve minute and forty five second long, looped narration in English and French (the bilingual script and an audio CD accompany this paper). In addition, outside the installation room, there were four video art works screened on a TV monitor: *Orthoepic Exercise* (1998), *Peripatetic Exercise* (1998), *Exercising with Princess Headgear (Adjustable)* (2000), and *Walking with Arms* (2002); (Appendices 32-35).

Prosthetic Self introduced some of my theoretical and visual preoccupations with the representations of a contemporary identity. The fact that there has been a growing interest in critical theory with the concept of *prosthesis* (*Prosthesis* by David Wills, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of*

Origin by Jacques Derrida, and *Prosthetic Culture. Photography, Memory, and Identity* by Celia Lury, among others), has helped me to visualize a *prosthesis* as an artificial and technological challenge to autonomous and freestanding notions of the *self*. By working with video, performance and installation art, I examine the notion of prosthetic *self*, visualizing its performance in diverse socio-political and cultural contexts.

The art works (sculptures, video, performance and installation art) I produce refer to prosthetics and they open up areas of indeterminacy that speak not only about aesthetics and beauty, but also about power relations. They problematize a formation of the *self* that has always been inscribed within the context of family, community, and nation.

Although I felt my own defection from Poland in 1988 was the beginning of a pilgrimage towards the Promised Land, I metamorphosed into a *perpetuum mobile*.. The compulsion to walk away from communist Poland towards the West was filled with a mythic belief that "life is elsewhere". It was a search for the perfect walk, a journey with no destination. My personal *art of fugue* introduced many harmonic steps and transitions that played intensely without breaks and stopping points. For me putting one foot in front of the other was never about becoming a *flâneur* or a *flâneuse*, it was about survival and I did not look back at the ruins of the iron curtain; a burden engraved in the silenced and humiliated faces of Polish citizens.

I strongly feel that I have always been in some sort of personal and artistic exile but, soon after leaving Poland I became conscious of the fact that the

foreigner is often treated as a cast off subject, an abject that is not allowed agency. As I "walked through" various socio-political systems, I was continually anxious about not being able to perform successfully in adopted political and cultural structures. While the communist system represented to me a false prosthetic constructed over the original socialist idea, the Western capitalist world offered still another fiction about autonomous *self*. My becoming Canadian was marked by profound realization that I needed to read a double discourse and perform accordingly.

Most of the artworks I have produced since 1998 address the reclamation of my body through differing and deferring discourses on loss. In Peripatetic Exercise I walked in impossibly heavy shoes; two cast iron hemispheres with imprints of my feet in the middle of each. In spite of the difficulty of balancing in the shoes I attempt, at the same time, to play the Vivaldi Concerto in A-minor (a piece I learned as a child).

During *Orthoepic Exercise* I walk around the swivel pole with a two-meter long extension of my tongue inserted into my mouth. My beautifully threatening instrument for correct (*ortho*) speech (*orthoepy*) sets up conditions for the war of pronouncing the words rightly. For this piece I performed in the enclosed and unifying space of a soundproof studio. It was a non-place, where the emerging language of violin and metal met as I walked around the swivel pole followed the squeaky sound of an iron tongue weighing twenty four kilograms.

Exercising with Princess Headgear (Adjustable), was performed in a public space, as I was climbing Mount Royal in Montréal. Dressed in black, I

wore a beautiful, yet cumbersome and dangerous copper hat that weighted about ten kilograms.

Walking with Arms, was the fourth interpretation of my walking and took place in each of the four seasons in Montréal's Jarry Park. In this case the prostheses are made out of maple wood and leather. These paradoxical extensions of the arms do not facilitate bodily movement. On the contrary, they represent grotesque attachments that exemplify the very impossibility of undertaking any unrestrained journey through time and space.

By insisting on building *walking* and *talking* prostheses in iron, glass, copper and wood, I wanted to seize the purest meaning of the *self* where meaning is circular and collapses. Constantly performing as an estranged body that moves *in* and *out* of socio-political and cultural frames, I deliberately exercise my prosthetic language by stepping over and over again into a world that both promises and denies.

The written thesis that follows acts as a historical and theoretical complement to my artistic production. I focus on two artists, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Adrian Piper, who were exiles and who performed walking in the city under inhibiting social and political conditions. Their works and sense of commitment have served as an important source of inspiration to me.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to critically investigate the motif of exile in two art works performed in different urban settings, Adrian Piper's *Catalysis*, performed from 1970 to 1971 in New York; and Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Vehicle*, performed in 1973 in Warsaw. My contention is that Wodiczko's and Piper's walks in the city can be examined by applying a threefold understanding of exile. First, these performative artworks made manifest in artistic walks are marginalized within, or exiled from, an institutionalized mainstream art. Second, the artists themselves communicate either personal or metaphorical states of exile. Wodiczko, for example, performs his walks in the streets of his native Warsaw as an artist-in-exile because of the socio-political and cultural restrictions imposed on Polish citizens by the communist government. Adrian Piper, a New York artist, strolls in her metropolis to forcefully communicate personal and racial "banishment from home" as a mulatto woman. Third, the phenomena of contemporary metropolises as diverse as the communist Warsaw and the capitalist New York of the 1970's are examined as alienating and exilic social dwellings *par excellence* in which most of the inhabitants do not feel "at home".

Rationales

There are at least four major rationales for exploring my dissertation topic. The first rationale is to make a meaningful academic comparison between two walking art performances, in terms of their exilic and marginal qualities. Since there are relatively few descriptions and critical writings (including artist and critic accounts) about each performance, it is important to re-examine them by emphasizing the role of exile in each artistic intervention. I needed to get first-hand information about the personal and artistic

raisons d'être that prompted the artists to execute these particular ambulatory art works. Consequently, I arranged personal and electronic interviews with the two performers, presented them with a number of questions related to their walking art works; I compared and contrasted the artists' personal walking experiences *vis a vis* the official and alternative media press releases. The fact that the existing publications on performance art do not fully engage in analyzing the significance of these two walking performances as exilic art works amplified my interest in seriously researching them in terms of their compelling aesthetic and political contents that enrich the understanding of the phenomenon of exile.

The second reason for choosing this particular topic is the fact that Wodiczko's and Piper's walking performances mark significant innovations in their artistic careers. Unlike most of Wodiczko's and Piper's later interdisciplinary artworks, these walking performances are executed by the artists themselves; they communicate, among other things, the artists' remarkable integrity to perform despite constraining socio-political and cultural contexts. It was thirty years ago when the Polish and the American artists first started to walk to redefine the critical status of the minor urban identity. Taking into consideration distinct Eastern European and American historical contexts, I understand these two art walks not only as important *caesuras* within each artists' professional development, but also as powerful and universal artistic statements that still provoke us to rethink the (unresolved) problematics of urban space. It is no coincidence that these urban strolls are ethically and aesthetically engaged. These critical walks in the city that are set at the highest formal and conceptual standards engaged the artists both socially and politically and earned them international respect.

The fact that this topic not only solidifies the years of my graduate research, but also summarizes a much longer and more intense conflation of my personal and professional experience with walking is the third reason for its selection. I, myself, am an exile who literally walked away from a student trip in Florence, Italy. Since that crucial event, I have developed a very special relationship with walking, this most humble human activity that I no longer take for granted; therefore, in my numerous theoretical and artistic investigations I have become involved with the phenomenon of walking and displacement. This document reflects partially on my passionate academic studies, which began in 1986 when I was an Art History student at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, as well as on my migrant walks that took me from Poland to Canada in 1988. It was important to me that one of my major academic documents not only present scholarly research, but also introduce the near twenty years of personal and artistic wanderings *around* and *about* the theme of walking. Since I understand this dissertation as a very special revisiting of my own performative experiences, I have complemented this paper with a personal and creative interpretation of walking. I felt compelled to argue about these conceptual and political art works by applying styles of logos and pathos; so inspired and encouraged by the contemporary theory of Peggy Phelan, a respected performance art critic who argues for performative writing about performance art. I have made a critical and creative contribution to two walking art performances. Phelan claims that creative writing about performance is excessive writing because it "enacts the affective force of the performance event again, as it plays itself out in an ongoing temporality made vivid by the psychic process of distortion" (*Mourning Sex*, p.12). Furthermore, she adds that "performative writing is solicitous of affect even while it is

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nervous and tentative about the consequences of that solicitation" (ibid, p.12). I welcomed the theoretico-affective challenge of re-creating these powerful yet ephemeral art works in my own performative act of writing. In order to make my writing more conversational I traveled to Poland and United States to walk the same streets that Wodiczko and Piper walked during their performances with my photo and video cameras. My visual and textual re-tracing of the artists' steps form a creative supplement to this dissertation. Since I wanted to exhaust the richness of these two exilic art works and connect them to the contemporary urban experience, I employed my personal writing style and juxtaposed it with the photographs I took in Warsaw and New York. These creative reflections on walking that enrich the academic form of expression are enclosed in two separate attachments following the chapters in which I theoretically analyze Wodiczko's and Piper's performance artworks.

The fourth rationale for investigating these particular walking art performances is the fact that there has been a recent increase in the number of representations of walking phenomena in interdisciplinary cultural practice and theory, which inspired me. While doing my "walking" research I realized that there is a growing interest in the contemporary artistic representations of walking that are understood as important socio-political and cultural acts. There have been many exhibitions, catalogues and books published on the subject of walking. Some of the most important international group shows, accompanied by resourceful catalogues, are exemplified by *Walking and Thinking and Walking* at Louisiana Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark (1997); *Ambulations: An Exhibition of Contemporary Works based on the Notion of Walking* at the Lasalle-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore, (1999-2000); *Les figures de la marche: Un siècle*

d'arpenteurs at Musée Picasso in Antibes, France (2000 and 2001); and the traveling *Walk Ways* at American and Canadian art galleries (2002-2004). Some of these exhibitions re-introduce the names of such acclaimed master-walkers as Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, and Francis Alÿs; however, each exhibition also presents younger artists who are making creative contributions to walking. All of the exhibitions and the accompanying catalogues argue for the indisputable importance of walking as one of the major contemporary artistic tropes that can be conceptualized in a rich interdisciplinary fashion. In addition, in the four chapters of *Wanderlust: the history of walking* (2000), American scholar Rebecca Solnit, presents cross-disciplinary studies of the walking phenomena. Even though Solnit's research on walking encompasses a wide spectrum and is directed towards the general public, her conversational presentation informs the reader about the historical importance of the main philosophical, artistic, and social aspects of human walking. In *Marcher, Crée. Déplacements, flâneries, dérives dans l'art de la fin du XXe siècle* (2002), Thierry Davila scrutinizes the urban interventions exemplified by the walking art performances of Gabriel Orozo, Francis Alÿs, and the Stalker group. Davila argues that these three chosen artists exhibit a great interest in moving around the city in "kinesthetic" investigations of urban spaces that can be traced back to the first Situationists' psychogeographic maps and performativity of *dérives*. Last but not least, in *Walkscapes: Walking as Aesthetic Practice* (2003) Francesco Careri, a Stalker group member, posits a philosophical question regarding how the humans create spaces by walking around them. For Careri there are three historical moments in which walking asserts its importance while metamorphosing from the Dadaist *banal* and Surrealist *oneiric* cities through the *playful* and *nomadic* city of the Situationist International to the

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entropic city of Minimal and Land artists such as Robert Smithson. All of these reading are beneficial to understanding walking not only as a physical act of measuring space, but also as a potent metaphor of creating culture. None of these readings, however, introduces the motif of exile as important element of the walking experience.

The Chapters

The paper is organized into four chapters. The first chapter, *Walking in the City*, presents a historical and interdisciplinary overview of the urban walking figure, *the flâneur*, as it was introduced in Charles Baudelaire's literary accounts of modern Paris. I complement the socio-political and cultural significance of the urban stroller, a modern exile, with selected critical writings of Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, and Susan Buck-Morss (among others). The urban walker, the *flâneur*, presents a complex figure, problematized not only as a disinterested Baudelairean voyeur who observes the modern city, but primarily as a marginal city dweller who assumes many alter egos in order to constantly adjust himself/herself to an alienating urban way of living. The *flâneur's* alter egos can be exemplified as a dispossessed intellectual (i.e. an exiled artist), a detective, a prostitute, a ragpicker (a homeless person), a dandy, and a conspirator. Moreover, the phenomena of the modern and the postmodern metropolises are examined as alienating places in which the city dwellers feel exiled from their own homes.

The second chapter, *Walking in Exile*, elaborates on one of the most challenging of the *flâneur's* alter egos: the figure of the contemporary intellectual understood as an exile. Drawing on interdisciplinary texts written by leading contemporary thinkers and exiles such as Edward Said, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, and Homi Bhabha, I problematize walking in exile as mobile, estranged and marginal *flânerie*. Elaborating on

key thoughts put forth by Edward Said in his essay, "Representations of the Intellectual",

I argue that the figure of the contemporary intellectual-exile represents one of the most

provoking and empowering model scholar figures that performs within minor, estranged

and shifting contexts. I complement the theoretical discussion on exile with two examples

from contemporary literature: Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation,* and Sherry Simon's

Hybridité Culturelle. Hoffman is an intellectual exile who moved from Poland to Canada.

This Polish-Canadian writer who exhibits rare sensitivity and intelligence translates for

the reader the complexity of the states of dwelling in primarily linguistic exile. Simon, on

the other hand, a native of Montréal, takes the reader for a walk in Mile-End one of the

city's most culturally diverse neighborhoods. Both writers engage the reader with

informed and passionate styles that eloquently represent the phenomenon of living

between cultures, countries, and languages. Hoffman's and Simon's individual and

professional work with the phenomenon of cultural hybridity greatly complements an

understanding of the exilic figure.

Chapter three, *Walking in Warsaw with the Vehicle*, formally and critically

analyzes Krzysztof Wodiczko's 1970-73 performance in Warsaw, Poland. Wodiczko's

work embodies not only aesthetically beautiful, but also politically engaging art. As it

was dangerous and sometimes illegal to walk ostentatiously in public spaces in

communist Poland, Wodiczko's "walking machine" represents a daring example of

artistic trespassing on the existing political and cultural constraints controlled by the

official state ideology. These formal restrictions imposed on walking in Poland allowed

Wodiczko to stretch the conceptual limits of the urban movement in a way that had never

occurred in other countries. In fact, Wodiczko became a performing figure of an exile in his own homeland.

Chapter four, *Walking in New York as a Catalytic Agent*, introduces and discusses the series of one-year-long (1970-71) courageous and absurd metropolitan strolls in New York by Adrian Piper, an African-American artist. This early New York ambulatory performance communicates the issues of gender and race as experienced by an exiled subject. Piper's *Catalytic* series forcefully questions the nature and the formation of the (racial) self *vis a vis* its social identifications. Moreover, Adrian Piper's minor walks address personal and social fears towards "the other". Her publicly displayed performative acts consisted of walking in the city while, for example, wearing malodorous clothing, a painted T-shirt, balloons attached to her teeth, and a red towel in her mouth. *Catalysis* communicates the limits of individual and group self-preservation in one of the world's biggest metropolises.

Finally, the *Conclusion* critically compares and contrasts the two walking art performances and summarizes the paper's main argument regarding the motif of exile in the two examined performance artworks. An interdisciplinary discussion concludes the dissertation with my closing academic and creative remarks.

Sources

The sources for my thesis are interdisciplinary, as the application of one critical discourse on exilic walks in the contemporary metropolis would present only a partial account of such a rich and moving subject. Therefore, I have applied critical thoughts on walking drawn from literature, philosophy, and cultural theory. My real challenge was to discover how the selected modern and postmodern theories (writings by Walter

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Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Susan Buck-Morss, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Zygmunt Bauman, Homi Bhabha, Julia Kristeva, Michel De Certeau, Edward Said, Peggy Phelan) and creative texts (Charles Baudelaire, Eva Hoffman, Sherry Simon, et al.) can be used to provide a context for the performances executed in such diverse countries as Poland and United States.

Meaningful Walks

The phenomenon of walking was born with human civilization. We tend to take walking for granted, not realizing, perhaps, its long and diverse history. In fact, one of the main physical characteristics that distinguishes humans from animals is the bipedal upright position of the former. Scientists claim that walking on two legs appeared about four million years ago allowing humans to investigate and understand the world differently than do animals. I would like to present a brief overview of walking by organizing it into four groupings: spiritual, philosophical, socio-political and cultural. My contention is that these four conceptual categories of walking reflect critically on the development of human travel by foot that is spiritually, socio-politically, and culturally conditioned.

Pilgrimages

Pilgrimages, portable forms of the world's religions, exemplify the first category of the oldest travels by foot. They constitute spiritual itineraries whose goal is to cleanse one's spirit by walking towards the sacred place. Both the journey to and the reaching of the sacred place are of paramount importance for a pilgrim. Pilgrimages could often take a long time to accomplish and they were often experienced as acts of renunciation of earthy pleasures in order to achieve a state of simple, spiritual purity. These pilgrims, or

"people-in-transit", relied on the donations (food, clothing, money etc.) and hospitality of the people they encountered on their journeys by foot. Different visual and spiritual principles exemplify the diverse forms of spiritual walks. There were, for example, ancient *Great Panathenaea* processions organized in Classical Athens and in Olympia; Islamic walks to Mecca originated in the VIIth century A.D. One of the oldest Christian pilgrimages is exemplified by walks towards Santiago de Compostela in Spain; to the Holy Land in Jerusalem, Palestine; to the Black Madonna in Częstochowa, Poland; to the Madonna of Fatima in Portugal; to the Virgin of Lourdes, France; to St. Peter's grave in the Vatican, Rome, Italy; to diversely diffused sites in the Indian religions; and finally, to Zen pilgrimages and parties at mount Fuji in Japan. The pilgrims, people who are in constant displacement, were perceived as a special category of people. They were called *Homo viator*, "man that travels."

While most pilgrims were ardent believers in their spiritual ends, there were also others who took advantage of the special status of the travelers. In his "Walking"essay, Henry David Thoreau researches an etymology of the English verb "to saunter" and traces its history back to Medieval pilgrims' "holy walks" towards Jerusalem, *la Sainte Terre*. Translation of the French "sans terre" into the English "saunter" literally denotes a person who has no land or home. The "sans terrers" were the medieval wanderers, idlers, and vagabonds who mimicked the pilgrims walking towards the Holy Land. Their home-less walks, sometimes mistaken for "Sainte-Terrers" became a marginalized walking around with no destination. "Sans terrers" desired no place to rest; they were migrant people whose only purpose was to walk incessantly. The phenomenon of real *Sainte Terrers* and the false *sans terrers* lies at the core of the socio-political discourse that

regulated walking in public spaces. While the pilgrims were welcomed on the journey, the others, the homeless wanderers, were not supposed to be helped because they circulated outside of the officially constructed discourse of crusades and pilgrimages. Thoreau seems to defend the very human right to walk freely when he concludes that "every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land" (p. 49). In analyzing the phenomenon of pilgrimages, we should not forget their link to tourism. There are contemporary walks in popular culture, such as the famous (and somewhat spiritually inverted) pilgrimages to Elvis Presley's commodified and tourist-oriented Graceland, home in Memphis, Tennessee. All these spiritual walks and counter-walks, which continue to take place today, speak of the great culturo-spiritual importance placed upon putting one foot in front of the other to achieve a greater state of being.

Finally, there are communities for whom the spiritual understanding of the world is inseparable from walking. Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines*, presents a beautiful literary account of the singing of Australian Aboriginals as they walk the invisible "Dreaming tracks" left behind by their Ancestors during the act of creation. The Aboriginal songlines are not a pilgrimage *per se* because they are inseparable from the Aboriginal way of living; they do not manifest any faith organizing a sacred journey. Still, this poetically and spiritually charged delineation of space presents a powerful example of walking that plays a critical part in the mythic re-enactment of the world whose end is largely unknown to humans.

Walks in Philosophical Practice and Theory

The second category of walking offers numerous anecdotes and texts that relate to the philosophical practice and theory. Meditations on bodily movement versus immobility were important in Aristotle's peripatetic teachings in ancient Athens. From the Greek word "peripatos", meaning to walk around the colonnades, the famous Peripatetic School was set up by the Greek philosopher and became the first "mobile" school where two principal human activities, *thinking* and *walking* were linked together. Although Aristotle was not primarily concerned with investigating walking in his philosophical writings, his diverse philosophico-scientific and artistic teachings "walked" around themes that set new philosophical paradigms for many centuries.

According to a later philosophical anecdote, Immanuel Kant's daily walks after dinner in Königsberg were so precise that people could adjust their watches according to Kant's promenades. While Kant did not write explicitly about the importance of walking (even though his promenades were an important part of his daily routine), Jean Jacques Rousseau enjoyed walking and praises it in numerous passages in his *Confessions*. Rousseau recounts that:

> there is something about walking which stimulates and enlivens my thoughts. When I stay in one place I can hardly think at all; my body has to be on the move to set my mind going; my mind works with my legs (*The Confessions*, p. 382).

His last unfinished book, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, written in 1778, is entirely devoted to walking, which is at once the main inspiration for his philosophical thoughts and a soothing activity that helps him to come to terms with his difficult life. Rousseau composes his philosophico-literary and personal reflections on walking while strolling in

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the Parisian parks; the activity that soothes Rousseau's troubled mind and puts his body

in a quasi-mesmerizing dream state. Moreover, it seems that the philosopher wanted to

achieve a pure and disinterested state of mind while walking with no precise purpose. He

states that such movement as walking is necessary because there is simply no life without

movement. He continues that it is important to maintain balance while putting one foot in

front of the other. Furthermore, Rousseau claims that there should be neither too much

repose nor too much movement, because walking should be done at a constant intensity.

Rousseau simply wants to be in control of his "self"; he does not want to be preoccupied

by his thoughts while enjoying the movement of his body. Such a disinterested state of

walking generates the sweet sensation of reverie. While on one of his walks, Rousseau:

> plunged into a thousand confused but delicious reveries,
> which without having any well-determined object, nor
> consistency, did not fail to be in my opinion a hundred
> times preferable to all that I have found sweetest in what
> are called the pleasures of life (*Reveries of the Solitary
> Walker*, p.109).

Thinking and walking is extremely present in Søren Kierkegaard's writing in

which he recalls forced walks in a room with his father, and the later importance of his

long solitary walks in the streets of Copenhagen. Edmund Husserl also argues for a close

relationship between walking and thinking, when, in many of his phenomenological

works he stresses the importance of movement as opposed to immobility. In Husserl's

view it is when we walk, when we are being displaced, that we gain a better

understanding of our bodies in relation to the world rather than when we are not moving

through space.

The phenomenological understanding of movement can be found in the deconstructive thought of Jacques Derrida. The French philosopher's re-reading of the history of philosophy presents one of the most significant contemporary intellectual contributions to existing philosophical paradigms. It is always a movement of the other element (often overlooked by philosophy), the absent, the missing, the marginal, the silent, and the imperceptible that is given a greater power in deconstructing the existing *status quo* (Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*). Even if our bodies might not necessarily walk to experience the world, it seems that our minds walk tirelessly by adapting to ever-changing and shifting environments of mobile deconstructive thoughts.

Walking as a Tool for Change

Walking has also been employed as a powerful tool advocating political and social change. Collective acts of walking seek to empower people to *walk* and *talk* freely in situations where the political and social norms are imposed by the ruling powers. Such examples of socio-political walks include military marches, labor strikes, parades, and diverse political demonstrations, to name a few. Another poignant example is the Argentinean women's resistance to the official junta regime. Since public gatherings were not allowed in the city, a group of brave women decided to walk counter-clockwise in Buenos Aires' Piazza de Mayo to protest against the cruelty of the Argentinean regime towards its citizens.

Another powerful example of walking, understood as a political resistance during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., is the famous walk of Black people from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. The predominantly Black group walked for four days and four nights to protest the racial discrimination and violence of the American political and

social systems. Although the walkers faced opposition and resistance along the way, the walk culminated with a crowd of twenty-five thousand people in front of the statehouse in Montgomery, and was a significant factor in the decision to issue the 1965 Voting Rights Act (Charles Fager, *Selma 1965. The March that Changed the South*).

Yet another example of a solitary yet strong walking figure in American history is that of Mildred Norman Ryder. She called herself "Peace Pilgrim" because she used walking as a means to promote peace during troubling political times in the United States. In order to make such a committed and admirable life decision, she had to virtually annihilate her own personal life. Over the period from 1953 to 1981, Mildred Ryder walked (accepting only occasional car rides) over twenty five thousand kilometers. She promoted peace, and in her public speeches she protested against the U.S. military actions during the McCarthy era, the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Last, but not least, there are many examples of socially engaging walks that aim to raise money to find cures for diverse illnesses. These predominantly urban walkways are primarily a North American phenomenon. These charity fundraising walks have had and continue to have great success in raising money for good causes with the number of participants increasing each year.

Walking in Culture and Visual Arts

Walking was born with human civilization; careful examination of this phenomenon reveals the desire to represent walking in even the very earliest of visual artworks. From the Paleolithic stick man, a hunter drawn in the Lascaux cave, through the ancient cultures of the Americas, Africa, and Europe, there has always been grand effort put into the representation of walking. The Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and

Classical artistic experimentation with diverse walking poses and the fascination with this basic human movement continues, and is primarily expressed in drawing, printmaking, painting, and sculpture.

Prior to the late XVIIth century it was usually the wealthy upper classes who would leisurely stroll in specially adapted and enlarged interiors such as mansions and galleries.

The history of European gardens is inseparable from the history of walking, since gardens developed as a natural extension towards making walking more adventurous and pleasant. Gardens started to be developed mainly as an exterior forum for walking for exercise and for pleasure. In *Wanderlust*, Rebecca Solnit states that the architecture of the medieval garden had high walls because individuals were less interested in walking in the garden than in resting and in lying down. Later, medieval gardens yielded to the much more open and elaborate design of the paths of the Renaissance walking trails. The ostentatiously cultivated gardens of the Baroque period slowly developed into the Classical and Romantic "wild" gardens with many architectural surprises or follies such as ruins, bridges, lakes etc. However, it was in the second half of the XVIIth century when walking in nature came to be seen as more of a general social practice. In some of the masterly artistic representations of nature we can admire a walking subject embedded in many of Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa's paintings, to name but a few.

The most elaborate and beautifully constructed gardens, however, could not satisfy some of the more curious and creative spirits such as Dorothy and William Wordsworth. They became some of the first Europeans to venture into nature and make

walking an important aesthetic experience. Dorothy and William wrote many accounts of their walking tours. William Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* is one of the most beautiful Romantic poems that translates the pleasures of walking in nature. Wordsworth is seen as the poet of nature because the he re-wrote the poem over a period of several years in order to find the most just word to describe each of the particulars experienced when walking in the natural environment "which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country" (James Averill, p.ix).

The pleasurable states of mind described in Wordsworth's accounts of walking in natural sites can be illustrated by some of the Romantic painters' representations of the solitary walking figures contemplating nature. One of the best examples is a painting by the German Caspar David Friedrich that represents the subject's meditation on a transcendental landscape. His melancholic painting entitled *Monk at the Sea* displays a sublime instance of the individual walking towards and abandoning himself to the overpowering forces of nature (Appendix 1).

While on one hand, there were excursions to admire infinite natural phenomena, there exist on the other, modern metropolises that became sites where individuals have strong aesthetic feelings. Since the Romantic period the phenomenon of walking has undergone a more scientific and aesthetic scrutiny; with the technological advancements of the modern era and a growing number of large urban metropolises, there occurred a shift from the previous solitary walks in nature to the more frequent solitary and group strolling in the city. In fact, walking as a cultural phenomenon, and as a full-fledged cultural act was not known until the Romantic era. With the birth of Modernity and urbanism, walks in the city began to replace walks in nature.

Walking in Painting and Photography

From XIXth century painters and photographers showed interest in urban walking figures. Paris, the modern European metropolis *par excellence*, became a city where walking was a positive image that was valorized in many visual representations.

There are several parallels that can be drawn between the painterly and photographic representations of the Parisian walking figure. For example, Gustave Caillebotte's painting *Paris: Rainy Day* from 1877 can be compared with Eugène Atget's *Marchand d'abat-jour,* taken between 1899-1900 (Appendix 2). Even though the former painting depicts a walker strolling through the streets self-confidently, and the latter represents a disappearing Parisian *petit métier*, a seller of lampshades, both walkers seem to be lost in the middle of the modern deserted proscenium of large Parisian boulevards. Another example shows *Ragpicker* painted by Edouard Manet and *Ragpicker* photographed by Atget, each of which represent a homeless beggar-philosopher, and dispossessed urban spectators whose anonymous walks become visualized as the marginalization of certain unwanted populations in the XIXth century metropolis (Appendix 3). The modern walker, the Baudelairean *flâneur*, strolls the streets out of necessity and becomes a tragic dispossessed hero of the new urban order. In addition, the interdisciplinary movement of surrealists with such literary works as Louis Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* and Breton's *Nadja* elevate the modern city to a dreamy and unconscious phenomena where *sur-real* things might happen.

Walking in Science and Art

The mechanics of walking always interested scientists and artists. With the invention of photography it became possible to freeze an image, to capture and thus

dissect a walking movement. Two modern photographers, Edward Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey made extensive photographic studies of human and animal locomotions. Among many photographs they took, there are series of detailed chronophotographs of moving bodies, legs and feet (Appendix 4). Their scientific-artistic contribution to studies of walking became important to visual arts. Futurists', Dadaists', Surrealists' and Situationists' creative works, among others, explore the theme of walking and movement through time and space (Appendix 5 and 6).

There is a particular photographer, Albert Londe, who offers a different type of photographic inquiry about walking (Appendix 7). Asked by Dr. Paul Richer to document his patients with walking problems at the Salpêtriére hospital, Londe produces documentation of hundreds of photographs organized according to the specific illness. The photographs were enclosed in the book *Traité Pratique de la Photographie,* published in Paris in 1896. Similar to Muybridge and Marey, Londe used a chronophotographic technique, but he used it to classify the other way of walking: the pathological, unnatural way of moving one's feet. While Muybridge and Marey's photographs represent more scientific studies of walking, Londe's photographs communicate uncanny visualization of walking staged in the hospital's courtyard. The photos suggest a strange relationship between a patient walking in the awkwardly large hospital gown and a supporting nurse. Both documented figures take their uneasy steps on a specially prepared prop: a hospital carpet. In fact, these "curiosity photographs" go further to marginalize the unhealthy act of walking by producing an awkward visual document. Consequently, Londe's photographs classify the sick walking figures (marginalized images) against the healthy and visually desirable images that are officially

acceptable and publicly circulating (*Les Chefs-D'Œuvre de la Photographie dans les Collections de l'École des Beaux-Arts*).

Performance Art

Although it is marginalized within mainstream culture, I found performance art to be one of the most provocative art forms that defines human culture. Therefore, I became particularly interested in performances that challenge the notion of walking in urban spaces. In order to engage in a critical discourse about performance art, many contemporary artists and cultural critics employ diverse interdisciplinary sources to tackle the uniqueness of this postmodern art form. Since performance art questions existing art historical discourse by asserting its new artistic and theoretical presence around the 1960's, it can no longer be evaluated by employing canonical aesthetic standards. Moreover, performance art remains a marginal and exilic art form, even though it has started to be acknowledged and included in mainstream art.

Performance Art in Contemporary Theory

I would like to refer to two contemporary theoretical discourses that problematize performance art as a very special art form. In particular, deconstructive ideas of Jacques Derrida, and Peggy Phelan's interdisciplinary contribution to understanding performance art help to further problematize performance as exilic art form.

Exilic and Itinerant Thoughts of Jacques Derrida

My contention is that Derrida's philosophy presents a case of exilic and itinerant philosophy because it is about intellectual displacement and subversions of the key metaphysical concepts of the Western thought. The contemporary thinker does not want to define another fixed philosophical system; instead, he constantly interrogates his own

deconstructive method. He sees deconstruction as a movement of "a double gesture, a double science, a double writing" ("Signature, Event Context", p.329) and of "overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated" (p.329). Derrida's critical input here is exilic and performative because his itinerant signature welcomes new intellectual challenges that stand in opposition to institutionalized yet immobile philosophical opuses. Since the Derridian philosophy of "reading the philosophers in a certain way" ("Structure, Sign and Play in the discourse of Human Sciences", p. 885) presents itinerant thought *par excellence* (hence his philosophical insistence on mobile tropes such as differance, iterability, destinerance, supplement, undecidability, etc.) it becomes an important tool for conceptualizing other traveling activities such as performance art. The first Derridian text, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences," was written in 1966 during the uncertain socio-cultural and political times in which performance art was also asserting itself as a new art form, a fact that provided a ground for intellectual and artistic exchanges and influences between these two areas.

Arguing for a deconstructive and exilic structure embedded within performance art, I will refer briefly to Derrida's interview conducted by Peter Brunette and David Wills and published as "The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida". In the discussion, the French philosopher is challenged by delimiting the nature and the properties of the visual arts. There has perhaps always been a certain uneasiness on the part of the artists and art critics about subscribing to interdisciplinary and constantly evolving performance art works under the academic title of "visual arts". The open-ended discipline of performance art employs diverse aspects of artistic and non-artistic elements

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(drawing, painting, sculpture, music, dance, theater, video, film, new media, and virtually every aspect of every day etc.), is conceptually closer to the Derridian definition of *spatial arts* than to the existing stiff terminology of the visual arts. Derrida argues for his original nomenclature of arts in the following way:

> The general question of the spatial arts is given prominence, for it is within a certain experience of spacing, of space, that resistance to philosophical authority can be produced. In other words, resistance to logocentrism has a better chance of appearing in these types of art ("The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida" p.10).

Performance art not only engages our eyes, it creates a whole new context in which the mobile body is staged and perceived in a different way than most objects and subjects represented in other forms of visual arts. Performance art is very much about space not only because it envelops a physical (or virtual) space, but, most importantly, because its representation is temporal and citational. This charged representation of the body is explained by Derrida's notion of ontological presence, a notion upon which Peggy Phelan elaborates. The performing body is experienced via a deconstructive understanding of the limits of its own representation. It is also a body that, in a certain metaphoric way, communicates marginal and exilic experiences of the performing artist. Derrida explains:

> The body is an experience in the most unstable sense of the term; it is an experience of frames, of dehiscence, of dislocations ("The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida" p.16).

Derrida explains that Western philosophical axioms attempt to represent a body in its full presence, thus stabilizing the subject as an autonomous perceiving entity. However, unlike other canonical examples of visual art works, such as drawing, painting, sculpture,

and architecture, performance art is about the disappearance of the body and an insistence on the temporality of a performative event that reinforces subject's anxiety to seize the authentic "self". In other words, the performing body is in a constant state of exile that engages the viewer in a discursive way. Since performance art examines the limits of its artistic discourse, it functions as a complex text. "There is text", Derrida says, "because there is always a discourse in the visual arts" ("The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida" p.15). The philosopher is interested in the polysemic nature of creating and translating representation in the arts. The plurality of tones establishes important relationships between things and creates "differential tones". Derrida argues that the experience of the beautiful is linked to a differential tone, in other words, it can only be experienced through the plurality of an aesthetic experience. Meditating on the nature of the beautiful experience, Derrida says:

> It can happen only with you - as is the case with the signature [....] - and at the same time you have nothing to do with it. Thus you are dead; it does without you [...] That is beauty; it's sad, mourning ("The Spatial Arts: An Interview with Jacques Derrida" p.23).

In addition, the philosopher says that spatial arts are silent, but their mutism produces "an effect of full presence" (p.12). This is a critical trait of the arts because in the artistic "silence" resides the greatest power to oppose a dominant logocentrism. Inherent in spatial art is the resistance to official authority that can produce a different kind of artistic counter-dialogue. The fact that the first performances of the 60's functioned outside the official art discourse, and were thus an exilic art form *par excellence*, marked them with an "ontologically confrontational character" (p.13). The signature of the artistic event is always proceeded by a countersignature, that is a context that prepares and then justifies

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an artwork as an important cultural and social event. Performance art, by becoming a new type of countersignature, put into crisis the existing and officially accepted cultural *status quo;* it revisited the aesthetic codes and reestablished the new ones. Such a deconstructive reading of the arts opens up a great number of possibilities in understanding the limits of the performative aesthetic discourse.

Performative Writing on Metonymic Body by Peggy Phelan

In her informed discussion on performance Peggy Phelan is greatly influenced by deconstruction, psychoanalysis and literary studies. Her interdisciplinary way of writing creates a highly influential performative act of re-creating new types of performance art works. Phelan employs some deconstructive tenets in her critical contribution regarding the phenomenon of performance. In *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (first edition in 1993) and *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (1997) Phelan establishes well-respected scholarship that carefully examines the notion of performance. There are only a few examples of performance art *stricto sensu* upon which Phelan draws in her books. She understands the performative act in a broad philosophical sense, the act that includes active and thoughtful engagement in experiencing artistic and non-artistic events.

This respected performance theorist offers not only an insightful critique of performance art, but also sets an example of writing about it in a performative way. According to Phelan, there is no need to repeat a performative event by describing it from memory. She argues for enacting the performance in an informed yet creative way. Her own performative writing presents an engaging, well-composed literary style that skillfully introduces and juxtaposes personal (sometimes very autobiographical) accounts

and criticism with the theoretical conceptualizations of the selected key contemporary thinkers. Phelan summarizes the critical character of performance art as non-reproducible (it functions outside the commercialized market), asserting itself through disappearance (she understands the body in Derridian sense as a "supplement"), and through temporal, irreparable artistic action that cannot be recorded or documented in any way. I am particularly interested in Phelan's elaboration on the disappearance of the body in performance art, because she offers one of the best examinations of the key aspects of live art. Even though Phelan does not explicitly focus on exiled or exilic qualities of performance art, her thought-provoking theory of a metonymic understanding of the performing body not only acknowledges the marginal qualities of performance art, but also desires to transcend the exilic states inherent in performance art. By opposing the metaphorical and metonymical understanding of performance art, Phelan argues that the employment of metonymy displaces the performing body and marks it as loss. While metaphor works in a comparative fashion, performing towards the holistic representation of the subject, metonymy is a trope that fragments the subject by generating the meaning contingent upon a shifting context. In particular, Phelan recounts:

> Metaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive; it works by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference; it turns two into one. Metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement (*Unmarked: the politics of performance* p.150).

It seems that this very insistence of performance art on introducing the body that was veiled in art practices before 1960's, is also a recognition that it cannot be authentically and holistically represented as a free-acting agent. The temporality of the bodily

performance understood as a representational addition through the use of metonymic tropes conveys the exilic qualities marked by the loss and continuous displacement of the performing subject. In this paradoxical assertion and disappearance of the acting body there lies, perhaps, the greatest artistic strength of performance art.

Walking in Contemporary Art

Since the 1960's, many artists have been engaging formally and/or conceptually with the theme of walking. The critical nature and characteristics of performance art will be explored by contemporary artists who, conscious of the ontological instability of the performative event, engage in a creative way to generate new aesthetic meanings. The following selection of walking art performances illustrates both daring and engaging performative countersignatures, whose artistic walks become critical *caesuras* for the advancement of postmodern art. Some of these performances convey strong exilic characteristics when a performer is represented as an artist in exile; the performative actions are often executed in deserted or alienating city spaces. I will introduce these performances according to four walking categories to show the breadth of contemporary walking art works.

I will introduce and briefly discuss eight exemplary walking art performances that were executed since the 1960's in diverse socio-political and cultural contexts. All the selected artworks relate to and critically comment on spiritual, philosophical, socio-political, and/or aesthetic concerns. Although it can be argued that each performance art work draws on four critical aspects, I will discuss Daniel Buren's and Milan Knížak's actions mainly as a response to the socio-political context; Richard Long's, Marina Abramović's and Ulay's works as those that raise spiritual questions; Vito Acconci's and

Sophie Calle's performances as philosophical meditations on the contemporary urban dwelling; and finally, Janet Cardiff's and Annette Weintraub's walks as primarily examining the question of aesthetics as challenged by the use of technology.

Socio-political contexts in Daniel Buren and Milan Knižak

Daniel Buren's early example of performance art from 1967 with two *Sandwichmen* took place around the building of the Parisian Contemporary Art Museum as part of the *Salon de Mai* group painting show (Appendix 8). The performance consisted of two men, dressed conservatively in black suits, who carried striped billboards attached to their bodies. The men walked for one full day outside the Museum. Their billboards did not convey any specific messages; they were painted with green and white vertical stripes. The great irony of this performance lies in playing a free and disinterested city walker, an artist/*flâneur* who produces nothing. The *Sandwichmen's* walk problematizes the strolls of dispossessed walkers who used to walk in the same city almost one century ago. In a modern consumer society where everything seems to be for sale, there is a danger that even one own's subjectivity and freedom might become a bargain.

The other socio-politically engaging walking series was performed in communist Prague in the early 1960's by Milan Knižak. This controversial performer, whose brave *Demonstration for all the Senses* was presented in the streets of Prague in 1964 and consisted of walking, falling, sleeping, and lying down on the streets, challenged the social codes of behavior in public communist spaces (Appendix 9). His public performances were always nonconformist because Knižak wanted to defy the political system that was imposing oppressive rules on artistic freedom. His uncompromising art

and lifestyle made him one of the bravest Eastern European performers. Knižak paid a high price for his choice of living; he was expelled from different Czech universities, arrested, and imprisoned several times in his life.

While Buren's walk in Paris challenged the Western state apparatus, Knižak's acting out in Prague's streets defied the Eastern communist system. Both performances are examples of political counter-signing of public space, of questioning the political system that stands in opposition to the lived reality. These vulnerable walking bodies presented the only alternative to the official socio-political and cultural systems. Buren and Knižak employed the metonymic negation of their own (temporary) presence trying to resist the politics of meaningless reproducible culture. Their performance art works introduced a different way of looking at and making art in a context in which the communist or capitalist systems promoted conformist and easily reproducible art works.

Spirituality in the works of Richard Long, Marina Abramović and Ulay

There are other performers whose walks examine the question of the spiritual in nature. Richard Long, for example, in one of his early performances consisting of repeating walking a line on the grass in 1967, presents a beautiful work of the absent performing body (Appendix 10). This minimal intervention in Somerset field can be related to the search for the spiritual experience of a subject. Just as any repetitive action can lead to a mesmerizing state that puts one's body into a trance, the repetitive walking experience in nature represents the same artistic urge to go beyond a given reality. Long's work was documented in a black and white photograph, which became the only object testifying to his ritual- based, private performance.

A different kind of walk on the borders of the natural and cultural is presented by Marina Abramović's and Ulay's walk on the Chinese Wall in 1988 entitled *The Lovers*; a Wall that is over six thousands kilometers long. The artists commence their journey separately: Marina started to walk from the East and Ulay from the West, from the Gobi desert (11). They were to meet each other in the middle of the Wall and marry, to symbolically mark a long-awaited ceremony between two performing partners. It is interesting that the Wall was built by the Chinese Emperors to keep strangers out of China, yet Marina and Ulay were determined to go through painstaking international negotiations to obtain permission to walk this human wonder. The resulting photos and beautifully shot film on location became an important part of this difficult and quasi-sublime walking experience. After the walk was completed, Marina and Ulay left each other to start new personal and artistic lives. Marina and Ulay wrote extensively about their walking experiences and interacted with locals, asking them about the legends and the mythical stories about this impressive architectural structure. Even though it was an exhausting physical experience, it was also a ritual-based walk. The experience of walking the wall was very important for both artists; however, it was only Marina who made subsequent spiritual and object-based art works following the arduous three month long experience of walking over the wall (Marina Abramović and Ulay, *The Lovers*).

Philosophical Meditations in Vito Acconci's and Sophie Calle's Works

The third pair of performances that touch predominantly (but not exclusively) on the philosophical aspect of walking are Vito Acconci's and Sophie Calle's ambulations in New York and Paris. Both performances involve walking as following someone or as being followed. In 1969 Acconci follows a pedestrian chosen at random in New York as

if playing a detective who has no clear object in mind. He follows a person until he/she enters a private space and then he chooses someone else as his object (Appendix 12). Acconci needs a scheme, he needs to follow someone as if wanting to annihilate himself as a subject who has a purposeful reason for dwelling in a metropolis. In his written accounts about the performance he states that he wanted to "step out of himself" (Acconci, *Following Piece*, p.31) by following someone else's itinerary. Acconci seems to respond to the concept of the lost aura of the postmodern walker in the city. He reinforces his artistic activity with compulsive walking exercises that transform him into a tragic and homeless figure of the postmodern *flâneur*.

Sophie Calle, on the other hand, in a walking performance from 1981 entitled *La Filature (The Shadow)* asked her mother to hire a detective to follow her in Paris. After the performance was completed she gathered the photos that the detective took of her as well as his and her notes taken about the work. She displayed the "evidence" of being followed as objective information documenting her intersubjective and extremely self-conscious performance (Appendix 13). These two performance art works are very much about the disappearance of the subject; they are "spurs of memory" that can be activated by making a different kind of performative gesture.

Phelan informs us that "performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance" (*Unmarked: the politics of performance* p. 146). I find the performative retracing of someone else's footsteps to be a beautiful act of creative writing. Among other things, it expresses the innate human desire to translate a given text ("text" as understood in Derridian philosophical discourse) and to perform it. It

also presents an empowering gesture of the subject that decides to countersign a text within which he/she has always already been inscribed. Artistic walking in the city calls for a particular kind of writing; because the performative texts cannot be always visible and easily perceptible in the thicks and thins of city language. They invite a different kind of meditation on the state of contemporary art. The task of decoding the language of the walks is not an easy one, especially as their elusive status seem to break away from well-formed discourses. Further, it is impossible to talk about performance art without considering a context in which it is generated, as well as a crucial subject/object constitution that defines it. These two performers, Acconci and Calle, walk in contemporary metropolises, places that are *eo ipso* complex texts, which, and while offering many possibilities and interpretations, also challenge the subject's freedom to act.

Technically Mediated Performances in Janet Cardiff and Anette Weintraub

Last, but not least, I would like to introduce two more walking art performances that are technologically mediated. These art works are executed by Janet Cardiff in an interactive audio work entitled *Missing Voice (Case Study B)* from 1999, and by Annette Weintraub in her creation of a website entitled *Pedestrian* in 1997. Both works rely upon technology to enhance the physical walking experience. Cardiff, for example, composes a carefully scripted story that she records on CD and juxtaposes with other audio tracks (environmental and other sounds). The participant literally wears it while walking in the city, listening to the prerecorded narration and following Cardiff's instructions that direct the participant where to walk and where to pause. The *Missing Voice(Case Study B)* presents one of Cardiff's layered stories that occurs in London, England. It starts at the

White Chapel Library and takes the beholder out into the streets. The environmental city sounds recorded on the CD both attract the listener to and alienate from the actual urban context. Weintraub's interactive website piece, on the other hand, can be experienced by playing CD-ROM or by connecting to the following internet address: "http://somewhere.org/Turb/turbsite/turb-nc.htm." Weintraub invites the beholder to walk in a virtual agora built of 0 and 1 binary switches. The participant, immobilized at his/her computer, experiences the limits of the simulated urban walk in a virtually designed agora. He/she participates by moving the computer's mouse and by clicking the cursor on the highlighted icons to "move along." Cardiff's and Weintraub's art works do not comment exclusively on aesthetics; rather, since they involve the question of technology, they challenge even further the limits of performative representation. They introduce a new, interactive media element as an aesthetic category in perceiving and evaluating art. Introduction of the performing body through technological mediation makes these two art works further fragment the body by highlighting its performative limits. What is particularly at stake with technologically supported art performances is the further intellectualization of aesthetic pleasure that makes the judgement of taste conceptual rather than purely subjective. The postmodern countersignature of performance as "this is art" is about a conceptual play of ideas that are often socio-politically and culturally conditioned. This is one of the reasons why the question of performance art presents a challenging and thought-provoking art form and does not seek to enclose itself within prescribed and preconceived ideas.

In this introduction I have presented the thesis statement, its purpose, rationale and main research sources. I have outlined my paper, briefly introducing its five main

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chapters. I have presented an overview of the history of walking, organized into four distinct categories, and have subsequently applied these categories to a discussion of eight contemporary works of performance art that involve walking in both urban and non-urban settings. While referring to two theoretical discourses regarding philosophy and art, I have shown that performance art, as an art form that emerged in the 1960s, displays exilic characteristics, as it is marginalized by being constantly displayed by and within mainstream art. To justify this claim I have applied Jacques Derrida's and Peggy Phelan's engaging theories, written from deconstructive and interdisciplinary critical positions. The introductory remarks argue that the phenomenon of exile, understood either in a literal sense as banishment from home or in metaphoric and symbolic ways as marginalization and alienation from officially and socio-culturally accepted norms, does not have to be perceived negatively. On the contrary, acknowledgment of and working from the exilic place can impress an empowering meaning. As I briefly discussed in an overview of two performative theories (Derrida, Phelan) and in a description of eight walking art performances, the exilic qualities of performance art play in favor of the artists who manage to transcend difficult alienating contexts of their socio-cultural and political contexts.

The next chapter, *Walking in the City*, introduces and critically analyzes the nature and main characteristics of the figure of the modern urban walker, the *flâneur*. This particular city stroller was presented for the first time in Charles Baudelaire's literary accounts and was later examined in Walter Benjamin's, Michel de Certeau's, and Susan Buck-Morss' critical re-readings of the solitary urban traveler. Following critical Benjaminian thought, I will argue that the *flâneur*, who assumes diverse marginalized

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alter egos, is an exilic figure. He/she is not welcome to participate in mainstream urban life. Finally, metropolis, a phenomenon of modern and postmodern architecture will be analyzed as an increasingly uncanny and alienating place of the city dwellers and especially of the urban minorities.

Chapter One – Walking in the City

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of walking in the city as exemplified by the figure of the *flâneur*. I will introduce the literary beginnings of the *flâneur* and the cultural and socio-political contexts in which it emerged in the middle of the XIXth century. I will argue that the figure of the *flâneur* was historically and artistically represented as marginalized and exilic. The phenomenon of *flânerie* will be discussed in selected Modern and Postmodern theoretical texts regarding the notion of the urban stroller. Since "the *flâneur* is a creation of Paris", as Benjamin claims (*Return of the Flâneur*, p. 263), I analyze the nature and characteristics of this urban stroller by applying some of the best of Charles Baudelaire's and Walter Benjamin's creative and critical writings on the Parisian city walker. I enrich their texts with selected contemporary writings on urban walking by such writers as Susan Buck-Morss, Michel de Certeau, and Elizabeth Wilson. The analyzed readings give significance to an exilic walking figure who remaps the modern city. Even though most of Baudelaire's and Benjamin's critical texts concern Paris, the act of walking in other metropolises also acquires a paramount importance in defining the limits of moving through urban spaces.

A *flâneur* does not exist without a city, and a city does not exist without a *flâneur*. Thus the phenomenon of walking in the city will be also analyzed by taking into consideration the uneasy social and architectural contexts of the modern metropolis. It was with the growth of modern cities in the middle of the XIXth century that contemplation of the sublime spectacle shifted from observing the natural to observing urban phenomena. This emerging new urban stage for awe-inspiring experience will be

examined as an alienating place where the urban strollers have strong aesthetic feelings. The socio-architectural order of modern cities produces a new type of stroller who questions the limits of free urban movement. Thus the modern metropolis will be primarily presented as an alienating and exilic place for city dwellers.

Etymology of the Word *Flâneur*

In her informative essay, entitled "Invisible Flâneur," Elizabeth Wilson examines the early uses of the word. The fact that the origins of the word are uncertain yet the first dictionary definitions support the gendered meaning of *flâneur* is very critical for Wilson. She claims that the XIXth century Larousse Encyclopaedia already two gendered entries. There are definitions of both *flâneur* and *flâneuse*. The latter denotes "a kind of reclining chair [...] it looks like an extended deck chair, and welcomes its occupant with womanly passivity" ("Invisible Flâneur", p.76). In spite of the fact that there is no clear etymology of the word *flâneur*, Wilson writes that Larousse provides a long entry on *flâneur* stating that its linguistic provenance comes from the Irish word "libertine"[1].

Wilson's feminist reading of the XIXth century origins and social functions of the flâneur makes her examine the identity of the modern stroller as a typically masculine activity of "loitering, frittering away of time"(p. 62). The *flâneur* presents the male figure in the Parisian metropolis whose favourite activities consist of disinterested walking around Paris, observing the urban marvels and the crowd:

> The flâneur [...] could exist only in the great city, the
> metropolis, since provincial towns would afford too
> restricted a stage for his strolling and too narrow a field for
> his observations. [...although] the majority of flâneurs were
> idlers, there were among them artists, and [...] the

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[1] An essay, "Invisible Flâneur" is part of the *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* book edited by Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson. In her essay, Wilson presents a feminist critique of gendered Modernist spaces, thereby examining the phenomenon of the flâneur in the context of the empowered male figure, while his female counterpart, the *flâneuse*, is presented as powerless walker not only in Modern, but also in Postmodern public spaces.

idlers, there were among them artists, and [...] the multifarious sights of the astonishing new urban spectacle constituted their raw material ("Invisible Flâneur" p. 62).

Wilson follows a historical development of the term *flâneur* by examining its earliest literary uses. More specifically, she points to the novels by Balzac, Zola, Proust, and Dickens in which the city strollers play the main literary characters. Further, she examines in greater depth an anonymous French pamphlet from 1806 that introduces the figure of the *flâneur* in the context of Bonaparte's era. A passage from the pamphlet entitled *Le Flâneur au salon ou M.Bon-Homme: examin joyeux des tableaux, mele de vaudevilles* exhibits some of the key characteristics of the *flâneur* that will become critical in Baudelaire's and Benjamin's later scrutiny of the same subject:

> No one knows how M. Bonhomme [the *flâneur*] supports himself, but he is said to be a rentier, seemingly set free from familial, landowning or mercantile responsibilities, to roam Paris at will. The flâneur spends most of his day simply looking at the urban spectacle; he observes in particular new inventions: for example he stops in Place Louis XIV to examine the signals of the marine telegraph, although he understands nothing about them ("Invisible Flâneur" p. 62).

Wilson explains that M. Bonhomme engages in aesthetic activities because either he was an artist or he associated himself with the artists in the modern public spaces such as salons, boulevards, arcades, cafes, bars, theaters and brothels. M. Bonhomme, however, performed a marginal *flânerie;* he was a solitary stroller with a blasé attitude towards the modern city.

Examination and comparison of the most recent comprehensive French and English dictionary entries of the word *flâneur*, the similarities with the XIXth century

Larousse definitions of the same French word are striking. Along with the literary quotations of the literary uses of *flâneur*, the eight volume *Tresor de la langue Francaise-Dictionaire de la langue du XIX et du XXe siecle* offers two main definitions of the word which describe walking in the city as a rather disinterested, care-free strolling about town. More specifically, *flâner*, as a transitive verb is first defined as "avancer lentement et sans direction précise," and the second meaning denotes "perdre son temps; se complaire dans l'inaction, dans le farniente" (p. 953). Further, under the entry *flâneuse* there is a simple explanation of "celui, celle, ce qui flâne", as well as the definition of *flâneur* as a "long chair" already quoted by Wilson: "siege pliant en bois ou en osier pouvant faire office de chaise longe" (p. 953). The latter definition of *flâneuse* as "chaise longe" does not come from the XIXth century entry; it is quoted after Sandry-Carr's publication in 1963. By comparison, the *Oxford English Dictionary* from 1989 has a much shorter entry of the word *flâneur,* and the definition of *flâneuse* does not appear at all. The verb *flânerie* is defined as "the disposition or practice of an idler or lounger", and *flâneur* as "a lounger or saunterer, an idle man about town" (p. 1003).

My contention is that *flâneur* does not actually denote an individual figure. While Wilson claims that "*flâneur* never really existed, being an embodiment of the special blend of excitement, tedium, and horrors aroused by many in the new metropolis" (p. 74), I argue that *flâneur* represents a complex symbolic figure that embodies diverse and mostly marginal, socio-cultural phenomena of the modern city. *Flâneur* cuts across distinct personal or class identifications. The figure of the *flâneur* is critical to understanding the actual and symbolic urban order. There are different socio-political and cultural reasons for which the *flâneur* moves through the city. From the XIXth century

Eurocentric experience of the modern metropolis, the notion of the *flâneur* travels to other large cities in the world to manifest the exilic limits of walking while critically re-walking the contested urban spaces.

Modernity and Modernism

In order to critically understand the context in which the figure of the *flâneur* was born, it is important to present the concept of Modernity and relate it to Modernism, the socio-political ideology that brought about the figure of the *flâneur*.

Modernity, a historically defined epoch, started in Europe at the end of the XVIIIth century with the French Revolution's desire to define a democratic society and to shape a new era of humanity. Many discoveries emerged from this Eurocentric concept of modernity that significantly changed people's perceptions of all aspects of human life. The invention of the steam engine, electricity, the camera and the telephone, among others, accelerated the experience of modern times, making it appear instantaneous and more immediate. While the time before the French Revolution could be described as linear and slow, the time of the XIXth century seemed to be undergoing unprecedented development of consistently faster and more efficient communication around the world. Additionally, the inventions of a number of visual devices such as the zootrope, phenakistiscope, zoopraxiscope, stereoscope, and finally the first Kodak camera in 1880 gave new importance to vision. Hence, the experienced eye became one of the crucial instruments not only for the scientific evaluation of the modern world, but also for aesthetic judgement of modern works of art. It is perhaps not surprising that, in such an accelerating world of new technological inventions, the humble act of walking in the city became valued not only as an activity free of charge, but as both a pleasurable and a

marginal urban pastime. While eyes were trained to scrutinise the wonders of the modern

metropolis, pairs of strong and healthy legs were performing an engaging yet marginal

flânerie.

Modernism, on the other hand, presents a doctrine, a constructed ideology that

claims authority for an objective knowledge. One of the most prominent XIXth century

critics, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), constructed the first influential account of what

it means to be modern. Speaking from an informed artistic position, Baudelaire finds the

modern times to be "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" (*The Painter of Modern

Life,* p. 41). Later, while analyzing one of the modern painters' art works, Baudelaire

argues that, "He [the painter] has everywhere sought after the fugitive, fleeting beauty of

present-day life, the distinguishing character of that quality which we have called

'modern'" (*The Painter of Modern Life*, p. 40).

The Baudelairean concept of Modernity is closely linked to the experience of the

Modern world, a world that in Baudelaire's accounts, is obsessed with beauty, fashion,

scientific inventions, the spaces of the *demi-monde,* and the numerous walking figures

embodied in the *flâneur*'s alter egos: the dandy, the detective, the conspirator, the

prostitute, and the homeless person. The complex interaction between all these modern

occurrences and a growing number of walking figures constituted a new type of

European society, one which Guy Debord, defines as the *society of the spectacle.*

The Society of the Spectacle

The society of the spectacle is based on occulocentrism, which was

institutionalized in the XIXth century. The new revolutionary visual devices, the

stereoscope in particular, shifted the monocular perception of the world to the binocular

view. This new binocular vision improved the proximal perception of registered images as both the eye and the body of the observer became stationary. Vision was changing towards disembodiment. The spectator, like an internalized machine, started to project himself/herself onto the preconstructed images. These images were often juxtaposed with cinematic and dioramic views, and their "fourth wall" effect made the viewers identify themselves with illusionist and imaginary vistas.

It seems that the modern euphoria with the new devices of vision had at least two crucial consequences. First, it allowed the viewer to identify with the illusionary projections; and second, it reduced the world to two dimensional, easily reproducible images. This development of a monocular vision, however, started to train the body in a uniform, rational order in which everything had a potential for classification and structure. Furthermore, the society of the spectacle became disembodied and docile, easily manipulated by the institutionalized authorities. Benjamin's colleague, sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel, investigated an increased use of vision in rapidly growing modern cities. Simmel observed that before the inventions of urban means of transportation, people were never put in a position to stare at each other while waiting for a streetcar, a subway, or a train. The new urban reality increased the scopophilic pleasures of the modern crowd, turning it progressively into a docile and obedient body. In addition, in many of his philosophical works, contemporary French thinker Michel Foucault, scrutinizes the conceptual grounds of modern times. He argues that it was during the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries that personal identity became a product of power relations. It seems appropriate then, to use Guy Debord's *society of the spectacle* and the Foucauldian term, the *society of the surveillance.*

Crucial modern changes occurred not only as a result of institutionalisation of principal human activities, but also of the changing way in which people saw and perceived the world. More specifically, while XVIIIth century use of the *camera obscura* required operating the eye in a more metaphoric sense, the great optical discoveries of the following century shifted towards metonymy, through which the viewer, while walking and looking at the wonders of modern architecture that had never been seen before (i.e. large boulevards, arcades, Eiffel Tower etc.), simultaneously experienced the state of being both *within* and *without* the frame of the image. A fragment of the city (such as the Eiffel Tower) was enough to stand for the whole picture. The eye became disembodied and there was no mediation between the person and the projected image. Consequently, in the *society of the spectacle*, sight became one of the most important senses in experiencing the new and rapidly shifting world. Even though the metropolitan walking figure became a very important subject in observing and therefore constructing the ideology of the society of the spectacle, it was not an empowered and autonomous subject.

Baudelaire's *Flâneur*

In his literary artworks Charles Baudelaire struggled to define not only what constitutes the phenomenon of Modernity, but also the characteristics of the Modern hero. In a certain way, Baudelaire himself was a *flâneur*, a fallen bourgeois, and an outcast who often portrayed himself as a tragic modern hero. Benjamin states that, "the hero is the subject of Modernism. In other words, it takes a heroic constitution to live through modernism" (p. 74). Benjamin quotes Jules Laforgue referring to Baudelaire saying that he was the first to speak "as someone condemned" to live in Paris (*Return of*

the Flâneur p. 55). Baudelaire describes the characteristics of a dispossessed *flâneur* and

a modern hero in a decadent way:

> Regarding the attire, the covering of the modern hero, does
> it not have a beauty and a charm of its own? Is this not an
> attire that is needed by our epoch, suffering and dressed up
> to its thin black narrow shoulders in the symbol of constant
> mourning? The black suit and the frock coat not only have
> their political beauty as an expression of general equality,
> but also their poetic beauty as an expression of the public
> mentality – an immense cortege of undertakers, political
> undertakers, amorous undertakers, bourgeois undertakers.
> We all observe some kind of funeral. The unvarying livery
> of hopelessness is proof of equality (*Return of the Flâneur*
> p. 77).

A modern hero then, a socially powerless artistic figure, an intellectual, is dressed in

black as if he were mourning something essential and disappearing from his life: the very

originality and liveliness of Modernity. This funeral-like image of the metropolis and its

inhabitants is certainly not an optimistic view of one of the most developed XIXth

century European cities. Benjamin says of Baudelaire that:

> when he abandoned one part of his bourgeois existence
> after another, the street increasingly became a place of
> refuge for him. But in strolling, there was from the outset
> an awareness of the fragility of this existence. It makes a
> virtue out of necessity, and in this it displays the structure
> which is in every way characteristic of Baudelaire's
> conception of the hero (p. 70/71).

It is in walking, the most humble human experience that the city stroller becomes aware

of the "fragility of modern existence". Benjamin recalls that Baudelaire used to walk a lot

in Paris (public means of transportation cost money), thus completely wearing out his

shoes. The poor artist, one of the greatest French poets, actually had to stick pieces of

clothes and newspapers into his shoes to conceal the visible holes. Benjamin writes that

the Baudelairean concept of the *flâneur* is, first and foremost, based on a voyeuristic experience of the city. At times, the *flâneur* is a poet who walks in the metropolis, at times he/she is an amateur detective and a homeless person. Benjamin recounts:

> Baudelaire's *flâneur* was not a self-portrait of the poet to the extent that this might be assumed. An important trait of the real-life Baudelaire – that is, of the man committed to his work – is not part of this portrayal: his absentmindedness. In the *flâneur* the joy of watching is triumphant. It can concentrate on observation; the result is the amateur detective. Or it can stagnate in the gaper; then the *flâneur* has turned into a badaud (p. 69).

Baudelaire epitomized the figure of the Modern hero in the artistic activities of his friend and admired artist, Constantin Guys. In the second chapter of his "Painter of Modern Life", Baudelaire introduces a figure of the *flâneur* exemplified by the artistic endeavour of a genius. He defines him in the following way:

> observer, philosopher, *flâneur* – call him what you will; but whatever words you use in trying to define this kind of artist, you will certainly be led to bestow upon him some adjective which you could not apply to the painter of eternal, or at least more lasting things, of heroic or religious subjects (*The Painter of Modern Life* p. 4).

The modern painter then is concerned with both eternal and fugitive beauty. In the Baudelarian view he is an empowered "man of the crowd", a "great traveler and cosmopolitan" who observes life unfolding around him with the curiosity of a child. The Modern artist becomes a *flâneur* who examines contemporary Parisian life. However, the Baudelairean literary concept of the *flâneur* is linked to and supports the discourses of power existing in the XIXth century society of the spectacle. The question of who could

visually scrutinize the modern world became an important socio-political issue. Baudelaire draws the characteristics of the *flâneur* as follows:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet remain hidden from the world (*The Painter of Modern Life* p. 9).

It would seem that Baudelaire's *flâneur*, a "prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito" (p. 9) represents a privileged figure of the XIXth century public life because the *flâneur* defines space by his anonymous and carefree mobility through the city; however, the *flâneur* does not have the privileged status of the city walker. In reality, a *flâneur* has no social or political power whatsoever. In his persistent homeless walks, the *flâneur* spies *in* and *out* of the urban frame and keeps moving.

In order to collect data for his new sketches on modern life, he walks in the city and engages his body and his eyes to take mental notes and, sometimes, to sketch on site. It is perhaps the first time in art history that an artist's peripatetic journeys in the modern city become a condition *sine qua non* of artistic practice. This important trait of 'collecting urban data' while walking makes modern art a mnemonic art. Baudelaire states that after Guys' preliminary studies of modern life (i.e. walking, observing the city, and taking mental notes) the artist returns home and draws passionately from his memory:

> He works in this way on twenty drawings at a time, with an impatience and a delight that are a joy to watch – and are amusing even for him. The sketches pile up, one on top of the other – in their tens, hundreds, thousands. Every now and then he will run through them and examine them, and

then select a few in order to carry them a stage further, to
intensify the shadows and gradually to heighten the lights
(*The Painter of Modern Life* p. 18).

For Baudelaire, Guys is an exemplary artist of Modern times because he is able "to
express at once the attitude and the gesture of living beings, whether solemn or grotesque,
and their luminous explosion in space" (*The Painter of Modern Life* p. 18) [2]. Constantin
Guys' sketches of Parisian life show the changing attitudes of XIXth century European
art that are produced when working in and with the city.

The *flâneur* presents a new performing identity that was born in rapidly changing
mid-XIXth century Paris. More specifically, Baron Georges Haussmann, a chief
administrator in Paris, appointed by the Emperor Napoleon the Third, not only widened
the existing streets of Paris and built twenty two new boulevards, but also modernized the
whole city plan, producing great traffic arteries, the sewer system, and the impressive
construction for the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867. In his thoughtful critique of the new
urban spaces, Benjamin deconstructs the modern architectural image exemplified by the
World Exposition:

> World exhibitions were places of pilgrimage to the fetish
> commodity [...] The world exhibitions glorified the
> exchange-value receded into the background. They opened
> up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to
> be distracted. The entertainment industry made that easier
> for them by lifting them to the level of commodity. They
> yielded them by its manipulations while enjoying their
> alienation from themselves and from others ("Charles
> Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p.
> 165).

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[2] For Charles Baudelaire the Modern artist *par excellence* was Constantin Guy and not Edouard Manet,
who was later acclaimed the Modern artist by contemporary art history.

All the XIXth century architectural transformations were made at a high cost by destroying most of Old Paris and its living social structures. On one hand, Paris proudly showed off its enhanced architecture, streets, and boulevards; on the other hand, a growing number of homeless, dispossessed people were pushed away from the cleaned-up, public spaces of the Modern City. In his essay "Haussmann, or The Barricades" Benjamin scrutinizes Haussmann's restructuring of Paris. The German thinker argues that the main decision to make the streets into new wide boulevards and thoroughfares was primarily a political one. By constructing wider streets, Haussmann wanted to prevent the building of barricades by potential revolutionists; however, the results of Haussmann's politico-architectural decision to reconstruct Paris were to push the proletariat workers out of their downtown quarters, and to increase the rent for those who stayed. Consequently, Paris started to become an estranged city for its own inhabitants. The major reshaping of Paris was initially based on politico-urban reasons, but it resulted in fundamental urban, social, and individual changes that altered the life and concept of the city forever.

The Modern Metropolis

Until the XIXth century, the development of cities proceeded more or less with the same classical idea of building up more living and working structures for the community around a centrally positioned urban place developed in ancient Greece, the agora. As Lewis Mumford informs us, the city was primarily a "geographical plexus" with a number of people living according to societal rules and performing a number of private and social activities. However, the American urban critic claims that a city always had a place for artistic enactment, because a town could not be solely defined by the

rigidly imposed rules. A city is a living organism that can be compared to that of theatre.

Mumford says:

> [the city] is a theatre of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity. The city fosters art and is art. The city creates theatre and is the theatre. It is in the city, the city of theatre, that man's more purposive activities are caused, and worked out, through conflict and cooperating personalities, events, groups, into more significant culminations ("What is City", p. 94)

Mumford's definition of city valorizes urban sites over natural ones, making the city a more desirable place. In the modern metropolis, the theatre-like place, individuals have strong aesthetic feelings, and it was in the middle of the XIXth century that architectural transformations invited pedestrians to take part in a different type of walking performance. Thus, the modern metropolis became a special place for a new type of individual and collective experience, the experience of the sublime spectacle.

The Urban Sublime

Even though for Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant the spectacle of sublime was an object-less spectacle of the overpowering qualities of nature, the XIXth century provided the metropolis as another, more perverse perhaps, site for such feelings. Kant reminds us that "sublimity does not reside in anything of nature, but only in our minds, in so far as we can become conscious that we are superior to nature within, and therefore also to nature within us" (*The Critique of Judgement*, p. 104). In other words, sublimity is a combination of being in a suitable context where the meditating subject is able to experience sublime feelings. The human cognitive faculties collapse, so to speak, in front of the spectacle of the sublime. In addition, there is no accord between the imagination

and reason, the judgment of the sublime is not objective, and it is elevated to a sort of excessive transcendental experience.

It seems that the modern city stroller is caught up in a similar conceptual play that allows him/her to experience the spectacle of sublime in the new emerging metropolis. Even though the experience of urban sublime spectacle is named differently by critics, it talks about the same issue of self-preservation when experiencing the powerful and delightfully fearful experience. There are numerous theoretical writings on cities that refer to urban dwelling as problematic. Contemporary metropolises, pressured by the increasing politics of commercialism, gentrification and political power relations, create uncanny places for city dwellers. In fact, the city has always been an exilic space where disinterested walking was never possible.

Contemporary Urban Space

The contemporary aspect of the exilic urban space is investigated by one of the contemporary architectural historians, Anthony Vilder. In his book, *The Architectural Uncanny*, Vilder presents studies on the concept that the city is an alienating and unhomely space that complicates an individual urban dwelling. The uncanny leifmotif denotes for Vidler what is estranged from the human body and projected as prosthetic extension into the public space. The peculiar "domestication of absolute terror" (*The Architectural Uncanny* p. 3), the sublime qualities of the modern and postmodern cities, presents the political and cultural aspects of the non-belonging of the city dwellers. The writer argues that urban *unheimlich* is that quality of the architectural unhomely which turns against its owners and becomes fragmented, disembodied and "derealized". Vidler references transcendental philosophy and the writings of Heidegger, Lukacs, Bachelard

and Kristeva to reinforce his contention that there is a resurgent interest in thinking about estranged dwelling places. In the chapter entitled *Unhomely Houses*, Vidler explains how the human body created a myth for architectural balance, standards of proportion, symmetry, and functioning. In reality, however, buildings, especially buildings constructed in large populated cities, started to form an uncanny feeling against their inhabitants. In other words, the metropolis was formed as an exilic space. Vidler observes how the person and his/her individual bodily and psychic characteristics were threatened by the unhomely forces of the city he/she erected. The writer explains:

> The history of the bodily analogy in architecture, from Vitruvious to the present, might be described in one sense as the progressive distancing of the body from the building, a gradual extension of the anthropomorphic analogy into wider and wider domains leading insensibly but inexorably to the final "loss" of the body as an authoritative foundation for architecture (*The Architectural Uncanny* p. 70).

The body-less qualities of contemporary metropolitan architecture create the feeling of estranged and ambivalent dwelling in between private and public spaces. Benjamin once wrote that "dwelling [in modern cities] becomes a kind of casing" ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 46). The German critic was not far from Vilder's critique of the contemporary body-less and uncanny casings of the urban dwellers that do not make them feel "at home," either in private or public spaces.

Exilic Qualities of Modern Metropolis

Modern urban architecture is not the only aspect of the sublime and exilic spectacle. There are at least two other sublime elements produced by the populated modern cities that contribute to the exilic qualities of the solitary stroller.

One of these elements is the phenomenon of the increased intensification of urban life. More specifically, in an essay, *On Some Motifs on Baudelaire*, Benjamin refers to his compatriot's studies of certain sublime aspects found in the individual experiences of the modern metropolis. In particular, Benjamin introduces his compatriot, Goerg Simmel and his *Metropolis and Mental Life*. Penetrating into the modern consciousness, the German sociologist presents a troubled figure of a city stroller that seems at once both to offend and defend. In Simmel's interpretation, the modern inhabitant dwells in the ambivalent state of powerlessness and empowerment. The writer draws the figure of the *flâneur* in the following way:

> The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolis individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli (*Metropolis and Mental Life* p. 70).

Simmel's description of "intensification of emotional life" in the city echoes the Burkean and Kantian preoccupation with the excessive, overpowering and sublime spectacle. Here, the modern city, Simmel suggests, produces physical and psychological tensions in a dweller every time he/she crosses the street. Later on, the writer elaborates on those constantly present "violent stimuli" that the modern metropolis presents to its inhabitants. He writes:

> the metropolis creates these psychological conditions [unexpected violent stimuli]-with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life (*Metropolis and Mental Life* p. 70).

The second exilic quality that defines the identity of the *flâneur* seems to be the crowd, "the agitated veil" (p. 168) of modern cities. This fact creates the cityscape as one

of the most powerful spectacles of the sublime. Benjamin draws a compelling image of the Parisian metropolis as site for a possible strong aesthetic experience. In particular, he refers to E.T.A. Hoffmann's short essay, *The Cousin's Corner Window*, where the immobile cousin observes the passing crowd from the interior of his private place. The binoculars allow him to pick a person at random and symbolically follow the individual without leaving his chair. There is a certain fascination with experiencing "fear, revulsion, and horror" (p. 174) that makes the Hoffmann character observe the crowd, moving like programmed automatons. Further, Benjamin states that the *flâneur* is with the crowd while, simultaneously experiencing a painful alienation and social isolation in public spaces.

In the critical analysis of the Baudelairean modern world, Benjamin scrutinizes the experience of the *flâneur* as a discontinuous and rhapsodic performance. It is the phenomenon of the *flâneur*'s ability to be *within* and *without* the urban crowd that intrigues the German writer the most. Benjamin argues that the ambivalent state of attraction and repulsion towards the city forms a new type of modern stroller. The *flâneur* "botanizes on the asphalt" while walking on the large Haussmannian boulevards. Benjamin compares this basic urban activity to the emerging 'phantasmagoria of Modernist space' experienced by the *flâneur* whose frequent movements echo those of the gamblers portrayed in Baudelaire's poetry. In the confused dream-like state in which real things are challenged by imagined ones, there appears a utopic wishful state that stands in opposition to the estranged reality of modern cities. The new urban situation presents itself to Benjamin as a situation of modern socio-cultural crisis:

> To the phantasmagoria of space to which the *flâneur*
> abandons himself, correspond the phantasmagorias of time

indulged in by the gambler. Gambling converts time into a narcotic ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 38).

In the short texts entitled "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century", and "Baudelaire, or The Streets of Paris", Benjamin further examines the estranged qualities of modern metropolitan life. In the first essay, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century", the German thinker problematizes the epitome of modernist architecture, the Parisian Arcades. The *flâneur* strolls in the arcades, the recent invention of industrial luxury. The form and use of the Arcades were conceived during the time of great industrial and engineering inventions, a time of social and commercial production occurring in the middle of the XIXth century. Benjamin observes that "The arcades are a center of trade in luxury goods. In their fittings art is brought in to the service of commerce" (p.34). The emerging modernist places of power, the arcades, were well fit to wear the new architectural material of modernist technology: iron and glass structures lit by gas lamps. This modernist architecture *par excellence*, became a strange hybrid creature that merged both the successful and the threatening achievements of engineers (originating in the revolutionary wars) and the decorators' knowledge (originating in fine arts tradition). Furthermore, the arcades became yet another problematic, utopian 'wishful image' of modernity. Benjamin writes:

> These images are wishful fantasies, and in them the collective seeks both to preserve and to transfigure the inchoateness of the social product and the deficiencies in the social system of production. In addition, these wish-fulfilling images manifest an emphatic striving for dissociation with the outmoded – which means, however, with the most recent past ("Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" p. 35).

Modern Hero

In "Baudelaire, or The Streets of Paris" Benjamin makes a meta-critique of

Modernity. In particular, he scrutinizes the identity of the modern artist, a hero, as

exemplified in the figure of the *flâneur*. Baudelaire, himself a modern *flâneur* "seeks

refuge in the crowd" and "[his] genius is fed on melancholy" (p. 37). Benjamin argues

that there is a dialectical tension in the images Baudelaire presents in many of his poems.

For example, he often refers to women (the "fallen women," such as prostitutes) and

death (fetish images). Benjamin states that the dialectical treatment of the French poet's

images re-creates a reality of ambivalence and uncertain values. Baudelairean poetry

artistically represents transformations of the product and consumer-oriented modern

world:

> Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics, the law of
> dialectics seen at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and
> the dialectic image therefore a dream image. Such an image
> is presented by the pure commodity: as fetish ("Paris,
> Capital of the Nineteenth Century" p. 37).

Benjamin also elaborates on the identity of the crowd that is often described by

Baudelaire as an "agitated veil". Benjamin shows how the French poet creates the figure

of the solitary *flâneur,* always defined against the metropolitan crowd:

> He [the *flâneur]* seeks refuge in the crowd. [...] The crowd
> is the veil through which the familiar city lures the *flâneur*
> like phantasmagoria. In it the city is now a landscape, now
> a room. Both then constitute the department store that puts
> even *flânerie* to use for commodity circulation. The
> department store is the flâneur's last practical joke ("Paris,
> Capital of the Nineteenth Century" p. 37)

The dispossessed *flâneur* who dreams of becoming a modern hero seems to metamorphose tragically into a commodity product when he strolls along the arcades and boulevards. He is an objectification of all the modern promises and desires that cannot be obtained by an ordinary stroller like himself. By which impossible ends does this degraded city stroller measure the streets of Paris? To which impossible ends does he insist on walking? He certainly does not walk to buy anything because he is not able to afford it; the *flâneur* never has enough money. In his impossible desire to become totally free and independent from any societal constraints, he finds himself walking with no purpose, as if an automaton, passively looking at the goods and people.

> On his peregrinations the man of the crowd lands at a late hour in a department store where there still are many customers. He moves about like someone who knows his way around the place. .... If the arcade is the classical form of the interior, which is how the *flâneur* sees the street, the department store is the form of the interior's decay. The bazaar is the last hangout of the *flâneur* ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 54).

A homeless *flâneur* figure, circulating in the city tries to feel at home in the public space. The harder he tries to accommodate the new social and economic changes in the city, the more he seems to be out of place. How did it happen that an artistic walking model of the society of the spectacle who strolled at leisure in modern Paris became a dispossessed a window-shopper?

Identities of the *Flâneur*

The *flâneur* is not only the subject of Modernity, he is also privileged subject matter in the visual arts. Constantin Guy's drafty sketches exemplify the identity shift of the modern artist who becomes independent from the academic canons and turns his

attention to portraying the scenes of life unfolding around him. Benjamin examines how the *flâneur*, a symbolic figure of the modern city, performed and actualized the XIXth century city-scape by acquiring many distinct identities and displaying diverse social functions.

There are several figures that complement the *flâneur*. They are exemplified in the Baudelairean literary heroes such as the apache, the dandy, the detective, the conspirator and such social outcasts as the prostitute and the ragpicker (the homeless person). One of the most prominent and challenging figures of the contemporary *flâneur*, who will be analyzed in Chapter Three, is the exilic figure of the intellectual.

One of the *flaneur's* alter-egos is the figure of a rag-picker or a homeless person. An urban rag-picker incessantly walks the streets of Paris because he "works for middlemen and constitutes a sort of cottage industry located in the streets" (Benjamin, p. 19). The rag-picker, the one who collects the refuse of the modern city, certainly does not belong to bohemian society. He forms a part of the literary and conspiratory figures who can be identified with the image of the itinerant and cast-off members of modern society. In Baudelaire's essay, "Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism", the figure of the rag-picker draws an allegorical and potent image of a dispossessed modern hero, be it an artist or an intellectual. Benjamin recounts:

> Here we have a man who has to gather the day's refuse in the capital city. Everything that the big city threw away, everything it lost, everything it despised, everything it crushed underfoot, he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum (stockpile) of waste. He sorts things out of and makes a wise choice; he collects, like a miser guarding a treasure, the refuse which

will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 19)

Further, Benjamin theorizes how the marginalilzed "collecting" work of a rag-picker and that of a poet complement each other. The German thinker critically examines their daily activities and concludes that they do not stand in social opposition to each other. On the contrary, the methodology of their work is similar:

> Ragpicker or a poet – the refuse concerns both, and both go about their business in solitude at times when the citizens indulge in sleeping; even the gesture is the same with both. Nadar speaks of Baudelaire's 'jerky gait' (pas saccadée). This is the gait of the poet who roams the city in search of rhyme-booty; it must also be the gait of the ragpicker who stops on his path every few moments to pick up the refuse he encounters ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism"p.79/80).

In *Flâneur,* Benjamin introduces another alter-ego of the city walker: a detective. The writer persuasively argues that, "in times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in a situation where he has to play a detective" (p. 40). Following someone is not exactly walking in the city; however the detective's job consists of walking after a person, taking notes and/or photos concerning their itineraries, and submitting the report to the employer. Benjamin seems to redefine the meaning and the position of the detective in an urban setting when he says that "any city dweller, any *flâneur* can be turned into an unwilling detective". Benjamin writes that the social context for the detective's job and his story are the consequence of the erasure of the individual's traces and stories from the modern crowded metropolises. Benjamin says:

a public man and one whose walks to and fro in the city
have been mostly limited to the vicinity of the public
offices... he passes to and fro, at regular intervals, within a
confined periphery, abounding in individuals who are led to
observation of his person through interest in the kindred
nature of his occupation with their own (p. 44).

Another marginalized alter-ego of the *flâneur* is a prostitute, called in French,

peripateticienne, the one who walks the city. The Parisian world of *demi-monde* presents

one of the most complex features of the socio-historically understood Modernity. From

Baudelaire's and Benjamin's writings, we learn that Modernity and its last exhaustive

years of the *fin de siècle* were obsessed with the female body. In formal, theoretical

discourses as well as in the artistic and literary representations, the female nude was very

desirable to the ruling white, heterosexual bourgeois class. In assuring the pleasure of

looking, scopophilia, the bourgeoisie had not only to be surrounded by prostitutes and

their images, but had also to have the power of controlling the situation.

In a detailed study of Manet's painting of a well-known Parisian prostitute,

Olympia, Timothy Clark refers to the social and controlled "necessity" of making the

prostitutes circulate in the modern city. He states:

The category "prostitute" is necessary, and thus must be
allowed its representations. It must take its place in the
various pictures of the social, the sexual, and the modern
which bourgeois society puts in circulation (p. 103).

The images of women were often disguised in painted, photographed and literary

representations as "mythological", "primitive," or "Oriental". This was not the case of

Olympia, however, which was exhibited in the Salon in 1865, causing a public scandal.

Manet's *Olympia* challenged the bourgeois scopophilia; the woman allowed the public to

look at her, while at the same time reflecting their gaze back on to themselves. She, a mere prostitute, was defying the modern society that was manipulated by desire, money, and corruption.

In such a complex, sexually charged socio-historical discourse, a prostitute became one of the dispossessed walking symbols of the commercialized and commodified modern city. While she was becoming a desirable and salable modern object, she was simultaneously disappearing as a subject. In his "Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" Benjamin examines the sexual *status quo* of the modern city that is similar to objectified, massively produced products:

> Prostitution opens up the possibility of a mythical communion with the masses. The rise of the masses, is, however, simultaneous with that of mass production. Prostitution at the same time appears to contain the possibility of surviving in a world in which the object of our most intimate use have increasingly become mass produced. In the prostitution of the metropolis the woman herself becomes an article that is mass produced ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p.56).

Both Baudelaire and Benjamin knew that the development of the modern metropolis was paid for dearly with the massive commercialization of every possible product. The limits of modern transactions were set as high as the sale of Paris' own inhabitants. This situation is exemplified by the growing business of buying and selling the services of prostitutes-*peripateticiennes*.

On the other hand, Baudelaire glorifies the prostitute as the muse of the modern poet in many of his poems. He writes, "holy prostitution of the sound which gives itself

wholly, poetry and charity, to the unexpected that appears, to the unknown that passes" (p.56).

Other so-called fallen women, or women "in revolt against society" (*The Painter of Modern Life*, 37), such as lesbian, single, and independent women became a source of fascination for Baudelaire. Exalted by their imagined mythical power and freedom, Baudelaire writes that, "Lesbian is the heroine of modernism because she combines with a historical ideal the greatness of the ancient world" (p. 90).

There is also another embodiment of the modern hero, a figure of an "everlasting idler", the *dandy*, who "appears to be strong and perfect in his every gesture" (p. 96). As Benjamin scrutinizes the British economico-cultural context that produced the figure of the dandy, he argues for his marginalized societal status. In particular, he says:

> The dandy is a creation of the English who were leaders in world trade. The trade network that spans the globe was in the hands of the London stock-exchange people; its meshes felt the most varied, most frequent, most unforeseeable tremors. A merchant had to react to these, but he could not publicly display his reactions. The dandies took charge of the conflicts thus created. They developed the ingenious training that was necessary to overcome these conflicts. They combined an extremely quick reaction with a relaxed, even slack demeanor and facial expression. The tic, which for a time was regarded as fashionable, is, as it were, the clumsy, low-level presentation of the problem ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 96)

These "soft" and pleasing traits of dandies were certainly not the characteristics of Baudelaire who did not want to please anyone by selling his personal and professional skills. The French poet was well aware of the increasing commercialization and politicization of the writing profession. Benjamin justifies:

This is how the figure of the London dandy appeared in the mind of Paris boulevardier, and this was its physiognomic reflection in Baudelaire. His love for dandyism was not successful. He did not have the gift of pleasing, which is such an important element in the dandy's art of not pleasing. Turning the things about him that by nature had to strike one as strange into a mannerism, he became profoundly lonely, particularly since his inaccessibility increased as he became more isolated ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 86/97).

In her essay, Wilson informs the reader that from about the 1830s to the 1840s there was a community of dandies living in Paris in the Maison D'Or and Caf'Toroni on the Boulevard des Italiens. Their fashionable strolling on the streets and their flamboyant lifestyle was quickly known in the Parisian neighborhoods and made its way into literature ("The Invisible Flâneur", p.63). Their over-stated *savoir vivre* was in a certain way a protest against the increased commercialization of everyday life in the modern metropolis.

In the first essay, of *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* entitled "The Bohème," Benjamin examines yet another minor alter-ego of the *flâneur*, the figure that belongs to la boheme - the conspirator. Benjamin distinguishes two groups of conspirators: the "occasional conspirator" (*conspirateur d'occasion*) and the "professional conspirator" (*conspirateur de profession*). While the first type of conspirator is defined as the worker who carries on the conspirator's job only in occasional meetings, readings, and other tasks; the latter type embraces conspirators who devote their life to conspiracy and make a living out of it. The professional conspirators walk the streets in the *habit noirs*, in black coats, and "they have no other aim but the immediate one of overthrowing the existing government" (p. 13). The conspirators, are

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marginal figures because they are wanted by the government; they are conspirators who are responsible for building the barricades in the Parisian streets during the political upheavals. Benjamin refers to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*, in which the powerful presence of the conspirators is well stated. In particular, Baudelaire evokes the supremacy of the barricades through the magic power of the cobblestones, which rise up in the form of a fortress. Blanqui was one of the conspirators who walked in a habit *noir* and was one of the most important advisors in building the barricades. In his critical writings about the conspirator, Benjamin claims that the conspirator is a symbol of the creative and independent spirit. More specifically, he compares Baudelairian "conspiring with language" to the conspirator's conspiring with the political system:

> Behind the masks which he used up, the poet in Baudelaire preserved his incognito. He was as circumspect in his work as he was capable of seeming provocative in his personal associations. The incognito was the law of his poetry. His prosody is comparable to the map of a big city in which it is possible to move about inconspicuously, shielded by blocks of houses, gateways, courtyards. On this map the places for the words are clearly indicated, as the places are indicated for conspirators before the outbreak of a revolt. Baudelaire conspires with language itself. He calculates its effects step by step ("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism" p. 98).

In critically summarizing Baudelaire's writing on the modern hero and his alter-egos, Benjamin observes that the "*flâneur*, apache, dandy and ragpicker were so many roles to him [the *flâneur*]. For the modern hero is no hero, he acts hero. Heroic modernism turns out to be a tragedy in which the hero's part is available" (p. 97).

There is an important transition for some unemployed, and marginal Parisian walkers who become part of the new bourgeoisie. Benjamin quotes Rattier's utopic novel

from 1857 entitled "Paris n'existe plus" that describes the modern city as a place where making rapid social changes in the city dwellers is possible, because of the rapid economic and political modifications happening in the metropolis. In particular, Rattier says:

> The *flâneur* who we used to encounter on the sidewalks and in front of the shop-windows, this nonentity, this constant rubberneck, this inconsequential type who was always in search of cheap emotions and knew about nothing but cobblestones, fiacres, and gas lanterns has now become a farmer, a vintner, a linen manufacturer, a sugar refiner, and a steel magnate (p. 54).

Analyzing one of Baudelaire's poems from *Les Fleur du mal*, Benjamin interprets the Parisian crowd as anonymous and detached, but also as inspirational for the poet-*flâneur*. There is a serious preoccupation with the paradoxical entrapment of the *flâneur* in the metropolitan transient sites that produced him, and with the same sites that also started to erase the *flâneur*'s individuality. Benjamin calls a modern *flâneur* an accomplice who takes part in the overpowering urban spectacle. The phenomenon of the modern city acquires the quality of that which defies human physical and psychical limits. In other words, the city becomes an artistic locality where individuals have strong aesthetic feelings. In that powerful sublime spectacle, however, the identity of the modern *flâneur* seems to be threatened by the very fact that he is one among many. Benjamin argues that the modern stroller finally acquires a commodity value that renders him the grotesque figure of the anti- *flâneur*.

Arcades Project

In a contemporary re-reading of Benjamin's critical writings on modern urban spaces, Susan Buck-Morss undertakes an impressive examination of Walter Benjamin's

last and unfinished book. In *Arcades Project The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcade Project,* Buck-Morss states that her contribution presents "a story (of XIXth century Paris) told without a story (of Benjamin's own historical experience) with the goal of bringing to life the cognitive and political powers of the *Passagen-Werk* that lie dormant within the layers of historical data of which it is composed" (p. ix). The *Arcades Projects* was written between 1927 and 1940 (the year of Benjamin's suicide) and grew from the initial 50-page essay to a manuscript of over a thousand pages that still survives today. The saved pages, however, do not present a draft that is coherent enough; Benjamin left behind rough sketches rather than a comprehensive draft of a future book. His pages display 36 files-Konvoluts with key words and phrases carefully classifying transcribed records regarding different aspects of Parisian life from the *fin de siécle.* Benjamin pulled out and copied his entries from the Berlin and Parisian National Libraries. Because "the *Arcades Project* develops a highly original philosophical method", Susan Buck-Morss argues that Benajmin's critical approach is marked by "a dialectic of seeing" (p. 6).

In the second chapter of Part I of the book entitled "Spatial Origins," Buck-Morss draws a conceptual diagram where Benjamin examines four major metropolises of the XIXth and XXth centuries as critical places of dwelling. The horizontal axis leads from Paris and "the origins of bourgeois society in the political-revolutionary sense", to Moscow with its aristocratic decline and rising socialist consciousness; from Naples and its classical origins, Benjamin concentrates on Berlin, the place of his own origin. Buck-Morss states that the *Arcades* projects are located in the null point of these two geographical axes (p. 25/26). Examining Benjamin's writing on Naples, Buck-Morss

stresses the importance of the German critic's new approach to critical observation. In particular, the act of walking through the city presents not only a subjective, but also an objective way of collecting important data regarding the modern society. She argues:

> There is no explicit political message [in Benjamin's essay]. Rather, hardly noticeable to the reader an experiment is underway, how images, gathered by a person walking the streets of a city, can be interpreted against the grain of idealist literary style. The images are not subjective impressions, but objective expressions. The phenomena – buildings, human gestures, spatial arrangements – are 'read' as a language in which a historically transient truth (and the truth of historical transiency) is expressed concretely, and the city's social formation becomes legible within perceived experience ("Spatial Origins" p. 27).

Benjamin's Parisian sojourn was marked by intense reading, walking, and researching the interdisciplinary material in the Parisian Bibliothèque Nationale. It is in the metropolis of the XIXth century that Benjamin started to collect his notes for the never finished *Arcades Project*. If it were not for Benjamin's walking in the city, the most intriguing and critical 'items' of his research list would never have been collected.

Benjamin's research on the Parisian Arcades contains the following entry: "arcades, fashion, boredom, kitsch, souvenirs, wax figures, gaslight, panoramas, iron construction, photography, prostitution, Jugendstil, *flâneur* collector, gambling, streets, casings, department stores, metros, railroads, street signs, perspective, mirrors, catacombs, interiors, weather, world expositions, gateways, architecture, hashish, Marx, Haussemann, Saint-Simon, Grandville, Wietz, Redon, Sue, Baudelaire, Proust" (p. 33). Buck-Morss states that there were already present in Benjamin's preliminary research the key methodological words such as: 'dream image, dream house, dreaming-collective, ur-history, now-of-recognition, dialectical image' (p. 33). Berlin, the city of Walter

Benjamin's upbringing is reflected by his insightful observations expressed in a series of

radio programs he was doing in Berlin. In the climate of fascism Buck-Morss argue that

"*Passagen-Werk*, a presentation of history that would demystify the present, had become

all the more urgent" (p. 36). Later on, Buck-Morss states that the critical writing on

Berlin is in the core of Benjamin's methodology of thinking:

> Benjamin was concerned, rather with how public space, the
> city of Berlin, had entered into his unconscious and for all
> his protected, bourgeois upbringing, held sway over his
> imagination (p. 38).

While in the XIXth century Arcades housed "the consumer dream" (p. 37), in the

twentieth century they turned to "commodity graveyards containing the refuse of the

discarded past" (p. 38). Buck-Morss references Franz Hessel's book *Spazieren in Berlin*

(*A Walk in Berlin*) in which the main character experiences ambivalent feelings by being

trapped in a commercial mall. Buck-Morss states that when Benjamin came back to his

Arcades Project in Paris, he was engaged in a more critical undertaking of the project in

terms of investigating the Arcades in sociological, philosophical and political contexts:

> The covered shopping arcades of the nineteenth century
> were Benjamin's central image because they were the
> precise material replica of the internal consciousness, or
> rather, the unconscious of dreaming collective. All of the
> errors of bourgeois consciousness could be found there
> (commodity fetishism, reification, the world as
> "inwardness") as well as (in fashion, prostitution,
> gambling) all of its utopian dreams. Moreover, the arcades
> were the first international style of modern architecture,
> hence part of the lived experience of a worldwide,
> metropolitan generation (p. 39).

It is not a coincidence for Buck-Morss that the phenomenon of Arcades, the "hallmark of the modern metropolis" (p. 40) could be found in Berlin, Naples, Moscow and Paris, the four cities where Benjamin lived and conducted his research.

In the Part II, essay on "Mythic History: Fetish," Buck-Morss states that *Passagen-Werk* is a double text because it presents both a social and a cultural Parisian history of the XIXth century from an original political point of view. What is critical for Buck-Morss is the fact that Benjamin considered *Passagen-Werk* to be a *Geschichtsphilosophie*. Buck-Morss translates this as "philosophy *out* of history", or "philosophical history" (p. 55) which makes Benjamin's approach to writing a history of modern Paris a very original one. She argues that Benjamin understood modern history in general as a mythic phenomenon in which the process of intense industrialization, commercialization, and politicization of everyday life was actually counter-progressive. Drawing on Auguste Blanqui, Benjamin proposes the concept of modern society as hellish, marked by a phantasmagoria of better life. By analyzing aspects of modern architecture and phenomena such as Arcades and World Expositions, Urbanism and Progress, Fashion, and Boredom, Benjamin argues for the hellish repetition of "the new as always old, and the old as continuously new" (p. 107).

The chapter contains two brief references to walking in the city. One of the passages refers to the deceit of the "urban brilliance" of the modern metropolis when experienced by the city walker:

> Everyone who strolled the boulevards and parks, or visited its department stores, museums, art galleries, and national monuments could experience the splendor of the modern city. Paris, a "looking glass city", dazzled the crowd, but at the same time deceived it (p. 81).

The peculiar fraud that the modern subject experiences in the city is precisely the phantasmagoria of a better lifestyle despite which the subject experiences the growing social inequality and socio-political dangers coming into shape in the time of the mythic history of progress.

The second brief passage regarding walking in the city concerns the proletarians encouraged to stroll in the Arcades and in the World Exposition palaces. The critical walks of the proletarians about those 'industrial shrines' show the social myth of equality: the proletariat could not afford to buy the produced goods, they could only look at items displayed in the shop windows:

> Proletarians were encouraged by the authorities to make the "pilgrimage" to these shrines of industry, to view on display the wonders that their own class had produced but could not afford to own, or to marvel at machines that would displace them (p. 86).

The richness of Benjamin's double text is explained by Buck-Morss in two evocative diagrams that, according to her represent the "invisible, inner structure of the *Passagen-Werk*" (p. 211). Diagram D, for example, shows the "dialectical image,"at the center of Benjamin's investigation. The midpoint of his dialectics presents the commodity, a phenomenon that is supported by XIXth and XXth-century collected interdisciplinary data and lived experiences. The images that complement the commodity are fossil, fetish, wish image, and ruin. Fossil trace complements the natural history, ruin and allegory that belong to historical nature; fetish and phantasmagoria support mythic history; and finally, wish image and symbol are part of mythic nature. Buck-Morss argues that the figures of the collector, the ragpicker and the detective that Benjamin examines walk the reader through the discourse of fossil and ruin. The prostitute and the

flâneur, on the other hand, belong to the dialectics of fetish and wish image. Further on, Buck-Morss states that the example of Benjamin's coordinates can be found in his developed writings on Baudelaire. In her Diagram E, she argues for the following dialectical oppositions: bodily performance *versus* bodily rest, and purposelessness versus purpose. The images of sport, work, idleness, and game (of patience) complement the diagram. Explaining the function of the historical axis conceptually embedded in Benjamin's methodology, Buck-Morss states:

> By transforming emblematic representation into philosophy
> of history and historical image into political education
> provides dialectical images with their explosive charge (p.
> 215)

In the essay on "Materialist Pedagogy", there is a great critical discussion regarding the figure of the *flâneur* as observed and examined by Baudelaire and Benjamin. Buck-Morss states that the *flâneur* is the ur-form of the modern intellectual who strolls the city streets. Unlike the Badelairean *flâneur*, however, the Benjamin stroller no longer searches for the meaning of modernity. The XXth century walker becomes a figure of the salaried "sandwich-man", a journalist, who observes the world and writes to support the politics of the state. For Benjamin, there is a significant transformation of the Modernist *flâneur* from a leisure person to a contemporary walker, "the reporter, a *flâneur* -become-detective, a photojournalist "ready to shoot'" (p. 306). For the German thinker, the latter figure signifies an ambiguous figure, "the prototype of a new form of salaried employee who produces news/literature/advertisements for the purpose of information/entertainment/persuasion" (p. 306). Benjamin shows the fatal consequences of the *flâneur*-journalist who works for the state. He mentions one

particular case of the "true salaried *flâneur* in the uniform" (p. 307), Henri Béraud. In the anti-Semitic writings of certain German ministers, this pro-fascist journalist promoted the suicide of the accused man. "If the sandwichman was the last, degraded incarnation of the *flâneur*," states Buck-Morss, "he himself underwent a further metamorphosis" (p. 312). The critic gives a poignant example of the further marginalization and politicization of the figure of the *flâneur*. Buck-Morss displays a black and white photograph taken in Munich, in 1933. The image shows a middle aged male Jew marching in front of the Nazi solders. The Jew holds a large rectangular sign that covers his chest which reads in German: "I am a Jew, but I have no complaints about the Nazis".

The Poetics of Walking

Leaving the strolling in the XIXth century metropolis, we will walk towards the end of this chapter with another contemporary interdisciplinary text written by Michel de Certeau, which presents the poetics of walking. In his book, *Practice of Everyday Life*, the writer includes a short and beautiful essay entitled "Walking in the City." As a former Jesuit, erudite historian, ethnologist, critical writer, and a member of the École Freudienne de Paris, de Certeau brings to his writing unusually rich readings that are complemented by diverse scholarly references. To walk with de Certeau's text is to experience the philosophical, anthropological, ethnological, phenomenological and cultural steps that weave together a challenging piece of writing about the primacy of the humble act of putting one foot in front of the other in New York City, a contemporary American metropolis. De Certeau understands the city not only as a rich and complex text, but also as a constantly shifting environment activated by the daily journeys of pedestrians. The pedestrians, the anonymous (minor) heroes of the city, are the key

players in making stories out of their walks. The act of walking in the city is so critical to

De Certeau that he dedicates the whole book to the anonymous, yet heroic city strollers:

> To the ordinary man. To a common hero, an ubiquitous
> character, walking in countless thousands on the streets
> (dedication, *Practice of Everyday Life*)

At the beginning of the essay, de Certeau draws a picture of New York read as a

peculiar instance of city-Text that can be read in terms of its invisibly written and

unwritten stories in an expanding palimpsest. The city is composed of places that are

fragmentary, that have their "inward-turning" secret histories. Most of their parts might

never be read. De Certeau explains:

> A city is composed of paroxysmal places in monumental
> reliefs. The spectator can read in it a universe that is
> constantly exploding. In it are inscribed the architectural
> figures of the coincidation oppositiorum formerly drawn in
> miniatures and mystical textures. On this stage of concrete,
> steel and glass, cut out between two oceans (the Atlantic
> and the American) by a frigid body of water, the tallest
> letters in the world compose a gigantic rhetoric of excess in
> both expenditure and production ("Walking in the City"
> p. 152).

De Certeau, however, seems to play and to subvert the concept of pleasurable

strolling on the urban streets, because his body is positioned above the border that marks

the experience of walking in the metropolis. He stands on top of the World Trade Center,

elevated 110 feet above the ground, and observes the sublime urban spectacle. De

Certeau's vision of the city is described from a perspective of the Icarian fall, which

makes him assert the importance of descending and discovering the real wanderers of the

city. It is in walking, the primary human activity often taken for granted, in the poetics of

humble strolling through the city where de Certeau finds daily heroism. De Certeau also

reminds the reader that walking in the city can recreate lost myths. It seems that only a ritual story could open up spaces for new urban possibilities. In other words, the act of walking is understood as the most important material for making a meaningful story, for recreating disappearing myths about the habitants of the city, about their unique daily itineraries.

De Certeau describes the scenic and infinite urban landscape from memory, remembering the movements of his body walking through space. He compares the "walking city" to the complex Barthesian Text where the reader is invited to stroll "between the lines" of the Postmodern open work. Moreover, most of the metaphors and expressions employed by De Certeau refer to the materiality of language; they come from rhetoric and they emphasize the relationship between walking and writing/reading a complex text. De Certeau says that walking offers the spaces of enunciation that involve spatial "turns of phrase" (walking tours and detours). Like walking, writing proposes a "phatic" aspect that initiates, maintains, or interrupts human contact in public spaces. Putting one foot in front of the other makes a path and has followers that create and activate the whole environment. Walking creates a sequence of *phatic topoi*, situations by which a meaningful communication can happen.

Further, walking in the city is complemented by the rhetorical figures of synecdoche and asyndeton. The first term is a literary device by which the part is taken for the whole. It names parts instead of a whole. When applied to spatial logic of moving through space, synecdoche expands the spatial element in order to make it play the role of a more total experience. For example, a fragment of a neighborhood, a particular space or a building stands for the whole city. Synecdoche makes the space dense; it amplifies

detail and miniaturizes entire rhetorical operations. The walkers activate the urban space and make some parts of the city disappear, exaggerate others, distort them, fragment them, and divert them from their immobile order. Asyndeton, on the other hand, is an omission of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs between coordinate parts of a sentence. Similarly, *walking in asydeton* selects and omits traversed space. While walking, we pass certain parts of the city and miss others. Each time we walk we create a unique story with our itineraries. De Certeau says that "every walk constantly leaps or skips", every step cuts out the space which it constructs its legendary story. The operations of the rhetorical figures that de Certeau applies to the movements of the walking body make the space swell, shrink, and fragment. The use of literary figures emphasizes the importance of the disappearing poetic of walking in metropolises.

De Certeau argues that there are three main mechanisms that organize the *topoi* or discourse about and around the city: legend, memory and dream. While the legendary story is always produced by the walking body, memory, which ties us to place, replaces absences with fictitious desirable presences, and dream plays on effects of spatial displacements and condensations.

The pedestrian, an anonymous hero, unfolds the stories accumulated in a place as he or she moves about the city. Comparing heroic city strollers to anonymous lovers who create a special type of text, the writer poetically asserts that:

> They are walkers whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban text, they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of space that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in these interwining, unrecognized poems in which body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility ("Walking in the City" p. 153).

To walk in the city means also to lack a place, or a home. De Certeau says that the strollers are always "on the run"; they intensify the urban experience and make it a complex text. Each walk creates a unique urban fabric because it talks, amongst other things, about frequent displacements and condensations that occur in every metropolis, every day. Even though de Certeau does not present the city in its socio-political context, his essay expresses, as do Baudelaire and Benjamin, a desire to make untold and invisible walking stories important and known to other city dwellers. The metropolis presents a sort of sublime legendary material that is partly hidden because texts about pedestrians' ambulations in the city are not considered important to study.

Summarizing, the figure of the *flâneur* presents a complex urban phenomenon created in Paris, one of the most modern European metropolises. Its marginal and exilic characteristics are well presented by Charles Baudelaire and critically discussed by Walter Benjamin, Susan Buck-Morss, and Michel de Certeau. Since the XIXth century there has been a successive development of the modern urban logic that challenged the classical understanding of space. While on the one hand Modernity built numerous architectural city wonders, on the other, it produced marginalized city spaces. Consequently, the solitary and powerless walker began to emerge as a marginal yet important figure of the big cities. The *flâneur* was never an economically or politically privileged figure of the modern world. He/she was often an artist who engaged in artistic activities, someone who knew the sacrifices of his/her works and therefore could not sell them to the commercially conditioned metropolis. The phenomenon of modern cities, on the other hand, such as Paris, Berlin and New York, exemplify cases of exilic dwellings in which the city dwellers do not feel at home. As in Baudelaire's, Benjamin's, and Buck-

Morss' analyses, the artist was aware of his marginalized situation. The dispossessed *flâneur* witnessed and often commented upon the growing commercialization and degradation of his/her own social and economic position in modern society. The images of mourning and the funeral-like settings, along with the visual and literary importance given to the outcast alter-egos of the *flâneur* testify to the increasing imbalance and ambivalent experienced regarding urban dwelling.

The next chapter, *Walking in Exile*, draws on several interdisciplinary texts that help to problematize the nature and key characteristics of the *flâneur* understood as an exilic figure.

Chapter Two - Walking in Exile

In this chapter I will examine the phenomenon of walking in exile understood as mobile, estranged, and marginal *flânerie*. My contention is that one of the *flâneur's* most challenging alter egos is the figure of exile, a figure that is expressed in the work of the contemporary intellectual. The *flâneur* in exile works in the cultural milieu and includes the work of the artist. The arguments for informed artistic walking exile, both real and metaphoric, will be drawn from selected theoretical texts written by exemplary exiled intellectuals: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Jacques Derrida, and Julia Kristeva. Additional reflections complementing the exilic aspects of displacement, strangeness, and 'minority manoeuvers' will be supported by the diverse critical and literary writings of Julia Kristeva, Zygmunt Bauman, Sherry Simon, Eva Hoffman, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

Understanding Exile

Defining the exilic figure requires not only an examination of appropriate writings on exile, but also a sharing of the "crippling sorrow of estrangement" when translating the unpresentable strong feelings into theoretical or artistic discourses. This is one of the reasons why I will draw primarily on critical and creative texts regarding exile that are written by displaced intellectuals. Their works express a scholarly desire to seize the meaning of banishment; they also offer potent images of exile supported by moving and affective testimonies.

Exile moves between different disciplines and lends its voice to many discourses. It is an interdisciplinary term whose dialectics constantly challenge logos and pathos.

While demanding serious cultural and political scrutiny, exile bleeds with an intense personal history that speaks about "the unbearable lightness of being"[3]. I will wrestle with the notion of walking in exile by proposing a threefold analysis of this rich and complex phenomenon whose multi-layered aspects are evocatively announced in Edward Said's essay, "Representations of the Intellectual":

> To be as marginal and as undomesticated as someone who is in real exile is for an intellectual to be unusually responsive to the traveler rather than the potentate to the provisional and risky rather than to the habitual. To innovation and experiment rather than the authority given *status quo*. The exilic intellectual does not respond to the logic of the conventional but to the audacity of daring, and to represent change, to moving on, not standing still ("Representations of the Intellectual" p.53)

Before engaging in a discussion of mobility, one of the most important aspects of exilic identity, it is important to meditate on a definition of exile, to present a brief history of banishment, displacement, and human deportation. *The New Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language* reminds us that the primary meaning of exile denotes "a banishment or expulsion from one's home or country" as well as, "a voluntary living outside one's country". Exile is also identified with "long absence from one's home or country or from some place or activity dear to one" (*Webster*, p. 331).

Edward Said, a Palestinian-born, North-American educated literary and cultural critic, offers an affective and effective examination of the term exile. In "Reflections on Exile," Said claims that exile, while it remains one of the oldest and most universal terms denoting personal and metaphorical displacement, carries "a touch of solitude and spirituality" (p. 362). Even though most uprooted people can be called exiles because

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[3] In his remarkable novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, a Czech-born writer, living in France since 1975, presents a wonderful philosophico-literary reflection on contemporary life.

they all share "the estrangement of exile", they form different political categories; they

obtain different human rights because they are classified by different immigration laws.

Said describes the spaces of political non-belonging that create a geopolitical image of

the contemporary world in the following way:

> Refugees [...] are a creation of the twentieth-century State.
> The word "refugee' has become a political one, suggesting
> a large herd of innocent and bewildered people requiring
> urgent international assistance [...]. Expatriates voluntarily
> live in an alien country, usually for personal or social
> reasons [...]. Émigrés enjoy an ambiguous status.
> Technically, an émigré is anyone who emigrates to a new
> country ("Reflections on Exile," p. 362/263).

The history of humanity is marked by many exilic events, which will always

remind us that there is no justification for the re-mapping of the socio-political and

cultural reality by the national and international powers if one of the consequences of this

restructuring results in the forced displacement of innocent people. The accounts of exile

cannot present a complete and satisfactory history because its records are marked with

many hiatuses that talk about unnecessary human sufferings and tragic losses.

One of the first human exiles is the symbolic Biblical Expulsion of Adam and Eve

from Eden, masterfully represented in Masaccio's XVth century fresco in the Branacci

Chapel in Florence. The God-driven expulsion of the first human parents seems to

suggest that our destiny is inescapable and incomprehensible. From the Babylonian

Captivity and the Exodus of the Jews in the VIth century B.C., to the more recent events

of the massive departure of people from Russian after the Revolution; the slave trade

from Africa to the United States; refugees from Nazi Germany; the displacement of the

D.P.'s, former slaves and captives in German concentration and labour camps; the

massive exile of Eastern-Europeans during and after the time of the Iron Curtain; the Middle-Eastern wars and displacements since the 60's; the tragic journeys of the "Boat People" from Vietnam; the forced migrations of the Balkan people in the former Yugoslavia; and the most recent suffering of thousands of displaced Afghan and Iraqi people, victims of international conflict. Each of these fragmented stories of exile are reminiscent of a discontinuous, and to a large extent, problematic history.

In "Reflections on Exile," Said argues that "exile is neither aesthetically nor humanistically comprehensible" in the XXth century (p. 357). However, being himself an exile, Said is conscious of the enormous ethical and political responsibilities of being an exiled intellectual who writes about exile without falling into a trap of trivial objectification and theoretical banalization. Exile can be something that is "strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (p. 357). Elaborating on Said's thought, I would add that being in the state of exile means profoundly understanding the nature and the responsibilities of being an intellectual and an artist.

Mobile *Flânerie*

From thought-provoking and highly affective discourses on loss, travel, and displacement, Said moves beyond the pathos of exile in another essay entitled "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals". In this text, Said makes an important conceptual transition: exile is no longer understood as a personal displacement, but rather as a metaphor denoting the figure of a conscious intellectual. Said meditates on the responsibilities of the intellectual who is fashioned after the exilic figure. More specifically, the critic describes the figure of the contemporary intellectual as an itinerant thinker who responds to the "audacity of daring and representing change, to moving on,

not standing still" ("Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals", p. 64). The mobility of the intellectual, who carries the sorrows of "a shipwrecked person who learns how to live in a certain sense with the land, not on it" (p. 59), becomes an advantageous feature for the contemporary thinker. Physical and metaphorical mobility allows the intellectual to engage more critically in cultural discourses because he/she is able to speak from more than one perspective. The condition of being mobile enables the intellectual-exile to look at the cultural and political *status quo* from the position of the outsider with an acute and critical eye: "to see things not simply as they are, but have come to be" (p. 60). An intellectual is a traveler; in a literal and symbolic sense, the exilic intellectual is "a provisional guest, not a freeloader, a conqueror, or raider" (p. 60). Said emphasizes the importance of movement as the condition *sine qua non* of a meaningful human performance. Since the "pathos of exile is in the loss of contact with the solidity and satisfaction of earth, homecoming is out of the question" (p. 361); therefore, the exile's discontinuous state of being can acquire a positive and productive homecoming.

Minor Subject

Homi Bhabha, an Indian-born and British-educated scholar, one of Said's contemporaries, and also an intellectual exile, is respected in the international academic community for his critical writing on a postcolonial "minor subject". His two essays, "Beyond the Pale: Art in the Age of Multiculturalism" and the later "Minority Manoeuvers and Unsettled Negotiations" complement the mobile exilic identity differently than Said's writings. First of all, Bhabha does not write from the pathos position; unlike Said, he is very much aware of the materiality of discourse and his language is therefore highly theorized. In Bhabha's reading of the Postcolonial and

multicultural subject, the figure of Said's intellectual is translated into a minor subject.

Secondly, Bhabha's main concern seems to lie not in defining "minor identity," but rather

addressing the political and ethical implications of performing a minor subjectivity. Thus,

the theorist proposes a model of a 'moderate' and moving identity that could conciliate

radical and offensive views. Bhabha disagrees with fundamentalist and essentialist

positions. He proposes a conceptual image of the third person whose ethics are in

opposition to the "more active, self-aware first-person perspective" (p. 434). In other

words, Bhabha offers an ambitious model of a minor identity that cannot be fixed by any

spatio-temporal or political discourse. The minor identity fluctuates within and without

its own fragile boundaries:

> is in the movement that a narrative of historical becoming
> is constituted not as a dialectic between first and third
> person but as an effect of the ambivalent condition of their
> borderline proximity – the first-in-the-third/the one-in-the-
> other ("Minority Manoeuvers and Unsettled Negotiations,"
> p. 434).

For Bhabha, the condition of living only with the first or the third person presents a

limitation of the performative and itinerant possibilities of the "self," understood as "the

performance of moderation as a practice of life" (p. 435). The minor subject should

perform the poetics of proximity in the midst of things whose movement should be ec-

static, fluctuating between dominant and marginal powers. The minor subject's

movement, its "bending towards freedom", is opposed to a stationary condition. Further,

Bhabha understands an excess of the minor subject's performativity as the state of being

beside oneself, in proximity to other multiplicities. Dwelling in a constantly disjunctive

and interruptive state of becoming encourages the subject to relate to others. Minor

walking and talking demonstrates the problematics of proximity: "the internally ambivalent subject structured through the temporal disjunction of present being" (p. 450). The exilic and itinerant identity resists any fixed definitions and labeling. It "splits and inverts" the identificatory politics by applying the rhetorical figures of its parts: synecdoche refers to parts in order to signify the whole; asyndeton omits elements in order to present the whole; and metonymy uses a name to symbolize something else. All three figures of speech, often employed by postmodern cultural critics and theorists when examining mobile phenomena, argue that the act of walking in the city remains a discontinuous urban performance[4].

It seems that the quality of being mobile is essential for Said and Bhabha in the formation of contemporary intellectual agency. The exilic walk, with its desire for change and its restless movement in defining the postmodern identity, relates to and complements the figure of the modern hero that was presented by Charles Baudelaire, examined by Walter Benjamin and revisited by Susan Buck-Morss. The figure of exile, that, elaborating on Said's provocative suggestion, can be read as a figure of the contemporary intellectual *par excellence* comments on the mobile fantasy of his predecessor, the *flâneur,* who walked the city of Paris almost two centuries ago.

In Baudelaire's and Benjamin's critical accounts of the modern stroller, the *flâneur* is essentially presented as a marginal and transitory figure who aims only to walk aimlessly in a modern metropolis. Similar to the figure of the exile (intellectual or otherwise) who circulates primarily outside national and international commercial exchanges, the *flâneur* is a social outcast disguised as a ragpicker, a prostitute, a

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[4] For more information about the use of synecdoche and asyndeton in contemporary cultural texts please see the discussion of Michel de Certeau's essay, *Walking in the City* in Chapter One of this thesis.

detective, a conspirator, a dandy, as well as intellectual and an artist. With rare critical

force and lucidity, Benjamin writes about the dialectics of *flânerie*, the counter-walk of

the modern hero who, excluded from official political and cultural life, becomes an

estranged "prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito" (*The Painter of Modern Life*

p. 9). The dispossessed stroller, the anti-hero of the modernized society can only make

virtue out of necessity, good value out of something that he truly possesses – "an

awareness of the fragility of this existence"("Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era

of High Capitalism, p. 70/71). He continues to walk through the city, even though he

knows that this commercialized and alienating space will never become his home. The

flâneur is an incessant traveler who is aware of the contingency of meaning; for this

reason he collects fragmentary images of disappearing Paris while walking around

feeling like an intruder in public spaces:

> The city is now a landscape, now a room. Both then
> constitute the department store that puts even flânerie to
> use for commodity circulation. The department store is the
> last practical joke (Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the
> Nineteenth century", p. 37).

So why does the *flâneur* walk incessantly, never standing still? Why does he

metamorphose himself into a paradoxical *perpetuum mobile*? In an essay "Desert

Spectacular," an exile, disguised as a figure of the post-modern *flâneur* fascinates another

contemporary intellectual. Zygmunt Bauman, a Polish born and British-educated

sociologist, says that a modern man cannot stand still because there is no constant place

upon which to stand (p.138). The critic writes that while Modern aesthetic, social, and

economic crises rendered Baudelaire's and Benjamin's *flâneur*'s walks purposeless, the

contemporary *flâneur*'s ambulations are caught up in a paradoxical, Disneyland-like,

fictitious reality. Moreover, while the modern *flâneur* participated in gratuitous and free strollings in the streets of Paris, a contemporary player no longer identifies himself/herself with the relaxed and disinterested *homo ludens*. He/she is rather an internalized and tragically immobilized version of his predecessor's ludic identity. Bauman claims that life for the *flâneur*, "the travelling player", can be compared to a "bagful of episodes, none of which is definite, unequivocal, irreversible; life as play" (p. 142). The main difference between the modern and postmodern *flâneur* lies in the contemporary loss of the disinterested playful condition, the *as-if* reality where one does not have to feel obliged to play. Moreover, in the contemporary world, there is a significant denigration of the very idea of walking in the city because urban walkers have increasingly become alienated players in an estranged reality. The city creates uncanny situations in which everyone becomes a stranger to oneself and to others. The streets of postmodern metropolises become stages for the spectacle of solitary exiles. While the modern *flâneur* wanted to "play his game at leisure we are forced to do so" (p. 153). The contemporary *flâneur* became a player of expropriated and privatized reality. It can be said that modern cities presented themselves as perfect settings for free games; the postmodern urban spaces became estranged and exiled realities that were suddenly out of the players' control. Bauman recounts:

> Disneyland and its earnest imitations are instances of the degenerate utopia of life as flânerisme – much as that utopia could be, in the 'classic' era, diffuse and inarticulate, before it has been seized by the merchants, reprocessed, and liquidized into the lubricant of the profit-churning contraptions. Blatantly and unashamedly, it presents the dream as reality, the world – this world here and now, in this enclosure – as a play and nothing but a play (p. 151).

Inverting Benjamin's claim of heroic urban *flânerie*, Bauman concludes with resignation that in the postmodern and postindustrial age when *"flâneurism* is commercially triumphant in its political defeat – it takes a heroic constitution to refuse being a *flâneur"* (p. 156).

In her informed critique of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, Susan Buck-Morss argues that the modern intellectual was modeled on the figure of the *flâneur*. The XIXth century itinerant outcast, the begger-philosopher, emerges as a key intellectual figure in the modern and in the postmodern metropolis. The outcast will assume the identity of a reporter, a journalist, a detective, a photographer whose intellectual accounts will become critical for negotiating his/her own consciousness and personal work ethic on one side, and for informing the official discourse that supports the state apparatus, on the other. In Said's call for the "marginal and undomesticated" exilic thinker and in Homi Bhabha's concern for the emergence of a minor performing subjectivity, there is a strong and clear ethical position. Both contemporary theorists' notions of the exilic figure stands in opposition to a corrupted intellectual *flânerie*. Said's and Bhabha's mobile intellectual would never work at any cost for the State; he/she would never become an intellectual conformist, working at any wage. An exile that would accept unethical work and conspire against its own society would present a scenario in which Said and Bhabha would never want to see the performing exilic intellectual. The *flânerie* of the intellectual, his/her intelligence, responsibility and ethical code are all understood as great assets, never as situations from which to profit and to risk commodifying himself/herself. Said and Bhabha's conceptualization of the figure of the itinerant intellectual presents a healthy

political and social provocation to walk and think differently in the world that turns out to be increasingly commercial and estranged to its own inhabitants.

Estranged *Flânerie*

The second significant trait of walking in exile, suggested by Said, is an estranged aspect of intellectual performativity. In "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals," Said writes about the intellectual risk involved in "innovation and experiment" that stands in opposition to the fixed and authoritative *status quo*. Further, an intellectual-traveler displays the qualities of being "risky rather than habitual" and finally, he/she responds to the "audacity of daring" (p. 63/64). Each of these estranged qualities that affect the individual psyche demand enormous strength from the exilic intellectual in order to perform successfully. At the same time, it seems that the exile partakes in and distances himself/herself from the intellectual milieu. The "perilous territory of not- belonging" (p. 359) represents a space that separates every exile from a larger group, a community or a nation. Said is concerned about the quality of the potential activities that can be carried out in a space that marks the solitude of exile and nationalistic belonging. He asks a rhetorical question: "What is there worth saving and holding on to between the extremes of exile on the one hand, and the often bloody-minded affirmations of nationalism on the other?" (p. 259/360). The psychological qualities of the estrangement and alienation of the exile-thinker complement and sublimate the intense state of being in a "real exile". Said "shares the solitude and estrangement of exile" (p. 362) with many people who are displaced, personally as well as geographically, with people who deal with the emotional burden of the displacement of the "self".

The psychologically complex and uneasy state of migration is well analyzed by the cultural critic. In fact, ideas such as, "exile is strongly compelling to think about but terrible to experience", "the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever", and "the pathos of exile is in loss of contact with the solidity and satisfaction of earth: homecoming is out of the question" (p. 61) could only be conceived by someone who is able to artistically translate his personal and migrant experiences into potent and intelligent discourse. An exile that seems to stand with the others is always apart from the group. This very state of non-belonging is valuable to Said. He acknowledges this ambivalent state of estrangement in the following way:

> Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives to an awareness of simulation dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal (p. 366).

Said has the courage to intellectually transcend the afflicting experiences of exile and transform them into productive thinking. His own personal state of estrangement offers "an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate modern life" (p. 365). Thus, a generous teaching and learning about each other, an exchange between the self and the other presents for Said a critical step towards a meaningful understanding of our cultural and political history.

Said's exilic intellectual speaks from the perspective of a nomad, a decentered and contrapuntal individual. The exile-intellectual proposes an ambitious intellectual premise because she/he not only reconciles the personal with the social, but she/he is also forced to constantly question the cultural, social and political *status quo*. Now, if the exile

does not conceal anything that "ought to remain secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud, *Uncanny*, p. 225), this would present a new challenge to what is personally and publicly understood as homely and familiar.[5] For Sigmund Freud, the very movement between the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* denotes a longing for a secure place that we often call home. The prefix "un" in "uncanny" illustrates the human ambivalence of dwelling in-between the canny and uncanny, in-between the estranged self and the societal other that "has to move on and never stand still".

Said's concern in making the "self" speak in relation to others echoes the views of renowned theorist and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva, herself an immigrant herself who left Bulgaria for France in 1965. Kristeva writes about the phenomenon of strangeness in a compelling way. "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us," says Kristeva. "He is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder" (*Strangers to Ourselves*, p.1). Like Said, Kristeva is concerned not only with seizing the meaning of "otherness" or "strangeness" and solidifying it, but rather with acknowledging its uncanny features in ourselves and setting them into perpetual motion. Moreover, what seems to be critical both for Kristeva and Said is the fact that the foreigner-exile has always been a "symptom" of the psychological impossibility of living with the other. The foreigner points to the limits of nationhood and the concept of citizenship. Kristeva claims that the reason why many national governments have a problem with foreigners is the fact that they mark the distinction between a person and a citizen. Furthermore, based on her experienced and researched

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[5] It is not a coincidence that in his seminal essay, "The Uncanny", Freud discusses two instances of the concept of *unheimlich* when in transitory states. He writes about experiencing an uncanny type of helplessness when he is lost while walking in Naples, and he experiences the effect of the double when he unexpectedly discovers his own reflection sitting in the train.

situation of the exiled people who immigrated to France, she states that Western democracies deprive foreigners of certain rights. For example, with a few exceptions, the exile is always excluded from public service in all countries. Overall, foreigners are deprived the right to own real estate and are not granted the right to inheritance. Kristeva concludes that both Christian ethics and the "Rights of Man" are based solely on the state's economic necessities. These rights deny the foreigner political rights, particularly the right to vote. As a result, there are too many restrictions and paradoxical regulations that "welcome" the foreigner to a newly adopted country, but really leave the exile on the margins of political and social reality. The dispossessed exilic figure is left with the resigned exclamation: "I belong to nothing, to no law, I circumvent the law, I myself make the law" (*Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 103). In a closing chapter of the book, Kristeva reminds the reader, that since we live in increasingly multicultural communities and countries, we should exercise our openness to others more than ever. We should respect others and welcome the performance of strangers in our community. In particular she says:

> We must live with different people while relying on our
> personal moral codes, without the assistance of a set that
> would include our particularities while transcending them
> (p. 193).

Estranged Identity

The idea of being or feeling like a stranger always refers to the language in which the exilic identity redefines itself. In his moving text, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin,* Jacques Derrida examines the linguistic aspect of estrangement. The French philosopher deconstructs the notion of monolingualism by stating that he has only

one language yet it is not his (p.1). In order to wrestle with the complex proposition of linguistic exile, Derrida introduces some of his personal memories of growing up in a Jewish family in Algeria and developing an identity that is marked by a silent hyphen: Franco-Maghrebian. He claims that it is very difficult to define a 'hyphenated person', and to write an autobiography from the position of a personal anamnesis. Derrida evocatively narrates:

> I dream of writing an anamnesis of what enables me to identify myself or say I from depths of amnesia and aphasia, I know, by the same token, that I can do it only by opening up an impossible path, leaving the road, escaping, giving myself a slip, inventing a language different enough to disallow its own reappropriation within the norms, the body, and the law of the given language (p. 66).

Kristeva has already shown us that the two-fold exilic identity challenges the rights to citizenship. Derrida is also aware of the fragile boundaries set between a person and a citizen when he says: "citizenship does not define a cultural, linguistic, or in general, historical participation [but citizenship is] more artificial than ever" (p. 15). The Cremieux decree of 1870 gave Algeria the status of a French state; therefore Jacques Derrida was born a French citizen. In 1940, he was stripped of his French citizenship when the French government abolished the decree, only to have it returned to him in 1943. For Derrida, this political arbitrariness exemplifies an estranged construction of the very concept of citizenship. The fact that a group of people were given political status and then had it taken away is not a natural one. There are some serious personal and national (if not international) repercussions of such political games, namely, bloody upheavals, suffering, and the deaths of innocent people. Many survivors of such extreme political situations internalize their pain, which results in internalized exile and traumas

that might never be healed. Derrida writes about his "disorder of identity" that has long been troubling the formation of his identity *vis a vis* his national belonging. He poses a thought-provoking question:

> Does this "disorder of identity" favor or inhibit anamnesia? Does it heighten the desire of memory, or does it drive the genealogical fantasy to despair? Does it suppress, repress, or liberate? All of these at the same time, no doubt, and that would be another version, the other side of the contradiction that set us in motion. And has us running to the point of losing our breath, or our mind (p.18).

The problematics of self-identification become critical when Derrida attests that, in order to construct a biographical anamnesis, one must have a well-defined concept of "I". But is it possible for a mobile, estranged, and exilic figure to have a stable sense of "self"? Derrida claims that it is impossible to point to the clear socio-political and cultural formations of his identity. He was born into a Jewish family in Algeria, in the Maghrebien culture, yet he learnt neither Hebrew nor Arabic nor Berber; rather, he acquired his education in the only language he ever knew: French, "a language of metropolis".

Derrida claims that the situation in which he was born and raised did not make him enter into monolingualism, or bilingualism or plurilingualism. Consequently, the formation of his "self" was "neither one, nor two, nor two + n" (p. 29). Thus, the pre-originary, primal master language does not exist; it is pure fiction. A clear origin of language is lacking. The colonizing countries invented monolingualism to impose Law on the dependant colonies, always perpetuating the illusion that there is a "mother tongue" for everyone when, in fact, there is only a prosthesis of (imagined) origin.

Lost in Translation

Derrida's philosophy corresponds with the intellectual exiles' comprehension of their situation who talk and walk between at least two languages. Eva Hoffman's autobiographical novel, for example, *Lost in Translation. Llife in a New Language*, presents a moving literary testimony of someone who walked in exile in-between two languages. The book is not only about her immigration from Cracow, Poland at the age of thirteen and her endeavour to make a new home for herself in the suburbs of Vancouver, Canada, but also about the geographical and physical displacements from communist Poland to capitalist Canada that were marked by the drastic change of having two cultures and two languages. Hoffman constructs a well-controlled story, but her subtle evocations of the very unpresentability of the exilic experience are challenged by her anguish that is narrated in rich and eloquent English. She divides her book into three parts: "Paradise", "Exile", and "The New World". While the first part presents Hoffman's life in her native Cracow and describes her departure from Poland on the ship "Batory" in 1959, the *Exile* presents a fragmented narration from the middle, a compelling story that masterfully unfolds in the exilic space of *in-between*. In this most engaging section of the book, it seems that the writer's representation of her critical walks towards the New World are coupled with her self-conscious metamorphoses manifested through the use of English and her slow adaptation to Western manners. It is precisely Hoffman's hybrid walk with the Canadian rules that prompts her to meditate upon the reconstruction and the meaning of her metamorphosing "self". She recounts how, in her turbulent teenage years in Canada, she was trying to "match up signifier to signified;", how she was struggling to see and name the aura in the English semantic

field. Dwelling here in Canada and yet, belonging to her beloved Poland, the inevitable there, Hoffman narrates:

> I can't afford to look back, and I can't figure out how to look forward. In both directions, I may see a Medusa, and already feel the danger of being turned into stone. Betwixt and between, I am stuck and time is stuck within me (p. 116).

In order to get rid of that unbearable weight of *tęsknota*, nostalgia for her old homeland, Hoffman makes a conscious decision to discipline her body and her mind to perform her best in the New World. One of the forms of her immersion into the Western system was to acquire an education, culminating in a Ph.D. in Literature from Harvard University. However, even after a successful doctoral ceremony, when everything finally seemed to come together, Hoffman is "gripped with fear" (p. 227) and she asks her "self", as if in real psychological analysis, a perplexing question: "Who is this that's behaving this way, anyhow?" (p. 227). In spite of the gratitude to her family who, as she says, "gave her the first world" and to her friends "who taught her how to appreciate the New World after all" (p. 1), Hoffman, a Jewish-Polish-Canadian-American exiled intellectual, realizes that her "self" remains forever forsaken. She has become, borrowing Kristeva's expression, "a stranger to herself" (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p.1).

While Hoffman leads the reader through frequent geographical displacements and habitats (Cracow, Poland; Vancouver, Canada; Houston, Texas, New York, United States; and London, England), Homi Bhabha theorizes this exilic state of displacement and proposes critical studies of a performative minor "self". The minor subject is the exile, the foreigner and the other. Its uneasy movements between the center and the margin are examined by Bhabha as an important act of enunciation because it is "a

performative act of emergence" (p. 441). Drawing on several psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, Andres Greene, Edward Glover and Jean Laplanche, Bhabha argues that the identity emerges through affects that are manifested in states of anxiety. For Bhabha, the minor subject is the most affective and anxious. Its internal and external intensities make it into an exilic borderline identity:

> Anxiety represents an ongoing, vacillating process of translation that iteratively crosses the border between external/internal, psychic/somatic, between the ego 'as the actual seat of anxiety' and the inner attack of id and superego (p. 442/443).

The anxiety of the emerging subject is very critical for Bhabha. The product of these intensities, the affect, marks the psychological disjunction between the subject and the object:

> Within the enunciation of anxiety, then, there is a disjunction between the subject as object of itself, "to be made anxious", and, in a double move, the object as subjected to itself, "myself as anxious" (p. 443).

It is the estranged subject, positioned on the borderlines that is able to generate a meaning of contemporary co-existence in an increasingly multicultural world.

It seems to me that what Said aspired to achieve with an experimental individual is actualized in Homi Bhabha's personal and professional walks that displaced him from India through Great Britain and to the United States. In the conclusion of the essay "Beyond the Pale: Art in the age of multicultural translation," Bhabha gives us a good sense of his multicultural and "anxious" upbringings, and of his early "desire to go beyond" colonized India:

Once, a boy in Bombay [...], I opened a museum catalogue
and discovered a late Giacometti. [...] A meager man,
naked to the bone, legs like hollowed bamboos, buttocks
like empty dugs, the icon of Independent Indian: Mahatma
Gandhi. From that moment on, for me, the Father of the
Nation lived in the shadow of Giacometti's "Walking Man
1". And when I read of the Mahatma's defiant march to the
seashore at Dandi, to draw a handful of free salt from the
water and thus oppose the British Government's iniquitous
salt tax, I saw the other figure marching too: the walking
man [...] In that walk that hither and thither, that turns salt
into the symbol of freedom, or bronze into a human image,
I felt the need to translate, to create something else,
somewhere between art and history; and with it the desire
to go beyond... (p.30)

Marginal *Flânerie*

The third and the final characteristic that complements the notion of the mobile

and estranged exile is that of being marginal. It is in fact the essential condition for Said

that makes him explicitly compare the figure of the intellectual with that of a displaced

person: "to be as marginal and as undomesticated as someone who is in real exile" (p.

63). Having the courage to be marginal, Said continues, means being free from always

proceeding with caution, not being afraid to overturn the applecart, and not being anxious

about upsetting fellow members of the same corporation (p. 63). Said's intellectual

position is highly ethical and demands from the exilic intellectual a clear ethical integrity.

Paradoxically, this noncomformist position is one of the main reasons why Said's exilic

intellectual would have to remain a minor figure. The exiled intellectual cannot identify

with Benjamin's notion of a pseudo-intellectual, a salaried *flâneur*, who accepts without

hesitation economic benefits in exchange for producing manufactured pieces of

information.

It is also the same ethical and intellectual integrity of the minor subject that makes Bhabha re-map the socio-political territory and "bend towards freedom" (p. 440). However, when Said proposes the idea of a "marginal subject", Bhabha rethinks this opposition and presents it as a minor performativity. What is critical for Bhabha is the rejection of the essentialist and pluralist positions in which a "marginal subject" would naturally be on the "margins" instead of in the center. Bhabha is not interested in a discourse of dichotomy; his "minor subject" is not in competition with centralized powers. For the critical thinker, the minor subject performs a contiguous movement with forceful eccentricity. It draws perpendicular lines that aim to de-territorialize the social and the personal. The phenomenon of proximity that is created as a result of the movement of the minor subject with the others is the space where everyone has the potential to become "minor". It is Bhabha's sincere wish that we have the courage to act from the middle, dwelling in the ambivalent space that can even acquire an agonistic quality. When we identify ourselves with others there is ambivalence, anxiety and, applying the psychoanalytical Lacanian term used by Bhabha, "extimité". What is critical for Bhabha is the demand for a psychological and social situation in which a minor subject identifies itself as an active and free agent. Bhabha explains:

> This agonistic state of hybridity, this state of acting from the midst of identities, takes us beyond the multicultural politics of mutual recognition that, for all its seductive reasonableness, too readily assumes coevality at the point at which difference is being adjudicated and cultural judgement passed (p. 438).

Minor Literature

Bhabha's theoretical desire to transcend the "multicultural politics of mutual recognition" is put to a practical test by two French intellectuals, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In their essay, "What is minor literature?" the two French philosophers examine a specific linguistic identification of the minor performing subject. And since it is often language through which a "minor subject" represents itself, Deleuze and Guattari analyze a case of "minor literature". The essay declares: "A minor literature doesn't come from minor language; it is rather that which a minor constructs within a major language" (p. 59). The philosophers argue that Kafka experimented with all the intensities and possibilities of the German language that by "swelling" and stretching its syntax to the limits, Kafka masterfully deterritorialized and then reterritorialized his own German language. Moreover, the writer recreated the German language to the point that Deleuze and Guattari saw it as a "plateau of pure intensities". Writing from a minority position, a Jew living in Prague, Kafka showed that there exists no language that is immune to larger politico-economic factors. Deleuze and Guattari show that Kafka always used German in relation to Yiddish and Czech languages thus allowing the writer to create new possibilities. The authors argue that Kafka's reterritorialization of the German language resulted in original, powerful "becoming-images". They raise a fundamental question: "How many people today live in a language that is not their own?" (p. 61). The situation of living in a language that under certain conditions, might become estranged creates challenging new possibilities. Deleuze and Guattari offer a provocative critique of the minor language when the linguistic notion of the "other" can also signify the situation

where "one becomes a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy to one's own language" (p. 62).

To continue our discussion of the minor exilic language, Canadian Sherry Simon examines its phenomenon from a slightly different theoretical angle in her book, *Hybridité Culturelle*. It is worth noting how the term hybridity traveled between diverse disciplines and acquired different connotations. In *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Robert J.C. Young claims that the historical meaning of "hybridity" had mostly negative connotations. There were highly racist speculations regarding newly produced plants, animals, or humans that were created from two different sources, types, or races. They were hybrids, offspring resulting from crossbreeding. The new hybrid identities were perceived as impure and inferior to the dominant race or class. Thus, hybridity, being both physically and intellectually "contaminated," presented a threat to other species (often understood as a threat to the dominant white European colonizers). The discourse of hybridity, fertility, and reproduction is certainly related to the discourses of power and the colonial desire to dominate others. Because of non-experienced before massive and frequent international displacements of people, hybridity started to develop a positive connotation and denote a cultural phenomenon. It is in contemporary theoretical discourses that hybridity celebrates its renewed cultural and post-colonial critical applications. Moreover, hybridity seems to be one of the postmodern terms whose denotation can neither be easily fixed nor fully explained. Young's open definition of hybridity echoes Simon's meditations on the fluidity and mobility of the cultural phenomena. Young states:

> There is no single, or correct concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes. It

shows that we are still locked into parts of the ideological network of a culture that we think and presume that we have surpassed (*Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, p. 27).

Simon claims that a hybrid text displaying more than one cultural reference and that is often written in more than one language can be called a "minor text:. Analyzing the characteristics of a hybrid text, she writes:

> Le texte hybridé est donc une texte qui manifeste des "effets des traduction", par un vocabulaire disparate, une syntaxe inhabituelle, un dénuement deterritorialisant, des interférences linguistiques ou culturelles, une certaine ouverture ou faiblesse sur le plan de la maîtrise linguistique ou du tissu de références. Ces effets esthétiques sont le résultat de la situation de frontière que vit l'écrivain, qui par sa prise de conscience de la multiplicité, choisit de créer un texte créolisé, selon l'expression d'Edouard Glissant, c'est-à-dire un texte où la confrontation des éléments disparates produit du nouveau, de l'imprévisible (p. 45/46).

Simon examines a few instances of hybrid texts that were written *in-between* languages by different exilic figures. For example, she recalls novels by A.M. Klein, a Jewish Montréal writer, Marco Micone, Dany Laferrière, Régine Robin, Gail Scott, and Robert Majzels. Simon is fascinated by the unique features of the hybrid texts. All of the hybrid-exilic texts have features of the hybrid text that Simon requires.

Simon's marginal exilic *flânerie* is concerned with promenading in the streets of one of the well-known multicultural neighborhoods in Montreal, the quarter where many exiles settle down, and where the author herself lived when writing her book, *Le Mile-End*. In her personal narration about walking in and observing this multicultural Canadian quarter, there is a serious academic concern about the phenomenon of the contemporary

culture in-transit, "un lieu de passage" (p. 17). The landmark of the multicultural quarter is represented by the prominent architecture of Saint Michel and Saint Anthony's Church located in the heart of *Mile-End*. The church reflects eclectic architecture in its merging of Byzantine, Islamic, Gothic, and Roman styles, as well as multilingual places of worship in that it served as an English Canadian, then an Irish, and finally, a Polish Christian Catholic parish. The phenomenon of being hybrid is very close, if not interchangeable, with the phenomenon of being in exile. Simon examines the hybrid cultural *status quo* as "un mode de circulation, d'interaction et de fusion imprévisible des traits culturels" (p. 19).

There are numerous instances in Simon's book where she evokes the necessity of walking in a multicultural metropolis as the most primal activity to create better "zones of contact" in urban socio-cultural exchanges. Moreover, there are many passages in the book where the author draws evocative images of the strolling city, a mobile and exilic place *eo ipso*. The phenomenon of hybridity does not recount a linear narration; but rather, it negates the progressive and dialectic logic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (p. 32). It evokes heterogenic elements (p. 33), it creates a situation of physical and mental limits (p. 45), and it prompts form displacement and relocation (p. 53). Finally, hybridity, a postmodern trope *par excellence*, pushed the limits of what is understood as aesthetically acceptable and cognitively possible. The writer states that:

> L'hybride est un lieu de contestation quand il force les catégories et nous oblige a redéfinir les critères de la beauté et du savoir (p. 28).

Further, Simon claims that the hybrid quarter of Mile-End is founded on "la mémoire et l'oubli" (p. 23). These key narrative tropes, memory and forgetting, present the most critical elements of every exile's story. This palimpsest-like history with partially revealed stories regarding Mile-End's exilic past and present is exemplified in Simon's neighbourhood by the multi-layered fragments of divers signs, architectural buildings, and different spoken languages in the public spaces. An exilic space breathes with anxiety and with nostalgia, and it "prends vie dans les coquilles vides que ces régimes laissent en mourant" (p. 25). The hybrid and exilic place is a transitional site; it is always shifting and redefining its identity because it is composed of many diverse elements. These elements constantly adjust to each other, and they challenge the notion of the stability of the newly adopted home.

The complication of walking in the city can be exemplified by walking in exile because exile presents a powerful translation of the most unpresentable states of the *flânerie*-intellectual who is always in transit. In this chapter, I argued that Said's reflections regarding the condition of the contemporary thinker can be seen as a triadic concept of the exilic identity. More specifically, I analyze the figure of walking in exile, understood as mobile, estranged, and marginal *flânerie*. Since "exile" is one of the oldest terms denoting human banishment and displacement, it contributes to a complex culturo-political notion that challenges the homogeneous performing identity. By examining texts of selected exiled intellectuals such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Eva Hoffman, Julia Kristeva, Zygmunt Bauman, and Sherry Simon, I endorse the thought-provoking image they draw of walking in exile. The written accounts on exile become successful translations of "the crippling sorrow of estrangement" that

transcends intense personal experiences. Said's proposition to fashion the figure of the contemporary intellectual into the figure of the exile presents an ambitious task. The cultural critic is aware that, becoming a responsible contemporary thinker is not only a personal but also a political decision.

Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, and Susan Buck-Morss show how the ambulant intellectual, a modern observer of life, metamorphosed from a disinterested bohemian out-looker into a salaried intellectual for the Nazis and other totalitarian regimes. Zygmunt Bauman's reading of the contemporary *flâneur* enriches the discussion of walking in exile because it shows how the increasingly commercialized postmodern world has become a contested ground for the immobilized player. It is perhaps no longer a solitary *flâneur*-player, but rather an estranged and "degenerate utopia" of the contemporary metropolis that traps the dispossessed *flâneur*, itself exemplifing deserted and exilic characteristics. On one hand, the critics are interested in the urban site that can be exilic and unhomely; on the other, they present an exile as a displaced person that lacks a place, an eternal outsider who moves in between geographico-political and cultural borders. Exile, then, and particularly the contemporary phenomenon of walking in exile, is an embodiment of complex concepts and ideas that balance the image of the exiled city with the image of the degraded urban stroller. There is no city without city dwellers; similarly, there are no *flâneurs* without the metropolis. Now, the pseudo-intellectual, the "sandwich-man" stands in opposition to Said's, Bhabha's and Kristeva's figure of the accountable thinker.

In addition to the itinerant quality of the intellectual, Bhabha and Kristeva see the aspect of the estranged and the uncanny as the complementing and beneficial "other"

facets of the emerging identity. And if each of us carries, in fact, a "stranger within ourselves," then it is our ethical and intellectual responsibility to recognize the "strange" qualities in ourselves before we appreciate them in the others. Bhabha argues for a much more demanding "moderate position" in which the enunciation of the minor subject would happen through an intensely psychological situation where the subject is affective and anxious. The marginality of the exilic subject seems to be the condition *sine qua non* of its successful performance. As Said, Bhabha, Deleuze, and Guattari tell us, being "on the margin" does not mean being downgraded to recycle the effects of the dominating power. On the contrary, the minor is constructed within the politics and dynamics of the major powers; therefore, we are all, in a certain way, minor subjects.

Walking in exile is that borderline performance that provokes a confrontation within ourselves and with others who are facing with courage the most uncomfortable situations and desires. Exilic identity performs, explicitly or implicitly, on the borderline of the "self" that can be exemplified by some of the best intellectual and artistic endeavours. I sense a common thread in the analyzed writings, that seems to emphasize the urgency of the ethical acknowledgement of others who become a part of our human exilic condition. And if the notion of exile deprives us from having one privileged point of view, it encourages us to learn about our unsettled intensities and fears; it positions us on the margin to teach ourselves and others how to participate more fully in our cultural and political lives. In the metaphorical and intellectual sense, we are all exiles; we all live in exiled estranged urban places. Perhaps not all of us cross one geographical border for an other, but all of us are able to cross creative borders if we aspire to "go beyond art and history" promising to deliver a culturally valuable and ethically sound performance.

Chapter Three - Walking in Warsaw with the *Vehicle*

One of the most significant Eastern European walking art performances that draws on the Baudelairean *flâneur* and elaborates on the politicized figure of the exiled intellectual is Krzysztof Wodiczko's performance with his first *Vehicle*. This performance is important not only because it was one of the very few politically engaged public art works executed in Warsaw, Poland, in the early 1970's, but also because it was entered into the art historical canon as a significant work of art. Wodiczko's *Vehicle* presents an aesthetically pleasing and politically loaded artwork that announces Wodiczko as a politically engaged artist who, for the next thirty years, would become actively involved with a public discourse and make us rethink the limits of walking in the contemporary metropolis.

I will introduce his first public sculpture, the *Vehicle,* in terms of its formal qualities with special attention to the history of two replicas of this performative object. Wodiczko's performance will be discussed in relation to the Polish political and cultural *status quo* of the early 1970's and will be analyzed in terms of its important contribution towards the artistically understood urban *flânerie*. The interview with Krzysztof Wodiczko conducted in New York in November 2003 as well as my April interview with Wiesław Borowski, director of Foksal Gallery in Warsaw, enrich my presentation of this particular performance. My private *walks* and *talks* around Washington Roundabout in Warsaw (I did not walk with the *Vehicle,* but with video and photo cameras) form a creative part of this chapter. From the perspective of an absent yet affected participant, I aspired to represent the unpresentable. I needed to get in touch with my past when living

in Poland and perform my exilic memory by retracing the steps that, as with Wodiczko, brought me from Poland to Canada in the late 1980's. The images and thoughts collected during and after my one-day walk in Warsaw in April 2003 are enclosed in the attachment at the end of this chapter.

Communist Poland: Social, Political, and Cultural Contexts

Before I discuss the historical and artistic importance of Wodiczko's performance of the *Vehicle*, it is critical to situate the artwork within socio-political, cultural, and historical contexts of Poland in the 1970's. Warsaw, the artist's hometown and the city that played a crucial role in Wodiczko's performance, will be discussed within historical, political, and cultural frameworks.

Situated in the middle of Europe, Poland divides the West (Germany) from the East (Russia, former Soviet Union). The geographic position of Poland is very strategic; sometimes it works against Polish national interests, other times it is in their favor. Since the country's inception in the Xth century, the Polish national boundaries have often changed as they have been put into question by many internal and external wars and political upheavals. Warsaw is located in central Poland and has been the country's capital since the XVIth century. It is one of the largest cities in Poland, and is known not only for its historical buildings, beautiful sights, and rich history, but also for its remarkable indestructibility. It has risen out of the devastation caused by the occupation of the Swedish and the Prussian (1655-56), the Russians (1813-1915) and the Germans (1915-1918). After the third and final partition of Poland amongst Prussian, Russian and Austria in 1795, Warsaw no longer appeared on the map as the capital of Poland. The Eastern part of Poland that contained Warsaw was annexed by the Russians; then, during

a brief Napoleonic sojourn, Poland was the establishment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in 1807, which was abolished by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. There were several Polish revolts and national uprisings against the Russian occupation that were harshly put down (1830, 1846, 1848, ands 1863); all of these patriotic movements had their headquarters in Warsaw. After more than a century of absence from the map, Poland was reestablished as an independent state with Warsaw as its capital from 1918 to 1939.

During the devastating Nazi occupation (1939-45), Warsaw was razed by Hitler's order in 1944. In 1943 the Nazis ordered a Jewish ghetto to be built in Warsaw, which first amassed several hundred thousand of Warsaw's total population and was liquidated after a month-long Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. Consequently, about half a million Jews (approximately 40% of the city's population) were exterminated by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto; those who survived were killed in concentration camps. In 1945, after the so-called "liberation of Poland" from the Third Reich by the Russian soldiers, the people of Warsaw returned to their city and began to rebuild a devastated capitol. For example, the ruins of the picturesque old city with the Royal Castle were rebuilt according to existing paintings, drawings and photographs. The restructuring of Warsaw was so well done that in 1980 The Old Town entered into the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

Warsaw is home to many industries, several universities and higher learning institutions, as well as the Philharmonic Orchestra, National Art Museums and Galleries, and the National Theatre Opera. Today's capital is divided into 18 distinct entities, each with its own administrative body. While Śródmiescie, Żolibórz, Mokotów, Ochota, and Wola are the oldest and the richest boroughs of the city, Praga, Rembertów, Białołęka,

Targówek, and Wawer are economically disadvantaged. Praga not only is considered destitute, but also it is the most dangerous part of the city. Brzeska Street, for example, has the reputation of being one of the capital's most unsafe places. Warszawa-Wilanow used to be the out-of-town residence of the Polish King, Jan III Sobieski, with a spectacular Palace and Park; today it is a national museum. Warsawa-Ursynow, -Włochy, -Ursus, -Bemowo, -Bielany and -Wesoła are the newest administrative districts to be adopted by the growing Polish metropolis. In 1970 Warsaw had 1,315,600 inhabitants; according to the 2003 national census, that number has almost doubled, reaching 2,269,000 inhabitants. Historically speaking, Warsaw's population is homogenous, composed of over 90% Slavic (i.e. Polish) people with a small percentage of Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Tatar, and other minorities.

At the end of the Second World War, Poland became a communist country with a new socialist ideology imposed by the Soviet Union that made Poland, as with many other Eastern European countries, culturally and economically dependent on the "Big Brother". From the end of World War II until 1989, all Polish political leaders were appointed directly by the Central Soviet Committee (the Politburo), run in Moscow by such known dictators as Stalin and his successors Khrushschev and Brezhnev. Even though Poland appeared on the world map as an independent country, freedom of expression was controlled by the ruling regime. The only official politics was that of socialism (eventually leading towards communism), based on the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of dialectical materialism. Appointed by the Russian Communist Party, Wladyslaw Gomułka, one of the Stalin's disciples, became the First Secretary of the Central Communist Committee (PZPR) in postwar Poland. The "Gomułka Period" of the

1960's was known for this leader's ruthless implementation of socialist ideology into the Polish cultural and political infrastructures that largely resisted his politics. Edward Gierek and his relatively open politics to the West followed Gomułka's leadership in the 1970's. During my interview with Wodiczko, the artist distinctly recalled that Gierek, the First Secretary of the Communist Party, used specific mechanistic terminology to lay down new directives or guidelines for Polish citizens. In particular, Wodiczko recalls:

> Gierek had a very specific way of directing Polish culture, industry, and science. He wanted Poland to become equal to the West. He always talked about starting and stopping the progress. He used Newtonian terminology to serve his political ends. He talked about the road to the future, a highway. He was interested in things such as gears; we could analyze the whole language of progress, this *postępowizm*, "progress" of Gierek's that was a one-way progress: one had to follow the only movement that went forward, the communist or socialist progressive movement (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

For over forty years after the end of World War II there was a paradoxical situation in Poland: it was supposedly a unified communist country, but almost all its inhabitants disagreed with the communist system that was imposed on them. However, because of the consistent and massive prosecution, imprisonment, and so-called *czystki*, "clean ups" of Poland's pre-war patriots and anti-communist leaders, no one dared to defy the overwhelming power of communism that was present in official politics, in the military forces (including the ever-present police), and in the networks of all the institutions (including the cultural ones). Many of the patriots and anti-communists were tortured and killed in Polish and Russian prisons. Some of the independent leaders, pre-war intelligentsia, and high ranking officers were not in a position to negotiate with the

Communists; they were either killed or forced to leave Poland (i.e. the independent government of Stanisław Mikołajczyk went in exile to Great Britain after World War II).

The increasing totalitarian measures imposed upon the country terrorized the Polish citizens who were not able to *walk* and *talk* freely. Hence, the frequent anti-communist uprisings singled out Poland as a brave Eastern European nation that repeatedly opposed the political system that was enslaving them. The persistent struggles to gain personal and national freedom are exemplified by the massive June 1956 manifestation by workers in the city of Poznań demanding better living conditions (at least 600 workers were killed); the March 1968 University of Warsaw student' uprising, demanding freedom of speech; the December 1970 strike when the Polish workers of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk demanded changes in food prices (at least 44 people were killed); the June 1976 worker's uprising in Radom, (although there were no fatalities, 2000 workers were arrested and heavily beaten); and the major 1980 strike in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk led by Lech Wałęsa who demanded that the government set up an independent trade union. After a few months of long and difficult negotiations between the workers and the government, in November 1980, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union *Solidarność* – Solidarity was officially registered.

In fact, the existence of Solidarity was a precedent in Eastern Europe. It was the first time in postwar history of all the communist countries that there was a truly self-governing workers union, not imposed and not controlled by the Soviets. During the interview I asked Wodiczko if he took part in any of these anticommunist demonstrations or strikes. He informed me that between 1968-70 when he was graduating from the

Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, he was in the middle of the political conflict between

the communist government and the students. He explained:

> I participated in all the meetings, I saw what was going on.
> I was in the Academy when they [the police] surrounded
> us... in 1972 or 73 there was a strike in Ursus [one of the
> largest car factories in Warsaw] and the police locked us up
> for one day in the "Stadium of the Decade". They rushed
> everyone from the factories to the stadium to cut off
> communication between the intelligentsia and the workers,
> because the workers were on strike. (*Krzysztof Wodiczko's
> Vehicle*, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New
> York).

Anticommunist sentiments had always been present in Poland and soon after

World War II, a network of underground newspapers, books and meetings was

established amongst the intelligentsia. These functioned as unofficial structures that filled

in the missing links of untold stories, forbidden by the state. Moreover, the alternative

culture, often supported by the Christian Catholic churches, was developing an antidote

to the ills of the everyday communist reality. These free patriotic, political, and cultural

debates took place in carefully selected private, public (i.e. special coffee spots), and

church-related uncensored places.

Polish Conceptual Art in the 1970's

The phenomenon of Polish conceptual art is closely linked to the complex socio-

political situation in postwar Poland. Since World War II, Poland had been culturally

divided between the socio-realist style imposed by the government and the alternative

conceptual art movements that started to emerge in the early 1970's. Paweł Polit and

Piotr Woźniak the editors of *Conceptual Reflection in Polish Art: Experiences of

Discourse: 1965-1975*, critically examine the first decade of Polish conceptual art. In an

interview with Paweł Polit, Andrzej Turowski, one of the most prominent Polish art

critics, says that there were essentially three major conceptual centers in Poland in the

early 1970's: the Cracow and Warsaw group around the Foksal Gallery; Poznań with the

Akumulatory Gallery; and Wrocław with the Mona Liza Gallery. Moreover, Turowski

claims that conceptual art enjoyed a very special status not only in Poland, but in all ex-

communist countries where the practice of conceptual art became "the Eastern European

special". Turowski argues:

> In some cases it [conceptual art] allowed the artist to
> "smuggle in" contesting and irony, ridicule, caricature of
> political bureaucracy. In other situations it created
> alternative circuits (mail art, gallery in form of a sheet of
> paper, photocopied materials), allowing artists to operate
> outside the monopoly of state institutions and exhibitions
> (*Conceptual Reflection in Polish Art: Experiences of
> Discourse: 1965-1975*, p. 213)

One of the conceptual practical and theoretical approaches is exemplified by senior artist

and critic, Jan Świdziński. He coined the movement named *Contextual Art*, art whose

meaning is contingent upon its context; therefore, this artist's interdisciplinary actions

often acquired a political dimension. It is in the tradition of conceptual art where many

Polish performers sought to understand the meaning of art and to question the existing

political and moral codes. Świdziński was one of the very few Polish artists who, during

the communist regime, was allowed to frequently travel to Canada to develop his artistic

and intellectual career. At that time there was very little financial support for artists,

especially for the avant-garde and performance-based art works that produced nothing

salable. There was only one cultural institution, the Ministry of Culture, and it promoted

socio-realist doctrine. The artists who questioned these imposed cultural politics were not

sponsored by the Ministry. During our interview, Wodiczko referred to these difficult

living and working conditions of 1970's Poland. In particular he said:

> Our role as artists and intellectuals in the 1970's, Poland
> was supposed to be passive. As long as we would work in
> experimental ways, searching for new means of expression,
> (there was a slogan those days that said: "artists are
> searching for new means of expression") as long as artists
> followed this way of working, they would get special
> benefits such as studios, extra living spaces, and passports
> to travel abroad. If the artists were searching for new means
> of expression, experimenting with new media, and did not
> interfere with the politicians' work, then the artists'
> position in social hierarchy was very high. The artists could
> have undertaken existential themes, but artistic
> existentialism could not include political questions.
> Obviously, it was a paradoxical situation. (Krzysztof
> Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New
> York).

Andrzej Turowski claims that Polish conceptual art became more a rationalized

catalyst between official realist and formal art than an engaged critique of the official

cultural system. In his essay, "Wodiczko and Poland in the 1970's", Turowski writes:

> The Conceptual Art, which was just developing in the early
> 1970's and had come out decisively on the side of the
> avant-garde by appealing to the well-known opposition
> between realism and formalism, turned out to be not so
> much a critique of formalism as a rationalized version of it
> (*Public Address*, p. 29).

During our interview Wodiczko informed me that he did not take an active part in the

"conceptual" or "critical Polish art" of the 1970's. He, in fact, was misunderstood by his

colleagues who could not accept his radically different way of thinking and making art

that was exemplified by his first *Vehicle*. Wodiczko told me that there was a great

number of so-called "ego-conceptualists" in Poland who understood "I as idea and art".

During the interview, Wodiczko informed me:

> There was general surprise why the *Vehicle* did not move forward and backward. I rejected the idea that the *Vehicle* would move forward and backward and it was received with great anger and refusal from my colleagues because during that time there was an artistic movement based on a rather superficial understanding of Wittgenstein' phenomenology of language and existentialism found in "body art". If the *Vehicle* would move in opposite direction to my walking on the platform, it would be accepted by my colleagues in Poland because it would, in fact, have had this philosophical Wittgenstein's characteristic (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

The conceptual- and ritual-based art that developed in the late 1960's and 1970's had strong interdisciplinary and performative elements. This is exemplified by the diverse performative actions of Jan Świdziński, Jerzy Warpechowski, Jerzy Bereś, Natalia LL, Ewa Partum, Jerzy Truszkowski, Józef Robakowski, and a performing couple, KwieKulik. These avant-garde performances challenged censorship and communist control over free artistic expression. According to Krzysztof Wodiczko, the most accomplished Polish conceptual artist was Jarosław Kozłowski, with whom he used to spend a lot of time and learned a lot about his conceptualism that was based on the dichotomy of language and image.

Conceptual and Political Aspects in Tadeusz Kantor's and Andrzej Partum's Art

One of the strongest authorities and the most influential interdisciplinary Polish artists was Tadeusz Kantor. His innovative drawings, paintings (often called assemblages), happenings and experimental spectacles of his renowned theater *Cricot 2*, drew extensively on artistic iconography in order to subvert and problematize its latent

meanings. In his early happening *Letter,* for example, performed in January, 1967 (a year before the students' uprising of March, 1968), Kantor built a registered letter that measured 14 meters long and weighed 87 kg, and had it carried by eight professional mailmen through the streets of Warsaw. The *Letter,* marked with the name of an unknown receiver, "Mister X", was addressed to the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw. During the performance, Kantor was in the gallery waiting for the letter. He received telephone messages from his collaborators situated in different parts of the city informing him of the *Letter's* journey. When the mailmen reached the gallery, a monologue played from the tape recorder of the unknown receiver of the letter communicating all sorts of emotional states. Finally, the mailmen deposited the *Letter* on the gallery floor and stepped on it, thus executing the last gesture of artistic catharsis. This happening, *Letter,* exhibits some of the critical traits, not only of Kantor's unique performative gesture, but also of the conceptually and contextually encoded artwork specific to the Polish context. The *Letter's* monumental size was similar to the communist banners carried through the streets of Polish cities during Communist celebrations (i.e. May 1st compulsory marches); it mimicked familiar iconography while offering a different content. Most of the early happening/performance actions were supported by the conceptually based Foksal Gallery that promoted experimental art as well as critical and cultural discussions that stemmed from the "art as an idea" and grounded the art work in a socio-political and cultural *status quo*. The *Letter* draws on familiar *signifiers* (the image of politically correct banners), but it challenges them by offering a different reading of a *signified*, although there is no explicit political message on Kantor's letter/banner. Kantor's artistic translation of the

difficult socio-political Polish reality is fueled by deconstructing the concept that uses a familiar form, but conveys a very different type of message.

Wodiczko remembered another politically engaged performance that he appreciated as an intelligent comment on the silenced cultural discourses of the time. The work was executed by Andrzej Partum who connected Warsaw University with the Warsaw Academia, two buildings that face each other from opposite sides of Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. He connected them with a banner carrying a two-word ironic message: "*milczenie awangardowe* - avant garde silence".

One can say that the notions of conceptual and political art have always been related, if not intertwined, in critical Polish art production. Conceptually-based artworks manipulated the political message, playing with the existing, officially accepted forms. Most of the conceptual artworks of the 1960's and 1970's critiqued the imposed "truths" of the communist ideology in a witty and intelligent ways.

Defining Eastern European Performance Art Before and After the Demise of Communism

There are important differences in defining Eastern European performances before and after the demise of communism in 1990. The comparative evaluation of this ephemeral art form performed in Eastern Europe presents an enriching way of looking at and evaluating performance art.

Even though there were some texts written about conceptually based performance art works, it was not until the demise of communism with the deconstruction of the Berlin Wall in 1990, that more critical thought regarding the contextualization of Eastern European art, and body and performance art in particular emerged. For example, in her

introductory essay to *Body and the East*, the first comprehensive catalogue from 1999

that put the Eastern European performers on the international Western art scene, Zdenka

Badovinac, a Yugoslav curator and art critic, claims that the notion of "Eastern European

Art" should be understood not in geographical terms but "as a term of popular politics,

referring to the countries of the various former socialistic regimes"(*Body and the East*, p.

18). The critic's main concern is the question of redefinition and representation of the

Eastern European artistic practices that involve the body, which had been censored by the

communist governments and were thus largely unknown to the Western art world.

Badovinac claims that the body from the East was marked by different socio-political

situations than the formation of an artistic identity in Western countries. The critic warns

about possible theoretical difficulties while recontextualizing the Eastern body in the new

political context of the 1990's. In particular, she says:

> If we talk about art creativity in Eastern Europe, which
> until recently was relatively isolated from the world, as
> being a separate phenomenon, we risk pushing it even
> further into the world of otherness (*Body and the East*, p.
> 9).

The fact that most artists from Eastern Europe were unknown to the Western public

(except certain rare and exceptional cases) was a result of the Iron Curtain politics that

did not facilitate political and cultural exchanges with Western countries. There was

either a complete prohibition or difficult situations created by the Eastern Europe

governments regarding performing in public spaces under the communist regimes.

Consequently, most of the early performance based art works were executed in private

spaces, which is why the performances were often poorly documented.

These difficult political constraints were coupled with economic ones. Badovinac compares the uneven economic situations of the Western to those Eastern European countries, thus elucidating the very different understanding of market in these two worlds:

> From the sixties on, artists in the West have been acting, in one way or another, against the manipulation of the art market. In the East, where the market was non-existent (nor has it developed to date), artists acted against manipulation by the state-ideological apparatus (*Body and the East*, 15).

Further, Badovinac claims that body art in the Eastern European context became a metaphor of the political powers in the 1970's. As a radical countersignature to the oppressive political system many performing artists' bodies were marked with scarifications, inflictions of pain, and self-mutilations. Drawing on Peggy Phelan's reflections of the metaphoric and metonymic use of the performative body, Badovinac states that contemporary performance uses a language of metonymy more than metaphor because it simply does not describe the aggression, suffering and traumas, that the Eastern European performances embody. Badovinac is also interested in how the Eastern European artists were deconstructing the notion of identity and redefining the complex politics of the body. The understanding of performance in public *vis a vis* private spaces presented different notions in the East and in the West. Badovinac says that "police surveillance and censorship were omnipresent so even appearing naked in public spaces could have a political dimension" (p. 16).

One of the most radical examples of politically based body art can be illustrated by the action of the Czech artist, Tomas Ruller. On the eighth of August, 1988 he walked in an industrial site with his back ablaze to protest, amongst other things, the fact that the

Police refused him his own passport to travel to the West Germany to participate in *Documenta 8*. Ruller's performance was not only a protest against the lack of human rights, his artwork was also significant because it was executed on the 20th anniversary of Jan Palach's suicide as a protest against the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1967. In this dangerous and extreme body art action, Ruller was making a strong statement about the regime's constraints of the basic human and artistic freedom in communist Czechoslovakia [6].

It is in such oppressive socio-political and cultural contexts that Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko was born to, grew up and worked as an industrial designer and as an artist. Wodiczko began to work on his first *Vehicle* in 1970 in Warsaw, in a workshop that belonged to the Foksal PSP Gallery. Wodiczko had been associated with the gallery since the late 1960's, where he came into contact with such important artists and critics as Tadeusz Kantor, Wiesław Borowski, Andrzej Turowski, Zbigniew Gostomski, and Henryk Stażewski; in this way, Foksal Gallery provided the forum for Wodiczko's artistic formation. He was influenced by Andrzej Turowski's book *Short History of Constuctivism* and by the semiotics introduced in texts by Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. Wodiczko was also very familiar with *ArtForum*, one of the Western art magazines that circulated in Poland.

When the artist started to work on the *Vehicle* he had already executed a few conceptually based art works that investigated the role of the individual in an urban context; his urban performances with *Personal Instrument* in 1969; and that of self-

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[6] During the communist regime, Eastern European citizens did not have rights to their own passports; their personal documents had to be deposited at the local police station. Every journey to the West had to be properly petitioned. The police had absolute power to make a decision to issue a passport or not, and thus to allow or disallow an applicant to travel. The police decision was final and could not be appealed.

representation using photography and mirrors in his *Self-Portrait* show in 1973. Wodiczko's subsequent investigations of drawings of various objects such as a stool, a ladder and free-floating lines exemplified his interest in the conceptualization of everyday objects by applying the laws of illusion. Between 1970 and 1973, Wodiczko worked and performed with his first public sculpture. It was during that time when his vocation began to shift from industrial designer to artist working in the social space, even though, as Wodiczko clearly expressed during our interview, he never wanted to be perceived as an artist, he simply wanted "to be useful to society" (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

Formal Description of the *Vehicle*

Let's start with the Polish and English titles of Wodiczko's first *Vehicle*. In Polish the work is called "Pojazd" which translates into English as *Vehicle*. During the interview Wodiczko specifies that Polish "Pojazd" means something else that "Wóz", "Pojazd" translates into English as *Vehicle*. He explains:

> *Vehicle* in English has more connotations than Polish "Pojazd." I actually prefer the English term, because in Polish there is a saying "wehikuł czasu" [vehicle of time], but since it has wheels and it has to move forward, it has to be "Pojazd", not "Wehikuł" (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

It is important to describe the sculpture in iconographical terms since the object was essential to Wodiczko's walking performance. The formal description of the *Vehicle*, however, posits a few troubling questions. First of all, the prototype of the *Vehicle* does not exist. There is a second replica of the sculpture (i.e. the third *Vehicle*) in a permanent collection at the Łódź Museum of Contemporary Art, *Muzeum Sztuki* in Łódź, Poland.

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The replica has the same dimensions as the second *Vehicle* that was made by the Łódź Museum according to the parameters of the first sculpture that is no longer in existence. According to the Museum's classification, the *Vehicle's* dimensions are: 69 x 444 x 82 cm. The currently displayed sculpture was acquired by the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź from the De Appel Gallery in Amsterdam. It is on display in the Museum's permanent collection, placed in a narrow corridor on the second floor. The sculpture is made out of white-painted wood and metal parts: four bicycle wheels, cords and gears (Appendix 14).

There is a revealing history of Wodiczko's performative object(s), the three *Vehicles*. Although Wodiczko claims that a book could be written about the history of the object that exemplifies the problematics of museology and the politics of the contemporary museums, he insists that the history of the object is not important because it is not part of the work. Nevertheless, I appreciated the artist's detailed explanation of the history of his *Vehicles* because it helped me to unravel the formal proprieties of the object(s) that had quite unusual museological and exhibiting adventures.

Wiesław Borowski, the director of the Foksal Gallery told me that the original sculpture was left outside in the gallery's courtyard after Wodiczko's solo show at Foksal in 1973. There was no space at the gallery or in Wodiczko's apartment to store it. The *Vehicle* slowly decomposed over time until it was discarded. There was no solo exhibition of the *Vehicle* at Foksal Gallery *per se*, because the sculpture "appeared as an unwanted child" (interview). However, since it was made in the Gallery Foksal Visual Workshop, Borowski insisted that the sculpture be shown in the gallery between two officially scheduled shows. *Vehicle* was properly exhibited in another alternative gallery, Akumulatory Gallery in Poznań, and was presented to Stanisławski, the director of the

Lódź Museum who refused to take it in a deposit. Consequently, the *Vehicle* was placed

outside the Foksal Gallery and someone destroyed it and removed it before Wodiczko's

permanent departure to Canada in 1977. According to the official institutionalized

judgment of taste as defined by the Polish Ministry of Culture and exercised by the art

museums and official art galleries of the 1970's, the *Vehicle* did not qualify as "a true

work of art", because it was made with everyday recycled materials. There was no

support to store the *Vehicle* in galleries or museums storage.

Borowski had no doubts that the *Vehicle* was a work of art, but he admits that he

was not aware of its great historical value. When Krzysztof came back to Poland in the

early 1980's with his artistic accomplishments from Canada and elsewhere, interest in re-

examining his art works in a retrospective exhibition developed. In the new context of his

other vehicle-projects (Vehicle-Café, Vehicle for the Worker, Vehicle-Coffee Shop,

Vehicle-Platform, Vehicle-Podium, Homeless Vehicle, Poliscar), it became necessary to

re-build the first *Pojazd*, the lost first *Vehicle* in order to illustrate Wodiczko's long

interest in public art. The *Vehicle* was re-built by the Art Museum in Lódź for the

Presences Polonaises group show at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1983. Maria

Morzuch, one of the Lódź Museum's curators, explained that the *Vehicle* was in high

demand by various art galleries and museums in Poland and abroad after the exhibition in

France, and the Lódź Museum was reluctant to lend the sculpture because of the high risk

of damage. According to Wodiczko, the replica was not a good one because it was

constructed very quickly, and it did not work properly because it was too heavy. Instead

of closely following the artist's instructions and building it from plywood with wooden

ribs inside the podium, the second *Vehicle*, its first replica, was built in wood. Wodiczko

heard that the sculpture was supposed to be sold to Centre Georges Pompidou, but it was quickly arranged without his knowledge that the *Vehicle* ended up at the Lódź Museum in Poland. When Wodiczko came to Lódź to confront the situation, the director confirmed that the museum had the sculpture; Wodiczko then suggested that he would like to sell it to them, asking for proper documentation of his artwork.

According to Maria Morzuch, the lending issue emerged again in the 1990's when the De Appel Gallery in Amsterdam wanted to borrow the *Vehicle* from the Muzeum Sztuki. Morzuch claims that the Museum refused to lend it for Wodiczko's Amsterdam show due to numerous scratches already visible on the sculpture's surface and to the fear of further damage to the *Vehicle*. In this situation, De Appel made a second replica of the *Vehicle* so it could be included it the show. However, at the same time, a second replica of the *Vehicle* already existed that had been built by the Walker Art Center for the artist's show. According to the previous arrangements between the artist and the American art center there could only be two replicas of the *Vehicle*; therefore, the artist decided to destroy the old heavy replica and replace it with the new better one so that there would be only two replicas of the *Vehicle*. Maria Morzuch and the director of the Art Museum in Lódź claimed that Wodiczko demanded that the Museum publicly destroy the second replica of the *Vehicle* and replace it with the one made in Amsterdam in 1990.

The institutionally supervised destruction of the *Vehicle* became a peculiar counter-walking performance that took place in 1992, during Wodiczko's solo show at the Lódź Museum. It consisted of having five gallery workers carry the *Vehicle* from the Museum's permanent collection located on the second floor, through the narrow Museum's staircases into the museum's courtyard. Once in the courtyard, the *Vehicle* was

dismantled and replaced by its third replica. The black and white documentation photos show Wodiczko present during the disassembling and replacing of his two *Vehicles* (Appendix 15).

The director of the Museum and the curators who worked closely with Wodiczko at the time did not feel comfortable explaining or discuss this matter with me. Looking at the numerous photographs taken during the dismantling of one *Vehicle* and the exchange of it with the other replica in the Museum's courtyard, I get a sense that from the very beginning of his artistic career, Wodiczko was aware of the dense political and cultural contexts in which his first, second and even the third *Vehicle* would be institutionally challenged and that he would be put in positions to explain himself and to defend his artwork. According to the Museum workers, the artist not only insisted that the Museum destroy the sculpture, but also that this uncanny performance be documented by video and photo cameras The artist himself, however, insists that he did not ask for documentation of this event. Except for a few black and white photographs of the *Vehicle*'s replacement, Wodiczko does not have any other documentation.

Constructing the *Vehicle*

The origins of the first *Vehicle* reveal an intriguing story about Wodiczko's personal and professional interests and vocation. It is during the work on the *Vehicle* that Wodiczko realized that he could no longer exclusively work as an industrial designer, an employee for the Polish Optical Works (Polskie Zakłady Optyczne), and a lecturer/instructor at the Technical University of Warsaw. The three year long work on the *Vehicle* became a significant turning point in Wodiczko's life: the project made him a

politically engaged artist, an artist who would consistently question the public space for the next thirty years.

During our interview, Wodiczko explained to me the context in which he conceived his first *Vehicle*. During the 1970's, Wodiczko and Krzysztof Meissner, a leading Polish designer, responded to the call of an international competition for a new model of a vehicle/bicycle. The winning project had to successfully translate the work and power of human muscles into a machine/vehicle that would move forward. Wodiczko consulted a mechanical engineer from PZO to select a design that would be the most workable, given the lack of sophisticated equipment and humble working conditions. Being trained as a designer and having excellent draftsman's skills, Wodiczko was thinking about building the *Vehicle* according to scrupulous, engineer-like precise technical drawings (Appendices 16-20). A lot of hard work involved in designing and rejecting many versions of *Vehicle's* technical drawings. Wodiczko distinctly recalls the moment when he realized that his future *Vehicle* represented something other than a competition project for a bicycle. He says:

> Suddenly, I saw something totally different in the translation of the muscles' work into gears. I distinctly remember the moment - I made a sketch and instantly knew that it was not a bicycle. It had all the elements that a bicycle was supposed to have, but it was no longer a bicycle. It carried something different in itself; it was a cluster of metaphors, some kind of hybrid that would be very hard to justify in a competition for a bicycle model. I told Meissner that he would have to continue working on the project alone (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

Borowski says that Wodiczko, like the other artists exhibiting at the Foksal Gallery, was given a space to work on his project. His plans to build the *Vehicle* began in 1970;

however, the sculpture was built during 1971-73 in the PSP - *Pracownia Sztuk Plastycznych,* Visual Arts Workshop that used to be connected to the Foksal Gallery (Appendix 21). At that time, Galeria Foksal was named Galeria Foksal PSP. While the gallery with its one room exhibiting space is still located downtown Warsaw on 1/4 Foksal Street, its extended work place, PSP no longer exists. Borowski says the work on *Vehicle* aroused a lot of excitement and controversy amongst the Foksal Gallery's artists, because Wodiczko's approach was different from that of the other artists; his project was carefully planned, and was made according to detailed technical drawings. Such an approach proposed different ethics and aesthetics than the other artworks made in the Foksal Gallery which promoted mostly conceptually based artworks and spontaneous happenings and performances made possible through consultation with and the influence of Tadeusz Kantor. During our talk in New York, Wodiczko emphasized that he always presented himself as an industrial designer, not as an aritst. "I was forced", he says, "to be an artist and a conceptual one. But really, my first *Vehicle* was a peculiar hybrid of design, art, and sculpture" (interview).

The members of the gallery helped Wodiczko to build his first *Vehicle* because, as Borowski recalls, there was a very casual and friendly working relationship amongst the gallery artists. The gallery artists' passion to make art works in spite of a difficult economico-political context challenged the institutionalized working relationship in other galleries and museums. Due to the limited resources and the lack of sophisticated technological equipment at that time, Wodiczko's first *Vehicle* was created mostly with recycled materials and with the help of his friends. Borowski recalls that one of his friends took apart a bicycle so that Krzysztof could have a pair of wheels; someone else

arranged appointments with the wood-shop workers to cut and assemble the plywood for the *Vehicle*'s base; and other friends brought Wodiczko gears, cables and metal parts etc. The Gallery director remembers that he was initially very skeptical about the *Vehicle*, because it presented a very different kind of art that he was used to seeing in the gallery and in the Polish artistic context in general. He even recalls being unsure whether the *Vehicle* would work the way the artist designed it. He clearly remembers that Wodiczko primarily focused on the idea of the apparatus, in terms of its technical aspect, and that he had not discussed the performative aspect of the *Vehicle* while making it. The act of walking that makes the sculpture move only in one direction was critical for Wodiczko. During the interview Wodiczko told me that his *Vehicle* presented a "Newtonian machine". According to the first law that governs the motion of material objects, an object moves in a straight line unless acted upon by force. Therefore, in theory, when Wodiczko walked on the *Vehicle*'s podium in the same direction as the *Vehicle*, the sculpture would stop, because there would be a counter-power at work that would make the *Vehicle* want to move in the opposite direction. In spite of the Newtonian logic, the *Vehicle* only moved in one direction.

Contextualization of the *Vehicle*

The *Vehicle* draws on socio-political and cultural contexts as well as Wodiczko's personal experiences and skills as both a designer and an employee of the Polish Optical Work (PZO). At the time, Wodiczko was also an active board member of the Industrial Form Association (*Zarząd Stowarzyszenia Form Przemysłowych*), an association that was financially independent from the state; the artist was actively involved in the "politics of progress;" he worked with the workers and with other industrial designers employed by

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the state (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York). He worked "right in the middle of the functions of the party's ideology in the industry and of the filtration of the ideology of progress as a 'fifth column' that tried to heal or prevent the basic human rights from the communist slogans" (interview). Wodiczko had a great respect for the hundreds of engineers who worked with him. "I saw", says Wodiczko, "how some of the engineers died of cancer or heart attacks because they designed their projects the best they could, but everything was going wrong because the system did not have democratic elements and it was breaking down within its own autocratic structure" (interview).

After his initial tests of the *Vehicle* in the PSP and after making the final technical corrections, the sculpture was ready for its first promenade. It was one of the instruments that Wodiczko reserved for his exclusive artistic use. In order to protect himself and the situation he created with the *Vehicle*, Wodiczko insisted that the *Pojazd* was only for himself. He did not want the *Vehicle* to be classified too quickly into certain social utopias, or to be annexed as something dangerous (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York). He explains:

> In a certain sense, I played ironically on autonomy. If you want something only for myself, or for an artist, here it is! Here is something only for the exclusive use of the artist, but, of course, everyone imagines themselves in my position (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

Walking in One Direction Only

It was critical for Wodiczko that *Vehicle* proceeds only in one direction. The closed relation between the socio-political system, and his reflection on the Gierek's ideology of the system of progress was as follows:

> The *Vehicle* is a machine that moves only forward, it does not turn to the right or to the left; it follows a straight line. The instrument requires a reflexive movement back and forth, that is, it requires an intellectual-philosopher who has two perspectives: he can look towards the back and towards the front, walking and thinking about the basic problems. However, the basic function of the *Vehicle* is determined beforehand, so until he believes that he thinks it is a certain type of prison that is called freedom, so-called freedom "from", as Marx used to say, and not "to" (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

The *Vehicle*'s logistics of movement were outlined by the artist:

> the movement of the mass is pushed cyclically forward and backward by a worker along a titling platform causing a seesaw motion; the energy thus generated is transmitted through an adjustment of gears to the rotation of the wheels; the momentum of the vehicle and the dynamism of the labor sustains the vehicle's motion in a straight line and in one direction only (Wodiczko, *Critical Vehicles: Writings, Projects, Interviews*, 77).

The large size of the sculpture presented an exhibiting challenge; it was discovered while storing the *Vehicle* between two shows that the object filled almost all of a small one-room gallery space at Foksal Gallery. However, Wodiczko never intended to make an art object for an exhibition; rather, he wanted to construct a peripatetic instrument outside of the institutional context.

Performative Aspect of the *Vehicle*

The aspect of performance presents an interesting case of hybrid efforts of design, sculpture, and performance, all of which equally important to the artist. During the interview I asked Wodiczko to define for me his walking performance with the *Vehicle*. He did not remember exactly if he walked one, two or three days, but it was definitely during the very cold January days of 1973. Moreover, Wodiczko does not define his walk with the *Vehicle* as a performance *stricto sensu*. He says:

> It is difficult to say if it was a real performance, but in a certain sense it was performance. I would rather call it a test, a performance-test (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

The "apparatus for reflection" or the "machine for walk, "as Wodiczko often used to call it, was taken to Washington Avenue for its first walking test because it was a public space that was much more quiet and less supervised by the police. Borowski remembers this first walk with the *Vehicle* in the following way:

> In those times [the 1970's] if we wanted to place the *Vehicle* in Aleje Jerozolimskie, for example [one of the largest Warsaw avenues] a policeman would most likely appear and tell us that we were disturbing the public space, and we did not want to make any type of public demonstration because it was not the object for this type of action. We did not want to argue with the police and explain to them what exactly we were doing, so we made a compromise and took the *Vehicle* to the much more quiet Aleje Waszyngtona (Wiesław Borowski, Personal Interview, April, 2003, Galeria Foksal, Warsaw).

There are number of black and white photographs taken by Elżbieta Tejchman which document Wodiczko's performance with the *Vehicle* along the Washington Avenue and at the nearby Washington Roundabout (Appendices 22-27). During the

interview I asked Wodiczko about the status and function of these photographs. He told me that during that time it was very important to document such alternative events. However, Wodiczko claimed that he did not mystify the documents as the final products of his performance; they simply remained for him documents of his 1973 public action (interview). Wodiczko's performance consisted of walking on the *Vehicle's* white platform that moved, as designed, in one direction only. By strolling back and forth along the elevated platform, which tilts in a see-saw manner, the gears and cables connected to the wheels are triggered which in response move the entire *Vehicle* forward. There are no turns to the right or to the left, the *Vehicle* can only proceed in one direction. All the photographs from 1973 show Wodiczko in his well-composed posture, dressed casually, typical fashion of the 1970's Eastern Europe; bright raincoat, dark pants, shoes, and a hat, strolling on the elevated and moving platform. Wodiczko told me that he had many layers of sweaters underneath the bright raincoat since the Polish winters in the 1970's were much colder than they are today. The light gray color of the *Vehicle's* podium matched the light gray color of his raincoat. When Wodiczko told Borowski that he had searched for a proper coat for his walking performance for two weeks, Borowski exclaimed: "stop it, you drive me nuts!" (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York). Borowski's friendly remark shows how different Wodiczko's meticulous conceptualization of his walking performance was from his colleagues' conceptualization of the same event.

The photographs taken during the performance show only a few casual passers-by who seem intrigued by the unusual public performance; however, afraid to make close contact with the stroller, they walk by, most likely unaware that they are participating in a

performance art work. Wodiczko, a philosopher-*flâneur*, always walked with his hands

behind his back and with a serious look on his pensive face. The artist told me that most

people preferred to pretend that they did do not see the *Vehicle*; they did not wanted to

get involved. In particular, Wodiczko says:

> At that time there were stories circulating that some
> intellectuals made certain actions and they got arrested. The
> intellectuals were not under massive arrest, and there were
> no particularly big problems, but overall there was a pretty
> depressing situation back then (Krzysztof Wodiczko,
> Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

Borowski describes Wodiczko as an individual who never tried to assume a flamboyant

"artistic identity", he was always very much in control of his artistic plans and public

actions. He did not want to draw people's attention to focus on the extravagant aspect of

the performance. Wodiczko says that the context of 1970's Poland is so

incomprehensible today that it becomes almost an archeological work; one would have to

look at the Polish culture of the 70's as staging for it was, in a certain sense, a work of art

and politics (interview):

> The Polish situation of the 1970's was not an authentic
> work of art, because the autocratic system copies and
> strengthens itself when it becomes a work of art; the central
> politics becomes a great work of productivity or
> constructivism and our role as artists, as intellectuals was to
> be part of that work of art (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal
> interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

In addition, Wodiczko was always a hard-working person, who took care of every detail

in every stage of his work. This fact explains his lengthy devotion to making a "perfect"

walking machine activated by human muscles. Borowski admires Wodiczko's analytic

mind and total commitment to the work, which set him apart from the other artists. He is

known as one who prepares in advance for everything, who ponders every detail, and who checks all the *pro* and *contra* before making the critical decision to execute an actual artwork. Borowski claims that this important artistic characteristic is, unfortunately, a very rare quality of many contemporary artists" (interview).

Urban *Flânerie*

There are many conceptual layers to Wodiczko's 1973 performance that problematize the notion of walking in the city. One of the most critical features of Wodiczko's work is his testing of the limits of politically and aesthetically understood urban *flânerie* in a way that had never been done before in Eastern Europe. In his interview with Piotr Rypson and Adam Szymczyk, Wodiczko explains that the first *Vehicle* expressed his desire to make contact with people, not in a real, but in a fictitious way. The artist was conscious that the social body that trained under the communist regime was docile and cautious to make contacts in public spaces. The artist's speculations were proven right by the people who were afraid to establish communication with a man walking on a strange-looking object. The city dwellers did not interact with Wodiczko. They knew that if they visibly acknowledge *Pojazd* by making closer contact with the artist, they could be taken by the police as accomplices trying to take part in what could have been understood as an illegal (i.e. anti-communist) public operation. Wodiczko states that, in case he had been stopped by the police, he had a special letter prepared in his pocket stating that he was an artist and a member of the Foksal Gallery and that he was conducting an artistic experiment with a mobile sculpture. The letter asked for support and understanding of this experiment that was important to the artist. Wodiczko remembers that during one of his promenades, a police car, intrigued by the

strange looking object acting in the public space, followed the *Vehicle*. However, since

Wodiczko's *Vehicle* mimicked four to five kilometers per hour walking speed of a

pedestrian, the police car had to significantly slow down and "walk" after the *Vehicle*

(*Krzysztof Wodiczko: Sztuka Publicza*, p. 11).

Since Wodiczko's walking performance was not advertised through official

public announcements, it presented one of the most direct, powerful, and anti-

institutionalized statements regarding the limits of walking in the Eastern European

metropolis that are understood as works of art.

Polish *Flâneur*

The figure of the walking artist became a charged political translation of its

Western counterpart, the Baudelairean *flâneur*. Wodiczko's performance on the balanced

wooden platform can be problematized by the two-fold conceptualization of the *flâneur*

understood as a marginalized artistic figure and an exiled citizen. During our interview,

Wodiczko was initially very skeptical about my analogy between his walking on the

Vehicle and the Baudelairean conceptualization of *flâneur*. The artist understood the

figure of the *flâneur* not as an engaged and thinking artist, but as a privileged and distant

observer who does not get involved. My reading of Wodiczko's performance as urban

flânerie, however draws on further elaboration of Baudelairean term as reexamined in

Benjamin's critical re-readings of a walking figure who does not participate in the

decision making of the city. Wodiczko says:

> Let's see the city from perspective of people walking and
> sleeping on the streets; these are the real people who walk
> in the city. To see the city with their eyes is to see the city
> as a wound. In such context we can meditate on the concept
> of *flâneur*... It is quite probable that all my work has been
> involved in fighting with the notion of *flâneur*. From my

point of view, I deconstruct the figure of the *flâneur* by questioning *flâneur* [in my first *Vehicle*] in an ironic way. (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

Further on, Wodiczko refers to the 1973 photo representing him walking on the *Vehicle* on Washington Avenue in Warsaw. He says that, in a certain way, he showed all Polish people and especially intellectuals of the 1970's as *flâneurs*. They are suspects, not in the positive sense, but in their assumed *flânerie* as active participants in the ideological system. "From here to here is *flâneur*", says Wodiczko and points to his *Vehicle's* wheels rolling on the ground. "There is no *flâneur* here," and he points to his feet, above the ground, resting on the *Vehicle's* podium. Wodiczko explains:

There are two parts of this *Vehicle* and in a book, *Critical Vehicles,* I especially cropped the photos of the first *Vehicle* to show the lower part, touching the ground, and the *Vehicle*'s upper part, the podium (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

In a context of his later vehicles designed and build in Canada and United States (Vehicle for the Worker, Homeless Vehicle, Poliscar, The Mouthpiece (Porte-Parole), Alien Staff, Disarmor, video and sound projections of abused and powerless city dwellers etc.) Wodiczko tells me that he wanted to give a chance to other people. He wanted other people to become significant and empowered *flâneurs* who would speak the truth about the city's real life; the life that no one wants to talk about. Wodiczko says:

If I in the 70's, 80's and 90's and in 2000 keep walking in the city and helping people to cope with their living in a more narrative and performative sense than I used to do alone, then these people become artists, thanks to my works. I am interested in reading the city, in listening to the silence of the city, not only to what the city is saying, but

also to what the city is not saying. I want to render invisible
people visible, to see the city with their eyes, with their
ears, with their thoughts and memories (Krzysztof
Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New
York).

Because of Polish social and political context that was drastically different from

the XIXth century France and other Western countries, the Eastern European *flâneur*

seemed to be especially challenged by numerous limitations constraining individual

actions in public spaces. Performance with the *Vehicle*, amongst other things, presents a

thought-provoking statement regarding the oppressive Eastern European *status quo.*

Walking on a bright, long platform becomes an image of asserting one's never-ending,

discontinuous, marginal *flânerie.*

Wodiczko's paradoxical promenade with the *Vehicle* can be understood as a

beautiful and canny metaphor of an exiled artist who becomes an inverted figure of the

Romantic genius and a tragic modern hero. In fact, Wodiczko was greatly influenced by

the poetic writings of the Romantic Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz. In his famous

national epic, *Pan Tadeusz*, Mickiewicz depicts turbulent life in a small Polish village of

Lithuania at the beginning of XIXth century during the patriotic upheaval. The poet wrote

his long narrative epic while in exile. Mickiewicz left Poland for France in order to

escape possible Russian prosecutions after his long involvement with anti-Russian

activities. In an interview with Rypson and Szymczyk, Wodiczko talks extensively about

the figure of the Wandering Jew, Jankiel, as portrayed in Mickiewicz's literary opus. It is

the story of a wanderer who carries with him philosophical artifacts that interest

Wodiczko. In particular he says:

The foreigners always tell you stories [...]. They create history by recounting stories. Since they do not have the rights of free speech or the right to vote, they sing along because by singing they can warn the world in a prophetic way. The foreigners are artists in a basic meaning of the word. They have to try out different tricks, they create metaphors, just like Jankiel, who - perhaps by chance, chose to live by chance or be played by chance (*Krzysztof Wodiczko, Sztuka Publicza*, p. 26).

The figures of the wanderer, the foreigner, and the other become prototypes of the estranged status of the contemporary artist in the communist Poland of 1970's. Given the challenging socio-cultural conditions in which he must perform, the artist-*flâneur* decides to stroll in the city to exercise his rights to tell a different type of story. Walking on the elevated machine without touching the ground expresses the artist's Romantic desire to transcend a given situation. On the other hand, since Wodiczko's performance is grounded in a specific public space, it suggests that it acknowledges and works within an actual social reality. The representation of an artist situated on a peripatetic instrument presents a dichotomy of the artist's reality. Wodiczko walking on the *Vehicle* almost touches the sky, yet he still rolls his *Vehicle*, on the urban ground. The artist's moving image is torn between the conceptual and the metaphysical (an elevation on the platform), and the everyday realm (the platform rolls on the city sidewalks). If Wodiczko were to walk with other people on the ground, it would signify his illusive freedom, his desire to escape from reality and to join the ideological system of progress. "If I stepped down from the *Vehicle* and walked with others, I would have to join *KOR* or *Solidarność* [both were anticommunist organizations], to step into a lived reality of other people" (interview). The artist walks on an instrument designed for his exclusive use. He seems to

be with the others, yet simultaneously, he walks alone, much like his alienated Parisian predecessor.

Wodiczko identifies with the urban landscape by creating an ambiguous relationship with it. His walk, one of the most humble of the human activities, is not taken for granted in this performance; it is metamorphosed into a symbol of freedom, representing an artist who can produce his work without watching for the ever present governmental censorship and public surveillance. Wodiczko seems to meditate on the impossible question of whether an artist is ever truly free to execute and perform his/her artworks. Ironically, even though the podium moved in one direction, in the 1973 artistic promenade with the *Vehicle* seemed to be motionless; Wodiczko made his steps in the same spot, over and over again; thereby, rendering the white platform an ironic metaphor for the one officially sanctioned political or cultural discourse, for an artwork executed according to the socio-realist parameters that praise communist dogma.

Can an artist transgress given cultural conditions? If so, how? The absurd and brave strolls along Washington Roundabout proved that Wodiczko was not afraid of making a statement, even though his walk did not convey any explicit message. The great strength of this artwork lies both in a formal beauty of the *Vehicle* as well as in a potent latent message encoded within this performance. The very insistence on walking a straight line in a controlled city becomes an idiotic act of heroism invested with a powerful artistic statement. Wodiczko recontextualizes his peripatetic walks in the following way:

> [the *Vehicle*] became a translation of the situation of an individual in an autocratic Polish reality into a metaphorical object. I, as an artist functioned in this performance as a symbolic and mechanical user. I was also a part of an

artwork (you could have looked at me), who was using the
instrument. I was part of the instrument, a never ceasing
machine of progress. I was an "automated thinker"
(*Krzysztof Wodiczko, Sztuka Publicza*, p. 12).

Wodiczko's walking exercise imitated neither official communist marches, nor long

Catholic processions that often occupied the main streets of Polish cities to manifest the

predominant ideologies or religious credos. Contrary to the officially sanctioned walks,

the artist was promenading alone, and was not disseminating a clear message to the

public.

In spite of the fact that Wodiczko's performance with the *Vehicle* was executed

in a specific political and cultural context, it transcended cultural specificities, making it a

critical art work that found its place in important art historical discourses. At the time of

executing his performance, Wodiczko was not understood by many people. It seems that

he was very much ahead of his time, and his remarkable personal and artistic journeys

that took him from Poland through Europe, to Canada, and to United States, started right

there and then, in 1973 with his insistence of walking a straight line along Washington

Avenue on the mobile sculpture.

Sisyphus' Work

There is a great conceptual similarity between Wodiczko's insistence on free

walking in a city controlled by the state and the mythic figure of the Sisyphus who was

condemned to eternal punishment. Even though Wodiczko later designed a *Vehicle for

the Worker*, a Sisyphus Vehicle, the first *Vehicle* displays certain similarities with the

Greek anti-hero. During the interview, Wodiczko told me that Sisyphus' punishment was

to reflect on his work. Sisyphus was walking down the hill to climb up it and push a

stone, over and over again. Wodiczko's *Vehicle for the Worker* (1977-79) moves in only one direction on a tilted platform and is sustained by the movement of the worker who pushes the *Vehicle* all the time, without a break.

Sisyphus, on the other hand, pushes the stone in a progressive and reflexive way. Sisyphus' story comes from Greek mythology in which he is best known as a canny, trickster-king of Corinth, who often lived by lies, theft, and by murdering unsuspecting travelers. Sisyphus' betrayal of Zeus's secret got him sent to the underworld. When Sisyphus managed to escaped from Hades first time, Hermes brought him back to the underworld by force. Sisyphus' "exemplary punishment", as Robert Graves recounts, consisted of pushing large rock up Hades' hill, a punishment that was much more severe than those of the usually condemned souls in the world of the Dead. In his book, *Greek Mythology*, Graves emphatically narrates:

> As soon he has reached the summit, he is forced back by the weight of the shameless stone, which bounces to the very bottom once more; where he wearily retrieves it and must begin all over again, though sweat bathes his limbs, and cloud of dust rises above his head (*Greek Mythology*, p. 218).

It is the unresolved phenomenon of Sisyphus's impossible struggle between life and death, just and unjust, and between meaningful and meaningless activities that make this Greek anti-hero into a frequently quoted symbol in both Western and Eastern cultural history. Wodiczko's paradoxical walk that gets him nowhere parallels the ambivalent movement of Sisyphus. Both figures are paradoxical workers that negate the very definition of their profession that expect them to deliver a product. Both engage in apparently meaningless, powerless actions in which bodily movement plays a great part.

As rolling the shameless stone up the hill in the Greek myth becomes an eternal image of a degraded status of the worker, so does Wodiczko's walking a podium four meters long podium become a powerful symbol of the suppression of personal and artistic freedom in a totalitarian country. During the interview, Wodiczko specifies the Sisyphus-like function of his first *Vehicle*:

> [the *Vehicle*] is about the consciousness of your place, that is... the philosophico-reflexive functioning within the frame of the system, that thanks to that movement goes forward, without that reflection there could be no progress. The irony here plays on the Vehicle contact with reality, because the Vehicle moves on the ground, while an intellectual, an artist is above the ground, as if in the clouds. People walk around on the real ground. (Krzysztof Wodiczko, Personal interview, 23 November, 2003, New York).

Wodiczko's promenades, empowering gestures of a socially powerless artist, become a potent statement about a profession that has been consistently marginalized, especially in communist countries. The fact that Wodiczko's performances from 1973 and the subsequent presentation of the *Vehicle* at Foksal Gallery (1974) did not receive much public attention in terms of the official critical art reviews and media coverage is perhaps unsurprising. When I was researching Wodiczko's two thick files that Foksal Gallery's workers have been scrupulously collecting since the artist involvement with the gallery, I was struck by the lack of public announcements and written responses to Wodiczko's performance with the *Vehicle* and to his subsequent presentation of his mobile sculpture. Wodiczko informed me that the *Vehicle* did not have a proper show, as it was not accepted by many of the gallery colleagues as a "real" work of art. No invitations, brochures, or other press releases were done. The only one-page text about

the *Vehicle* was written by Andrzej Turowski, a Polish artist critic and a close friend of Wodiczko after the two-week presentation of the *Vehicle* at Foksal Gallery. It is regrettable that none of the alternative and official art galleries discussed Wodiczko's walking on the tilting platform, since it was an important performance art work. Moreover, most of the contemporary publications regarding performance art, conceptual art, or Polish art focus on the artist's later artworks made in Canada and the Unites States (i.e. his slide projections on diverse public buildings and his later vehicle and instrument projects).

The overlooked artistic importance of *Vehicle* by both the past and current artistic and cultural publications might be caused by the very impossibility of classifying this artwork as performance, conceptual art, or sculpture *stricto sensu*. In the later comprehensive book, *Critical Vehicle*, Wodiczko reveals the *Vehicle's* latent context. In particular, he says:

> One could say that the subject operating the vehicle was in fact an object, a part of this machine. And yet there was, in this vehicle, a certain illusion of freedom, moving back and forth and seeing the world independently, in peripatetic fashion. And for all that the independence was limited by the dimensions of the machine and the manner in which one moved upon it, there emerged a dubious dialectic based on this dual point of view. The thesis and antithesis were to influence the synthesis, but the synthesis had a direction determined in advance. It was not a simple locomotion, just moving along the ground - dangerous terrain - but rather involved elevation above it, to the level of the platform of the vehicle, somewhat closer to the clouds (*Critical Vehicles*, p. 76).

Wodiczko's *Vehicle* seems to escape a rigid art historical classification because his artwork addresses the poetics and politics that lie on the border of many cultural discourses. The performance with the *Vehicle* comprises at least three diverse elements:

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design, sculpture, and performance artwork. The artwork, being conceived ahead of its time, exists in rich interdisciplinary fashion as performance-based art that has sculptural, photographic and drawing-based documentation.

One of the very few critical texts about Wodiczko's performance was written by Andrzej Turowski. The text displays the theoretical language of Polish conceptual context in the 1970s. This very short, one page text, archived by the gallery, is dated February 1974, a few months after Wodiczko's presentation at Foksal Gallery. Turowski briefly describes the *Vehicle's* functions and argues that Wodiczko's object "served the real replacement in space as a result of the author's changing places within the *Vehicle* itself". Further on he adds, "Wodiczko was defining the movement of space by movement in space. The object (apparatus, *Vehicle*) was becoming a mediator allowing an understanding of the situation in which the artist assumed a role of an object". Applying a modernist understanding of what constitutes a work of art, Turowski concludes: "This is the reason why the vehicle never pretended to be called a work of art, because it acquired a meaning in the act of becoming that is outside of the performance" (Gallery brochure). Turowski's critique of Wodiczko's performance presents a contradictory statement. On one hand, he seems to be aware of the special status of Wodiczko's work; on the other, he claims that the sculpture that is integral to the artwork, cannot be called a work of art because it does not conform to the official aesthetics, the definition of which Turowski provides as the modernist judgment of taste, that which ruled at the time. In a later review regarding Wodiczko's conceptual *Line* art works, Wiesław Borowski contextualizes the artist's action with the *Vehicle* slightly differently. He writes that the performance "wanted to demystify as well as contemplate on the

stereotypical imagination of the everyday" (*Kultura*, 1976). In Wodiczko's own words, *Pojazd* functioned as an ironic self-portrait as well as a portrait of his close friends. In a later interview conducted by two Polish art critics, the artist eloquently summarizes the rich conceptual dichotomy of his 1973 walking performance:

> The first *Vehicle* is not very active. I walk on it in circles, in one place, back and forth. It is not a peripatetic exercise in a sense in which one walks and meditates upon the issues of being and on the knowledge of others. The walking back and forth expressed an illusion of being free, of being transparent, erected, alienated, yet simultaneously, of being a useful power that drives a social machine forward. [...] For the designer of the *Vehicle* it was important that the intellectual does not cease to think. (*Krzysztof Wodiczko, Sztuka Publicza*, p.16).

An image of an artist/intellectual who is always in motion leads to the second important aspect of Wodiczko's walking performance, in particular, to the performative political message. Wodiczko, at that time a Polish citizen, performs as if he were already exiled from communist reality controlled by the oppressive political powers from which he felt estranged. Performing his artistic and solitary *flânerie* in Warsaw in 1973, at a time when it was extremely difficult to obtain a passport to travel abroad (especially to the West) Wodiczko could not know that his emigration to Canada in 1977 was about to challenge his nomadic national status. In a few years he would acquire Canadian, French and American national identities. It is as if the very idea of building an itinerant instrument and performing with it in the difficult Polish context of the 1970s invested the object with latent exilic meaning. Wodiczko's socially and politically conscious art, an argument that would be developed in his subsequent vehicle projects executed in the West, was already present in the first *Vehicle* from 1973. The *Vehicle* argued for

meaningful artistic gesture. Amongst other things, Wodiczko's object engaged in a critical public art. It presented a significant intervention in a context that always challenged art by forcing it to bend towards prescribed political ideas.

The director of Foksal Gallery, Wiesław Borowski, remembers the artist as an avid critical thinker who brought a lot of positive energy into the gallery, not only with his unusual art projects, but also because of his eager engagement in organizing and participating in critical discussion regarding global cultural issues. In Borowski's words, "Krzysztof was contributing into a very important *dialogic platform* that existed in the Gallery" (interview, 2003). That platform consisted of uncensored and engaged discussions with fellow artists and with the students from the Fine Arts Academy who were often invited to these meetings. When Wodiczko was making his *Vehicle*, the critical art discussions were already taking place at the Foksal Gallery and at the nearby Skarpa Caffe. Borowski remembers that there were series of engaging meetings regarding Wodiczko's art works and the *Vehicle* in particular. He recalls that these stimulating discussions became essential both in the formation of the artist and of the gallery. Even though the grassroots of Wodiczko's artistic criticality stem from these engaging discussions, there are no written recollections of these meetings. Wodiczko is remembered as an individual with the unusual propensity to zoom in on details, and to simultaneously, understand and make crucial analyses regarding broad cultural phenomena.

What is critical about Wodiczko's walking performance with the *Vehicle* is the fact that it can be understood as an exiled walk that tests the aesthetic and political limits of strolling in public space. Wodiczko prepares himself very carefully for this walk that

will become a landmark of his artistic style, dealing critically with the issues of public art. It is because of the performance with the *Vehicle* that Wodiczko's career changed from that of being a designer to that of being a socio-politically engaged artist. He mades detailed drawings and time consuming tests with a *Vehicle* to ensure that the paradoxical, yet indispensable, artist's apparatus would work. Even though Wodiczko got a lot of help from the Foksal Gallery, he knew that in order to test his work he had to be in the public space, within the context of everyday life, yet apart from any institutionalized art commodified by art galleries and art museums. Performance, a new contested art form, was the best medium to test Wodiczko's artistic limits. The technical drawings and the photographs that became a part of the walking experience have been displayed together with the *Vehicle* in the Foksal Gallery and in the Lódź Museum of Contemporary Art.

The struggle to preserve the second *Vehicle* and the insistence upon building two more replicas based on the first forgotten and decomposed object, displaces the initial significance of Wodiczko's powerful performative act from 1973. In a later interview Wodiczko states that after the performance is done his diverse vehicles function as "set of relics, reminders which are quite capable of continuing their critical mission even as museum artifacts" (*Critical Vehicles*, p. 218). When I visited the Contemporary Art Museum in Lódź and saw the *Vehicle* for the first time (the third replica), my initial reaction was to step on it and experience that magical walk. However, a Museum's worker pulled me aside at the last moment because he knew that the *Vehicle* was permanently fixed to the gallery floor with unnoticeable brackets. I was disappointed, because the *Vehicle* looks more like an immobile coffin squeezed into a gallery corner, and it is actually easy to pass by this artwork without noticing it. The *Vehicle* then, when

it became purchasable museum art could not be experienced and touched. When the institutional judgment of taste finally decided that the *Vehicle* is in fact a work of art, the object was bought and preserved by the Lódź Museum. There is a certain contradiction in the Museum's operation. Over a period of ten years, the mobile sculpture became desirable by the same art institutions that refused to store the original prototype for free. Finally, I am a bit skeptical to see how the immobile *Vehicle* can continue its critical mission after becoming one among many other mute museum artifacts.

Wodiczko's formal and conceptual design of the kinetic *Vehicle* comments in a witty and creative way on the political, cultural and social realities in Poland. In a remarkable way, this ephemeral artistic act of walking transcended the given politico-cultural *status quo*. The performance with the *Vehicle* is an example of a politically engaged artwork and makes its author a political city stroller, a XXth century Eastern European *flâneur*. There is a theoretical notion that every contemporary art work is political because it "offers a perspective - direct or indirect - on social relations" (Robert Atkins, *ArtSpeak: a guide to contemporary ideas, movements and buzzwords*, p.127). However, in works such as Wodiczko's the question of politics is also linked to the notion of distribution, context and an audience. These three factors acquire paramount importance in evaluating a political art artwork. Contemporary artists must make many choices if they want their artworks to be distributed in the right context. In politically and economically mapped words, be it in the East or in the West, it seems no longer possible to execute an artwork that is immune to the structures and the frames of a lived reality. It is therefore a condition *sine qua non* that political artists must have total control over distribution, strategies, and over the audience in order to fully succeed in their artistico-

political practices. Depending on artist's social concerns or actual social involvement with the work, Lucy Lippard distinguishes between political and activist art. In her essay, "Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power", she says:

> I would describe a political artist as someone whose subject and sometimes context reflects social issues, usually in the form of ironic criticism. Although "political" and "activist" artists are often the same people, "political" art tends to be socially concerned and activist art tends to be socially involved [...] The former's work is a commentary or analysis, while the latter's art works within its context, with its audience. ("Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power" p. 349)

Wodiczko's performative action in Warsaw displays both political and activist characteristics. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to separate this work's political features from its activist ones, since his art created an interesting *on-the-spot* problem for the pedestrians and for the governmental surveillers of the urban space. Wodiczko's performance with the *Vehicle* can be used to show that Lippard's distinctions between political and activist art are problematic. From the very beginning of his artistic career, Wodiczko was very clear regarding his political, if not revolutionary ideas regarding art. Talking about the role of the artist in a democratic society, he speculates:

> I believe that as an artist I should have right not only to my own practice, but also the rights to suggest different things to others. It does not mean that I have to be a demagogue, God forbid, if I have rights to speak, so I also should have rights to convince people, as well as taking responsibility for others. And this is a moment in which we have ethics of democracy. Democracy gives rights to all, it is a symmetrical [democracy] (*Krzysztof Wodiczko, Sztuka Publicza*, p. 19).

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Like Wodiczko who was raising the political consciousness in Eastern European art in the 1970's, another political artist, Martha Rosler, critically inquired into the Western politicized cultural context of the same time. In "Place, Power, Politics" Rosler posits important questions regarding the role and responsibility of the artist in a contemporary North American context. She constructs her arguments based on artistic and theoretical experiences as well as informed socio-political events. The questions she asks in her essay are concerned with artistic identification, audience, and distribution: "With whom to identify, for whom to make work, and how to seek patronage" (p. 64). Rosler revisits the history of the counter-cultural, anti-institutional movements that started in the late 1960's in which performance, happening, and other Fluxus type activities were taking place. It was at that time that she became aware of the existence of art space, of so-called third space, "the imaginary space where different tales collided" (p. 58). She tried to show that the notion of *here* and *there* are the same realities. We can observe that in Wodiczko's case the notions of *there* and *here* are also not separate concepts, but one. The discourse of creating the other space that, as the Polish artist suggests, could be called democracy, implicates the active use of ethics and aesthetics. Wodiczko's 1970's performance presents a thought provoking example of the artist functioning on both sides of the discourse as an aesthetic carrier and as an ethical citizen who tries to reconcile the two elements in his evocative artistic acting out.

It is fascinating that in such an apparently simple "automobile model" the aspect of walking is treated in a rich political and metonymic way. First of all, the artist who walks on the platform acquires an ambiguous function of the abject that stands in-between the object (i.e. the machine, or restrained individual) and the subject (i.e. the

autonomous individual). Wodiczko ironically combines the features of human and machine by using the parts of the body that are symbolic of progressive movement: the foot and the wheels. The *Vehicle*'s function can be seen as a replacement of disinterested travels in the city, as experienced by the Baudelairean *flâneur* to keep pace with the progression of the society. Wodiczko, elevated from the ground, a peculiar anti-hero not from the Romantic, but rather from socio-realist Polish context, questions the very idea of progress through his immobile movement (the artist walks back and forth on the platform) that propels the *Vehicle* that seems to be out of the artist's control. Once stimulated by the artist's muscles, the *Vehicle* is in charge of its own movement. The question is whether the *Vehicle* walks towards a better future as suggested in Hegel's philosophy where the thesis and antithesis can achieve the ultimate state of synthesis. Wodiczko strolls rhythmically, as if producing a personal mesmerizing incantation that would save him from the totalitarian system that produced these uncanny walks. Although the artist is capable to *walk* and *talk* freely, at least during the time of the performance, he was confined in the 1970's Poland to the dimension of the platform that can be understood as a necessary complement of the state's politics. Wodiczko states:

> We were immersed, if not submerged, in a very "liberal" authoritarian system, if that is possible, a system that allowed artists to work using all means and methods, as long as they stayed away from anything political and didn't make any explicit reference to cultural politics or, above all - and this was very important - to the politics of life in Poland (*Critical Vehicles*, p.211)

Wodiczko's apparatus questioned state politics in a witty, indirect way. It was unlikely that Wodiczko would be arrested when performing in a public space because his action did not directly offend the doctrines of social realism and communism. Borowski states

that Wodiczko, however, could have been questioned by the police about making a disturbance in a public space while extravagantly walking on a four meters long tilting platform (*Krzysztof Wodiczko's Vehicle*. Personal Interview with Wiesław Borowski, 9 April, 2003, Warsaw, Poland). Actually, this questioning never happened during Wodiczko's performances; it was as if he had been set "free" to exercise his personal and artistic independence. The ephemeral and solitary aspect of the performance (i.e. the performance was not advertised as an artistic event to the public) argues for its strong, effective, and affective artistic gesture. There was no other way to engage an individual in a public performance than by actually taking a risk and walking on the illusionary neutral white platform. The absurdity of this walking performance is coupled with its intelligent investigation of space that was marked by the lack of freedom of expression. The performance with the *Vehicle* seems to lie in between the individual freedom questioned by the authorities, and unconstrained artistic freedom. It was actually daring to walk on a strange-looking "automobile", a counter-walk towards progress. In such an encoded space, the subject-object constitution is also questioned. As alluded to by Turowski, Wodiczko was partially playing the role of an object that extended, yet the *Vehicle* always remained the subject of the whole spectacle. Wodiczko became an abject, a peculiar type of an object that is "thrown" further out of the familiar context and does not belong to one well-defined reality. The indispensable *Vehicle* became a mediator between two different realities: the individual and social space.

The Production of Space

The notion of production, or rather, the lack thereof, seems to be central to Wodiczko's performance. In his artistic walk Wodiczko seems to argue for a counter-

production that does not denote the activity of making an art object. One of the most fascinating political aspects of Wodiczko's performance was taking the *Vehicle* onto the streets of Warsaw to activate space, or, using Lefebvre's terminology, to produce space. Wodiczko is familiar with the *Production of Space*; this magisterial book appears in a photograph as one of the essential references in the artist's library (*Critical Vehicle*, p. 220).

Every artistic creation is concerned with producing some sort of space. A socio-political artwork such as Wodiczko's certainly dialogues with Lefebvre's idea of an active and thoughtful production of social space. Since the French liberal philosopher's notion of space is crucial for understanding Wodiczko's public work, I would like to focus on the ideas put forth in "Social Space" of Lefebvre's book and draw the necessary analogies between the two thinkers.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre sets the ambitious task of defining social space. This chapter's objective is to propose critical guidelines to advance a new conceptual formalization of space. Lefebvre's approach to space is interdisciplinary and his style is highly conversational. Although some of his arguments seem very subjective, they are supported by well-researched deductive and inductive observations that come from history, politics, philosophy, science, linguistics and art. His ambition is to put forth the premises for a new science of space that would provide a satisfactory understanding of different types of spaces. Lefebvre distinguishes between spaces based on their different uses.

Walking defiantly on his *Vehicle* around busy Washington Roundabout, Wodiczko was forcefully inserting himself into a homogenous organization of the

communist space. He wanted to disrupt it, to break it down, to open a new possibility for

a new type of "production". "Social Space" is concerned with the similar issues of space.

First of all, Lefebvre starts off with a general introduction and with distinctions of the

notions of production, space, product and work. The writer refers briefly to the Hegelian

notion of the absolute 'Production' that makes the world, nature and human beings.

Further on, he states that the Marxist notion of 'production' has two different meanings

that make the notion of production both rich and ambiguous. One of the significations

presents a more general philosophical concept that "embraces a multiplicity of works and

a great diversity of forms" (p. 68), and the other denotes a specific object and a thing,

called the product. Lefebvre argues that, with time, the Marxist general term denoting

production became very loose. Production became an "open concept" that no longer

encompassed Marx and Engels' philosophical idea of the human production of social,

political and economic spaces, but rather denoted "the production of knowledge, or

ideologies, or writings and meanings, of images, of discourses, of language, of signs and

of symbols" (p. 69). The term 'production' certainly acquired a negative meaning when

enforced and applied to the politico-economic ideologies of many Eastern European

countries. Wodiczko plays on the degraded meaning of production when he walks with

his *Vehicle* yet brings no product. This artistic gesture displays a great irony of the market

that is monopolized by the Soviets' socialist understanding. In communist Poland, to

'produce' something meant to be able to automatically reproduce it according to imposed

governmental patterns and preexisting ideas. Production did not involve creative

thinking. It was a contradictory term that stood in opposition to a market and to the

customer driven production of Western goods. Lefebvre differentiates between work and

product, stating that while the previous term denotes unique and irreplaceable qualities of the object, the latter bears traces of repetitive, mass-produced gesture (p. 70). Lefebvre's definition of the social space complements Wodiczko's understanding of the same phenomena, produced with a performative artwork. Lefebvre claims that:

> (Social) space is not a thing among other things, not a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity, their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder (p. 73).

Regarding the phenomenon of social space Lefebvre further elaborates that "so-called social reality is dual, multiple, plural" (p. 81) and is very difficult to define. He acknowledges that there was a significant caesura in the middle of the XIXth century where "industry" and "political economy" went hand in hand creating a new dual reality of the modern world. The dual reality is well expressed by the errant activity of the social outcast, *the flâneur*, whose appearance in the urban scene, not surprisingly, coincides with further complication of the modern social space. Lefebvre defines social space as follows:

> any space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships - and this despite the fact that a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products) (p. 82/83).

Lefebvre argues that there is no one definition of the social space. He provides several different thoughts on space, demonstrating that the term is very broad, multiple ("we are confronted not by one social space but by many" p. 86), heterogeneous ("social space, and especially urban space, emerged in all its diversity - and with a structure far more reminiscent of flaky mille-feuille pastry than of the homogenous and isotropic space of

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classical (Euclidean/Cartesian) mathematics" p. 86), and rhizomatic ("social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another," p.86/87). Lefebvre's open understanding of space stands in clear opposition to the homogeneously understood communist production of space. In addition, Lefebvre continues to argue for the necessity of having an interdisciplinary science of space. He claims that in philosophical terms space is neither subject nor object (p. 92) hence the difficulties to define and examine this phenomenon. He offers an evocative allegory of a house that seems to be stable and immobile from outside; however, by a closer inspection it shows fluid and complex notions of "in and out conduits" (p. 93). He warns against the fetishization of space in the name of forming a philosophical discourse.

In modernity, industrialization and political economy were imposed into social structure; these new economic space subordinated and expelled the notion of time from experiencing a space. Since we experience the supremacy of space over time, this new reality marks for Lefebvre a significant shift from the pre-modern times in which time and space were conceived as a balanced notion. The modern city is a clear product of the capitalist system. It is important to add that a modern city such as Warsaw was also the product of a communist system and its desire to unify space. Lefebvre refuses to acknowledge sociological, psychological, or cultural approaches to studying space as satisfactory. He states that these disciplines do not explain the origins of the modern urban spaces in a satisfactory manner. Towards the end of the chapter he draws a metaphor of a prosthetic body produced in a contemporary urban habitant:

> even cars [like all messages encountered in a modern city]
> may fulfill the function of analogons, for they are at once
> extensions of the body and mobile homes, so to speak, fully
> equipped to receive these wandering bodies (p. 98/99).

Referencing the unique social space of Venice, Lefebvre argues for the two interrelated phenomena that shape the city landscape: the *representation of space* and the *representational space*. While the first term describes the geographical reality of the space, the second term describes the actual lived reality with socio-political and cultural factors. Lefebvre posits an interesting premise that the origins of the artistic perspective developed by Tuscan painters in the early Renaissance was a result of an acute observation of *the representation of space*. The artistic interpretation of this lived space resulted in its unique translation in the form of the *representational space*[7].

Lefebvre argues that Marx's *Capital, Grundisse,* and other works critically problematize the notion of space in a good way. For Lefebvre, Marx was the first thinker who examined well social problems such as labor, circulation of material goods and exchange and surplus value. Following Marxist thought, French thinker says that social space *"per se* is at once a work and a product", it materializes human beings. Lefebvre states that this space is "encounter, assembly, simultaneity [...] everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts" (p. 101). Lefebvre hopes that space will be examined not as an object but rather as a product, as a 'production of space' that would draw on already existing features in order to develop new political economies of space.

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[7] In the first chapter of the book, Lefebvre outlines his important spatial terminology of the representations of space and the representational spaces. He says: "representations of space are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations; representational spaces, on the other hand, "embody complex symbolism, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art which may eventually come to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces (p. 33).

The figure of the *flâneur* that appeared in the modern city of Paris complements Lefebvre's meditation on the disappearance of the measuring and measured body in space. The *flâneur*'s Parisian walks can be nicely complemented by the image of Wodiczko's elongated and prosthetic body during his peripatetic exercise. Lefebvre claims that "every social space has a history, one invariably grounded in nature, in natural conditions that are at once primordial and unique in the sense that they are always and everywhere endowed with specific characteristics (site, climate etc.)" (110). The example of a slow substitution of the "natural way" of measuring space with body parts, with the abstract generality (i.e. it could be an imposed political system that metaphorically "measures" the body in space) of a decimal system that directs towards the quantitative, homogenous, and body-less space. Wodiczko's defiant walk on his over four meter long podium was a witty example of questioning the homogenous space created for the urban dwellers by the communist government. In his performance, Wodiczko was in fact actively producing a new kind of space.

In his radical pursuit to demystify the existing theories of space, Lefebvre claims that the space of a nation has two moments or conditions: one of them is market (commercial relations, communication network), and the other is violence (feudal, bourgeois, imperialist, and other politically controlling powers). What is critical for Lefebvre is understanding relations that occur between an object (product) and nature. We have many abstract models of space and objects of space, but none of them talks about their relations. To decipher the meaning of space, to unravel its rich and complex relations, requires a deconstructing of the existing discourses to generate a new type of rhetoric of space. Lefebvre's contention that "space is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object'

but rather a social reality - that is to say, a set of relations and forms" (p. 116) is well complemented by Wodiczko's walk that breaks down the distinction of subject/object constitution. He comes back to the historical and conceptual developments of the space in Tuscany where the coexistence of a *representational space* (an image of the world) to a *representation of space* (the discovery of perspective) were exemplary. Lefebvre makes a critique of Heideggerian and Bachelardian notions of the house (spiritual and absolute space versus emotional understanding of dwelling) as interesting yet not sufficient to tackle all the aspects of space. Lefebvre does not discard ethnographic, ethnological, anthropological, historical or philosophical approaches to space, but he stresses that the only understanding of space can come from understanding the dynamics of capitalism and modernity. According to Lefebvre one of the most successful investigations of space was presented by the Bauhaus. The French philosopher admires their examination of the 'new consciousness of space', the problematization of the façade, and the discussion on the emergence of the global space.

Lefebvre analyzes important relation of language to space. In particular, he says that "every language is located in space. Every discourse says something about a space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space" (p. 132). Lefebvre is skeptical about the use of language by semiologists, structuralists and scientists. He states that even if their contributions to our culture is very important, these discourses seek to establish knowledge with a "solid core", whereas the phenomenon of space is never static, it cannot be fully explained. He refers more closely to Nietzsche skepticism towards language and he gives an excellent account on metaphor and metonymy as

explained by this German philosopher. For example Lefebvre states that the metaphorized and metonymical bodies are metamorphosed bodies.

All the discourses that produce 'absolute knowledge' actually reduce the social to mental and the practical to intellectual. It is very difficult to speak about the 'reading of space' because "space is at once result and cause, product and producer; it is also a stake, the locus of projects and actions deployed as part of specific strategies, and hence also the object of wagers on the future - wagers which are articulated, if never completely" (p. 142/43). There is a well-known 'double-meaning' of architectural buildings, for example, where the monumentality and façade often hide their real meaning: totalitarian and power-driven spaces. Lefebvre references Robert Venturi's conceptualization of dialectical space. Today's space erases the distinction between the inside and outside; nothing seems to escape the surveillance of power. It is for these reasons that Lefebvre opposes to the 'clear cut' theory of space that is be visible, tangible, well written and easy to read, and criticizes the ambiguous and relative applicability of form onto the discursive structure and function of a social space. He shows how the notion of form can be a fictitious construct and often becomes an artificial product (i.e. the recent emergence of so-called 'authentic' Hispanic towns in the USA).

Lefebvre continues a discussion on the need to consider scale, proportion, dimension, and level into the discussion of space. He proposes looking at the East and Asiatic mode of representation of space which always took into consideration private space *vis a vis* a global image. He employs the Barthesian terminology for decoding/reading the text. The code of knowledge based on an objective analysis and the subjective code that "gives the decoding activity the musical qualities of a fugue" (p.

161). The previous mode of reading is echoed by a denotative operation while the latter exemplifies a connotative level. For Lefebvre what is often overlooked in the examination of space is the body which is revived in performance art and becomes a critical factor in Wodiczko's urban performance. Lefebvre writes that space is read differently by a migrant, a wanderer, and an exile. Similarly to a homeless *flâneur* who wandered in Paris reconstructed by Haussmann, a contemporary wanderer understands the new space by measuring it with his/her body. Lefebvre complements urban nomadic walks in the following evocative narration:

> When 'Ego' arrives in an unknown country or city, he first experiences it through every part of his body - through his senses of smell and taste, as (provided he does not limit this by remaining in his car) through his legs and feet. His hearing picks up the noises and the quality of the voices; his eyes are assailed by new impressions. For it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived - and produced (p. 162)

He later distinguishes between *ur-places* (he calls them 'pastoral') and *absolute* spaces of spiritual and religious beliefs. Spaces can be also categorized and subjected to a grid on the basis of different topias: isotopias, heterotopias, utopias, and absolute places (p.163).

The closing discussion distinguishes between dominated and appropriated spaces. There is a continuous dialogue and relationship between the diachronic and synchronic axes that operate in every space. "No space ever vanishes utterly" (p. 164) says Lefebvre and therefore a good critical reading of the space is very important. A dominated space is that metamorphosed space that is changed and transformed by technology and practice. The dominated spaces are usually closed, sterilized, emptied out (p. 165). Appropriated space on the other hand can be only studied by applying the critical theory of the space.

Often an appropriated space resembles a work of art; it is a structure - a monument or building (p. 164) even though it might not always be the case. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish how and who appropriated space. Keeping in mind an image of Wodiczko walking on the elevated platform in Warsaw in 1973, Lefebvre emphasizes the indispensable importance of reinserting the body into understanding of spatial logic:

> Any revolutionary 'project' today, whether utopian or realistic, must, if it is to avoid hopeless banality, make the reappropriation of the body, in association with the reappropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its agenda (p. 167).

In this chapter, I introduced and critically analyzed Krzysztof Wodiczko's hybrid walk executed in Warsaw between 1970 and 73. By employing diverse critical voices on the notion of conceptual, performance and political art, I contextualized Wodiczko's work as a phenomenon that was ahead of its time, which led to lack of support and appreciation for its formal and conceptual *in-between-ness*. *Vehicle* incorporates elements of design, sculpture, and performance art, three forms that have never been so closely intertwined together in the 1970's Polish art production. My interviews with Wieslaw Borowski, director of Foksal Gallery, and a later interview with the artist himself, enriched and elucidated certain important iconographical and conceptual aspects of the *Vehicle*.

The fact that there were actually three versions of the same itinerant object is paradigmatic of the problems related to contemporary art institutions and their decisions. I contextualized the importance of Wodiczko's first *Vehicle* by placing it within the socio-political and cultural context of 1970's Poland and within complex notions of conceptual and performance art production in Eastern Europe in general. I emphasized

that Wodiczko's thirty year long artistic commitment to working with people and the critical aspect of the public space started on the streets of Warsaw with his construction of and performance on the first *Vehicle*. In 1973, Wodiczko performed alone; his promenade was a brave statement against the constraints and difficulties of communist Poland.

I drew on diverse theoretical readings to emphasize the rich significance of this 1973 hybrid artwork that changed our perception and use of public space. The exilic aspect of walking with the *Vehicle* is examined by the artist's conscious withdrawal and estrangement from the oppressive socio-political and cultural system. The active reflection and meditation on the system is exemplified in Wodiczko's defiant and thoughtful walk on the elongated podium. The personal and professional alienation of an artist, conceptualized as *flâneur*-intellectual, is represented by his marginalization by the officially institutionalized judgment of taste. It is in Wodiczko's intelligent play with double alienation within socio-political and cultural contexts, (the notion of the artist and citizen as exile), that I saw the most powerful walking statement in support of the exilic state of estrangement and the desire to forcefully affirm one's identity as an empowered and autonomous subject.

Attachment - Walking in Warsaw

It is April 21st, 2003, a very sunny Easter Monday. In fact, it is a perfect day to be outside and enjoying one of the warmest spring days. I am in the Warsaw's borough of Praga, away from downtown, on the other side of the Wisła river. In fact, I am right in the middle of Saska Kępa, Praga's area. I walk with video and photo cameras around the Washington Roundabout: I walk on Francuska Street and on Washington Avenue along Skarzyński-Ignacy Paderewski Park. My goal is to retrace and reflect on Wodiczko's promenade with his first *Vehicle* on a cold January day in 1973, more than thirty years ago.

My guide to Wodiczko's itinerary is the visual information gathered from photocopies taken of black and white photographs from Foksal Gallery's archive as well as my own research materials. I carry a small knapsack with my folder containing the collected copies and notes regarding the 1973 performance.

I start my promenade on Francuska Street between numbers 41 and 43. I record my walk on a digital miniDV tape using a video camera; I also take several color photographs with my photo camera. In one of the 1973 photographs, Wodiczko walks on

the *Vehicle* right here, between 41 and 43 Francuska Street. I walk down the street as he did. I walk a short block between Lipska (the first perpendicular street to Francuska on the right) and Berezynska Street (the first perpendicular street to the left).
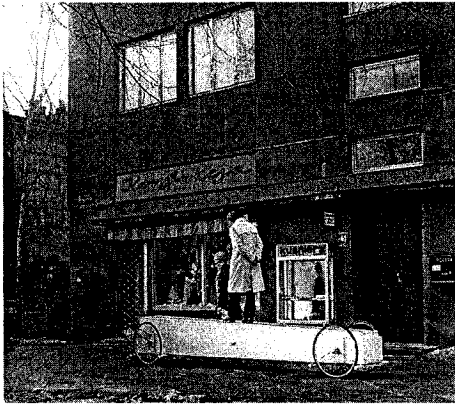
The major architecture around this place has remained pretty much the same during the thirty year period since Wodiczko's walk; however a few elements have changed. The numbers of the buildings, for example, are the same, and the red mailbox is in the same place, but it has been replaced with a more updated design. The Optics Store (*Zakłady Optyczne*) that used to be at 43 Francuska has changed to a *Print and Photocopy* Store; and the Woman's Clothing Store (*Konfekcja Damska*) that used to be at 41 Francuska has changed its name to *Perfect* Clothing Store. The building's windows and the doors are altered. There is absolutely nothing spectacular about this urban site; it is an example of mundane, post-war living and commercial architecture. Since this place is far from the capitol's busy downtown area to which where tourists flock, it seems that no one cares to embellish this impoverished part of town. When I take video and photo pictures a few passers by give me strange looks as if they were asking me the reason why I would want to

document this uninteresting location, that is so lacking in landmarks. Not many other people who jog and ride their bicycles do pay attention to my solitary walk on Francuska Street.

I cross the street and walk towards number 50 Francuska Street. The *Coffee Roundabout* - "Kawiarnia Rondo" from the 1973 photograph has given away to "Bar/Pub" and the "Aquarium" ice cream place on the other side of the same building. The public telephone booth has not changed its place, but like the mailbox on the other side of the street, it has been updated. There is also a new street sign giving directions to Warsaw and other cities. It is around noon; I take a small break, buy ice cream and sit down outside the "Aquarium" to enjoy the sun. I am the only customer, so I can take any one of the empty white chairs outside the ice cream place.
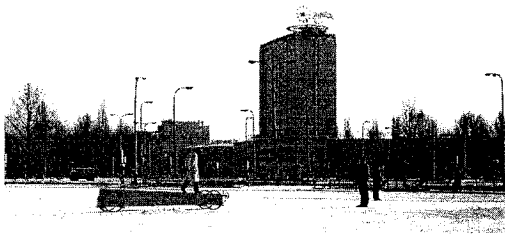
After a while, I continue my walk towards Washington Roundabout and
Washington Avenue. I am surprised at how peaceful and deserted this public place is. I
thought that Skarzyński-Ignacy Paderewski Park and its surrounding streets would be
crowded on such a nice sunny holiday. I walk with my video camera on the long
sidewalk beside the Park; the sidewalk has a peculiar surface pattern, which I also notice
on the photos taken thirty years ago. The beautiful photographs taken by Elżbieta
Tejchman of Wodiczko walking this Avenue are very vivid in my mind. I visualize them
intensely and it makes my walking experience even more special. In fact, these very
photographs made a great impression on me when I first spotted them in one of
Wodiczko's books. They were the first strong visuals that introduced me to and guided
me through Wodiczko's works. It is through the photographs with 1973 *Vehicle* that I
found a compelling affinity between my artistic *flânerie* and Wodiczko's. The
photographs of the 1973 performance brought me here, to Washington Roundabout in
Warsaw. Moreover, it is through these early black and white photographs that I
appreciated Wodiczko's other critical public art works. I record my walk. I listen to my
steps, look downwards and ahead of me. I stroll back and forth along

Skarzyński-Paderewski Park following a ghostly image of Wodiczko's first *Vehicle*.

I feel as if I were a strange creature, an "Occuloperipatetic", composed of large pairs of eyes and exaggerated pairs of legs, a hybrid that looks to walk, and walks to look more closely.

There is no picture of me, only shadows where I put my feet down in effort to get in touch with some of my past when living in Poland. I wonder if my walk is, like so many other things, about the very impossibility of mourning the part of my Polish "self" that walked away from here in 1988. This is one of the few places in Poland where I feel as if I were walking above the ground, on the invisible podium.
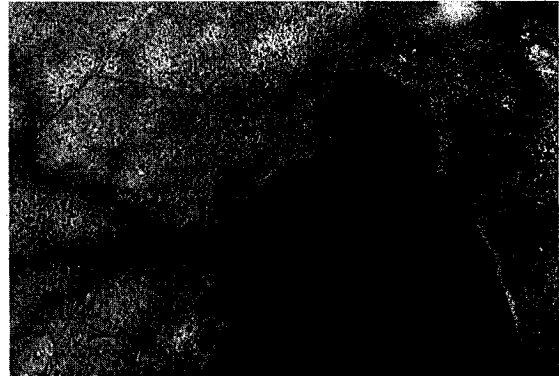
Walking along Washington Avenue brings to my mind some of my walks performed first as a violinist, then as an art history student and a member of an underground, anti-Communist student organization. I remember my Polish walks mostly as minor movements through space and time that were not mine. I remember a few special walks that occurred in Poland. One of them was walking with my fellow students and distributing our underground newspapers in the evenings, watching time so we could not be caught by the

police after the curfew that had been imposed on the Polish citizens by the Communist government. I remember the walks we took to the woods, hidden in the snow, and crunched behind the trees where we observed Russian tanks entering our city to intimidate anti-Communist opposition active in the city.

There was one unforgettable walk that I took from Poland to Italy in August, 1988. I am no longer sure if it was my first artistic performance or the first profound walking experience which helped me to discover my "self," my long *walking* and *talking* journey in art. The 1988 and 1990 walks brought me from Roman historical streets through Kitchener-Waterloo (1990), Ottawa (1990-96), Toronto (1996-98), Lubbock, Texas (1998-99), and carried me back to Canada, to Montreal (1999 to present). I wonder what kind of *flâneur* was I in Poland and during my migrant year? How much did my internal exile cause the external one and *vice versa*? Who am I and why am I here as a woman, a Polish-born Canadian citizen, a doctoral student, and an interdisciplinary artist?

The phenomenon of *walking* and *talking* in-between diverse cultures, countries, and languages became a condition *since qua non* of my artistic practice. I often question my belonging to the group I encounter during my journeys. How much of my "self" is still "Polish" and how much has already become "Canadian"? Driving force behind my art works lies in an impossible desire to create an empowered and authentic "self" that would displace the notion of the prosthetic origins of our cultural and socio-political identities. I am thinking how my Washington walking experience would be different if I helped my body with iron, copper, glass and wooden instruments I made for my body. I have been always searching for balance in my art; in my persistent walking *in-between* the notion of being grounded and groundless, moving and standing still, talking and being silenced. Most

of my sculptures, videos, and performance art works problematize the formation of the "self" that has been always already inscribed within a context of a family, a group, a community, and a nation. The ambivalent movement between the dichotomy of personal vs. social, individual vs. collective, and aesthetic vs. everyday is very important to me. While constantly moving *in* and *out* of different socio-political, geographical and cultural frames, I examine an itinerant "self": my *becoming identity*.
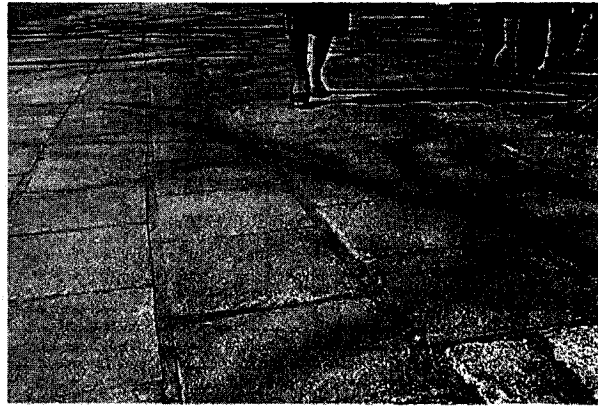
I might never know for sure what is so compelling about my desire to re-walk Wodiczko's performance from over thirty years ago. I am walking in the places that are *déjà vu*, yet, they appear as new and challenging sites to me. I am leaving this place with uncanny feeling that I have always already been walking here performing a never-ending minor *flânerie*.

Chapter Four - Walking in New York as a *Catalytic Agent.*

This chapter introduces and critically analyzes Adrian Piper's series of walking art performances entitled *Catalysis*, executed in New York in 1970 and 1971. Piper's peripatetic exercises not only investigate the boundaries of moving through urban space, but also defy the limits of urban walking. In her artistic walks, Piper embodies the politicized aspect of the *flâneur*. In particular, she inverts the notion of estranged, mobile, and marginal *flânerie* to empower herself, because being mulatto, a woman and an artist she is perceived as a "minor" subject. While performing her artwork, the artist redefines her exilic identity against the identity of the Western metropolitan crowd. In her urban performances, the artist recontextualizes the figure of the *flâneur* by primarily communicating issues of racism, xenophobia, and sexism. New York City, the XXth century metropolis *par excellence,* becomes an uncanny place where the city dwellers have strong aesthetic feelings. In order to underline some crucial aspects of Adrian Piper's exiled art, I refer to major political walks within American Black history, Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection and estrangement, Kawash's analysis of the homeless body, bell hook's examination of Black performance as well as the artist's own writings and her responses to our electronic interview conducted on November 17th, 2003.

When Adrian Piper, a young emerging artist of Black origin, was executing her *Catalytic* series in New York City between 1970 and 1971, she was re-mapping the metropolis' cultural and socio-political structure. I will present New York's complex multicultural and multiracial history, which makes the city one of the most socially and culturally challenging urban dwellings.

History of New York City

New York, one of the world's largest metropolises was never a homogenous city. The land that became New York City was originally populated by Native Americans, but soon became rife with European colonizers, immigrants, and slaves brought by force from African and other non-European countries. Most of the metropolis lies on an island, with easy access to the Atlantic Ocean. New York is surrounded by the Hudson and East Rivers that makes it a convenient and important port. It is for this reason that the New York harbor was the prize for the Europeans from the arrival of Giovanni da Verrazano in XVIth century. Before his arrival, the island was mainly inhabited by the Algonquian-speaking Natives. After the first Dutch colonial contact with the natives, then the other European and non-European expeditions, New York became increasingly made up of Whites, Blacks (descendents of African slaves and newcomers from other countries), Hispanics and Asians. Newcomers to the United States were often escaping socio-political and/or cultural hardships in their own homelands and trying to make a better life for themselves in a new country. Beginning in the XXth century, large number of immigrants from all over the world arrived in New York in two large waves. During the first wave of immigration (also called the old wave), between 1880 and 1920, close to 1.5 million immigrants arrived in New York. By 1910, almost half of the population of New York were foreign born (*From Ellis Island to JFK*, p. 1). Most of the first wave immigrants arrived from Europe. There was also a second (or new) wave of newcomers, who arrived in New York after the World War II. The second wave immigrants came mostly from Dominican Republic, Mexico, Jamaica, Asia, Latin America, West India, and Eastern Europe. The American Immigration Station located on

Ellis Island, in the upper bay just off the New Jersey coast, was a key check point at the New York Harbor. It is estimated that between 1892 and 1954 on this "Island of Tears", over 12 million immigrants were "processed" and entered the United States as naturalized American citizens, after long and often humiliating inspections.

In spite of a great number of mixed races arriving at the Ellis Island, there was already a growing population of Blacks living in New York. The Black population in New York has a long and difficult history, which reflects on American discriminatory politics.

Most of New York Black inhabitants were descendents of African slaves, captured by White men and brought against their will to United States. The slave-trade, the buying and selling of Black people as property for Americans, became one of the most shameful chapters of US history. The slave trade formed part of the colonial discourse that was justified by White Europeans and Americans as a resource for territorial expansion towards their advancement. In the United States the trade lasted for over two hundred years, from the beginnings of the XVIIth century. In 1808, the US Congress finally banned the importing of slaves into United States. The Anti-Slave Act, however, did not resolve the racial problems that this unjust trade had created. There is a long and painful history of Black people's resistance to and struggle to change the discriminatory American laws that is peppered with many anti-racist demonstrations and actions, such as the first extensive slave uprisings in New York in the XVIIIth century, and the American Civil War (1861 – 1865). The dispute over slavery was brought to the fore front during the Civil War that divided the North (the Union) and the Southern states (Confederation). The more industrially advanced North favouring free soil and protection for Black people, stood in opposition to the agricultural, slave-owning South that wanted to keep the socio-political

status quo. In 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which abolished slavery. The act itself, however, did not truly free the slaves, because it applied mainly to rebellious and marginal areas that the Union's federal government could not control. The continuous racial humiliations led to numerous riots, formations of civil rights movements such as *The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* in 1909, and militant organizations, such as *Black Panthers* and *Black Powers* in the 1960's. Open fights and demonstrations were happening all over the US. The Blacks, citizens of the United States, were fighting for the same rights to freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and the press as the "normal" US citizens were guaranteed by the American Constitution signed in 1787 and ratified by all the states in 1791. From the end of the Civil War, Blacks began moving North, attracted by the promise of better life conditions in large cities, such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. In a compelling book, *Half Man: The Status of the Negro in New York*, Mary White Ovington writes about meeting a Black college boy whose story represents the painful embodiment of racial discrimination. The boy decided to move from the South of US to the North because, as he claimed, he wanted to feel at least as "half man" (*Half Man*, p.1). One of the greatest and the earliest Black scholars, Dr. Du Bois, in *The Black North in 1901* estimates that there were about 60,000 Black people in New York at the beginning of the XXth century, but only 15,000 were able to support themselves by earning a good living. The difficult social situation did not change much over the next few decades and the majority of Blacks lived and worked in discriminatory and humiliating urban contexts.

Multiracial New York City, covering an era of 780 square kilometers, is divided into five boroughs: Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island.

According to the US Decennial Census Information the population of New York in 1970 was almost eight million (7,894,862). All the boroughs display layered urban and social geographies and are organized and populated according to the urban, racial and cultural history of the metropolis. However, their boundaries are fluid as the inhabitants travel constantly and change the social structure.

Manhattan

Manhattan is one of the oldest, largest and the most diverse boroughs. It is divided into several smaller neighborhoods each with its own unique characteristics. For example, SoHo is proud of its mainstream and high-priced Greenwich Village which also houses New York gay community. Chelsea has its garment and commercial district dominated by New York oldest Macy's Shopping Center. Situated in the heart of Manhattan the large and artificially designed Central Park (843-acres) is the other frequently attended attraction. Harlem is located in the northern part of Manhattan, near the Hudson River. Once a very poor neighborhood populated mainly by Blacks, Harlem became famous for the achievements of the Black community. One of Harlem's important landmarks is the largest institution for contemporary research of Black and African culture in the United States located on 515 Malcolm X Boulevard. However, as studies of New York City Maps from 1970 to 1990 report, there has been a decline of Blacks living in Harlem from 1970 onwards. Another borough, the Bronx was once a prosperous quarter, but became a disadvantaged symbol of urban decay. Diverse ethnic communities inhabit the Bronx, and since 1970 there has been an increasing number of black residents. Brooklyn, more economically advantageous than the previous borough, is also more multicultural than Bronx. It is called "an ultimate melting pot," with its West

Indians, Hassidic Jews, Russians, Italians and Arabs living side by side. Queens is a borough with large commercial areas with primarily Greek and Asian communities. Between the 1970's and 1980's, Queens and the Bronx became heavily populated with African-Americans. Moreover, as the New York City Maps report in 2003, there has been an emergence of a large Black middle class in the Queens. Finally, the fifth NY borough, Staten Island is primarily known for its famous ferry, operating since 1810. The ferry ride provides an excellent view of Liberty Island with the ninety-three meters high Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and Lower Manhattan's skyscraper buildings.

There is a political paradox embedded in American multicultural policy that, in practice, did not want to accept Black people as equal citizens. Discrimination against Blacks made it very difficult for them to get the middle or upper-class working positions, secured by a good education. It took more than one century of bloody riots, resistance marches, fights, and uprisings all over the United States to raise the Americans' awareness that all people are equal and should have the same rights regardless of the color of their skin. It is perhaps not a coincidence that within Black history there are a great stories of Black people walking towards freedom.

Walking Towards Freedom

There are at least three famous historical walks by Black people in the US that made a significant change in the American constitutional rights for all American citizens. One of the most significant advances in the movement for the rights of Black people was brought about by the Civil Rights Movement run by Martin Luther King, Jr. and by the famous action of a black Alabama woman, Rosa Parks. On December 1, 1955, Miss Parks was riding a bus home after a day of work. According to the Alabama segregation

rules of public transportation at the time, she was supposed to give up her seat to a white person and move towards the back of the bus. On that historical day, she refused to give up her seat when the bus driver ordered her to do so. This middle-aged, hardworking woman was arrested and charged by the court for obstructing the law. The existing racial tensions in Montgomery and in other American cities led the individual act of Miss Parker to be interpreted by the Black community as an opportunity to stand up and fight again against discriminatory American laws. Martin Luther King said eloquently, "the segregation of public accommodations segregates the moral concerns of the citizens" (*Martin Luther King Jr*, The Speeches Collection, VHS tape). The Montgomery bus boycott was supposed to be a one-day protest, but it lasted 381 days. During the time of the protest, most Black people did not use the public means of transportation. Sometimes they had to walk long distances to get to work. Since most black used the buses, the protest put the public transportation system into an economic crisis. After the year-long boycott, the court of Alabama declared that the segregation on buses was unconstitutional.

On August 28, 1963 there was another famous walk by Blacks, the March on Washington. It was a non-violent protest against unfair rights. Adrian Piper was one of the protesters walking to Washington. During his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King, Jr., a moral leader of the nation, addressed thousands of Black and White people gathered in front of the American Parliament. He emphasized the fact that Black people march for first class citizenship; they march to live with dignity and respect. They will not rest because "Negro finds himself exiled in his own homeland" (*Martin Luther King Jr*, The Speeches Collection, VHS tape). Further on, he forcefully argued: "I

have a dream that one day this nation will raise up and live up to true meaning of its creed, we hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are equal" (*Martin Luther King Jr*, The Speeches Collection, VHS tape).

The third powerful example of walking understood as a political resistance during the Civil Rights Movement was the famous walk by Black people from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. The group walked for four days and four nights to protest the racial discrimination and violence of the American political and social system. Although the walkers faced opposition and resistance along the way, the walk culminated with a crowd of twenty-five thousand people in front of the statehouse in Montgomery and, in 1965, the Voting Rights Act was issued.

These three politically engaged walks changed human history forever. The people involved forcefully communicated that walking is a critical means in their political struggle for a better future. They understood walking as human activity that is not taken for granted.

When we look at the American *status quo* of the late 1960's, we observe not only the internal racial tension, but also the external politics of the Cold War era and McCarthyism, the oppression and persecution of persons sympathizing with Communism. It might come as a surprise that this supposedly free country there was despite the democratic American Constitution, discriminatory politics exercised over so-called minority groups such as women, Blacks, homosexuals, and immigrants (officially classified as "aliens"). Some of the most poignant cases of discrimination are exemplified by assassination of Malcolm X in New York in 1965 and that of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis in 1968. In 1969, the police raided the gay Stonewall Inn in New York, even

though the US had officially decriminalized homosexuality. In 1967, the Parliament finally legalized abortion, one of the many legal and social rights for which the women's movement (also called the feminist movement) had been fighting since the XIXth century. These contradictory political situations made USA, and New York in particular, one of the most challenging "melting pots" of diverse political, social, and cultural practices that differed from the official politics of the time.

Cultural Context of New York City since the late 1960's

Since the XIXth century New York has been one of the most important ports of international shipping as well as the key financial and commercial center of American and international life. These favorable economic factors contributed to a great flourish of the arts in the post-war New York City, making this metropolis a true experimental center of postmodern art.

I would like to present a brief overview of New York cultural scene since the late 1960's as experienced by Adrian Piper. It was the most immediate background on which she drew while making her art. From the 1960's onwards, New York City offered many alternative places for the artists where they could voice their unrestrained artistic opinions. The cultural period following the Second World War was an exciting time during which such important issues as feminist and other "minority" politics started to assert their legitimacy in mainstream culture. One of the most appropriate art forms that served these important new ideas was performance art, which flourished in 1970's New York. In her biography, Adrian Piper mentions how the New York experimental art scene influenced her own work. Piper grew up in New York, and she was informed by the affluent socio-cultural context of her city. In fact, Piper, active participant in cultural

events, became involved in the American art scene in the middle of the 1960's. These cultural events were important to her artistic formation, as is evident from the *Personal Chronology* posted on her website (http: www.adrianpiper.com).

In 1967, the artist met Rosemary Meyer, Vito Acconci, and Hans Haacke. She collaborated with the first two artists on many occasions. Rosemary was not only Piper's co-organizer of meetings to raise women's consciousness, she also became a photographer for some of the *Catalysis* performances. In the same year, Piper listened to such experimental composers as Webern, Boulez, Stockhausen, Cage, LaMonte Young, and Steve Reich. In 1968, the artist attended Yvonne Reiner's dance concert and contributed conceptual material to Acconci's *0 to 9* Magazine. The early happenings of Allan Kaprow's, Fluxus and the Judson Dance Group's experimental artworks, as well as the artistic contribution of Joan Jonas, Carolee Schneemann, Robert Rauschenberg et al., greatly redefined the status of the arts. All of the above mentioned individuals and groups (among others) made significant cultural contributions to American culture, and resulted in one of the major cultural shifts from a modern to a postmodern way of thinking about and making art. It affected not only American culture, but also the international artistic community.

The most profound influence that on Adrian Piper's early artwork, that which mark her entire career, is conceptualism. In "An Autobiographical Preface", Piper recalls her early art formation and her coming in contact with Sol LeWitt's artworks featured in "46 Variations on Three Different Kinds of Cubes" that made an everlasting impression on her. The late 1960's presented a first significant breakthrough in Adrian Piper's

artistic career. She recounts that after seeing LeWitt's artworks in 1967 her thinking about and way of making art changed significantly:

> From this point on, I felt freed, not only from the technical and formal constraints of figurative art, but also from my preconceptions about what art had to be. I saw that there were in fact no absolute standards of art, which I had to meet, and that whatever standards there were had their source in artists ("An Autobiographical Preface",p. 38).

Ever since the "discovery" of the art of ideas, Adrian Piper became a conceptual artist working in a variety of mediums to express her socio-political concerns. The artwork that immediately preceded the performative *Catalysis* series was, in fact the conceptually based *Hypothesis*. It is important to introduce briefly this project because it displayed critical characteristics developed further in the *Catalytic* performances.

Piper began to work on *Hypothesis* in 1968 until she started to perform as a catalytic agent in the 1970's. In *Hypothesis*, Piper decided to perceive her diverse life activities as art, and she meditated on a subject/object constitution that was crucial to this performative art work. Piper acted as a self-conscious object that registers space and time by documenting it photographically and then arranging the images in a conceptually designed grid. While working on this piece, Piper posited a philosophical question: "if documenting something is making art, and that's within my "personal life" – which is itself the art – then why not document that? " (*Out of Order, Out of Sight,* p.35). Some of her photographic exercises were similar to Fluxus-like performative scores in which the chance played an important part and ultimately gave meaning to the piece. For example, in "Notes and Qualifications" Piper writes that she would take photographs of the TV every minute or so, thus composing, or rather deconstructing, the way we usually view

and understand images. She would align the photographs on a pre-constructed grid, thus generating an abstract visual communication (*Out of Order, Out of Sight*, p.34).

Beginning in the 1960's, Adrian Piper started to show professionally in diverse art galleries and museums not only in the United States, but also abroad. By the 1970's, Piper had done important conceptual shows, such as those at Dawn and Paul Copper Galleries, Stadtisches Museum in Leverkusen, and at Kunsthalle in Bern. In 1970, however, the artist withdrew her *Hypothesis* artwork from the *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* show at New York Cultural Center, a decision that exemplified Piper's political formation as an artist who was becoming conscious about the context in which her artworks were generated and exhibited. The artist was asserting that she was not only a carrier of aesthetic and conceptually based ideas, but also a carrier of politically engaged art. The troubled American political scene of the 1970's had a significant impact on Piper's subsequent shift from "pure" conceptual art to socio-politically based artworks. In fact, Piper's withdrawal from the 1970 conceptual show was a protest against Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the Kent State massacre.

Piper could no longer show her works in the art galleries and museum (hence withdrawal of *Hypothesis* from the public art show) because these institutions were based on the same capitalist structures that tacitly justified violent acts against humanity. Moreover, Piper realized that the art world was a sort of illusion, a fictitiously safe "bubble", removed from immediate social and political concerns. This young emerging artist writes about developing her acute artistic awareness and, simultaneously, recognizing herself as a paradigm of the North American society acting not as an empowered agent, but as a marginal entity:

I became aware of my cultural alienation from the rest of society. I discovered, through interminable arguments, derision, and lack of comprehension from non-art-oriented friends that in fact that art world is not coextensive with the world at large, and the unspoken presuppositions that allow me to exhibit and discuss my work within the art community are practically unacceptable to anyone outside it (*Out of Order, Out of Sight*, p.41).

Formal Description of *Catalysis*

Presenting a formal description of Adrian Piper's performative *Catalysis* is no easy task. Since the individual walks occurred over thirty years ago and were never properly documented, it is difficult to indicate exact times and, often, precise locations. In an electronic interview conducted with Adrian Piper on November 17th, 2003, I received some valuable information and street pointers for most of the *Catalytic* walks even though, as the artist informed me, "I did not keep records, as part of the point was not to document these pieces" (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003)[8]. In particular, there are six distinct performative public actions, or interventions, that were executed more than once. All of them are entitled *Catalysis;* they are numbered I, III, IV, V, VI, and VII. *Catalysis II* is not acknowledged by the artist in any of the available publications; the numbering of Catalytic performances skips from I to III. On average, the artist performed each *Catalytic* intervention not more than twice a month. Each performative intervention was different, and not all of them involve the act of walking in the metropolis. More specifically, four out of six of the performed interventions involve walking in the city. I will introduce and formally describe six

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[8] In *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, Adrian Piper states that there are nine *Catalytic* actions. *Catalysis VIII* consisted in recording talk inducing hypnosis and playing it during *Catalysis IX* intervention in which "the artist covered her face, neck and artms with feathers and attended the opening of the Women Artists show in New York (p.235).

distinct actions but will describe in depth only those that involved Piper actually walking in New York.

The first *Catalytic* intervention, performed in late Spring 1970, probably in May or June (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003) was a performance that involved taking the subway during rush hour and walking to a nearby bookstore [9]. More specifically, *Catalysis I* consisted of taking a subway, train D, at around 5 p.m. while wearing excessively malodorous clothes. Train D runs through both rich and poor New York boroughs. Piper got on at Grand Station, IND, changed to the D train at West 41st Street and get off at 59th Street, at which point she retraced the trip (interview). The artist spent a lot of time preparing her performative "props". In an essay, "Concretized Ideas I've Been Working Around", Piper explains, "In *Catalysis I*, […] I saturated a set of clothing in a mixture of vinegar, eggs, and cod liver oil for a week, then wore it on the D train" (p. 42). Wearing the same clothes, Piper walked into a Marlboro bookstore, where she used to buy a lot of books, and browsed. The bookstore used to be on 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues. During the first part of the performance in the New York Subway, Piper remembers, "I was groped, and one guy ejaculated on my pants. Yuck". (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

The second *Catalytic* action is not acknowledged in any publication. Upon asking the artist to help me with this missing piece of information, Adrian Piper answered, "I don't remember what that piece was. It's possible that I didn't consider it successful, so I

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[9] In *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, Lucy Lipperd states that on September 18 "Adrian Piper performs *Catalysis I* in the third car of the first D train to pass the Grand Street Station after 5:15 p.m.; September 19, in Marlboro Book Store, 8th Street, between 9 and 10 p.m." (p. 191)

abandoned it (and then, apparently, repressed it)" (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

During *Catalysis III*, Piper walked in late Spring or early Summer 1970 in midtown Manhattan, in the Fourteenth Street and Union Squares as well as the nearby Fashion district, near Macy's shopping center. Union Square is a very busy place in New York. Its streets are known for the Greenmarket sales; it was in this very place during the 1930's Depression that gathered over 35,000 unemployed people rallied here to march on City Hall and demand jobs. Macy's, on the other hand, is the largest and the oldest store in New York City, established in 1857 by a rich whaler named Rowland Hussey Macy. The store grew from its initial location on 14th street to a much larger store consisting of several buildings located at its current address. Piper carried a rectangular sign across her chest reading in large letters: "wet paint" over a painted long sleeved shirt (Appendix 28). This walking performance lasted no longer than two hours. In particular, Piper walked from 14th Street and 6th Avenue east to 1st Avenue on the north side of the street, and back on the south side. She also walked on 34th Street and 8th Avenue east to 3rd Avenue on the north side of the street and back on the south side. The public reaction to her walk was "staring, backing away, circumnavigation, avoidance of eye contact" (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

The fourth *Catalytic* action was not a walking piece; it consisted mostly of being carried places by public transportation. Piper rode a bus running on the First Avenue, a subway, and the Empire State Building elevator at different times of day: late morning to early afternoon in the late Spring or early Summer of 1970 First Avenue is one of the longest and largest streets in New York that joins the South-Eastern part of Manhattan

with the Northern neighborhoods. In particular, it begins at the intersection with East Houston in the East Village and runs Northwards through the Gramercy Park, Tuyvesant Square, Kips Bay, Murray Hill, close by the United Nations Plaza and Ford Building, Upper East Side, Carnegie Hill, and Spanish Harlem to end in the East Harlem. The Empire State Building, once overshadowed by the World Trade Center, is now the tallest skyscraper in New York to became an observatory attraction. To date, the Building was attracted more than 100 million visitors. While the artist appeared to be dressed conservatively, she stuffed her mouth with a red towel (Appendix 29).

During *Catalysis V*, which was not a walking performance either, Adrian Piper played prerecorded loud belches at the Donnell Library, situated in the Midtown Manhattan. She performed several times around noontime to late afternoon in the Fall, 1970 to Winter of 1970 and 1971. She recalls:

> I recorded loud belches made at five minutes intervals, then concealed the tape recorder on myself and replayed it at full volume while reading, doing research, and taking out some books and records at Donnell Library (*Talking to Myself*, p. 54)

Donnell Library Center, is located on 20 West 53rd Street (across the Museum of Modern Art); it is a great research center housing the New York Public Library branch system's largest collection of materials in languages other than English. The Donnell Center organizes diverse cultural events and exhibits free of charge. During the electronic interview Piper informed that she chose this particular library because there were a lot of homeless people reading there all day when it was cold outside. "Sometimes there were so many of them that it was hard to find a seat", the artist says (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

In the sixth *Catalytic* action, the artist walked through Central Park, the lobby of the nearby Plaza Hotel, and rode the subway B train to West 4th Street and changed to the D train to 59th Street during the morning rush hours. These walks were performed early afternoons in the Fall of 1970 and Winter of 1971 and lasted no more than one hour. The artist attached Mickey Mouse balloons to her ears, nose and two front teeth. In an electronic interview, Piper recalls that it was a particularly difficult piece to perform because the threads she tied to her teeth cut her gums and made her salivate. She also had to be very careful when getting into subway so that the balloons would not get caught in the closing doors (interview). The artist remembers that the reaction of the Central Park public was mostly stares, and some smiles; in the Plaza Hotel there was no reaction to her walking piece. While Central Park is an impressive and frequently attended "natural" site of 350 ha created by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1858, the nearby Plaza Hotel is one of the most expensive hotels in the city that only welcomes guests with high incomes.

Finally, in *Catalysis VII*, Adrian Piper walked through the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in the "Before Cortes" exhibition featuring Pre-Colombian art, chewing and blowing an unusually large quantity of bubble gum that was sticking to her face and to her clothes. It was a Saturday afternoon piece and lasted no longer than half and hour. While the artist made guards very nervous, she does not think that many people noticed her (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003). Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 and it is one of the oldest New York art museums. It is proud of its collection art from prehistoric times to the present.

Walking as a *Catalytic Agent*

In her 1970-71 performance series, Piper assumed the identity of an artist-catalyst to communicate her artistic concerns. The catalytic artwork displays ever-changing elements of the subject promoting change in the object who has the potential to "break down" and become a new entity. *The Webster Dictionary* reminds us of the primary scientific provenance of catalysis: "it is the change in the rate of chemical reaction brought about by a catalyst, usually present in small quantities and unaffected at the completion of the reaction, from Greek *katalus*, a breaking down" (*Webster*, p. 154).

Adrian Piper, disguised as homeless and marginal figure, staged her walks as thoughtful and purposeful re-mappings of New York. The artist moved though places she knew or attended, and in locations that felt the most appropriate to convey her particular *Catalytic* idea. While in *Catalysis I* and *IV* she used public transportation during rush hour; in *Catalysis III, V, VI* and *VII* she walked in public spaces marked either by high consumer, leisure, or cultural symbolic values. More specifically, walking on the Fourteenth Street in Union Square and around Macy's shopping center while carrying a sign "wet pain" was to disturb behavior of the consumers walking around and shopping at the expensive commercial shopping mall. Playing loud belches at Donnell's library where homeless people found shelter from cold was calling attention to other purposes and issues that seemed "invisible" in this major New York research center. Sauntering in Central Park and the lobby of the Plaza Hotel with helium filled Mickey Mouse balloons attached to her upper body, deconstructed the very idea of leisurely strolling in metropolis' largest natural site. Finally, chewing and blowing an excessive amount of bubble gum while walking in Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of the major New York

cultural institutions, to counter-walked the very idea of "preserving" artworks such as the

Pre-Columbian sculptures which were on display at the Museum in 1971.

In all of these *Catalytic* performances, Piper's body was disguised as "other", as

an excessive and socially unwanted body with the potential to disrupt the established

structure of a docile society. Piper specifies formal qualities of her transformation as an

art object, as a "sensory object" that moved through urban space:

> My formal preoccupations were about my own being as a
> sensory sculptural object, and how to modify or experiment
> with it as I would any other sculptural object so as to
> produce varying reaction in perceivers. So different pieces
> explored different senses. *Catalysis I* was mostly about
> smell. *Catalysis III* was about color and surface. *Catalysis
> IV* and *VI* were about form. *Catalysis V* was about sound.
> *Catalysis VII* was about texture (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*,
> personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

Piper's decision to acknowledge herself as a sensory object, thus acting out of the

ordinary, was a strong statement about her experiences of being in exile in her own

country. Thus, the artist embodied the most estranged and marginal qualities of the

contemporary urban dweller. While the previous *Hypothesis* series was performed in the

artist's personal space, the *Catalytic* series took Piper to the streets of New York.

Furthermore, *Catalysis* is the only performance to date that dealt directly with the artist's

body in public spaces.

Critical Biography of Adrian Piper

In order to understand better Piper's racial and social concerns as manifested

explicitly and implicitly in *Catalysis*, I will refer to her biography that is often critical

subject matter for her interdisciplinary artworks. Throughout her artistic career, Piper has

often referred to her family's background and referred to certain events from her

childhood to make a socio-political statement. Her thoughtful and self-conscious examination of her life allowed Piper to connect to and publicly announce a larger problem: discrimination and unequal power distribution in the North American social, political, and cultural systems.

Adrian Margaret Smith Piper was born in 1948 and grew up in Harlem, New York's "Black neighborhood." Her upper-middle class Manhattan family identified itself as Black. She was the only child of Olive Xavier Smith Piper, a City College administrator, who was one-quarter African-American and had some Caribbean ancestry, and Daniel Robert Piper, a real-estate lawyer, who was one-eighth black. In a later critical autobiographical text-based artwork, *Self-Portrait #3* from 1980, Piper writes about the socio-political conditions of her family, living in Harlem. In particular, she states:

> For a long time I didn't realize we were poor at all. We lived in that part of Harlem called Sugar Hill, where there were lots of parks and big houses that had once been mansions but had then been converted into hotels and funeral homes [...]. I had been too embarrassed by my house and neighborhood to give a party although all the other popular kids in the class did [...]. My father had a very unsteady real estate law practice in Harlem, where people paid him for defending them against unscrupulous landlords by mending his shirts or cooking things for him or fixing his car [...]. My parents spent all their money on me (*Political Self-Portrait # 3*).

In an earlier *Self-Portrait # 2* from 1978 the artist recalls her uneasy upbringing in the racist neighborhood. By exposing some of her life events, Piper communicates much larger issues of how it felt growing up in the "other" part of Harlem and attending private school. The racial tension and discrimination she experienced as a child are exemplified

in her compelling *Self-Portrait* stories. Here is another part of Piper's autobiography translated into two dimensional, textural artworks:

> [My school] was far away because it was not a local public school but rather an expensive progressive prep school called New Lincoln where there were lots of rich mediocre white kids and a few poor smart white kids and even fewer, poorer, even smarter black kids. But all I knew then was that there sure was a difference between where most of them lived (Fifth Avenue) and where I lived (Harlem). Anyway I started going to school by myself and the neighborhood kids would waylay me as I was walking the two blocks from the bus stop to my house and would pull my braids and tease me and call me Paleface [...]I was afraid of the black kids on my block because they bullied me and I was afraid of the black kids at school because they made cutting remarks about my acting too white (*Self-Portrait # 2*).

Adrian Piper has light skin and therefore she often "passes" for white. In the same *Self-Portrait # 2* she narrates a story about her discriminating fifth grade teacher, Miss Nancy Modiano. When Adrian was ten years Miss Modiano asked her parents if their child were aware she is "colored." Piper remembers her as "one of the few whites who overtly bullied me because of my color"(*Self-Portrait # 2*). Many other art works, executed after the *Catalysis,* communicate the stories of racism and discrimination that Adrian Piper and her family experienced.

When I walked through Adrian Piper's retrospective exhibition in Barcelona, in December 2003 [10], I felt uneasy realizing that since the late 1960's, the time when this intelligent and brave woman was making these strong artworks, not much changed in terms of decreasing or eliminating racial, xenophobic, and other discriminations. Walking

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[10] Adrian Piper's retrospective show in Barcelona was entitled "Adrian Piper Desde 1965/Adrian Piper Since 1965"; it was on view from October 17, 2003 until January 11, 2004 at the Museum of Contemporary Art – MACBA in Barcelona, Spain.

for two days through large second level of the Contemporary Art Museum-MACBA (Piper's exhibition took all of the rooms on the second level), and experiencing Piper's original two dimensional (drawing, painting, photographs), audio, video and installation artworks, for the first time I could not help but question myself: "Do artists ever make a difference in society?" I was deeply touched by the work I saw. In particular, her *Mythic Being,* performance based photos (1974-75); *Art for the Art World Surface Pattern,* a sound installation (1976); three text-based critical *Self-Portraits* (late 1970's and 1980); *Four Intruders Plus Alarm System* a sound installation (1980); *Funk Lessons,* performances and a video documentation (1983-84); *Please God* video (1990), My Calling Cards #1 and #2, performance (1986-1990), *Cornered* video installation (1988); *What It's Like, What it is* # 1, 2, and 3 (1991/2002); *Portrait as a Nice White Lady* (1995); and *Color Wheel-Series* (2000) to name a few, communicated with rare intelligence and artistic forcefulness the same, yet unresolved, discriminatory problems of our society.

It was both the national and personal anxiety that prompted Piper to become actively involved in the political art. In her poetic autobiography "Flying", she emphatically narrates:

> The political upheaval of 1970 – Kent State, Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, the student revolts, the women's movement, and other's response to my perceived social, political, and gender identity braked my flight a bit, reflecting back onto me, enclosing me in my subjectivity, shocking me back into my skin ("Flying", p.24).

Moreover, Piper's urge to thoughtfully reflect on and write about the major shift in her art making process, from a conceptual to a more engaging performative one,

resulted in the intelligent short essays included in a book, *Talking to Myself: An Ongoing Autobiography of an Art Object*, published in Bari, Italy in 1975. In one of the essays, "III – Note on "Notes and Qualifications" Piper, in her self-conscious methodology, defines herself as a paradigm of American society. In particular she states:

> Society's treatment of me shows me what I am, and in the products of my labor I reveal the nature of the society, whether I intend to or not. This is to say that art can be a didactic tool just like any other work, but not by changing the nature of the work. One can study the construction industry, art, prostitution, or General Motors from a technical or from a sociopolitical viewpoint. But if one is affected or politicized by looking at these areas in the latter way, one has learned by studying the implications of the activity as it is, not by rerouting in into specifically political activity ("III – Note on "Notes and Qualifications", p. 51)

Self-Reflective Method of the *Catalytic* Agent

Adrian Piper is one of the very few extremely self-conscious artists, who employs unusually charged self-reflective methods (both in her studio practice and in her theoretical and philosophical texts) to understand and confront her own "self" with those of other people. In her two impressive autobiographical volumes entitled *Out of order, out of Sight,* Piper generates a critical artistico-philosophical discourse and forcefully argues the issues at heart of her art production from the 1960's until 1996 when the volumes were published. In her studio and theoretical practices Piper seems to be unforgivable in her incessant fight for personal and social justice[11]. Her political and

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[11] On the cover of *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, Volume One, in a left bottom corner there is a photograph of Adrian Piper with a balloon message announcing in a typically to Piper's wry sense of humor: "Be sure attend very carefully to what I have to say to you. For if you do not, I will make a sincere effort to kill you".

activist takes are well exemplified in a text written when Piper was executing *Catalytic* performances in 1970's. In "Art as Catalysis" she convincingly narrates:

> One cannot effect political change in the construction industry by building union halls, but by going on strike, picketing, and so on. Similarly, an artist can't effect political change by making art intentionally, but by taking the same kind of action: striking exhibitions, picketing galleries and museums, and so on. All this is to say that I can become politically conscious by studying the implications of my societal status and the products of my activity, just like any other job. And, like everyone else, I can effect political change only through specifically political activity (p. 41).

All the *Catalytic* walks seems to forcefully communicate: "look at me! I am your estranged *alter-ego* and your ultimate nightmare; I am the embodiment of a Black, dirty and homeless body!" Piper was very serious about publicly celebrating her marginal identity. She inserted her marginal identity and moved through the midst of the well-behaved societal "self" functioning as an official New Yorkers' image. It is in fact quite extraordinary (and quite unusual at that time) that these irrational performative events were seriously scrutinized in Piper's thought-provoking and forceful writing. Piper's erudite and extensive texts about the *Catalytic* pieces, as well as several photographs taken of her performances, contributed to the recognition of this work in some important art historical and performance related publications.

Catalytic Agent as a Political *Flâneur*

The *Catalytic* performances offer a witty and politically engaging message of urban strollers. Piper compellingly re-maps the city when she insists on her excessive promenades in New York. Piper's early performance art work exemplifies walking through the streets of New York understood as a potent marginal *flânerie* where the

artist/woman/mulatto asserts her exilic existence into her alienating city. The artist's excessive walks staged as peripatetic journeys of the "other" - an American artist of black origin, a mulatto woman - can be problematized as an intriguing case of an estranged walk, during which the individual identity is threatened by the identity of the metropolitan crowd. Just as a homeless *flâneur* in the Parisian metropolis of the XIXth century would stroll "out of necessity", Piper's exilic walks presented a strong response to racial and other discriminatory ills of the postmodern metropolis. Walking in the city presents a certain celebration of the exilic identity that does not fit into the prescribed uniform social *savoir vivre*. In such a borderline situation, a simple act of walking becomes a powerful tool expressing the non-conformist and non-conventional (risk-taking) way of urban living. In addition, if one performs one's peripatetic experience with a special type of disguise (however simple or odd it may be), one becomes a negative site of an urban spectacle; an "on-the-spot" problem for other city dwellers who have to acknowledge the estranged and marginal moving through metropolis.

The recipient of the catalytic process presents a complex phenomenon that lies in between the artist and the viewer/receiver. The catalytic art work is a hybrid creature; it is neither a subject, nor an object, but it requires at least the presence of the two to make a change. Thus, the catalytic art is an ongoing process that can be accomplished at its best when exercised as performance art, outside of official art institutions. While performing her *Catalytic* performances in August 1970, Piper eloquently rationalized her walks as being a catalytic agent in an essay "Art as Catalysis". She wrote:

> Since the artist is the embodiment of a particular creative process, art works can abandon the intermediary of the discrete form and base themselves on this type of impact. The artist himself [sic!] becomes the catalytic agent

inducing change in the viewer; the viewer responds to the catalytic presence of the artist as art work. This is not to be confused with life as art or the artist's personality as art. The aesthetic formality and artifice of the work temporarily replaces or veils the personal attributes of the artist ("Art as Catalysis" p. 43).

Further on, Piper writes about the effectiveness and impact of the catalysis. She realizes that the human impact is stronger when imposed in everyday, unexpected situations and especially when it is based on direct and immediate confrontation. For Piper, such works of art offer a more complete aesthetic experience. There is no intermediary in the *Catalytic* performance. The artist's body becomes primary the indispensable and source. The body is identical with an artwork.

Documentation of *Catalysis*

The documentation of performance is an important issue as it is often the only visual "proof" or record that allows the viewers (like myself) to get to know unattended performances that occurred in the past. There are three black and white photographs of *Catalysis III* and five photographs of *Catalysis IV* that were taken by Piper's friend, Rosemary Meyer. There are the only documentation of *Catalysis*. I was fortunate to see all the existing photographs at Adrian Piper's retrospective show, *Adrian Piper Since 1965*, at Museum of Modern Art in Barcelona, Spain, in December, 2003. All of the photographs, nicely framed and annotated, are in the Collection of the Generali Foundation. Mayer was the only photographer of these two *Catalytic* performances and, as Piper explains, "it was only because Scott Burton had been commissioned to do a piece on them (which never came out) for *Art in America*. So she surreptitiously followed me around with a camera" (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17

November, 2003). When asked how she feels about the existing photographs, she
answers:

> They are documents of the performances, and as such can
> be art works in their own right – "documentary art works".
> But the *Catalysis* performances themselves were complete
> as such (interview).

In *Talking to Myself, An Ongoing Autobiography*, Piper philosophically meditates

on the dichotomy of a subject and an object distinction. In the writings about her street art

of the 70's, Piper acknowledges that it was very difficult to achieve a totally self-

conscious status when performing *Catalysis* (she certainly achieves it in her writings

about the performance). In a text "About A.-A", written especially for the 1996 edition of

Out of Order Out of Sight, Piper further recontextualizes the *Catalytic* distinction of the

object/subject opposition. Using philosophical language, Piper claims that in her 1970-72

performative series she functioned as a "first-order" variable; that is, the artist and the

audience were not self-conscious of her artwork. The "second order" variable, on the

other hand, represents for Piper a fully conscious, controlled and, in a certain way,

predictable artistic encounter. It seems that Piper wanted to transcend the dichotomy of

the self/other and make her artwork a truly catalytic agent, even though it was she who

originated all the actions, and she who wished to provoke reactions in the passer by. In

"About A.-A" Piper presents her 'objectified subjectivity' *vis a vis* perceiving her art

people:

> The confrontation I engineered in the *Catalysis* series and
> related works affected me in ways that were essentially
> arbitrary, because the variables themselves were random:
> There was little or no decision making, intentional
> directedness, or self-consciousness in the responses of my

many audiences. Thus the ways in which I changed and grew as a result of those responses were essentially impersonal: The central assumptions of my identity were untouched. We might call these audiences "first-order" variables to indicate that they share – with me – an objecthood, a third-person behavioral surface, but no awareness of these surfaces as such. In this sense I functioned as a first-order variable in the varying surface I presented (p. 143).

The first and second order variables relate to Piper's earlier writings regarding the nature of the aesthetically and politically engaging art works. The artist, preoccupied by a philosophical question, addresses it in "In Support of Meta-Art," written while executing *Catalysis*. The text was first published a year after in *Artforum* (October, 1973). Meta-art presents a rare insightful artistic writings that touch upon the aesthetics and politics of art.

Generated by the unique experience of performing seven *Catalytic* actions on the street, Piper argues that meta-art is "an activity of making explicit the thought process, procedures and presuppositions of making whatever kind of art we make" (p. 17). Further on Piper argues that even though meta-art is related to art and art criticism it is a distinct activity in which an artist perceives herself/himself as an aesthetic object and she is able to rationalize her activities as art. Similarly to a deconstructive thought of Jacques Derrida, Piper sees making meta-art as a discursive text that puts the conceptual and cognitive abilities of the artist. Piper claims that meta-art requires the thoughtful meditation of an artist who consequently is aware of making art that would be easily accessible to the public. Unlike art that is opaque and restricted to a specialized audience, Piper proposes meta-art that is transparent that interacts with all the members of our society. In such a critical aesthetic distinction lies a political message. Piper argues for the socio-politically engaging status of meta-art in the following way:

Meta-art criticizes and indicts the machination necessary to maintain this society as it is. It hold up for scrutiny how capitalism works on us and through us; how we therefore live, think, what we do as artists; what kinds of social interaction we have (personal, political, financial); what injustices we are the victim of, and which ones we must inflict on others in order to validate our work or our role as artist; how we have learned to circumvent these, if at all, that is, how highly developed we have had to become as political animals; what forms of manipulation we must utilize to get things done; what compromises we must make in our work or our integrity in order to reach the point where such compromises are no longer necessary; whether, given the structure of this society, there can be such a point (p. 27).

Whether the question socio-political art is actually able to change the Western capitalist society is another matter entirely. It seems that it was important for Piper that her public art address this question, and to react to a socio-political *status quo*. The *Catalytic* series is one of Piper's examples of meta-art which the artist plays the role of aesthetic (or sublime) object. In order to be closer to people, to create "on the spot" problems in public spaces, Adrian Piper never advertised her art works. She successfully escaped the "staged" and standardized way of looking at and perceiving art. The artist did not want to create a separation between the audience and the performer. In fact, at first it was hard to classify for the artist her unusual actions. Piper's public interventions did not fall under then existing categories of "guerilla theatre", "event", "happening", "streetwork" etc. Rather, the formally open and socio-politically engaged *Catalysis* series embodied a brave example of postmodern performance art works. The performances had to do with the places that Piper frequented and where she felt she knew the environment. The individual pieces were performed in the locations she felt to be most appropriate. (interview). Thus, the artist's promenades were not purposeless and random, even though

they might have looked as such to casual passers by. Piper desired to make a meaningful change in the person(s) she encounters during her urban journeys on foot. Consequently, Piper herself acted as a catalytic agent. The public interventions become critical deterriteriolization of urban spaces. The artist narrates:

> The work is catalytic agent, in that it promotes a change in another entity (a viewer) without undergoing any permanent change itself. The value of the work may then be measured in terms of the strength of the change, rather then whether the change accords positively or negatively with some aesthetic standard. In this sense, the work as such is non-existent except when it functions as a medium of change between the artist and the viewer (p. 41).

In the interview with Lucy Lippard, Piper describes some of the difficulties and the personal changes she had to go through while executing the *Catalysis* performances. It seems that these bizarre, yet courageous acts of personal liberation, allowed Piper to freely relate to audience and thus examine the limits of the personal and social consciousness. The satisfaction of having total personal control over her artwork presents the most revealing experience for the artist. Piper recalls:

> It seems that since I have stopped using gallery space, and stopped announcing the pieces, I have stopped using art frameworks. There is very little that separates what I am doing from quirky personal activity. Except I've been thinking about the fact that I relate what I am doing to people. Occasionally, I meet somebody I know while I am doing a piece, and it seems OK to me, because it affirms what I am doing as art (*Catalysis: An Interview with Adrian Piper*, 171).

These extremely self-referential and self-reflexive walks that position the artist's body *vis a vis* the social body, present the most crucial political aspect of her

performances. Piper intelligently plays upon her "double negativity" as she is marked by dominant white and patriarchal power structures as the other: a mulatto, an artist and a woman. Consequently, she decides to artistically push the limits of the social *savoir vivre* and put her body on a obscene and excessive display. I asked Piper what was the most important for her when she was performing *Catalysis* in the 1970's and how she sees/contextualizes these artworks right now, 30 years later:

> Most important at the time was re-establishing my being as a concrete particular subject in catalytic relation to other concrete particular subjects by sculpturally and formally modifying my physical presence in the ways described in the texts. Now I see them as my having put myself through a very rigorous training program in preparation for the experience of social ostracism. I think of them as prophetic, although not self-fulfillingly so (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

The well-chosen form of the direct performative interventions allows her to disrupt existing public codes. Writing twenty years after *Catalysis,* and reflecting on its political message, Piper writes in "In Xenophobia and the Indexical Present II":

> Although I was thinking still very formalistically and abstractly at this point [1970's], I think that the symbology of these pieces had a lot to do with my emerging sense of myself as a woman, as having been silenced in various ways, as having been objectified as being black person as well (p. 263).

bell hooks, a black American theorist, complements Piper's political interests while performing the *Catalytic* series. In her essay "Performance Practice as Site of Opposition," she argues that the urban performances executed by black artists in the United States constitutes the most effective means in defining the African-American

culture. Presenting performance art as successful process of critical decolonization of racial discrimination, bell hook's writes:

> For African-American performance has been a place where we have reclaimed subjugated knowledge and historical memory. Along with this, it has also been a place of transgression where new identities and radicalized black subjectivites emerge, illuminating our place in history in ways that challenge and interrogate, that highlight the shifting nature of black experience ("Performance Practice as Site of Opposition," p. 5).

In spite of hook's insistence that performative sites are the only places where "we [African-Americans] know we are not alone" ("Performance Practice as Site of Opposition"), Piper's public interventions were performed by herself. It is possible that the artists wanted to comment on the lack of a well-formed and empowered black community in New York. Performing alone while dwelling in the middle of the crowd made Piper "homeless."

There is yet another philosophical aspect to Piper's exilic walks through New York. The estranged or sublime notion is present in all *Catalytic* actions, because the artist becomes a homeless, abjected, and marginal object/body. All these characteristics are identified as features of the postmodern sublime (as opposed to beautiful) artwork. It is perhaps no coincidence that while performing her walks, Piper was a fervent reader of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. I would like to examine Piper's performances by referring to the aesthetic concept of magnitude and by deploying the Burkean and Kantian philosophical ideas of sublime.

In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, the Eighteenth century English thinker, Edmund Burke, compares and

contrasts the ideas of the beautiful and sublime. While the first quality produces pleasurable ends, the sublime is discussed in terms of terrible, and simultaneously, delightfully painful sources. In *The Section VI* of his book, Burke presents sublime passions that belong to the individual self-preservation. Analyzing the physiological and empirical states of basic passions, Burke argues:

> The passions that concern self-preservation, turn mostly to
> pain or danger. The ideas of Pain, sickness, and death, fill
> the mind with strong emotions of horror (*Philosophical
> Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime and
> Beautiful*, p. 38)

The question of distance in experiencing the delightfully painful spectacle is also of paramount importance. It is only when we are positioned in a secure place *vis a vis* the spectacle of terror that we can derive sublime pleasure from it. Burke explains:

> When the danger or pain press too nearly, they are
> incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but
> at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they
> may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience
> (p. 40).

The philosopher does not discuss the case where a person could (or could not) become a sublime spectacle. There is, however, a short descriptive passage in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* where dark skin is naturally attributed to the realm of sublime. In particular, in the section XV entitled "Darkness terrible in its own nature", Burke recalls a story recounted by Cheselden. The thinker claims that there was a blind boy who after an eye operation at the age of thirteen regained his sight. Burke repeats after Cheselden that "every time the boy saw a black object, it gave him great uneasiness" (p.144). The most striking evaluative sentence follows the previous citation. Burke continues by recounting that

"upon accidentally seeing a Negro woman, he [the boy] was struck with great horror at the sight" (p.144).

Immanuel Kant's philosophy of the beautiful and sublime is much more complex than that of his English predecessor. First of all, there is a significant shift from Burkean empirical subject to Kantian Transcendental subject. Rather than trying to formulate a specific theory regarding aesthetic concepts, Kant is interested in analyzing the consciousness of the modern subject. The philosopher posits such questions as: What allows me to 'perceive' myself? What are the limits of my cognitive and sensory faculties? Kant distinguishes the sublime from the beautiful because of the former prominent quantitative characteristics. He puts forth the concept of mathematically and dynamically sublime. While the first one gives the idea of magnitude, the second is represented in the fearful experience. The Kantian aesthetic judgement is based on sensation of the perceiving subject who puts the faculties of understanding, reason, and imagination into a free play arrangement. In the case of perceiving this peculiar object-less form, the spectacle of sublime, there is a conflict among the faculties. Kant speculates that in the case of the mathematically sublime that involves the concept of measurable magnitude, the apprehension (adding the information *ad infinitum*) and comprehension (instantaneous process where imagination has its limits) are in conflict. Whereas imagination tries to apprehend, the reason struggles to comprehend and to come up with a clear concept of a given spectacle. In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant explains:

> There is [...] a feeling of the inadequacy of his imagination for presenting the ideas of a whole, wherein the imagination reaches its maximum, and, in striving to surpass it, sinks back into itself, by which, however, a kind of emotional satisfaction is produced (*Critique of Judgement*, p. 91).

In addition, the Kantian examination of the dynamically powerful sublime again

brings about the importance of distance that divides the subject from the perceived object.

Similarly to Burke, if the spectator wants to enjoy the pleasures and pains of the sublime,

Kant stresses how the breath of space and the location of the meditating subject acquires

a great importance. He recounts:

> The more fearful it is [the spectacle] provided only we are
> in security, and we willingly call these objects sublime,
> because they raise the energies of the soul above their
> accustomed height and discover in us faculty of resistance
> of a quite different kind, which gives us courage to measure
> ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature
> (p.101).

Kant insists on the superiority of the observing subject when he reminds the reader that

"sublimity does not reside in anything of nature, but only in our minds, in so far as we

can become conscious that we are superior to nature within, and therefore also to nature

without us" (p. 104). In spite of the German philosopher's desire to present a complete

picture of the modern transcendental subject, there is something tragic and fragmentary

about the human performance. First of all, the foundations of the very experience of the

sublime with its fragile object/subject constitution seem to threaten the authority of the

Modern subject and put his/her autonomy into question. The fact that the human

cognitive faculties collapse, so to speak, in front of the spectacle of sublime, and that

there is no accord between the imagination and reason, makes the judgement of the

sublime not only subjective, but also elevates it to some sort of excessive transcendental

experience.

It seems that Adrian Piper, the postmodern city stroller, is caught up in a similar

conceptual play that allows her to experience the spectacle of sublime in the new

emerging metropolis. Her *Catalytic* series greatly contribute to a contemporary re-reading of the aesthetics and politics of the sublime. In her challenging performance, the artist forcefully questioned public trust and public space, by circulating her body as an urban spectacle. The artist body became a sublime spectacle since it was a body of the homeless, abjected and marginal walker, superfluous element in a business oriented metropolis.

Homeless Body

In her informative essay, *The Homeless Body*, Samira Kawash scrutinizes the term "homeless" as it is problematized in contemporary discourse regarding the homelessness in the North American cities. Her term *homeless body* however, does not denote exclusively the homeless person, but rather opens up the complexity of the critical spaces of non-belonging. More specifically, Kawash states that:

> [the homeless body] emerges in contingent circumstances
> through which the public struggles to define and secure
> itself as distinct and whole (*The Homeless Body*, 324).

This literary critic proposes an interesting notion of homeless body's *emplacement* analyzed as a new manner of examining a body that inhabits public transitory spaces such as subway cars, seats in public transportation, benches in parks, sidewalks etc. Kawash argues that the *emplacement* of the homeless body requires the body's continual movement, incessant cutting through the city. And since the homeless body has no real place to be, the affirmation of its corporeality can only be announced through its continual and contingent emplacements in transit places. Further on, Kawash adds that homeless body is often viewed by public as filth. We can certainly compare that notion of unwanted and marginal city dwellers with Piper's *Catalytic* performances

during which the artist threatened the identity of well behaving urban masses. Referring

to Kawash's statement of homelessness and filth, I think about the artist's *Catalytic* piece

where Piper wears malodorous clothes:

> The public view of the homeless as "filth" marks the
> danger of this body as body to the homogeneity and
> wholess of the public (p. 329).

The notion of filth, dirt and social uncleanness directs us towards Julia Kristeva's

compelling studies of abjection. Drawing upon her psychoanalytical and literary

expertise, Kristeva defines her neologism, an abject as an unpresentable site of human

psyche, a phenomenon that lies in-between consciousness and unconsciousness. Abject,

from Latin "jacere", is an object of inquiry that is literally "thrown" from us further

down. Abjection is that which possesses ambiguous qualities, and that which is at once

wanted and unwanted. In the opening chapter of *Powers of Horror*, she introduces the

abjection in the following way:

> The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or
> imagine. [..] What is abject is not my correlative, which,
> providing me with someone or something else as support,
> would allow me to be more or less detached and
> autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object –
> that of being opposed to I (*Powers of Horrors*,1)

Furthermore, the abject's place "on the edge of non-existence and hallucination" (2)

displays a charged psychological site where the individual constantly confronts her/his

social fears and desires. The abject, that which lies between the subject and the object,

can be also interpreted as " a stranger that dwells within us". In her later book, *Strangers

to Ourselves*, Kristeva puts forth a contention that we are all, in fact, strangers to our own

"selves" before we even confront others. The problem is not that the "other" bodies might

display some alien, strange, and abjected qualities; the predicament of estrangement lies foremost in our own troubled psyches. Kristeva encourages the readers to confront their own fears in order to deal successfully with the social body. Piper's profound understanding of her own socially and politically marked "otherness", makes her walk boldly in the streets to celebrate her body of excess, her unglamorous abjectness. I can feel Piper's personal anxiety when she artistically interprets Kristeva's powerful introductory words from *Strangers to Ourselves*:

> Foreigner: a choked up rage down in my throat, a black
> angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur
> (*Strangers to Ourselves*, 1)

One of the most critical aspects of Piper's exilic body was that of challenging the usually respected distances between people interacting in public spaces. We can observe that Piper, in a certain way, became a threat to the public because she performed too close to people. Consequently her bizarre, peripatetic and marginal performances became "obscene". The passers by and the passengers in public means of transportation probably wished that her unwanted body to be contained, squeezed, and removed. The excessively odorous and misbehaving person had no social reason to function in the city spaces. On the contrary, this excessive body ruptured in a well-trained and docile social urban body.

In the *Hidden Dimension*, Edward Hall, a contemporary cultural anthropologist, stresses the importance of studying the cultural and interactive dimension of human behavior. The hidden dimension defines the variety of spaces that are activated and used by people. Hall puts forth a notion of *proxemics*, a new science that scrutinizes the human interaction in personal and public spaces. Since Hall argues that humans set themselves apart from the animal world by activating the space around them, it is

important to examine the patterns and systems that govern people's behaviors in different spaces. Hall states that by elaborating on the personal sensory worlds as expressed in stimulated spaces, humans redefine culture. The space becomes an extension of human body, where the thoughts, desires and fears define the human function. While describing the concept of the bodily extensions, Hall states that:

> By developing his extension, man has been able to improve or specialize various functions. The computer is an extension of part of the brain, the telephone extends the voice, the wheel extends the legs and feet. Language extends experience in time and space while writing extends language (p. 3).

In the Chapter X, "Distances in Man", Hall uses empirical experiments, to identify the dynamics of distance between people and puts them into four categories. He names them as intimate, personal, social, and public. While intimate distance usually involves a very close, lovemaking occurrences, its "far phase" presents a peculiar case of breaking down the boundaries of what is understood as public and personal. Piper's performances in crowded means of public transportation, present the artist's intelligent commentary on that precarious space that is too close to us, yet it distances us and socially disciplines others. Analyzing the sites of the intimate in public spheres, Hall explains:

> Crowded subways and buses may bring strangers into what would ordinarily be classified as intimate spatial relations, but subway riders have defensive devices which take the real intimacy out of intimate space in public conveyances. The basic tactics is to be immobile as possible and, when part of the trunk or extremities touches another person, withdraw if possible. If this is not possible, the muscles in the affected areas are kept tense. For members of the non-contact group, it is taboo to relax and enjoy bodily contact with stranger (p. 118).

Piper's walking performances nicely complement Hall's notion of the individual spatial envelope, which marks the bodily space both as a container and as contained. As soon as the foreign body, designed as such by its "otherness", enters the public arena, it reminds us about the rules that regulate social savoir vivre. The "stranger's body" also reminds us about our own fears that we carry within ourselves regarding that invisible space that separates the personal from the social. The fact that Piper was not presenting herself as a glamorized female body that would certainly be welcomed and accepted for the public consumption. Piper's itinerant performance presented an abjected body that significantly questioned the well behaved societal subject. Piper's main preoccupation is the disruption of the imposed social codes and the exhaustion of walking in the city understood as exiled activity.

In conclusion, Adrian Piper's *Catalytic* walks present a powerful example of early performance art in which the artist profoundly meditates on her exilic "self" by creating "on-the-spot" problem for the city dwellers. If she, a Black woman artist, is discriminated against because of her race and gender, she successfully deconstructs social injustice in her anti-glamorous walks. All the unjust social relations and discrimination directed towards her put her in a state of exile in her own city. The artist reflects philosophically on her artistic actions by writing down her ideas in several essays. Piper's writing about *Catalysis* helped her to articulate her intuitions in words. It helped her to find a language in which to conceptualize what she felt to give them art-historical significance at a time when none of the criticism addressed the philosophical and socio-political issues she raised. (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003).

Catalysis became an artwork that significantly changed the artist and her subsequent art production. It becomes a *caesura* between her previous conceptually based artworks, and her socially and politically engaged works. Walking as a means of delivering Piper's message is not accidental. Regardless of Piper's upbringing in which she "grew up in New York City and walked around, all over, quite a lot when I lived there," (*Adrian Piper's Catalysis*, personal electronic interview 17 November, 2003), *Catalysis* would not have the same social and political power if it had not been carried out "on foot". Walking has powerful meaning in American-African history. Moreover, the artist's abjected walks strongly echo the Black people's Marches for Freedom. Piper's riding a bus with a red towel stuffed in her mouth brings up a potent image of Rosa Parks sitting "illegally" in the bus and refusing to give up her seat to a white man. In 1970 there were no segregation laws that divided the public places by race. However, Piper's "obscene" public sitting in the bus with a towel in her mouth communicated that discrimination and xenophobia still made many "marginal" people, like her, to feel exiled in their home town, in the casting of their citizenship.

Attachment: Walking in New York

It is Sunday, November 23rd, 2003. I am in New York City. I was here in 1999, for two short days; now, I am anxious to familiarize myself with some of New York's special places, guided by Adrian Piper's walks of her 1970-71 *Catalytic* artwork. I carry with me video and photo cameras, along with Piper's electronic responses to the specific locations of her urban *flânerie*.

I get off the subway the Columbus Circle which is named after a large round area with Christopher Columbus monument and a stainless steel Globe in the center. I enter Central Park from the south. During her *Catalysis VI* Piper walked mostly through south paths of Central Park with helium-filled balloons attached to her teeth. She walked here more than thirty years ago, from Fall, 1970 until winter 1971.
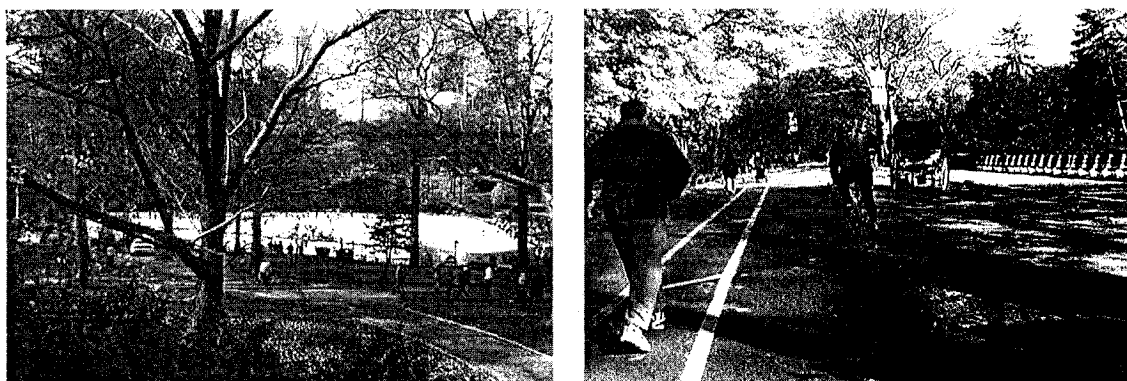
I have never been in Central Park and I am really surprised at what I experience during my walk. First of all, I would not call my Sunday promenade a leisurely stroll, because there is a great number of people constantly circulating around me. I am in one busiest parks I have ever encountered, in which everyone looks at everyone else and watches out not to step on someone else's toes. Carefully designed asphalt roads with white painted signs, iron railings, gates, monuments, and maps placed in the Park try to

orient the visitors; however; there are always some people who get lost while walking or running in the Park. Consequently they often walk counter-current or run unexpectedly across the road and paths. I can hardly take pleasure in admiring the Park's human-made hills, lakes, and paths because I have to be very watchful and careful.

While walking I notice at least five groups of people that are in the Park. One of the groups are the visitors carried through the asphalt roads in fancy carriages pulled by two dressed up horses, run by a cabmen. Another group is composed of people who come to the Park to exercise. They either walk alone or in groups, often pushing a baby carriage or walking a dog; or they jog, run, ride their bicycles or roller-blades. The third kind of visitors are vendors who walk around their temporary booths to incite the Park visitors to buy their services: reading people's handwriting or their future, drawing or painting, their portrait or selling food and beverages. The fourth category of people I observe in the Park are lonely and/or homeless people who sit on the grass or in removed bunches, as if waiting for someone or something to happen. They are the only people who actually do not walk in the Park. The final category is the police officers dressed in official NYCPD black uniforms, walking in pairs and looking around to ensure that everyone behaves. Each group minds its own business; people do not interact with other visitors. It is phenomenal that there are so many people in this crowded place, yet no one intermingles

unless people already know each other and came to the Park together. I am glad that no one pays attention to my walk as it allows me to videotape and photograph my promenade more freely, without fear of interruption.

Starting at the southwestern part of the Central Park I follow the sinusoid paths and get off at the east side, on 5th Avenue and East 59th Street. I cross the Grand Army Plaza in front of the Plaza Hotel, an example of early XXth century French Renaissance architecture located at 768 Fifth Avenue. I walk inside the Hotel and feel even more estranged than I did in the Park. This is certainly one of the most glamorous and expensive metropolitan hotels. I visually scan the rich decorations and a busy interior with my video camera. I exit quickly, passing a throng of tourists that constantly moves in and out of the Hotel. I think about Adrian who walked through the lobby of this Hotel with Mickey Mouse balloons attached to her teeth and got no reaction from the bustling staff and tourists. No one seems to notice me either. I continue walking.

I take a bus north on Madison Street, one street parallel to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I get off at the bus stop along with the many other passengers who are going to the Museum. Here, Piper performed her seventh and final *Catalytic* action, which consisted of walking through the "Before Cortes" exhibition in 1971 while chewing and blowing a large quantity of gum that adhered to her face. As I walk outside

of the Museum, along its frontal façade, I record long line of street vendors selling art-related gifts, mostly two-dimensional works on paper. They attract tourists; most of them stop at their stalls even though they buy nothing. I notice a few Museum workers sitting outside in the shadow, enjoying their break time. There are three, large colorful banners hanging outside, above the main doors informing the visitors about the exhibitions on view. I do not enter the Museum. I walk off to experience other *Catalytic* New York City spaces.

My next promenade starts in Union Square where Piper performed her third *Catalysis* carrying a sign "Wet Paint," across her chest. There are a lot of people here; they either walk around the Square, shop for early Christmas gifts (at the booths that are already set up at the Square), or sit in the center. As I walk with my video camera towards the center of the Square, I hear a man's voice asking me repeatedly to video tape him. I stop and turn my video camera on him. The Black, middle-aged man is dressed in white shirt with a tie, as if he had been waiting for this impromptu yet long desired conversation.

He talks fast with a typically New York accent. He says:

> I pledge to peace. That's what I want to say, I pledge to peace in this beautiful country. I am a US marine since 17 years old, I went from New York when I was 17; I broke my mama's heart, but I enjoyed it. I came back to New York when 20 years old and now I am a disabled American Vet because I worked too hard. I had to be operated on... I think that all young people in this country should sign up for military so our country would be more powerful to our enemies. You know, like those groups over there should be in military [he points to a group of black adolescents, standing to his left and smoking]. What can you do for your country? I try to do as much as possible. I went to campaign... I want to petition. I want to stand up for candidate, but I don't know anyone to stand up for so I guess I go for Bush because he is strong and demeanor (videotape).

I continue walking around the busy Square. I hear another call; this time it is not directed to me, but rather to everyone. I see a Black man, standing alone at the edge of a sidewalk and shouting fragmented and disjointed sentences:

> This is your world... I see!... You end up beat me up, yeah! Do I make you understand? ... I suck your dick! ... Piece of shit! (videotape).

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This is a strange urban spectacle. The man stands in one of the busiest NYC Squares and shouts his invectives towards an unidentified addressee. He raises his left and right hands as if making important orator's points in his speech. The Square is crowded, and many people pass by the man; however, no one pays attention either to his presence or to his words. I am one of the passers by who pretends that I do not see anything out of ordinary. I am not sure how to react, especially that the man does not make eye contact and seems to be in too much pain and anger to react to people. I leave Union Square with mixed feelings.

I continue walking towards 34th Street, towards the famous Macy's Shopping Center, apparently one of the world's largest stores. As I get closer to the store, the streets become more crowded. The cars honk, the people walk faster, often carrying bags of different sizes. I hear different languages around me: mostly English, but also Spanish, Chinese even Polish. I have to be very careful as I walk with my video camera as I have started to touch people with my camera lens. I can hardly see where I am going, the crowd gets really thick. I have no choice; I simply follow the crowd. Surely, it must be going towards Macy's. There are green, red, and gold decorations already put on a store the size of a city block; harbingers of Christmas shopping.
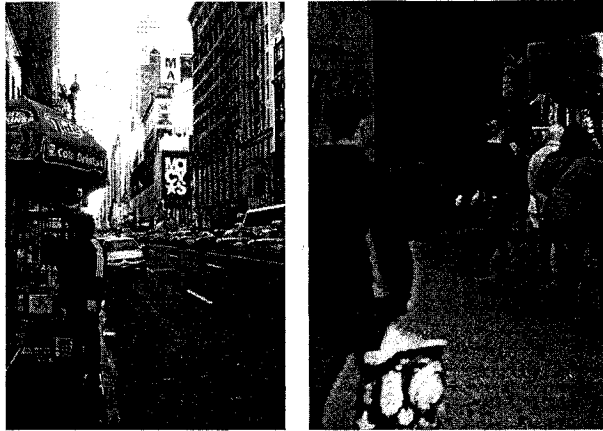
I walk into the store and quickly walk out. I have been in North American shopping centers and malls many times, but never in such frantically busy shopping interiors. The cosmetics department I happened to enter through a door next to the 34th Street façade feels and sounds like a beehive. I imagine Piper walking here, probably in busy streets similar to today's, and displaying her "Wet Paint" attitude to the frantic shoppers. When I observed people rushing with their purses and bags, I realize that the tourists and New Yorkers must be spending a lot of money in this store that sells all types of merchandise of every price range. This shopping activity must be somehow pleasurable for most of the people; otherwise they would not walk and shop around Macy's in such great numbers. This is definitely my most densely populated walk in New York City. I seek an empty bench outside the store to relax for a moment. There is a young woman with a child sitting beside me. She notices my video and photo cameras, and, assuming that I am a tourist she asks me: "Did you go inside Macy's and see the Christmas decorations?" I tell her I had looked around. She exclaims: "It is such a beautiful shopping store, I love it so much!" I smile politely and walk away.
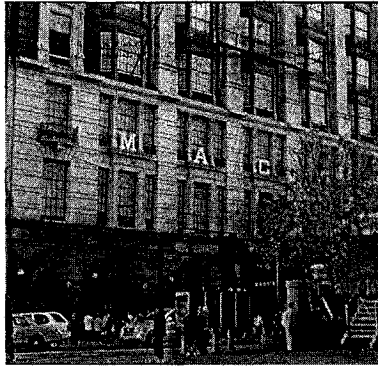
I re-walked Adrian Piper's New York as experienced in her sixth, seventh, and third *Catalysis*. I had not realized that these metropolitan places were so incredibly crowded and busy. Since the population of New York has grew extensively over the past thirty years, there might be more human traffic today than there was when the artist was executing her performances. Upon walking through these places and trying to get in touch with my feelings in each location, I realized that I was very conscious of my *flâneur*-tourist status. I walked in the middle of the crowd, literally touching people with my body or my camera, yet I was alone. I was in a more privileged position than the *flâneur* because it was my choice to walk in the particular places; therefore I was in no way marginal or homeless subject. However, I have never experienced such an alienating feeling walking around metropolitan places. I also realized the enormous courage that it takes to perform publicly in order to make a difference in these places that seem to be so heavily mapped in terms of their socio-political and cultural grids and history. Most of the urban spaces did not allow for any social disturbances. The Black man shouting his anguishes disrupted the uniformity of the public space, but it did not seem to make a difference to the people passing by. Did anyone remember Adrian Piper's walks with her "Wet Paint" sign, or with her great amount of chewing gum or with Mickey Mouse balloons attached to her teeth? Perhaps a few people noticed her, talked about it with their

friends and soon after forgot about her provocative walking in the city. Was Piper able to change the docile metropolitan crowd? Was she a successful catalytic agent, causing a positive reaction in a contemporary urban dweller? Mostly, the artist received stares, smiles and avoidance of eye contact; the typical human behavior of one who does not want to get involved, but wants to observe, to look from a distance, and take pleasure in what is considered excessive or different social behavior. I did not receive these reactions because I "behaved" in public spaces, i.e. I did not alter my external look or acted in a provocatively in public.

As I walked along the crowded New York streets, I meditated on the ontology of performance art. I meditate on the beauty of executing a meaningful walking performance that would have the power to redefine the nature and characteristics of performance art. I meditated on the successful walking performers that often acted as catalytic agents, alienated in an overpopulated metropolis such as New York City. And yet, in this powerless and dispossessed state of being a *flâneur* in the world, there is always the possibility to make a difference without giving up any ethical and aesthetic ideas. Adrian Piper showed us how walks in the city can be a challenging urban experience because of the various forms of discriminations to which one is exposed. Piper remains a great source of artistic inspiration for me; and I sincerely thank her for letting me know New York through her walks that intelligently deconstruct the metropolitan space.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that two performative walks executed at the same time in two different metropolises can be conceptualized as exilic art. I have formally introduced and critically examined two artworks that reveal the motif of exile in two separate chapters. More specifically, *Walking with the Vehicle in Warsaw* presented Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Vehicle* performed from 1970 to 73; and *Walking in New York as Catalytic Agent* discussed Adrian Piper walks, performed from 1970 to 1971. I applied a threefold understanding of exile to argue that this exilic motif is present and manifested in these two walking art performances.

First, I found that these important performative artworks made manifest the power of artistic walks by being marginalized within, or exiled from, an institutionalized mainstream art. Wodiczko's and Piper's performances were early examples of performance art, a new genre of postmodern art that was contesting the existing mainstream culture. Their performances were not announced to public; neither artist received support from established or alternative artistic institutions to perform and to actively promote their ephemeral actions. There were no proper exhibitions or shows, no artist talks, no publications that accompanied the two performances. The only material that arouse from the performances was the artist's conceptualization and philosophical rationalization of the performative actions (Adrian Piper's informed and intelligent essays), and one page of critical reflection written by the artist's close friend (Andrzej Turowski's paragraph on Wodiczko's performance with the *Vehicle*). There were no official publications that discussed these two performative artworks at the time of their

execution. In a sense, theses urban walks were homeless and were exiled from Polish and American cultural and political social structures. In addition, it was only because of Wodiczko's initiatives that there were several black and white photographs taken of Wodiczko's promenade. Paradoxically, Scott Burton's failed attempt to write about Piper's performances for *Art in America*, prompted Rosemary Mayer, Piper's friend, to take a few black and white photographs of the third and fourth *Catalytic* actions. There are no other visual records or artists' notes regarding their walking art performances.

Wodiczko did not feel comfortable with the conceptual artists grouped around Foksal Gallery in Warsaw. His walking "test-performance", as he calls it, was an unusual cultural event in the Poland in the early 1970's. This hybrid mixture of design, sculpture, and performance did not fit within the prescribed official judgment of taste; it did not comply with the existing conceptual language available then in Poland. Therefore, it was taken seriously by neither the fellow artists nor by the art institutions. Coming from an industrial design background and working actively within the Polish industry, Wodiczko entered the art world with a profound understanding of the political "double talk" of the communist system that he was trained in on daily basis. It made his approach to art formally and conceptually different than his fellow colleagues. Moreover, Wodiczko was not understood by most of the Polish artists because he had different philosophico-artistic approach to understanding and making "art that matters". The very notion of being called an "artist" was foreign to him since his main goal was not making art but being useful in a society torn by the many political and cultural contradictions of the 1970's Gierek area.

Almost at the same time, in a metropolis situated on another continent, Adrian Piper ventured into performance art when she courageously walked the streets in New

York. It was around the 1970's that the artist became aware of the political and social issues that formally and conceptually changed her art. It seemed natural for a New Yorker to walk the places she frequented; but it was neither natural nor socially acceptable to alter her body and to act as an art object. Piper's brave catalytic walks and actions could only be successfully carried out by strolling the public spaces and making "catalytic" contact with other people. The artist's long internalized discriminations, derision and humiliations that she received from her school-mates, teachers, and other people made her walk differently, erasing her subjectivity and acting as a sculptural object. There could be no better art form than performance to express Piper's political concerns and philosophical ideas. *Catalysis* was significant because it put the artist "through a very rigorous training program in preparation for the experience of social ostracism" (interview). Piper thought of the performances as prophetic, although not self-fulfillingly so. Assuming the position of an object, Piper was testing the limits of people's behavior in public spaces. Walking as a minor and exilic subject, Piper celebrated her form of new expression that was unconstrained by art institutions.

The second notion of exile as observed in the two walking art performances refers to metaphorical and political states of expulsion. In Adrian Piper's case, the exile refers to her Black origins and her painful family history. Piper was always made conscious by others of her Black (or "colored", as she was often called) skin and background; it made her feel different, as if her family were in exile in their own country. The internal exile of Wodiczko, on the other hand, is manifested in his political discrimination as an artist in a communist country who did not have free expression. Wodiczko could not make art that favored the official political system and that praised the communist way of thinking.

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Moreover, Wodiczko felt excluded from the Polish conceptually based artists who discriminated against him by not actively participating in and supporting the development of his creative ideas. The fact that Wodiczko designed the first *Vehicle* "for the artist's use only" was the result of him not wanting anyone to classify his art into stiff rules and existing art discourses. Looking at several photographs of Wodiczko walking on his intriguing peripatetic instrument, I get a sense that he was very much ahead of his time, and was therefore alone in his native land.

Piper, by comparison, expressed her internal exile by publicly re-walking her city as an anti-glamorous walker who became an abject and unwanted body protesting, among other things, the racist, xenophobic, chauvinist, and money-oriented North American society. *Catalysis*, in spite of the initial interest, was never reviewed in any art magazine or journal, similar to Wodiczko's abandoned and discarded *Vehicle*. Moreover, his first *Vehicle* destroyed, lost, and replicated three times before it finally received its well-deserved appreciation. Both works conceived in the 1970's had to wait until their first retrospectives, to be "resurrected" in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

Just as Wodiczko worked alone on his *Vehicle*, Piper was also isolated while contemplating and reflecting upon the painful state of exile experienced in her alienating city. Piper was well-educated and very eloquent, which enabled her write in a self-reflexive and critical way about *Catalytic* ideas in art; it helped her to clarify her artistic concerns at a time when no one else was raising similar issues. Her informative essays on *Catalysis* also made this particular walking performance very important to the development of her artistic ideas. Piper explicitly states in many of her *Catalytic* writings around 1970's that she became aware of herself as a "paradigm of society", society that is

politically and socially troubled, it is racist and discriminatory. Most of her artworks following *Catalysis* were politically engaged and she has committed herself to a long artistic practice that has aimed to make a positive change in North American society.

While Wodiczko was in a metaphoric state of exile because of the cultural and political *status quo*; Piper experienced direct racist and discriminatory conduct that made her feel like an exile in her own home. Both artists were minority figures in their own countries because of the socio-political discriminatory systems (communist and capitalist), alienating cultural contexts, and personal discrimination.

Third, the phenomena of contemporary metropolises as diverse as communist Warsaw and capitalist New York in the 1970's were examined as alienating and discriminatory social dwellings *par excellence* in which most of the inhabitants, such as artists, intellectuals, Blacks, or women, did not feel welcomed and could not feel "at home." As every city is socially and culturally mapped, it presents as unequal distribution of power relations operating in contemporary urban dwellings. Because both Wodiczko and Piper walked in the city places that were either the most convenient or familiar to them also defines the artists' social status. *Vehicle* was rolling the streets around Washington Roundabout, one of the largest Warsaw intersections that is far from the city center. It was convenient for Wodiczko to walk there because the studio where the *Vehicle* was made was very close to the Washington Roundabout, located in Praga, one of the capital's poorest boroughs. This part of the city also houses some key Polish industries. Despite the fact that he lived outside Warsaw at the time this borough was, in fact, Wodiczko's borough because he worked for the Polish Optical Works at Grochowska Street. If the Skarzynski-Paderewski sidewalks were as deserted in 1973 as

they were during my walk in 2003 then it was, indeed, a perfect place for a comfortable promenade with the over four-meter long *Vehicle*. The fact that there were no reactions from the passers by who pretended that they did not see the *Vehicle* exemplifies the degree to which a docile and disciplined society had been trained under the totalitarian regime.

Adrian Piper's *Catalytic* walks took her mostly to the metropolitan places she knew because she frequented them or because of their high socio-political and cultural value. Piper used to walk a lot in New York as it is the most economical form of transportation. Living on Hester Street downtown in Lower Manhattan, it was relatively easy for her to walk to key places such as Macy's, the Empire State Building, the Metropolitan Art Museum, etc. Piper also took public means of transportation to re-map familiar places. Macey's shopping mall, for example, located on 34th Street in the fashion district, was targeted in Piper's *Catalysis III* performance in which she walked along between the busy shoppers, defiantly carrying a sign across her chest: "Wet Paint". Furthermore, the artist attached balloons to her teeth and walked through a major city attraction such as Central Park and the Plaza Hotel (*Catalysis VI*), stuffed her mouth with a towel while riding a bus along one of the major metropolitan avenues (*Catalysis IV*), and blew an exaggerated amount of bubble gum that adhered to her face and clothes while walking through the Metropolitan Museum of Art (*Catalysis VII*).

The fact that neither political, social, nor cultural system supported Wodiczko's and Piper's performances encouraged the artists to communicate their estranged dwelling in the city even more forcefully. They successfully communicated personal and metaphorical states of exile that took them beyond constraining frames: Wodiczko

immigrated from Poland in 1977 to artistically develop his critical public art in Canada and the United States; Piper remained in her country, graduated with a Doctoral degree in Philosophy, and continued to make interdisciplinary artworks that directly criticized forms of human discrimination.

Contemporary metropolises such as Warsaw have always been significantly different from New York. First of all, New York is one of the world's largest metropolises that has heterogeneous capitalist social and economic structures. Warsaw has a much smaller area and it has always been a mostly homogenous, Slavic, and populated city. Both cities, however, displayed the aspect of the "architectural unhomely" as presented in Anthony Vildler's book *The Architectural Uncanny* in which he argues for the body-less architecture of modern and postmodern cities that augment the estranged, alienating, and solitary feelings of city dwellers.

In order to theoretically highlight Wodiczko's and Piper's walks as exilic artworks, I considered several interdisciplinary sources and approaches. In the first chapter, *Walking in the City*, I presented and discussed the phenomenon of walking in the city as exemplified by the figure of the *flâneur*. This notion of this modern city stroller was put forth by Charles Baudelaire and critically re-read by Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, Susan Buck-Morss and Zygmunt Bauman, among others. My contention was that the figure of the *flâneur* does not only denote a literary character represented by a disinterested urban stroller or a bohemian figure who is disengaged towards the world around him/her; with help of the above listed critical readings, and of critical engagement with the two performance artworks and the input received from the artists themselves, my understanding of the walking urban figure was enriched.

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Although they were familiar with the critical literature of walking at the time of executing their performances, neither Wodiczko not Piper reflected in any conscious way on Baudelaire's or Benjamin's reading of the *flâneur*. It seems that they took walking as something natural because it was the most accessible resource for them; however, the act of walking became critical in Wodiczko's and Piper's performances. The element of walking was not accidental in their artworks, since it constitutes the most critical performative aspect, and was thus the most powerful form of expression available for the artists at the time. In fact, they not only made the best out of the social, political and cultural contexts of the early 1970's, they transgressed them by venturing into new and challenging walking art forms. Both *Vehicle* and *Catalysis* are important *caesuras* in Wodiczko's and Piper's artistic careers. These artworks commence the next thirty years of their politically and culturally involved participation in the arena of the public space. In addition, the urban *flânerie* that marked their performances in significant ways primarily plays on their disadvantaged and minor dwellings in the metropolises. For me, both artists exemplify high ethical and aesthetic standards of being thoughtfully and critically engaged in remaking the urban public space.

By applying a variety of interdisciplinary material ranging from contemporary cultural theory, to philosophy and literature, in the second chapter, *Walking in Exile*, I argued that the figure of the *flâneur* exemplifies a figure of an exile. My contention was that the *flâneur*'s most challenging alter ago is the figure of exile, a figure that is expressed in the work of contemporary intellectual. The *flâneur*-exile also includes artistic works. The two discussed walking art performances are excellent examples of exilic urban *flânerie* in which the artists, in thoughtful and self-reflective ways, meditate

upon and perform their metaphorical and personal states of exile. Inspired by ideas of the intellectuals in exile, such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and Eva Hoffmann, I argued that "walking in exile" provides a powerful means to translate difficult performative states as a marginal subject by conceptualizing the phenomenon of the *flâneur*-exile understood as mobile, estranged and marginal *flânerie*. Being in metaphorical exile represents multiple, heterogeneous, and open walks between borderline situations. All three exilic characteristics can be applied to Wodiczko's and Piper's peripatetic movements in the city. Their minor walks in Warsaw and New York were ahead of their times. Walking with the *Vehicle* and in some of the *Catalysis* was a significant statement about the state of the 1970's art that lacked critical language to embrace these important artworks. Moreover, it took a couple of years for the Polish, American, and international artistic establishment to acknowledge and include these prophetic art works in their art historical canons.

Finally, my solitary walks in Warsaw and in New York in 2003 were very important on many levels. First of all, after completing my research, I was very curious to actually experience in a phenomenological way, the very places where two artists walked over thirty years ago. As a performance and "walking" artist, I could not imagine not longing to walk in Warsaw and New York to gain a better understanding of these urban places. It is only through walking that we are able to experience the space and I knew I would be better able to conceptualize Wodiczko's and Piper's walks by having the experience of re-walking the city where they did. For example, I had never walked in Praga, Warsaw; and I never experienced walking by following landmarks of the *Catalytic* New York. Therefore, it was very informative and revealing for me to experience these

places that, in my experience, I still marked by the ghostly presence of these two performers. I was surprised to discover how deserted and quiet the Skarzynski-Paderewski Park was, and how relatively quiet Washington Roundabout was in Warsaw, the place that I expected to see many people during the sunny and warm spring day. Being in Praga, the poorer part of the Polish capital, made me reflect on the role of the artist in the 1970's who was pushed out of the center and was given a studio (that I actually could not locate when I was in Praga) far removed from the city center. These conditions made it convenient for Wodiczko to walk on these deserted streets because of the little human traffic the decreased and risk of being stopped by the police or other public workers. Since I registered my walk with video and photo cameras, I wanted to show the differences between the 1970's locations and those of today. Most of all, however, there was an emotional aspect of my re-walking the streets that I was forced to leave behind in 1988 because of my personal and political exile. I will always remember the sunny Spring day in Warsaw because it provided me with a very meditative and useful way of coming to terms with my own exile as a Polish-born, Canadian interdisciplinary artist who *walks* and *talks* in her art, at least, since 1995.

The New York walking experience was very different from the Polish walks. I was very surprised at the incessant amount of traffic, both on sidewalks and on the streets. Yet, it was my most alienating and solitary urban experience to date. While in the Warsaw walks I could feel certain pleasure in walking, I could not enjoy my promenades in New York. They made me exhausted. I had to be very careful about the way I walked in order to respect the regular flow of people and to be careful not to bump into someone or *vice versa*. I felt that the New York space was much more challenging for any type of

public performance because of the general social anesthesia towards the suffering of the others. In passing homeless and sick people who enjoyed the autumn sun in some of the public spaces, I remembered Wodiczko words (the artist moved to live New York in 1984): "here, a dying person on the street becomes an actor" (interview). The Columbus Circle, the Central Park, the Plaza Hotel, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Union Square and the fashion district street with crowded sidewalks around Macy's became painful reminders that these places still need a lot of public healing to make many people feel "at home". Two Black men pronounced their presence more than other people, but in the course of my three days in New York, I encountered many Black people (mostly men) in subways, buses and other public spaces who were disrupting the homogeneity of the public space by shouting, lying on the streets, or searching for food in public garbage containers.

These two personal walking performances altered my conception of the nature and characteristics of the metropolitan public space and made me profoundly reflect upon my own theoretical and artistic preoccupations of *walking* and *talking* as a powerless and potentially empowered subject. Since my experience with Wodiczko's and Piper's walking artworks, I started to shift my perception regarding the responsibilities of an exilic subject that lives and works as cultural agent by constantly negotiating diverse contexts. The theme of urban *flânerie*, walking in the city and in exile it was proven to be a fascinating, and also a difficult walk towards the unsolved problematics of urban dwelling where there is a great demand for more performances of critical and ethically responsible exilic subjects.

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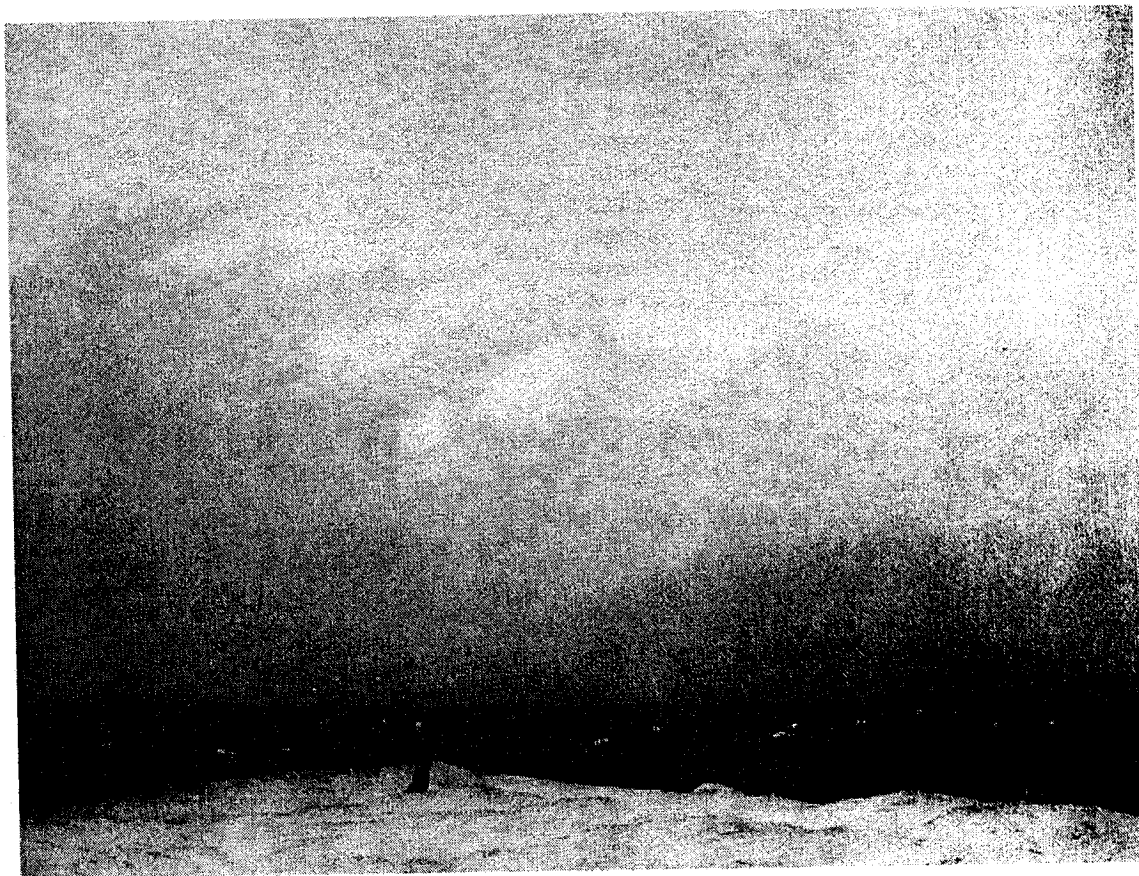
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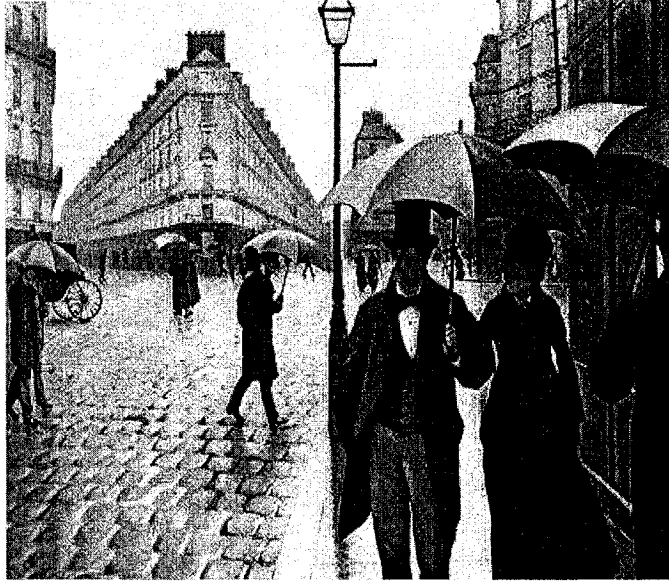
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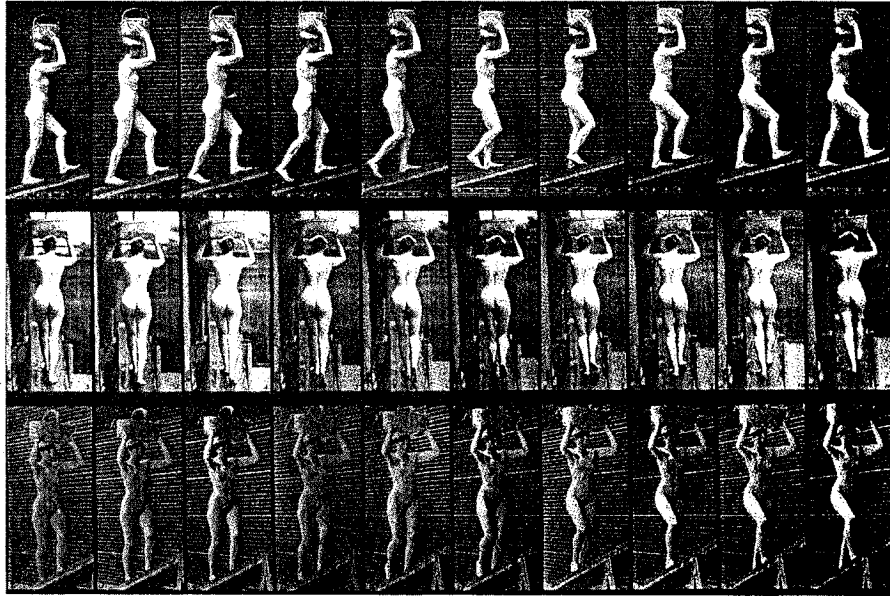
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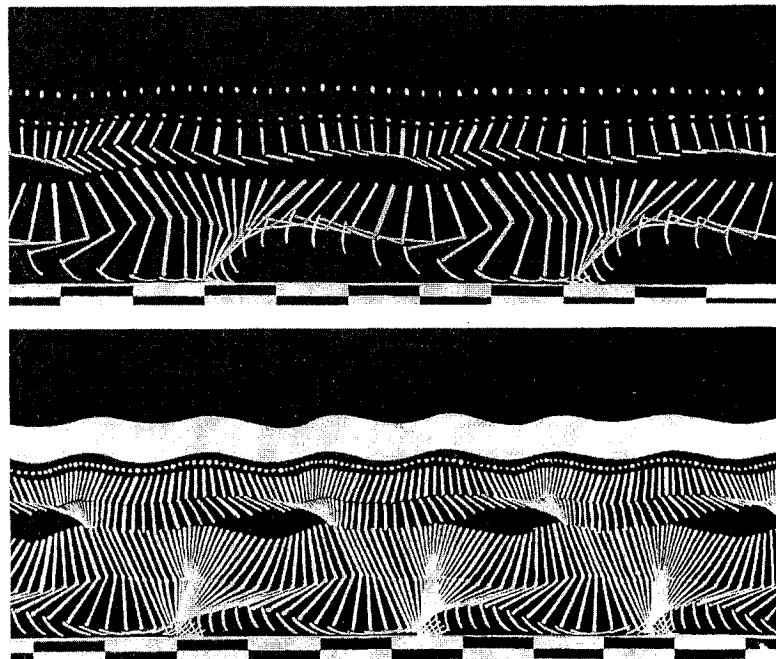
Ètienne-Jules Marey, *Marche de l'homme revêtu d'un costume noir à repères blanc*, 1886

Appendix 5

Giacomo Balla, *Jeune Fille courant sur un balcon*, 1912 (crayone sur papier)

Umberto Boccioni
Forme unique de continuité dans l'espace, 1913, bronze, 116 x 90 x 92 cm

Appendix 6
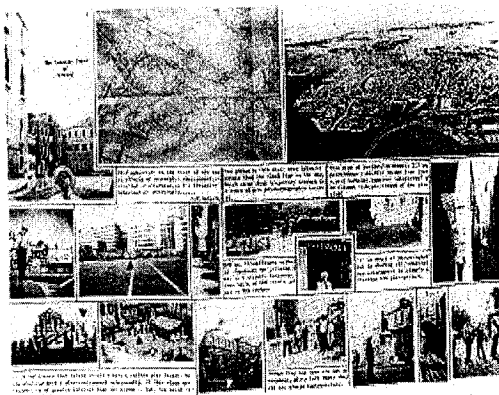
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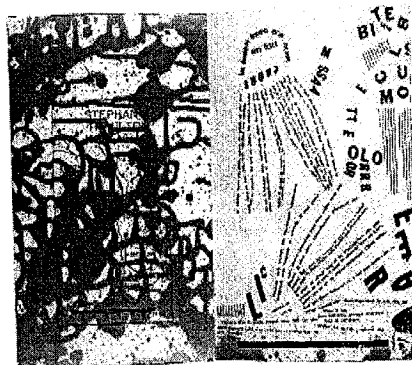
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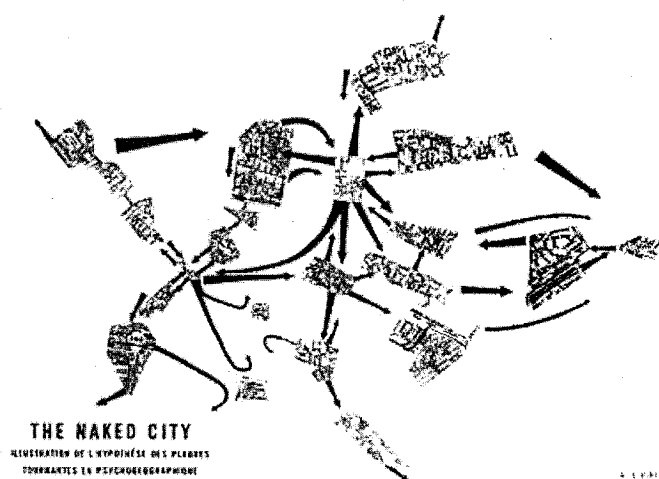
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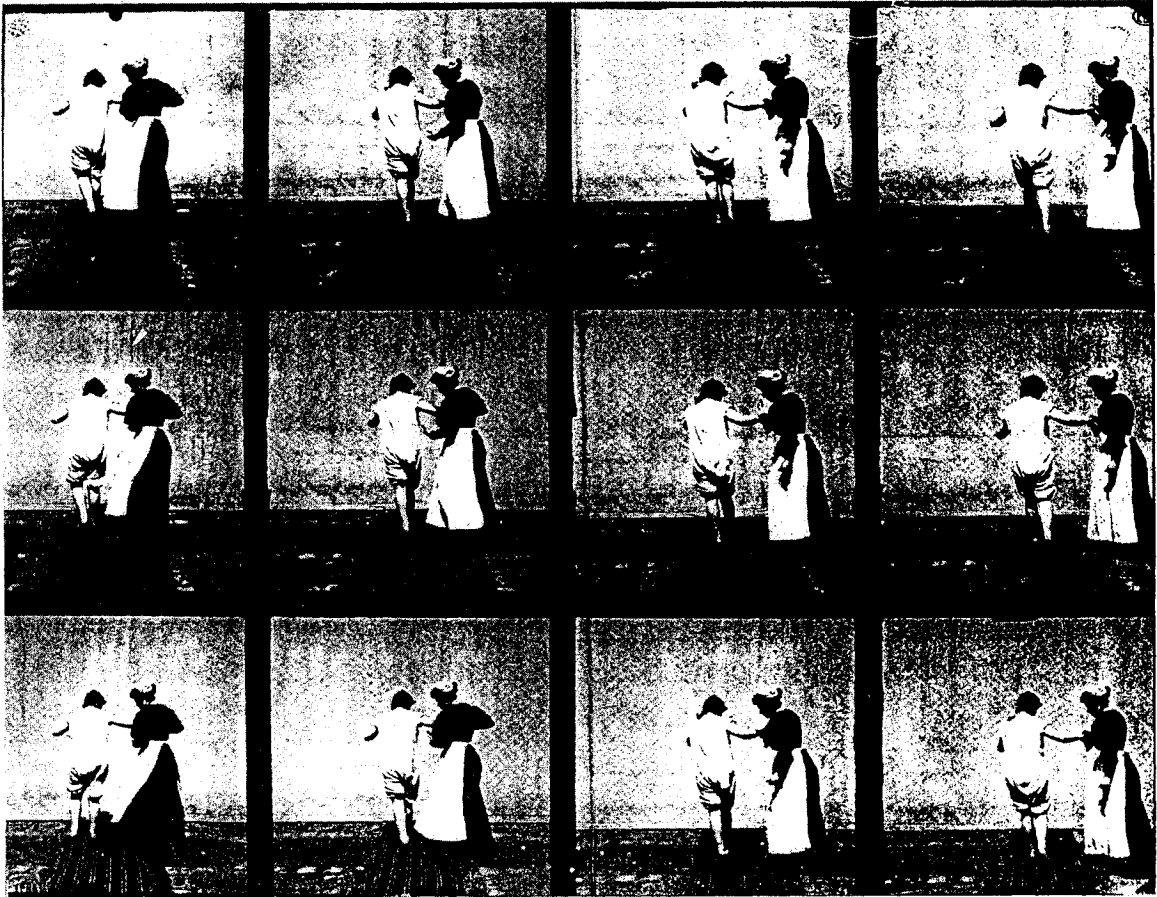
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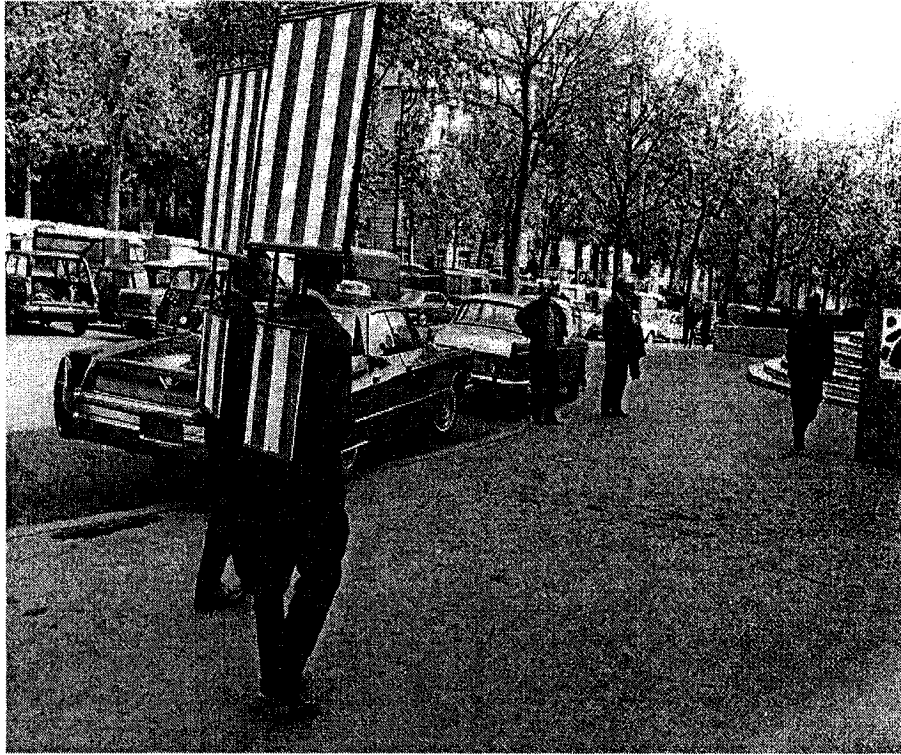
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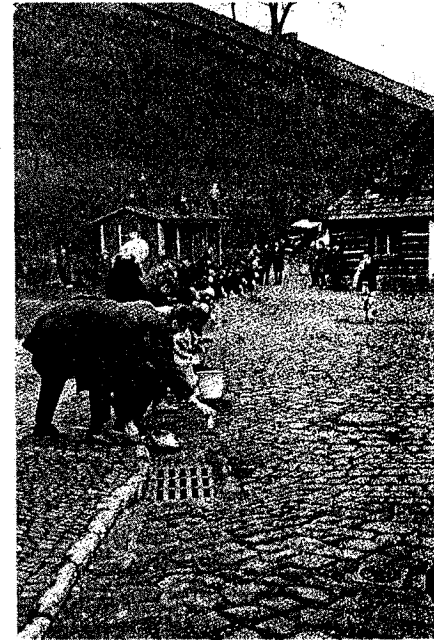
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Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967

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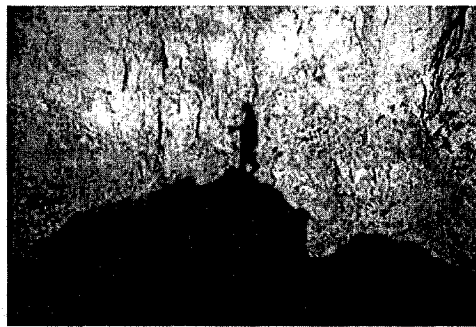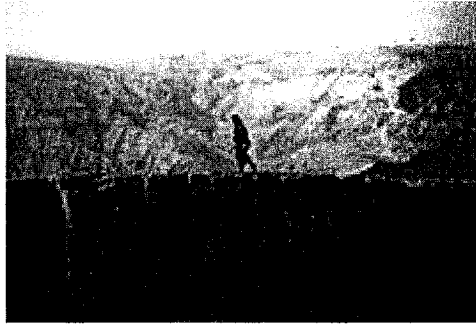
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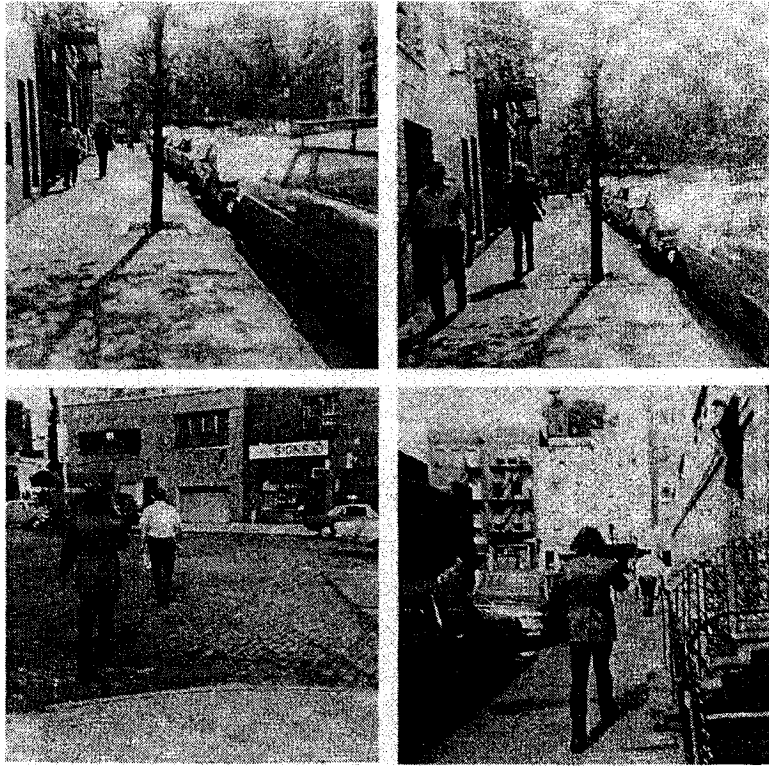
Vito Acconci, *Following Piece*, 1969

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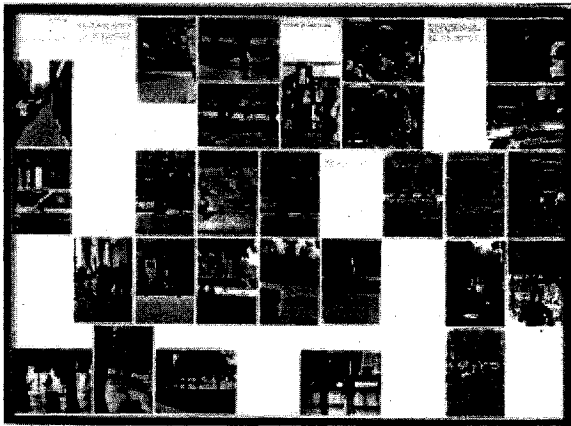
Sophie Calle, *La Filature (The Shadow)*, 1981
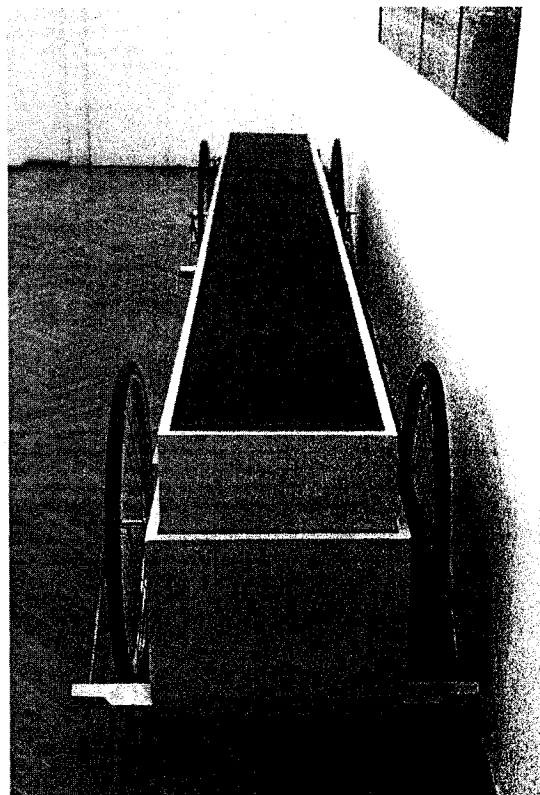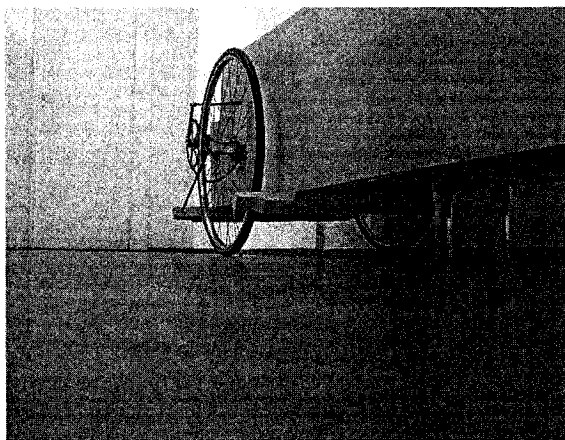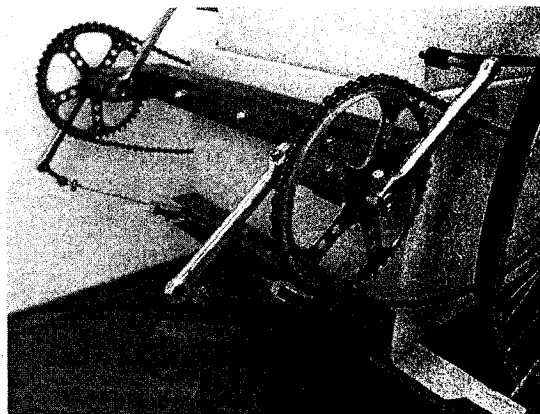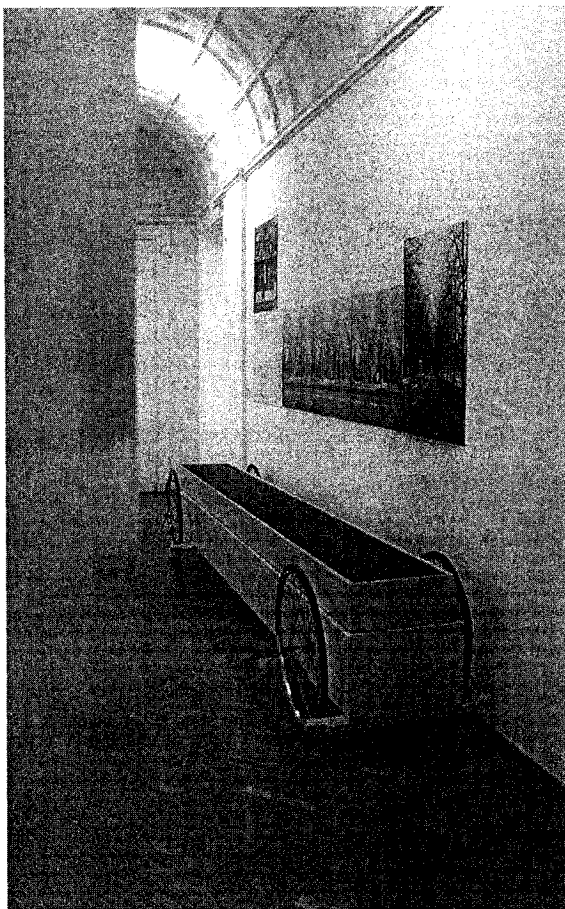
Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Vehicle* (the third replica) and selected photographs at the *Łódź Museum of Contemporary Art* in Łódź, Poland
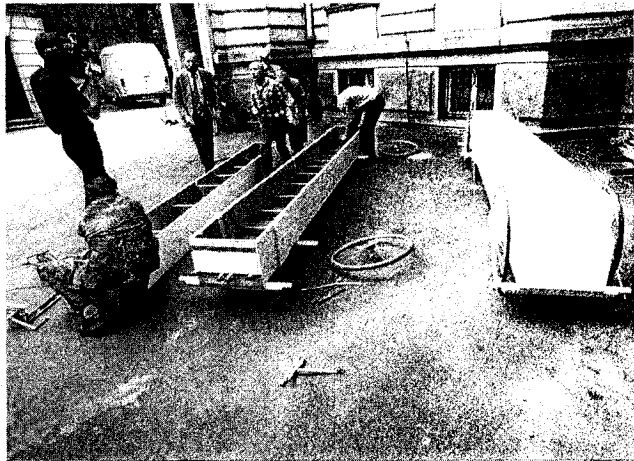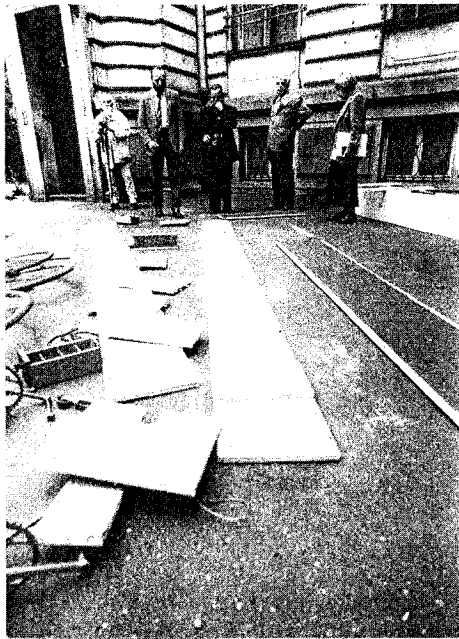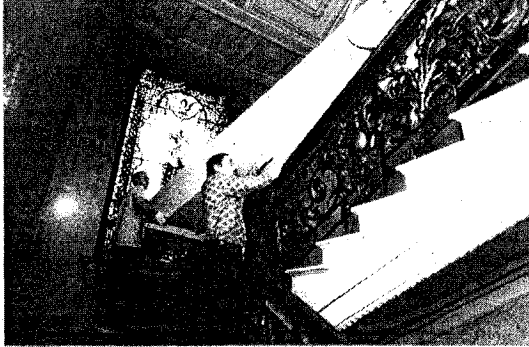
Dismantling Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Vehicle* in the Museum's courtyard, Łódź, Poland

Krzysztof Wodiczko, Drawing of the *Vehicle*, 1974

Krzysztof Wodiczko, Drawing of the *Vehicle*, 1974

Krzysztof Wodiczko, Drawing of the *Vehicle*, 1974

Krzysztof Wodiczko, Drawing of the *Vehicle*, 1974
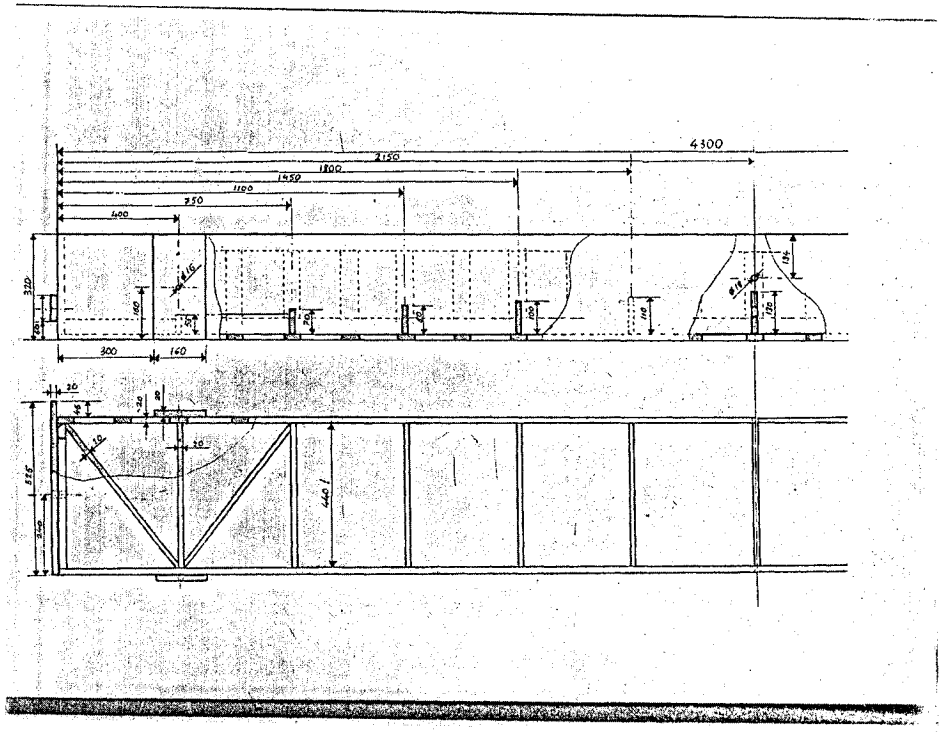
Krzysztof Wodiczko, Drawing of the *Vehicle*, 1974

Appendix 21
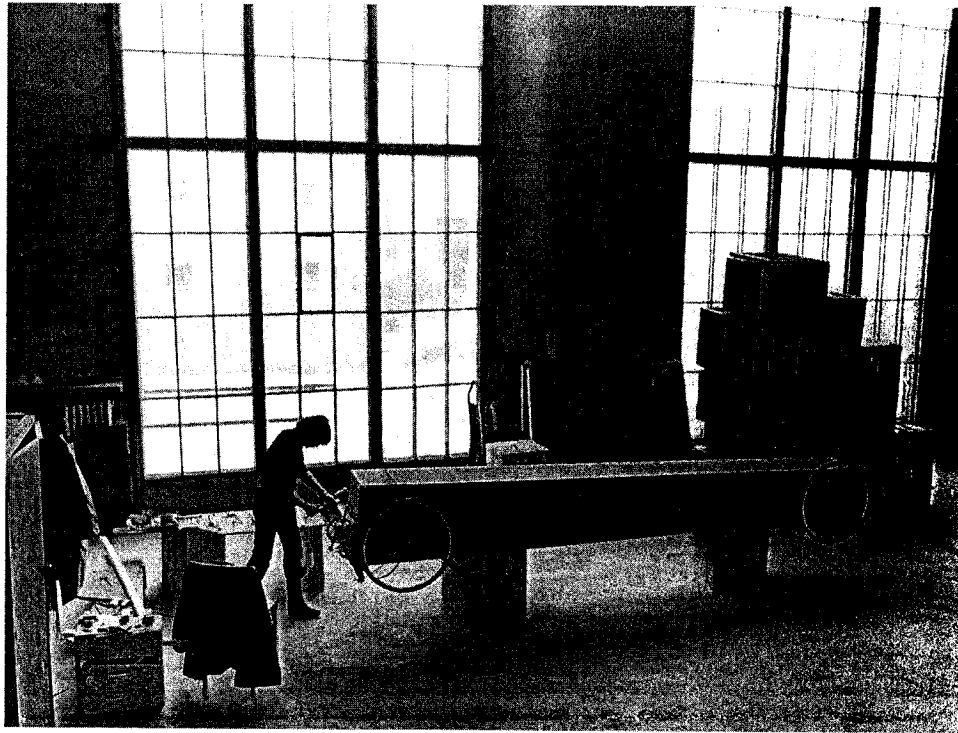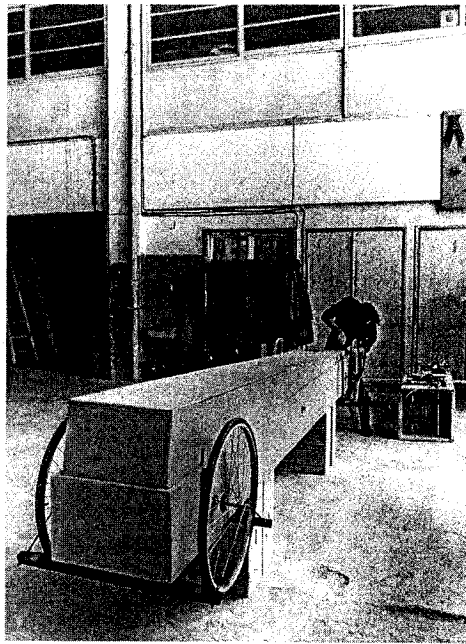
Krzysztof Wodiczko works on the *Vehicle* in *Pracownia Sztuk Plastycznych*, Visual Arts Workshop, Warsaw, 1971-1973
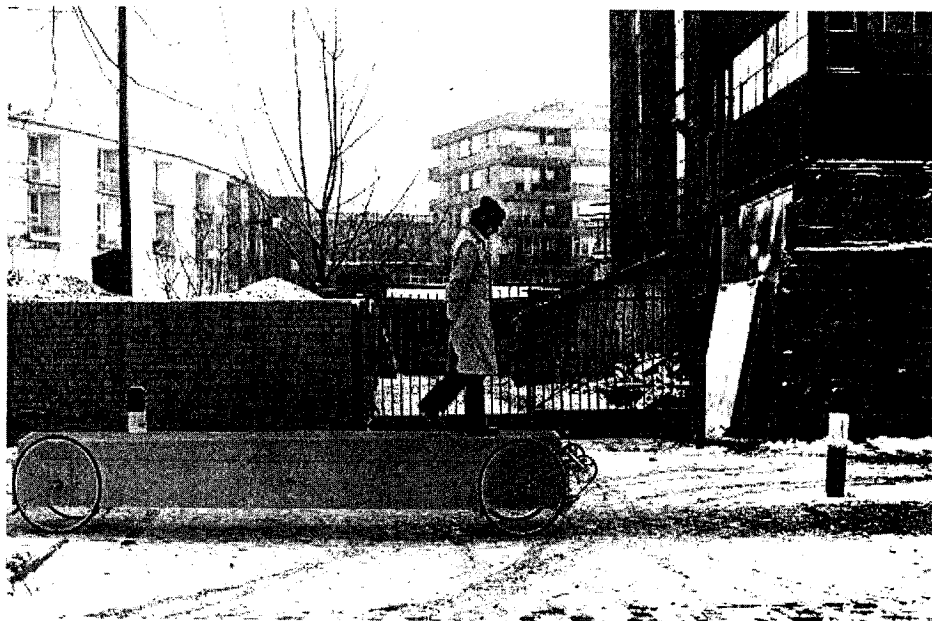
Krzysztof Wodiczko walks on the *Vehicle* outside *Pracownia Sztuk Plastycznych*, Visual
Arts Workshop, January 1973
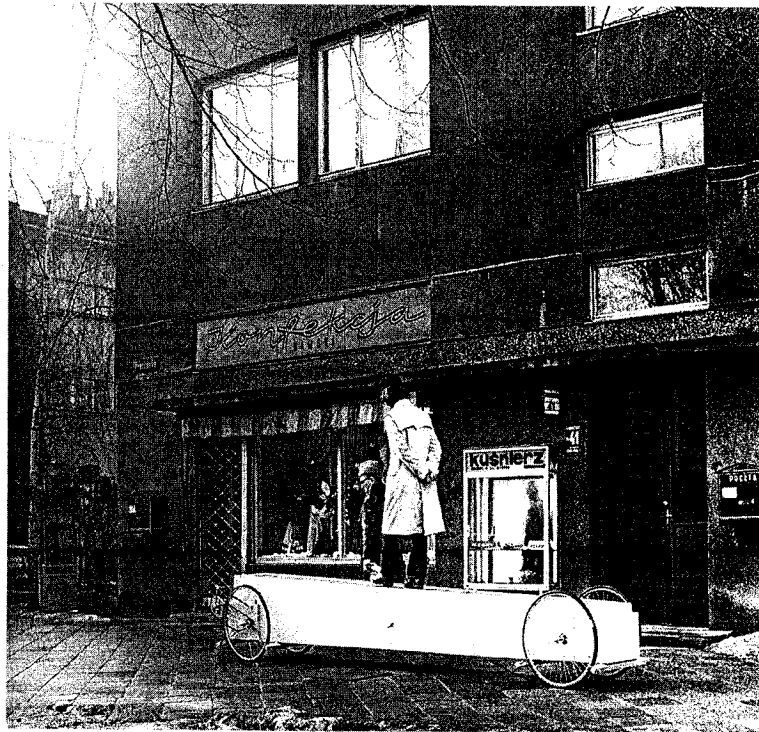
Krzysztof Wodiczko walks on the *Vehicle* on Francuska Street, 1973

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Krzysztof Wodiczko walks on the *Vehicle* on the other side of Francuska Street, 1973

Krzysztof Wodiczko walks on the *Vehicle* around Washington Roundabout, 1973

Krzysztof Wodiczko walks on the *Vehicle* along Washington Avenue, 1973

Krzysztof Wodiczko walks on the *Vehicle* along Washington Avenue, 1973
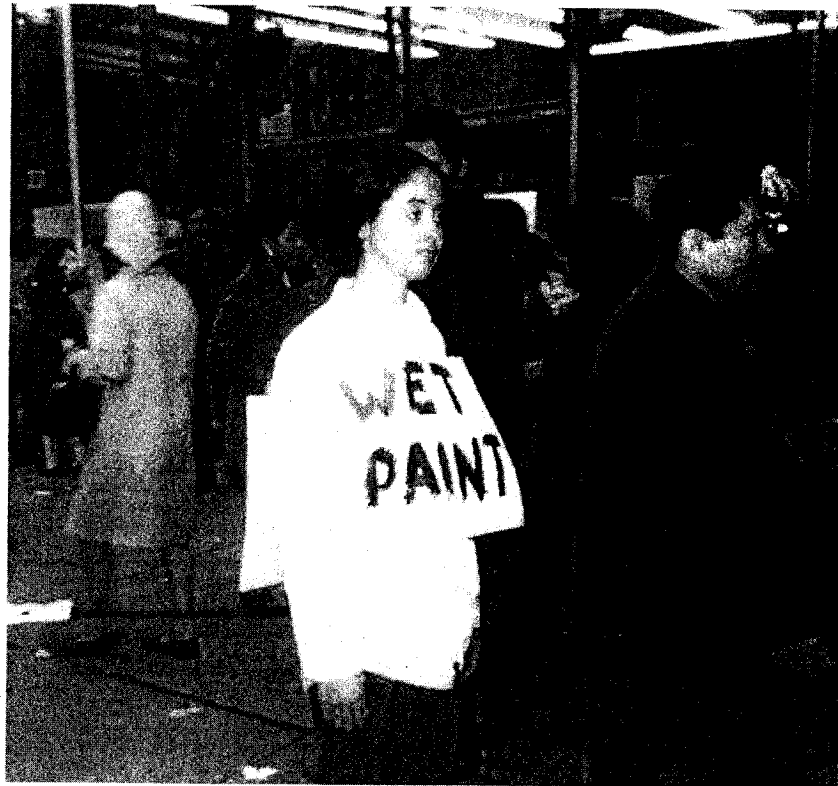
Adrian Piper, *Catalysis III*, late Spring or early Summer, 1970
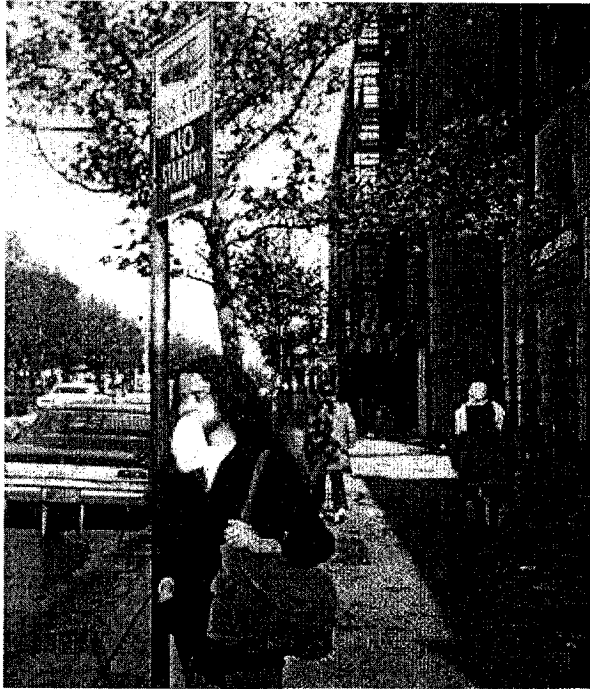
Adrian Piper, *Catalysis IV*, late Spring or early Summer, 1970
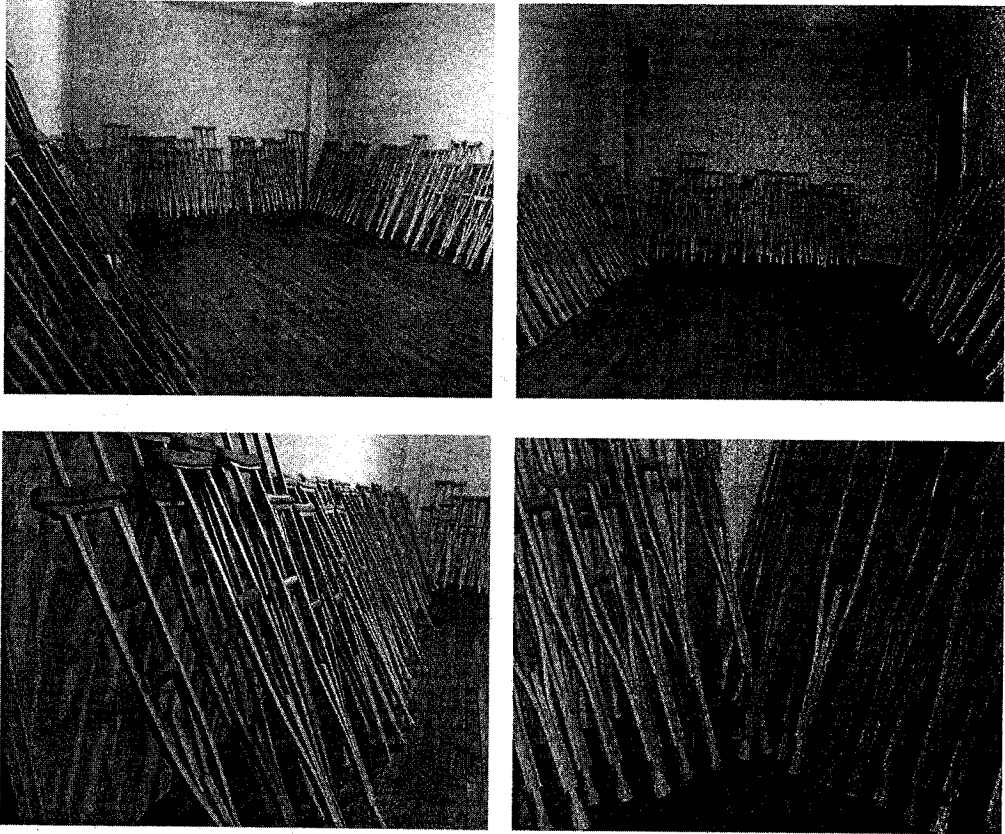
Kinga Araya, installation view of *Prosthetic Self*, exhibited at Oboro Art Gallery, Montréal, March, 2004

Appendix 31

Script of *Prosthetic Self* (audio CD enclosed):

I was not born in non uncivilized country.
Je ne suis pas né dans un pays non-civilisé.

I am not a stranger.
Je ne suis pas un étranger.

I am not a victim of a communist system.
Je ne suis pas victime d'un système communiste.

I am not a victim of a capitalist system.
Je ne suis pas victime d'un système capitaliste.

I am not living on tax payers' money.
Je ne survis pas avec l'argent des contribuables.

I am not stupid.
Je ne suis pas stupide.

I am not a slow learner.
Je n'apprends pas lentement.

I am not uneducated.
Je ne suis pas non éduqué.

I am not defenseless.
Je ne suis pas sans défense.

I am not poor.
Je ne suis pas pauvre.

I am not homeless.
Je ne suis pas sans-abri.

I am not a handicapped person.
Je ne suis pas handicapé.

I am not a visible minority.
Je ne suis pas une minorité visible.

I am not unemployed.
Je ne suis pas sans emploi.

I did not come to Canada to make money.
Je ne suis pas venu au Canada pour gagner de l'argent.

I did not marry a Canadian to obtain the Canadian citizenship.
Je ne me suis pas marié avec un canadien pour obtenir la citoyenneté canadienne.

I do not live on my credit card.
Je ne dépend pas d'une carte de crédit.

I do not abuse Canadian political system.
Je n'abuse pas le système politique canadien.

I am not a marginal figure.
Je ne suis pas une figure marginale.

I am not ashamed of my past.
Je n'ai pas honte de mon passé.

I am not cornered.
Je ne suis pas mal pris.

I am not racist.
Je ne suis pas raciste.

I am not homophobic.
Je ne suis pas homophobe.

I am not paralyzed.
Je ne suis pas paralysé.

I am not fucked up.
Je ne suis pas foutu.

I don't stink.
Je ne pu pas.

I am not confused about who I am.
Je ne suis pas confu au sujet de mon identité.

I am not dangerous.
Je ne suis pas dangeureux.

I do not take advantage of people.
Je ne prends pas avantage des gens.
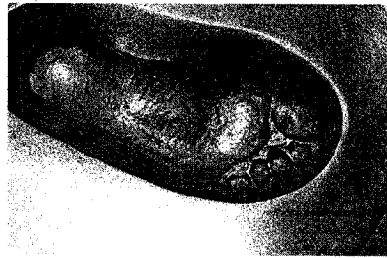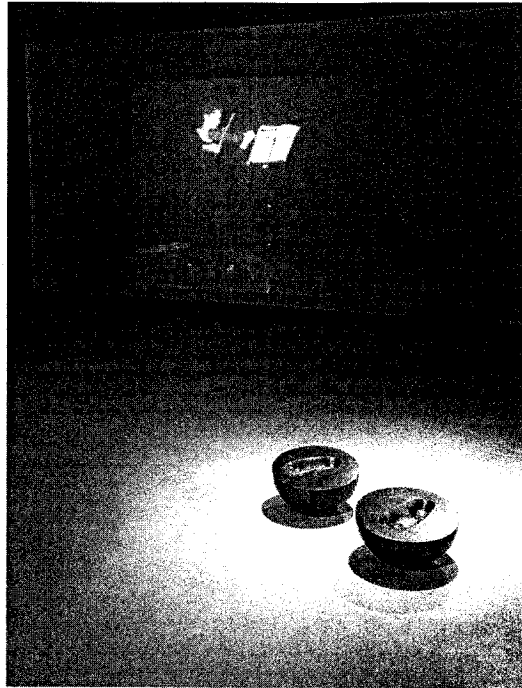

I am not crazy.
Je ne suis pas fou.

I am not powerless.
Je ne suis pas sans pouvoir.
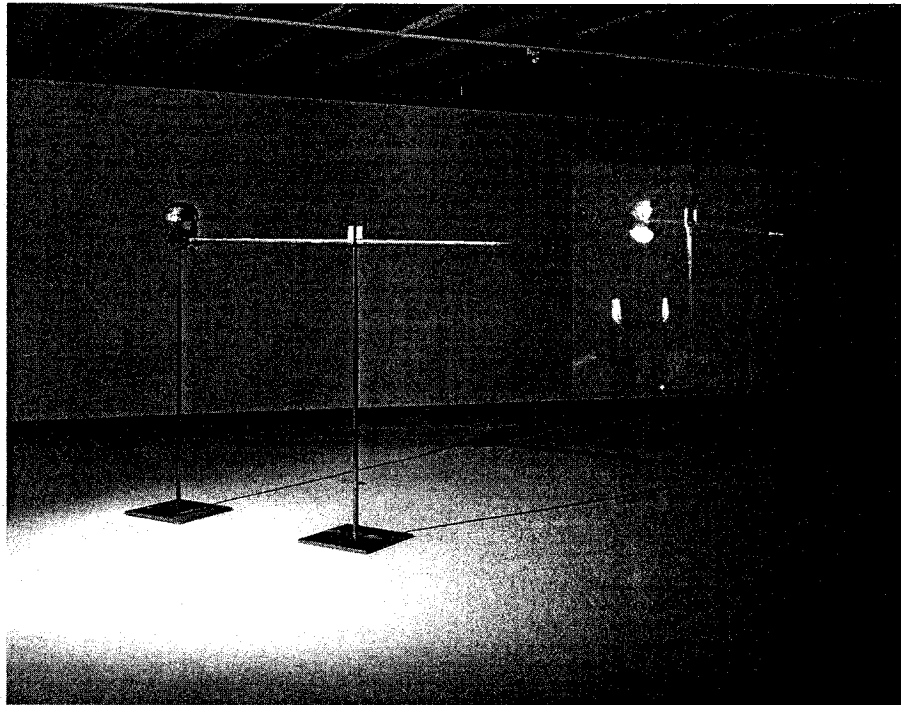
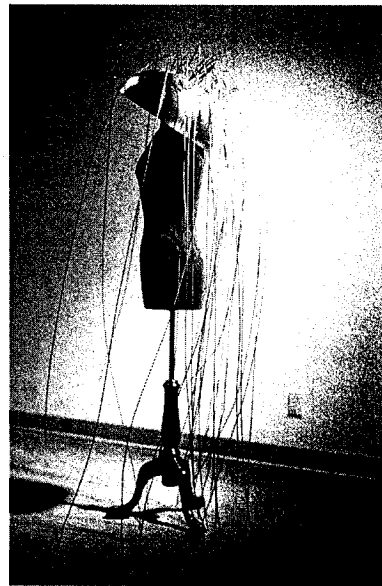Kinga Araya, *Orthoepic Devise* and *Exercise*; installation view of an iron sculpture and a video projection of a performance.
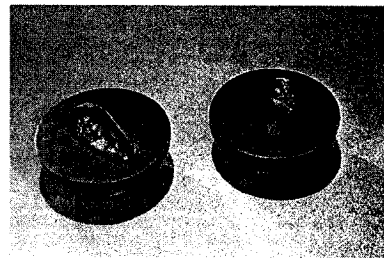
Kinga Araya, *Peripatetic Devise* and *Exercise*; installation view of an iron sculpture and video projection of a performance.

Kinga Araya, *Exercising with Princess Headgear(Adjustable)*; installation view of a copper sculpture and video projection of a performance.
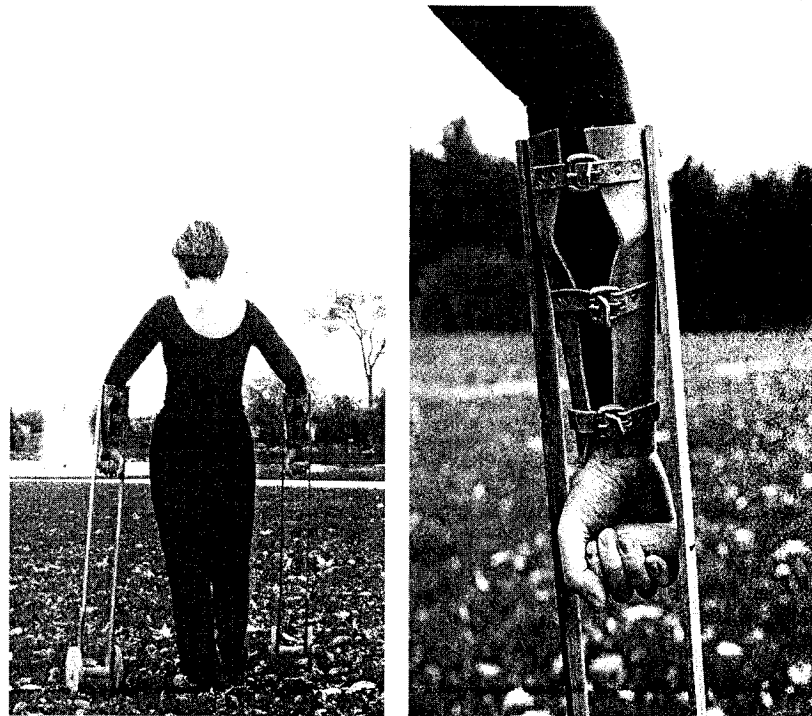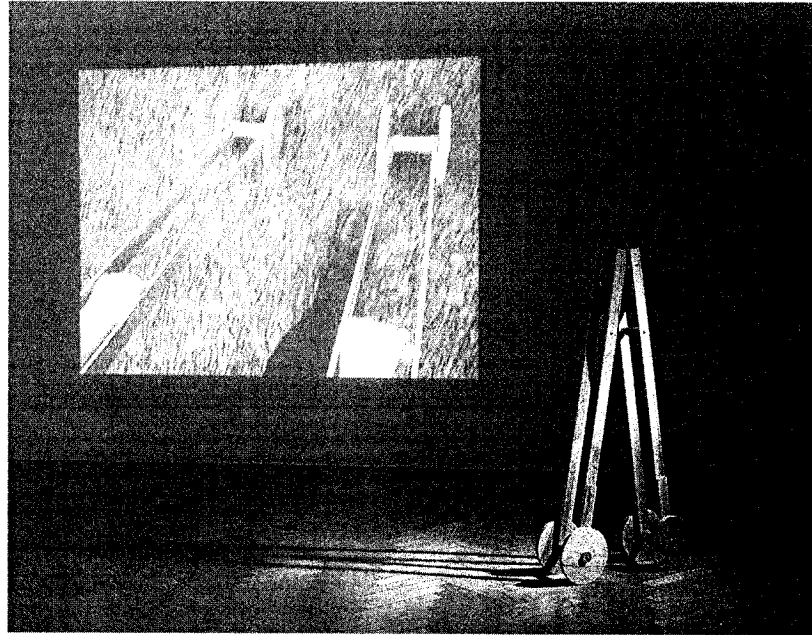
Kinga Araya, *Walking with Arms*; installation view of a wooden sculpture and video projection, documentation of a year long performance.