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The Reality of the Vessel is the Void Within

The Representational/Functional and Socio-Symbolic Levels in Public Spatial Use

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The Representational/Functionalizational and Socio-Symbolic Levels of Public Spatial Use

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The purpose of this work is to examine what I refer to as the two levels of public spatial use: the representational/functionalizational level and the socio-symbolic level. The work uncovers various patterns of exclusion with regard to public space by highlighting different examples of discourses which outline the definition and assignment of an assumed and inherent use or function to specific public spaces. The backdrop for the disclosure of functional manipulation can be seen as the set of dominant codes by which we are all trained to contextualize our lives and our world. I focus here on Roland Barthes' description of these codes as the *studium*, a term he uses to refer to the socially, politically, economically, culturally and ideologically driving force behind our interpretation of our surrounding environment. In my examination of the socio-symbolic level I introduce Barthes' notion of the *punctum*, a potential element of photographic viewing that causes an unconscious emotional interest in a detail of a given image which exists outside of the realm of the *studium*.

In addition to my specific focus on two of Barthes' works, Camera Lucida and S/Z, I also incorporate works by a broad yet select group of urban and spatial theorists, such as Rosalyn Deutsche and Neil Smith. I also include what I refer to as the element of the Arendtian storyteller, whose potential appearance occurs in conjunction with the reading of a photographic image.

Avainsanat: functionalization, socio-symbolism, public spatial use, *studium* and *punctum*.

Contents

1. Opening Words

My analysis here includes the examination of what I characterize as two distinct levels of public spatial use: the representational/functionalizational and the socio-symbolic. The representational/functionalizational refers on the one hand to the examination of public spatial use in terms of its definition as guided by a dominant set of culturally, socially, politically, economically and ideologically based norms, and on the other hand, to an inquiry into the prevalence and challenging effect of uses of public space which diverge from these norms. It is this simultaneous ambiguity and juxtaposition in my analysis of the representation and functionalization of public space that led me to come to use to the term "representational/functionalizational" in order to refer to this level. The socio-symbolic level focuses on the examination of images of public space and the potential of the practice of viewing the image - or in this work the practice of reading the image text - to politicize through the application of the codes brought to the image by the viewer/reader. More specifically, the socio-symbolic level's crescendo is the point at which the reader becomes the bodily host to the Arendtian storyteller through the emergence of the *punctum*, which could be any minute detail that springs from the image and pricks the viewer - awakening the dormant storyteller. It is the appearance of the storyteller, who reveals the true identity of the story's heroes through mimesis, that justifies the characterization of the photographic image as the *political art par excellence.*

I have separated the two levels here into separate sections: the first is the examination of dominant discourses of public spatial use and examples of divergent uses, and the second deals with photographic examples of the usage of public space and the tripartite interaction between reader/Spectator, photographer/Operator and target/Spectrum. I will begin my examination by presenting three examples from the representational/functionalizational level, following which I will examine the potential of the photographic image to serve as a powerful genre of political discourse, which, similarly to the three discursive examples provided in my examination of the representational/functionalizational level, aids in the illumination and illustration of

what we might refer to as "dominant stories" of specific public spaces. These dominant stories are characterized by Roland Barthes as the cultural codes by which life becomes "a nauseating mixture of common opinions, a smothering layer of received ideas".[1] The reading of the stories told in photographic images is paralleled here to the reenactment of Greek tragedy in terms of the necessity of the mimesis in order to convey the true identity of the agents of the story, and the poetic commentary of the chorus in revealing the story's direct and universal meaning. A reading that is restricted to the realm of the cultural codes , or *studium*, is seen as having choral qualities in this sense, whereas a reading in which the reader is pricked by a given detail, or the *punctum*, is associated with the revelation of the identity of the story's agents. In addition, as Michael Shapiro writes in his discussion of the discursive power of the image, it has the ability to "allow other than the usual or canonical interpretive codes to enter into the interpretive economy of the contemplation of the image".[2] This Barthesian inspired notion is one to which I will return throughout my discussion of the socio-symbolic level at a later point in this work.

The two levels that I examine here, the representational/functionalizational and the socio-symbolic, each retain totally separate and specific characteristics while simultaneously exhibiting a clearly juxtaposed relationship with one another. I will attempt to examine them in a way which parallels their separate and juxtapositional nature - focusing on each category individually and also allowing them to intermingle when the occasion arises. My two "main characters" here - my navigators - will be the Barthesian textual reader and the Arendtian storyteller, who will act here as guides through the examination of both levels. Again, while different facets of their appearance can be discerned separately, they are still intricately juxtaposed with one another - the appearance of the storyteller necessarily requiring the presence of the

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[1] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 206

[2] Michael J. Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 124

reader. Thus, the reader can appear without the storyteller, but the reverse is quite impossible. They, too, have many parallel characteristics, although I must reiterate that the emergence of the storyteller here presupposes the presence of the reader. In other words, the reader appears first, like the *studium*, and is sometimes - although not always - joined by the storyteller, whose appearance coincides with the *punctum*. Here, the storyteller's emergence is confined to the mimesis that accompanies the practice of viewing the image. The storyteller is absent from the representational/functionalizational level because of the distinct impossibility of the appearance of the *punctum* in the reading of space that is in motion. In other words, the *punctum* pricks the reader, awakening the storyteller, when he or she is in the process of reenacting the story contained within an image. In this work, the *punctum* and the simultaneous appearance of the storyteller are what justify the characterization of the image as the political art par excellence in the Arendtian sense, and as such it clearly implies the main distinction between the reading of spatial or image centered texts at each level. Barthes himself ponders the possibility of the potential interruption of the *studium* by the *punctum* when viewing moving images, and he comes to the following conclusion: "Do I add to the images in movies? I don't think so; I don't have time: in front of the screen, I am not free to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not *pensiveness*; whence the interest, for me, of the photogram."[3] In other words, the photograph is unique in its permanence following its mechanical and chemical development, and this captured moment allows for the discernment - or rather the experience - of the *punctum*. I would consider Barthes' categorization of movies as also including non-cinematic moving images, thus as restricting the potential appearance of the *punctum* to photographic images.

[3] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 55

While my main compasses throughout this work are Barthes' codes, particularly the cultural codes, or dominant norms which guide our reading of any and every text, the Arendtian storyteller will be easily assimilated into the practice of the reading of images of public spatial use in the examples provided in the examination of the socio-symbolic level. Again, this is so because these specific images are ones which each pricked our hypothetical reader into recognizing a *punctum*.

My separation here of the two levels upon which I focus is a simultaneous specification of the inherent differences and similarities between the ideological, social, economic, political and cultural driving forces behind the function assigned to public spaces and the signification of their "actual" uses. The representational/functionalizational perspective is located in the discussion of and inquiry into the dictation of function and contradictory uses of public space, while the socio-symbolic level inhabits an image-centered arena of public spatial function and use. My inquiry into the introspective and aesthetic socio-symbolic level will also delve into the notion of the potential of photographic images - here, specifically images of public spatial use - to be the political art par excellence in the Arendtian sense.

I have chosen to focus specifically on public spatial use in this work, because the inhabitation of a public space differs quite significantly from the inhabitation of a space with a more legitimately and clearly defined function. Take, for example, a university building, which can be described as representative of the ideology of higher education, including all of its inherent political, cultural, social and economic aspects. It has an intrinsic function that is based upon its definition as fulfilling a specific capacity. Although it has certain dimensions that are reminiscent of public spaces, such as campus lawns, cafés, theaters, etc., its mere existence sustains a distinctly defined function, and as such it is less ambiguous than its public spatial counterpart. I see this difference as presenting a realm of focus which suits this work well, as it is both public and exclusive, inherently inclusive yet intentionally limited - its

intertwined and intermingling character as a focus of examination here coincides with what I hope will be a common theme throughout this work - juxtaposition.

As will become clear throughout the course of this work, it is precisely the ambiguity of public space in this context which attracts me to it as the focus of my questioning here, for ambiguity itself is juxtapositional in character, as are both the two levels of focus here, as well as public space in general. Public spaces are, to me, a much more interesting point of focus, because despite their limitation through assigned function, they retain an inherent aspect of publicness that supersedes their given definition. This is so because their definition as fulfilling a specific need or capacity - their functionalization - negates the aspect of inclusion that is implied by their characterization as *public* spaces. Thus, the examination I engage in here will result in a much more conflicted and volatile analysis of spatial use than one focusing on a more legitimately defined space. I mean "legitimately" here in terms of the definition of spatial function that is more easily legitimated, like, for example, the aforementioned university. In other words, it is easier to legitimate the definition of a university as housing a specific ideology than it is to defend the definition of a public space as such. As will become clear, the revelation of the ambiguity and juxtaposition of public spatial use provides a forum for the telling of a story that tends to remain untold - overshadowed by the more dominant discourse of function, and the story that is retold by the reader/storyteller in the viewing of an image of public spatial use will convey the identity of the agents within them.

As a result of the ambiguity of public space - and I refer to ambiguity here in the most positive of senses - the discernment of the representational/functionalizational level of their use also facilitates a much more interesting analysis of the socio-symbolic level. In other words, the analysis of images of public spaces is much more provocative and interesting than, for example, images of the various uses of a university building, although we could also certainly also find ambiguities there as well.

As Anthony King writes in his own discussion of the dualistic relationship between society and the built environment: "To understand built environments it is essential to know both the codes and systems which order the environment as well as those which order behaviour".[4] I will apply to both levels five codes offered by Roland Barthes as guides which lead the reader through the reading of a given text. The codes are not as structured as their name would have us believe, as the term code here refers to "a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures; we know only its departures and returns; the units which have resulted from it (those we inventory) are themselves, always, ventures out of the text, the mark, the sign of a virtual digression toward the remainder of a catalogue (*The Kidnapping* refers to every kidnapping ever written); they are so many fragments of something that has always *already* read, seen, done, experienced; the code is the wake of that *already*."[5] Here, I will be are applying the terms "text" and "reader" loosely, as does Barthes himself, to include both spaces and images - although. In this sense, the reading of a text, here, the texts of public spaces and later images, include a fragmented and historical dimension. The socio-symbolic level will also include the dimension of *punctum*, which can be characterized as an interruption of the *studium* - the codes and knowledge which with our reader engages in the reading of both the public spatial and image texts.

At this point I am also reminded of Cornel West's description of "prophetic thought" as a sort of guide through the journey of reflection on different facets of life in general, specifically in terms of his discussion of going beyond multiculturalism and eurocentrism. The first of four components comprising West's notion of prophetic thought is discernment, which is conceptually parallel to the character of Barthes' codes in that it stresses the significance of the maintenance of a historical sense when reflecting upon a situation occurring in the present. He writes: "Prophetic thought

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[4] Anthony D. King, ed., *Buildings and Society: Essays on the Social Development of the Built Environment* (Routledge & Keegan Paul, Ltd., 1980), p. 27

[5] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 20

must have the capacity to provide a broad and deep analytical grasp of the present in light of the past. Discernment. We can call it an analytical moment. It is a moment in which one must accent a nuanced historical sense."[6] This nuanced historical sense implies the necessity of questioning dominant cultural, political, social and economic forms in order to reveal what lies behind them, which in turn tends to allow for the telling of the same story from quite a different vantage point. The result of maintaining a nuanced historical sense when questioning dominant forms, whatever they may be, is a view of the subject of analysis in question from below, as opposed to from above. Viewing from below facilitates the de-legitimization of dominant discourses through their revelation as existent and present. West writes: "I believe, in fact, that the condition of truth is to allow the suffering to speak. It doesn't mean that those who suffer have a monopoly on truth, but it means that the condition of truth to emerge must be in tune with those who are undergoing social misery - socially induced forms of suffering."[7] This notion runs parallel to my aim here of discerning the condition of truth from the dominant condition of functionalization in terms of the uses of public space. Similarly to the way in which prophetic thought, particularly its aspect of discernment, leads us to uncover a different story than the dominantly produced one (a different truth), my aim in using Barthes' codes here is to uncover different uses of public space, which in turn will help to illustrate the dominant story of public spatial functionalization which is based upon the cultural codes. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes in her discussion of the production of moving images: "A responsible work today seems to me above all to be one that shows, on the one hand, a political commitment and an ideological lucidity, and is, on the other hand interrogative by nature, instead of being merely prescriptive."[8] It is my goal here to create a work that lives up to this notion of interrogation versus prescription - of posing questions that are open to an infinite number of answers, as opposed to searching for and imposing a cure for a specific "problem".

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[6] Cornel West, *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times* (Common Courage Press, 1993), pp. 3-4
[7] ibid., p. 4
[8] Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Routledge, 1991), p. 149

2. The Representational/Functionalizational Level

The first level of focus in this work deals with the functionalization of public space, in that it represents ideologically, socially, politically, economically and culturally driven definitions of concrete space. As will become clear below, it deals with the legitimization on various levels of assigned uses of, in this case, public spaces through various means of manipulation through definition, legitimization and neutralization. It is a rhetoric of the legitimization of exclusional practice, as it portrays space, public space here, as including and inherent (natural) function, which implies specific uses. As I will show below, this functionalization occurs on many levels and in many ways, although I will limit my focus here to three specific examples, which are representative of three different models of functionalization. One specific aspect that all three of these examples have in common is the desperate defense of gentrification in one form or another; the first two incorporate it into their assignment of function and the third uses gentrification in order to illustrate and de-legitimate a distinctly non-gentrified contextual backdrop.

The first example is the Sony Plaza Public Space in New York City. I will focus specifically on the examination of a plaque that can be found on all of the tables in this urban public space. Its content, in this case in written form, is a documentation of exclusion through functionalization, which is supported through its gentrified appearance. We might say that the rules of conduct help to legitimate an aspect of exclusion that is supported by its gentrified facade and vice versa.

My second example is a quote by ex-New York City Mayor, Ed Koch, regarding his definition of the function of Grand Central Station in New York City. This comment, made in 1988, seems to have an almost desperate tone in terms of its being directly linkable to this particularly non-gentrified period in the station's history. As I will describe below, Koch resorts to a rhetorical attempt at gaining support for his aversion to the use of Grand Central Station by homeless people. He does this by

legitimating the non-gentrified state of this public space by de-legitimizing its use as anything other than a hub of transportation. His appeal that "reasonable and rational" people would agree that the space fulfills a specific and categorical function simultaneously supports the exclusion, and thus de-legitimization, of divergent uses. This example is of the political-rhetorical-verbal functionalization of space.

The third example is of the Puerto Rican *casitas* found in economically dilapidated, non-gentrified, areas of New York City. This example is one of a "counter-space" in the Lefebvrean sense, in that it challenges the space it is located within by creating an opposite space of resistance within it. In addition, the setting of *las casitas* in non-gentrified areas of New York City allows them to both act as reminders of another time and another place and to de-legitimize the dominant discourse behind the construction and representation of their environments. They tell a historically nuanced story from below that forces the questioning of the story traditionally told from above.

2.1 An Initial Conceptualization of the *Studium* and the *Punctum*

The *studium*, which is the culturally based knowledge, or codes, used by the reader when consciously choosing, based upon this knowledge, to form an opinion of a given text is applicable to both the reading of an image text and a spatial text. In this sense, it is important that its introduction take place at an early stage of this work, as its presence will be crucial throughout. In this work the *studium* refers to the culturally, politically, socially, historically and economically driven interest in a certain image text or public spatial text. The interest in terms of the representational/functionalizational level is in spatial definition and use, whereas the interest in terms of the socio-symbolic level is of course in what a given image portrays - what it represents - here, public spatial use - both defined and divergent. In other words, there is a inherently direct correlation between forms of representational and cultural knowledge and the codes used by the reader as the paradigm of his or her interpretation of the content of the text in question. The *punctum*, which Barthes

characterizes as "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me),"[9] is an inherently emotional and passionate interruption of the *studium*, which I see as really only possible in the reading of an image text by virtue of the photograph's distinction from the spatial text as the political art par excellence. As such, the *punctum* appears exclusively in the discussion contained in the sections dealing with the socio-symbolic level of public spatial use. This is so because the photograph presents a scenario that can be characterized as parallel to the Arendtian and Aristotelian conceptualization of drama as the only art form in which the full and true meaning "not so much of the story itself, but of the 'heroes' who reveal themselves in it."[10] In other words, the reenactment or mimesis of the identities of the agents in the public spatial story - the users of public space in this case - can only fully be revealed by the imitation of their acting, which I see as happening in the act of viewing or reading the image text. The stories contained in the images presented in the discussion of the socio-symbolic level below certainly occur on stages that are familiar to most readers based upon the codes that make up our dominant societal, cultural, political, ideological and economic norms - our *studium*. But there seems to me to be a heightened potential for their reenactment by the reader to include the appearance of a *punctum*, something within them that pricks the reader, perhaps because of a certain inherent contradiction or juxtaposition that suddenly awakens the storyteller. This awakening of the storyteller through the appearance of the *punctum* serves to "shatter a traditional viewing practice and hold up for scrutiny what usually goes unnoticed"[11] - it challenges dominant norms, in other words the *studium*, by punctuating the consciousness of their identification in the practice of reading with the unconscious appearance of the *punctum*.

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[9] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 27
[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 187
[11] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 126

3. Public Space & Barthes' Codes

"Thus certain spaces produced by capitalist promoters are so laden with signs - signs of well-being, happiness, style, art, riches, power, prosperity, and so on - that not only is their primary meaning (that of profitability) effaced but meaning disappears altogether."[12]

- Henri Lefebvre

"The five codes create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)."[13]

- Roland Barthes

Before delving into the examples I will explore below, it is important to contextualize both the realm of examination and the navigational guide used in order to move within it. Below I will discuss both the concept of public space and its role here as the text we will be reading and interpreting. Barthes' codes can be characterized as the light that shines on the pages of the spatial text, enabling us to decipher and de-code their content. The reader plays the central role - the only role, really - as Barthes writes: "Whereby we see that writing is not the communication of a message which starts from the author and proceeds to the reader; it is specifically the voice of reading itself: *in the text, only the reader speaks.*"[14]

Prior to proceeding with my discussion of the nature of public space and its role as the contextual background and foreground in this work, I will list some of the most commonly found dictionary definitions for the entry "public":

- a place accessible or visible to the public;
- of, relating to, or being in the service of the community or nation;

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[12] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1991), p. 160

[13] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 20

[14] ibid., p. 151

- accessible to or shared by all members of the community;
- devoted to the general or national welfare;[15]
- relating to or involving people in general, rather than being limited to a particular group of people;
- provided by the government from taxes to be available to everyone.[16]

3.1 Public Space

Henri Lefebvre, in his discussion of public space, presents a debate between the Japanese concept of *shin-gyo-sho*, which is an elaborate principle dealing with the perception of space, and the "pro-Western" rebuttal. It is all-encompassing and juxtapositional in nature, as it merges public with private. "Under its aegis, public areas (the spaces of social relationships and actions) are connected up with private areas (spaces for contemplation, isolation and retreat) via 'mixed' areas (linking thoroughfares, etc.).[17] It views spatial organization as bound by "relationships of reciprocal implication". The 'public' realm includes private aspects and vice versa. In *shin-gyo-sho* it is these intersections, these juxtaposed meeting points, which are of the most significance.

The most significant aspects of the Western rejoinder are, in the context of my work, the highlighting of *shin-gyo-sho*'s somewhat utopian tone. Its explanation of the intrinsic nature of public and private space, although I am attracted to its juxtapositional character, tends to leave out the level of examination discussed above - namely, that of the existence of a socially, politically, economically and culturally centered driving force behind the assignment of function to space. Rather, *shin-gyo-sho* is underlined by an inherent organizational character and is a neatly packaged view of spatial arrangement with a center inhabited by "Divinity, Wisdom and Power"[18] - with

[15] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2000
[16] Cambridge Dictionary
[17] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1991), p. 153
[18] ibid., p. 154

everything in its place: "Nature and divinity in the first place, then social life and relationships, and finally individual and private life - all these aspects of human reality have their assigned places, all implicatively linked in a concrete fashion."[19] This linear and strictly vertical arrangement of spatial realms completely excludes and denies the diagonal and zigzagged examination of various representational forms inherent in spatial use. It leaves no room for the space, to which I refer above, that results from the examination of the representational/functionalizational and socio-symbolic levels. In other words, it only allows for one dominant spatial story to be told - obliterating stories of public spatial use that are told from below, upon which I particularly want to focus in this work.

This exclusion in *shin-gyo-sho* stems from its failure to view space as inhabited and used by people - as social - and the assignment of aspects of human reality to specific places which are concretely interjoined implies the functionalization of space itself. In her essay 'Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City', Rosalyn Deutsche discusses the implications of assigning unequivocal intrinsic uses to spaces in terms of claiming that city space itself has its own voice. She writes: " Instrumental function is the only meaning signified by the built environment. What this essentialist view systematically obstructs - an obstruction that is actually its principal function - is the perception that the organization, shape, and meaning of space is social."[20] The result of this view is at the very heart of this work - namely, the functionalization of space, and thus its de-socialization, legitimizes the dictation of the use of public spaces by a dominant group of people, who tend to be responsible for its organization. Of course, there are two sides to the coin of public spatial functionalization, in that this legitimization of the assignment of intrinsic uses to public spaces repudiates the presence of those people whose use of the same space diverges from these dominant uses. The existence of one legitimizes the other.

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[19] ibid., p. 154

[20] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City", in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-Ha & Cornel West (The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 109

Lefebvre, too, in his rebuttal regarding the space of the Japanese garden, highlights the inherent complexity of analyzing the uses of specific spaces. He writes that: "Considered in its various contexts, for example, the Japanese garden remains the same yet it is never the same.... This remarkable institution of the garden is always a microcosm, a symbolic work of art, an abject as well as a place, and it has diverse 'functions' which are never merely functions."[21] He questions the ability of this type of spatial conceptualization to actually account for reality. Lefebvre's inquiry into the potential of *shin-gyo-sho* to be representative of the real is at the heart of an examination of spatial functionalization and its driving ideological, social, economic, political and cultural forces. This is precisely the type of inquiry that is central in the context of my examination of the examples I provide here - namely, the inherent aspect of exclusion that is implied by rules of conduct at Sony Plaza Public Space, the functionalizational comment made by ex-Mayor Ed Koch regarding the uses of Grand Central Station, and the Puerto Rican *casitas* as counter-spaces. I will pose the same question in my examination of the dominant discursive definitions of the intended uses of these aforementioned spaces that Lefebvre posed is his rejoinder to the Japanese philosopher's characterization of *shin-gyo-sho*: "...can you be sure that it accounts adequately for actual reality?"[22]

The question of whether a space, here the Japanese garden and below the aforementioned examples, actually is what it is defined as is simultaneously simple and problematic. Like spatial functionalization itself, attempting to discern its reality from its story, in other words, its true uses and their implications from its assigned function, is like trying to find one's way out of a hall of mirrors at an amusement park. Just as one must discern between the real and mere reflection in the mirrors of the fun house if one wishes to find his or her way out, the process of distinguishing

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[21] ibid., p. 157

[22] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1991), p. 157

between spatial functionalization and its ramifications and its real uses requires a similar kind of questioning of reality and mere illusion. When, for example, we examine the statement made by Koch regarding the presence of homeless people in Grand Central Station, to which I will return in more detail below, we must ask ourselves whether his characterization of the public space in question is representative of "the whole story" or whether his version of the tale of that space is exclusive to his perspective and its specific motives. In my examination of the representational/functionalizational level of public spatial use in terms of the three examples provided below, I will use Barthes' codes as a paradigm of inquiry - as a compass of sorts.

Again, we must ask: Whose Divinity, Wisdom and Power inhabit the center of space in *shin-gyo-sho*? The linearity of the concept goes as follows: "Urban space is comprised, first, of wide avenues leading to the temples and palaces, secondly of medium-sized squares and streets which are the transitional and connecting spaces, and, thirdly and lastly, of the charming flower filled alleys that afford access to our houses."[23] This linearity thus reveals itself as a scheme of spatial functionalization which assumes specific uses for specific spaces. These uses are implied to be based upon "a concrete logic, a logic of the senses."[24] But whose logic of the senses? Logic dictated by Divinity, Wisdom and Power? (Capitalized in order to stress their human characteristics perhaps?) This view excludes the uses of space that fall outside the realm of this logic of the senses. I propose that we apply the same question here to public spatial use that we applied above to *shin-gyo-sho* - namely, whose Divinity, Wisdom and Power dictate the definitions of its uses, and where does that leave those who challenge this discourse of function by countering its content? What does the story of spatial use told from below revel about the dominant story told from above, and vice versa?

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[23] ibid., p. 155
[24] ibid., p. 156

3.2 Barthes' Codes: Un nappé géneral, épandu avec la bénédiction du Pouvoir (A smooth coating spread out with the blessing of the Powers that Be)[25]

"The blanks and looseness of the analysis will be like footprints marking the escape of the text; for if the text is subject to some form, this form is not unitary, architectonic, finite: it is the fragment, the shards, the broken or obliterated network - all the movements and inflections of a vast 'dissolve,' which permits both overlapping and loss of messages."[26]

I will use Barthes' interpretive codes throughout this work both in order to help me to outline the representational/functionalization level of public spatial use, as well as in my examination of the socio-symbolic level in the context of my examination of images of public spatial use. In both levels, the Voice of Science, or the cultural codes, play the most central role in both the readings that are guided by our hypothetical reader and in my own examination of the two levels presented here. In this sense the codes play a dualistic role here, which simultaneously helps to illustrate both levels in this work and highlights the diverse applicability of the codes themselves in terms of any kind of "textual" reading. The use of the codes allow me to outline a paradigm of the reading of public space, or, in the case of the socio-symbolic level, the reading of photographic images, as parallel to the reading of any given text. My main attraction to the codes is the central role of the reader as what we might refer to here as the spatial-textual navigator.

This hypothetical navigator, who will appear in conjunction with the examples of public spatial use in our examination of the representational/functionalizational level, and again in the image based examples of stories of public spatial use in the following section dealing with the socio-symbolic level, will act as our guide through the codes which she utilizes in the act of reading. Of course, her presence is intended to

[25] Philip Thody, *Roland Barthes: A Conservative Estimate* (The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1977), p. 21
[26] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 20

illustrate an example of how a reader applies his or her knowledge or codes to the interpretation and reading of a given text - a spatial text in the representational/functionalizational level and an image text in the socio-symbolic level. Although the codes are cultural, social, political, ideological and economic norms that are often shared by many people, they are subjective in the sense that not all readers share the same codes. In addition, as will become clear in the examination of the reading of the images presented in the socio-symbolic level, the codes - or *studium* - by which a reader reads the story contained in an image can also be accompanied by the appearance of the *punctum*, which can be characterized as a small detail that pricks the viewer/reader. The unconscious recognition of the *punctum* is simultaneously dependent upon, yet often appears in spite of or regardless of the codes that guide the *studium*.

In addition, as I noted in the opening words of this work, the codes also bear similarity to Cornel West's concept of discernment in prophetic thought, in which the importance of maintaining a nuanced historical sense when questioning dominant discourses is stressed in order to produce a different version of the same story - this version coming from below as opposed to from above. They provide a natural counter-balance to the inherent presence of the ideological, social, economic, political, social and cultural driving forces behind public spatial functionalization, as the mere existence of the codes implies the social aspect necessary in order to facilitate a non-vertical examination of the representational/functionalizational level.

Barthes' consistently highlights the direct correlation between bourgeois ideology and the "nauseating mixture of common opinions"[27] that comprise the cultural codes, which is also extremely pertinent to the discussion contained in this work - running parallel to the notion of functionalization and its politics of exclusion. In effect, this cultural dominance, which Barthes deems as belonging to bourgeois ideology, really

[27] ibid., p. 206

provides the weapons for its own demise simply by virtue of the transparency with which dominant norms are enforced. One of the main goals of this work is precisely to illustrate the degree of transparency of these dominant norms in terms of their use in public spatial functionalization. The codes, specifically the cultural codes, aid in the illustration of this transparency in terms of both the representational/functionalizational and socio-symbolic levels of public spatial use. In addition, the examples presented in this work also illustrate the critique of these codes, which Barthes claims "has never been tenable except through trickery,"[28] by means of challenging them as superior over codes which diverge from their content and use. Again, the three examples presented in this first section, the representational/functionalizational level, illustrate these dominant codes and their utilization in the dictation of the functions that they attempt to present as inherent to various public spaces. In addition to this, each of the three examples also includes an examination of the challenging of this supposedly natural functionalization of public space by means of the exposition of their denial of plurality.

In the examples presented in the first level, the codes can be used as a navigational guide by the reader as the text passes through them. When the reader enters a space, here a public space, he or she uses and encounters the five codes in the interpretative reading of the spatial text, the most centrally relevant of which are the cultural codes. The text then passes through topos of these codes as the reader, the only one to speak in the text, attempts to simultaneously both name and evade the truth. Again, I am attracted to the central role played by the reader in the Barthesian reading of a public space, for "What we hear, therefore, is the *displaced* voice which the reader lends, by proxy, to the discourse: the discourse is speaking according to the reader's interests."[29] This idea is clearly connected to Cornel West's notion of discernment in prophetic thought, in that by allowing only the reader to speak - to navigate the journey taken

[28] ibid., p. 206
[29] ibid., p. 151

my the text through the topos of the codes - it facilitates the telling of a story from below.

In my examination of the socio-symbolic level, I will apply the same codes to a reading of the photographic images of public spatial use in terms of the examples that will be presented. In this sense, the images are to be taken as texts, similarly to the examples that will be covered in the context of the representational/functionalizational level. Again, I will return to this at a later point, but it is important to note the parallels between the application of the codes to both levels in order to illustrate its significance here and in the reading of photographic texts as a framework of inquiry. In his discussion of the political rhetoric of photography, Michael Shapiro writes that: "when we interrogate photographs from the point of view of how they speak/think politically, it is necessary to think of them as discursive practices situated within the general economy of societal practices."[30] In support of the Barthesian inspired[31] characterization presented by Shapiro of the potential of the photographic image to be read as a text, Edward Said can also be sited as referring to the textual nature of photographs. He writes that the use of the visual faculty is one of the inherent tasks of breaking out of the "disciplinary ghettos" and that an alternative use of photography is: "using photomontage to tell other stories than the official sequential or ideological ones produced by institutions of power."[32] Over the course that this work will eventually follow, the similarities between the discursive nature of photographic images of public spatial use and the discourse of public spatial use itself will become clear.

The codes used by the reader when reading a given text can be characterized as revealing myths - more specifically, myths and the uses to which they are put in

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[30] Michael J. Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 129

[31] Amongst others, such as Walter Benjamin, Stuart Hall and Allan Sekula.

[32] Edward Said, 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies', in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, (Bay Press, 1983) Hal Foster, ed., p. 158

society. The societal uses of such myths can be seen as practically synonymous with our definition of functionalization here - as signifiers they appear as inherently natural and neutral, but actually tend to be what we might refer to as underhanded illusions of mythological use. A Barthesian inspired reading of public spatial texts, then, would presuppose a familiarity with these uses on the part of the reader that precedes his or her analysis of the ways in which they are constructed. A common notion throughout the majority of Barthes' work, which is applicable here, too, seems to be the non-existence of totally neutral or non-significant objects. In other words, there is nothing - no text or detail of it - that cannot potentially be altered by the imposition of cultural codes, which Barthes sees as leading to its characterization as myth. What this implies is that what is signified by myths tends to easily become assimilated into socially and culturally guided dominant norms, which are representative of the uses of such significations. We will encounter this distinction in terms of the navigation of the following public spatial examples by our reader's reading of them as spatial texts.

The five codes, or voices, summed up by Barthes "in order of appearance, without trying to put them in any order of importance" are: the hermeneutic code or the Voice of Truth, the cultural codes or the Voice of Science, the semes or the Voice of the Person, the proairetisms or the Voice of Empirics and the Voice of Symbol.[33] I will briefly introduce each of them below in order to illustrate their connotation in terms of the practice of reading. My focus here on each of the codes individually is fleeting, as is Barthes' own description of them in his own work. Again, Barthes' codes can be characterized as "a topos through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)."[34] It becomes text in passing, because the realization of the codes - accomplished through the interaction between reader and text during the act of reading - is really what facilitates its being a text. A text does not signify without this interaction with the reader, and this interaction between text and reader is based upon the realization and application of the codes. While they are widely shared, the

[33] ibid., pp. 20-21
[34] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 20

application of the codes is confineable to the interaction between a single reader and single text, although there always exists what might be referred to as a shared historical element. As Barthes writes: "The code is a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures; we know only its departures and returns; the units which have resulted from it (those we inventory) are themselves, always, ventures out of the text, the mark, the sign of a virtual digression toward the remainder of a catalogue (*The Kidnapping* refers to every kidnapping ever written); they are so many fragments of something that has always been *already* read, seen, done, experienced; the code is the wake of that *already*."[35] The notion that the code is the wake of the already implies the shared nature of their application in the reading of that which is signified in and by the text. Still, the practice of reading is individual - an individual interactive relationship between reader and text - which simultaneously awakens the recognition of what has already been read, seen, done and experienced. As such, it seems fitting that my description here of the five codes remain brief, open and loose - congruent to their use by any given reader in the practice of reading. They will center mainly on direct quotations of Barthes' own descriptions of them, as I see it as unnecessary in this context to add to them to any great extent.

3.2.1 The Voice of Empirics

The Empiric Voice is characterized by Barthes as "a certain power of the reading, which tries to give a sufficiently transcendent name to a series of actions, themselves deriving from a patrimonial hoard of human experiences; that the typology of these proaireticisms seems uncertain or that at least they can be assigned no logic other than that of the probable of empirics, of the 'already-done' or 'already-written,' for the number and the order of their terms vary, some deriving from a practical reservoir of trivial everyday acts (*to knock at a door, to arrange a rendezvous*) and others from a written corpus of novelistic models (*the Abduction, the Declaration of Love, the Murder*); that such sequences are generally open to catalysis, to branching, and can form 'trees'; that

[35] ibid., p. 20

when subjected to a logico-temporal order, they constitute the strongest armature of the readerly; that by their typically sequential nature, simultaneously syntagmatic and organized, they can form the favored raw material for a certain structural analysis of narrative."[36] In other words, the Empiric Voice attempts to aptly name any actions that can be associated with basic human acts and experiences - it includes a distinct element of familiarity and commonality, elements of the everyday.

3.2.2 The Voice of the Person

The Voice of the Person, or the semses, is characterized by Barthes as follows: "The seme (or the signified of connotation, strictly speaking) is a connotator of persons, places, objects, of which the signified is a *character.* Character is an adjective, an attribute, a predicate)for example: *unnatural, shadowy, star, composite, excessive, impious,* etc.). Even though the connotation may be clear, the nomination of its signified is uncertain, approximative, unstable: to fasten a name to this signified depends in large part on the critical pertinence to which we adhere: the seme is only a *departure,* an avenue of meaning...If we set aside the semes of objects or atmospheres, actually rather rare (here, at last), what is constant is that the seme is linked to an ideology of the person (to inventory the semes in a classic text is therefore merely to observe this ideology): the person is no more than a collection of semes...."[37] In other words, the Voice of the Person is the code by which the reader names a signified through its description as the sum of certain attributes. It tends generally to be focused on a person, as opposed to an object or place, and leads to what Barthes characterizes as the "Proper Name,"[38] which enables the person to exist outside of the semes, which in fact comprises it. I would say that the reception of the semes, although most often dealing with people, is connected more with the naming of the adjectives that a reader uses in relation to a place or object. Barthes, too, considers the inventory of the semes as better serving psychological criticism than any type of thematic criticism.

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[36] ibid., p. 204
[37] ibid., pp. 190-191
[38] ibid., p. 191

3.2.3 The Voice of Science

Barthes describes the Voice of Science as deriving from a body of knowledge which he sees as modeled after a set of seven or eight student handbook type guides: a History of Literature, a History of Art, a History of Europe, an Outline of Practical Medicine, a Treatise on Psychology, an Ethics, a Logic, a Rhetoric, and an anthology of maxims and proverbs about life, death, suffering, love, women, ages of man, etc.[39] He goes on to write that: "Although entirely derived from books, these codes, by a swivel characteristic of bourgeois ideology, which turns culture into nature, appear to establish reality, 'Life.' 'Life' then, in the classic text, becomes a nauseating mixture of common opinions, a mothering layer of received ideas: in fact, it is in these cultural codes that what is outmoded in Balzac, the essence of what, in Balzac, cannot be (re) written, is concentrated. What is outmoded, of course, is not a defect in performance, a personal inability of the author to afford opportunities in his work for what will be modern, but rather a fatal condition of Replete Literature, mortally stalked by the army of stereotypes it contains. Thus, a critique of the references (the cultural codes) has never been tenable except through trickery, on the very limits of Replete Literature, where it is possible (but at the cost of what acrobatics and with what uncertainty) to criticize the stereotype (to vomit it up) without recourse to a new stereotype: that of irony...In fact, the cultural code occupies the same position as stupidity: how can stupidity be pinned down without declaring oneself intelligent? How can one code be superior to another without abusively closing off the plurality of codes? Only writing, by assuming the largest possible plural in its own task, can oppose without appeal to force the imperialism of each language."[40]

The Voice of Science - or the cultural codes - is doubtless the most significant of the voices in terms of the reading of public spatial texts such as those presented here, for it really embodies the essence of the relationship between reader and text that evolves

[39] ibid., pp. 205-206
[40] ibid., p. 206

within and indeed enables the practice of reading. He establishes these shared cultural norms, "Life", as "a nauseating mixture of common opinions, a smothering layer of received ideas," which is parallel to the notion of functionalization which I will discuss in terms of the public spatial examples presented below. These nauseatingly common (and bourgeoisie) opinions and ideas are what tend to guide our reading of most of the texts that we encounter - whether they be spatial, image based, literal, rhetorical, etc. - and they tend also to be upheld and enforced in order to serve various political, social, economic, ideological and cultural purposes, as will become clear below. What I also hope will become clear over the course of this work are examples of what Barthes refers to as the trickery by which a critique of these cultural codes becomes tenable. His choice of words used to describe this type of critique implies a circus-like atmosphere, in which acrobatics and tightrope walking lead to the vomiting up of a given stereotype - replacing it with the stereotype of irony. Once again, Barthes' emphasis of plurality is clear as he questions how any given code can be superior to any other without forcefully rationing the inherently plural nature of cultural codes. In the context of this work we might ask: How can one definition of public spatial use surpass any other given use without negating the inherent plurality of potential uses and leading to a politics of exclusion? The answer to both of these questions seems clear - no code can be superior to any other code without denying the plurality of codes, and no definition of public spatial use can surpass any other without excluding other uses.

3.2.4 The Voice of Truth

"All the enigmas are now disclosed, the vast hermeneutic sentence is closed...We now know the morphemes (or the 'hermeneutemes') of this hermeneutic sentence, this *period* of truth (in the rhetorical sense). They are: (1) *thematization*, or an emphasizing of the subject which will be the object of the enigma; (2) *proposal*, a metalinguistic index which, by signaling in a thousand different ways that an enigma exists, designates the hermeneutic (or enigmatic) *genus*; (3) *formulation* of the enigma; (4) *promise of an answer* (or *request for an answer*); (5) *snare*, a pretense which must be

defined, if possible, by its circuit if destination (by one character for another, for himself, by the discourse for the reader); (6) *equivocation*, or double understanding, the mixture in a single statement of a snare and a truth; (7) *jamming*, acknowledgment of the insolubility of the enigma; (8) *suspended answer* (after having been begun); (9) *partial answer*, which consists in stating only one of the features whose total will form the complete identification of the truth; (10) *disclosure, decipherment*, which is, in the pure enigma (whose model is always the Sphinx's question to Oedipus), a final nomination, the discovery and uttering of the irreversible word.[41] The Voice of Truth - or the hermeneutic code - leads the reader to ask him or herself questions regarding truth versus illusion and aesthetic versus signification. It is through the hermeneutic code that the reader lists the formal names by which an enigma is ultimately disclosed.

3.2.5 The Voice of Symbol

The Voice of the Symbol is characterized by Barthes as a field - or the Three Points of Entry. He writes: "The symbolic field is occupied by a single object from which it derives its unity (and from which we have derived a certain right to name it, some pleasure in describing it, and what may pass for a privilege granted the symbolic system, the symbolic adventure of the hero, sculptor or narrator)...Now we can enter this symbolic field by three routes, no one of which is privileged: provided with equal points of entry, the textual network, on its symbolic level, is reversible. The rhetorical route discovers the transgression of the Antithesis, the passage through the wall of opposites, the abolition of difference. The route of castration, strictly speaking, discovers the pandemic void of desire, the collapse of the creative chain (bodies and works). The economic route discovers the disappearance of all fake currency, empty Gold, without origin or odor, no longer and index but a sign, a narrative corroded by the story it bears. These three routes are all conducive to stating the same disturbance in classification: it is fatal, the text says, to remove the dividing line, the paradigmatic

[41] ibid., pp. 209-210

slash mark which permits meaning to function (the wall of the Antithesis), life to reproduce (the opposition of the sexes), property to be protected (rule of contract)."[42]

The Voice of Symbol can basically be characterized as the reader's disentanglement of his or her impressions from knowledge. Barthes sees the main aspect of the symbolic groupings as reversibility - as based, once again, on the fact that it can be entered and approached from any number of different points. As such, he refrains form attempting to structure it, instead acknowledging its plurality.

4. Sony Plaza Public Space

"The following rules of conduct will be enforced so you may enjoy your visit to Sony Plaza in comfort and safety"[43]

Sony Plaza Public Space

[42] ibid., pp. 214-215

[43] According to the official rules of conduct as stipulated in the small plastic cards that adorn each table.

The first example I will present here of the representational/functionalization level of public spatial use is of the Sony Plaza Public Space, located in New York City. The public part of the building its lobby, containing 8 planters with trees, 74 tables, and 222 seats. It is maintained by 550 Madison Avenue, Inc., which is located at 9 West 57th Street, but complaints regarding the public space are to be addressed to The Department of City Planning or The Department of Buildings of the City of New York. The building is accessible to the physically challenged.[44] The building stands in mid-town Manhattan, an area comprised of a high concentration of office buildings, retail stores and expensive restaurants. The public lobby's main retail attraction, through which one can also gain entry to the public lobby, is Sony Wonder, a store selling Sony products, computer games and CDs. There is also a Starbuck's Coffee bar located in the store itself. In addition to Sony Wonder, the lobby also includes a high-priced café, newsstand and uniformed guard.

Delving into an examination of the ambiguity of public space and its use - both dominant and divergent - creates a space of political, cultural, social, social and ideological tumultuousness. In her essay 'Space and Symbols in an Age of Decline', Sharon Zukin writes about various uses of space, focusing on two main perspectives: the political-economical view of the transfer of land and its uses from social class to social class, and the representation of various social groups in spatial use and visual means of their exclusion from public (and private) spaces. She writes: "From this view, the endless negotiation of cultural meanings in built forms - in buildings, streets, parks, interiors - contributes to the construction of social identities."[45]

The examination of public space that I engage in here - both in terms of the dominant assignment of intrinsic spatial function, as well as from the perspective of stories of

[44] According to a plaque on the outer facade of the building.
[45] Sharon Zukin, "Space and Symbols in an Age of Decline", in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis*, (New York University Press, 1996) Anthony D. Kind, ed., p. 43

counter uses that are told from below - necessarily includes aspects of the social nature of public space. For despite the neutralization and de-socialization that functionalization attempts to portray as natural, it is simply impossible to totally neutralize the social aspect from a space which is defined as public. The reciprocity between functionalization and de-socialization and counter uses is impenetrable - one exposes and legitimizes the other. In other words, the inclusion that is sustained by the functionalization of public space could not exist without its exclusional counterpart - their existence is mutually interchangeable.

As we go down the list of rules at the Sony Plaza Public Space one by one we are presented with an example of a discourse of exclusion that manifests itself here in the form of written rules dictating the use of this public space. I view these rules, each one playing its own role on the gentrified stage that is the Sony Plaza Public Space, are visible discursive reinforcements of the social, political, cultural, ideological and economic dictation of the dominant definition of use for this public space. As Sharon Zukin writes: "Visual artifacts of material culture and political economy thus reinforce - or comment on - social structure. By making social rules legible, they represent the city."[46] These rules, along with the encoded messages of the guard, cafés, marble facade and high-scale merchants, the most dominant of which is, of course, Sony Wonder, do indeed make the social rules of this space legible. Barthes' codes will be employed here in order to navigate the journey through the reading of these messages.

Let us now imagine a scenario in which our reader enters and engages in a reading of this public space. She walks into Sony Plaza Public Space through one of the large glass main doors that lead into the lobby space. She sees the foliage hanging from the planters on the wall, the silver colored tables and chairs and patterned floor. She notices the uniformed guard who paces lazily form one end of the space to the other -

[46] ibid., p. 44

as if taking for granted that the reading of the objects inhabiting the space itself will lead to the application of cultural codes to them, which will thus metamorphose them from objects to signifiers to the uses of those signifiers in terms of dominantly produced societal norms.

Glass Doors

What is a public space if not completely neutral? The whole idea behind the public space is that it remains unnamed as anything more than what it is - a blank space to be used by the "public" - in a sense also a blank or empty notion. Its supposed neutrality and emptiness results from its characterization as inherently public - empty only because of its potential to be filled by anyone for any use. However, as our reader

was able to illustrate for us, this seemingly neutral and literally unnamed space - lacking a function other than the ambiguous notion of "public use" - can be explained and indeed demystified through the reader's immediate understanding of the meaning of the signification of the space and its objects. In other words, upon entering this public and ostensibly neutral and unnamed space, our reader grasped the meaning signified by the aesthetic characteristics of both the actual space and the objects inhabiting it. If she was not already tipped off by the physical location of this public space - it lies in the middle of Manhattan's business and tourist district, surrounded by and sharing its lobby with expensive stores and cafés - she understood the presence of the shiny tables and chairs, the uniformed guard and lush plants as signifying a specific meaning or set of meanings. She sensed and understood this meaning or meanings prior to being able to consider their construction as what translates into dominant norms.

In terms of the five codes "under which all the textual signifiers can be grouped,"[47] we can apply them to our reader's reading of this particular space as follows. As she walks into Sony Plaza Public Space, our reader first uses the hermeneutic code as she applies her knowledge of the characteristics of the space in order to begin to name them. She sees the guard and the Sony Store, the tables and chairs, etc., and is able to associate them with the "various (formal) terms by which an enigma can be distinguished, suggested, formulated...."[48] She uses adjectives in connotation to the place and its objects - she finds them to be cold, empty and neutral - she names the place through its description as the sum of certain of its attributes.

However, mainly, she uses the cultural codes, or the *doxa*, in order to read this public space. Her knowledge of the common opinions and received ideas that dominate the way in which we tend to view reality - "Life," as Barthes' sarcastically refers to them - guide her reading of this spatial text. It seems to me as if the reception of all of the

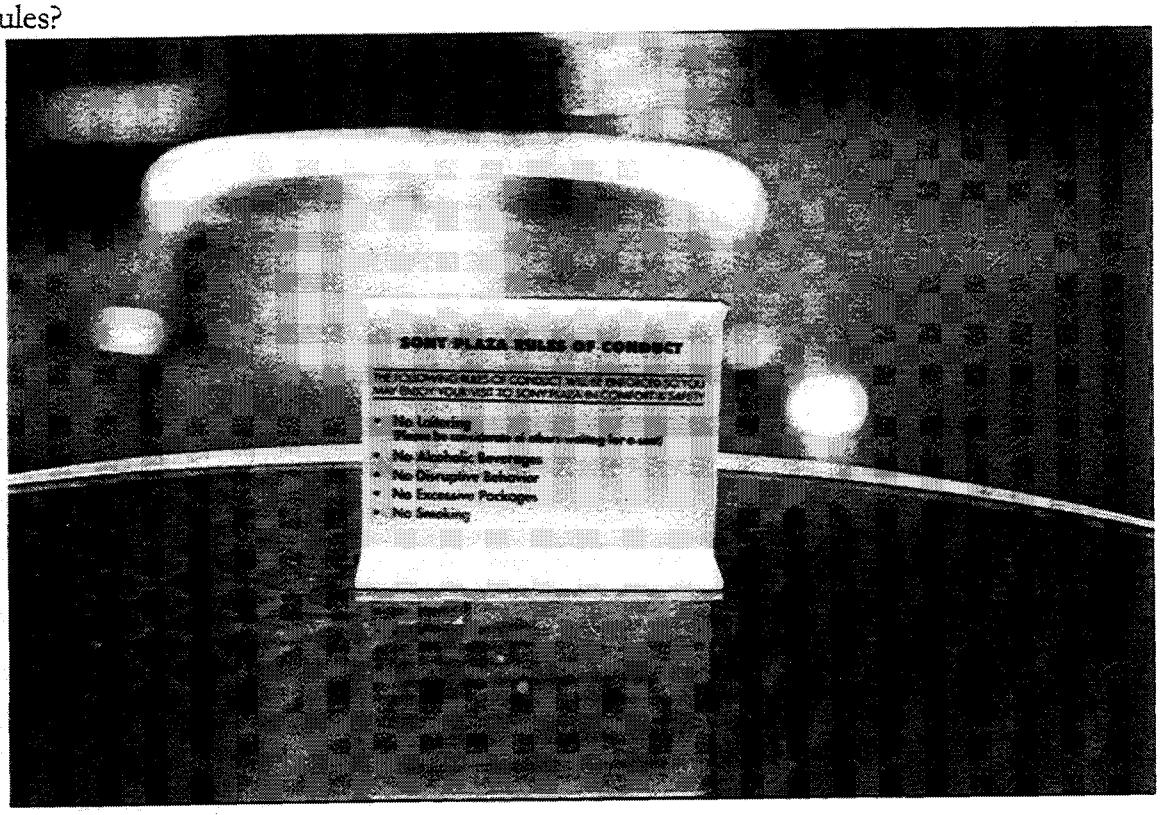
[47] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 19
[48] ibid., p. 19

other codes necessitates this association with this dominant set of norms - in order for our reader to recognize and name them she must possess a context in which to do so, and this context is provided by the *doxa*. It is the cultural codes which tell our reader that this "public space" is actually something other than what its name implies and signifies. Its location its location in the middle of the tourist and business district of Manhattan implies what our reader perceives as a sort of intended and restricted "public". Once she seats herself at one of the many tables in the lobby space, she notices the plaques that adorn each of the tables - making the rules of conduct easily visible to each person who visits the space. She goes down the rules one by one and uses her cultural codes to unlock the meaning of what they represent - she understands this meaning before she even has time to analyze the way in which they are constructed.

After reading the rules of conduct and taking inventory of the space and its objects, the facade and location of the building itself - in addition to the guard pacing back and forth, the plants hanging from the walls, the Sony Wonder electronics store and coffee bar, and the tourists and tired shoppers with their paper and plastic bags - she decides to leave. Although no one has uttered a word to her during her visit to this public space, she has the urge to leave - sensing that she falls outside of the category of the intended clientele. She comes to this conclusion perhaps without engaging in any sort of conscious analysis of how and why she has this sense, choosing instead to leave on the basis of her connotative codes - which for all intents and purposes are unconscious simply by virtue of their degree of commonality. In other words, she reads the dominant message of the spatial story itself without really engaging in a conscious reading of a specific text. As Barthes writes: "I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think."[49]

[49] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 21

Again, as is the case with regard to Cornel West's component of discernment in his concept of prophetic thought, the divulgence of the cultural, ideological, social, political and economic driving forces behind the functionalization of a given public space through the telling of a story from below as opposed to above indeed reveals much more than a mere statement of use. Just as West notes that "there is no jazz without European instruments"[50], there are no public spaces without the politics, ideology, cultural, economic and social aspects, and indeed elements of exclusion that define them. From this perspective we must ask the following questions: What do the rules of conduct imply about the rhetoric which drives their presence? Who is the "you" left after the "who" who threatens "your" comfort and safety based on these rules?



Sony Plaza Public Space Rules of Conduct

[50] Cornel West, *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times* (Common Courage Press, 1993), p. 4

1. *No loitering (please be considerate of others waiting for a seat)* The idea that "you" would be loitering is clearly rejected or not represented by this statement. "who" loiters, not "you".

2. *No alcoholic beverages* This could be geared at "you", but it is more likely that the "who" who comes to the mind of the reader of this space is representative of Other.

3. *No disruptive behavior* It is doubtful that "you" would be disruptive. It is much more likely that "you" would be.

4. *No excessive packages* is really perhaps the most clearly exclusional and connotative of the

rules of conduct, because certainly "you" would not be breaching the rules of conduct if "you" were carrying excessive packages from, for example, the Sony Wonder store that is adjacent to the public space of the building.

5. *No smoking*[51]

This example of the functionalization of this particular public space presents a situation in which function is implied not only through the aesthetic aspect of the space itself, but also through the legibility of the social rules of conduct, aided by the plaques left on all of the tables. They are written reminders of the social, cultural, economic, political and ideological aspects of the functionalization of this space, and they speak a language of exclusion which can be characterized as the story told from above. It is clear that the "you" who is assured that the rules of conduct will be enforced in order to allow a safe and enjoyable visit to Sony Plaza Public Space is not the same "you" to whom the rules explicitly apply. Rather, the rules seem to act as a deterrent against the inhabitation of this public space by those whose definition of its function diverge from "yours". In this sense, the rules of the Sony Plaza Public Space illustrate a more subtle practice of exclusion than that of the following example of Grand Central Station.

[51] These are the rules of conduct placed on the tables at the Sony Plaza Public Space by its managers.

5. Ex-Mayor Ed Koch's Functionalization of Grand Central Station

"These Homeless people, you can tell who they are. They're sitting on the floor, occasionally defecating, urinating, talking to themselves - many, not all, but many - or panhandling. We thought it would be reasonable for the authorities to say, 'You can't stay here unless you're here for transportation.' Reasonable, rational people would come to that conclusion, right? Not the Court of Appeals."[52]

Grand Central Station[53]

Grand Central Station is one of two train stations and numerous public spaces in New York City. Clearly, one of the main uses of the space is as a hub of transportation, although it is equally as clearly not limited to this one capacity. In fact, Grand Central Station includes no less than 40 retail stores and services, and 15

[52] David W. Dunlap, "Koch, the 'Entertainer,' Gets Mixed Review," *New York Times* (May 19, 1988) B4. As quoted by Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City', in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, (The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1990) Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-Ha & Cornel West, eds., p. 108

[53] www.nycsubway.org

restaurants. The Grand Central Market, made up of 14 food and agricultural vendors, inspires its customers to imagine themselves in the countryside - far away from the chaos of the city and the station. Grand Central Station's calendar of events includes a wide variety of entertainment that utilizes the beauty and centrality of this space, although often with quite high entrance fees. There are a variety of both group and individual tours available, which are organized by various groups, one of which being the Grand Central Partnership, to which I will return below. The Grand Central Partnership provides "a free tour catering to the individual"[54], which proudly introduces the newly revitalized Grand Central. "It combines the romance of train travel, the history of a magnificent terminal building from a bygone time, a destination for superb restaurants, and convenience of outstanding retail shops. Grand Central is truly grand again!"[55] Based upon this description of the space, as well as the presence of its numerous retail and food service tenants, calendar of social events and guided tours, we can see that this public space/train terminal is quite social in nature. We are invited by the Metropolitan Transit Authority to come and enjoy the fine cuisine of the terminal restaurants and to shop in the terminal shops. We are told by the MTA that: "After a four year monumental effort, the terminal is even grander than when it first opened in 1913 and we would like to share this with you!"[56] We must once again pose the question of who is the "you" with which the MTA would like to share the awe-inspiring re-gentrified Grand Central Station?

The public nature of public spaces highlights the significance of socially constructed definitions of use, thus making the de-legitimization of its neutralization much easier to illustrate and uncover. Rosalyn Deutsche provides an example of the neutralization of public space in her discussion of ex-New York City Mayor Ed Koch's response to a question posed to him at a conference of The American Institute of Architects in the spring of 1988. Koch's comment , our second example

[54] From www.grandcentralterminal.com
[55] www.grandcentralterminal.com
[56] www.grandcentralterminal.com

of the representational/functionalizational level, deals with the space of Grand Central Station, specifically with the "problem" of its occupancy by homeless people. Deutsche's conclusion is that Koch, unable to legitimate his view with the support of lawmakers, resorts to the insistence that "reasonable, rational people" would surely come to the same conclusion - namely, that the clear and intrinsic function of Grand Central Station is its role as a hub of transportation. His plea for the reasonable and rational audience to support his rhetoric of the exclusion and eviction of homeless people from Grand Central Station is based on the contention that their presence directly contradicts this assigned function of this public city space.

Neil smith, too, discusses the inhabitation of homeless people in Grand Central Station, which clearly illustrate an even grimmer and more intimidation-based policy of exclusion. He writes that in the early to mid 1990s: "...the Transit Authority instituted new antihomeless policies for its major hubs, aimed at beginning to deny homeless people access to indoor public space. At Grand Central Station a more novel approach was tried. Formed in the wake of Mobil Oil's departure from Manhattan and their parting movie, which depicted the tribulations of a white suburban executive trying to commute to work through mobs of harassing homeless people, the 'Grand Central Partnership' was formed to deal with 'the problem'."[57] The goal of the Grand Central Partnership was basically to evict homeless people from Grand Central Station and other public spaces. Its existence, similarly to Koch's comment, is indicative of the blatant functionalization of this specific public space. This is the same Grand Central Partnership that now conducts free individual tours of the revitalized space and that wants to share its grandness with "you".

The perpetuation of exclusion inherent in both of these examples is driven by juxtaposition, in that it is inherently political, social, economic and cultural - both as a rhetoric of functionalization and in terms of the driving forces behind it. In other

[57] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (Routledge, 1996), pp. 222-223

words, these examples can be seen as reactions to specific political and economic policies during the Reagan/Bush years, which directly led to the rampant increase in the numbers of homeless people left with no place else to inhabit but public spaces. The movie made by Mobil Oil upon its departure from Manhattan, which facilitated the creation of the Grand Central Partnership, clearly links the presence of homeless people in Grand Central Station to economic stability - it blatantly fingers the homeless as chasing the company out of town.

Yet another of the use of functionalizational rhetoric can be seen in this characterization of Grand Central Station following its recent gentrification: "Grand Central used to be a study in smoke, soot and grime with its most notable features a series of giant billboards that chopped the spacious interior into one gigantic commercial presentation. The billboards are gone and the light once again streams through the glass panes... Rows of oak benches (removed in the 1980s to keep the homeless from sleeping on them) have been reinstalled."[58] However, as opposed to presenting a lengthy list of examples of political, social, economic and cultural driving forces behind statements such as Koch's and various, more physical, means of corralling homeless people out of public spaces, I will say in short that these are merely two examples of the legitimization of exclusion through functionalization. I claim that examples of public spatial functionalizations such as these imply the existence of certain codes of interpretation that are used by all readers of public spatial texts. Without the existence of these codes, Koch's plea would have failed to legitimate anything at all, much less the exclusion of a specific group of people from a public city space. Koch relied upon these codes when defining his audience as comprised of reasonable and rational people. Here, we must once again ask ourselves the question: Who is the "you" to which Koch is referring? Indicating the homeless, Koch says: "you can tell who they are" - implying their rational exclusion from both the category of "you" as well as from the public space of Grand Central Station.

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[58] From Best Fares Magazine, October 1998

We can describe the neutralization of homelessness that is implied by Koch's quote as an attempt to "restore to the city a surface calm that belies underlying contradictions"[59]. One form taken by such connotative enforcement is the representation of poverty in a way which serves to legitimate it as a fundamentally existent social condition. One of the ways in which it is represented, of course, is as an inherent component of capitalist society - a legitimization of wealth - adding to its reality by presenting a necessary opposite. It is rarely represented in any other light than as a means to this end - it is generally something which we attempt to keep out of view or to hide, or else it is something which we use to gage or strengthen our own social, economic, cultural or political position. Perhaps one reason why this is so is that poverty (and images of poverty, which I will return to when dealing with this socio-symbolic level of public spatial use) provokes the questioning of the distribution of wealth and misfortune, as well as our own position within this social order.

Again, in this sense, Koch's desperate attempt to legitimate the gentrification of Grand Central Station could be characterized as an attempt at a rhetorical legitimization of certain norms or codes which he assumed his listeners would accept without questioning. His functionalization of this public space legitimates only certain uses for it - simultaneously silencing those whose social, economic, political and cultural position happens to be that of legitimator of wealth - in other words, poor people. The assignment of inherent meaning to public space facilitates the assumption that its existence is limited to its capacity to fulfill specific needs, thus proclaiming it to be functional as opposed to social, which of course contradicts its central aspect of publicness. This, of course, is the main means of its legitimization as intending to serve the strictly function oriented needs of the majority of its inhabitants, simultaneously de-legitimating uses which might fall outside of this

[59] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City", in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-Ha & Cornel West (The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 108

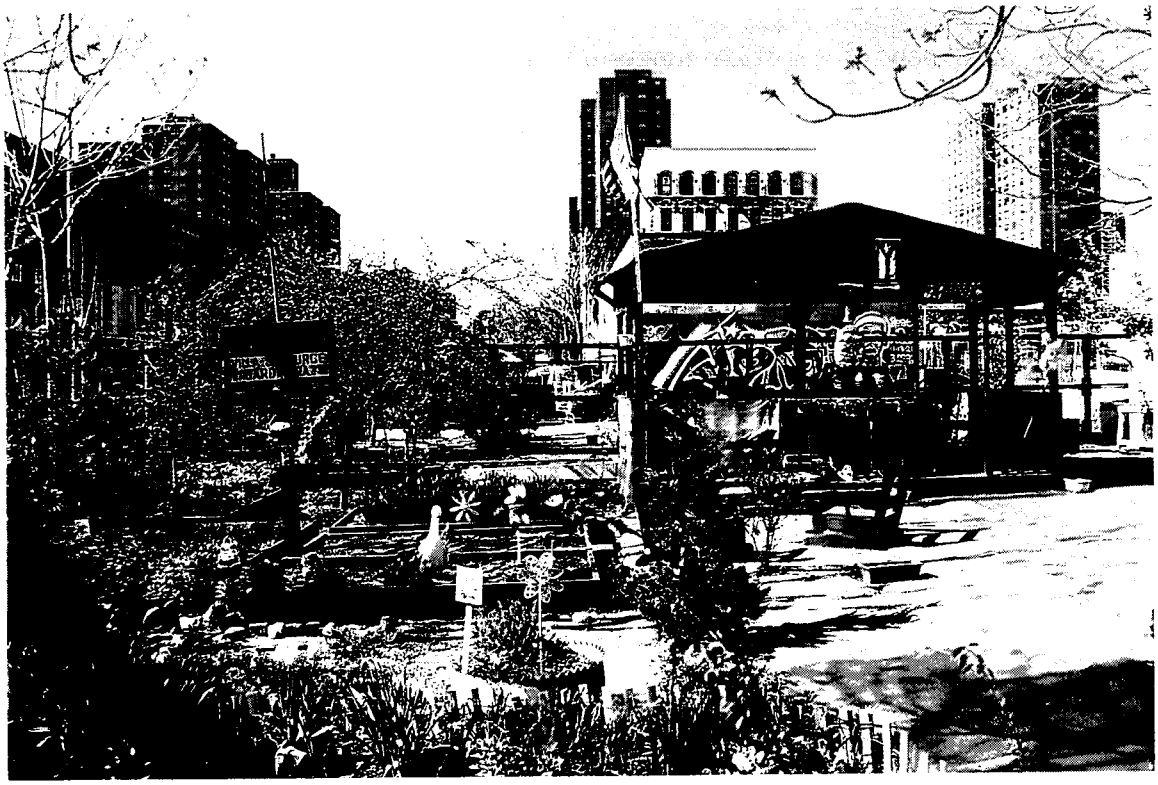
sphere of function. In his discussion of gridded space, which is also characterized as neutral, Richard Sennett also delves into inherent exclusional aspects of functionalization in the development of neutralized space. He writes: "Gridded space does more than create a blank canvas for development. It subdues those who must live in the space, but disorienting their ability to see and evaluate relationships. In this sense, the planning of neutral space is an act of dominating and subduing others."[60] Rosalyn Deutsche continues this same line of thought, going even further by politicizing functionalized space. She writes: "The functionalization of the city, which presents space as politically neutral, merely utilitarian, is, then, filled with politics. For the notion that the city speaks for itself conceals the identity of those who speak through the city."[61] The idea of a legitimate public space that perpetuates exclusion based on its fulfillment of a specific function is an oxymoron in the true sense of the word.

[60] Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (Alfred A. Knoph, Inc., 1990), p. 60
[61] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City", in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-Ha & Cornel West (The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 109

6. *Las Casitas*

"If I came to New York with the intention of getting ahead.
[And] if back home it was bad, here it's even worse.
Sometimes it's the heat and other times this damn cold.
Sometimes I look like a mess slipping and sliding in the snow.
I'm not enjoying this. I'm returning to my *bohío*."

- (Miguel Angel Figueroa (El Jibarito se Adjusntas),
'Yo me vuelvo a mi bohío')



Villa-Santurce
Jardinera[62]

[62] Photographed by Harriet Moulton in Harlem, in April of 2000.

The driving force behind the representational/functionalizational level in public spatial use is the establishment of norms which guide its uses through ideological, cultural, political, social and economic manipulation. So far I have provided two examples of public spatial functionalization - one being the rules of conduct at Sony Plaza Public Space and the other being ex-Mayor Koch's functionalization of Grand Central Station. My third example is of the Puerto Rican gardens and *casitas* found in areas in New York City, such as the Bronx, the Lower East Side and Harlem.

Again, what I am interested in here are the ambiguities in the reading and uses of public space - in what the discourse of functionalized public space reveals about its legitimizing motives - as well as the prohibitive aspect of spatial legitimization. In other words, I am interested in what is revealed by the story of public spatial use as told from below. In this sense, the last example I will present here of the representational/functionalizational level can be distinguished from the first two, because the *casita* itself is a constructed spatial manifestation of this kind of story. It is a reaction to an assignment of spatial use that differs from the first two, in that the backdrop of *las casitas* is non-gentrified. Whereas Grand Central Station and the Sony Plaza Public Space are representative of gentrified public spaces, which is an inherent aspect of their paradigms of exclusion, *las casitas* are counter-spaces which challenge their surroundings by highlighting them. In other words, *las casitas* really represent the other side of the coin in terms of its relation to the first two examples.

The Puerto Rican *casitas* in New York City provide us with an example of a constructed counter-space, which completes our trilogy of written, political-rhetorical and constructed examples of the representational/functionalizational level of public spatial use. As I have discussed above, the legitimization of dominant social, cultural, political, economic and ideological norms is facilitated by the highlighting of the existence of divergent norms. One does not exist without the other - poverty and hopelessness live a parallel existence to that of gentrification and wealth, despite various attempts to de-legitimize the former through the coded domination of the

latter. We have seen this in the context of the first two examples discussed here. We saw that it is indeed quite impossible to divorce the inherent elements of poverty and hopelessness from either one of these spaces, although attempts are constantly made to do so through various practices of spatial functionalization.

The Puerto Rican *casita* is quite distinct from both of the first two examples, in that it is "a rural dwelling converted into a public place"[63], which is built in an area of devastation and dilapidation that has been cleared out area by the people who live there. They build small gardens and *casitas* or *bohíos*, the *casita* being a wood-frame structure and the *bohío* a structure made of wood, bamboo and cane with a thatched roof, that are typically found throughout the Caribbean - structural testaments to the resistance of dominant forms of spatial use. The production of these gardens and *casitas*, "create local landscapes of empowerment"[64] in which people who tend to be denied access to the dominant political practices and financial resources that dictate their own lives are able to gather in a way that lies outside the norm. The bright colors that *las casitas* are painted recall a place far removed from the dark abandoned buildings and gray concrete of their contextual setting. We can see another prime example of this type of structure and garden in the following image.

[63] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (The MIT Press, 1997), p. 35
[64] Joseph Sciorra, "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City", in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis* New York University Press, 1996), p. 66

Chenchita's Group[65]

The *casita* not only acts as a counter-space in terms of its aesthetically-centered challenging of dominant spatial and economic distribution, but also in terms of its ability to allow its reader to imagine him or herself in another time and another place. As Dolores Hayden writes: "They offer an alternative kind of social reproduction within their space, at the same time that they critique the available space, past and present, for Puerto Rican workers."[66] Joseph Sciorra also highlights the power of the *casita* to sustain and reconstitute a specific historical, cultural, political, social and economic time and place within another one. According to him, the *casita* "is similar to scrap books and quilts in that builders piece together disparate objects into a meaningful whole in order to reclaim a lost world and fix it in our consciousness."[67] In this sense, I am once again reminded of Cornel West's aspect of discernment in

[65] Photographed by Harriet Moulton in Harlem, in April of 2000.
[66] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (The MIT Press, 1997), p. 36
[67] Joseph Sciorra, "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City", in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis* New York University Press, 1996), p. 76

prophetic though, as this production of this kind of space not only retains a nuanced historical vision, it can also be characterized as a story told from below, which by the mere act of telling challenges the dominantly told story by which it tends to be overshadowed. It spatially and aesthetically keeps track of those who are bearing most of the cost in terms of both the present and the past. The brightly colored *casitas* and gardens show strong signs of life in areas that tend to be portrayed from above as either dead or unworthy of living - whether in terms of cultural, economic, political or social life.

Here, in their use of one spatial landscape in order to challenge the dominant one, *las casitas* represent a counter-space in the Lefebvrean sense. Again, in this way, *las casitas* differ quite distinctly from the other two examples of the representational/ functionalizational level of public spatial use, in that they are spaces that challenge the dominant paradigms of the arrangement and characterization of space by their mere existence. They do so not only because they clear out spaces of social, political and public action from a landscape of devastation, but also because they sustain a nuanced sense of the history of those who inhabit them. In his discussion of "Hispanicness" in terms of acceptance, discovery and appreciation of various forms of marginalized peoples' art, Timothy Luke presents an example that parallels the presence of *las casitas* in New York City. He writes: "...Hispanicness allows, on the one hand, Spanish-speaking Americans to 'come and visit the Old Country' without actually leaving the material or cultural frameworks of mainstream American culture, while, on the other hand, simulating the aura of various Latin American aesthetics for ordinary white-bread Anglos."[68] In addition, *las casitas* challenge the non-gentrified environment in which they are built by literally aestheticizing a space that was previously and intentionally devoid of any aesthetic value. Again, like Avedon's depiction of the American West as inhabited by people, *las casitas* create a reversal of the way in which we tend to be encouraged to view the areas they inhabit as well as

[68] Timothy W. Luke, *Shows of Force: Power, Politics, and Ideology in Art Exhibitions* (Duke University Press, 1992), p. 181

the people who inhabit them. The vision of the brightly colored, traditionally Caribbean *casita* living and breathing life into a space that is traditionally represented as lifeless de-familiarizes and de-legitimizes the rhetoric that defines it. In addition, the distinct Caribbean - specifically Puerto Rican - character of *las casitas* allows for the presence of an entirely different set of codes that are familiar only to the reader possessing a culturally based knowledge of a place that is both geographically and socially far removed from the context against which they are built. As such, *la casita* might be described as a spatial-rhetorical polemic - translatable into words only my means of the reading of both sets of codes: the codes which serve to define the contextual space of, in this case, Harlem, and the encoded story of *la casita*, which remains indecipherable without the necessary culturally, socially, economically, politically and ideologically based knowledge. Thus, for those spatial readers who are unable to decipher its message, *casitas* like the one in the image below simply remain "gardens" or "bungalows". In other words, they remain neutral, almost empty spaces - just as a book written in a foreign language is merely a "book" to its illiterate reader. The story inside the unreadable book remains shrouded by codes that are impossible to break without knowledge of the language used to tell it. I would characterize the same as holding true for spaces such as *casitas* - those who are unable to read them are destined to be blind to the story that lies behind the spatial book's cover, only able to decipher it as a "space".

This Out[69]

"This Out" is perhaps the most difficult of the spatial stories presented here to decipher, and when our reader is encountered with it she realizes that her own lack of familiarity with the language in which it is written makes it impossible for her to read. While her own lack of knowledge implies that her codes do not permit her to read this story with any degree of fluency, she is able to at least discern aspects which, based upon her limited and second hand knowledge of Puerto Rican culture, cause her to question. In other words, they do not go so far as to challenge or contest any of the codes that she uses in her muddled reading of this spatial text, they simply cause her to contemplate their possible significance. For example, she cannot help but wonder about the presence of the pink head that is mounted on the blue sky on

[69] Photographed by Harriet Moulton in Harlem, in April of 2000.

the wall in the background. Her limited knowledge of Puerto Rican geography allows her to assume that the mural on the wall is representative of a landscape that is familiar to those who are better equipped to read it. As Dolores Hayden notes: "Painted in coral, turquoise, or lemon yellow, these dwellings recall the colors of the Caribbean and evoke a memory of the homeland for immigrants who find themselves in Alphabet City or Spanish Harlem."[70] The white chairs and the papier maché man in the yellow jogging suit seem to our reader to also belong to the specific discourse of this distinct story, although our reader's own codes allow her only to imagine the intricacies of their meaning.

As has become clear, Barthes' codes facilitate a reading of both stories - each within the context of the other - resulting in a translation or discursive interpretation of both the space and counter-space. A crucial prerequisite of such a reading, of course, is that the reader is fluent in the language used to tell the spatial story - in other words, the reader must posses knowledge or codes with which he or she then engages in the practice of reading. The space and counter-space are impossible to divorce from one another, because, as we can see here in the example of the *casita*, each both legitimates and de-legitimates the other. A reader whose codes only allow for the reading of one space, for example, the contextual space, is only getting half of the story. In other words, whether or not a reader is able to read both stories, more than one story still exists. An English speaking reader's inability to read a Chinese book does not negate the fact that the book does indeed contain a story - it merely means that this particular reader is unable to read Chinese. The examination of the *casita* in terms of its capacity as a counter-space demands that attention be paid to both the counter-space and the larger, more dominant space that it inhabits and challenges. This impossibility of separating *la casita* from its context and the context from *la casita* is illustrated in the following image.

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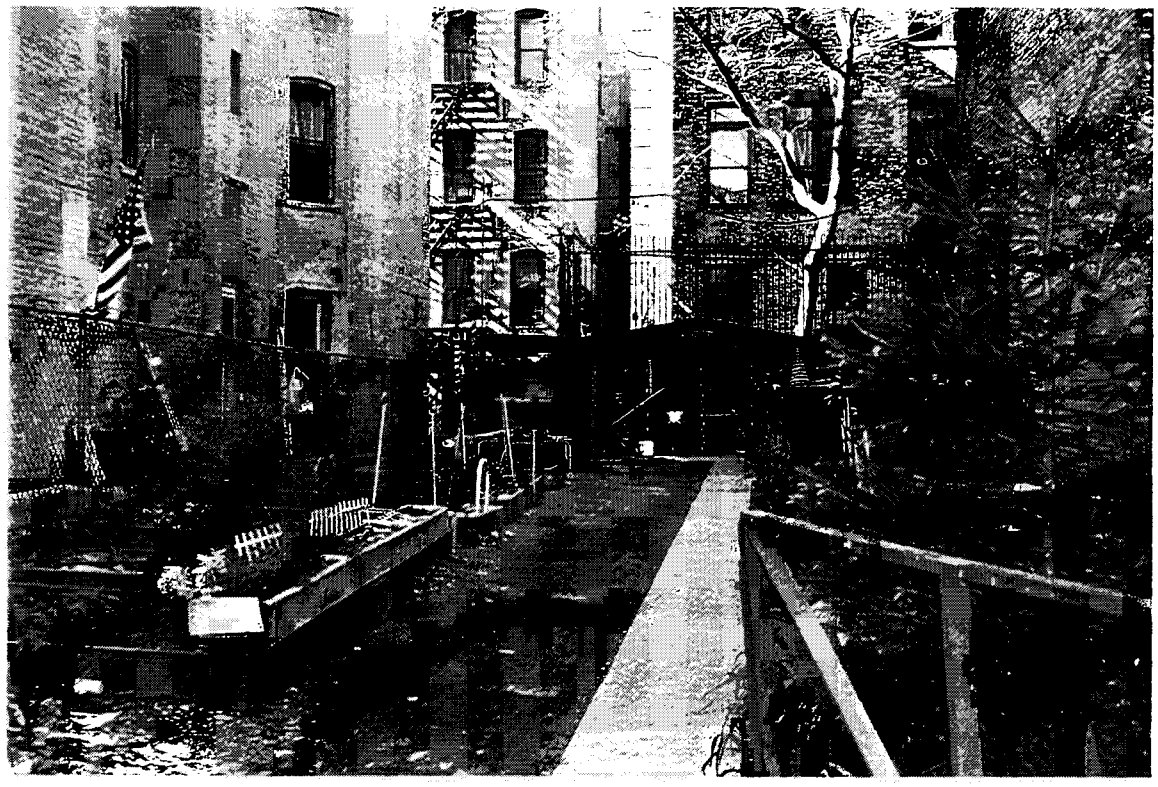
[70] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (The MIT Press, 1997), pp. 35-36



La Casita[71]

Lefebvre writes on the topic of the counter-space that: "The quest for a 'counter-space' overwhelms the supposedly ironclad distinction between 'reform' and 'revolution'. Any proposal along these lines, even the most seemingly insignificant, shakes the existing space to its foundations, along with its strategies and aims - namely, the imposition of homogeneity and transparency everywhere within the purview of power and its established order."[72] The counter-space can be characterized as social reproductions within social reproductions - spaces of contradiction to the discourse behind functionalized space. Again, limiting myself to public spaces provides spatial examples which are by nature inclusive. The existence

[71] Photographed by Harriet Moulton in Harlem, in April of 2000.
[72] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1991), p. 383

of counter-spaces within public places presents an inherently transparent kind of exclusion.

7. Who is You?

My closing words here will be brief, in that it is not my intention here to propose answers to specific questions or problems, but instead to pose open questions to be pondered by the reader of this work. I posed the question here of who is the "you" that is implied to be the user of public space? It is used as an all-inclusive "you", comprising, one would assume, the "public" when applied to the dictation of the use of public spaces. As we have already seen here, the inclusiveness of this "you" is accompanied by a wink and a smile when used in order to subtly - and often not so subtly - exclude by defining the specific capacities which (even) public spaces are defined as fulfilling. It seems clear that the "you" referred to in the Sony Plaza Public Space's rules of conduct (The following rules of conduct will be enforced so *you* may enjoy your visit to Sony Plaza in comfort & safety) is not the same "you" to whom the rules actually apply. The message sent by the plaques on the tables seems to be that the rules will be applied to the other "you" so that the real "you" may enjoy your visit to Sony Plaza in comfort and safety. The rules can be seen as discursive codes of exclusion that are legitimized by their definition as implemented for the benefit of "your" comfort and safety.

We also saw how ex-Mayor Koch's appealed to his audience of architects that "rational and reasonable" people would certainly agree that the intrinsic function of Grand Central Station is its capacity as a hub of transportation. This rhetorical example of public spatial functionalization is driven by the desire to purge the public space of the homeless people whose use of the public station diverged from Koch's definition of it as solely providing transportation. This, along with the current capacity of the Grand Central Partnership as tour-guides of the newly gentrified station in light of their history as employing quite questionable tactics in order to rid the station of its homeless population, illustrates the functionalization of this public

space. As we have seen, the functionalization of space, here public space, implies that spaces themselves speak - that they fulfill natural needs - which, as Rosalyn Deutsche notes, means that they are in fact "filled with politics."[73] The implication of inherent public spatial function conceals the uses, and thus voices, of those whose use it in a way that is divergent from the dominant assignment of function. Thus, the telling of the story of public spatial use from below - from the vantage point of those who use it differently - de-legitimizes the story told from above.

This brings us to the last example dealt with here - namely, that of the Puerto Rican *casita* as a counter-space. The *casita* differs from the first two examples in that is a constructed space that challenges the spatial environment in which it lies contextually. It highlights, and indeed politicizes its surrounding environment by implanting color where there had only been drab city-run buildings, and life where the traditional rhetoric used to describe such spaces tends to include death. It is strengthened by its strong nuanced cultural and historical sense, which inspires in its inhabitants and those readers memories of another time and another place - far removed from the streets of Spanish Harlem. In addition to this, *las casitas* act as a public spaces and social, cultural and political meeting places where there otherwise would be none. Thus, by the mere construction of this kind of counter-space, many forms of the questioning of dominant norms simultaneously exist and intermingle. The result is a constructed story told from below that serves to de-legitimize the larger story against which it is told.

8. The Socio-Symbolic Level

The socio-symbolic level logically follows the progression of the analysis of the representational/functionalizational level, as its examination presupposes the existence of encoded norms in the viewer - the *studium* brought by the viewer to the

[73] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City", in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-Ha & Cornel West (The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 109

practice of viewing or reading the image. It differs from the representational/functionalizational level, which focuses more on the way in which constructed space, in this case public space, is representative of social, political, economic, cultural and ideological associations and practices - dominant norms that are applied to the use of public space. The socio-symbolic level provides another dimension in the inquiry into the dominant and divergent uses of public space, in that it is a realm of examination which inspires and in some cases even forces emotion and passion, through the potential interruption of the *studium* by the *punctum*, which is unique to the reading of the image - here, images of public spatial use. The *punctum*, this interruption or punctuation of the *studium*, only reveals itself to the storyteller who reenacts what I would characterize here as the dramatic crescendo in the image story. It is precisely the potential appearance of the *punctum* that allows for the conceptualization of the photographic image as representative of the political art par excellence in the Arendtian sense. In other words, as we have seen above, the encoded assignment of use (in the examples provided above in the specific forms of textual-rhetorical functionalization - Sony Plaza rules of conduct; verbal-rhetorical functionalization - Ed Koch's definition of use of Grand Central Station; and the counter-space of the Puerto Rican *casita*) works to legitimize exclusion through functionalization. The socio-symbolic level - the examination of images of public spatial use - refuses to be shrouded and covered up - it is impossible to divorce emotion and feeling - "ethnological knowledge", as Barthes writes, from the viewing of the image when the reader becomes captive of the *punctum*. For while its *studium* and *punctum* differ amongst the infinite range of possible viewers, the reading of an image story always retains the potential to excite, which makes it simultaneously completely distinct from and parallel to the representational/functionalizational level. In other words, the main distinction between the two in this sense surrounds the *punctum*, as the representational/functionalizational level includes the *studium* - the spatial textual reader uses the codes when engaging in the process of reading - but lacks the potential appearance of the *punctum*.

The viewer - and more importantly these encoded norms - are really the key to unlocking the potential politics within the image. I have discussed and introduced Barthes' codes above and applied them to my discussion and analysis of the functionalization of public space. I will apply them again here, although, as will become clear in the examination of the images presented below, they differ quite significantly from the codes used in the reading of the public spaces presented above.

In the context of this work, we can strengthen the dimension of continuity in terms of the application of the codes by allowing the same hypothetical reader who journeyed through the aforementioned representational/functionalization examples to be our guide through the examples here in the analysis of the images in the socio-symbolic level. Here, however, in the viewing of the image in terms of the reading of its story, the reader will be joined by - or will exhibit elements of - the Arendtian storyteller. The storyteller emerges at the same point as the *punctum* interrupts the *studium*, causing what can be compared to a dramatic crescendo, in which the storyteller reenacts the plot of the image's story, thus conveying "the full meaning, not so much of the story itself, but of the 'heroes' who reveal themselves in it."[74] Again, as I noted earlier in the context of my discussion of the uses of the codes as a guide through public spatial use, their ambiguity allows them to be applied to any "text", which above were the examples of Sony Plaza Public Space, Grand Central Station and *las casitas*, and below are the images used here in the examination of the socio-symbolic level. But what kind of texts are they?

Barthes characterizes as ideal text as one in which: "the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are

[74] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 187

indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language."[75] Although the texts presented here most certainly exhibit qualities that are inherent to the definition of a text as ideal - they could perhaps be described as texts in which the mobilized codes extend as far as the eye can reach, and in which meaning is accidental and infinite - they seem to me to be more closely related to what Barthes characterizes as "moderately plural (i.e., merely polysemous) texts".[76] This is so, because Barthes' ideal text "is not a question of conceding some meanings, of magnanimously acknowledging that each one has its share of truth; it is a question, against all in-difference, of asserting the very existence of plurality, which is not that of the true, the probable or even the possible."[77] For, I see the revelation of some aspect of truth - plural aspects of truth - as quite central to the reading of the texts in the context of both the representational/functionalizational and socio-symbolic levels of the examination of public spatial use. Unlike the ideal text, which Barthes sees as "triumphantly plural" and "unimpoverished by any constraint of representation (of imitation),"[78] the reading of the texts in this work tend to actually center on the reader's mimesis of the story within, whereby also revealing the identities of the stories' heroes. However, similarly to the ideal text, the aspect of plurality - of systems of meaning that are naturally as infinite as language - is the main characteristic of the use of the codes in the practice of reading.

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[75] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), pp. 3-4
[76] ibid., p. 6
[77] ibid., p. 6
[78] ibid., p. 5

9. The Arendtian Storyteller

"The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves..."

-Hannah Arendt

Hannah Arendt describes the reality of the public realm as relying on "the presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised"[79]. She notes the position of the common world as a common meeting ground in which all inhabitants inhabit different locations and see and hear from different perspectives. The subjective aspect of the private realm has the potential to grow to be extremely strong - even potentially being felt or sensed within the sphere of the public realm. While she recognizes this potential strength, she emphasizes the fact that while the private realm and the actions occurring within its confines can potentially reverberate within the public realm, they "can never replace the reality rising out of the sum total of aspects presented by one object to a multitude of spectators. Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear"[80]. Similarly to this notion, Barthes sees the aspect of plurality as imperative to the codes used by the reader when reading a given text. Just as the Arendtian worldly reality truly and reliably appears through the plurality of spectators and perspectives, the reading of any text - here, public spatial and image based texts - requires plurality if it is to challenge the existence and use of dominant norms. It is this specific idea within both Arendt's and Barthes' discourses upon which I focus in the context of this work. In doing so I will also justify the photographic image as both a potentially public space and text in this sense.

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[79] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 57
[80] ibid., p. 57

The photographic image, similarly to Arendt's description of the reality of the public realm, relies on the presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in order to render it "real", in the sense that it can be characterized as what Arendt refers to as "political art par excellence"[81]. One way in which it does this, as I will discuss in greater detail below, is by challenging existing dogmas of functionalization, which we take for granted as being representative of what is real - what Barthes characterizes as "a nauseating mixture of common opinions, a smothering layer of received ideas...."[82] I see this process as taking place in the act of an image being viewed by a viewer. Again, the following main interrelated elements are central in my discussion of this process: the notion of functionalization as the use of a set of dominant encoded norms, which are brought to the image by the viewer/reader during the act of viewing/reading; the image as presenting a space which is open to multitudinous perspectives and interpretations, and which thus has the potential to be decentralizing and political; and the Arendtian notion of the life story of the agent (which is manifested in the image) as being revealed through its repetition by the storyteller (the viewer), which also includes the inherence of mimesis and repetition in the transposition of the political realm of human life into art. This revelation of the life story of the agent by the storyteller's mimesis of the story is also paralleled here to the Barthesian practice of reading. The photograph, like drama, can be the object of three practices: "to do, to undergo, to look. The *Operator* is the Photographer. The *Spectator* is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs - in magazines and newspapers, in books, albums, archives... And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object, which I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the Photograph..."[83]

The space of the photographic image is unique in its ability to transcend the inherent separateness of the private and public realms described by Arendt. Again, she notes

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[81] Arendt, however, is referring to the theater as the political art par excellence. Ibid., p. 188
[82] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 206
[83] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 9

that while the subjective aspects of the private realm have the potential to grow so strong that their presence is felt within the public realm, they "can never replace the reality rising out of the sum total of aspects presented by one object to a multitude of spectators"[84]. It is my contention that the image has the potential to be the materialization of the juxtaposition of both the private and public realms through its ability to transgress the fissures which result from the multitudinous connotative codes created by functionalization. The act of viewing the image includes what Arendt might consider prerequisites of the transformation of the subjective aspect of private realm into the public realm. The act of viewing - of images being seen and heard by others (and ourselves) - constitutes their reality. The subjective nature of the image, which is born out of its existence as the materialization of a subjective perspective, becomes real through its transformation into public form and its subjection to mimesis and repetition through the act of viewing. As Arendt notes: "Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life - the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses - lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance"[85].

I see the image as presenting a space - a realm - which need not necessarily be deprivatized or deindividualized in order for it to acquire characteristics of publicness according to Arendt's criteria. For while it is rendered real through the act of repetitious viewing, the retelling of the life story of the agent, if you will, its subjection to multifarious perspectives does not necessarily rob it of possible characteristics of individualization. On the contrary, the image sustains its potential individuality and characteristics of privatization even under the gaze of viewers, thus in its shape as fitting public appearance, and is subsequently deemed "real". This is a notion to which I will return later in more detail, but the main motivation for this claim is that I

[84] ibid., p. 57
[85] ibid., p. 50

characterize the image as representative of what Arendt later refers to as the "political art par excellence"[86].

In his discussion on the political rhetoric of photography, Michael Shapiro notes that: "of all modes of representation, it is the one most easily assimilated into the discourses of knowledge and truth, for it is thought to be an unmediated simulacrum, a copy of what we consider the 'real'."[87] Shapiro alludes to the fact that the photographic image in itself is a copy of the real - an arrested moment in real time. He emphasizes the potential of the photographic image to serve as a powerful genre of political discourse, noting its ability to "allow other than the usual or canonical interpretive codes to enter into the interpretive economy of the contemplation of the image"[88]. He refers to Barthes' codes in terms of their resulting in the "congruence between photographing something and looking at it,"[89] which creates the tendency for photographic images to be reconciled with a shared cultural and social order. This occurs based upon the widely shared cultural codes, which are sustained as dominant and natural norms. While Arendt suggests the necessity of the presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear as a prerequisite for assuring ourselves if the reality of the world around us, Shapiro focuses more on the inherent power of the image as a tool used to invoke the questioning of accepted social and indeed political norms. Of course, this position also fundamentally requires the presence of a viewer/reader, who brings his or her own connotative codes to the image, for without the reader the text - here, the image text - does not signify.

One of the main themes in my own work on the space of the photographic image as both political and politicizing is its juxtaposed character. Here, I combine the notion of the image as inherently representative of the real, proposed by Shapiro, and the

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[86] ibid., p. 188
[87] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 124
[88] ibid., p. 124
[89] ibid., p. 128

Arendtian and Barthesian concept that the recognition of this reality requires a plurality of vision and context.

In my examination here of the socio-symbolic level, I focus on images which are representative of the social condition of poverty within the setting of concrete public urban space. My decision to limit the images to the context of poverty within public spatial settings is related to the following ideas: the juxtaposed aspects of poverty as a condition which is both socially and politically constructed; the functionalization of public urban space; and the photographic image of poverty within public space as a politicized discourse of human lived experience and social, political, cultural, economic and ideological functionalization through the upholding of dominant norms or codes.

Arendt characterizes speech as "the disclosure of the 'who'" and action as "the setting of a new beginning"[90]. She describes the juxtaposition of these two aspects as the beginning of a process which leads to the emergence of the unique life story of an agent by the mimesis of the story by the storyteller. She notes that the reading of these life stories can take the form of "documents and monuments, they may be visible in use objects or art works, they may be told and retold and worked into all kinds of material"[91]. Arendt distinguishes between the author of a life story and its subject or "hero" - its agent. In her defense of this notion she alludes to the Platonic god, a symbol of the idea that stories which are real, as opposed to fiction, have no authors per se, but rather agents or heroes, who are revealed through action and speech. In order to become aware of who this agent is we must know the life story of which he or she is the hero, and this life story is revealed by the storyteller. As I mentioned, Arendt presents the possibility of this as taking the form of a work of art - or rather as taking place *within* a work of art. While Arendt describes the art form in which this is most prevalent as drama (deriving from the Greek verb 'dran', which

[90] ibid., p. 184
[91] ibid., p. 184

literally means "to act"[92]), because of its element of the imitation and reenactment of the plot of the hero, I see it as possible within the space of the photographic image.

Firstly, photographic imagery as an art form clearly includes the aspect of mimesis inherent to drama - images can be mechanically repeated or copied endlessly. Secondly, drama's characteristic as an imitation of action seems to be inherently inferior to the possibility to suspend a moment in real time through the technical act of photography. There is no longer a need to imitate action, as is the case with drama, in that photography - and also moving pictures - allow the story to be told by the storyteller him or herself. The image becomes an objective bridge between storyteller and viewer - the subjective perspective of the agent and the multitude of perspectives which constitute its reality. This brings us back to the inherent reality of the photographic image, which can be described here as a form of biography or life story.

Now we can tie this to some of the aforementioned ideas by examining the potential of the photographic image to be a space in which there are inherent possibilities to politicize and challenge the dominant codes, which Barthes' refers to as characteristic of bourgeois ideology and which he sees as turning culture into nature and appearing to establish a reality that is then generalized as "Life"[93]. In limiting my focus to the concrete and ideological realm of poverty within urban public space I attempt to create a visually and discursively located account of its features, both private and public aspects as well as their juxtaposition.

My goal is to produce a work of life, if you will - a work of visual and narrative art which challenges dominant practices of categorization and functionalization, both of people and space. Again, as has already become clear, the character of this work is juxtapositional - meshing space and its inhabitants in order to defamiliarize what we

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[92] ibid., p. 187

[93] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 206

have come to assume is real or natural. Using photographic practice in addition to the above rhetorical, verbal and written examples in order to explore the uses of public urban space by various groups of people allows for such a process of defamiliarization and delegitimization. Where this process really takes place in terms of the reading of image texts is in the act of viewing. Again, returning to Arendt, the viewing of the image by multitudes of people is the bridge between the private and the public - the presence of multitudinous perspectives assures the reality of what we know. It is a confirmation of the agent's life story as told by the storyteller, and it is a space of politicization. The image is a meeting of men, as it were, although the meeting is mediated through the story as depicted or represented in the arrested moment of the image - the story told by the storyteller.

Again, in his discussion of the political rhetoric of photography, Michael Shapiro describes Richard Avedon's photographs of the American West as effecting a "startling reversal of the photographic rhetoric with which we have come to apprehend the West"[94]. One of the ways in which Avedon achieves this effect is by presenting images of people where we are used to seeing only expansive landscapes. In other words, he literally filled space which had traditionally been represented as empty. In doing so he forces the viewer to fill what has historically been connotatively coded as devoid with people, thus challenging an existing dogma of the functionalization of Western space. He writes: "Insofar as we are encouraged to have the West as landscape/wilderness and space, we are rendered inattentive to the West as something else - people"[95].

This notion of the decentralizing rhetorical potential of the photographic space is also expressed by Edward Said in his discussion of the politics of interpretation contained in his essay entitled Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies. Said proposes that we

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[94] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988) p. 154
[95] ibid., p. 156

"use the visual faculty (which also happens to be dominated by visual media such as television, news photography and commercial film, all of them fundamentally immediate, 'objective' and ahistorical) to restore the nonsequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity as fundamental components of meaning in representation"[96]. He provides an example of a study of photographic images of Algerian harem women taken by their captors - "the pictorial capture of colonized people by colonizer"[97] - as representative of the practice of challenging dominantly produced dogmas through functionalization. This particular study was done by a young Algerian sociologist, whose own connotative codes - his own history - could be described as being reflected in the images upon which his study was focused. I see this study as possible to characterize as representative of the Arendtian notion of the practice of the storyteller retelling the agent's story in order to reveal his or her real identity. It provides an exemplary illustration of the potential of the image to be a political art par excellence through the revelation of the agent's life story in terms of the "backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants"[98]. This idea can be directly applied to the context of my own inquiry into the multitude of uses of public space in order to challenge its functionalization, specifically within the context of the juxtaposition of poverty and wealth within the realm of urban public space.

The act of viewing the image includes the aspect of discernment, which I discussed above with regard to the representational/functionalizational level of public spatial use. As I noted, in his collection of speeches and essays entitles Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times, Cornel West discusses the four components of his "prophetic thought". At the heart of the element of discernment lies the capacity for grasping the analytic features of the present in light of the past. He writes that it is "a moment in which one must accent a nuanced historical sense", specifically, "an ability to keep

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[96] Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies", in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Bay Press, 1983), p. 158

[97] ibid., p. 158

[98] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 192

track, to remain attuned to the ambiguous legacies and hybrid cultures in history"[99]. This notion can be directly related to both the Arendtian idea that only the storyteller can know the true identity of the agent, as well as to the concept of the significance of Barthes' codes in the practice of reading either a concrete or image based text. In the context of Arendt, it is related to "the backward glance of the historian"[100], and according to Barthes, the codes of connotation by which the reader refers when reading a given text also have an historical element, in that they are culturally and socially enforced norms which can also be traced historically.

As I have suggested above, perhaps we can characterize the viewer as inhabiting the role of the storyteller in the Arendtian sense. In other words, the viewer is the narrator of the agent's story insofar as he or she perceives it through the act of viewing it from his or her own historical (or code based) perspective. Arendt describes action as revealing itself fully "only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it is about than the participants"[101]. Returning to the notion of the reenactment of the life story in a work of art - epitomized by drama, specifically Greek tragedy - she refers to the Aristotelian notion that the actors who reenact the story are the only ones who are able to convey the true identity of the "heroes" who are revealed in the plot. She goes on to write that: "This is also why the theater is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art"[102]. Again, I propose that the photographic image, specifically photographic images of public spatial use within the scope of this work, can be seen as having replaced the theater as the political genre of art par excellence. The viewer of the photographic image has replaced the actor of Greek tragedy in the role of the storyteller. In other words, the action represented by or in the photograph reveals itself fully to the storyteller, who here is the viewer, that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who views from an

[99] Cornel West, *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times* (Common Courage Press, 1993), p. 4
[100] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 192
[101] ibid., p. 192
[102] ibid., p. 188

analytical position of discernment by bringing his or her connotative codes to the image.

This idea of the emergence of the cultural codes proposed by Barthes is referred to by Shapiro in connection with his discussion of the politicizing potential encoded within photographic discourse. He describes the codes as being neither "natural" nor "artificial" but rather "historical"[103] - alluding to the fact that the image, no matter what its content, does not in itself possess the historical connotation or signs which can only be brought to the image by the viewer or storyteller. Within the context of images of poverty and urban space, this historical connotation tends to be enforced in a number of ways, which tend to be political, cultural, social, ideological and economic. One form taken by such connotative enforcement is the representation of poverty in a way which serves to legitimate it as a fundamentally existent social condition - as natural, as we saw in the above examples of Sony Plaza, Grand Central Station and *Las Casitas*. One of the ways in which it is represented, of course, is as an inherent component of capitalist society - a legitimization of wealth - adding to its reality by providing a necessary opposite. It is rarely represented in any light other than as a means to this end - it is generally something which we attempt to keep out of view or hide. Perhaps one reason why this is so is that images of poverty provoke us to question the distribution of wealth and misfortune as well as our own position within this social order. In other words, the have the potential to provoke us into challenging these dominant norms by presenting plural perspectives of both spatial use and representations of poverty. Another way in which these codes are enforced is through the functionalization of space, which we saw above. This is perhaps a more concrete version of the functionalization of poverty as a social condition - again - two sides of the same coin. The functionalization of space, specifically of urban public space, assigns meaning to literally concrete space. Doing so tends to have the effect of legitimating only certain uses for space which is characterized as "public" -

[103] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988) p. 154

simultaneously silencing those whose social position happens to be that of the legitimator of wealth - in other words, poor.

One example of this rhetoric of legitimization is provided by Rosalyn Deutsche in her discussion of the neutralization of homelessness in New York City, which I outlined above. She describes the neutralization of the effects of homelessness on viewers of urban images as an attempt to "restore to the city a surface calm that belies underlying contradictions"[104]. In other words, the legitimization of social and economic uneven development in the city is facilitated by a delegitimization of homelessness and poverty. Again, as prosperity necessarily goes hand in hand with poverty, one is used to legitimate the other through visual and rhetorical manipulation. Deutsche proposes the notion that the assignment of inherent meaning to urban space facilitates the assumption that its existence is limited to its capacity to fulfill specific needs, thus proclaiming it functional as opposed to social. This, of course, is the main means of its legitimization as intended to serve the strictly function oriented needs of the majority of its inhabitants, simultaneously delegitimating uses which might fall outside of this sphere of function. She writes: "The functionalization of the city, which presents space as politically neutral, merely utilitarian, is, then, filled with politics. For the notion that the city speaks for itself conceals the identity of those who speak through the city"[105].

I propose that the concealment of the identity of those who speak though the city - of the Arendtian "agent" - can be revealed within images depicting various uses of urban space through the practice of their reading by the viewer/reader. As will become evident below, I see the appearance of the storyteller as generally dependent upon the appearance of the *punctum*. The viewer or storyteller brings his or her own cultural codes to the image through the act of reading it, and it is through these codes that the

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[104] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City", in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-Ha & Cornel West (The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), p. 108
[105] ibid., p. 109

facets of manipulation through functionalization and neutralization can potentially be revealed.

10. *Studium* and *Punctum*

"I foresee that I shall have to wake from this bad dream even more uncomfortably; for what society makes of my photograph, what it reads there, I do not know (in any case, there are so many readings of the same face)..."

- Roland Barthes

Again, the main distinction between the reading of a concrete spatial text and an image text is really the potential emergence of the *punctum*, which punctuates the *studium* in the viewing of an image and storms the viewer with accidental pricks and stings which shoot from the scene itself. The *studium*, which is the culturally based knowledge, or codes, used by the reader when consciously choosing, based upon this knowledge, to form an opinion of a given text is applicable to both the reading of an image text and a spatial text, as we saw above in the examination of the representational/functionalization level of public spatial use. Again, in this work the *studium* refers to the culturally, politically, socially, historically and economically driven interest in a certain image text or public spatial text. The interest in terms of the image text is of course in what it portrays - what it represents - here, public spatial use - both defined and divergent. In other words, there is a inherently direct correlation between forms of representational and cultural knowledge and the codes used by the reader as the paradigm of his or her interpretation of the content of the text in question. As Frank Webter notes: "When we recognize culture as wedded to communication we realize that decoding is a process of interpretation in which the viewer selects and reads symbols by way of their cultural knowledge."[106] This notion refers, of course, to the *studium*, and is applicable in the context of this work to both

[106] Frank Webster, *The New Photography: Responsibility in Visual Communication* (Rivtrum Press, Inc., 1985), p. 134

the examination of the representational/functionalizational and socio-symbolic levels of public spatial use. The appearance of the *punctum* is simultaneously dependent upon yet unrelated to the codes used by the reader in the process of interpretation.

The *punctum*, which Barthes characterizes as "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me),"[107] is an inherently emotional and passionate interruption of the *studium*, which I see as really only possible in the reading of an image text by virtue of the photograph's distinction from the spatial text as the political art par excellence. This is so because the photograph presents a scenario that can be characterized as parallel to the Arendtian and Aristotelian conceptualization of drama as the only art form in which the full and true meaning "not so much of the story itself, but of the 'heroes' who reveal themselves in it."[108] In other words, the reenactment or mimesis of the identities of the agents in the public spatial story - the users of public space in this case - can only fully be revealed by the imitation of their acting, which I see as happening in the act of viewing or reading the image text. This is the main distinction between the examination and analysis of public spatial use through verbal and textual rhetorical means - as was done in the examples above - and the examination and analysis of images of public spatial use. The Barthesian reader who guided us through the examples presented in the representational/functionalizational level remains limited to the realm of the *studium*, unscathed by the pricks and bruises inflicted by the *punctum*, which is only potentially present in the viewing or reading of an image text.

10.1 "NY"

The *studium* is a conscious interest taken in a photograph based upon a knowledge - a familiarity - with the field. The reader applies his or her knowledge of a body of information that is contained and represented within the image - without which he or she would certainly be incapable of recognizing the *studium*, which would result in a

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[107] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 27
[108] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 187

lack of interest in the image. Barthes writes: "It is by *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions."[109] In order to help illustrate the presence of the *studium* and *punctum* in terms of the reading of a public spatial image text, let us imagine our reader's encounter with the following images. Let us assume that our reader, viewing a selection of images, chooses to focus her attention on the following two. She consciously bases this decision on the provocation of some degree of interest in them based upon knowledge she possesses of their subject matter.

"NY"

When encountering this first image, our reader finds herself focusing her gaze upon it based upon her recognition of the scene played out within its borders. She recognizes the context of the stage upon which it takes place, the city street, and she is culturally

[109] ibid., p. 26

familiar with the genre of story that is contained within it. She sees a small piece of urban street that is occupied by seven actors (three of whom, at the right side of the image, are together) - five separate mini-scenes on a single stage. She senses the cold, despite the bright sun lighting the stage from the right. This knowledge that she possesses and applies to her reading of the image - her *studium* - is inherently coded; it is part of the rapport between the viewer/reader and the image story. As Michael Shapiro writes in his own discussion of the notion that the image itself is incapable of signifying without the codes that accompany the reader's gaze: "Given the relative coherence of those codes, there is a congruence between photographing something and looking at it, and thus there is a tendency for the photograph to be reconciled with the social order."[110]

The reconciliation of the image with the social order based upon the generality of the codes with which it is read implies a phenomenon that is quite parallel to the functionalization of space - here, public space - which is the focus of the first section of this work. The codes applied by our reader here illustrate this similarity quite well: she consciously identifies with the story that is played out on the image's stage based upon her familiarity with its content. In other words, similarly to the way in which our reader previously engaged in a reading of Sony Plaza Public Space as inherently public - blind to its functionalization through the assigned fulfillment of a specific politically, economically, ideologically, culturally and socially driven rhetoric of exclusion - she does the same when reading images of public spatial use. The difference, however - the specificity of the image text - is in the potential appearance of the *punctum*, which makes it an inherently political form of art.

She consciously identifies with the story told in the image based on her familiarity with it and the codes she uses in deciphering its content. She is taken by surprise when she feels the initial prick that shoots out of the image at her, piercing her

[110] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 128

conscious control over her reading of the scene. What detail is it that catches her attention, that punctuates *her* as much as her reading of the image? She is unmoved by the lack of interest shown by the other actors toward the man with the shopping cart - her codes and her knowledge of and familiarity with the city stage cause her to remain unfazed by what he represents - his legitimization of the social, political, economic and cultural wealth which contextualizes his poverty. She is transfixed by the "NY" symbol on the hat that he wears - it is her *punctum*. Again, the *punctum's* prick is unconscious on the part of the reader - she is incapable of preventing the sting of that detail which interrupts her *studium* and arouses an emotion in her that the scene itself does not. Perhaps her *punctum* stems from the accidental irony behind the "NY" symbol on the hat - she sees it as present by mere chance - it could just as well have been a hat with no logo at all. The irony that pricks her is obvious: the "NY" on his hat symbolizes support for a baseball team that is directly and strongly identifiable with the city itself. This identification seems to her to heighten what she recognizes as poverty based upon her knowledge of the image's context. She applies the codes, her *studium*, which tell her that his poverty is impossible to divorce from the political, cultural, ideological, economical and social factors which serve to allow its existence. Her *punctum* - the punctuation of the "NY" in her reading of this familiar scene - is somehow reminiscent of the counter-space of the *casita*, in that its presence seems to simultaneously legitimate and de-legitimate the contextual environment in which it exists. Similarly to the way in which the brightly colored *casitas* highlight the dilapidated backdrop that represents their stage, the "NY" symbol worn in the center of the man's head seems to her to heighten the drama of the scene itself.

Thus, our reader, now also acting as the transient host to the storyteller as a result of the pricking of the *punctum*, reveals something about the plot of the story that the agents on the stage are incapable of revealing themselves. As Arendt writes: "All accounts told by the actors themselves, though they may in rare cases give an entirely trustworthy statement of intentions, aims, and motives, become more useful source material in the historian's hands and can never match his story in significance and

truthfulness. What the storyteller narrates must necessarily be hidden from the actor himself, at least as long as he is in the act or caught in its consequences, because to him the meaningfulness of his act is not the story that follows. Even though stories are the inevitable results of action, it is not the actor but the storyteller who perceives and 'makes' the story."[111] Thus, here, the storyteller's narration of the story includes the *punctum* of the "NY" symbol on the actor's hat, which indeed remains hidden from the man himself. The storyteller's perception of the meaning of the story, as well as her mimesis of it through the act of narration, is manifested through her application of her knowledge and familiarity with the subject matter - her codes or *studium* - which is then interrupted in this case by the prick of the "NY" symbol. Her reading and reenactment of this story illustrates this Arendtian notion of the revelation of the true story as only possible through the storyteller.

10.2 "Brooklyn Bridge"

"Brooklyn Bridge"

[111] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 192

As our reader begins reading this image, she once again finds herself familiar with its Spectrum - "the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object".[112] She recognizes the stage as the bridge connecting Manhattan and Brooklyn. As with the first image, she senses the cold air despite the presence of the sun. There is nothing too out of the ordinary about the story told in this image - people crossing from one borough into another on a cold day in New York. This is her *studium*. She knows that this element of her interest in this particular image is perceived through her familiarity and as a consequence of her knowledge or cultural codes about its subject matter. It is a field which can be "more or less stylized, more or less successful, depending on the photographer's skill or luck, but it always refers to a classical body of information;"[113] -her classical body of information.

Although perhaps to a lesser degree than in the first image, our reader is pricked by a small detail of this image, too. For a reason that eludes her consciously, her *punctum* is the backpack worn by the man in the brown jacket - the man without a hat. This specific *punctum* arouses in our reader a sense that this man and his companions are possibly foreign, which in turn causes her to add an aspect to the story told in the image that stems from her own experiences outside of it. Her *punctum*, the straps of the backpack carried by the man, represent a possible explanation for the look on his face as he passes the man in the red jacket who is pushing his cart-full of belongings - maybe his cart-full of life - across the bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn. The straps of the backpack cause our reader to wonder whether the man in the brown jacket has crossed an ocean in order to get to this spot - to be confronted with the man in the red jacket. The *punctum*, has the potential power to add another dimension to the reading of the image that would otherwise remain limited to the recognition of the *studium*. As Barthes writes: "However lighting-like it may be, the *punctum* has, more or

[112] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 9
[113] ibid., pp. 25-26

less potentially, a power of expansion. This power is often metonymic."[114] He goes on to describe an instance in which he himself experienced this sense of expansion when pricked by a detail in a specific image. "There is a photograph by Kertész (1921) which shows a blind gypsy violinist being led by a boy; now what I see, by means of this 'thinking eye' which makes me add something to the photograph, is the dirt road; its texture gives me the certainty of being in Central Europe; I perceive the referent (here, the photograph really transcends itself: is this not the sole proof of its art? To annihilate itself as *medium*, to be no longer a sign but the thing itself?), I recognize, with my whole body, the straggling villages I passed through on my long ago travels in Hungary and Romania."[115]

A. Kertész: The Violinist's Tune. Abony, Hungary, 1921

[114] ibid., p. 45
[115] ibid., p. 45

The *punctum* by which Barthes is pricked here is a detail that actually encompasses a large area of the image itself, thus highlighting the insignificance of the physical size of the detail - it still remains a prick or "an explosion that makes a little star on the plane of the text or the photograph".[116] I find Barthes' notion of the ability of the referent - the *punctum* - to cause the image to transcend and annihilate itself as a mere medium and undergo a metamorphosis from a sign of something to the actual thing itself as central to the intricately woven relationship between the reader/Spectator, the photographer/Operator, and the object/Spectrum. As in our reader's reading of the "Brooklyn Bridge" image, and most definitely also in the case of the Shooting Back images, her *punctum* adds a dimension or expansion to the image that allows it to transcend itself as a mere medium and become assimilated with reality. It ceases to be a mere sign and literally becomes what it used to merely represent.

[116] ibid., p. 49

10.3 Koen Wessing: Nicaragua. 1979

In his discussion of the *punctum* in his reading of this image of Nicaraguan soldiers on patrol on a street ravaged by rebellion, he notes the presence of the two nuns in the background of the image - for him they are the *punctum* that interrupts his *studium*.

Koen Wessing: Nicaragua. 1979[117]

His knowledge of the scene - the *studium*, or the codes he applies when reading it - do not move him. He writes: "I understood at once that its existence (its 'adventure') derived from the co-presence of two discontinuous elements, heterogeneous in that they did not belong to the same world (no need to proceed to the point of contrast): the soldiers and the nuns."[118] At a later point, however, he includes the presence of

[117] This photograph was taken in 1979 in Nicaragua by Koen Wessing and is taken from Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 22
[118] ibid., p. 23

the nuns in this image as an example of the accidental nature of the detail that is the *punctum*, noting the impossibility of positing a specific rule with regard to the connection between the *studium* and the *punctum*, writing that: "It is a matter of co-presence, that is all one can say: the nuns 'happened to be there,' passing in the background when Wessing photographed the Nicaraguan soldiers".[119]

I sense an interesting link here between this notion and the Arendtian characterization of drama as the political art par excellence. Barthes goes on to write that: "from the viewpoint of reality (which is perhaps that of the *Operator*), a whole causality explains the presence of the 'detail': the Church implanted in these Latin American countries, the nuns allowed to circulate as nurses, etc.; but from my *Spectator's* viewpoint, the detail is offered by chance and for nothing; the scene is in no way 'composed' according to a creative logic; the photograph is doubtless dual, but this duality is the motor of no 'development,' as happens in classical discourse."[120] I find the similarity as lying in the Barthesian distinction between the reality, which he characterizes as perhaps representative of the story told by the *Operator*, and the non-composed nature of the same story from the perspective of the *Spectator*. We can relate this to the Arendtian concept of the dramatic work as only coming to life when it is enacted on stage. The fact that the Barthesian *Operator's* viewpoint includes an entire causality which explains the presence of the *Spectator's punctum* does not detract from the accidental nature of its appearance, which is indeed crucial to its role as an interruption of the *studium*. In other words, similarly to the Arendtian notion that only the speakers who reenact the plot of a story can fully reveal its meaning, and that the identity of the agents in a story can only be revealed by the mimesis of their acting, the Barthesian *Spectator* is the only one who can reveal the true nature of the *punctum*, for it remains shrouded until it springs from the image and pricks the *Spectator*. The true meaning of the story and the intangible identities of the agents also remain concealed in the image until reenacted by the reader through the act of

[119] ibid., p. 42
[120] ibid., p. 42

viewing. It is in this sense and at this moment that the Barthesian reader becomes the ephemeral host to the Arendtian storyteller.

In terms of the Barthesian notion of the viewpoint of reality perhaps being that of the *Operator*, we can distinguish an element of contradiction between the role of the Barthesian reader and that of the Arendtian storyteller in the context of the reading and mimesis of the story played out on the stage of the image text. Arendt writes that: "The fictional story reveals a maker just as every work of art clearly indicates that it was made by somebody; this does not belong to the character of the story itself but only to the mode in which it came into existence. This distinction between a real and a fictional story is precisely that the latter was 'made up' and the former was not made at all."[121] Barthes characterizes the viewpoint of reality as perhaps that of the *Operator*, who he sees as the writer of the image text, whereas the *Spectator* occupies the role of reader - "It seemed to me that the *Spectator's* Photograph descended essentially, so to speak, from the chemical revelation of the object (from which I receive, by deferred action, the rays), and that the *Operator's* Photograph, on the contrary, was linked to the vision framed by the key hole of the *camera obscura*."[122] Thus, while Arendt conceptualizes the "real story" as not made up and the "fictional story" as revealing the existence of a maker, Barthes considers the viewpoint of reality as (perhaps) that of the *Operator*, although it is important to note Barthes' sense of the insignificance of the identity of the Operator in terms of the reader's reading of a given text. As I noted above, Arendt sees the story as perceived and "made" by the storyteller as opposed to the actors themselves. Her use of quotation marks around the word "made" can perhaps be seen as implying her distinction between the fictional story as revealing the existence of a maker and the "real story" as not made up at all. On the other hand, it seems to me that there is some ambiguity as to whether the storyteller's mimesis of the actor's story through narration can also be fully applied to "real stories". In other words, it would seem to me that regardless of whether or not the

[121] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 186
[122] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 10

story is fictional or "real", the storyteller always perceives and thus "makes" the story. Similarly, any photograph, whether "real" - in other words candid - or "fictional" - in other words staged - is, according to Barthes, created by the *Operator.*

Based upon this distinction, it would seem that the Arendtian storyteller in fact plays a more crucial role in the Barthesian context, because it is through the application of the *studium* and the accident of the *punctum* that the *Spectator* is able to reveal the true meaning of the story contained in the image. In other words, the act of viewing/reading is the mimesis by which the Arendtian storyteller reveals the true plot of the story and even the true identity of the agents - the "heroes". The difference is that when the mimesis takes the form of the *studium* and the *punctum*, which accompany the reading of an image text, the plot that is revealed is the perspective of reality contained in the story that is written by the *Operator.* As Michael Shapiro writes in his discussion of the potential political rhetoric of photography: "Of all modes of representation, it is the one most easily assimilated into the discourses of knowledge and truth, for it is thought to be an unmediated simulacrum, a copy of what we consider the 'real'."[123] I see this ambiguity between the Arendtian distinction between fictive and real stories and the image as representative of the real as in fact strengthening the conceptualization of the photographic image as the political art par excellence.

There are numerous potential examples in which we could illustrate this *punctum* based difference between the reading of public spatial use in terms of its functionalization in various rhetorical forms, as presented above, and the reading or viewing of an image that might in fact even be representative of the same scenario. Again, the viewing or reading of the photographic image is parallel to the theatrical reenactment of a story, in which the true identity of the agents in the story are revealed only through the mimesis of their actions by the storyteller. In the viewing or reading of an image this

[123] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 124

occurs through both the *studium* and the *punctum*, in that the *studium* - the codes and embedded knowledge through which the reader is able to interpret what is contained in a given image - is the cultural, political, economic, social and historical basis by which he or she either does or does not develop an interest in that image. The *studium* could be characterized as a prerequisite for the emergence of the *punctum*, whereas the *punctum* is an interruption of the *studium*, and its appearance is reliant upon the presence of the knowledge and codes which draw the storyteller into the act of viewing the image. The *punctum* - in keeping with the theatrical genre which is parallel to the photographic story's justification as a political art par excellence - is the heightened dramatic moment when the storyteller reveals a momentous tragic or comic twist in the plot - the revelation of the otherwise intangible identity of the agents in the story through the mimesis of their own acting - in other words, in the reenactment of the moment of the appearance of the *punctum*.

11. Shooting Back

"The title of the project came form the lips of a nine-year old boy, who, while holding a camera almost as big as himself, said, 'We're shooting back.' This young prophet made the remark while walking past used syringes along the curb in a neighborhood where shootings are a regular occurrence."

- Jim Hubbard

Although the appearance and presence of the *punctum* is much more subjective than the *studium* applied by individual viewers or storytellers when viewing given images, the images presented below can be distinguished as illustrative of this revelation of the agent through the retelling of their story through the act of viewing, which is manifested here in both the *studium* and *punctum* that are applied and experienced by our hypothetical storyteller. The images presented here are taken from a bound collection of photographic images entitled Shooting Back: A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children. I have selected these particular images, as they turn space

that could be identified with the representational/functionalizational level's characterization of functionalized and legitimized space (legitimized in terms of its simultaneous legitimization and de-legitimization of its opposite) - non-gentrified in nature and generally ignored and disdained by readers of concrete and rhetorical spatial texts, as became clear above. The spaces inhabited and photographed by these homeless children are public in that they are homeless shelters and abandoned areas, which are sometimes used for living and playing, but which have also been the sites of tragedy. I see these images as kin to the counter-space presented by the Puerto Rican *casita* in that they portray space that tends to be represented as either entirely devoid of human inhabitancy - perhaps in order to highlight the dilapidated physical environment - or as inhabited by images of people who fit the bill in the upholding of a specific ideology or dominant social, political, economic, or cultural norm. Similarly to Michael Shapiro's characterization of the American West as typically having been portrayed as "landscape oriented" in order to support and legitimate the rhetoric surrounding the expansion of white Europeans to the North American West[124], images of poverty typically legitimate a politically driven rhetoric of exclusion and a means of enforcing dominant cultural, economic, political, social and ideological norms. Shapiro engages in a discussion of the "scandalous" and "politicizing" signification of Richard Avedon's portraits of the West as inhabited by people - specifically poor people, in terms of their "startling reversal of the photographic rhetoric with which we have come to apprehend the West."[125] The main idea behind Avedon's politicization of the West is that he intentionally presents the viewer/reader's of his images with stories with which they are unfamiliar - with images that contradict and challenge the codes with which they practice reading. This manipulation of his readers' *studium* through his intentional choice of focusing his camera work on a divergent Spectrum is quite parallel to the politicizing character of the Shooting Back images.

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[124] ibid., p. 154
[125] ibid., p. 154

Shooting Back, Inc. was founded in 1989 by Jim Hubbard, whose job in the early 1980s as a UPI staff photographer assigned to cover the White House during the first term of the Reagan Administration led to his documentation of the life of the homeless in the Washington, D.C. area. He began specifically focusing on photographing homeless families, some of which were living at the Capitol City Inn, which Hubbard describes as "a Washington welfare motel and hellhole in the power center of the world."[126] It was at the Capitol City Inn that Hubbard first encountered Dion Johnson, one of the children living there with his mother and three siblings, which marked the birth of the project that would become Shooting Back. While Hubbard was documenting the Johnson's life at the shelter, Dion showed Hubbard some snapshots he had taken of his friends and family. Hubbard offered Dion the chance to take pictures with a professional camera and to learn more about photography. Dion eagerly accepted the offer, and he and Hubbard began to spend many hours each week wandering around the shelter and taking pictures of life there. Soon after they began working together, however, the hundreds of other small inhabitants of the shelter began to approach them, grabbing at the big professional cameras, eager to begin to learn how to snap pictures themselves.

Hubbard began recruiting other staff and freelance photographers located in the Washington, D.C. area to help him teach the Capitol City kids about photography and how to take pictures of their world. They expanded the project to include other area shelters and a broader range of kids, and collaboration began between Hubbard and the Washington Project for the Arts, which resulted in the establishment of The Shooting Back Education and Media Center. The significance of the living conditions of these children in terms of the goals of the project is obvious - although it began by accident, the poverty and dilapidation that provides the contextual backdrop for these children's lives is intentionally highlighted. Jim Hubbard has described life at the Capitol City Inn as follows: "This dingy and dilapidated two-story former tourist

[126] Jim Hubbard, *Shooting Back: A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children* (Chronicle Books, 1991), p. 3

motel, situated on a major six-lane road, became home for nearly seven hundred children and their parents. Between 1978 and 1989, five children died there. Two were stabbed to death by their overburdened father. One was hit by a train behind the shelter while playing the shelter children's favorite game of tag with the train. There wasn't even a playground for these children except on worn-out mattresses that they pulled from the trash. Another child died of a mysterious illness, and yet another burned to death when the mother left the room to find food."[127] Again, similarly to the Puerto Rican *casitas* that are sprinkled throughout poverty stricken areas of New York City, tiny slices of a Caribbean life left behind, the Shooting Back images are stories of poverty that are told in a way that diverges from the way in which such stories tend to be told - from above.

A student guide that was produced by Shooting Back and used in their educational projects describes the exhibition that resulted from the photographs taken by this original group of kids as follows: "Shooting Back: Photography by and About the Homeless is an exhibition of photographs that tells us about the lives of the photographers who took them. Some pictures are beautiful and serene while others are disturbing and violent. Several are scenes which may seem familiar to you, but others depict situations you may never have imagined. What all these photographs have in common is that they were all taken by children in the DC area who no longer have a home of their own."[128] This brief quote quite aptly reveals the central notion behind Shooting Back, and can also easily be assimilated into the discussion contained in this work. The images, or rather the reading of the images, convey the story of their heroes, "who reveal themselves in it."[129] In the specific context of these images, it would seem that the Operator and Spectrum are somehow juxtaposed in terms of the *studium* which will attract certain viewers to them. In the Arendtian sense, the maker and the hero can here be characterized as playing separate, yet somehow

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[127] ibid., p. 4

[128] Shooting Back: A Technical Assistance Manual. This is basically a compilation of various educational material and guidelines used in the various Shooting Back projects.

[129] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 187

related roles in terms of the story's reenactment by the reader. In other words, these images transcend the abyss that is detectable in both Barthes' and Arendt's discussions of the quite insignificant role played by the maker (in the Arendtian sense) and the Operator (in the Barthesian sense) by de-legitimizing their generally neutral presence. Here, the Operator, whose perspective is characterized by Barthes as "perhaps that of reality"[130], but who he sees as unrelated to the Spectator's reading, and the maker, who is characterized by Arendt as not belonging "to the character of the story itself but only to the mode in which it came into existence"[131], are certainly related to the *studium*, and in all likelihood help to heighten the potential pricking of the *punctum*.

11.1 Operator vs. Maker

In terms of my comparison here of the image as parallel to drama as the political art par excellence, we might compare the story that the reader/viewer reenacts when reading these particular images through the practice of viewing them to a kind of amateur theater production of a non-mainstream story. In other words, the stories contained in these images certainly occur on stages that are familiar to most readers based upon the codes that make up our dominant societal, cultural, political, ideological and economic norms - our *studium*. But there seems to me to be a heightened potential for their reenactment by the reader to include the appearance of a *punctum*, something within them that pricks the reader, perhaps because of a certain inherent contradiction or juxtaposition that suddenly awakens the storyteller. This awakening of the storyteller through the appearance of the *punctum* serves to "shatter a traditional viewing practice and hold up for scrutiny what usually goes unnoticed"[132] - it challenges dominant norms, in other words the *studium*, by punctuating the consciousness of their identification in the practice of reading with the unconscious appearance of the *punctum*. As we saw above in the context of Barthes' example of

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[130] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 42
[131] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 186
[132] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 126

"The Violinist's Tune", the appearance of this prickly and explosive detail - the *punctum* - causes the image to transcend itself and undergo a metamorphosis from being a mere sign of something to being assimilated with the thing itself. As such, it seems as if the reality of the story is attainable only through the appearance of the *punctum.*

I am compelled at this point to ask what it is about these particular images - the Shooting Back photographs - that increases the potential pricking of the *punctum* - the shift from the conscious association and familiarity that is the Barthesian *studium.* Is it the story itself or the stage upon which it is told? Doubtful, considering the prevalence of similar stories told from various perspectives throughout the city - although they generally tend to be told form above or shrouded by, for example, rhetorical modes of functionalization, as we saw in the above examination of the representational/functionalizational level of public spatial use. Returning to the above discussion of the perspective of reality as perhaps that of the Operator, it would seem to me that the probability of the appearance of the *punctum* in the practice of viewing these images is heightened by the presence, or even the identity of the Operator, whose story is then revealed through its reenactment by the storyteller through the act of viewing. What I mean by the significance of the identity of the specific Operator in terms of the heightened potential of the pricking of the *punctum* is that, in the context of these particular images, it seems to intermingle with the codes which make up the *studium* and intensify the potential "something" which causes the unconscious shift from coded to non-coded. Would these same images solicit a similar coded interest - the reader's *studium* - had they been made by a different Operator? It is likely that they would. Would these same images prick the reader as often as they do had they been made by another Operator? Probably not.

Although it is my contention that the identity of the Operator heightens the potential appearance of the *punctum* here, it is also important to note the inherent significance of the relationship between the Spectator or reader and the Operator in terms of the

conscious reading that is based upon the *studium*. While Arendt sees the role of the maker as related only to the means by which the story came into existence, Barthes characterizes the recognition of the *studium* as an inevitable encounter between Spectator and Operator, although he is referring merely to the vision of the Operator as opposed to the Operator him or herself. In other words, the Spectator/reader not only uses his or her codes in order to read the image, he or she also necessarily confronts the intentions of the Operator/photographer. Barthes finds it impossible to divorce the intentions of the Operator with the conscious reading of the image based upon the recognition of the *studium*. I would emphasize the fact that this confrontation between Operator and Spectator transgresses identification by the Spectator with the Operator's "who", and instead is centered on a vision that is represented in the story told in the image - the recognition of the photographer/Operator's intentions. Barthes refers to this encounter between the recognition of the *studium* and these intentions as entering into harmony "with them, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers."[133] Again, this contradicts the Arendtian characterization of the role of the maker as merely utilitarian - as lending itself only to the means of production. The Arendtian maker seems to me to be parallel to the role of the chemicals used to develop an image, or perhaps the camera itself - which play technical roles in the making of an image story.

Barthes goes on to describe the *studium* as a kind of education possessed by the reader/Spectator, which allows him or her to become acquainted with the Operator on some level, "to experience the intentions which establish and animate his practices, but to experience them 'in reverse,' according to my will as a *Spectator*."[134] This aspect of Barthes' codes seems to be parallel to the Arendtian notion of action as always revealing itself "fully only to the storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the

[133] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 28
[134] ibid., p. 28

historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants."[135] Although, Arendt is, of course, referring to action, which she separates from fabrication, I would say that in terms of images of inhabited space such as the ones contained in this work, her distinction between fabrication and action seems to lead to the questioning of the actual significance of the maker.

Again, the story that Arendt characterizes as being revealed to the storyteller is that of the "heroes" - the identity of the agents within the story. The maker is only present at all in works that are made - fictional stories - whereas "real" stories are not made up at all and as such have no maker. She considers drama to be the only political art par excellence, since "only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art."[136] At this point I am once again reminded of the Barthesian notion described above that the recognition of the *punctum* by the reader/Spectator has the potential to cause the image to transcend and annihilate itself as a mere medium and instead actually become what it could previously have only been described as a sign of. In other words, the potential of the appearance of the *punctum*, which allows the image story to be assimilated with the real - "reconciled with the social order,"[137] could also certainly be characterized as a medium in which the political sphere of human life is transposed into art. As such, while the story of the heroes is unlocked by the mimesis of their acting in the Arendtian sense, and the role of the maker remains limited to the means by which the story came into existence, the Barthesian reenactment of the story told in the image is a juxtaposition of the perspectives of the photographer/Operator, reader/Spectator and even subject/Spectrum.

Similarly to our examination of the representational/functionalizational level of public spatial use, the Barthesian reading, based on the conscious *studium* and the non-coded *punctum*, are potentially discernible as separate perspectives, although each is

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[135] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 192
[136] ibid., p. 188
[137] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 128

dependent upon and manifests the other. In other words, the Spectator and Operator are always in some sort of relationship with one another during the reading of an image text, in which the role of the Spectrum is also obviously central. The story's reenactment through the act of reading cannot exclude the perspective of the Operator or maker - the role of the photographer cannot simply be reduced to the means by which the image came into existence. However, I would contend that there are varying levels of significance with regard to the role of the Operator in the tripartite relationship between Operator, Spectator and Spectrum, which I consider as quite evident in the context of the Shooting Back images. My claim is that the identity of the Operator does have the potential to increase the prospect of the reader being pricked by the *punctum*, which in turn leads to the transgression and annihilation of such images as mere signs, and reconciles them with reality - "is this not the sole proof of its art?"[138]

In his discussion of the power of Shooting Back and other similar artistically centered projects to deliberately challenge recognizable official discourses through the exploration of artistic modes of representation, Nicholas Paley also highlights aspects of juxtaposition and intermingling within various types of image texts. Although he focuses mainly on the process of image production, there are points at which he, too, incorporates the role played by the reader when reading the image text. He refers specifically to the exhibition of the original Shooting Back images as follows: "While much of the jolting power of this exhibition came from the juxtaposition of images that subverted cultural and media depictions that all too frequently represent the urban homeless as lacking in hope and promise, it also came from the subtle and often unexpected ways the photographs forced viewers to confront parallel issues of stereotypic attitudes and behavior, the tremendous - almost surreal - disproportion of wealth in the nation's capital, the vacancy of governmental promises during the 1980s about human rights, and questions of what should be done now."[139] What Paley is

[138] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 45
[139] Nicholas Paley, *Finding Art's Place: Experiments in Contemporary Education and Culture* (Routledge, 1995), p. 119

essentially saying is parallel to both the Barthesian notion of the interaction between the reader and image through the presence of the codes by which the reader is drawn to the image, as well as to the idea discussed in greater detail in the examination of the representational/functionalizational level of spatial use - namely, the delegitimization of the dominant norms that are contained in those codes by a divergent means of representation. In other words, these images tell socially, culturally, economically, politically and ideologically familiar stories that challenge dominant stories by causing the reader to question the codes which he or she uses when reading the image.

Again, similarly to the way in which the *casitas* challenge the dominant norms that serve to legitimate its context by literally inserting color where there previously had been none, the Shooting Back images, which tell stories of hope and joy that contradict the way in which homelessness tends to be represented, cause the reader to question the *studium* by which he or she engages in the practice of reading. As such, the assumption that these images include a heightened potential of the interruption of the *studium* by the *punctum* is justifiable based upon their simultaneously accidental and intentional divergent narration of often untold stories.

In her discussion of the distinction between fictional and non-fictional stories' revelation of their heroes, Hannah Arendt writes that: "The fictional story reveals a maker just as every work of art clearly indicates that it was made by somebody; this does not belong to the character of the story itself but only to the mode in which it came into existence."[140] Here, we encounter what might be seen as contradictory to the notion that the identity of the "maker", or Operator, does in fact play an integral role in the potential interruption of the *studium* by the *punctum*. However, as is evident in the context of the Shooting Back images, the appearance of the *punctum* can also be directly related to knowledge of the identity of the Operator - it does not demand personal knowledge, but merely a knowledge that is parallel to the level of the codes

[140] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 186

or the *studium*. In other words, to some extent, the Spectator always sees what the Operator sees. With regard to these specific images it is clear that the identity of the Operators or makers increases the probability of the appearance of the *punctum*. In other words, the fact that the images were made by homeless children whose assignment was to photograph their reality impacts the viewers' reading of the images. I see this as a peculiarity that really transgresses both the Arendtian and the Barthesian notions of the role played by the maker/Operator in the reading process, although it is much closer to supporting the Barthesian view.

Returning again to the aforementioned example of Richard Avedon's intentional contradiction of the set of norms or codes by which the reader reads the image through his inhabitation of the American West, it is clear that while Avedon, as the Operator or maker, manipulated the *studium* through focusing upon a divergent Spectrum, his own identity remains rather insignificant. The reader sees the object of his focus, the Spectrum, in an abstract and detached sense - as if almost by accident. It seems to me as if it is precisely this detachment that Barthes sees as belonging only to the accidental means by which the image came about, whereas Arendt sees the maker as merely facilitating the coming about of the story or image. As Barthes writes in the context of his discussion of the presence of his own *punctum* in Koen Wessing's "Nicaragua", "from the viewpoint of reality (which is perhaps that of the *Operator*), a whole causality explains the presence of the 'detail': the Church implanted in these Latin American countries, the nuns allowed to circulate as nurses, etc.; but from my *Spectator's* viewpoint, the detail is offered by chance and for nothing; the scene is in no way 'composed' according to a creative logic; the photograph is doubtless dual, but this duality is the motor of no 'development,' as it happens in classical discourse."[141] In other words, while the presence of the *punctum* can be explained "from the viewpoint of reality" as based on a causality that is perhaps conscious to the Operator, it becomes accidental an non-composed when

[141] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 42

encountered by the Spectator - the causality behind the Operator's "perspective of reality" becomes meaningless.

This notion would seem in some way to support the Arendtian concept of the maker of a story as belonging only to the mode by which the story came into existence as opposed to playing an integral role in terms of the character of the story itself. While, for example, Avedon made his stories of the American West as inhabited by choosing the Spectrum, it is the Spectrum which seems to have a greater potential to awaken the storyteller through the prick of the *punctum*, which in turn is at the same time experienced because of and in spite of the Operator. But can we separate the Operator from his or her vision? According to Barthes' we cannot. I would venture to say that certainly the tripartite relationship between Operator, Spectator and Spectrum varies greatly in terms of the significance of each in relation to the other. Again, Barthes does not seem prepared to separate the Operator, Spectator and Spectrum in terms of the negation or de-legitimization of any one over the other. Rather, he allows them - even encourages them - to intermingle and juxtapose in relation to one another. But the perspective which is always our starting point in the context of this work is that of the Spectator. And from this perspective we have seen evidence that tends to support this Barthesian notion - we have seen the varying degree to which each counterpart relates to the others in the practice of reading the images presented here. For example, while the reader might well be aware of the causality behind the Operator's vision in Avedon's images of the West, it becomes insignificant and accidental when he or she is pricked by a *punctum* within that image. It, unlike the *studium*, is no longer explainable in terms of this causality because the Spectator no longer sees this detail as composed according to a creative logic - it is "the motor of no 'development'."[142]

[142] ibid., p. 42

However, the Shooting Back images present us with a scenario in which the identity of the Operator seems to be more significant in terms of the relationship between the three elements: Spectator, Operator and Spectrum. In these images, the identity of the maker or Operator would appear to have a greater potential to impact the reading process - perhaps even leading to the appearance of the *punctum* - by virtue of the relevance of his or her perspective of reality with regard to the story told in the images. Perhaps this is so because of the degree to which these images challenge the dominant cultural, social, political, ideological and economic norms by which the Spectator reads the image. Again, for example, Richard Avedon's images of the American West as inhabited - specifically by poor people - tend to "effect a startling reversal of the photographic rhetoric with which we have come to apprehend the West."[143] The codes which the images challenge, however, are not provoked exclusively by the signification of image - or the causality behind the Operator's choice of Spectrum - but rather are brought to the image by the reader's *studium*, and potentially also *punctum*. In a sense, any signification they might have lies dormant until read by the Spectator during the process of reading, and even then the role of the Operator remains secondary in relation to the codes applied to the image by the reader. But what is the degree of significance played by the Operator in terms of the Shooting Back images?

Life Magazine published an article on Shooting Back in November of 1990, in which it was noted that: "After photojournalists descend on America's homeless shelters and welfare hotels to document the children of poverty, they inevitably come back with images of despair."[144] The article goes on to describe Shooting Back's history and ideology, quoting the single rule that Jim Hubbard enforced: "Shoot within one block of home - document that one block of reality."[145] The result is a collection of images that tell quite a different story than the images that have been made by countless

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[143] Michael Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 154
[144] *Life Magazine*, November 1990, Volume 13, Number 14, p.94
[145] ibid., p. 94

photojournalists. There was a "distinct difference between their pictures and the professionals' - the kids' photos were more fun. Like children anywhere, they focused on friends, family and games. Set against the background of shelters and slums, these are images of joy in the midst of degradation, of love among the ruins."[146]

Again, what this implies is the significance of the Operator or maker in the production of a story that is consequently read by multitudinous readers, and which is subjected to "a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)."[147] There would seem to be a correlation in the context of these images between the relation of the identity of the Operator and the potential appearance of the *punctum*, at which point the causality behind the Operator's vision becomes merely accidental to the Spectator. But does it become insignificant? If the Shooting Back Operators can be characterized as increasing the potential appearance of the *punctum* by virtue of the degree to which their perspective (perhaps that of reality) challenges the codes with which we as readers normally read images of poverty, does the causality behind their vision become accidental? It is my view that one of the main reasons why these images are so unique in terms of the tripartite relationship between Operator, Spectator and Spectrum is because this causality, which tends to be seen as dictating the Operator's view of the Spectrum, is already accidental because of the specific context of their perspective as Operators. In other words, they are young and non-professional photographers who in all likelihood were not attempting to compose scenes which challenge the dominant norms of the potential readers of their images. They are not conscious attempts at effecting a reversal of the image based rhetoric through which images of poverty tend to be presented. If anyone had intended to effect such a reversal through the Shooting Back images, it was Jim Hubbard, whose agenda remained hidden from the kids/Operators themselves.

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[146] ibid., p. 94

[147] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 20

11.2 Girl on Street

Let us imagine that our reader encounters the image presented below. She begins reading the image - is drawn to its subject matter or story - through the use of the political, cultural, social, historical, ideological and economic codes and knowledge which are the basis of her conscious interest in the image - her *studium*. The reader associates this knowledge and familiarity with the Spectrum - or the story told in the image - and is consciously drawn to it. In other words, the *studium* - the knowledge and codes which facilitate the reader's interest in the image presuppose a certain political and cultural intermediary. As we saw in our examination of the representational/functionalizational level of public spatial use, the role played by the codes in terms of the analysis of public space - in terms of the socio-symbolic level, what the reader feels about images to which she is drawn - is inseparable from this knowledge and familiarity - it "derives from an *average* affect, almost from a certain training."[148] As such, she associates the girl's location within the context of the debris-filled background as signifying her familiarity with what the reader reads as the condition of poverty. The name given to the image by its Operator, "Girl on Street", leads the reader to sense a certain normalcy - she uses her codes to guess that the Operator's definition of street corresponds with the situation of this girl in relation to it. All of these assumptions that comprise our reader's reading derive from a culturally, socially, politically, ideologically and economically based knowledge which has been instilled in her as norms by which she interprets and reads various texts that she encounters. Is there a *punctum* in this image? For our reader, the *punctum* or prick that shoots out of the image at her are the lambs on the girl's sweater, which remind her of a serenity and calm that could only be associated with fresh air and farm life - far removed and seemingly out of place in the contextual setting of this particular image. This detail seems inherently accidental - certainly to our reader, and in all likelihood also to the Operator, who, unlike her professional counterpart (such as

[148] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 26

Avedon), probably was not guided by a consciously composed causality when choosing her Spectrum.

Girl on Street
Carissa Etheridge, 15
Community of Hope,
Washington, D.C.
1989[149]

11.3 Children

As our reader begins her reading of the image entitled "Children", she is once again drawn to the image by her recognition of, and subsequent interest in, its content. She recognizes the *studium* based upon her reading of the story told in the image - what is symbolizes to her. She is immediately drawn to the image's context - to the old bench

[149] Jim Hubbard, *Shooting Back: A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children* (Chronicle Books, 1991), p. 94

and littered street, as well as to the message written on the wall in the background. She is amused by the group of white sneakers on the feet of the children in the image, although she is not pricked by their presence. She is not pricked by any of these aspects of the image, as she fails to be intrigued or moved by them - at most she is drawn to them by means of some sort of cultural connotation, which Barthes sees as always present in the field of the *studium*. The clear duality between the faces of these smiling children and the inherently political message that is written on the wall - "fuck the police", with its social, cultural and economic overtones - is really too obvious to prick her. She does, however, contemplate the intention of this duality on the part of the Operator - considering that he is only nine years old, she wonders whether or not he was aware of the harshness of this duality when he snapped the picture. Whether he was or not is rather irrelevant at this point, since "in the text, only the reader speaks"[150] - the intentions of the Operator do not often affect the realm of the *studium*. She is able to name all of the aspects of the *studium*, and as such they fail to prick her. "What I can name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance."[151]

What disturbs her in the image? What is her *punctum*? She is pricked by the face of the boy who is sitting behind the girls in the picture - his eyes downcast, seemingly removed from the smiling faces of the two girls sitting next to him. His face lies outside of her realm of cultural knowledge, which is the basis of her recognition of the *studium*. The boy's face literally acts in the capacity of a mark of punctuation in the reader's culturally and code based conscious reading. As Barthes notes in reference to the appearance of the *punctum*: "This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is the element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me."[152] In other words, up until being pricked by the *punctum* it is the reader who seeks out the

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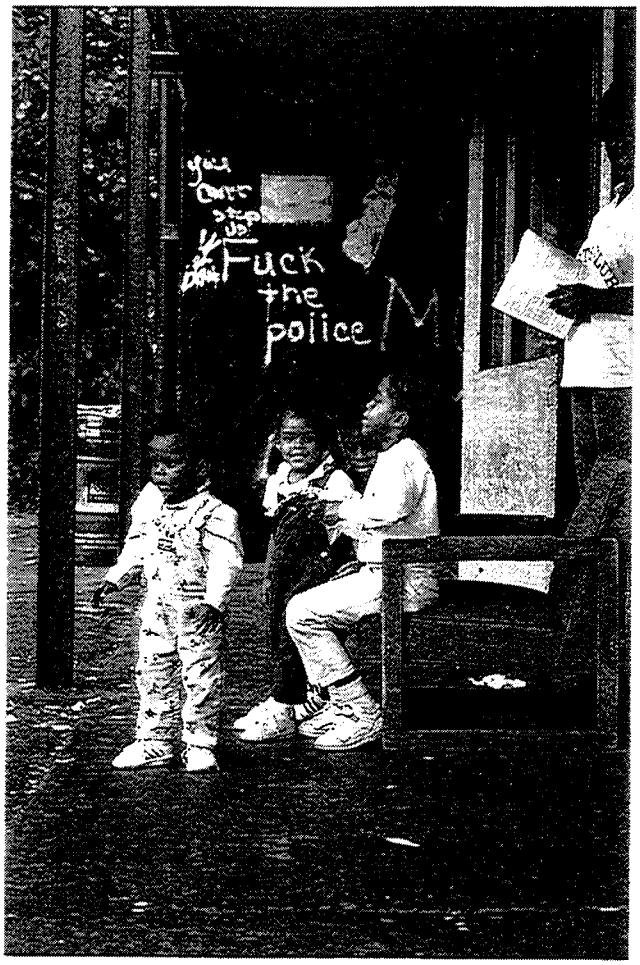
[150] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 151
[151] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, translated by Richard Howard (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981), p. 51
[152] ibid., p. 26

inherent symbolism in the image by her participation with the various aspects that are contained in the image: the faces of the agents, the figures, their gestures, the actions, the settings, the objects, etc. Again, the *studium* is associated with the encounter between the reader and the intentions of the photographer - precisely a result of the fact that the *studium* is inherently cultural, and culture itself can be characterized as "a contract arrived at between creators and consumers."[153] The presence of the *punctum*, and this image is no exception, is always accidental - it happens to be a co-present detail within the field of the image, and it is impossible to really connect it in any way to the *studium*. As such, our reader's *punctum* requires no greater explanation, for one would inevitably be impossible to formulate; the detail, the boy's face, just happens to be there and it pricks her.

When she is pricked, however, she takes on the role of the storyteller in the Arendtian sense, as the accident of being pricked interrupts her otherwise culturally based - almost automatic - reading of the image text. Again, being struck by a detail in the image seems to have an essence that is parallel to that of the storyteller's reenactment of the life story of the agents that he or she mimics. It would seem to me that the reading of an image that remains restricted to the mere cultural recognition of the *studium* would be comparable to the notion of the chorus as revealing the meaning of a story. Arendt writes: "In terms of Greek tragedy, this would mean that the story's direct as well as its universal meaning is revealed by the chorus, which does not imitate and whose comments are pure poetry, whereas the intangible identities of the agents in the story, since they escape all generalization and therefore all reification, can be conveyed only through an imitation of their acting."[154] In other words, I see the choral revelation of the direct and universal meaning of the story as quite parallel to the notion of the reader's recognition of the *studium* as purely cultural - as an almost habitual and instinctive reading that can only reveal the direct and universal meaning of a given story. The reader's recognition of the *studium* can reveal no more than the

[153] ibid., p. 28
[154] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 187-188

culturally based codes by which the world tends to be defined through the enforcement of dominant norms, which are then assumed to be natural and true. We saw this above in terms of the public spatial examples presented in the examination of the representational/functionalizational level. The *studium* reveals and is based on these cultural codes, whereas the *punctum* has the potential to reveal much more. The pricking of the *punctum* can indeed lead to the revelation of the identities of the agents in the story, as well as to some kind of revelation of the identity of the reader him or herself. Again, conversely to the *studium*, it is quite impossible to specify any kind of rule or set of rules which guides the potential effects of the *punctum*. It is crucial to note, however, that its appearance does alter the reading of a pricked reader by allowing - or even forcing - him or her to take on the role (in varying degrees) of the storyteller.



Children

Daniel Hall, 9

Capitol City Inn,

Washington, D.C.

1989[155]

11.4 Bird

Our reader's reading of "Bird" begins by her feeling drawn to the image, based upon her recognition of the *studium* - her almost automatic association of its content with

[155] Jim Hubbard, *Shooting Back: A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children* (Chronicle Books, 1991), p. 32

her knowledge or cultural codes. She is intrigued by it perhaps in part because of the inherent duality within it in terms of its portrayal of children living in poverty and hopelessness in a way in which they tend not to be portrayed: namely, as caring and nurturing as opposed to their typical depiction as villainous or even criminal - certainly as devoid of the emotions portrayed in this image. Our reader's cultural codes have trained her to expect to see kids like this - kids who are or have been homeless - in a way which conforms to the dominant social, political, cultural and economic norms by which they tend to be defined. People living in dilapidated and economically poor environments tend to be assimilated with the conditions which define their surroundings, which is guided by these dominant encoded norms by which our world tends to be defined. Our reader is immediately drawn to the divergence from this kind of association between environment and inhabitant which is central to this image.

Again, it is quite possible - probable in fact - that this inherent duality was unintentional, based upon the tender age and lack of professional photographic expertise of the photographer herself. When she was asked to pinpoint what she considered to be her favorite image, she answered: "My favorite picture that I took: that's me and my brother and my sister with a pigeon. My brother had found a pigeon, and the pigeon had been shot in the wing. My brother was trying to fix it, so I just told me brother to look at it, and I just put the timer on, focused it, and I ran over to get into the picture."[156] But as I noted above, while the reader's reading of an image implies that she encounters the intentions of the photographer, the photographer's reasons for creating what becomes those intentions are insignificant in terms of the reader's *studium* based reading. In other words, our reader, while necessarily encountering the intentions of the photographer, is not affected by descriptions like the one given by Charlene. The reader still uses her own cultural codes and knowledge in order to read the story contained in the image. A girl who

[156] ibid., p. 27

visited the Shooting Back exhibit made the following comment to Charlene, indicating her own reading of the image: "I saw your picture, Birds, in the exhibit in New York. I saw it from way across the room and I felt drawn to it.... The girl on the left, her teeth show, like she understood pain and in that instant, experienced it for the bird."[157]

Is our own reader pricked by any detail within this image? Yes. She cannot avoid succumbing to the prick of the boy's fingernails - a detail that happens by sheer accident to be present, and that is impossible to connect by any analytical or logical means to the *studium*. Again, she finds herself unable to specify the source of her *punctum* - which is rather irrelevant anyway as it need not be explained or justified, it merely exists. If anything, she somehow senses a sort of medicinal quality to them - as if they have the power to heal the bird's wounds.

[157] ibid., p. 27

Bird

Charlene Williams, 11

new residence,

Southeast Washington, D.C.

1990[158]

[158] ibid., p. 27

12. The Reality of the Vessel is the Void Within

My examination of the representational/functionalizational and socio-symbolic levels of public spatial use throughout the course of this work has taken us on a journey from the rhetorical, written and implied exclusion that is inherent to the functionalization of public space, to the volatile and revelatory tripartite relationship between reader/Spectator, photographer/Operator and target/Spectrum. Both levels have utilized Barthes' codes, particularly the cultural codes, in the capacity of a decipherer - as a tool used in unlocking the meaning behind use and the use behind meaning. In other words, the codes play a dualistic role here, as they both highlight the existence of dominant social, political, ideological, economic and cultural norms, as well as enable their critique by encouraging the recognition of multiple perspectives and the impossibility of positioning one perspective over any other. This aspect of Barthes' codes is crucial to both levels of examination here. In terms of the representational/functionalizational level, this duality is significant in challenging and deconstructing the assignment of a specific and restricted use to a given space by implying that it has a certain natural and inherent function. In terms of the socio-symbolic level, however, the codes play an intricate role in the reading of an image by a reader - in the relationship between Spectator, Operator and Spectrum.

The codes, particularly the dominant cultural codes, are consistently characterized by Barthes in terms of the direct correlation between bourgeois ideology and the "nauseating mixture of common opinions"[159] that comprise them, which is also extremely pertinent to the discussion contained in this work - running parallel to the notion of functionalization and its politics of exclusion. In effect, this cultural dominance, which Barthes deems as belonging to bourgeois ideology, really provides the weapons for its own demise simply by virtue of the transparency with which dominant norms are enforced. Although we can say that these dominant norms are indeed transparent, they tend to be accepted as natural - we as readers recognize them

[159] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1974), p. 206

and grasp their meaning before even having the time to consider their construction. In fact, we tend not to even consider how they are constructed, instead simply taking them for granted as natural and as socially, politically, culturally, economically and ideologically congenital. One of the main goals of this work has been precisely to illustrate the degree of transparency of these dominant norms in terms of their use in public spatial functionalization and also to consider the means by which they are constructed. The three examples I presented in the context of the representational/functionalizational level have hopefully helped me to accomplish this goal by allowing me to present cases in which specific public spaces are functionalized - textually in the case of Sony Plaza Public Space, rhetorically in the case of Ed Koch's assignment of an inherent use to Grand Central Station, and aesthetically in the case of *las casitas*.

In terms of the socio-symbolic level, the codes aid in the politicization of the image through their application in the reading of an image text by a reader, who brings them to the image. In the socio-symbolic level, however, the codes appear in the form of the *studium*, which is the field of cultural knowledge by which the reader is initially attracted to an image's Spectrum. The *studium* remains limited to this spere of knowledge, however, and the crescendo of the socio-symbolic level is the potential appearance of the *punctum*, which can be characterized as a tiny detail that springs from the image and pricks the viewer/reader. I see the appearance of the *punctum* - the punctuation of this *studium* based reading - as parallel to the notion that the Arendtian storyteller is the only one who can reveal the true identity of the story's heroes through mimesis. It is this aspect which justifies the characterization of the photographic image as the political art par excellence.

Again, as I noted in the opening words of this work, my goal here is not to pose and answer any specific questions per se, but rather to present a framework in which the "five codes create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or

rather, in passing, becomes text)."[160] In other words, my aim has been to emphasize their centrality in the examination and de- and re-construction of concepts of public spatial use, as well as in the practice of reading/viewing images of public spatial use. Because of the simultaneous commonality and subjectivity of the codes with which we all read and decipher the infinite number of texts which comprise the many facets of life surrounding us, any attempt here to draw specific and precise conclusions would be futile and would indeed contradict the goals of this work. Instead, my hope here is to encourage each and every textual reader - whether the text in question be spatial, literal, photographic or concrete - to consider the construction of the meanings of ideological, political, economic, social and cultural representations as opposed to simply taking them for granted as natural or fundamentally true.

[160] ibid., p. 20

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