

Schpilin Aqui/ InterSECT, 2008

Narration for live performance
Angie Eng, 2008

Fear of invaders was instilled at an early age so that 30 years afterwards I would react to the same alarm with nostalgic complacency. (read in another announcement tone) US government teaches school children to protect against the effects of an unexpected (nuclear) attack ...Flash. Stop what you are doing, get under the desk, lie face-down and cover your head with your hands. Memories of 'Duck and Cover' resurface as soon as I hear the invader siren borrowed for the onset of *shabat*. (use flash to change sections in video, begin with siren. Sample of duck and cover.) Ironic; a nuclear attack alarm would later be adopted for a religious call. And even stranger- I would represent invasion inside the quarter of Tradition.

Tradition preserved in contemporary society gives us the satisfaction of progress and existential reaffirmation. Or perhaps just the simple variation of **I** control versus **We** control. Modernity begins with I. The Satmar walks stoically in his 1950's black wool over-coat, the Puerto Rican defies frontiers-carrying his Puerto Rican flag behind his Dominoes chair. In case you were wondering just how a culture within a culture can persist, resist assimilation. Give the American Contemporary a pinch on the cheek. These neighbors drive with the emergency break on, while the rest of the world speeds off to invade the moon. Are they rebels against the progress of western democratic civilization? The world is round and eventually we will go full circle, run into each other on the road despite the year, place.

The name of the street is South 8th AKA South Williamsburg, AKA Los Sures, AKA eccetera through the decades of a thick yet short history. 1638 the Canarsee Indians sell the land to the Dutch West Indies Company. Factories open, Factories close. Immigrants move in

and out. Artists build walls. 2005, the City of New York sells public land to private developers. The clocks read a different time and inequality of space equals friction. Who is moving here? My neighbor asks. *Hasids and Puerto Ricans Unite Against a Common Enemy*. Is it you who plays the guitar. Where is that music coming from? Some unknown mysterious place as the old nuclear siren for Shabbat.

Fashion faux-pas incites reaction. 'I feel sorry for them.' 'Don't they sweat with all that wool in August.' Backwards. Drug Dealers. Uneducated. Incest. Oppression. Sexist. Lazy. Fundamentalists. Catholic. Someone feels threatened. 'They breed like animals.' Luxury condos mark the beginning of your extinction. When the Sunday Times comes out Friday night, you will see in the travel section there is a special: 'Visit orthodox Jews at the Wailing Wall' - 'A photo of smiling friendly Puerto Ricans serving you a piña colada on a lounge chair in the Caribbean with caption FOR \$599. One prefers the exotic to NOT share the same sidewalk. Otherwise the exotic becomes strange... Backwards. Drug Dealers. Uneducated. Incest. Oppression. Sexist. Lazy. Fundamentalists. Catholic.

Look over there. Closer. You find sparks of tradition beyond the pagan dancing devils on Halloween and the resurrection of Christ on Toys R Us day. They are tucked behind the pluralistic society of Gaps, spaces in between, crossovers, gray area. Division street, Lee street. Yet, there is a Mentawai family half dressed in tattoos and loincloth and another in jeans and an Adidas cap. Which one do you choose to take a picture of? Which one do you write about? Which one would you take home with you?

Like a raver or a deadhead, my grandmother travels the world. She seeks the next folk dance party. A herd of contemporary nomads in thirst of not water but rhythm. Yesterday the Russian Troika, today the Polish Mazurka, and tomorrow the Turkish Spoon Dance. Mom is gonna freak out if you bring *that* home.

We share the same view, except they shop Kosher and beans.

An American in a matching jogging suit wanders the African Savannah. Eyesore.

Homogeneity and continuity contradicts the Cosmopolite. Dress differently, breed (but not too much), follow the year, do not loiter in public. Postmodernite seeks nuances, opposites, contradictions, pointing out the unfamiliar. Reassurance.

Within Tradition I want to be a stranger, but not generic, not foreign. The outsider who enjoys the luxury of not being confined to convention, societal pressure, free from the norm. The nomad crosses frontiers mostly outside the periphery. No worries of loss, worries of gain, fear of rejection, fear of acceptance. In a place of the strange, the familiar is jealous. How does bright survive in dullness, excitement in boredom, innocence in corruption, tradition in free will, you and your next door neighbor and then what next?

Is my life easier because I can choose. There are soooo many possibilities in the cereal and potato chip aisle. I only need three choices. I don't need 150 variations and combinations. Just three. Maybe five. When did we stop feeling free with having to make decisions. Freedom even so, comes with multiple guides- cultural, environmental, biological, historical, social, governmental, psychological. Afterwards, the 150 choices are reduced to 3 maybe 5.

A Puerto Rican girl turns scaffolding into a convenient playground- Brooklyn style. (stop motion back and forth camera girl turning) Pretend around. Act around. Dream around. Feel around. At this age, an outsider's gaze has no effect. Her generation can switch back and forth to different spaces with ease. Her imagination turns in sync with each rotation.

(sync sound, image with other footage) (blocks of wood, dominoes, puzzles) Inside, Outside, Inside, Outside.

When does distinguish turn into discriminate. Notice: the color of skin and clothing and language in a slight gesture, a religious way? How does the two-year old Hasidic toddler know not to throw the ball to the little Spanish girl. (footage of girls playing ball stop motion, in between close ups of Puerto Rican kids) The Puerto Rican has an affair with a Satmar. Conversion or ex-communication expands compromise. In youth we are quick-times. Then we gradually grow up into slow-mo. (slow motion of Satmar man walking against graffiti)

Small herds of women in black survey the road. (footage of people looking up in the sky for aliens) They live for the moment and the eyes of their men move in reflection. The women scan the street for safety, energies, the stranger. Listening for an invasion of gentrification. (empty chairs) A family sits on the stoop and in patio chairs watching the sounds of *Los Sures*.

On the waterfront two groups side by side, the Satmars and the Puerto Ricans conform to the same pace with an invisible barrier between. If we try to carve out a view, a perspective, we can open and close this amorphous window. It all depends upon what you want to notice/experience. Because a view isn't a perfect fit. In constant adjustment it remains new. A group of Hispanic teens, Hasidic parents in a synced gaze. (Flash from view to gaze)

In an instant of this street lies a gap perhaps 100 years past or future, 10,000 kilometers there and back. (sample footage prewar eastern Europe fast forward and rewind) A time warp to prewar Hungary and Poland. A conservative branch of Judaism. On a Caribbean

Island 1950. (old footage of PR) Bhutan is isolated from the world it is a part of. (old footage of Bhutanese in costumes. Headline of government on strict traditional laws) Roles, education, laws, food, sex, money, habits, language, love are regulated. Exclusion, in seclusion, questions—rare. What is an island within an island? Does an island within an island begin to become like the mainland. Is the view the same or is it obstructed or closer to the center. Someone else sees the bridge peeking out of the fog, or the fog meeting the bridge or is it the bridge that escapes the fog. Why is it on the islands there is a threat of some species becoming extinct?

Even so on this island within the island, they share the sidewalk, the street, a building, a park, a store, the same water, the same view, same traffic, same laws, money, but not entirely. *Everything* would erase tradition. The traditional dress, the religious customs, the language and then the face. The posture, the way a person meets, greets. The way a person becomes your neighbor, a friend, family, your shopkeeper, your waiter, a husband, wife your child. The way you watch, you move, react, respond. Tradition limits and sets the boundaries between the community and the outsider.

In the Hasidic community, names of family and their class and age are typed on index cards, filed like coupons on a suburban counter. When two index cards 'match'— like a math problem, probability or improbability is reduced to the least amount. Is a scientific guess better than an emotional one? Sociological studies prove how we make choices. We are quite predictable. If not then the choice would be choosing the improbably which would decrease the chances of maybe the chosen end result. One would be in a continuous cycle of re-choosing. It's not the freedom of choice, but being bound to the idea of re-choosing your life over and over again. I am a pattern on white coral.

Groups of identical Hasids walk briskly to/from the prayer house. Invisible personas are pushed to the periphery of life. To penetrate the scene I would have to relinquish my extension of identity, vulnerable to rejection of the establishment. For an occasional ten minutes I'm allowed to visit inside amicably. As if there was some social wall that opened and closed like a bank teller, but instead it's a cultural exchange window. 'I'd like a Knish', 'Buenos dias Felix', ' Mrs. Deutsch, are you getting ready for Sukkot?' In this context I play both. They say the worst punishment is to be banished from the group. Lu Decheng was kept in solitary confinement for 6 months for protesting in the 1989 Tienamen Square democracy demonstrations. (footage of Tian'anmen Square)

I walk alone and South 8th is passing by. I read the walls but I do not understand, but that is OK because they do not understand me. Hebrew nor Spanish morph into beautiful shapes that remind me of the shape of a perspective we can not measure.

If you reduce everything down to symbols and direction the interesting points would be the intersection of the two. The common point when two merge into one. As they come closer to each other you could mistake one for the other. They connect the streets together as they cross the road. They are now bringing you somewhere. If we see people as reflective containers then each person carries a part of the world. Somehow the Orthodox reveal a slice of everyone else. Hence, The Puerto Rican family carry a piece of the Satmar sect. Normally blind to such comparisons, we see surface- dress, physique, gesture, color and size. No longer confining vision to outside, but inside and beyond. The relations between people, the humanness invades into each and every neighbor.