Beyond the Salaried Society

André Gorz

The Myth of Art

Régis Debray

Sentiers indiens: Caughnawaga: aux sources du Canada français

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ON THE WATERFRONT

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A new magazine after twelve years? Not really. Vice Versa has always looked beyond cultural and political borders as well as psychological ones, proposing an open identity, a hybrid. No surprises then. The truth is that Vice Versa, after reflecting at length (globally), has decided to act locally by choosing a new territory and changing its linguistic balance (66% of the articles are in English, 30% in French and 5% in Italian and Spanish). The magazine has found itself within the “triangle” formed by the three big metropoles of Eastern North America: Montreal, Toronto, New York. Instead of circling the planet now we’re “triangulating”! Quite a different thing! The means of connecting certainly aren’t lacking. Just think: forty planes, a dozen trains and at least six buses leave Montreal for Toronto every day and return. There are also many different highways! The same is true as regards access to and from New York. This is not an ordinary little triangle but an extraordinary and bustling mosaic which goes largely unnoticed and, therefore, neglected. We, however, already love it because it allows us to step out of the national circle; because it harbors a hybrid identity, a fusion. No surprises then. The truth is that after having thought for so long about it, it is established (locally)! This is how it works: a different one! And there are means of connecting certainly aren’t lacking. "Triangulating"! Quite a different thing! The means of connecting certainly aren’t lacking.

In this issue you will read extraordinary articles by Regis Debray and Andre Gorz which reflect our political orientation. The latter’s article puts an end to the lies of the economists (“create” jobs, the unbearable “luxury” of public health, education...). Regis Debray’s article strikes out at "Art", the last religion. The ambiguous, trafficked activity which has been strangely overrated for the past, say, four hundred years. Read. Take a stroll along our three waterfronts. Then subscribe, support. Happy reading and enjoy your journey.
His name is Charles Wright. The Post Office has just forwarded him the proofs of his bio for the newest edition of *Who's Who Among Black Americans*. It was delivered to the shelter where he lives this morning. He's astonished but it's not the first time he's made the list, it's just the first time he's been homeless.

Back in 1963, when his first novel *The Messenger* was published and hardcovers were selling for $3.98, he was a promising young writer. Now they cost $24.98 and Charles is sixty-two and going blind. In 1949, when he was seventeen and the subways were still a nickel, he met James Jones in a writers colony. James introduced him to Norman Mailer who wanted to read Charles' unpublished novel *No Regrets* but only on the condition that it wasn't Charles' only copy. Norman didn't want to be responsible for losing it. So Charles xeroxed it and kept the original. Then Charles felt safe because Norman had a duplicate, and Norman felt secure since Charles still had the original, until both of them lost the only two copies in existence. Charles laughs as he tells this story with good natured shrug. It might have been some of his best writing, but easy come easy go. Writing and money have come and gone as easily as his fifteen minutes of fame. Now his nerves are bad and he complains his predicament and the people in the shelters are so boring he has writer's block. But once life was full of splendid coevals. He met Kay Boyle in the lobby of the Metropolitan Museum of Art when he was still a messenger. She was charmed someone so young had recognized her. "You must be a writer," she said, "how else could you know this face."

Before he and Mailer lost *No Regrets* he had shown it to Ferrar Straus and Giroux. Roger Strauss didn't want to publish it but he
wanted to meet the young man who wrote it. "Why don't you write about what you do. You must have seen a lot..." That was on a Thursday. Charles wrote thirty pages over the weekend, delivered them on Monday and before the end of the week had a contract to publish his first novel, _The Messenger._

The critics loved _The Messenger_ and its author. Charles took the residuals and flew to Tangiers to live, where he met Paul Bowles and stayed until he ran out of funds. Sitting in the sidewalk cafes he often befriended the local whores and thieves and gave them advice. He would tell the poor young gigolos what to put in the letters they wrote their middle class tourist lovers. "No, no," he would say, "if you want that expensive watch you can't say it that way". They repaid him with streetwise affection. He was the only foreigner who could wander down the waterfront through its deserted alleys smashed drunk at three o'clock in the morning with total impunity. No one touched him. But afterall, it was the sixties and Tangiers.

By the time he got back to New York he was broke. He holed up in a little hotel and wrote _The Wig_ his second novel, in twenty-nine sweet alcoholic days. He was hoping for a little more fame and money. He believed _The Wig_ a far better book than _The Messenger._ He met James Baldwin after Baldwin wrote the blurb that appeared on the cover of _The Wig._ Baldwin thought the book daring and honest, but the critics decimated _The Wig._ It was a rare example of a black protest novel before its time had come. Richard Wright had written _Native Son_ and Ralph Ellison had written _The Invisible Man_ but comparatively, although these were protest novels, they were respectful and traditional in form.

_The Wig_ was irreverent. It assaulted both Whites and Blacks. As a tragic surreal tale of a desperate black man's futile attempt to enter the all American dream by straightening his kinky hair, it was too far on the vanguard of those militant black novels that would soon decorate the coffee tables of the radically white and chic in the next decade. The White "liberalism" of the Sixties didn't become trendy until the Seventies. When _The Wig_ was published in 1966, the mainstream had not yet hit upon the idea of literary flagellation as a means of expiating its collective guilt. Charles was confused. Langston Hughes had written him a couple of letters after reading _The Messenger_, but Charles had carelessly neglected to answer. He only met Langston after _The Wig_ was published. Langston spoke to him gently. He could see Charles had been damaged by the critics' barbs. Langston gave him a little fatherly advice. "If what you want is for them to love you again, just write another nice little book like _The Messenger._"

White folks don't want to know any black person feels and thinks intensely enough to write a book like _The Wig._ Langston told him.

Eventually, the critics who destroyed _The Wig_ begrudgingly conceded that, at the very least, Charles Wright had become the undisputed father of black black satire. But they then hated its course for Charles Wright. The promising young writer was not so lucky. He saw his lady. Like so many writers of his generation Charles is an alcoholic and suffers from depression. Two excellent reasons to never guess talking to him that he is homeless and on the verge of going blind. He's charismatic, pragmatic steel. He's down to two cigarettes a day "just to read the New York Times with" and still holding on to "the wagon". It's a roller coaster but he's been dry since October when he entered the seedy little shelter where he now resides. The shelter is supposed to be finding him an apartment but so far all it's offered is 'single room occupancy' uptown in Harlem or downtown near Avenue D and the East River, better known to the locals as Junkieville.

Charles is resisting leaving a shelter for an SRO. In order to write again he needs the privacy and solitude of his own place. "The East Village is home" he sighs. "I've lived here ever since I arrived from St. Louis. Even when I was washing dishes in the Catskills I hiked back on my days off. Even when I was sleeping in those Bowery fleabags they were always lower East side fleas" he laughs. He figures if he's going to have to walk those mean streets one day with a cane or a seeing eye dog as the doctors keep predicting, he wants to be able to 'see' them. He's got Nolof (East Manhattan from Fourteen Street to Houston Street) memorized. He'd rather have a tiny studio in Noho than a state of the art loft in Soho or the Bronx. He's a veteran, a senior citizen, disabled, in "Who's Somebody in Black America", but he can't find a decent apartment he can afford. Forget decent, he can't find any cheap apartment.

But Charles is sanguine. Like the title of his third book, he finds darkness and homelessness absolutely Nothing to get Alarmed About. He's writing poetry on Prozac, hiding his time, confident his Guardian Angel is about to appear any moment. All he wants, he says, is a little pad, a big old fashioned mechanical typewriter and peace and quiet. The shelters are even noisier than SROs. He doesn't sleep nights. If it wasn't for his vision and physical problems he'd probably hit the streets.

I quote the statistics to him. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, as of May 1995, there are approximately 24,000 people living in shelters, 9000 of which are children, and another 25,000 people living in the streets. I ask why he thinks he's going to luck upon what thousands of other homeless in New York must be hoping for in vain. He flashes that ageless teenage grin and whispers, "Well then, what the heck, maybe I've got a premonition. I'm always on the vanguard of something. I was the father of black black humor and what other homeless guy do you know listed in 'Who's Who'?" He sees the look on my face and laughs. "I'm not worried about your checks?" I ask. "No, my soul. Look" he whispers. "Maybe it's the detox, but someday I feel chipper. And I been dreaming stuff lately, that's been coming true. Like imagining my vision's getting better. It's scary. But hey, as a friend of mine, who risked his life crossing the New Jersey turnpike on foot last week and lost it, as ole Al use to say, I'm a tough little son-of-a-bitch. So now, if I could survive an April? Are you kidding me? I can survive anything." "What happened April 17th?" "Here. Read the poem I wrote. That was the day they told me I was also going blind in my good eye."
To announce the meeting of representatives of more than a dozen disciplines in Quebec City in the spring of 1995 for les États généraux du paysage québécois, the conference’s organizing committee produced an elegant three colour brochure with imagined landscapes rendered to suggest vintage etchings and flowing calligraphic script. It appeared that the États généraux was a call to assembly for the Knights of the Round Table and all that was missing were some trumpets and flags.

Such romanticizations of the landscape are not a new phenomenon. The natural world was first portrayed as an escape from the brutality of the Industrial Revolution and if the twentieth century conception of the landscape has had any focus, it remained rooted in this nineteenth century inheritance. The romantic approach never quite eclipsed the reductionism it set out to criticize: by framing the landscape as a sacred object it only succeeded in isolating man and nature, city and country. An idealized retreat distinct from the realities of urban life, the natural world remained separated from the world inhabited by man. Most of the significant landscape art of our times has reflected this division. The broad appeal of the paintings of the Group of Seven, for example, can be attributed in large measure to the work’s pleasant associations with the rest and relaxation of vacation-time [1]. Combined with this heritage has been a fundamental confusion between environment and landscape. While the former as a physical reality should be distinguished from the latter as a cultural practice of modification, such a distinction is rarely made. The twentieth century’s attitude to the landscape has generally been one of...
devaluation and mystification [2]. But there is hope on the horizon. As the industrial world becomes increasingly submerged in an information-based society, we are witnessing a new type of place-making. To best understand this change, let us consider landscape as the mediating presence between the natural and the artificial. The romantic process of mediation was sentimental and nostalgic: nature was good and man was bad and never the twain shall meet. In the new landscapes, it is the manner of mediation itself which is changing. Considering built and natural environments as part of a larger continuum, places are being made that embrace the landscape pragmatically in a spirit of reconciliation between environment and man. Landscape becomes "the sum total of all things and their past configurations" [3]; a living record of history inscribed in nature. Combining elements of industry with the varying scales of nature and the particularities of local geography and history, the revitalization of urban waterfronts throughout North America and Europe are among the most compelling examples of these new landscapes. These projects use architecture as a type of in-situ installation to reveal the existing landscape of ageing commercial ports. Abandoned railways, storage sheds and obsolete marine equipment are treated as landscape elements in the same manner as vegetation, topography or water features. Such conversions of declining industrial areas to recreational uses are the most recent example of a fascination with nature-appreciation as a leisure activity of the urban dweller. In an ironic twist of history, the industrial infrastructure that fueled a return to nature more than a century ago is being reappropriated as visual animation for recreational landscapes - an unlikely mutation from mechanical to visual power.

In Montréal, the recent completion of the first phase of the Vieux-Port redevelopment has breathed new life into a declining waterfront and reconnected the city with the Saint Lawrence River. Montréal had little choice in the early 1980s than to begin to debate strategies for the reuse of its historic port area. The conversion of shipping to container cargo and the rerouting of marine traffic occasioned by the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s resulted in the construction of new container terminals down river that effectively rendered the Vieux-Port obsolete. Left behind was a strip of land some three kilometers long separating the tourist district of Old Montréal from the river. While narrow, this strip was richly articulated as a built landscape: towering embankments in stone and concrete structured a dramatic relationship to the water; railways and their bridges and sidings criss-crossed the embankments and piers. The powerfully simple forms of industrial architecture including steel frame storage sheds and massive cylindrical grain elevators rose above the embankments as silhouettes against the river.

Designed by a consortium including architects Cardinal-Hardy, Peter Rose and Jodoin, Lamarré, Pratte and landscape architects Parent-Latreille, Pluram and Peter Walker, the Vieux-Port is the recipient of three of the profession's highest honours: a Prix d'Excellence from the Order of Architects of Quebec, a Progressive Architecture Award of Excellence and a Governor General's Award. The plan restores the morphology of the twentieth century port by reopening the entry to the Lachine Canal (closed in 1964) and the Bonsecours Basin (backfilled in 1973). Superimposed on this restored landscape is a network of pedestrian promenades, bicycle paths, park furniture, and vegetation. The contrast between the fine grain of this new recreational infrastructure and the embankments, ships and grain elevators still present on the site stimulates activity and creates a memorable sequence of experiences. Complementing this dynamic are a series of archaeological events including the exposed foundations of loading crane towers and a garden of ruins made up of the rusting vestiges of mechanical devices. The reappropriation of abandoned structures as the visual focii of a leisure landscape is further heightened by the layers of decay left exposed on embankment edges, grain elevators and storage shed walls. Weathered limestone and concrete and accumulated grime and rust create surfaces as inherently natural as those of a bucolic landscape.

The commitment of the designers to creating a new type of landscape is evident in the skill with which the various landscape layers, from the historic to the contemporary, are collaged together. The effect is generally seamless and the message communicated is one of continuity through time. In place of the pseudo-historical approach common to many revitalization schemes, the Vieux-Port treats buildings as spaces of experience. Complementing this dynamic are a series of archaeological events including the exposed foundations of loading crane towers and a garden of ruins made up of the rusting vestiges of mechanical devices. The reappropriation of abandoned structures as the visual focii of a leisure landscape is further heightened by the layers of decay left exposed on embankment edges, grain elevators and storage shed walls. Weathered limestone and concrete and accumulated grime and rust create surfaces as inherently natural as those of a bucolic landscape.

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The presence of the river should not be underestimated in the ultimate success of the Vieux-Port as a landscape experiment. As opposed to city-center revitalization schemes lacking in significant natural features, the Vieux-
Port is blessed with a waterway of continental scale that ties the project to a larger conception of territory. Not only does the river create a unique sense of space through ebb and flow it imposes as well its own sense of time. As a zone of mediation between the dominion of man (the city) and the dominion of nature (the river), the success of the Vieux-Port as a humane environment hinges on a sensitive negotiation of this transition. As opposed to waterfront revitalizations in other Canadian cities, programming of activities in the Vieux-Port insures that the recreational vocation of the project remains its primary focus. Toronto's Harbourfront is dominated by condominium, hotel and office towers while Vancouver's Granville Island redevelopment is organized around a shopping arcade and retail area. The Vieux-Port is a more fundamentally public space: commercial activity is limited to recreational or leisure services such as a small-craft marina and Imax theater, both of which are woven into the fabric of existing storage sheds and piers. As with any intervention of this scale, the Vieux-Port is not without missed opportunities. Beyond the restoration of embankments and piers, the plan's essential working space is the strip of vegetation contained by the urban wall of de la Commune Street to the north and the water's edge to the south. The results of an earlier phase of construction, the rustic pavilion, neo-Victorian street furniture and picturesque pond found in this area are disappointing. These nostalgic elements are at odds with the linearity of the land parcel they inhabit and create an unfortunate break in an otherwise seamless landscape. Somewhat frustrating as well was the decision to locate a granite promenade on the southern flank of de la Commune when the location of such a broad strip of horizontal surface on the opposite side of the street would have created an opportunity for sidewalk cafes and given a boost to often abandoned storefronts.

The cultural sophistication of the Vieux-Port plan is good news for both Montréalers in general and the design professions in particular but assigning credit for a visionary approach to place-making would not be true to the happenstance of the situation. For all the willful good intentions of the socially engaged, new cultural expressions are as often as not thrust upon a reluctant populace by larger forces. As our cities transform from centers of labour and industry to centers of service and leisure our conception of landscape is shifting as well. The hybrid landscapes of the post-industrial city are an inevitability, not a vision, and the real challenge lies in our ability to understand the particularities and potential of each site and each situation as they arise.

**NOTES**


**GAVIN AFFLECK**

AN ARCHITECT AND PAINTER BASED IN MONTREAL. A MAJOR FOCUS OF HIS WORK IN BOTH DISCIPLINES IS THE INTEGRATION OF CONTEMPORARY FORM WITH THE LANDSCAPE.

**EVE ON THE RIVER**

ECOWATCH CENTRE

ON THE ST. LAWRENCE

A new project which highlights the complexity and fragility of ecosystems is a welcome public service in an age of "cosmopolitan myopic greed, and the exaltation of short-term gain as well as private interests.

The Biosphere of Montréal, recently inaugurated as a water conservation awareness and ecowatch centre, constitutes a link with a different era of utopian vision and budding global ecological concerns. The great geodesic sphere on St Helen's Island, a light and graceful framework composed of a myriad of steel tubes, was crafted for Expo '67. It was intended in the generous vision of its creator, the American engineer and inventor Buckminster Fuller, as an exhibition space to underscore the limits of natural resources on "spaceship Earth". In its time the dome merely became the US national pavilion at Expo 67. But, luckily still standing, the peculiar three-quarter sphere now houses an elegant, "high-tech", Bauhaus-style inspired addition: well-integrated within the original structure, the addition serves as home to the ecowatch centre. The Biosphere is primarily an educational institution, with activities and exhibits oriented toward outings for school groups and families.

The concept is beautifully and imaginatively realized giving the visitor a sense of the majesty and complexity of the St. Lawrence river with its wetlands and ecosystems. The natural setting of the Biosphere, on the green St Helen island, adds its own meaning to the centre's ecological message. Here, altered by man's works, nature displays a characteristic Canadian grandeur. The activities of the Biosphere staff will not directly improve water quality or the state of flora and fauna of the St Lawrence. Although no research is carried out by the centre, there is scientific work of environmental value going on at various other research centres around Montréal, in connection with the universities and Environment Canada.

Michel Provencer, the director of active observation for the Biosphere, talks about a new type of community involvement that the new institution claims to pioneer. He quote the best-selling author, astronomer and environmental guru Hubert Reeves: "We don't have one environmental problem, but a host of small ones." The concept reminds one of the ecological movement catch phrase: "Think globally, act locally". In line with such precepts, the centre gathers observations made by concerned ornithologists, fishermen and students with respect to the health of flora, fish and bird habitat along the St Lawrence. Data collected in the framework of what the centre calls "environmental action networks" may eventually offer scientists an increased base for environmental action. Eleven such projects are currently under way. Harm Sloterdijk, an Environment Canada scientist specializing in ecotoxicology, is affiliated with the ecowatch centre. He has shown some senior high-school students from Varennes, Québec how to harvest; brown bull-head, yellow perch, pike and pumpkin seed sunfish, as well as how to measure them and describe their pathology (or how healthy they are) and subsequently to convey that information to the centre data bank. Environmental concern among students in Québec seems quite high according to some polls.

It appears that one of the most effective ways to woe high-school drop-outs to work, is by getting them involved in environmental projects.

In the near future, the ecocentre will also offer nature walks and bird watching tours. The Biosphere project, jointly realized by Environment Canada and the City of Montréal, is part of a wider plan to open up the city towards its river. The rehabilitation of the Old Port, making the waterfront available for recreation, belongs to the same vision which, in part, motivated the ecowatch centre recreation.

In the centre, the visitor can try out a variety of multi-media screens and displays illustrating the importance of water conservation and the effects of pollution. A number of aquariums and plant displays illustrate the river habitat while the data centre gathers information on all aspects of river ecology.

Andrew Seleanu
sentiment de l'élù qui en profite quand ça passe.

J'allois à l'est de l'est. Là où l'odeur s'amplifiait sans rien retenir du parfum anachronique qu'elle promenait au-dessus des voies asphaltées. Je laissais mon nez jouir de cette surprise. Le fleuve à deux pas d'où je roulais...

Je trichais avec le passé. Je trichais comme on triche toujours quand il s'agit de traverser les temps difficiles. Et le Saint-Laurent s'y prêtait. Je pensais au fleuve et j'exigeais souverain mon dû. Rien à voir avec ce Saint-Laurent civilisé, cet affluant policé sous la main de politiques, de touristes clinquants. Je réclamais le fleuve entouré du gris des silos à grains où les rats venaient se gaver. Avec des quais imbéliés des suées propres aux misères et des marins souriants sous le soleil domical des années cinquante. C'était à cet endroit que j'avais appris à ressouder le reste du monde. L'espace bien absorbant, il était mome. Le vent m'agaçait et je décuplais mes efforts pour jeter un oeil sur le fleuve qui me faisait déjà mieux. J'enl'm'empiffrais d'un maximum d'air. La tristesse des bateaux, ça passe. Leur ombre sévère... Ça devait marcher.

Un murmure venait de l'avant m'agaçait et je découpaïs mes efforts pour l'expérier à l'autre bout de ma conscience. Je toisais le Saint-Laurent avec l'intuition que je n'avais rien à dégainer. Y'avait plus rien au monde que le fleuve, ce murmure et ma caboché enfaméisée. Le murmure, comme une rumeur d'urgence, s'approchait de plus en plus jusqu'à devenir un chuchotement glissé vers mon tympan.

Je coule de source depuis plus loin que là-bas. Depuis au-delà de l'éério qui m'enrichit l'embouchure et m'incite à pousser ma masse fluide. Riche en intrigues. Dans ma course j'attaque les rêves de riverains qui se donnent la peine de fournir du lest au regard. Je les traîne jusqu'aux marées salées et les érotise d'un balant licencieux. Le vent s'inventait sur ma crinière chamboulée. Le cœur à marée haute, je m'emphiris d'un maximum d'air. La tristesse en mille miettes et le vin à la rescousse... Ça devait marcher. Ce qui se trame sur le plancher des vaches ne me concerne que très indirectement. Ça gueule, ça mord, et ça ne fait pas trop de vague sous le souffle râleux des mécontents. Je m'étière sur mes mille kilomètres et je mouille vos berges de vaguelettes qui les font frémir. C'est mon clin d'œi à moi.
Sometime in May of this year one of the world’s longest streetcar lines came into being. Not an inch of track was laid: all it took was the flip of a switch. The Toronto Transit Commission began running through-streetcars on existing lines, snaking 23 kilometres across Toronto, almost linking two sprawling suburbs: Scarborough and Mississauga, that bracket the more traditionally urban city.

Directly across from where the no. 501 car turns at the eastern end of its line is a water purification plant built during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Ironically, the low cost of labour and materials meant no expense was spared on the project. Besides using sand and chemicals to make the murky waters of Lake Ontario potable, the R.C. Harris filtration plant makes a powerful architectural statement: its mausoleum-like Art Deco buildings climb in steps onto a high bluff with sweeping views of the lake.

There is no such urban theatre at the 501 car’s western loop at Long Branch. The name, like a counterpart waterfront community on New Jersey’s Atlantic shore, reflects history, geography, and technology: here is the farthest point where the rails reached, way back when. Today, suburbs have engulfed Long Branch, and transit riders who persevere to the end at first find suburban nothingness. At the loop, hopeful people wait to go back: in Toronto tracks in the street and wires overhead connect to life down the line.

What these opposite ends to Toronto’s old-fashioned transit system do have in common is that they are both within a few hundred feet of Lake Ontario. The Queen St./Long Branch streetcar runs parallel to the lake, never more than a mile from it. Those willing to walk can see much of Toronto’s waterfront by transit. At the Long Branch stop you can already smell the lake (the scent is surprisingly fresh); walk across the street and you see the surf; in a minute you kick sand on the beach at Marie Curtis park.

Indeed, one of the surprising things about the Toronto waterfront is its accessibility. But this is something that has yet to be discovered and is still relatively unknown. The Long Branch neighbourhood, which grew around the transit terminus, appears to be a privileged waterfront enclave; its wealthiest live at the lake, their waterfronts private. Yet a closer look reveals that the right-of-way for every north-south street extends to the water; these spaces remain undeveloped, a little wild, and public. The practice is the legacy of early Ontario surveyors who usually reserved such access for the Crown; the tradition was practised when Long Branch was developed this century.

Riding back toward the city, the streetcar doesn’t hug the shoreline; Toronto’s car lines spawned dense commercial districts and Lakeshore Blvd. is one of these, though threadbare compared to the others. Between street and lake are neighbourhoods showing different generations valued proximity to Lake Ontario. You pass an abandoned psychiatric hospital, modest post-war housing, aging modernist apartments, and grotesque waterfront condominiums executed in baroque and nautical styles.

And finally where downtown Toronto’s Oz-like skyline comes into view is motel row. With names like “Cruise Motel” or “Rainbow Motel,” they date from the 1930s to the 1950s. Some have been associated with sin and mangled...
bodies. Bad feng shui, perhaps: created for people in automobiles, these motels were located on a streetcar line. They were once right on the lake; surely business suffered when fill landlocked them behind a new waterfront park. Then again, maybe it didn't.

Toronto, you gather by now, is a city of many waterfronts, whose beauty lie in beholders' eyes. This is true of an appalling harbour district southeast of downtown (and best reached by bike). Here the skeletons of Toronto's great lakes shipping heyday are found: rusting lake freighters like Canada Steamship Lines' Saguenay; a decrepit tank farm; the seldom-used ship canal and turning basin; heaps of incoming coal; a drawbridge whose huge concrete counterweights hang threateningly in mid-air. Amid the desolation, incongruons signs of life: the Cherry Restaurant ("fast take-out service"); a Knob Hill Farms supermarket whose littered parking lot has an unusual view of Toronto's skyline over the harbour.

Where Cherry St. meets the lake is a modest municipal beach, with views across a bay to a relatively new addition to the city's lake front, the Leslie St. "spit," a narrow point of land that extends kilometres out into Lake Ontario. Not easy to get to (locals bike it on weekends), the spit does have a public transit connection: it was created from fill dug up when Toronto's Bloor-Danforth subway was built in the 1960s. After it was dumped wildlife unexpectedly claimed the man-made waste, transforming it into a refuge.

Whether art is found on the Toronto waterfront is debatable. Lakeshore Blvd. itself, from the city core to the Humber River where the motels are found, comes close. Not really the same street that takes you by transit to Long Branch, here it is a late expression of the American-based "City Beautiful" movement, which early this century sought to make cities more substantial and park-like.

Originally a grand waterfront boulevard lined with trees, Lakeshore Blvd. has suffered many indignities — Dutch elm disease claimed its green roof in the 1960s; to prevent pedestrian slaughter chain-link fences wall it off from Toronto's historic Canadian National Exhibition Grounds and Ontario Place, a futuristic waterfront activity park. But there are things to see here: rowers practising in the enclosure between breakwater and beach; a stylish bathing pavilion from the 1920s; a monument to the opening of the lake front Queen Elizabeth Way, once a parkway and now a dangerous expressway.

And there is something that is unquestionably an artistic gesture: a new suspension bridge over the mouth of the Humber river, exclusively for strollers and cyclists. Its 100-metre deck is hung from thin cables fastened to two soaring tubes of white steel formed into an arch. Strong, public, and sculptural, it is inexplicable in the nasty '60s.

Queen's Quay, the portion of the city waterfront that has not been neglected — that has no rusting ships or doubtful motels — is Toronto's worst maritime tragedy. Yet Harbourfront is where most tourists go in search of the lake. Scyscraping condominiums form a canyon near water's edge. There are streetcars; a short-line links the strip to the Toronto's nearby transportation hub, Union Station. But the atmosphere is like Edge City; money has been made, but no sense of place created. Federal largess funded arts and cultural events in renovated buildings that drew a critical mass of visitors. The question now that Ottawa has cut funding is how the ersatz neighbourhood will now fare.

Escape from this disappointment is available at Harbour Castle Hotel, where Metro ferries dock and $3 buys a round trip to a truly extraordinary waterfront, Toronto Island, a group of connected islets in the harbour. Much of it is parkland, but at one end ramshackle summer cottages were turned into year-round homes and a thriving, car-free community. This occurred much against the wishes of the Metropolitan government, whose motherhood vision to turn the entire island into parkland would also empty it of people.

If you walk up Bay St. from the ferry to Toronto's financial district, and catch the 501 car going east, you arrive at the Beaches. This too is an old cottage colony, long since winterized. But the Beaches still live by, for, and chiefly because of Lake Ontario. On a 2 kilometre boardwalk pure-bred dogs, expensive sneakers, and beautiful people with large mortgages on small homes are on parade. Sailing and swimming after work, sand in hall carpets, and walks to the neighbouring Harris filtration plant come with the territory. It seems almost too chic. But on Queen St. the streetcar and hydroelectric wires overhead remind — like they did at Long Branch — that this is still Toronto, a gritty, flat city on a flat lake. Others have aspired to much more on their waterfronts, and some have done more. But they have not achieved as much. The strength of Toronto is its mishmash and diversity, and the city's messy, cluttered, varied waterfront is part of the equation. It is never grand, only occasionally beautiful. But like the city itself, it works. —

ALFRED HOLDEN IS A JOURNALIST LIVING IN TORONTO.
With the rise of industrialism many waterfronts were simply treated as convenient transportation routes and discharge outlets. A wall of warehouses and factories met the water while on the other side wide ribbons of steel and asphalt separated the residential neighbourhoods from the production centres - the mythological symbolic ties broken, the ecological partnership unraveled. Toronto, along with countless other cities, has suffered such a fate. However, with the change in the economy the waterfront is being rediscovered. Unused railway lines are dismantled, the towering expressways redesigned and a new generation of green spaces occupy the landfills. Toronto never emerged as a megalopolis and was thus spared some of the problems associated with an immense concentration of people. Still a large city, it has managed to preserve most of its ravines and watercourses, although not all in a healthy state. It is these green remnants that have given vigor and hope to the restoration projects now taking place. What distinguishes the Toronto approach to waterfront regeneration is this link to the larger watershed areas, which in turn have led to a holistic understanding of bioregional relationships away from the city-centric mentality that prevailed for a long period of time. With the guidance of a few visionaries the regeneration movement may turn out to be one of the region's more successful ventures. The combined efforts of The Crombie Commission (regional greenway strategy) along with the vigil of various local task forces have developed a regional outlook that, if not politically corrupted, may produce substantial noteworthy changes in future developments.

The disastrous overdevelopment of Toronto's central waterfront has provided a lesson which has taught us that private enterprise acting in collusion with nearsighted politicians cannot be trusted to provide the quality of environment we have come to cherish. Economic issues of the day must be weighed against other integral values and may no longer be seen as the sole guiding principles. Many problems still plague the regeneration process. Without taking merit away from the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, which has done much needed work and is still one of the best working models for a comprehensive approach, a basic problem of inadequacy among the professions when dealing with ecological issues still remain. The overempowerment of the planning and architectural professions in the design process especially when dealing with environmental and public art issues has created a definite bias of problem solving which belies the claim of ecosystem approach made by Trust. There is a great need for people who are able to think and act in a holistic fashion. Efforts must be devoted to producing sensitive multidimensional professionals and not simply competent but unidimensional ones. It is unfortunate that most educational institutions fall short in this task, a new generation of holistic learning must begin.

To discuss such complex problems we met Suzanne Barrett who is director of Environmental Studies with the Waterfront Regeneration Trust.

V.V.: Toronto is undergoing a substantial change in its waterfront development strategy. How did this awareness of the city as a natural phenomena take into consideration the bioregional connections come about?

S.B.: It came about through the work of the Crombie Commission on the Toronto Waterfront, which was in existence from 1988 to 1992. The commission was set up initially to look at some issues of particular federal interest, the Toronto harbour, the Island airport, Harbourfront - but the mandate also included a request that Mr. Crombie look at the environmental health of the Waterfront. Of course as we started to look at the environmental issues of the waterfront we realized we can't do this without understanding the watershed.

The second interim report from the Crombie Commission was called Watershed, to reflect that understanding. There is change happening in the kinds of economic activities traditionally associated with waterfronts. We also looked at some of the social changes that are occurring, obviously associated with economic issues, unemployment. Other changes in the social fabric in terms of the increasing multicultural diversity in the population, the aging population, the
fact that people have different working hours, and so people have different leisure time. The fact that people want more recreational opportunities, are more interested in fitness and health, so they are looking for a cheap recreational place close to home. When you look at these factors, you see relationships between people and the waterfront in a different kind of a way. Another aspect of all of this was to look at the reasons we weren't making effective decisions on the waterfront, and that is when Mr. Crombie used the phrase jurisdiction gridlock. On one hand we needed to think about our environment, economy and the community in an integrative way, which is what we mean by an ecosystem approach, and on the other hand we have jurisdictions that are set to do exactly the opposite, to treat everything separately. So we came to the realization that if we were to take an ecosystem approach we needed to think of the way that we make decisions, and that led us into thinking about a roundtable approach. **V.V.:** The political aspect is interesting, attempting to change the views of municipalities to think not only about their particular jurisdictions. There are a number of local task forces such as the Don River Task Force or the Humber River Task Force. What is the Waterfront Regeneration Trust's relation with them? Is it an amiable relationship?

**S.B.:** Oh yes, in fact we are members of both those task forces. I think the relationship has gone two ways, in that some of the work the Crombie Commission did was influential in helping those emerging task forces to go about in the work that they were doing. And looking at it the other way around, we learned a lot from the work that they have been doing, in particular the Don River Task Force has done a good deal of interesting work. We see that as the way to go in dealing with environmental issues of the waterfront, to take a watershed approach. To have those types of task forces in operation is very healthy and very useful.

**Pedagogy, not authority**

**V.V.:** How much of an influence do you have on development that occurs in environmentally sensitive regions such as the headlands?

**S.B.:** We don't have any power of authority. Our mandate, outlined in Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy, and as set out in legislation Bill 1, 1992, is to facilitate the establishment of trail associated greenway and open spaces along the waterfront, to advise the province to consult with the public, to coordinate. Those are all activities that rely on the powers of existing agencies. We are here to act as a facilitator and a catalyst and to help the existing agencies, the private sector and the community groups work together. We work more by influence, by providing assistance and advise, than we do by telling people what to do. **V.V.:** In what ways are you active in educating the public?

**S.B.:** Through the work that we are already doing, I think that we already made some headway in reaching people through the work that the Crombie Commission did. Obviously through our publications we are helping people. **The Lake Ontario Greenways Strategy** is directed towards the protection and restoration, and both the recreational and economic uses, of the waterfront from Burlington Bay to the Trent River. It is presented in such a way that it is accessible for people to read and understand it. This kind of report can be used by environmental groups, by consultants, by developers as they try to figure out what to do with Bill 163, as well the municipalities and other agencies. **A Guidebook to the Waterfront Trail** is the second publication we are launching at this time. As people spend more time on the waterfront we know that they are going to become more concerned about the environmental problems that they see. This book also provides information about the cultural and natural heritage of the waterfront, so it will raise overall awareness, raise understanding and get people thinking about what they do out there and the affect it will have on others.

**V.V.:** Are you also in contact with educational institutions such as universities and other schools that would be able to contribute to this endeavour?

**S.B.:** Yes, there is quite a bit of interest. You are aware that the Regeneration report is being used as a textbook by many institutions and we expect that the same will happen with the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy. We are not doing as much in that field as we would like to because we simply don't have the staff, but we are planning to do more if we can. **V.V.:** Regarding the shoreline regeneration plan as presented in the Regeneration report, does the Trust feel there is enough competency in tackling such a problem as preserving the natural shifting of the shoreline? And has there been progress in coordinating a collaborative effort between the various municipalities and other authorities?

**S.B.:** Yes, what is happening is the first integrated shoreline management plan that is being done on the north shore of Lake Ontario. It is being coordinated by the Conservation Authority, the Trust is not doing that. In fact the Regeneration report may be a bit misleading for it says that there should be a shoreline management plan for the whole north shore, but it doesn't say who should do it. We have concluded that what we need to do is a number of shoreline management plans. The whole shoreline is too big, so you do it in manageable chunks, that makes sense from a coastal process point of view. **V.V.:** One of the problems I see in the projects being proposed thus far is perhaps a problem of semantics. There is much talk about ecosystem regeneration yet there is
very little evidence of ecosystem structures in them, the green spaces are still basically parks. I'm wondering if there are studies going on in defining "ecosystem ".

S.B.: What type of projects have you seen?

V.V.: One of the projects, for example, is the Garrison Commons, where they speak about ecosystem linkages. However when we look at the proposed master plan it is basically a Beaux-Art approach to development. They are using native plants, but native plants used in an horticultural manner is not truly an ecosystem. I wonder how much study has gone into the defining of this ecosystem, the land areas needed for true ecological connections to be made.

S.B.: I think you have to do the appropriate thing in the appropriate place. We also have to think about how you define an ecosystem, because the way we define an ecosystem is air, land, water, and we include people, and the interaction among them. Taking this definition, any human activity is as much part of the ecosystem as things usually thought of as the green environmental things. We don't define the ecosystem approach as meaning that everything has to be a natural habitat system. We define it as meaning that what you have to do is have an integrative understanding of how the air, the land and the water and the pollutants are interacting so an ecosystem can be a sewage treatment plant, this building is an ecosystem. So you have to not get hung up on that. The important thing is the approach that we take to it, which is the integrative approach, trying to understand how things work. The fact that Garrison Commons may appear to have more manicured space than functional environmental systems doesn't mean that you are not taking an ecosystem approach. On the other hand you also want to make sure that one of the aspects of the ecosystem approach is to make sure that you pay more attention to the environmental functions, to the wildlife habitats as well as the human systems, so you will be looking to see how many of those objectives you can meet in any given place and how you can integrate the natural systems with the human ones.

V.V.: Does the Trust have plans or recommend the buy out of private land to put in the public domain?

S.B.: If one had money it would be wonderful, there are all kinds of places one could acquire for public benefit or for wildlife habitat. However there is not much money for that, but to the extent that it is possible, yes, more waterfront should be in public hands. You know there has been some concern raised that perhaps there is going to be expropriation of private lands for the waterfront trail. That's not going to happen. But where the municipality or the conservation authority has an opportunity to acquire some land or to make some arrangements during the development, then that's when we should get more public land.

V.V.: Where do you see the major obstacles to a smooth journey?

S.B.: I think, probably, the biggest obstacle is money. The other obstacles are usually jurisdictional ones or political ones, generally disagreeing on the future. What we found since the work of the Commission and the work of the Trust has been increasingly more agreement about how to do things. So we are seeing a lot of advances and people sharing similar values for the waterfront than in the past. That is very encouraging, but there are still places where people don't agree on how things should be.

V.V.: Which are the major issues of contention?

S.B.: I guess where people don't want to be disturbed. A quiet neighbourhood, or quite farmland if you are looking further east. People don't want more visitors. On the one hand you may have a commercial center that is trying to attract more visitors, on the other hand you have residents of quiet communities who don't want to have a trail going through their neighbourhood.

V.V.: Do you envision a day when perhaps the whole Great Lakes Region would be regenerated?

S.B.: Yes, it could happen. I am forever hopeful, I think that there is a lot of progress going on. I think that on the whole people are a lot more careful. We have already seen progress in regards to the Great Lakes if we have the political will and enough money. It's not only the money, a lot of it is attitudes, it is doing things differently and recognizing that sometimes you can make money by making things better.

V.V.: How does an organization such as the Waterfront Trust keep from becoming too bureaucratic and loosing touch with the outside?

S.B.: Stay small. We are a small organization. The people who work here are not bureaucratically inclined. David Crombie has attracted people who don't think in an administrative way. They think about getting the job done. We don't have time to get bureaucratic, we have too much to do. Thanks to David Crombie we keep setting ourselves very practical goals, and very demanding goals, so we work to try to achieve those. We don't have an organized structure here, it is a very fluid structure within the organization.

What profit is more profitable?

V.V.: What do you see as your greatest strength and what is your greatest weakness?

S.B.: I think on the strength side is the ability to bring people together. To work collectively on things. Often you have a difficult problem to tackle and a number of agencies that need to work on it and perhaps a private sector or a community group involvement. Certainly no one group can solve the problem. There is also no one group that
Manhattan is like a walled city, surrounded by a gigantic moat, almost encircled by concrete and steel, broken only at the northern end by a fragment of the vegetation and rock that once covered the island. There is no waterfront. The West Side Improvement of the 1930's was the beginning of the end. Instead of having parkland extend down to the water, the highway was built at the edge, providing a barrier of noise and fumes between park and river. To pacify West Side residents the old Riverside Park was enlarged and expensively landscaped—until the point where it enters Harlem. From 125th to 145th Streets the railroad tracks were left uncovered, and to reach the narrow strip of park, residents of the area had to walk down an endless flight of steps, over the tracks, under the viaduct, and once there found few facilities and no peace. It was never improved.

The same relentlessly car-obsessed planning paved the waterfront of the East River and much of Brooklyn and the Bronx. Workers used to cross the rivers on ferries, but when the roads were built, the wharves and docks were demolished, which meant they had to cross the bridges on foot. Until the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Drive was built, people on the Upper East Side could walk to the water's edge. Even wealthy opponents couldn't stop the massive highway system, which eventually encircled the city with the fumes of a million cars.

When they needed peace and quiet, the wealthy could leave the city. The poor had, and have, no such option, and in any case wilderness was not considered to have the necessary "civilizing" effect. In the late 1850's work began on Central Park, the prototype of a highly structured environment where nature was "paraphrased." It included roads, in all directions. Olmsted knew that people like to look at the landscape from their carriages, and the roads and bridges of the twentieth century would provide river views for those who could afford cars. Most of the working class of the 1860's did not have the time, energy or money to make the long trip to Central Park, and could not therefore experience the soothing effect that was supposed to prevent them from rioting. The park's visitors were mostly the middle and upper classes—to their great relief, and property surrounding it increased in value by 200 per-cent per annum. Not surprisingly, city planning continues to be authoritarian and racially biased. In the 1960's a sewage treatment plant on the Hudson was planned for the Upper West Side, a mostly white, middle and upper class area with political clout. Of course they got rid of it. It was moved...
uptown to Harlem, to the same stretch of the Hudson neglected by the West Side Improvement. In 1986, forty-nine years after the highway was completed, the plant opened with great fanfare and the terrible stench of hydrogen sulphide, like rotting eggs, or fish. The outraged residents of West Harlem have had to endure this latest environmental racism ever since, with increased incidents of asthma and other health problems. In the same paternalistic vein as the park planners of the nineteenth century, there was a palliative, as compensation the people of West Harlem finally got their “waterfront” park. High on top of the sewage plant is a impressive layout of “waterfront” park. High on top of the viaduct, is the nearly inaccessible strip from the approach to River Bank State Park, as it is euphemistically called, you can look down on the roaring traffic of the viaduct, and below it the disused railroad tracks that the Improvement plan of the thirties didn't bother to cover. Next to the rusted tracks, separated by the dark, unusable space under the viaduct, is the nearly inaccessible strip of old Riverside Park that many Harlem residents consider too dangerous to visit. Recently, in contrast, the mostly white and middle class residents of Manhattan's lower West Side won battles against City and corporate interests that produced small areas of park by the river in exchange for commercial development. A new concrete path extends from the Chicago-like Battery Park City along the Hudson to Chelsea, next to the highway, and two or three neighborhood piers will be restored for recreation. A few years ago when New York's infrastructure was as usual crumbling around us, a inspection of the Manhattan bridge found that the homeless men who lived under it had chopped away most of the wooden posts holding it up. The posts had been put there to save money. The homeless had used them for firewood.

The city's docks are mostly gone, leaving their trace in the remaining delapidated, burned-out piers on the Hudson. A few cruise ships, and the monstrous carrier Intrepid, deployed off Vietnam, dock midtown. The four ferries, the Brooklyn dock, and the Dickensian prison ships of the late 1980's remind us of how the city once extended out onto the water. When the port began to dwindle in importance, there was an opportunity for the city to restore its riverbanks, for people, not cars, but that was not to be. After the West Side Improvement had destroyed the last waterfront wilderness its planner exclaimed: "...What a waterfront! What an island to buy for $241 million!"

Water, Land, Air.
A Critical Exchange.

Reflections of a Florentine Architect in New York
Vittorio Giorgini

Architecture and urbanism, have evolved slowly as have other human disciplines. Very little has been done to redefine them in these post-industrial times except for a few attempts in the first half of our century. But the nature of such "arts" has changed considerably since the classic era. Even if recent and still undivulged, this change is essential since it defines scientific and objective parameters and work methods in opposition to the contemporary artistic narcissism. These new tendencies derive from the study of the techniques and design of the artificial structures, inspired by some structures we can observe in nature. But this analogy has never been really applied since the dominant understanding of nature has always been a "creationist one", therefore essentially different from the historical. This fact demonstrates how we are conditioned by our cultural beliefs. Today, we have the newborn bionics and biomorphics with their attention to the structural organization of the systems, and their relations of balance, efficiency and interdependence. In this context, the classical and symbolical concepts of planning are rejected and researchers are about to open new and exciting perspectives, if only the dominant culture, static and self-defensive, will allow them to do so.

We shall refer every criticism and every proposal whatsoever to these parameters which will always be verified on an experimental basis. Here we can't describe the new approach even if we have to take it into account. Given the complexity of this subject, as we tried to point out, our purpose here is quite general and necessarily generic. Referring to the waterfront, the line we call shore or coast whatsoever, it is nothing else but the point of extremely complex contacts (exchanges) between three volumes: air, water, land. These volumes are defined by surfaces which we call transitional and which represent, on our planet, areas of supreme importance, because of the complexity of the exchanges taking place within them. Besides the waterfront, everything that is produced by Homo Faber (but not much Sapiens), is not in accord with
these principles of harmony, which are usually violated and ignored.
In the past, little was built on shores. Many of the roads followed the line of water and were little more than paths which didn't damage the ecosystem. Harbours were few and covered a small surface, enough to satisfy the functional needs of exchanges — the transition — between land and water.

Their impact on the environment was minimal and didn't provoke any serious damage. The problems started with the development of the bourgeois economy and its markets and a society rushing greedily for profits, more and more greedy. All the roads, even those parallel to the coast became paved with stones, then with cement and asphalt. They became artificial barriers breaking the existing relationship between land, water and air. Ports expanded also and became city with buildings near the water, where the streets act like dams violently separating urban life from the water. Real estate speculations on the waterfront privatized the shores, they destroyed the environment with tourist facilities ironically conceived to enjoy it. This is a constant and tragic paradox of contemporary society, to which must be added the chaotic industrial development and its heavy pollution impact.

At this point it seems that any critic or proposal becomes a pure utopia and one must ask whether we must be optimistic or pessimistic. Personally, I don't like to conclude that being optimistic means embracing an utopia and that a pessimistic attitude is merely a realistic one; to finally affirm that this society is endlessly losing its values and only keeping its blind egotistic drive.

All human activities, waterfront included, are related to our consciousness and our ability to make things. And even the demographic making is producing new disasters besides many others and, with all due respect to the believers of "Go forth and multiply", its effects upon shores, woods, mountains and so on are disastrous, independent of the quality of the projects. What I think matters in fact, is not just "how" but "how much".

Manhattan is the perfect example of this "how much". There is no such a phenomenon as an urban area facing the water. Any possibility of it is cut off, excluded by a large highway which surrounds the city like a fortified wall. The water is accessible only to cars, which anyway, cannot take advantage of it. And then there is no panorama. The entire road network is contained within the highway ring, with no beginning nor end. It is cut here and there, at random. The shore-line surrounding the city seems to encroach upon the urban space, but in fact the opposite is true. Then, if some buildings have the luck (good or bad?) to face the water, they are the first — the last — of a series. Eventually, the river, lake or sea will be filled up by earth, in order to build and then the first buildings will lose their privilege.

A political task
The waterfront is too precious a space to build on. Mayors, politicians, architects, engineers, tycoons: the Donald Trumps of the past used to build in honor and for the advantage of their society and times.

I think that we should build very little on the waterfront and only in a landscaping manner. Not like a city-park, which is contained and imprisoned by roads, but instead by shaping the land, working carefully with nature, and keeping the urban structures as far away as possible.

Here we should broaden our consideration of the concepts of city, nature, facilities, etc. A difficult discourse, but an urgent one, as the analysis of such concepts may produce new criteria which may eventually open into a political terrain.

And yet it may be too late. Such political task, already seen as utopian, has little chance of being accomplished. This is an incredible and sad paradox of this profit-based society: it still blindly believes in profits unable to see that it is about to destroy itself.

River Crane by Vittorio Giorgini
The River Crane has been conceived as a global center to develop environmental policy through research and education. The project is located on the southern tip of Roosevelt Island in New York. It is suspended over a natural environment and projects into the sky and out over the water. The island's subway and cable car stations are connected by a light rail system to the central node (axis) of the project. This node acts as a lobby with all the necessary services directing people toward the major parts of the project, a small craft marina, a sport/swim club and bar/restaurant on the ground or up into the building. Six elevators ascend along the mast to the bridge node. One of these elevators continues to the top where there is an observatory and a multi-media center. The bridge node leads to the space frame which contains offices, laboratories, information centers, lecture rooms, conference halls, exhibition spaces and services. The supporting system consists of a metal mast on a tripod, which acts as a compressive element, stabilized by a cable network. This cable network also supports the suspended space frame. Collaborators: Javid Abrahimi, Monier Barakat, Jesse Robinson, Ziggy Rubel (computer graphics), Juan Matiz.
The horror that we witnessed in Oklahoma City on April 19th, 1995, though no different from the assassin's bullet in Sarajevo or the pounding shells from the Russian tanks in Grozny, has nevertheless propelled the American people into the so called 'new world order', triumphantly heralded with the end of the cold war. Just as we are commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Kent State massacre which brought the Vietnam War home to roost on the front lawns of suburban America, the tragedy that has befallen this tranquil southern city, was the shock therapy which in one macabre gesture exposed the violence that has corroded American society.

Admittedly, we have always been aware of the violent crimes of society. The rapes, the murders, the gang warfare have been all too well documented and chronicled in our local and national newspapers and the sensationalist, hungry electronic media. Yet this type of violence has been rationalized and compartmentalized by the sociological investigations on poverty, ghetto life and the perennial buggaboo of drugs. Unfortunately this type of violence, with domestic spousal violence as a recent addition to the list, has become part of everyday life. We have become immune to it. We have become comfortably numb to it. But April 19th, 1995 was different. This could not be explained. This could surely not have happened here. This was middle-America. This was the heartland. This was where people read the bible regularly, went to church on Sunday, still tipped their hats in the street and listen religiously to country music which beats to the heart of America. This type of terror, this repugnant deed of violence could not have its roots in the American grain. This must surely be the work of an Un-American and instantaneously we pounced, as a wounded mountain lion, on a foreign invader trespassing on hallowed ground.

But America should wake up to its own history and culture. Violence is a product of the folk culture upon which much of the collective memory of being an American has its generic roots. The symbolic and mythological hero who stands out as an individual, to fight against all odds, no matter the cause: is this not the American way? The self-styled vigilante, whether it be a Wyatt Earp, a Lone Ranger, a Jesse James or even the comic book hero Batman, leaves us with the symbolic image, that social, political and religious grievances are better served by the quick action of the superhero. For many in America who believe in this us against them symbolic relationship, the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma was the work of a person or persons who stood up for what they believed in and what was menacing their concept of America. Is this not the definition of the superhero which has emerged and prospered within American folk and popular culture?

The individual as the equalizer, the 'have gun will travel' mentality personified in the Hollywoodien character of Rambo, the modern gunslinger, defender of American ideals against the enemy, whether it be some fictious country that has strayed away from American policy or the need to remake the Vietnam war in order to come out the victor, fulfills this folkloric and popular need for a superhero who will make things right. Unfortunately, we have forgotten that all superheroes operate according to their own set of values and tend to impose their concepts on society not necessarily for the common good, but generally to satisfy their own interests which are more often than not in contradiction with a civil and a democratic society.

Oklahoma City has hopefully given America a slap in the face; a wake up call. Rambo is no longer overseas. Rambo is not fighting the evil communists. Rambo has his own set of values and has changed target. Rambo is no longer in the desert or in the rice fields, but is in the corn fields of middle-America. Time has come to deactivate him and heaven forbide let us not replace him by Robocop.

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BEYOND the SALARIED SOCIETY

André Gorz is certainly the purist Marxist thinker in Europe and the most imaginative. His restless critical spirit is as suspicious of the proletariat as of the State for the betterment of the human condition. His sparkling insights give birth to debates of a higher order.

Main works:
Metamorphoses du travail: quête du sens, Galilée, 1988
Adieux au prolétariat: au-delà du socialisme, Seuil 1981
Écologie et politique (André Gorz, Michel Bosquet), Seuil 1978

The enormous time-savings should be redistributed into society so that more can work less and better and still receive their share of the wealth society produces.

SOCIAL REDISTRIBUTION OF WORK
The savings in time actually harm society by splitting it into two: an over-worked sector hampered by growing changes versus a mass of marginalized, excluded and de-valued people. So that one and all can contribute to society's basic economic production and receive proportionate powers, a policy of work redistribution through a reduction of work hours is imperative. Such a policy is fundamentally distinct from partial measures currently recommended. For example, when the 100,000 salaried employees of Volkswagen accept work-hour reductions and pay to prevent 30,000 layoffs it's a "sharing" that spreads out a reduced volume of work and resources on a given number of people. This sharing does not go to the root of the problem. Volkswagen should reduce its size by half within 4 or 5 years. The question of reducing work hours and salaries as an alternative to layoffs will still have to be answered. Measures taken solely at the company level cannot have a lasting solution on economic problems caused by technological changes.

Redistribution of work must see itself as an over-all policy (affecting the entire population) geared to a long-term goal of continuous redistribution of work, which despite a shrinking work force, avoids unemployment by progressively shortening the work hours.

With the redistribution plan, income should not in principle decrease due to work hours. In fact, when a lesser volume of work is sufficient to produce the same volume of wealth, nothing, at least from the point-of-view of macro-economics, prohibits each from receiving for less work, part of the wealth produced.

Loss of income becomes necessary only to reduce an already existing unemployment. The global volume of work should be spread out over a much larger number of people by massive and quick reductions of work-hours that result in employment increases greater than the growth volume of available wealth.

Once unemployment is reduced the work time-period can continue to be shortened so long as available productivity increases without revenue having to fall all that much.

Minor cut-backs of one hour per week does not allow for changes in organizing work, the manner of working and living. Easily matched by increases in individual events and inferior to productivity growth from...
The work-period is reduced periodically (every 3 or 4 years, for example) in significant stages.

The usual work-period should be reduced within the context of a legal frame-work and inter-professional agreement because everyone, no matter how qualified will come face to face with unemployment in the future.

The kick-off time for shortening the work-period should be in 3 to 4 years from now to allow for:

IMPACT STUDIES to predict foreseeable needs that the spill-over from a reduced work-period will have on each sector: administration, public service, occupations and professions as a whole.

PROFESSIONAL RETRAINING or PLACEMENT into jobs that will have to be filled.

Negotiating collective agreements with all levels of business particularly in regards to work re-organization, time to access equipment, more flexible scheduling, a productivity contract, growth of work force, qualifications and salaries.

Preparation for the reduction of work-time impacts the society at all levels, changes all aspects of negotiation, reevaluates trade unions and sparks democratic debate concerning what's at stake.

Work-period reduction takes on more than one form. The 4-day week of 32 or 33 hours applies only to full-time, salaried employees. The majority of new jobs that will have to be filled in the future will be short-term or periodic with varying schedules and very short hours.

THE RE-APPROPRIATION OF TIME

To be meaningful, time freed from work must allow individuals to take charge on a personal and collective level. The policy to redistribute freed

A salary-based society where each has a stable, full-time job, and your best hours are invested in the company has been superseded by events.

Time is precisely to help foster the growth of autonomy. As greater blocks of time become available, consumption of personal and collective services should drop off to make room for the growth of self-production.

It is here the solution to the impasses of the Swedish model.

It consists in developing by urban and technological solutions mutual aid associations and service exchange coops in building units and equipment, in localities. The public service sector takes on the role of helper: in the form of subsidies that fit the citizens’ needs, by providing continuity, co-ordination and supporting the self-organized social activities and by bringing together volunteers for tasks requiring special expertise.

The goal is that each person’s actions flourish and spill over into three levels: 1) the macro-social - where professional services are exchanged, 2) the micro-social - where your own productivity and experience are socially relevant in assisting all to take charge of their destiny, their environment. Finally, on the private level which is where you yourself grow, where your uniqueness is valued and for artistic endeavours.

A CULTURAL MUTATION

We will have gone beyond the salaried society, and with it -capitalism - when the bonds of voluntary social cooperation and self-organized exchanges of non-market goods hits the heart of capitalist production: work-employment, work-goods.

Going beyond capitalism is inherently stamped in the technico-economic mutations that are taking place. But this won’t build a post-economic, post-capitalist society unless it goes through an equally drastic cultural and political revolution: meaning, if the “social actors” seize hold of what is still only a change and place themselves as leaders and instigators of this liberation.

OF WHAT IS A NATURALLY OCCURRING EVENT, PRETENDING TO BE THE LEADERS OF ETC

Cultural evolution is already reducing the value of work and concern over social and professional success and is giving emphasis to personal accomplishment, producing bonds of social membership, and no longer trying to fit social and professional identity into pre-ordained slots.

But this cultural evolution has yet to be expressed in social and political discourse. Still missing is a mediation between individuals who aspire to their own lives, choices, lifestyles and the social recognition of the legitimacy and value of this longing. Missing too is a social statute which confers on those activities which exist not for profit or social favour but that society and the public regard as work and as such should be paid.

translated from French by René Akitinas.

The Changing American Workforce

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from Utne Reader no. 69, May-June 95
source: Minneapolis Star Tribune
À MarySol et FaraNuelle

Tous les ans, comme mes ancêtres voyageurs de la grande tribu des Gens-Libres, je pars en déroule vers les Pays d'en-Haut jusqu'en Russie, en Caraïbe ou au Paraguay. Non sans avoir tenté d'offrir, auparavant, un baiser aux bourgeons de Tekakwitha, à la Mission Saint-François Xavier de Caughnawaga ou à la gloire de Kateri, morte en humeur de sainteté ou en odeur d'altérité, c'est selon. S'agit-il d'une sainte ou d'une victime, d'une traîtresse à sa patrie ou d'une maitresse qui se refuse, ou tout cela à la fois? Comment savoir? La quête de l'identité, en pays de Canada, n'est pas une opération récente. Je suis loin d'être le premier à être tombé amoureux de Kateri. Leonard Cohen y avait laissé, avant moi, quelques neurones au point d'y avoir consacré, au milieu des années 1960, le roman Beauitul Long où il avait prévu le scénario Québec (Latin America of the North, Louizanisation[i] and the like) tel qu'il se déroule jusqu'à maintenant, à une exception près: Oka. Oka, la crise qui a balayé le Québec en 1990 dont on n'a pas fini de cuver l'aftermath. En fait, la Nord-Amérique entière tente, avant ou après la lettre, de digérer la crise d'Oka depuis l'arrivée même de Cartier/Caboto et des Pèlerins de la Fleur-de-Mai sur les rives orientales de la Grande-Isle. L'Isle-de-la-Tortue, comme le proclament si bien les Iroquois. Quelle chance inouïe, en effet, de pouvoir accomplir dans un même lieu, à une demi-heure à peine du Vieux-Montréal et ce n'est pas là un hasard-, un quintuple voyage! Se rendre, d'un seul empan, à la fois chez les Jesuites et chez les Mohawks, aux USA, en Amérique britannique loyaliste et au French Québec le plus authentique. Et tout cela, sous l'escorte attentive de chevaliers de paix nommés précisément -peace keepers-, circulant dans des bagnoles chromées rouges et blanches qui repoussent l'œil du bleu de la Sécurité du Québec, omniprésent ailleurs. S'adosser au fleuve, ou à ce qui en reste, le long de la voie maritime, pour adopter cet angle de vision en diagonale entre le XVIème et le XXème siècles, c'est voir apparaître alors l'un des plus beaux joyaux architecturaux de l'Amérique coloniale. Le complexe sanctuaire/église/musée de la «Sainte Sauvagesse de Caughnawaga», pour rester dans le style de l'époque, est l'un des mariages spatiaux les plus distinctifs, à l'échelle boréale du continent. Pour en retrouver l'équivalent, il faut aller au Mexique ou aux Antilles.

Je parcourais récemment quelques textes de Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé écrits au siècle dernier - quand on s'appelle -de Gaspé>. On a du Micmac dans l'aile, c'est le moins qu'on puisse dire. Eh bien, tout au long de leurs échancreurs et de leurs baies, de Belle-Chasse à Cacouna et partout ailleurs, les rives du Saint-Laurent des «Anciens Canadiens» sont dotées de wigwams et de campsements autochtones. Mais où est donc allé se réfugier tout ce monde qu'on réaperçoit très bien, par ailleurs, dans à peu près tous les tableaux de Cornelius Krieghoff? Les yeux de l'Europe n'ont jamais opéré, vis-à-vis du Canada, la même censure que ceux de la classe intellectuelle. N'est-ce pas exactement cela le «French Quebec»? Un pays dans un pays dans un pays dans une cartographie où tout a été masqué par couches successives d'architectures et de déforestations, de mises en agriculture et de mise en demeure de l'âme, où l'innovation de la brunante rappelle légendes et présences aussitôt effacées par le vent de l'histoire officielle. Se promener dans Caughnawaga/Kahnawake, c'est retrouver une espèce de French Canada joyeusement frelaté ayant été conservé malgré lui par la présence Mohawak et la langue anglaise. Ainsi, Caughnawaga/Kahnawake a beau nous être présenté comme une réserve indienne, elle...
conduit l'un des villages -canadiens-français- les plus représentatifs qui soient en Amérique. Rarement signale-t'-on une telle évidence. Ce sont les Mohawks qui conservent, à leur façon, le patrimoine franco mieux que les Francos eux-mêmes ne le font dans les agglomérations circouvsoisines, telle Châteauguay, qui s'apparentent beaucoup plus à la banlieue de Kansas City, de fait.

De plus, puisque la «réserve», en raison de son statut, a réussi à échapper partiellement aux urbanistes et aux normes réductrices présidant à l'organisation de l'espace, la communauté iroquoise de Sault Saint-Louis incarne un espace unique. L'on y trouve de tout comme nulle part ailleurs: maisons canadiennes, barns, shaks, mansions, racks-à-poutines ou stands-à-patates frites; maisons longues, tee-pee, clubs de golf, arabesque, diners, casino, etc. On y trouve également deux ou trois bannières et les rues ne se rencontrent pas toujours à angles droits comme dans le reste de la Western Wasp-America.

Comment exprimer la chose à plus vaste échelle? Plus que New York, Boston et toute autre conurbation de la Côte atlantique, Montréal est la seule ville de l'Amérique anglo- où on trouve, en cette veille de l'an 2000, trois réserves inscrites dans l'axe même d'une histoire devenant géographique, celle du Saint-Laurent, soit Akwesasne, Kanata-ke ou Kahnawake. Ce n'est certes pas un hasard. C'est ici que se trouve le talon d'Achille, pour ne pas dire le talon du mocassin de Kondiaronk. Ici s'est fait la guerre; ici a été conclue la paix; ici que se trouve le Santa Maria de Colombo, qui pré-existaient Hurons, Iroquois et tous les autres.

Mais, qui sont donc alors les Iroquois?

Qu'ont-il été et que sont-ils, ces gens qui se nomment justement Del'Isle Beauvais, L'Ahache ou MonTour, et encore, McComber, Goodleaf, Stacey, Jacob's ou Diabo (lequel nom ne vient pas de Diabolo mais du français d'Ailleboust) et que cachent dans leur sac à malice un troisième nom pour les intimes ou les dieux, Ho-Wee-So-Kon, Dey-Ouen-Doque, etc. Si ce n'est pas là du Canadien-Français Écossais-Autochtones, Sangs-Mélés-Limeys, sans parler des Irlandais, Abénaquis et autres qui sont passés à marée haute et qu'on a embarqué dans la réserve, au passage, qu'on me dise de quoi se composent leurs noms.

En parcourant Caughnawaga, on est amené à penser que si les Iroquois ont réussi à se maintenir sur le monticule de la survie, c'est en jouant constamment de leur position-tampon. Provoquant constamment l'affrontement de leurs ennemis, ils en arrivaient à se ménager ainsi un espace intermédiaire. Qu'en est-il aujourd'hui? La crise d'Oka s'avère une application ad hoc d'une telle stratégie: opposer Français et Anglais pour maintenir à flots des les ises risquant l'engloutissement permanent.

En même temps qu'il s'est imposé à l'univers entier, l'anglais est devenu, à toutes fins pratiques, la langue de la confédération iroquoise, et donc, de l'identité autochtone en Nord-Amérique. Mais quelque chose d'autre demeure à double entrée de la porte de l'Est et de la porte du Nord: ce qu'on appelle maintenant le Québec, lequel est issu, en fait d'Hochelaga ou Montréal (et de la lointaine banlieue de Stadaconé, bien sûr).

Avec les réserves autochtones, Montréal est la seule véritable grande poche de résistance linguistique interne et s'avère donc l'une des seuls espaces -autochtonisés- aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, continuant de résister. Maintenant que la légitimité même de la résistance passe aussi par l'anglais, sans parler de la spiritualité et des rites de la maison-longue, qu'en est-il de la promesse qu'est toujours venue incarner Montréal, entre New York/USA et la Grande Iroquoise?

Ainsi, un pèlerinage à Caughnawaga - à tous les Caughnawagas - s'impose-t-il de toute urgence pour sortir de toutes les réserves et des prisons imposées par l'Empire et que certains en sont venus à considérer comme leur liberté. Liberté enfermée.

Pour retrouver enfin l'esprit de l'Eau, l'esprit du fleuve Saint-Laurent, c'est-à-dire de la Grande Rivière de Canada.

*J'ai fait ce pays jusqu'à sa source et je t'ai rencontrée entre les deux cuisses de ton tee-pee ou je t'ai suivie jusqu'à la vie-
Hemos venido a parar a un barrio de mujeres feas. Toma elige este apartamento porque había espacio suficiente para meter su piano y el sillón en que le gusta echarse a reposar después de comida. La dueña del edificio, Teresita, una filipina casada con italiano, le pidió ver una foto de su marido que estaba empacando libros en Ottawa, solo por curiosidad. Me encontró boquiabierta y dijo que podíamos firmar contrato cuando quisieramos, que el apartamento era nuestro.

Ese tipo del supermercado latino se reía cuando, semanas después, yo le contaba extasiado que Teresita había pedido ver mi foto. "Era para ver si era negro", movía la cabeza despreocupada. No podía entender que fueran tan estúpidos, que no supieran que los moriscos mandan a las gringas a buscar "apartamentos" y después que está todo firmado se aparecen ellos, y que en este barrio no los quiere nadie porque como todo el mundo sabe donde hay moros hay trouble. Lo miro riendo con su boca gruesa y su pelo crecido y mientras recojo las bolsas le acepto que todavía tenemos mucho que aprender, que esto no es Canadá es N.York.

La vecina del piso cuarto bajo el mismo día de la mudanza para averiguar si tenemos hijos y ofrecer sus servicios de niñera. Ella estaba casada con Tony, hermano del marido de Teresita y la conocía todo el barrio. Cuando le abrí la puerta me quedé paralizado como por cinco segundos. Ella se dio cuenta y se arregló el pelo. Era pequeña, aiin montada barna. Cuando le abrí la puerta me quedé paralizado como por cinco segundos. Ella se dio cuenta y se arregló el pelo. Era pequeña, y el sillón en que le gusta echarse a reposar después de comida. La dueña del edificio, Teresita, una filipina casada con italiano, le pidió ver una foto de su marido que estaba empacando libros en Ottawa, solo por curiosidad. Me encontró boquiabierta y dijo que podíamos firmar contrato cuando quisieramos, que el apartamento era nuestro.

El viejo italiano que vino a instalar la alfombra también era conocido de todos y no tenía ningún apuro. Yo tenía una cita con un amigo en Manhattan y no quería dejarlo solo en el apartamento. "Vaya tranquilo", decía el "Deje la llave y yo se la dejo con su vecina". Miraba de frente, a los ojos. "Ahora su mujer viene trabajar, no tendrá problemas". "Tengo que ir a Manhattan", le dije tratando de no mostrarme muy nervioso. "A Manhattan", exclamó con risa. "¿Quién quiere ir a Manhattan? Yo he vivido aquí por treinta años y he ido dos veces a Manhattan, todo para darle el gusto a la criada de su mujer. Ese lugar huele a madera, cuesta caro y esta lleno de locos, putas, maricones, asesinos, drogadictos, y degenerados. Ese es un lugar para los americanos, no para los de usted. Manhattan", "Tengo que conseguir trabajo", me dijó. "Consigalo aquí en Red Hook, donde la gente es buena y los hombres son hombres y las mujeres son mujeres. En Manhattan uno ni siquiera puede estar seguro de si la camarera que le trae café a la mesa y le pone las tetas en la cara es mujer o no."

Las de aquí son mujeres de verdad, con sus peinados unidos de moda y sus uñas postizas y lo tratan a uno de hondo. Las chiquitas salen en las tardes a la calle y se reúnen alrededor de una radio a bailar llevando las cadenas y los pechos. Los hombres también son de verdad, casi todos hacen pesas e impera el culto de la virgen. La mayoria viene de Bar y si bien muchos han estado aquí más de un par de generaciones, siempre hay quien acaba de llegar y quien está a punto de irse.

Mi amigo me pregunta divertido, mientras tomamos un expreso en el corazón de Soho, si se donde nos hemos ido a meter. "Dejo que supongo". Hace una semana hubo un incidente racial donde un grupo de jóvenes latinos mataron a un joven negro de un par de balazos después de haberlo golpeado con bates de béisbol. En el bar de Manhattan la gente se refiere a esos vecinos como basura blanca. También los llaman los gusos y a las mujeres las guerinas. A ellos les importa poco, parece. Ellas siguen yendo a la peluquería y a la manicura, y siguen usando faldas ajustadas y pantalones ajustados de poliéster y tacones altos. La bordura es parte de la hermosura genética. También la necesidad de socializar. Se reúnen y conversan frente a la panadería, la carnicería, los almacenes y mientras tanto saludan a todo el mundo de lado a lado de la calle con ese insolente toque chillon hola honey, y gritan a sus hijos que corran frente a los jardines delanteros de las casas y se bajan de la acera sin mirar a ningún lado. Hablan alternativamente de hombres y de dinero. Los hombres en el café hablan de comida y de fútbol.

Pasó mi vecina con una mujer grande, el doble de su estatura y el triple de su peso. Comenzó a contarme que Maria era la dueña del edificio una mulata loca que venía del sector hispano, al otro lado de Smith. Decían que andaba rondando el sector buscando plata para drogas. Se había metido al apartamento del viejo, le había dado una buena chupada y se había llevado parte del dinero de su pension. El viejo quería casarse con ella. "No me diga", "Si le digo". "Y con lo viejo que es, que ya ni le funciona, pero los hombres son asi, hasta el día que se mueren se siguen haciendo ilusiones", lloraba la hoya. "Yo no lo puedo tener en mi casa, tengo mi familia y dos niñas adolescentes". "Que viejo más suyo", decía mi vecina. "Es un hombre no mas", decía la otra. Por fin les conté que si había visto a la mujer, una mulata flaca con las manos y los pies grandes. "Esa mujer", Había estado tocando el tambor del apartamento de Cosmo y cuando me vio salir se metió al edificio diciendo que venía a visitar al viejito que la había llamado porque no se sentía bien. Le dije que iba a aviso a la vecina y ella se me pegó al cuerpo carrémenty tuviste solo aquí mi amor. "Con mi esposa" Pero ahora esto está bien, y yo te


ARE YOU A NEWCOMER?  YES!
WHERE YOU COME FROM?  ITALY!

DO YOU LIKE IT HERE?  YES!
AND YOUR RELATIVES?  BACK THERE!

SO, YOU CAME ALONE?  NO! WITH THE POPE!!
I have been to Greece and Mexico, so how could I love the homage to Cartier, that marble piece of angels and lions, that reigns in the heart of Jeanne-Mance Park in Montreal? Still. Still... It's a Sunday in May, in between the lions two, three, four, then ten TAM TAM musicians drift in, lining up at the angels' feet, and angrily start to caress their drums as if obeying an ancient sign. People start to gather - moved by a tender, momentary lapse - looking, looking at each other, smiling. Some, those who dare (I am not one of them, unfortunately), take on in waves that sparkling rhythm. It immediately becomes a dance, a frenzy, sweat. All of sudden young men, young girls with painted faces of every race and colour pop up everywhere; but also, men and women not so young anymore, and a couple of flower children with white beards: everyone is invited (long live freedom). The movement swells up, it transforms itself by celebrating itself: it's a joyous hymn, sung with arms outstretched to the sky. Above, the sun radiates, beating down, drugging us: so, this miraculous drum dance is an explosive thank you to its power, to the miracle that winter (so intensely here just a month ago) suddenly vanished, already a washed-up memory. Here, right here, was it ever cold? Will it be cold again? It seems impossible: anyway, no one wants to think about it now. Now there is life, love: people sensing the beat, swaying, and nearby, in increasing circles, with a simple smile, with a straightforward desire to embrace, to laugh. There is, in this place, the multicoloured strength of Central Park, or, of the African warmth, but also a Neapolitan Holland. Everyone is beautiful, the less beautiful, the old, the physically handicapped, the fat. Even Cartier seems more alive, somewhat more pleasant, almost Greek or Mexican. And I find out that right behind, with the mountain as a backdrop, the trees are green and lilac. I find out, enraptured - several hours have already passed.

An incredible Sunday, I think. No, it is not one Sunday. They tell me it happens every Sunday, starting with the first warm air. Since when? It's been many, many years. Then - I'm told - the ville de Montréal has taken over the popular 'spontaneity'. Even the police came along, and who, though smiling, continue their beat: no wine or drugs (at least...), licensed ice-cream sellers, and licensed sellers on the street leading to the dance area. Obviously, it could be a sociological study. But, I will not think about it right now. Still immersed in the buoying rhythm of the drums, I think about a girl with an earring in her navel who was dancing like Mozart. If you want to know what the meaning of life is, come to Montreal in the spring, pass by Jeanne-Mance Park.
De la main tendue au couteau sous la gorge

LEÇON DE DÉMOCRATIE

Baruch Levinstein

I nous faut une question gagnante. Ce qui importe c'est d'obtenir coûte que coûte non pas un «oui» au référendum mais un «oui» à la question qui sera posée. Saisissez-vous la nuance ? M. Parizeau, premier ministre du Québec, pense que l'accession du Québec à l'indépendance est une bonne chose. M. Lucien Bouchard, chef de l'opposition au Parlement du Canada, estime que c'est une noble cause à défendre. M. Mario Dumont, député unique du parti de l'Action démocratique du Québec, hésite: l'indépendance, oui, mais... Mais quoi donc?

La majorité de la population du Québec n'est pas favorable à l'indépendance. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas une majorité qui a permis au Parti Québécois de former le gouvernement actuel mais plus simplement le jeu de l'alternance politique. En effet, dans une saine démocratie, il se révèle jugé après deux mandats consécutifs, de changer l'équipe au pouvoir. Il se trouve que l'équipe de rechange compte dans son programme le projet de faire sécession. Mais ce projet doit d'abord recevoir l'assentiment de la majorité de la population. Dans de telles conditions, la majorité des électeurs estiment qu'ils peuvent dormir tranquilles. Tous les sondages démontrent que la majorité des électeurs estiment qu'ils peuvent dormir tranquilles. Tous les sondages démontrent que la majorité de la population du Québec ne veut pas se séparer du Canada. D'ailleurs cette question sera vite réglée, pense-t-on, puisque M. Parizeau a promis un référendum avec une question sans équivoque dans les six mois puis dans les douze mois qui suivront son accession au pouvoir. Bref, il s'agit d'une formalité: en cas de réponse négative, le gouvernement se mettra au travail pour bien gouverner. Il se promet alors de promettre un référendum dans quinze ans; en cas de réponse positive (autant tout prévoir), ce sera la fête. Il était entendu que la consultation sur l'indépendance ne serait pas le gouvernement de gouverner: c'était ne pas très bien comprendre ce que signifiait la promesse d'une autre façon de gouverner.

UN LÉGER GLISSEMENT SÉMANTIQUE QUI NE CHANGE RIEN

On imaginait sérieusement que l'affaire serait réglée à la Saint-Jean. Il faudra attendre l'automne. Soit. Mais les règles du jeu ont changé. Il ne s'agit plus de consulter la population, il s'agit de gagner. La différence est considérable. Déjà, le gouvernement n'avait pu résister à la tentation de manipuler l'opinion en proposant un exercice de démocratie orienté vers ses citoyens qui se sont révélés des écoliers moins dociles que prévu. Les Commissions sur l'avenir du Québec sont restées sourdes aux doléances les plus légitimes: du travail, un meilleur système d'éducation, l'amélioration des soins de santé, les garanties sur la sécurité du territoire. En revanche, leurs animatrices ont bien compris qu'une écrasante majorité de citoyens souhaite garder des liens avec le Canada. Cette perspective est évidemment incompatible avec l'indépendance. A moins de ressortir la bonne vieille formule de la souveraineté-association. Un peu usé ce modèle. Qu'à cela ne tienne: on va le rajeunir. Ce n'est qu'une affaire de mots.

Quels sont les vocables à la mode ? Quels sont les mots fourre-tout ? On a bien eu la Société distincte mais ça n'a pas marché. Les dictionnaires fourmillent de substantifs. Eh bien, MM. Parizeau, Bouchard et Dumont n'ont pas eu à chercher très loin. Ils ont conclu une entente qui font d'eux des partenaires. Et justement ce qu'ils comptent proposer au gouvernement du Canada, ainsi qu'aux provinces canadiennes c'est un partenariat. Voilà: le maître-mot c'est Partenariat. Il se prête à toutes les combinaisons possibles, à toutes les combinaisons aussi. Il est équivoque à souhait et surtout logique. C'est bien connu, les adversaires d'hier sont les partenaires de...
demain. La politique de la main tendue que prône M. Bernard Landry, ministre des affaires internationales, repose sur une logique incontestable: une fois l'indépendance acquise, le gouvernement du Canada devra négocier des accords dans tous les domaines s'il entend défendre les intérêts des Canadiens.

D'UNE LOGIQUE À L'AUTRE

À cette logique, MM. Parizeau, Bouchard et Dumont en opposent une autre: celle du couteau sous la gorge. Il s'agit de forcer le gouvernement canadien à entériner un traité qui reconnaîtrait au Québec un caractère souverain conditionnel à la ratification de clauses concernant principalement l'union douanière, la libre circulation des marchandises, des personnes, des capitaux, des services, la politique monétaire, la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre, la citoyenneté. S'ajoutent encore une douzaine d'autres modalités. L'opération serait assimilable à une nouvelle ronde constitutionnelle si elle ne prévoyait à terme l'instauration d'un Conseil du Partenariat formé à part égale de ministres des deux états, d'une Assemblée parlementaire formée d'une part de députés canadiens et, d'autre part, de députés québécois non pas élu mais nommés, une forme originale de bicamérisme; et d'un tribunal pour trancher les litiges. Le tout devra être conclu en moins d'un an à défaut de quoi l'Assemblée nationale aura la capacité de proclamer unilatéralement la souveraineté pure et dure. Alors, on se trouvera dans la situation de la main tendue chère à M. Landry.

Ce Qu'il Fallait Démontrer.

Ce projet rappelle à s'y méprendre celui formulé par Daniel Johnson père sous le titre: Égalité ou indépendance. Il prônait l'instauration d'un Canada binational. C'était en mars 1965. Il a formé le gouvernement l'année suivante. Il s'est bien gardé alors de réaliser son projet.

Décidément de virage en virage, on finit par revenir loin en arrière.

LES SENSATIONS D'UN ÉTAT SOUVERAIN

Reste la question à formuler. Il faudra qu'elle ait la forme d'une offre que l'on ne puisse pas refuser. Il s'agit de concocter quelque chose de logique, quelque chose que le bon sens ne refusera pas. Quelque chose à quoi souscrira tout esprit épris d'idéal de liberté, en somme tout esprit qui se réclamerait du libéralisme. Et justement, il s'en trouve un bon nombre chez les partisans du Parti libéral et davantage encore au sein de la population.

À l'esprit rationnel, pragmatique et pratique de la question, il conviendra d'ajouter une touche sentimentale; plus qu'une touche d'ailleurs: une épaisse couche. Dans cette optique, il y aurait les questions du genre Voulez-vous vivre heureux?... dans un pays qui serait vraiment le vôtre. Il y aurait encore Souhaitez-vous connaître les extraordinaires sensations de bien-être mental et physique d'un état... souverain? Il est facile de répondre «Oui» à de telles questions. Facile de rassembler une quasi-unanimité autour de telles perspectives. Mais au moins une question restera en suspens: quelle part de ce Oui massif s'accapareraient respectivement MM. Parizeau, Bouchard et Dumont? Les partenaires d'aujourd'hui seront-ils les adversaires de demain ? À une telle question, il est tentant de répondre: Oui. 

BARUCH LEVINSTEIN EST THÉOLOGIEN, PHILOSOPHE ET DIAMANTAIRE. IL VIT ENTRE AMSTERDAM, NEW YORK ET MONTRÉAL.
I. HISTORY’S SPIRAL WITHOUT END

A curious thing how defenders of the Republic are so reactionary when they speak about art.

Edouard Manet, 1867

Art is not an invariant of the human condition but a latter-day notion of the modern West, and nothing guarantees its permanence. This mythical abstraction has drawn its legitimacy from a "history of Art" no less mythological, in which utopian linear time finds a last refuge. Observing the cycles of creation in the plastic arts, over the long term, would lead one instead to replace the messianic idea of evolution of forms with that of "revolution"—namely, the line with the spiral.

A Label’s Luster

Between ourselves and the pictures and artifacts we behold stands the screen of the word “art.” This catchword, mechanically repeated, has time and again been a stumbling block. The enticement of its single syllable obstinately resists all elucidation of the variants of l’image, a term that in French can mean many genres of visual representation. "Art" dresses up an artifact as nature, instant as essence, and a folklore as the universal. The summary rhetoric of art, a seductive lie, is present in too many places to be avoided. We will be content here with seeing it put precisely in its place.

Those who preach for the sake of art unfold for us a pageantry of metamorphoses and resurrections like so many avatars of some transhistorical substance. This latter is like a noun that somehow arrived late. The most recent well-known attendant of its cult, paradoxically also doing it a disservice, himself recognized this in the end: "Nor is the timeless eternal (Malraux).

We had been asked to believe that Art is an invariant, a region of being or district of the soul, fillable with crafted images here and there, as one went along. It was as if the passing and variegated flow of visual images, produced over a period of 30,000 years, was believed to make available in the course of centuries an ideal unity of structure consisting of common properties that defined a certain class of objects—of which each epoch would come along and merely actualize such and such a trait or segment. This amounted to fusing the law of the latecomer with the survival of the fittest into our "modern art" that draws its justification only out of itself. The arrogance of this second nature is that of the local become global and a universal arbiter; that of only one brief segment putting itself forward as the whole or end of history, and, short of understanding what eludes it, pretending to discover itself at the origin of all visible representations crafted by the human hand and gathered together later by our zeal. Whereas in reality the order is reversed: each age of the image has its distinctive type of art.

Add to this an ethnocentric naïveté: the claim that "the museum delivers art from its extra-artistic functions." As if "art" had had to bide its time, long-suffering out of the limelight for entire centuries, until being restored to itself, a self-sufficient and self-engendered totality unjustly denatured, alienated, perverted by non-indigenous and illegitimate interests. Would it not fit with the reality of the actual metamorphoses to turn the proposition around, to "the museum has relieved sacred ages of their cultural functions"? Beauty made on purpose, what we call art—this has been the business during the long history of the West, of a mere four or five centuries. A short parenthesis.

Our twentieth century has been characterized by the undermining of aesthetic norms inherited from the preceding one: the rifts between popular and elite art, kitsch and avant-garde, etc. It has carried out, in Harold Rosenberg’s phrase, the "de-definition" of art. All manner of incongruities, exoticisms or throw-aways that our predecessors preferred to leave linger curbside have been recycled and stuffed together in the same bag. There subsists a dogmatism hidden beneath this hyper-empiricism, a latent authoritarianism under this visual anarchism, namely the idea of the bag. I have in our day the right to...
claim it will accommodate everything and anything—flask of artist's urine, wine bottle-carrier, hair dryer, empty picture frame, knotted string, the chair up against a wall with photograph of said chair by its side. But I still do not have the right to heave the bag into the trash can. That "everything is art" is accepted; but not yet that art is nothing—but an effective illusion.

But I still do not have the right to heave the bag into the trash can. That "everything is art" is accepted; but not yet that art is nothing—but an effective illusion.

Observing as Gombrich does in his preface to History of Art that there is no art but only artists is to fob off the problem: since what period have there been artists, and why? "Art is everything that men have pronounced it such?" And what exactly was there in the absence of the proper noun but the willingness of artists to "store" to Academy? It is not the artist who has made art, it is the notion of art that has made of the artisan an artist. And this notion only emerged in all its majesty with the Florentine Quattrocento, in that period that stretches from painters' conquest of their corporate autonomy (1378) to the funerary apotheosis of Michelangelo portrayed by Vasari (1564)...

II.A DESPERATE RELIGION

The Gay Capital

Art was born in the fifteenth century in the urban centers of the economy/world unto itself of that
frenzy of circulation, its anxiousness of attestation by exchange. Today's "quasi-object"—a monetary sign whose assigned value is decisive—is motorized by things like confidence, chic, cheek, with the art criticism they fuel always on the verge of its bottom dropping out like the crash of '29 (though now highly improbable thanks to the interests at stake—museums, private collections, storeroom surplus, galleries, families, mafias, etc.). This mad rush ahead, like that of capital if you will, is a series of teeterings toward a disaster that manages to be averted at the last second.

The subsidence of images to the level of simple signs has kept tempo with the transformation of the advertisement (playing up the qualities of the object) into p.r. (flattering the desires of a subject). The rise of publicity has accompanied the reshuffling of priorities, within the mediatic order, from information to communication (or from the bit of news to the message); within the political order, from the State to civil society, the Party to the network, the collective to the individual; within the economic order, from a production-based society to a service-based society; within the order of leisure, from a culture oriented toward (cautionary or edifying) public announcement (school, book, newspaper) to one centered around entertainment; and within the psychic order, from the predominance of the reality principle to that of the pleasure principle. All of this opens onto a new order, complete and coherent.

Once desire has supplanted need, and the commodity reached its "aesthetic stage," those who are creative and those who create fuse. Art and p.r. comprise the same struggle. In the one case, the work's promotion becomes the work; art is the performance of its publicness. In the other, merchandise becomes a mirror of dreams to catch the optical glutton's attention. Transforming products of consumption into objets d'art, p.r. is the official art of our after-art. Not by government decree but by social necessity. It is "official" because functional (and the functional is always a thing of beauty). A liturgy of the commodity, p.r. is most certainly our sacred art, the art of the sacred of our own time. And hence it is the most alive: the art that attracts the others to its orbit, the Zeitgeist's sponsor. In the logosphere, the Idol answered the appeal addressed to it of men...
struggling to survive; Art responded to a will to take possession of the world; the Visual intercedes when competition for image, for the way things have to look to draw the most attention, has replaced the other two. That is, when people no longer have either physical hunger or fear.

Economically speaking, the movies depend on television, which in turn depends on p.r. It is logical that the advertising image should impose its law on its forebears who are now living off it. In 1920, commercial publicity was tuned into by the avant-garde; in 1980 it was the avant-garde that was absorbed by publicity [1]. Delaunay used to play with p.r., but Warhol, who had in fact worked for an advertising agency, was backed by and a card played by p.r., staged by it. It had become in the meantime the central mediator. Hence its power to induce receptiveness and itself be tuned in, and its canonical status. In its position as an element of commonality, it took financial responsibility not only for the works themselves after the assets and the art market itself, but the production of political images and even the organizing of collective symbolic ritualizations (the Bicentennial of the French Revolution, and the "Rights of Man" resounding and represented everywhere).

If everything and anything has become "art" today (packaging, mode of display, cartoons and carnival exhibition, styles of handwriting and calligraphy, graphic design, the photocopy, hairstyle, perfumery, cooking, etc.), and if "everyone is an artist" (Beuys), is not the very stylistic register itself

Do you in fact know anyone who might not be an artist? And is there anything left which has not had a museum devoted to it (corkscrews? eyeglasses? types of coffee?)? Our temple of images turns out to be the entire City itself.
exhausted? It no longer designates any more than one judgment of quality among others. "It's art," say we unreflectively, in place of "it's good, I like it." But this nothing is not just anything. It has the festive color of joy and the dream. A weak definition perhaps, but an unprecedented expansion. The one permitting the other. Do you in fact know anyone who might not be an artist? And is there anything left which has not had a museum devoted to it (corkscrews? eyeglasses? types of coffee?)? Our temple of images turns out to be the entire City itself. The former god of Beauty, long ago so inaccessible or rare, is now on one to be seen nesting behind all social activities, and makes a niche for our benefit at every street corner. What could possibly make him jealous—this mischievous fetish whose rituals and hallmark cover the whole planet? At the "Art and Advertising" exhibition held by the Pompidou Center in 1991, the entering visitor was confronted with a sign that read: "Use your money to make an art work fast." This "making" consisted of feeding a one-Franc note or personal check to a laser photocopier of a noteworthy "artist," and the bill or check came back to you with a signature on it. It can be cashed in like one check for another, and it was inscribed as a highly sought after but interchangeable and endless susceptibility of the work to transformation into a monetary sign without distinguishing itself. And proves its worth by its price. This counts least. It floats without weighing anything. It confers distinction and de-dramatization; this serialization of one-of-a-kindness; this. Duchamp was in a way the guarantor of the commercialization effects.

PONTIFEX MAXIMUS

Nothing new: art gravitates to money (as yesterday's artists went to New York, and soon Tokyo), and money to the sacred. There is no contradiction between an explosion in prices at Sotheby's and the multiplication of Councils, hagiographies and encyclical on the final meaning of white square against white background. Or between high priests and auction appraisers. The business of art cults converts to the arful cult of business. "Speculation" like "values," let us not forget, are words used in two senses: temporal and spiritual.

In fall 1991, the city of Venice (as is only fitting) held a "World Arts Summit" under the aegis of the World Economic Forum headquartered in Switzerland (better known as the "Davos group"). The elite of international business finally resolved to itself to take up its aesthetic responsibilities, envisioning the "creation of a global spirit of unity across the inevitable diversity of cultures." "Art," one reads further in the Manifeste d'un Global Society (composed in English, since in the visual era of media communications Italy has so speak American), "is the language of culture, the one form of creative expression that allows us to communicate and to build real worldwide bridges." Entrusted with the highest values, art collectors and visual artists make it their vocation to restore the bridges that have broken down between individuals and cultures—so say these businessmen who are not ones to choose their words carelessly under such circumstances. Building bridges is in its original sense "to pontificate" (from pontifex, "bridge-maker"), a sacred function in all times. The Sovereign Pontif of this world, its Great Communicator and Fabricant—might he no longer be the Pope but the Artist? It is already recognized that the spiritual government of future United Europe falls to the Vatican. Our Venetians have looked farther than to Rome: they are offering the planet a common language, Beauty, the supreme hyphenation and hyper-nation of divided civilizations.

Excerpts from Vie et morts de l'image, by Regis Debray, © 1992 Gallimard

NOTES


REGIS DEBRAY IS THE CELEBRATED FRENCH COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA PHILOSOPHER WHOSE MEDILOGISTS MANIFESTOS WILL APPEAR IN ENGLISH IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1996.

ERIC RAUTH IS WORKING ON A STUDY OF VERNE AND CONRAD, LIVING IN THE FLICKER.
Mao, Stalin and Che Guevara peep like ghosts from behind a small window of Revolution Books in Greenwich Village and seem saddened by the thought that they might disappear once more, this time from a bookstore, only to be engulfed by one of those new restaurants on Union Square.

Revolution Books is the only remaining bookstore in New York for lovers and scholars of political and ideological revolution. It is a spot where one can still feel the downtown atmosphere of the twenties when debates and rallies between leftist political factions once took place and where one can still find 6,000 books by liberal, communist and anarchist authors. Revolution Books risks disappearing under the forces of consumerism, a metaphor for the fall of the communist bloc. "The original monthly rent of $3,000 has almost doubled since 1984," declares Joan Hirsch, manager and the only salaried clerk who runs the store with six volunteers: "1,800 square feet in the middle of a neighborhood which has become very trendy represent a gold mine for the owners. The offers from the nearby restaurants which want to expand at any cost have reached an eight to ten thousand dollar range per month, our efforts to survive will soon become useless. The monthly expenses have reached $25,000 while the revenues have been slowly decreasing, only 65 titles amongst 6,000 available, have sold more than 50 copies last year. "The choice however still remains excellent," says Hirsch. "We have works by authors from around the world and prices vary between $250 for a set of 13 volumes of Stalin's complete writings to a dollar for the True Story of the Columbus Invasion, a pamphlet on the discovery of America as seen by the natives. There are books in Chinese, Turkish, Arabic, and French. There is even a comic metaphor for children on war by a certain Doctor Seuss. The Butter Battle Book tells the story of two populations, separated by a wall, and at war because they can't agree on the proper way to spread butter on bread. "Perhaps a little publicity would help our situation, but we don't have any money," declares Miss Hirsch. "We would like people to know that we are not the last survivors of an extremist faction, an extinguished species. The range of our potential clients is a great deal broader than what it seems; there are thousands of persons in the city who are trying to understand and interpret what is happening in the world through our books."
IL DÉGOUTTAIS DE PARTOUT. LES VÊTEMENTS TRAVERSÉS ET LES CHEVEUX DERNIÈRE MINUTE. JE SUIS SÛR.

QUITTE LA RIVE POUR LA TRANQUILLITÉ DE MES ONDES.

CONSCIENCES.

SOMMAIRE.

MON CHAOS, SON CALME... MA CRISSE EN SUSPEND ET D'HISTOIRES INACHEVÉES.

S'ESCAPENT DE LA RIVE POUR LA TRANQUILLITÉ DE MES ONDES.

LES YEUX CREVÉS D'ALEVIN. DES ÂMES EN PEINÉE QUI ONT D'HISTOIRES QUI ALANGUISSENT LES PÂLES MODIFIE LE PLAN ET ÉMIETTE LE SENS DU TERME.

SERGE BRUNEAU|EST UN ARTISTE-PEINTRE QUI VIT ET TRAVAILLE À MONTRÉAL.

D'ENDROITS. MODIFIE LE PLAN ET ÉMIETTE LE SENS DU TERME.

L'EPIDERME DE SILLONS MILLE FOIS MAUDITS

TAC QUI VOUS TRAÎNE DANS LES VEINES ET QUI VOUS TRACE

LE PIED DE NEZ DE L'IRRÉDUCTIBLE. DE L'INTARISSABLE.

JE COULÉ DEPUIS TOUJOURS ET POUR TOUJOURS.

JE SUIS UNE HISTOIRE QUI VOUS ENLACE ET VOUS ENVESE.

LE TEMPS, C'EST VOTRE PROBLÈME À VOUS. Ç'EST CE TIC-TAC QUI VOUS TRAÎNE DANS LES VEINES ET QUI VOUS TRACE L'ÉPIDERMÉ DE SILLONS MILLE FOIS MAUDITS

ICI, LE PRÉSENT N'EXISTE PAS. LE TEMPS DE DIRE LE MOT MA SURFACE FRISSONNE EN DONNES MILLIERS D'ENDROITS, MODIFIE LE PLAN ET ÉMIETTE LE SENS DU TERME.

Le souffle court, je fermais les yeux pour stopper le vent d'hérésie qui allait m'emporter. "T'as trop bu, mon vieux," je me répétai comme pour expliquer le fatras qui me gonflait le crâne. Les poings serrés, je me sentais prêt pour m'importer quelle bataille. Le fleuve est un géant, dis-je en signe de reconnaissance. Mon chaos, son calme... Ma crise en suspens et son lent parcours qui pouvait soudain casser le gueule aux plus robustes cargos.

VOUS NE SAVIEZ RIEN DE CE QUI SE JOUE ENTRE VOS RIVES.

D'BIJOUX, DE MORTS ET D'HISTOIRES INACHEVÉES.

UNE HISTOIRE DE SURFACE TOUJOURS UN PEU FIGÉE DANS LE CONTEXTE D'UNE GÉOGRAPHIE DU MOMENT.

UNE VAGUE IDÉE DE CE QUE MON VENTRE RECÈLE D'HISTOIRES QUI ALANGUISSENT LES PÂLES CONSCIENCES.

QUI TRESSSENT D'ALGUES DES MORCEAUX DE MISÈRE VENUES SE SAOULER À MES EAUX QUE JE NE PERDS JAMAIS.

JE BERCE MES CADAVRES TAPIS TOUT AU FOND DE MA VASE.

LES YEUX CREVÉS D'ALEVINS. DES ÂMES EN PEINÉE QUI ONT QUITTÉ LA RIVE POUR LA TRANQUILLITÉ DE MES ONDES.

Un soleil cru comme une larme m'attaquait de plein fouet. Çà doit être le soleil du matin, pensais-je, en combattant le frisson qu'un vent en balayait l'effet. La journée serait bonne et la couleur violette me garderait au chaud. Je vais ramasser mes esprits. Je me suis dégagé un peu brusquement de mes marmitons pour retourner à la rue. Le soleil dardait mais une brise en balayant l'effet. La journée serait bonne et la couleur allait s'y accorder.

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can provide the table for everyone to come around. So we often provide that service, we are able to help people see where they have common ground and where their differences are and how to resolve those differences. I think that is our greatest strength in the problem solving arena and the same thing applies to funding approaches. What is our greatest weakness? It is probably spreading ourselves too thin. We are a small agency, we have a large territory and a lot of demands placed on us, it is very easy to take on more than you can do properly. One of the things we worry about is that we can’t follow up on things. You may do a project and then in three months you are doing something else and don’t have time to go back and make sure that the project worked on before is being implemented properly. People have criticized us about other things as well. Some people criticize us for compromising. For not being green enough or determined enough about environmental protection. You also have the local communities who have a good deal of disturbance and environmental problems from living so close to the quarries. You do as much as you can for the environment but you bear in mind at the same time the economic and community realities. Much as I would like to see wetlands and other sensitive natural environments protected, allowing for their natural processes. The reality is that we live in an urban area where there are demands made on it by people’s activities.

V.V.: One last question. It is not an easy one to word succinctly. It is regarding the mythography of a place. We have spoken about the physical aspects and the ecological restoration aspects. You have alluded to it previously in our discussion in acknowledging the multicultural aspects of our community. How do the different projects you have been involved with connect to this understanding of the spirituality of a place to its inhabitants. The mythological connections, a place that is not only a field to play ball on but that fosters an identity of home place.

S.B.: I think there is something spiritual about waterfronts anyway. I think people are drawn to waterfronts, you see that all over the world. There is a magical attraction that people have, whatever the spiritual connection that any particular individual has. It is a place where people go for contemplation or relaxation. So I think there is something inherent in human nature that seeks out waterfronts. I think that is one of the reasons why people are so keen to get waterfront access. The way in which people experience it is so different and we have no idea, how can you understand how individuals are experiencing waterfronts? We don’t really know much about the different kinds of places that people like, some people want busy commercial places, others want a manicured park, other people want a beach, others want a wetland. Other people like to experience all those kinds of places. So that is why we have the principle of diversity for the waterfront, recognizing that there are lots of different ways to experience the waterfront. I think what we have to do is assess the existing characteristics of each place and its potential, what was it, what is it, what could it be, take advantage of the existing characteristics of each place and its potential, what is our greatest weakness? It is probably spreading ourselves too thin. We are a small agency, we have a large territory and a lot of demands placed on us, it is very easy to take on more than you can do properly. One of the things we worry about is that we can’t follow up on things. You may do a project and then in three months you are doing something else and don’t have time to go back and make sure that the project worked on before is being implemented properly. People have criticized us about other things as well. Some people criticize us for compromising. For not being green enough or determined enough about environmental protection. You also have the local communities who have a good deal of disturbance and environmental problems from living so close to the quarries. You do as much as you can for the environment but you bear in mind at the same time the economic and community realities. Much as I would like to see wetlands and other sensitive natural environments protected, allowing for their natural processes. The reality is that we live in an urban area where there are demands made on it by people’s activities.

DOMENICO D'ALESSANDEO | IS A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND THE TORONTO EDITOR OF VICE VERSA.
Je connaissais depuis plusieurs années et qui souveraineté du Québec), son ouverture couleurs, par exemple en ce qui concerne la exemple, je suis pour l'indépendance du Québec, du moins parmi celles que je connaissais: intelligente par sa sensibilité, son intelligence?... (Quoique je trouvais l'ancien prix tout à fait raisonnable eu égard au contenu et à la présentation). Bon, jusque là, je n'avais pas encore ouvert la revue, pas encore lu, et j'avais peur. Peur qu'une certaine banalisation du discours (qui semble un lieu commun actuellement. Abaissons le niveau, abrutissons le peuple, il nous laissera en paix.) J'avais hâte d'arriver chez moi...

J'ai donc commencé par l'editorial, non par logique, mais parce qu'il me semblait bien que je trouverais réponse à mes interrogations précisément là, dans cette "Reprise" (ça rime avec surprise!). Et je fus...comblé (que je vous aime!!!). Enfin, des gens qui osent s'affirmer, prendre position, expliquer (tandis que d'autres continuent à nous prendre pour des cons incapables de penser!)

(...) Et vous annoncez vos couleurs en introduction (avis à ceux qui vivent sur les a priori). Tiens, tiens, un journal qui s'engage politiquement sans tomber dans une sauce délayée style B.B.O.

Ça existe encore? (...) Et pourtant, je ne partage pas toutes vos idées politiques. Par exemple, je suis pour l'indépendance du Québec (ou la souveraineté? On pourrait s'interroger sur le sens de ces deux mots et sur ce qu'ils recouvrent). Mais ce qui me plait dans la revue, c'est que vous ne me servez pas un discours tout mâché en me disant: voilà, c'est comme ça qu'il faut penser (ce que font la majorité des quotidiens et des revues existantes). Vous m'aidez à avancer dans mes réflexions, soit en me donnant des arguments qui viennent renforcer mes opinions, soit en m'ouvrant des horizons ou encore en me faisant accepter certaines choses que je refusais parce qu'au, je "comprends" pourquoi. Merci pour cela.

Je vais continuer à vous lire -plus que jamais - a vous soutenir- (je ne sais trop comment... en me rebonnant, en parlant de la revue, en la citant) - et vous me donner le goût de prendre réellement part aux débats actuels. (...)


Brigitte De Souza
Vanier, Ontario
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