



other women in this arena, to make living worthwhile.'

What are the psychological roots of our responses to beauty? Unfortunately the authors didn't get very far with that question. Their research turned up only contradictory positions. 'Academic psychologists link beauty with happiness, competence and goodness. Psychoanalysts link it to misery, passivity and immorality. Both claim "empirical" evidence... The two together form a whole—the whole of our myths, literature and popular stereotypes about beauty.'

In their own surveys the authors found that, without exception, all the women they interviewed claimed that beauty was important to them, though none could elucidate why. Many felt guilty at admitting its importance, believing that their concern for personal beauty was antithetical to feminism. In the fight to be valued equally and on the same basis as men—for our activities—parts of the feminist movement have often poised on the edge of puritanical views. The call that we no longer should shave our legs, paint our eyes or participate in the exchange of beauty for power and influence served two ends. It liberated some from tedious cosmetic routines but put many others off feminism. The image of the ugly feminist endures, especially among younger women.

We worry in private about our looks and we go to extraordinary lengths to enhance or reclaim them once ageing and birthing threaten to permanently mark our bodies. *Face Value* describes in wincing detail the self-mutilations, from ear-piercing to face lifts and implant surgery we elect to undergo. In our efforts to maintain ourselves in the current image of slender beauty we put our health at risk. The current adolescent look in which sexual innocence and knowingness are simultaneously suggested by sexually experienced women in the slim firm bodies of the immature, has led many women to dangerous lengths to obtain a slender body. Women let their body weight fluctuate dramatically and unhealthily and consume dangerous dietary 'aids' by the millions. Ten thousand women a year in the United States alone are poisoned each year by diet pills, and thousands more are left exposed to hypertension and strokes.

In the quest for beauty, ageing women shell out thousands of dollars for cosmetic surgery. While the signs of ageing are popularly considered to enhance the attractiveness of men because they are evidence of his experience in the world, the prime virtue of manliness, the same bags and wrinkles and greying hair are, for the same reasons, considered ugly in a woman. The signs of ageing not only deny our innocence, they also blur the male/female distinction at the root of the ideal of female beauty.

Beauty is the power of the weak, but while women are relatively powerless in other ways in western society, can we renounce the one power we command? Would we ever want to give up the pleasure of seeing or being a beautiful woman, of at least trying? *Face Value* suggests that only when women are valued primarily for our activities and gain real power will beauty relinquish its powerful grip. Perhaps then we can enjoy beauty without compulsion or guilt. We need to use this book and the other writings that ought to follow as a starting place to shake this 'final great divider, the ultimate thing we worry about as individuals'.

Dinah Forbes

**The** most common form of political action any of us are likely to take these days involves urban issues. It might be joining a tenants' group to protest the disrepair of the building, or fighting off an attempt to raise rents. It could be rallying around a particularly impressive old building scheduled for demolition or about the desecration of a ravine. It could involve the environment, such as saving a stand of trees, worrying about industrial wastes or deteriorating water quality.

What's amazing is the extent of these actions. People take them everyday in every city—apolitical people, folks who would never put themselves out to shake the hand of a walking, breathing member of Parliament. Often these kinds of struggles aren't seen by the traditional political analysts as being of much importance—they are on the fringes, people amusing themselves on the periphery of life. But when one of these minor irritations erupts into a battle, grand and impressive, then there's much scurrying to report the size and shape of the action.

One learns for the first time about the remarkable rent strike in Glasgow in 1915, the tenant action provoked by the prostitutes in Veracruz in 1922 and the bitter struggles of the early 1970s in the Grand Ensembles—the post World War II new towns in the commutered Paris. There are intricate discussions of the Mission District in San Francisco as well as the urban impact of the gay community in the same city; explanations of squatter communities in Lima, Mexico and Santiago de Chile, and the profile of the citizens' movement in Madrid in the mid-1970s.

Unfortunately, none of the stories turn out to be terrifically interesting, at least not they way they are told. Castells recounts them not for their own sake, but to draw out his thesis and that means he hasn't the time or inclination to outline the characters firmly and to inject all the details of the battles that make them so fascinating. (Take a look at John Cheevers' marvellous book *Oh What a Paradise It Seems* to experience how well fragments of these urban stories can be told.) When something can't be drawn out to fit in any way with the thesis—as indeed happens in regard to the Madrid struggle—Castells is reduced to saying, 'These stories offer no lesson.' Well, thank goodness he let me know, but it hardly provides enlightenment.

Castells generally concludes that 'urban movements do address the real issues of our time, although neither on the scale nor terms that are adequate to the task... they are more than a last, symbolic stand and desperate cry: they are symptoms of our contradictions, and therefore potentially capable of superseding these contradictions.' What does this actually mean? I'm not quite sure. It is but one of many examples of a paragraph starting out with panache and direction, then ending in a puddle of words that have lost their sense. There is a romanticism about Castells' conclusions that is irritating. One wishes he'd be a bit tougher about exactly what he is saying.

The thesis he proposes is certainly simple enough. He proposes that an urban movement will achieve its maximum impact if it meets the following four criteria:

## THE CITY AND THE GRASSROOTS

by Manuel Castells

(Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, 1983)

What Castells attempts to do in this book is develop a theory that will make sense of urban grassroot political movements. His approach is to discuss some of the more spectacular urban fights in cities across the world, going as far back as Castilian Spain in 1520 and the Commune of Paris in 1871, to a dozen other examples this century in Europe, South America and the United States. The stories are ones that are not well-known—after all, urban struggles have not been treated with much respect by scholars.

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Many communities have spent the last two decades fighting off developers and their high-rise towers

1. It must have goals related to collective consumption demands (such as lower rents), community culture (that feeling of being part of a neighbourhood, for example) and political self-management (such as participation in decision-making). Indeed, he shows that the important struggles always include these three elements, and if you think of significant battles in any Canadian city, chances are they will be there. Take the case of the fight of the Toronto Island residents. They want reasonable rents, the right for their community to continue its existence and a say in how their community is run. Those kinds of criteria are handy to keep in mind as one assesses the seriousness of a community struggle.

2. It must be conscious of its role as an urban social movement. In other words, it must have a sense of history, rather than being an instantaneous backlash worried only about its own status.

3. It must be related to society through the media, professionals and traditional political parties.

4. It must be autonomous of any political party. We all know the damage that a political party—a group with its own agenda—can cause to a community group.

Castells has a great deal of sympathy for struggles involving these elements, in spite of their limitations. 'Urban social movements are aimed at transforming the meaning of the city without being able to transform society. They are a reaction, not an alternative; they are calling for a depth of existence without being able to create that new breadth.'

And why do people engage in this kind of limited activity? Because 'People appear to have no other choice. The historical actors (social movements, political parties, institutions) that were supposed to provide the answers to the new challenges at the global level, were unable to stand up to them... Thus urban movements do address the real issues of our time, although neither on the scale nor the terms that are adequate to the task.'

And that's the pity. Urban movements are just concerned with — and it's not a word that Castells uses — reform. That's always been the great bugaboo of the marxists — reform never goes far enough, it's not based on a deep enough analysis. What this book does is make reform legitimate even though it is incapable of making the changes required. I think that Castells would agree that reform politics produces useful results — he's much too quiet on this point for my own liking — and that's going some for a theoretician of his stature.

But for the many of us who have at times become immersed in urban politics, there's some comfort to believing that reform and urban politics may soon become respectable among the intellectual leaders of our times.

#### John Sewell

is a former mayor and alderman of Toronto. He writes a daily column on urban affairs for *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's national newspaper.

**Let** me begin with 'the object itself': this book is divided into a nine-page introduction by the editors; Part 1 of 215 pages (nine essays, plus 'A Very Partial Chronology' of five pages); Part 2, 'Reading for What', of 143 pages, introduced by Sohnya Sayres, with subsections 'Memories', 'Acknowledgements' and '(Re)Takes'; the book concludes with a 'Lexicon of Folk-Etymology' by Ralph Larkin and Daniel Foss.

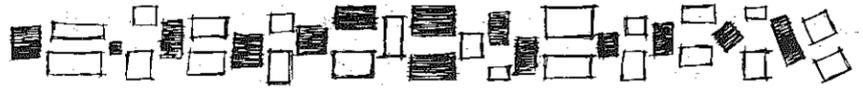
The editors' 'Introduction' ends with the moment of the book's own context — the 'trashing of the sixties', the various Rights with their particular moralisms and the multiple Lefts' weak and defensive responses. The editors conclude that they see this book as 'an attempt to combine the affirmative with the critical, an attempt to salvage certain positions now under severe attack...' But they also stress how 'reflecting the radical displacement in those years of homogeneity itself, we make no claim that ours is a complete account. We put this work before the reader in the form of an intervention, and we do so without apology.'

Part 1 frames (or, polemically, is a kind of frame-up for) Part 2, which consists of shorter, often extracted, writings. I shall resist the strong desire to respond, conversationally, to much that is vibrant, sentimental, signifying differently in Part 2... I shall concentrate on the frame. But in this response I do so with the resources drawn from the one Great (Re)Discovery of the 60s: as ether or glue, words (later signs) fix and faze us. Turning that onto the frame of Part 1, there is a murmur as I am reading — who is speaking, to and for whom? Was there love made and unmade, did people walk midnight streets or sit in sunlit rooms rocking alone, talk for hours about their visions and their gastronomy... did people have bodies in the 60s? These thoughts are raised because Part 1's frame-up tends to cop-in with a gentle (affirming?) but firm (critical?) policing, heard (more than read) by problems with tenses, adjectives, verbal flows, textual flushes.

Part 1 has nine essays, eight of them by men (including one of these 'A 60s Movement in the 80s' which is an interview between the two-man *Social Text* 'collective' and David Apter) — and the exception, by Ellen Willis, is 'Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism'. In that regard, this is a pre-60s ensemble. Despite some attempts — notably the Apter interview concerning the Narita Airport movement in Japan; Belden Fields' 'French Maoism'; Herman Rapaport's 'Vietnam: The Thousand Plateaus', strong themes within Simon Frith's 'Rock and the Politics of Memory' and some features of Frederic Jameson's 'Periodizing the 60s' — to internationalize the accounting, the US-centric view is very strong. It predominates in Stanley Aronowitz' 'When the New Left Was New', Ellen Willis' essay, Colin Greer's 'The Ethnic Question' and, differently but significantly, in Jameson.

Let me focus further — a zooming-in on the opening Aronowitz and the closing Jameson texts as they are the bolts and bars of the frame. I find many of the other texts share their finalization, their boxing-in (much talk of legacies and consequences, little of resources and filiations) and a persisting tone (or drone) of the academy: a tidying-up, a final-wording. The two partial exceptions are the Apter interview and Rapaport's 'Vietnam' (catching up threads from both *Coming Home* and *Apocalypse Now*). To all of these essays I want to affirm and abjure by saying, 'It's not that simple.'

Aronowitz and Jameson involve their writing with their more general agenda — I use the singular term deliberately, partly because of their association with,



## THE 60s WITHOUT APOLOGY

edited by Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, Frederic Jameson

(University of Minnesota Press in cooperation with Social Text, Minneapolis, 1984)

for example, *Social Text*, and/or their individual publications and/or specifically Frederic Jameson's essay in *The Anti-Aesthetic* (ed. Hal Foster, Bay Press, 1983) and Aronowitz' review of that book (*Village Voice Literary Supplement* October 1983, p. 14). On the first page of Aronowitz' essay in the reviewed text we have a sentence which condenses all the closures/policing I have indicated:

**In fact (N.B.), only Kerouac, Ginsberg and San Francisco poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti survived the Beat movement. Most of their comrades literally sat out the 60s; by the late 50s their rebellion had generated into the cynical affectation characteristic (N.B.) of all failed romantic politics and art. (p. 11)**

*All failed romantic politics and art. Nothing sturdy enough about them in the first place, not realistic, etc. But the claim is enormous: 'characteristic of all...' The rest of his slight, singular, sub-superhero account pales beside that kind of claim, now, in the face of a history that includes,*

at least as a beginning sense, the 1940s and 1950s, plus the 1970s and half of the 1980s. Might not this be part of the prison we are all in: fixated on success (what it is, how it is accomplished) in the wrong image-repertoire?

With Jameson there is also something different — a problem of tenses: like the replay commentators on sports programs, he tends to write now (1983/84) that someone 'will' do something in the 60s! But the same Papal infallibility is involved: '...postmodernism... is no longer at all (N.B.) "oppositional"... indeed it constitutes the very dominant or hegemonic aesthetic of consumer society itself and significantly serves the latter's commodity production as a virtual laboratory of new forms and fashions' (p. 196). Really? Just-like-that? I have been arguing for some time that the real symptomatic issue here is the loss of the Authority of the Critic, or, better, making visible the claim to that Authority. Multiplicity, difference and varied

