
6.

The Street as Teacher

GRADY CLAY

It is the Road which determines the sites of many cities and the growth and nourishment of all. It is the Road which controls the development of strategies and fixes the sites of battles. It is the Road which gives its framework to all economic development. It is the Road which is the channel of all trade and, what is more important, of all ideas. In its most humble function it is a necessary guide without which progress from place to place would be a ceaseless experiment; it is a sustenance without which organized society would be impossible; thus, and with those other characters I have mentioned, the Road moves and controls all history.

—Hilaire Belloc
The Road

That we have travelled a long distance from such deterministic views and a long time from 1923, when Belloc wrote these words, does not reduce their power or conceal the strategic mind at work in a large field. One of the great English essayists of the first half of this century, Belloc was nothing if not absolutely certain and a master of the sheer crescendo of utterance in argumentation. His grasp of geography, though bearing traces of the British empire-building tradition, was often firm and occasionally brilliant.

Modern readers must struggle with Belloc over many a detour and diversion, for the English personal essayists, of whom few still practice the art, were devotees of the telling aside, the byways and by-the-ways of exposition. Belloc's intriguing book *The Path to Rome*, first published in 1902 and repeatedly printed in paperback, tells us as much about Belloc's encounters with folk, drink, and oddities along the way as it does about the way itself. That was Belloc's way of operating: anecdotal, diversionary, reflective from various distances and viewpoints.

He would be among the first to welcome with erudite derision the modern wave of analysts of the street, road, and highway. Of their preoccupation with efficient movement, their charts and questionnaires, their paradigms and parameters he would have little but epigrammatic scorn. Yet, without my attempting to push him ahead of his time, he was, I think, offering a rare insight into the cultural functions of street,

road, and highway, which we would do well to consider today. Particularly revealing was his plumbing the depths of the historical process by which tracks became trails became paths became pathways, ways, wagon and carriage roads, well-travelled routes, and eventually today's Autoroutes across Europe and Interstates across the United States.

Above all, it occurs to me, after taking a second look at some of Belloc's work, that he was viewing street and road as a palimpsest of past and present, a teller of tales for all who care to look, a schoolbook both continental in scope and transferrable across cultures. Without this conviction I would be foolish indeed to bring Belloc kicking and screaming across the Atlantic and into the great North American scene of street, road, highway, and multimodal transit systems. (However, I expect Belloc must have welcomed the no doubt considerable royalties from his book sales in North America.) Belloc's closest model in current literature is James/Jan Morris, the transsexual journalist whose mastery of the long-distance trip in essay form for *Rolling Stone* and other media is as well-fitted to modern dress as was Belloc's to more old-fashioned modes.

From Belloc's pioneering Road to the modern American street is not as long a leap as one might suppose, given certain universals about all linear means of transportation and most especially about the street as it is situated in contemporary urban territory. In this essay, I assume that the street is the great common carrier of information for a democratic so-

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ciety; an educational device of huge dimensions, giving off great volumes of lessons, examples, warnings, admonitions; a living and inescapable classroom penetrating all phases of life. My view is further conditioned by assuming that our knowledge about the Street (in which term I include Road and Highway) is socially conditioned, so that only by supreme effort can we think of it much beyond its simplistic function of getting us from here to there.

We have been brainwashed by at least a half-century of "research," all of it designed to prove that getting from here to there quickly by personal vehicle is the fundamental human activity of the twentieth century. Vast sums of money have cascaded through state highway departments, research institutes, and universities to ratify trends rather than to explore alternatives. My own bookshelves—reflecting an abiding interest in highway development—are crowded with studies of the impact of the Houston Freeway on land values and the like, reinventions of the wheel to suit every local whim and budget.

If one of the major revolutions in history was the multiplication of the amount of food one man could produce in one day's time, then another revolution surely is the multiplication of places that a human being can occupy or modify in the space of a day's travel. That first revolution lay in the multiplication of sustenance; the next in the multiplication of presence.

In this multiplication table, the street speaks a universal language: its signals are part of everyday learning; its rules for movement are among the most widely understood of all public codes of conduct; and even its most bizarre variations offer, upon close examination, familiar goings-on.

The School of the Street offers kindergarden-to-graduate-level curricula, evidence, texts, and tests. To matriculate in the School of the Street, one must take determined steps that go beyond merely venturing down the sidewalk of one's own street—even though Jane Jacobs showed masterfully what a large curriculum is offered by any complex street system and how much is to be learned in front of one's own house. (Her pre-Toronto location, Hudson Street, Manhattan, has gone down in urban history as one of the great Learning Streets. See her *Death and Life of Great American Cities* [1961] for a more complete lesson.)

Marshall McLuhan reminded us in *Understanding Media* (1964) that, "for the West, literacy has long been pipes and taps and streets and assembly lines and inventories . . . things in sequence and succession." The road and the printed word he dismissed as "our older media." Implicit in McLuhan's writings—as in those of his mentor, the Canadian economist Harold

A. Innis—was his conviction that transportation and personal movement-through-territory was a dying form of communication, fast being supplanted by television and the electronic grid forming the Global Village (his capitals, not mine). The world he attempted to describe would soon be moving information to the body, rather than vice versa.

But now, twenty years after *Understanding Media*, the mass movement of persons from Here to There persists, and neither McLuhan's brilliant insights nor the rise thus far in the price of oil seems able to diminish the world's appetite for movement—by personal vehicle, if possible, and by any means, where necessary. Human movement itself shows such power as a learning device that I doubt it can ever be fully replaced by electronic substitutes. Street scenes will change, perhaps beyond all recognition, but differences between places will continue to require humans to exploit or escape those differences—as tourist, as entrepreneur, as military invader, or as refugee.

Photography changed the presence of places by moving them to the easy chair, the desk or slide show, and later the television screen. This truncation of places-in-the-round to places on a flat surface left out feeling, smelling, movement, experiment—all those elements of "being there" that were the essence of thereness.

But in considering how such a scene, this locus of movement—the North American street—can operate as a fully rewarding educational instrument, we must approach it in a structured way, organize it as a replicable experience, and record it in ways that prove meaningful and useful beyond the classroom's walls. In this essay, I wish to examine Street, Road, and Highway collectively as a public educational medium and to do so in three ways: first, as a mode of communication in which the language we use is an essential part; second, by taking a look at special methods of examination; and, finally, by speculating upon Street-Road-Highway as laboratories for universities.

Along the way, we must take note of "down time"—stretches of the urbanized environment where learning is at a minimum, where street frontage gives over to open parking lots or closed-off parking garages; and where a form of design exists called "Riot Renaissance," with no stores, no shops, few doorways along one street and none along the next block. Along the way, we must also observe the rise of the new Citadels—those multipurpose megastructures containing convention halls, hotels, indoor race tracks, sports arenas, and parking ramps—self-consciously designed to capture customers and keep them spending their time and money indoors, well removed from the street. Few major American cities are without these new zones of confinement, which reduce the sidewalk

population of the streets around them. Scores of them have been deposited at the edge of town or used to clear away slums adjacent to the old Downtown—with devastating impact on their neighborhoods (fig. 6-1).

Let me now reinforce this discussion with the lamentation that our language is still imprecise and deficient in dealing with Street, still stuck at the level of prescientific discourse that preceded Linnaeus's great codification of plant and animal names in the eighteenth century. Here before our very eyes is a definitional entity that we name Street: "A generally levelled, linear, artificially lighted, and paved surface, extended across territory in a continuous and often straight direction, bounded on either side by curbs or other tangible limits, and offering unlimited or partial access to its surface from adjoining properties [my construction]." Having said all that in schoolmarmish fashion, I am obliged at once to utter qualifications and emendations. Thousands of small-town, unpaved, rocky streets in the Americas admit to no such rigidities, being dusty in summer, muddy in winter, impassable after rains, and of random width and direction. I am being deliberate in using such a formal definition of the urbanized street, for reasons soon to come.

Meanwhile, what about the nomenclature for all those variations and subspecies of Urban Street? What of those things called Main Street, Main Drag, Shopping Strip, Back Alley (Laneway, in Toronto), Front Street, Back Street, Side Street, Dock Street, Structural Street (a nice example from Allan Jacobs's book *Looking at Cities* [1985])? What about Connector, High Tech Corridor, Mansion Row, Skid Road (popularized as Skid Row), Cross-Town (with Con-

necter understood but silent), Fashionable Shopping Street (as in Worth Avenue, Palm Beach; Regent Street, London; Rodeo Drive, Los Angeles; rue de Faubourg, Paris; Fifty-seventh Street, New York City)?

Not to mention those endless subdivisions into Fire Lane, Express Bus Lane, Fast Lane, Deceleration Lane, Bicycle Lane, Loading Ramp, Runaway Truck Ramp, No Parking and No Standing Zones, Towaway Zone, Carriageway (also known as Cartway), Verge, Gutter and Valley Gutter, Access Road, and Pull-Outs, and then off to Easements and Rights-of-Way of infinite variation, Driveways, Sidewalks and Walkways. As we proceed into the outskirts, we again confront Trails, Paths, Cowpaths, Ways, and the increasing obscurities of hinterland routes. Beyond the outskirts the Dirt Tracks, Raceways, Racetracks (dog, horse, and auto), and Drag Strips flourish. Hobbyists pursue each other in gymkhanas, autocrosses, point-to-point races, cross-country steeplechases, fox hunts, and drag hunts off to the far horizons. Closer to the Main Road, we encounter the large acreages where Motel Complexes thrive, where a dozen dealers jostle for customers in the new Auto Shopping Complex, with its own internal Streets, Ramps, Hardstands, and so on.

All this nomenclature suggests that the School of the Street properly begins with the language of the street, and here I do not mean the language of the gutter. I look upon the street as an educational enterprise, partly institutionalized and partly open to the most outrageous assumptions and interventions. Its rules of movement are among the most widely understood of all codes of public conduct. Within this broad context, one should view the trip and the walk as



6-1. Albany, Georgia, circa 1985. The civic arena surrounded by acres of empty parking just outside the built-up city shows "confinement" at work—everybody is gathered into one huge structure. Pulled off the streets and sidewalks, attendees have no lessons to learn, no messages to understand, only distance from a potentially enriching environment.

mechanisms by which each of us learns to adjust, cope, memorize, and habituate; to replicate experience and generalize from it; to invent experience and go with it.

Linnaeus, the great Swedish botanist, organized "the sovereign order of nature" with a naming system that still spans the natural sciences of our day. If the study of urban objects and processes is to advance beyond its present contentiousness, then the sovereign order of the man-made urban environment will need all the intensity of gaze and discrimination of nomenclature that we can muster. And for our study to proceed much beyond name-calling, we must recognize that the order of the street is continuous, that the street exhibits the ancient order of history that Hilaire Belloc revelled in, and that it displays emerging orders, both of magnitude and specialization, which we have only begun to put into some useful order.

One of the more intriguing aspects of street evolution is that its evolutionary order is far more apparent to the naked eye (though not to the naked mind) than was the evolution of plants and animals. Unless we live on a farm, go to the zoo, go to the jungle (with an exemplary guide to chop a path), or go to the laboratory and textbook, we see too few examples of animals in an ordinary life to arrive at evolutionary conclusions from visible evidence.

Not so on the street. A single daily commute from suburb to city center, an eye-filling trip to the airport, or a strongly held gaze at the passing roadside can uncover more historical evidence of evolution than the mind can digest.

Evidence of this evolutionary process, however, is scattered far and wide among many disciplines, and in recent years much of it has been generated by the historical preservationists. Off in other directions, the environmental psychologists are taking their own cut at the subject, while traditional planners and designers pursue their own objectives, using their own special lingo. Street literature and research methods run in all creeds and colors. Where does one find a multidisciplinary university course in Visible Evidence? Where does one find the same intensity of broad, scholarly gaze fastened upon a famous street (Fifth Avenue, New York; Market Street, San Francisco; North Wells, Chicago; Peachtree, Atlanta) as is regularly fastened upon single buildings of renown?

Without attempting to lay down my own favorite tactic upon so volatile a subject, I do suggest that use of the cross-section trip through metropolitan areas is as revealing to the modern observer as the first cross section of human tissue was to the anatomist Vesalius, or as the Valley Section was to the botanist-ecol-

ogist-planner Patrick Geddes—to whom we shall shortly return.

As we move down the street itself, ten generations of cars pass by a hundred generations of advertising fashions, and a thousand variations in roadside building styles fill the windshield in an hour's trip. The evidence is so thick we recoil, we block it out; school is over, the mind closes shop for the rest of the trip. William Ewald, in his seminal book, *Street Graphics* (1971), recounts a 1968 study of Baltimore County drivers: "Under normal driving conditions, the occupant of a moving car can seldom handle more than ten items of information at a time." Yet at thirty miles per hour (2,640 feet per minute) both driver and passenger are confronted with 1,320 items of information—words, phrases, signs, symbols, diagrams, directions, and admonitions. This comes to approximately 440 words a minute—about double the average person's reading speed. No wonder most road users learn to blank it all out, to write it all off as a confusing blur (fig. 6-2). (Ewald's solution, which needs not detain us unduly, was to ration roadside messages by zoning, so as to protect drivers from excess diversion from the road itself.) Yet behind all that razzle-dazzle of the street-road-highway, an emerging order exists there waiting to be found.

Linnaeus would remind us students of street life that certain criteria hold true for the searching gaze. We must consider birth, nutrition, aging, movement, and internal propulsion; all of these criteria, it appears to me, operate as observably in street life as they do in animal and vegetable existence. Street evolution is far more clear in the school of the street than is biological evolution, yet the former has attracted little of the scholarly apparatus that surrounds the latter. Should we not think of today's street as the link between ancient paths and trails and tomorrow's megastucture? The street itself will take many forms beyond those envisioned by architect Louis Kahn, when he said "the street wants to be a building"—one that Kahn himself would design. But the ancient pathways persist over most of those human settlements we call cities. And in the evolution of those paths—once sufficiently recorded—there lies a new form of evolutionary theory waiting to be discovered. When such a theory finally develops, I suspect it will revolve around a single vital criterion, accessibility, from which all other attributes flow.

The street itself is a place of complex behavior and specialization and cannot be understood apart from its denizens and their habits. Increasingly, street space is preempted by the "world cars" of the 1980s (fig. 6-3). These look-alike contenders jostle for right-of-way with mobile earth movers, garment workers'



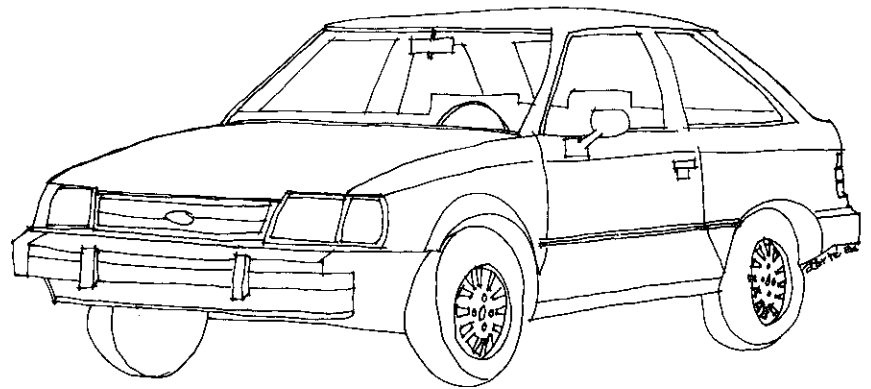
6-2. How to trim down the number of commercial messages from the roadside: a. example of message overdose; b. two ways to reduce it. (Source: Ewald 1971: 91-92)

carts, motorized deliverymen, mobile-home transporters, backhoes, front loaders, gas-guzzlers, and a host of incipient minivehicles. While the city street grid attempts to accommodate all these vehicles, specialized streets, and streets-within-streets arise, as demarcated by Express Lanes, Bus Lanes, Truck Routes, Mass-Transit Streets, Loading Zones, and special rights-of-way. Small personal vehicles—the horse, bicycle, and motorbike—have long demanded street and parking space. Now comes the “Trike,” the three-cylinder commuter car.

But perhaps no one (to my knowledge, at least) has put upon street life the burden of explication that Linnaeus, two hundred years ago, put upon life in its

biozoological senses. There is yet to be found a fully documented and logical order of streets.

Contrast this, if you will, with the intensity of gaze fastened upon the street’s mechanical denizens, the automobile, especially by the sports car magazines. From years of captivity to this narcotic subspecies of literature, I can testify to the endless permutations of specialized language—terms, depiction, description, comparison, and codification that are bought, sold, traded, and given currency by practitioners and observers alike. From the fastidious Museum of Modern Art down to endless local galleries, public museums give testimony to the object—the car—with their predictable exhibitions of the world of the car. That



6-3. World car. (Sketch: Deborah Porte)

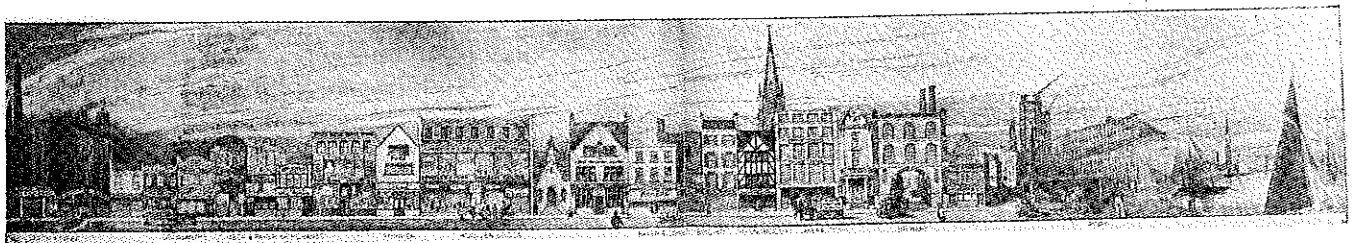
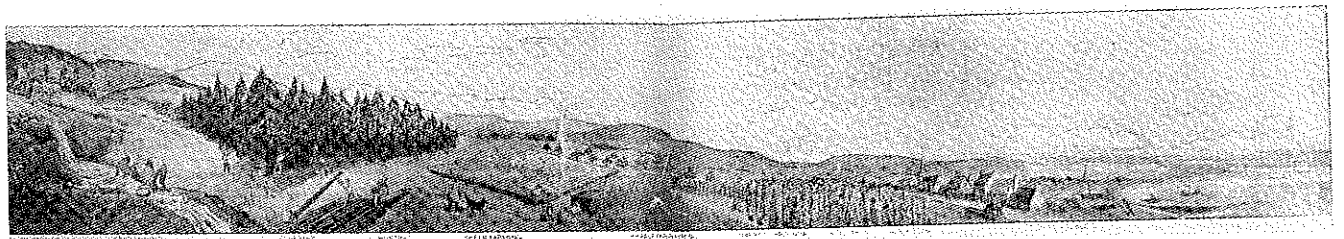
world turns out to be mostly the car itself, its couture and that of its drivers: a celebration of mechanical commodity. Few museums or historians, until lately, have paid much attention to the world beyond the car. No doubt it was the Arabian oil embargo and the first brisk whiff of shortages that encouraged a new wave of road historians to begin publishing their observations of the road, highway, motel, and tourist facilities in the 1970s, encouraged by J. B. Jackson's essays on the stranger's path and the evolving strip, which appeared in *Landscape* during the 1960s. Closer to the racetracks, the great Henry Manny III, a columnist in *Road and Track* magazine, was one of the most versatile linguists of that field, relishing the wordplay involved in a run through the gears, run-in, test run, trial run, trial spin, running off the track (as

distinguished from an off-track run), or run for your money (as distinguished from a run for The Money).

Beyond learning the language of the street, future theorists of street meanings can find no better mentor than the great Scottish biologist Patrick Geddes and no better example adapted to the modern metropolis than his Valley Section (fig. 6-4).

Geddes's Valley Section was first exhibited in a grand civic panorama designed for the now-famous Cities Exhibition at Chelsea, London, in 1911. His painting showed a typical seventeenth- to eighteenth-century valley in cross section, with a fishing village port at the right and the landforms slowly ascending upward to the left through town streets, outskirts, hopfields, vineyards, and market gardens. The painting depicted cattle, arable and sheep farms on higher

6-4. Patrick Geddes's great "Valley Section," a pioneering description of a nineteenth-century port fishing village and its tributary region and an early version of the Metropolitan Cross Section described in this essay. (Source: Geddes 1950: 166-67)



grounds, then upland hunters, foresters, gold miners, and quarry workers on the mountains. It featured the perfect epitome of the perfect town form. From the woods came game and pelt; off the pastures the cattle were led down the paths and streets into the slaughterhouse, the cobbler's shop, and onto the ships; off the fields came the harvests for miller, baker, and town grocer. The whole, in short, was a progressional pageant from start to finish, a complete story in one picture.

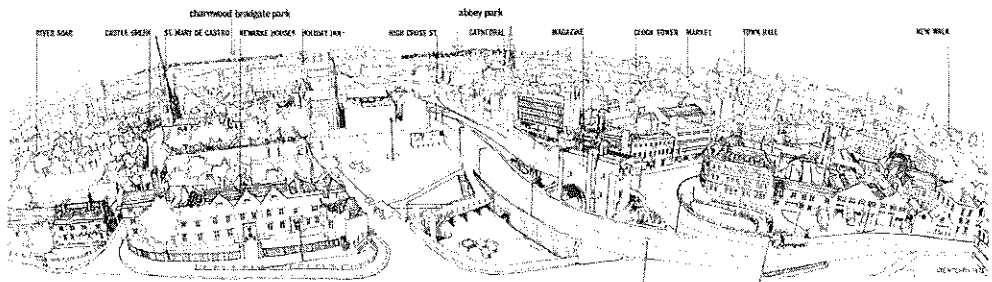
But even the most cursory study of the Geddes epitome showed that such a cross section as an educational device can tell only part of the story of the modern city and its street system. Geddes's town was an old-fashioned processor of raw materials. Today's American city has become a processor of power and information. To understand that power firsthand, to tap that information, one must traverse the whole city, the whole metropolitan area as a continuous experience from outer trail to path to road to street, into the very city center, and out the other side. This completed experience forces the student-learner to confront the Whole Thing, the "city" as a complex educational enterprise, with various forms of learning available at each stage. The processing of local crops in the Geddes diagram is but a small part of today's picture.

There was no way, I concluded from a study via cross section of thirty-three North American cities in 1972 to 1973, that one can come to grips eye-to-eye, firsthand, with the complex metropolis, short of inventing and then following such a cross-section trip in a single, unifying journey. This approach could be considered Montessorian—handy for dealing with an environment rich in manipulative materials. One should look to it as a form of transactional analysis, a running encounter that requires both homework and on-site skills. It is a learning experience of high order, although it can be much simplified in scale and adapted to grade-school children, as has been done by members of the British Town and Country Planning Association with their Town Trails (Goodey 1975) (fig. 6-5).

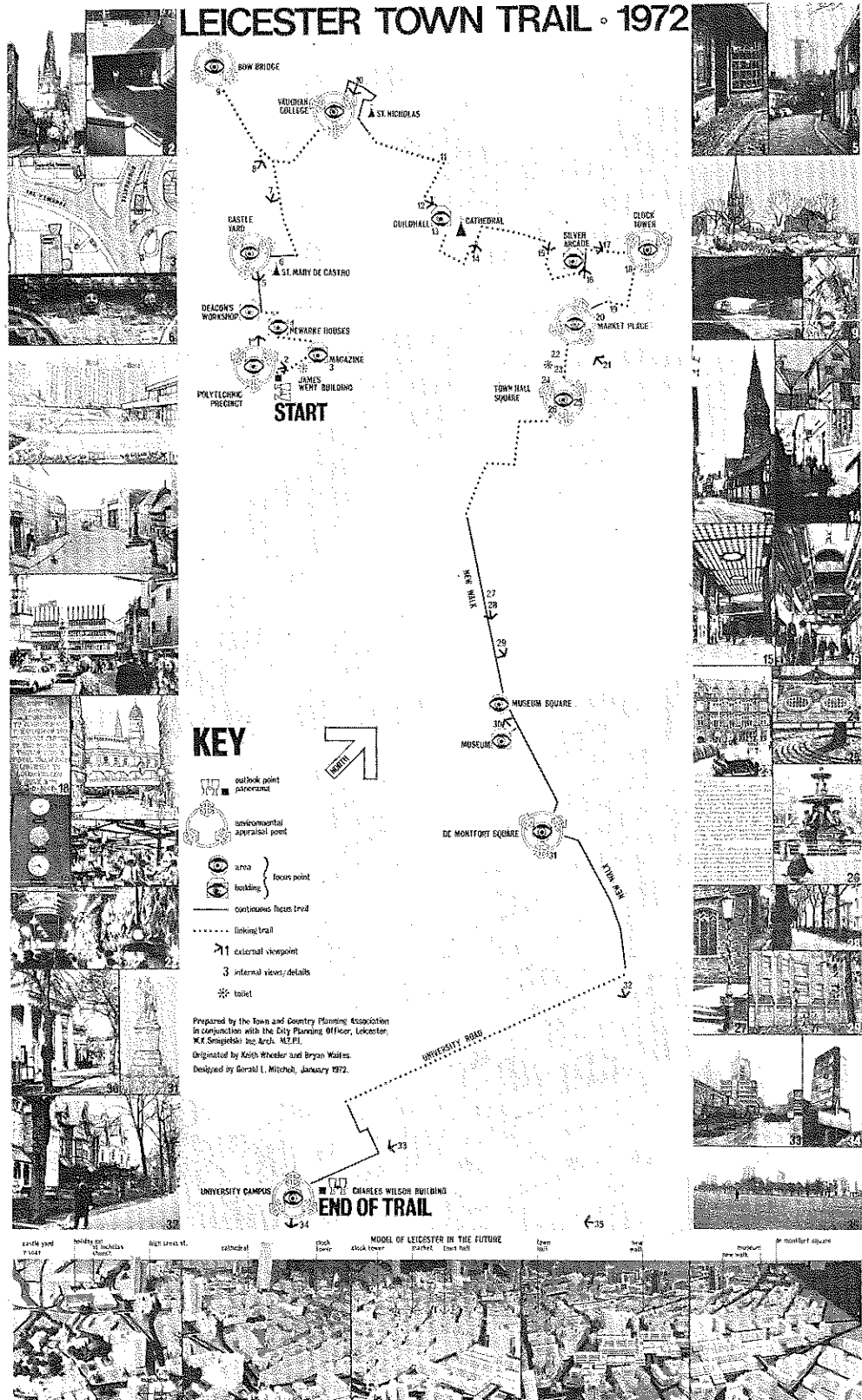
In order to make the most of a cross-section analysis as a learning device, one must consider and plot out a route that performs as follows:

1. It must follow one general direction, not doubling back upon itself. In this way it would resemble the familiar geographer's traverse, a time-tested learning device for recording a linear experience through new territory.
2. As a corollary, it must form a continuous, easily described experience, using certain routes as a "spine" for the trip.

3. It should span the full range of daily commuting, exploiting the full size of the "commutershed." The ideal cross-section route thus begins at the outer limits of commuting (generally considered the zone in which at least 5 percent of job holders commute into the metropolitan area) and ends at the opposite outer limits—usually, but not invariably, 180 degrees in the opposite direction.
4. It should deal with the Center, whether the historic city center, the civic center, or the geographic center, where all roads once came together at a historic crossroads; it could be the original Town Landing, Zero Milestone, Court House Square, or other designated central place.
5. It must cope with the zone or neighborhood that is the major source of exportable goods and services and therefore the essential source of local income from distant markets.
6. It must explore a dying area—slums beyond recall, an abandoned warehouse district based on cost advantages long gone, a mill district undermined by foreign competition, Mansion Row on the skids.
7. It should encounter at least one growth area where booming firms burst through their walls and workers' parking expands all bounds, where land development is under way, and where roadside billboards announce zoning changes and new construction to come.
8. It should offer transactions with the Best Address, where fashion and ambition dictate that the new wealthy jostle for space with old families or carve out their own turf, where foreign-car agencies cluster, and where the spoor of status-striving rests upon vegetation, house style, and decor.
9. It should bring us into at least visual contact with the major geographic feature of the area, be it the closest navigable water or the dominant local peak or escarpment.
10. The ideal cross section will touch a historic part of the city, perhaps an entire district—sufficient evidence to tell the studious what might further be pursued (figs. 6-6, 6-7).
11. Finally, the course should be fun. This is the wild card in the deck, the subjectivity among those objective criteria. My own tactic has been to give close consideration to my own attention span, to my own capacity for boredom. If the route turns boring, turn off. And this opens up another axiom: To turn is to learn. Moving off a predictable or familiar route increases the intensity of one's gaze, the receptivity of one's senses. If one turns into threatening territory, pupils dilate, muscles tense, sweat exudes—and learning speeds up (fig. 6-8).



LEICESTER TOWN TRAIL • 1972



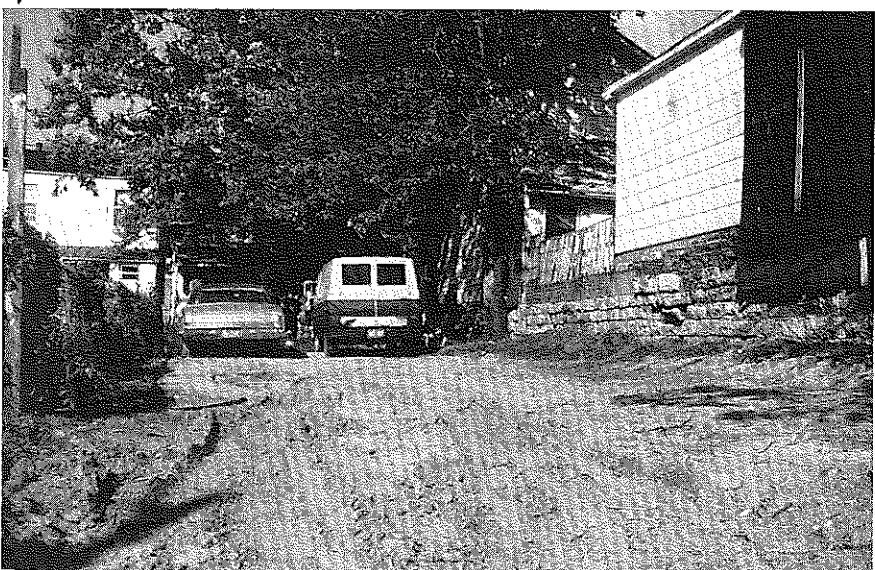
6-5. Leicester Town Trail, another pioneering effort in using the town as a teaching device. (Source: Town and Country Planning Association 1972)



a.



b.

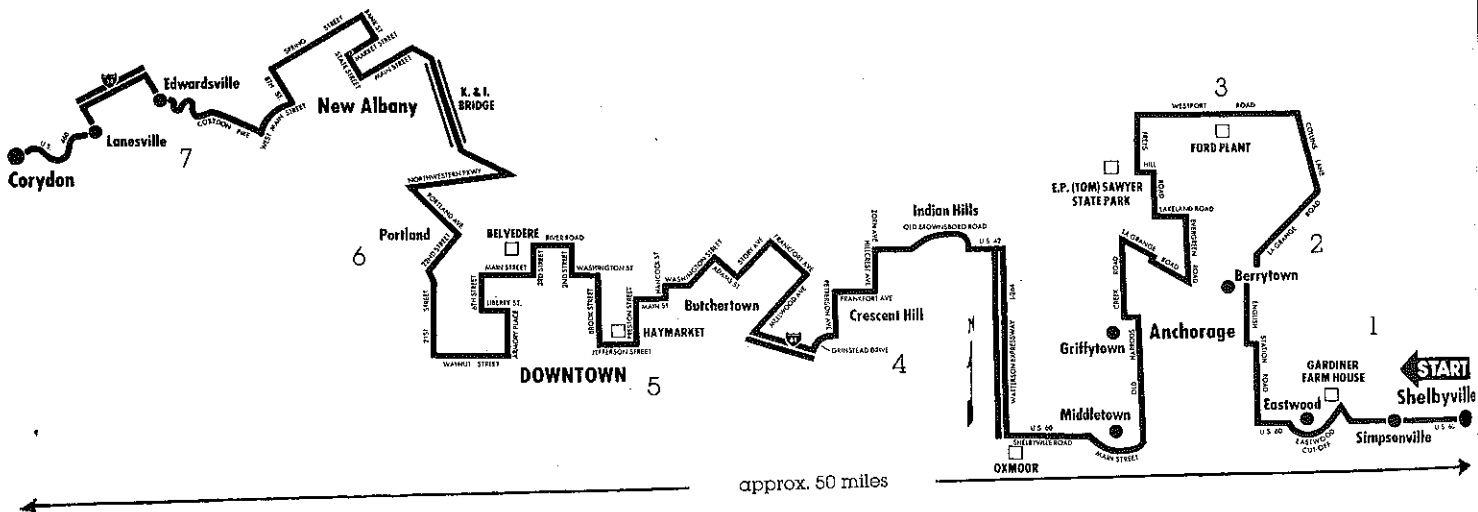


c.

6-6. a., b., and c. In these Old Louisville back-alley scenes, garages, stables, and other outbuildings have been demolished, backyards gravelled, and new parking spaces tucked up close to the house because of residents' fear of crime.



6-7. Informal expansion of alleys and private hardstands offer clues to increasing population density in a once-elegant neighborhood where old mansions have been converted. Often, where alleys turn (as above), the hardstands become targets for anonymous parkers from a distance.



1. Jogs in route touch original curvy-swervy route of old highway before the road-straighteners got at it in the 1930s. Here the old roadside is revealed: an early settler's house converted to a suburban plant nursery.
2. Berrytown and Griffittown, post-Civil War black communities, settled around sites of old plantations.
3. Ford truck plant, first blue-collar impetus for this suburban sector.
4. Route is now inside 1900 city limits, directed past old and new housing and signs of gentrification.
5. I-64 cuts through bucolic backwater of old quarries and roars alongside new riverfront hotels and office towers.
6. Zig-zag route through transition area (right) was once all white, but West Walnut is partly black. K & I Bridge is now blocked to auto traffic, so I-64 Bridge is best for views of river traffic, which creates many city jobs.
7. You are now in the Indiana Knobs, a replay of Appalachian-type land and settlement patterns, where everything hangs out along the highways.

6-8. The Cross-Section Trip offers a formal, well-structured experience in "reading" a metropolitan area to anyone travelling a carefully chosen route. This one, from the Kentucky county-seat town of Shelbyville (at right) to Corydon, the original state capital of Indiana, approximately 45 miles away (at left), is plotted to touch significant generators of Louisville's urban form.

To fulfill all of the aforementioned criteria, one should pursue at least one Main Drag, preferably that special variation I call Alpha Street. Most cities east of the 100th meridian had their start along a river that brought settlers and trade. They then extended their old streets toward higher ground, usually at right angles to the original landing place. Careful observers can "read" the generations of occupants and economic activities along the old main route, the one that starts down by the original Town Landing; meanders through the dying Mill District, then through the city center, office district, and Court House Square; proceeds uphill along the decaying Mansion Row (see the Men's Club, watch the funeral parlors take over the old mansions); and then merges with the Auto Strip toward suburbia. Not all Main Drags will be so accommodating, but they bear close inspection. (Since I fastened myself on it, Alpha Street has assumed an utter and predictable reality for me. I take delight in looking for the Alpha Street wherever I travel. I can be sure that it will not be listed in the city directory, and that few if any books—beyond anecdotal tracts pitched to visiting conventioners—will mention it. So one is left to dig it out of the city's fabric as a current discovery: Genesee Street in Utica, New York; St. Charles in New Orleans; Main Street in Houston; Meridian Street in Indianapolis.)

In Louisville, Kentucky, Alpha Street is Third Street (fig. 6-9). Close to the original landing place on the Ohio River—where hundreds of river packets once competed for space—the *Belle of Louisville* occasionally shares berth with a few other tourist and excursion boats. Up above the river landing, Main Street once was home to brokers, warehousemen, commission agents, banks, and shippers working off the river. Today, landlords compete for boutiques and tourist-oriented shops. Their original customers long gone, several stores were taken over during and after World War II by pornographic displays, which puritan-minded downtown promoters were attempting to remove in the 1980s. A state-financed convention center—a security-minded citadel with few entrances—muscles into the scene, turning its back on the neighborhood. A mile from the river, a former town mansion is boarded up. Shortly after being photographed it was razed to get spaces for a nearby Theater Square project. Old Automobile Row had seen better days before most of its dealers moved to suburban strips, now replaced by equipment dealers and other "interim users." After its original owners sold out and the street began "going commercial," an old mansion featured add-ons typical of "cash-register drawer architecture." The "duke's mixture" of old mansion, postwar low-rise "garden apartment," and a high-rise for the elderly built in the 1970s, marks a

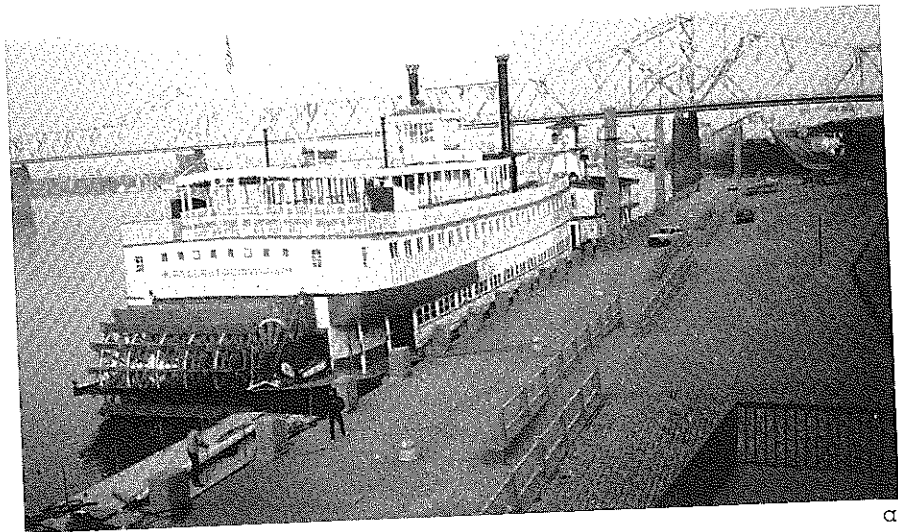
transition zone between the commercializing conversion district and Mansion Row, where old houses more or less maintain their original shape. The Ferguson mansion, once the city's finest downtown residence, was converted into an undertaker's parlor and later remodelled and expanded for the Filson (historical) Club. Now a landmark structure, a drive-in filling station dates from the 1920s (when Mansion Row began its slow descent). Today it serves yuppies and others who renovate the area's old mansions into apartment buildings.

In common with many educational experiences, a full cross-section trip does tend to screen out the hard parts: it smooths everything down to automobile grades. Any cross-section traveller may find himself choosing routes that eliminate the dead ends, the rough terrain, the spectacular views. No matter what one may intend at the start, beginning cross sectioners unconsciously tend to follow straight lines and hence become captives to a geometry that may not correspond to a city's basic structure. But, of course, the truly experimenting student will stop the car, get out, and explore as necessary afoot and afresh. Often the hidden spaces just off the main routes tell a different story, allowing the student to compare what is up front with another reality out back.

But beyond such personal or schoolish adventures, should we not ask ourselves: How can universities themselves tap into the School of the Street—beyond supporting all those hundreds of forays by click-counting and tape-recording students following the footsteps of William H. Whyte Jr.'s marvelous movies of people-on-the-street?

Private universities that own their own streets are prime candidates for such experiments as I envision. They can manage certain streets as open-air laboratories for experiments in crowd, vehicle, space, and a combination of learning, experience, and management. Most such spaces, as I have encountered them, became experimental only during the riots and mass meetings that were part of Earth Day and the Vietnam War protests of the 1970s. American streets seldom become educational media except for two forms of messages: commercial (advertising) and control (government rules and regulations). To encounter six blocks of a major thoroughfare that have been exclusively reserved for one set of messages is almost unthinkable, on campus or off, and I will admit that the first examples that come to mind flourished during a semidictatorial election campaign in Mexico City, where some major highways were dominated by Get-Out-and-Vote billboards. But we need to know such things as how the street can be made to perform more fully its many educational functions. And where better to begin than on the university campus itself? In

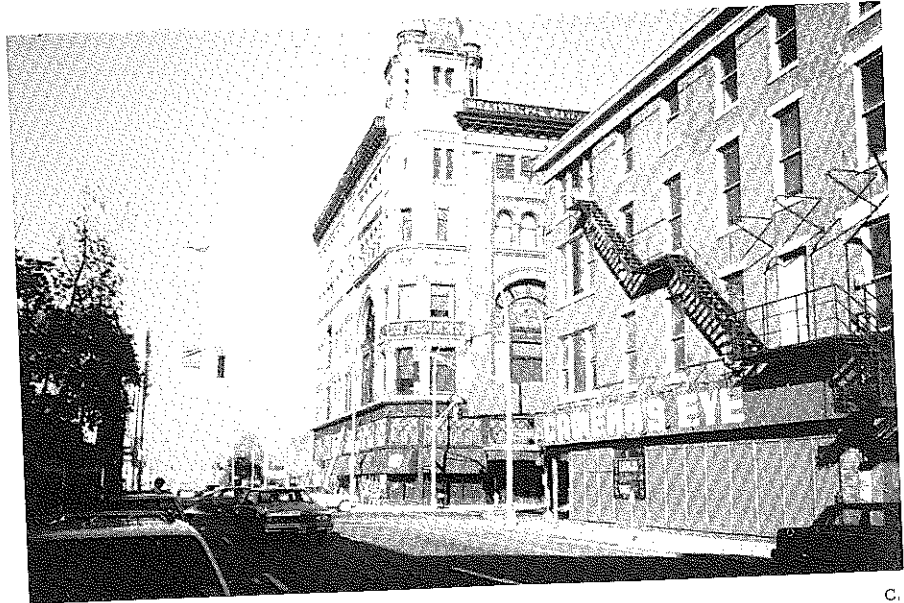
6-9. A trip along Alpha Street in Louisville, Kentucky: a. the *Belle of Louisville*; b. stores along Main Street; c. storefront pornography advertisement; d. convention center; e. boarded-up town mansion; f. Old Automobile Row; g. old mansion with add-ons; h. Mansion Row with new uses; i. Ferguson mansion in process of being reconverted; j. drive-in filling station and converted mansions (in rear).



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.



g.



h.





such fashion, the School of the Street could become far more the mixed media than we have so far explored. It would be instructive, just for starters, to see how students of engineering, urban design, architecture, and public art would handle a given block-long "street" of their own design. So far as I have observed, all such experiments have been confined to special events (the Big Game, Homecoming, the Beaux-Arts Ball, and so on), with little effort to examine the evidence for its larger lessons. My own experience, as an outsider being driven off Madison, Wisconsin's State Street which, unbeknownst to me, had become student Turf, offers a memorable example of special purpose. Looking farther, how can that after-hours white elephant, the multilevel parking garage, become an extension of the classroom? A television and computer hookup for every car, piped-in heat or air conditioning for the car occupants, pickup and delivery service by trike or bike?

We continue to go through each new Age of Confinement and its ensuing reactions. Sociologist Robert Gutman believes television merely takes people off the street and into the home, and is thus just another force inhibiting street life—an inevitable follow-up to early sanitation laws and social reforms that swept beggars, peddlers, garbage, kids, and tramps off the streets and into institutions. The department store and elevators conspired to pull adults off the sidewalks into buildings; the modern "Citadel," which I referred to earlier, reinforces the trend to depopulate the street. Traditional architects and their buildings are so inward directed that street life around buildings is a second-class activity.

But to lament all this merely reinforces our need to view the street from the reformist tradition. It is not

merely the inevitable byproduct of our latest mode of transport, but a vital part of the learning and testing system for the larger society. We can look back at the outpouring of federal, state, and local funds into traffic/transport/movement studies since World War II as an expensive episode in single-purpose thought. Such a look gives us both time to reflect and to prepare for a new wave of studies and examples that show how the street can perform to the fullest extent its many educational functions.

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