

deschooling architecture

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They run the clinic in which you're born
Christen you in their church
Teach you the rules of their school
Examine your minds
Mark them
Donate your playing field
Teach you the rules of their games
Employ you and pay you
Pay you when there's no work
Print your money
Marry you in their church or other registry office
Christen your children
Censor your television
Let you listen to their radio
Share their newspapers with you
Sweep your street
Train your police
Give you medals
Encourage you with bonuses
Punish you when you're a nuisance
Put you in hospital when you're sick
Take you into care when you're old
Burn you in their crematorium
And scatter your ash on their grass

No wonder some of you fight for them
when the rest start to ask
What the hell they're doing

Edward Bond¹

DESCHOOLING ARCHITECTURE

Lifting the Curtain on the Brain

"By elevating the status of architectural education to university level the profession by its own volition demonstrated that it was not the concern of the architectural schools to function as a sort of training ground for the production of the ideal assistant. If offices are dissatisfied with their new architects perhaps they should question more their own role, their own expectations and their own activities as a link in a chain that controls the built environment, an environment that an increasing number of people are finding irrelevant to their own needs and whose form is controlled by economic and planning considerations that are banal and totalitarian. Any office must remember that they are necessarily alienated from the cultural and social inputs that the student is exposed to and to expect that a student should view his world in the same way as an architectural practice of long standing is obviously absurd. It is commonplace to suggest that we must learn from one another, but any student must take away from his school new skills, new information and new questions, in order that he can change the situation he moves into, (normally architectural practice) and he likewise will be changed; the implicit them and us and what good can they do us attitude contained within the questions profits no one, least of all the future of architecture, which should cause us all to lose a lot of sleep." ²

(on right hand page)

1 don't settle

2 play the old spice, sir!

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5 the New American Revolution

6 school is dead

7 pedagogies of resistance

8 the death of the seminar

9 deschooling zetaville

10 we used to read books

The story that the writer must reveal is no less than
the truth. And by 'truth' I mean the fabrication
through which reality may be the more clearly defined.

Alan Garner The Voice that Thunders ³

(start on right hand page)

1

don't settle

But I have been taught to find this fruit the most
dangerous and tempting of all. Knowledge is only meant
to be passed on. 'A man can call himself a teacher when he
has no cultural Interest just for his own sake.'

Letter to a Teacher⁴

Down the road on the Interstate 30, the Dean of the school of architecture from Zetaville, Texas is on death row. After a few years taming the students and systematically removing their talent and enthusiasm, he had had enough. With no small preparation and dressed in fatigues he entered the school one morning with a sports bag full of guns and ammunition and shot six students. How we got there is the story of this anti-volume. At the moment of writing the Dean is still on death row.

If it had not existed, I would have had to invent the name *Zetaville*. I taught for 6 years at Zetaville. Each year I thought it would come to an end. Each year it did come to an end and I returned to Old Europe. But before I am finally invited to put my tongue away, and the Dean breathes his last, it seems useful to say a few words on a journey from the North Wales coastal town of Holywell in the United Kingdom to the University of Texas at Zetaville.

Zetaville? What can I say about this university, the sort that applauds when American weapons lights up the sky in Baghdad? Zetaville? What spawned this

university in the 1970s, what sort of people started its school of architecture, how did it come into being and why? The key is back in the splintered and fragmented early 1970s and the clue from the historian T.H. Anderson: “The 1970s was becoming the Me Decade. A sociologist in the Bay Area noted that the ‘burned-out activist was almost as common in the early 1970s as the burned-out drug user’, that many activists, ‘have turned to quiet politics or withdrawn from politics altogether,’ and that their first priority had become ‘getting my head together.’ After a chaotic era, many re-evaluated, reconsidered their lives and began their own pursuit of happiness. Thousands left cities and went to the country to tend, literally, their own gardens, and the number of food co-ops soared.”⁵

And a few of them left the cities of Dallas, Houston, New York, Lubbock and Pittsburgh, headed off to the desert in West Central Texas and began to tend their own garden called Zetaville. I was never really sure – as a European in a US University – where I fitted in when I first went to Zetaville in Texas in 2000. I then spent the next intervening six years between the two countries that have come to define many of the restless and unsettled conditions under which we live today, unhelpfully narrowed to the ‘war on terror’: Pakistan and the USA. From Lahore to Dallas, the ideas that I brought in from the ‘outside’ were, for some reason, possibly of my own making, mostly ignored. At Zetaville, education appeared to be nothing more than a confused notion, even the personal agenda of those who happen to take more decisions than others. With communication so passively aggressive, anger lay so insidiously under the surface.

It was not hard to recognise the situation some 40 years ago in America when the President of Berkeley Charles Kerr coined the phrase Multiversity. “To many students sitting in an auditorium listening to someone with a microphone, the university seemed like a service station,” Terry Anderson writes in his history of *The Movement and the Sixties*, “a factory where one matriculated before heading off to automated America. The Multiversity became the ‘screwnaversity’.”⁶

School, according to Charles A. Reich in his bestselling treatise from 1970 ‘The Green of America,’ “was intensely concerned with training students to stop thinking and start obeying.” In Zetaville, Texas almost 50 years later, it still is. Blowback takes over and the student is still being “told to accept hierarchical authority – that principles, deans, ‘adults’ have the right to make decisions concerning him without consulting him or being responsible to him in any way.” Quickly we reach the

inevitable metaphor and reality of the 'prison': "Everything that happens is decided by someone other than the student - the curriculum (some of which may even be dictated by state law), and all other school activities, what apparent freedom the students have, such as publishing their own newspaper, is like the 'freedom' of a prison newspaper; it can be suspended at any time. Democracy, whilst praised in theory, is rejected in practice by the school."⁷

Forget progressive education or alternative strategies, everyone was tired at Zetaville. Even first year students could be tired within a few months if they caught a whiff of the senior faculty of the school of architecture collapsing in easy chairs and bemoaning the standard of students today. There they were, once passionate 'rangers' and defenders of a once so-brave Modern Architecture, deflating as the air passed out of them as if someone over-weight and over-intense had sat down by mistake on them. A dysfunctional faculty who seemed to speak so decently to one another yet behind their backs would abuse each other at the drop of a hat. They did this so covertly that teaching architecture was more like appearing in Samuel Beckett's play 'Waiting for Godot'.

The faculty, the curriculum, the information technology and graduate committees, the equal opportunities board, the digital portfolio committee, the software committee, the student body, the whole university and the profession of architecture all seemed to be waiting for Godot. And if not Godot, you had the feeling they were waiting for someone to come along and resolve all the confusion, the ambivalence and pedagogical mishaps. There was even talk of bringing in the big names, the big guns, famous architects, in order to run studios which of course encouraged students to turn out replicas of what those famed architects espoused.

To call this a question of those in power is an insult to power itself. Decisions at Zetaville were often taken by default, taken in place of the other decisions that might have been taken. Faculty meetings were little more than attendance sheets, arrogance games, lists ticked off, akin to the multiple choice questions students are given in the History of Architecture survey course. Not this, not that, then it must be the third. Many paid lip service on the principle that the devil you know is better than the devil you don't. Deans came and went, double-talked, ranted, retired, were thrown-out for inactivity, embezzlement or just forced out for the only sin of being a female in the cowboy dream environment of West Central Texas. Despite the arrivals of different deans over the years, Zetaville was in an end-game situation.

Zetaville had become the pedagogy of the fatigued.

*

I walked into the Dean's room in Zetaville with a small paper of three sides, only to be greeted with a somewhat dishevelled unease: "Give me time to read this," the Dean replied shuffling his legs and papers around his computer uneasily, "I am not particularly suited to this kind of thinking." The language of the proposal was clear, the idea simple but the Dean never did come back to me. Disinterested in any exchange, unintellectual and unimaginative, was this merely the provincial atmosphere of a remote West Central Texan University? The fear of the 'outsider' led to no exchange being better than a problematic one. Civil proceedings, individual generosity even decency were hard to recognise. Everything had become, in Zetaville, devastatingly rigid and simple.

But it was all hidden. Except the waste!

In the eternal corridor of this school of architecture, architecture either became the remedy for the squalor and distress of the past, or then a recruitment system. Either way, the barricades were set up, warring ideologies had faded and the journals championed architecture that was beginning to look like all other architecture once again. What the professors and students edited out that didn't fit into their picture of contemporary architecture, redundancy started to bring back.

Often when we use words, when they have been spoken aloud in conversation or during a lecture, human sense invites us to think we know just what we have said. This applies to us all. Today, however, there is a crisp correctness in any applause. Response is polite but the words are instantly forgotten. Aplomb, occasional wit and brief courage may outlive theoretical anxiety. But many use this as a reason to put the tongue away. Words may survive but it is doubtful they will see out the dry comfort that architecture, continually failing within language itself, will become 'dead good architecture'.

The situation became so extreme in Zetaville that students were confused as to what year this was. The blur was complete, the daddies and deans were in full control of the university and by 2007, with the Iraq war and Afghanistan spiralling way out of control, the campus was silent. Back in the 1960s, we were told, "the condition that most irritated students in the first half of the decade was not overcrowding, frustrating but understandable, but the way that college set rules and regulations for its students.

In loco parentis was a term meaning ‘in the place of the parents.’ Historically, it gave academic officials authorisation to act as the students’ parents and issue discipline during college years. Philosophically, it meant that daddies and deans would continue to tell college kids how to behave, smiling and saying, ‘It’s for your own good.’⁸

‘Historically’ didn’t exist anymore in Zetaville. There was no history. The 1990s had become the 1980s, the 1980s had echoed the 1970s and we were back in the 1950s before the 1960s had happened.

Zetaville was flat-lining.

The Dean organized new car stickers to celebrate this. Out in the desert that had become the prairie, old cowboy educators were suddenly afraid. They had taken on their favourite Joni Mitchell song line and ‘paved paradise and put up a parking lot’. Not one of these professors and administrators seemed to understand what they had created and dreamt of until it was now disappearing. They spoke, moved their mouths, but didn’t really speak at all anymore. Meanwhile the upper administration of Zetaville was echoing the impasse and inefficiency of the bigger US administration in Washington. They were all trying to get out of a war that should never have started.

America was tripping, in reverse.

Paul Goodman’s words in his book ‘Growing up Absurd’ published in 1960 could not be avoided: “The majority of young people are faced with the following alternative: Either society is a benevolently frivolous racket in which they’ll manage to boondoggle. Though less profitably than the more privileged; or society is serious (and they hope still benevolent enough to support them), but they are useless and hopelessly out. Such thoughts do no encourage productive life. Naturally young people are more sanguine and look for man’s work, but few find it. Some settle for a ‘good job’; most settled for a lousy job; a few, but an increasing number, don’t settle.”⁹

*

Don’t settle indeed was one solution if you accepted growing up absurd in Zetaville. The systematic behaviour of ‘deans and daddies’ or ‘presidents and propagandists’ had gone so far as to re-write the rules and conditions to limit just that little bit of freedom which had survived for the young students. There was a rumour that the school of architecture would be closed down for at least two years. And then start again. This wastage, the delinquency, of deans and daddies not of the students, in a little known university in Texas is the story of this book. Everyone will think of course Zetaville is

only in Texas, and a special unremarkable part of Texas at that. But let's not be too hasty. Zetaville exists all over North America and into Canada.

Even all over the world.

The next chapter starts in Holywell, North Wales where school kids walk over cars to get home. Imagine!

2

Play the Old Spice, Sir!

Maybe I thought the students were in my class because they were eager to learn what I was trying to teach, but they knew better. They were in school because they had to be, and in my class either because they had to be, or because otherwise they would have had to be in another class, which might even be worse. **John Holt How Children Fail**¹⁰

I exited the dentist in Stockholm and passed an office with a sign in the window: “Don’t let your career be a game of chance.” The sign nauseated me. What had I been doing for over 30 years if not letting any career I may have had be a game of chance? I knew not why I was doing the things I was doing, nor where I might be in some months time. This seemed to mirror the ‘don’t settle’ condition we thought we could live with some 30 years ago. The thrill of uncertainty in life was worth more than all of this. But as with any contract with the random it would also – and had to - threaten my whole existence. Was it only as we turned from the 20th century into 21st century that we forget one of the most obvious post-war lessons from the 1950s; that the observer is always part of the observed, the critic part of the commentary, and the historian part of the anti-history. And we ourselves would be waste if we knew not how to handle that waste? Redundancy thrilled me; passion never so innocent, communication never so ecstatic.

After the intense theorizing of the last two decades of the Modern 20th Century, this condition of ecstasy and undoing had been extended to architecture. A building, any building, any environment was surely part of a knowledge known only by those who choose to be part of it. Contemporary architecture appeared to be adrift, to have lost its own brief. The ‘provisional’ was asking from us all – professors, instructors, teachers, critics, architects, planners - a more serious, even permanent rigour. Morality was being spoken

about again, albeit quietly. After a sporadic two decades of teaching in India, Finland and Sweden I felt that it was less and less easy to make any big remarks about architecture. Indeed it was less and less easy to make any big remarks about anything.

Teaching fell into the oscillating chaos and critical uncertainty of a confused curriculum and a facile relativism. The millennium turned for us, in front of us; it would have happened whether we liked it or not. In the new millennium a reluctant faculty often met a resistant and indifferent student population and, as we entered a period after 'nine-eleven' with the 'war on terror', our conditions altered. Panic and moral chaos emerged yet the world appeared paralysed, as serious public anger and protest began to be ignored by administrations. Fear was manufactured to create more fear.

Was I too about to lose the plot?

Some ten years back I had been in India, in Delhi. I had been called into the Director's Office of the Jamia Millia Islamia University. This wasn't unusual but, whilst I was holding a class with my students at that moment, it was more than uncommon. The peon-*clerk* had been sent to fetch me from the teaching room that had all the appearance of an abandoned army camp in South Delhi. The metal desks always screeched with the slightest movement. The first task as a visiting professor was to assert one's position. It had nothing to do with knowledge; it could only be done by controlling the fidgeting of the metal desks. Otherwise the noise was intolerable, the class lost and teaching an uphill struggle. I can't remember what I had been speaking about, perhaps Susan Sontag or John Berger. Or then we might have been analysing the use of *metaphor* in advertising films. I was teaching photography and film theory, semiotics and, at the time, exploring advertising.

It was the 1980s.

I had introduced to the class the idea of semiotics, 'denotation' and 'connotation', talked about the French cultural theorist Roland Barthes and begun to introduce ideas of reading: reading films, reading adverts, reading photographs, reading events. When the peon asked me to come to the Director's office, I told my students to continue amongst themselves. By then, they knew what to do and were enthusiastic to continue. Will you be back? I would expect so, I replied. I walked across the desert. The Director's room was one of the

largest and most comfortable - if that is the word - in the sprawling, dilapidated structures that passed for the administration building. It was situated across an area of manicured grass that separated the teaching hut from the administration wing of the Mass Communications Centre at the Jamia Millia Islamia University.

Desolate and grimy, the building had *peons* and *chai-wallahs* running everywhere giving the impression of immense activity. By now I knew this meant very little. I had learnt quickly. To get some papers copied for class needed signatures and a series of measures that required planning at least 2 weeks in advance. That was, if the machine was working. With electricity cuts and the state of the old re-furbished Xerox copy machine (probably picked up from an Embassy in the Chanakypuri Enclave in Delhi) the time stretched to a month sometimes. If the peons and other assistants were praying in the courtyard this, too, meant I was to respect Allah and suspend my activities.

In the few months I had been there I had learnt how to get around all this. As I crossed the grass, and we avoided precious sprinklers, I remember wondering whether the Director had heard that I had sent my class out to monitor and photograph the riot that had broken out on campus earlier that month. One of the young Bengali girls had come running in a little late for the class on photography history and theory with the words: "Sir, is it possible to take our cameras out in the campus?" Yes, I replied, why not. "Right now, I mean, there's a riot going on. A bus is on fire!"

It had seemed appropriate, as besides film, script writing and aesthetic theory, I had also ended up teaching photography and the use of the camera in relation to photojournalism. We had analysed political and cultural images, we had read Sontag and Berger on photography. Was this not what they were being educated for? Yes, I said, but be careful! Stay in pairs, and don't go to the epicentre. Circle the event, photograph from the distance, and always have a way out behind you. Don't get caught in the event, avoid the tear gas.

We all went. Nikons, Canons, Pentax sets and Prakticas all ready. The students dispersed within the riot, photographed as best they could. As the tear gas started flying, as the Indian riot squad started advancing down the main campus road with visors down and shields and *lathi*-truncheons ready, finally we had to retreat to the department and our classroom. We just missed the tear

gas. The other students, almost all Muslim, had disappeared back to their own departments. The bus was burnt out. In dribs and drabs, as if on a resistance mission, the students all arrived back to class where, thrilled, enraged and somehow different, they all analysed what they had seen.

I had probably broken all the rules of a Muslim university but nothing like this crossed my mind. I knew where the Director's room was but the peon was not letting go of me. He seemed to be on a mission. It was more than his life was worth not to deliver me to the Director. Administrators walked around with a self-importance that usually indicated some contempt at the lowly 'firengi' pedagogue. There appeared knowing looks. Always elegant, always softly spoken, I had considered the Director somehow different. He had been, after all, the Minister of Education in the Indian Government, and was now Director of the prestigious Mass Communications Centre set up with the help of Canadian funding. In his seventies, this was his baby. I liked him. The peon left me at the door and turned. Now you're in for it, his grin said. He spoke no English.

At least in the Director's room there was air conditioning, though the noise tended to prevent serious exchange. I had no chance to settle. The Director was furious. The usual calm tone and politeness with which I had come to know A.J.Kidwai had disappeared. I had never seen him like this: "What do you mean by holding class on the grass and inciting your students to rebel? Who gave you permission to take them out, sit under the tree and introduce them to the revolution? Was that why you came here? It's not why you are paid. It's not what I want." He had never addressed me in that way, nor had he ever used such a tone. The outrage shocked me and my youth and enthusiasm for teaching got the better of me. I forgot myself.

I laid into him back. I shouldn't have done but I did. I should have respected his age and his position. I thought I could do both. I attacked: "How dare you accuse me of inciting the students to revolt. What do you think I was doing? I was teaching. What's worth knowing? Nobody has ever accused me of such a thing. The air-conditioning had collapsed, it was over 35 degrees inside, everyone was sweating, the noise of the workmen was intolerable so we went and found some shade under a tree and we were discussing, yes if you like, revolutionary ideas. Yes, if you think that trying to show students how to work within the advertising world to subvert it and re-apply it for a malaria campaign

is revolutionary then yes, it was that. Yes, if you think when we use a pizza in a television advert and then blow it up in front of the camera that's revolution, then yes, welcome to the revolution. And anyway," I threw in for good measure, didn't Buddha sit..."

"Don't bring Buddha into it..." His words drifted to no real end. His tone changed. His face lightened. Was this just a ritual of double speak or triple speak? There was a hint of that smile which I had seen previously on the Director. It was as if we had parried and now we were back in the Delhi Gymkhana about to order a gin and tonic. One to one, we were. He reached for the little light switch that had been rigged up to a bell outside. "Water, chai?" he asked. "No water, thank you," I said, "but chai yes, tea yes, thank you." The bell must have been working today. Unusually. The peon came in and the Director snapped his orders in his own gentle manner: "*do chai, do glass pani, jaldi, jaldi.*"

Usually I never drank the sweet milky tea made on a single flame along the corridor but this time it would have tasted sweeter. "Tell me, I am interested. Your students seem to be so enthusiastic and keen," he said, "unlike anything I have seen previously. You get on so well with them. How do you do it? What you are teaching and how?"

*

There are moments when we feel our own country really does its best to finish us off. We should suspect the disappointment and be able to deflect it. Usually, if this happened in Britain, I wanted nothing more than to get back on a plane to Helsinki, Delhi, Paris or preferably an unknown destination. I remember one particular afternoon in 1989 in North Wales, standing in for a sick teacher or, as I was told in the staff room, standing in for a teacher on stress release; a teacher finally giving up the ghost of education, I was further told. I had no reason to disbelieve the rumours that British education was in chaos. At the time I was writing a book on Finnish cinema and would use the occasional call for supply teaching to earn some money. This meant a drive across the Welsh countryside to the North Wales coastal town, Holywell.

There I would sit in for the fatigued.

That particular day I was also standing in for the French teacher, released for a refresher course. Only later that afternoon did I realise how urgent this refresher course must have been. Being a one-off supply teacher when faced with a class of thirty pupils has its obvious drawbacks. I opted for the only solution I felt comfortable with. During the French lesson I asked the class to bring their books to the front in alphabetical order. I had this strange idea that their books could be marked. The homework exercise left by the teacher was a letter to their penfriend. A quick survey of the French in the first two or three books brought to me indicated an alarming level of error. I suspected a state of almost total incomprehension. Phrases were obviously copied word for word from the textbook. Adjustments for gender or for any change of sense and location had not been made. The few clever ones could only be defined by the fact they chose phrases from elsewhere in the textbook. And the one or two more inventive pupils distinguished themselves by being able to change the gender and location of the French phrases. Errors were horrendous even to any passive knowledge of the French language. Pupil after pupil brought up their exercise books. They stared at me.

Obviously I was on a visit from another planet.

The mistakes were so radical that they indicated either a total hoodwink of the teacher by the class or an absolute abandonment of the language and any learning. When I took out a red pen and actually started marking these books, immediately I had a potential riot on my hands. I did my best, amidst the clamour, to indicate the advantages of the corrective exercise. Obviously addressing what must have been the *yoof kulchur* one reads about in serious Sunday newspaper supplements and lifestyle magazines, carefully I suggested that correction was one if not the best way of learning.

Time took on the eternal.

It began its own subjective journey as it always does in schools, as it had done for me in Class 2B in Geography some twenty-five years ago in Ellesmere Port County Grammar School near Liverpool. Nothing seemed to break the sense of dread as I attempted to correct the errors in the pupils' books. The time remaining in the lesson terrified me. No exaggeration could hide my feeling of anguish. The fifteen minutes to go for the rest of the lesson overtook eternity. I remember sitting there thinking of death. Whenever time takes on its own

control, death is the most accessible and comfortable subject. I thought of the local butcher, once the Mayor of the local town not far from here in North Wales. The police had found him at one o'clock in the morning slumped inside his car; suicide. I looked at the class. Their fathers and mothers would have known the butcher. Their eyes stared back, all glazed, all planet-wise and indifferent.

Just who amongst us are the endangered species?

I longed to get back to my theories on incoherence, redundancy and *deschooling*, to uncomfortable writing and my outrageous plan of human error and ignorance. Anything I felt which would prevent this personal embarrassment: anything to deflect this absurdity of reducing contemporary existence to simple error. I had begun to think of the ecstasy of no further communication.

Unconvinced about my plea for the corrective method, the pupils drifted through the rest of the lesson. All education seemed unanchored. The anguish was immense but I knew that I should keep silent. By speaking, as the French writer Georges Bataille had said, I knew all I was doing was postponing the irremediable. It was obviously part of my idea of redundancy that being alone, none should hear. In fact it was essential. No one saw the inner wail or the inner laughter. But that was to change. The marking procedure itself was a farce. I placed a chair besides my own chair at the front of the class. I asked each pupil to sit and I began to go through their work. Most of the pupils edged away from me whenever possible. Almost all pupils thought marking had nothing to do with their own existence, hence laughed, smirked, and generally gave the rest of the class the idea that I had a terrible disease. Or had the recent warnings about sexual harassment by teachers and the politics of the classroom been so convincing?

There were, I decided, not too many reasons to continue treating them like adults. I floundered. I began regretting I had offered the British education system a helping hand. I could have gone to work in a bar, or then taken up spare-time wedding photography. I could have dug graves or worked in the crematorium. What had I to share or give this class of thirteen year olds I was thinking to myself, when two boys must have realised this. Sent by a particularly trying God, they decided that French dictionaries dropped from a

height of five feet could test my resolve to use the red pen. There seemed a quiet satisfaction similar to the one they would have had on kick-starting a stolen car.

I sent them out of the classroom.

I had heard the stories from the 'Special Class' of tight-ropeing the cars; a game the local children played in the streets. When I was young at Primary School we used to try and not walk on the cracks in the pavements. All the way home it became a matter of life and death. It sometimes still is if I happen to glance downwards. Today, the stakes had been raised. In this part of North Wales it appeared that no one was allowed to walk home touching the ground. Hence the easiest way home was via the streets with cars parked end to end. The school children tightrope-walked across car after car, jumping the abyss of cars parked just a little too far apart. Until the bell went for the end of the lesson the whole class began looking and then literally walking right through me without for one moment touching earth.

I had become a holograph.

On the bell, as they rushed out, I was told by one of the more inventive copiers that no one likes the sign of a red pen in their books. It indicates mistakes. "What do you do then?" I asked. "We re-write them," he said, "after first using Tippex!" *Tippex*? *Tippex* was the great educational hoodwink, the great 'white-out' material worth exchanging sandwiches, posters, video games, Pokemon cards and coca-cola T shirts for. Tippex allowed the pupils to wipe out mistakes and write over anything previously done. Tippex meant that if you looked at the books, everyone got every answer correct. These schoolchildren were hallucinating a reality faster than I had lived mine. This was not the first time I had come across the erasure revolution. Earlier that year I had taught some six year olds. *Tippex* had found its way there too. No one, absolutely no one in the class, wanted their errors marked. Everyone's book was a relief map of smudged white blobs and attempts to write over uneven surfaces.

*

Only two years back in India I had met this same fascination with forgetting and the art of erasure. At the Mass Communications Research Centre in Delhi, the fascination was for video editing. The clever, inventive students could alter an

image anywhichway. After showing the class a re-edited version of Sergei Eisenstein's Odessa Steps sequence from the film *Battleship Potemkin*, the world seemed open to reformulation. The implications for communication in Asia at least were still unexplored. When I suggested the political and cultural power of this, I received quiet agreement. When the diploma works arrived, what I mostly saw was a reworking of all the things I had taught the students served up as slick campaign, protest or advertising videos. It was not long before these devices and the same students would be using all their talents for seductive advertisements for Moti Mahal Tandoori paste, Patak's Biryani Paste, Guru Beer, Kapil Dev Cricket Bats and Maruti Cars. Some would take on more serious issue as the graduate students would later arrive to give their own lectures in their own Maruti cars earned by applying lessons picked up in a series of lectures on the Seduction and Resistance in Advertising and Film.

Fool that I was, such an anti-talent I admired and yet resisted myself.

Back at the North Wales coastal town, back in a present that was to become the past the minute that afternoon ended, this was not the first time I had felt like a holograph. The final two lessons of the afternoon saw me standing in for the Music teacher. Remembering my own ambiguous relationships to Music and Religious Education lessons at the Grammar School, I anticipated the dissent. The pupils were on to me, as I passed them queuing outside the music room. A visiting teacher they would never see again was up for grabs. The girls laughed, the boys smirked. About to play me up rotten, the joy on their faces was evident.

I blanked out.

What could I do to stay ahead of them? I could not think of any strategies. What was damage limitation under these circumstances? Already tired of raising the voice or even telling a story with some passing learning value, I was no longer present. I began to look through them as they looked through me. I was already tight-roping the cars I could see from the school window.

The lesson began uneasily, noisily. After a period of some chaos and increasing turbulence, I attempted to set a piece of work before the boys in the back row set fire to the desks and chairs. I thought I was acting wise in subtly ignoring this piece of amateurish arson. I continued by asking the class to make up a song with their own lyrics. They were to use the first line of a known song

and go on from there. Their faces looked back, blanker and more uneventful than a Tippex bottle.

I couldn't help it but the laughter rolled down my cheeks.

The tears of this idiocy were unstoppable. I tried to cover up the laughter by turning my back on them in the only way acceptable. I wrote on the blackboard the first lines of some songs: *Dead End Street, Tonight, Tonight, Love comes and Goes, Pretty Woman and Something in the Air*. It was useless. The class had gone. They had noticed that I was gone. They had passed right through me like a holograph. I needed the *quantum leap* that they would rather be watching on television. I stood there, totally redundant, willing each minute to go by faster than the previous one without a further riot, noise or attempted arson. When two boys entered the classroom, I could not even remember them exiting. The strong smell of cigarette smoke, I wished, was the beginning of a serious fire. Anything so that the bell would go and I could get back to my plan to write about Deschooling.

Pupils started coming up to my desk, behind the piano. *Play it Sir, play it!* The image of being stopped in a car I was rashly pretending to drive with competence in Los Angeles came to me. A young 'hoodie' leant on the Chrysler Lebaron with his hand held behind his back. There was the same look on these faces. I imagined a knife quickly taken out and thrust in. I imagined tomorrow's tabloid headlines: *Supply Teacher Stabbed for not playing The Piano in a Music Lesson*. I glanced behind me. I found a pile of records and wondered why I had not noticed the stereo in the corner. I discovered *Carmina Burana*, a record I used to play over and over again in my days at architecture school. There was nothing for it.

At least its volume would hide the increasing noise.

I expected other teachers to look in. There were always those teachers that looked in and gave the knowing wink. It was coded: *All right? Need any help?* It actually meant: we know you're out of control, near insane, but we enjoy watching the performance! As Orff's pagan revelry began and the Latin boomed, I thought I was saved. The girls became rather iffy about the music. Most said it was rubbish. The boys recognised the cover of the record as I had taken the record from its sleeve. They knew it for what it was, its contemporary

cultural value and sign. They knew it as the music to a television advertisement for *Old Spice* After Shave.

The boys seemed to call out into another planet, to another teacher, to another world than mine; *Play the Old Spice, Sir. Play the Old Spice!* (Teacher stabbed for not playing the Old Spice! I amended the tabloid headlines). And I played the Old Spice. Oh, how I played the Old Spice. I turned up the volume and let it rip through the school. I had five minutes to go to four o'clock. I stared out over the estuary of the River Dee to where I was born, towards Chester. I looked back at twenty five school children all pulling, knifing, ribbing and pushing each other; all dancing, showing off, swearing, mock-fighting and generally attempting anything that might shock. Instead of any further communication I just increased the volume like a commandant at a concentration camp. I was gone. I wanted out. I had only come for the day. I would laugh all the way to the car park. If England made me, if the Old World had given me all this, then the Old World must surely have finished me too.

At four o'clock, I decided to play the commandant again.

I sat there releasing the pupils one by one. They began folding their arms; dinner table tactics. They squeezed their legs together. Some could not resist trying to shoot their hands up in the air as if to say, "Me, me, I'm good, I can go." A mean, pathetic gesture of control perhaps, but I was on another planet. The Old World was spinning out of control. "Play the Old Spice, Sir. Play the Old Spice again Sir, next week?" some of them actually said, as they left the classroom in an orderly manner on their way to tightrope home on the tops of cars.

Without touching the ground once!

*

3

Ordning och Reda

(the deschooling book)

*You who have learned nothing
while reading this chapter,
you are clearly convinced that
everything I said is the same thing
as what you know.*

Jacques Derrida¹¹

Flexibility? I remember leaving Sweden for Texas. After a period of teaching at the Royal School on Skeppsholmen in Stockholm, options had narrowed. I had heard the utterance of Neo-Fascism in Sweden more recently and dreaded meeting any hint of it. The Swedish Bus driver had looked at my ticket and it appeared a minute or two over. It was literally that close. The stamp wasn't clear or the digital clocks. He indicated that I had to pay again. I was enraged and tried to explain to him the benefits of flexibility and occasionally looking the other way. I was desperately trying to re-frame the bus driver. An irresistible move in such a country! Having met such inflexibility in some of the Swedish graduate architecture students, I was pulling out. But as usual I felt this little act enough to confirm my reading and joke knowledge of this over-valued and ordered city. As usual I would then spend an intense five minutes being petulantly violent with myself first and then everyone else around me. I had been a professor but nothing helped this moment. I curled up – figuratively – in useless inner pain and remembered how my wife had informed me she would – if she had to – go without everything in order to buy our daughter a new pair of Nike each spring.

Horried, I realised just how long the future lasts.

The Future lasts a Long Time is the title of the autobiography of Louis Althusser. This wasn't quite accurate though. It struck me that the future only lasted a long time, if you have no control over it. So what, if you turned your life into a film script? Retreat was threatening to reject the courage *not to be*, but to remain alone despite all the odds. Paulo Freire had begun to look at the irresponsible self; he knew the dangers of a negative isolation: "A negative isolation is to be found in those who timidly or methodically look to find some refuge in being alone. A negative isolation is characterised by those who selfishly require that everything revolves around them so as to meet their needs."¹² Retreat was also tempting me to be satisfied with an incomplete and imperfect soul.

In Sweden one of the most orderly shops is the paper outlet *Ordning och Reda*. Translated to mean 'order and method', it did not surprise me that this store was seen as particularly Swedish. When beginning the year teaching the Advanced Architecture course students on the Swedish island, I decided to ask them to complete a journal. For this purpose I approached the company *Ordning och Reda* for the possibility of sponsoring the students with their own notebook. In mind the hardback grey linen bound editions, with good strong paper. The nothingness of the notebook would inspire the students to see the notebook as something beyond the book. Surely the architecture of the book would convince them to 'think' before filling the book with architecture. There was, I felt, a method in this madness; as if by using a quintessential Swedish product we might upset and *deschool* the architecture the students had been pre-scripted to explore and design. Many of the graduates felt ready to take on such an exercise; they were, many expressed, thoroughly frustrated with things-Swedish.

Interestingly, the two other firms like *Ordning och Reda* in Britain and in France suggest - by their very names - a rather different 'organisational' metaphor for their products. *Paperchase* in England hints at fantasy, at mystery. There is even the romantic ambiguity of a love-letter, a card or a series of clues as in a detective story. Of course there is also the idea of a game, suitable to the British culture's way of seeing usefulness in folly, eccentricity in whim, romanticism in chance. Just like a children's game where paper is left as clues in a chase through the forest. This suited us. Architecture as a 'paperchase': ultimate infinity, the blank page and the whiteness of a lost century, the 20th century.

Papeterie in France indicates, as I understood, an emphasis towards the manufacture of paper, the product in all its ‘production’ and all its ‘paperiness’. This recalls a more ‘general’ shop that sells all paper-related things, including newspapers, postcards and cahiers; in other words a stationary shop. Resonating with ‘charcuterie’ or ‘boulangerie’, this ‘papeterie’ allowed us to recall the skill, technique and method of preparing meat, baking bread or making paper. More abstract, the French seem always to have been able to suggest an erotics within this the act of making paper. Would any students pick up on this: architecture as ‘jouissance’ and ultimate desire? Or was it to be another blank page and the smoothness of lost value?

This was to be their *Deschooling Book*.

The Swedish company, after informing that they did not sponsor anything of the sort, relented. Some gentle persuasion suggested that they might gain by a small exhibition of ‘The Book of Architecture’. Students, I said, are surely inventive enough to produce some unusual books, something we have never seen before. The next day, a brown box of smart crisp grey linen notebooks was waiting up in the reception. Companies can change their policies. Now it was up to the students to keep their end of the bargain.

The *Deschooling Book* was a Book of Options. It set out to investigate and expand a self-critical, even confessional approach: to explore and develop the awareness of personal knowledge, fragility and uncertainty as much as alterations and changes. To negotiate ‘theory’ and the hallucinatory uses theory was subjected to in architecture, art and contemporary culture; to raise theoretical self-consciousness *not* with more theory or more knowledge *but* more understanding and awareness of the students’ personal relationships to theory and knowledge. The students were to veer toward critical hospitality, generosity and the awakening of thought; a fragmented or a holistic seeing. To record, document, explore, draw, sketch, measure, annotate, confess, exchange and question.

*

Is it possible to demonstrate that all thinking is necessarily operative? When this thinking is represented within architecture - whichever type of architecture is produced – is it always carried out with ‘order’ and ‘method’, even if the so-called operations privilege disorder, laziness, indifference or the huge varieties of an ‘anti-method’? At first blank faces on the students quickly became the blank pages in the empty book. Few wanted to

soil the books. Some treated it as they would a spiral bound stenographer's pad. Some saw their life as a film script. The short course of one year began to feel like a future that would indeed last a long time.

What was I doing wrong?

Paradoxically the emphasis given language, and words like 'order' and 'method', could be used to reassess the very order and method promised by 'Modernism' in architecture in the earlier 20th century, and the provisional condition often facing contemporary architecture today. In Sweden under these conditions - *ordning och reda, löning på fredag* - architecture could only ever be a book of options. We were approaching the Millennium, the close of the 20th century. The world appeared *formless* and French texts confirmed this! It was necessary to introduce to the students a critique of redundancy and accept the notion of incoherence and even impossibility in a profession that seemed irresponsibly aimless.

In a bar called Lexington's, as the Modern Century was closing, it was clear that much had been written on the disenchantment within contemporary architecture. Less awareness had been given to the indifference the general public began to show towards any architectural pretence. In Sweden, a rather neo-conservative, 'alone together' society, it was possible to use the 'book of options' as a laboratory to explore how ideas, when shifted across different cultures, are debased in architecture: the despoliation, the diaspora of ideas, and the derivative stain had become architecture. Students who had flirted with Post-modernism were now flirting with the architectural sophistications of a Frank Gehry-do-it-yourself, a Daniel Libeskind atomised 'narrative-fleuve' or a Peter Eisenman deep-structured 'simulation'.

Were these all inevitably flattened to a *tromp l'oeil*?

There was a sense when I really thought we might be able to study the notion of the 'formless' and the coercion in all the pre-scripted architectural solutions that students would come up with. John Summerson came to mind. Could we write like this anymore: "this witty, sublime-nonsensical approach to architectural design is Le Corbusier's very own, personal and inimitable possession. Many architects borrow from him...But this borrowing is meaningless – often nothing more than witless and inapposite quotation."

In Lexington's, in Amsterdam, the conversations develop and take shape, only to be broken up once more in the next sentence. Levi, a balding senior architect is continuing a dialogue with Linney a photographer aged 30. Linney is confident that her light but all-encompassing view of the world and what is architecture (*this shoe is architecture*) is the

right answer and Levi has difficulty with her sovereignty. Linney is queen of all. Levi sees neatness, precision and order in all this, an innocence that claims more for architecture than the old professional model he was taught. His head is exploding. Levi wishes to re-invent himself, to extend his site and grasp of architecture, to take in perhaps his passion for gardening. They both distrust the professor but see all this 'order' and 'method' as a necessary professional framing. It must be imposed, mediated and remain closed. Linney encourages Levi to see fashion, a show, photography and a drawing, all potential architecture. As she flies, Levi tries to restrain her, keep the training harness on, but he cannot hold onto her impossible condition.

He resorts to a professional hubris and forgets his gardening.

The conversation remains interesting and viciously unsettled. Neither seem to patronise or understand each other's ignorance. They have talked and when they leave, they feel they have not talked at all. They repeat this one hundred times a day. Others discuss the notion of the 'formless'. They say it all depends on how much credibility we give to the phrase, the line of thought. The architect can treat this metaphorically, seeing this as a literal metaphor of the life's line: a line of text, a chronology, a queue to the next taxi or a date, near a door which never opens. No one quite understands the other as they sit in Lexington's. The logic of the necessary lightness in all this talk that escapes such treatment is shown in a sign that says Toilet and Café. The café itself is squeezed into an impossible space to ask of the visitor denial. No one mentions the moral responsibility of the architect, though someone reads aloud from Summerson's 'Heavenly Mansions': "Much of Le Corbusier is 'witty nonsense' though on that plane of seriousness which an architect who is spending rather large sums of somebody else's money must necessarily perform."

Meanwhile the artist in the corridor has installed his work: a series of clips from all the available films on the Holocaust showing men or women drinking coffee. 'Coffee in the Camps' accompanies you as you sit there, and architecture extends your history. Architecture such as this is theatre that exposes itself to the paid up observer; a participation in someone else's history rescued by the theatrical telling of the artist's life. No one claims that architecture can do this better than literature.

But in the next century it is going to see it try.

As the Deschooling Book continued and the empty pages were defiled, we consulted Georges Bataille (or rather I did, I suspect no one read more than the extract): “A dictionary begins when it no longer give the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus ‘formless’ is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing has a form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.”

I was unsure whether the graduate students, many who were already architects, were powerless to prevent this rhetorical cross-traffic in world architecture. Everyone seemed to recognise how any examples of excellence were cannibalised as fast as the magazines reproduced them. Was there any real outrage at this? With scant interest in their own history of architecture, with a re-assessment of the 20th century, the archives were bulkier and looser than ever. An accepted loose democracy, dialogue and openness could disperse an idea. How do ideas diverge from the origin that has never existed? To say I was interested in the logics of disintegration would be stretching it, but it was a concern as to how dissolution occurs.

The students were ready to lay the blame at the wrong door.

The seduction of Postmodernist thinking had given way to a new seduction, Deconstruction and then onto the next seduction, a curious ‘anti-theory – anti-thinking’ movement. The result – and you could see it any Swedish office – was a rapid dispersal of any stylistic approaches to architecture in the future. To use a phrase by Freire; it looked as if the future itself had been *de-problematized*. I began to see how the anger and protest of old progressive militants led to a mild pragmatism. Freire had been thinking about exactly the same thing at the end of the 1990s: “To serve the dominant order is what many intellectuals of today who were progressive yesterday are doing when they reject all educational practices that unveil the dominant ideology while reducing education to a mere transference of contents that are considered to guarantee a happy life.”

A perfectly round man called Josef was ‘perfectly’ in resonance with the agony of contemporary architecture. The invented pain has, he knows, become the pain of space itself. Grieved by the excess of infinity and the meta-history all around, Josef liked to explain the hard corners, the angled forms and diamond light as if they are the world’s

answer to his own roundness, the obvious discomfort of his huge distended belly. Keen to show the logic to the bitter end, Josef reveals a door in the building concealing the fire extinguisher. Sadly, he said, placed on a wall that should have remained blank.

‘Imagine a brief for a building if you will’, Josef was saying to the gaggle of tourists that had come to the building, ‘design a building, an architectural site (a transitional space – a non-site – a liminal space whatever) using your own relationship to meta-history. Try to imitate the reach of a novel, assuming the self-reflective compromises missed in ordinary architecture. Apply a liberal reading towards nonsense like ‘dead end’, the end of the line. Transform the pain of the text into a pained space. Then prepare an audio to remind one of such pain.’ Josef was unstoppable. “For example,” Josef rolled his hand over his huge stomach, “remember the ball rolled back and forth in Tadeusz Kantor’s cradle in *The Dead Class*?”

Blank stares on the students’ faces!

Josef would not be put off. “Use the paradox between the amount of detail details can take whilst leaving questionable areas of bewilderment and personal resolution. Allow the notion of shoddy to be close but distinguishable from the notion of ‘unsteady’. Work in the imaginary space of history (landscape, society, culture, whatever) until a significant displacement will inevitably question the convention of wall, window and door. Finesse the remaining architecture to destabilise the readings created by adding the lightness of the deadly labyrinth. There my friends you have it, the future. And it is here now in front of you, surrounding you.”

Architecture had been reduced to an archo-babble of surface, symbol and semiosis. The Swedish students seemed no different from those around the world who imagined and invented, with some nerve, architecture on picture search. This was an impoverished architectural experience. But they were not exactly sure why. I am not sure I knew why either. I had written books claiming in some way to know this. Now, after a very awkward decade, approaching 2000, I didn’t.

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Nothing more than a witless and inapposite quotation: was the learning through borrowing meaningless? The intensity of the student visits to the star architects’ buildings was both thrilling and dulling. Conversations were wide, spontaneous and chaotic. The

professor waves his arms about as we all look on. The intensity edits out the rest of the world as all are cocooned in the latest architectural spectacle. Everyone has a handle on the contemporary moment, would even kill for it. Remember Glenn Gould: *Lie, but do it creatively*. Walking back on the wet roads in Amsterdam it is possible to gulp in the air, the silent air. It is possible to escape only to know that the pilgrimage begins again tomorrow. The future is once more confirmed and if the Director paused one moment before moving, he would have realised he could be wrong.

The students seemed to all watch him, address him. Could he recognise the alarming signs? Why was he the first to put up the umbrella when it drizzled or had to inform the receptionist that he was Herr Direktor-Professor? He wanted the best room in a hotel and more often than not complained and changed. His need to be first, forced him to inform strangers in a lost hotel to recognise and then celebrate his birthday. Do you like what sort of person you are becoming, the students asked their Director, but remained silent. He needed a redefinition of the word 'pragmatic' to recognise the paradox that allows him no further movement in architecture. He would lecture on Samuel Beckett's *Worstword Ho!* as if a clear repetition of nonsense relieved him of a responsibility he could no longer take in the discipline. And yet he would drag the students through a thunderstorm not caring whether any of them got wet, their shoes leaking. Students watched as he refused a restaurant that would have seated 16 for another destination that would seat sixteen. Drenched at the end of the walk, he felt happy. He realised he existed, and only he existed, under the umbrella.

There was no one else.

The students do not understand what is happening. The Director was the centre of a centreless world. It had become possible to resist using knowledge as a part of a series of references to pass on. Resisting the inevitability of their own lines of thought, passing over knowledge itself, the opening was there for all of them to see. It was fashionable to reintegrate themselves into reality. At least this is what the therapist will say to them, with some emphasis on the 'reality'. Every one of them comes at it from different directions, all anxious to ask the question once more – what is architecture?

Do we gain by this openness that will ultimately defeat the architecture of today as we know it? The professionals, architects mostly, look back and manage history from their own knowledge. Even if they have to struggle against history so far, they do it in order to bring back architecture, to re-integrate it into reality. Their world though is challenge-less. And left this exposed, the others move in. It is what the psychiatrist

warned. Photographers, journalists or artists remove the world as it was known and replace it with a subtlety that is more and more difficult to pass without introductions. The professionals scramble their own history to alter their own versions of the contemporary moment. Others believe themselves free to imagine what architecture could be, rather than what it should be. Bets are being taken. Buildings are being built for the very purpose of staging the biggest game on earth: Life!

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I was in need of *deschooling* as much as the students, as much as architectural education. Like the students I too had to start again. But where? I was not sure how useful were the architectural manoeuvres being made right now from 'unrest' and 'chaos'. It did not take a genius to see that the global access to images and ideas through magazines and the media would continue to produce a thin, gratuitous global repertoire. McLuhan's global village is now architectural first, electronic second. But there was more alarm. Was the resistance to theory about to grow into a resistance to thinking? Were universities about to become thinking-proof, theory-free zones? By resisting or abdicating philosophical and cultural engagement, by opting for a visual flatness, was not all architecture likely to become about all other architecture, and all architecture then finally souvenirs of each other?

How many times had this been repeated?

In the Deschooling Book we were concerned with the idea of 'Actual' architecture. Once, Levi said, it was an immediate example of neutrality where, if the intellectual is abandoned the signified is not. Peter laughed. Linney scorned this language. I looked around. All but two of the students in the seminar were dressed in various shades of grey, black or white. The Director, nicknamed Opel, was also dressed from head to toe in black, this time – surprisingly - with no discernible brand conspicuous. I sat there and imagined entering the head of such students, in a way inventing the architecture they already resist. Introductions were brief as if it was enough to say we still teach this discipline in order to do what Wittgenstein was doing in Norway, *lifting the curtain on the brain*. Meanwhile the students were busy correcting the addresses and their mobile phone numbers: two in blue jeans, 10 with black shoes and one with black trainers. As the students questioned each other like a football team going through a bonding exercise, social capital abandoned, a protectiveness led to shyness. No one wished to say anything

that might outstay another. It felt like a group of teenagers meeting for a summer study; a therapy group out to lift the curtain on all brains, all optimism, until dead once more.

I had that feeling - it came more and more in the 1990s - of catching up with myself. Someone else had written that programme for your life. Someone else had occupied the hotel, made New York delirious or re-occupied Asia, and for some reason you feel the invitation is extended to you.

Why that should be, of course, you are no longer sure.

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Ordning och reda? An Electro-Helios dish-washer mechanic arrived to repair, yes the dishwasher. The Swedish mechanic could see no reason why the machine would not work but he had a hunch. He presented two options. The machine could be replaced at considerable cost. Or the hunch: clean one small part and pay about 200 Swedish crowns for a new rubber component that is often the cause of wear on such machines. There was a chance of course that this would not solve it and one would then still have to pay for a new machine. Pleased with his unusual flexibility and innovation, I happily bought off him a lemon freshener for the dishwasher and trusted in his rubber band solution. Smiling, he left the apartment and said, as if to suggest a thesis about architecture in this country: "There are no good customers. I create them."

Later that evening I was in Vasa Park, Central Stockholm before leaving for Texas. An Italian passed my daughter on her bicycle and remarked at how good she rode and so young. I explained the principle of learning to ride on a level playing field: Don't use the training wheels. Don't use the harness! Choose grass. At least if she fell off she would hurt herself less than on asphalt. He agreed with the premise and for some reason took this as a sign to share how the lessons he had learnt in Sweden would suit another thesis about the architecture. "The difference is not the climate," he said, "though compared to Italy, this is dismal and dark especially during winter. No, it is the act of closure. Everywhere, every act is one of closing off." He looked off into the sky as if catching a kite. "Horizontality is the problem here. It's the thinking that sees democracy equal equality equals paralysis. It happens in both individuals and groups."

I had asked for none of this but listened thinking of my students. 'It leads to confusion about responsibility. Whenever anyone is asked to lead there is guilt, an uneasy sense of importance. This then can express itself as arrogance. You see they are modern

but ana-chronic.” The Italian spoke as if this inflexibility was some kind of identifiable disease. I think he was trying to say all this leads to a lack of integration whilst giving the illusion of integration. This seemed to tie up with the conspicuous way money must be shown to be spent, whether in a restaurant or in new fashion. “We are,” he said, “here at the fake top of the world. Sweden has seen itself for too long as Europe’s conscience that it has led to self-righteousness. That’s why their modern solutions often look inventive but lack life. Derivative, they lack the adaptive functions we associate with friendlier solutions.”

He had realised I taught architecture.

“Their architects can constantly wear black and give utterly embarrassing reasons for wearing this limited uniform. The application of talent is not the same as the talent at application. I’ll leave you to work out which I think Sweden has and which it doesn’t. For me,” he concluded, “being alone and realising it or living in a paradise alone is no fun. That was and remains their problem with the Modern world. Modernism and everything Sweden has aspired to bring people closer apart.”

With this insight he waved and said he had two years of his Ericsson contract to run.

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We imagined a seminar:

You were right. I would always eventually lose interest in any career, in this notion of a world called ‘architecture’. You were right to protect yourself, to protect your passion for this art. After years away I have come back. I have lost interest again as you suspected in so many things, but I’ve returned. Returned to architecture! But of course, you are not here!

The year of teaching in Sweden came full circle. The grey linen covered Deschooling Book begun was, too, almost complete. Some students used their own grey books as intended. Others put off writing or drawing in them long enough until, for them, it was no longer needed. There had been much suspicion in the year, a suspicion that teaching might help release. Often this didn’t happen. There were fears too, which the students brought along with them and also discovered as they worked together. It was not a consistent year and the frustration shown at the end of it demonstrated both the impatience of the Director, the faculty and the intolerance of leadership.

Impatience and intolerance do not necessarily belong to the education set-up yet the year had been shaped by these two factors. Helped not by the cult of the persona and the stigma attached to a Royal School, the impending rise of a performative programme looked as if it would turn architecture into a near fiasco. Naturally, as befits a school with such history and assumed status and importance, there is never anyone who wants to accept responsibility for any 'fiasco'. Hidden factors eat into the fabric, the structure appears rotten, the conclusions sad and drastic. It would be rather too easy to highlight leadership at The Royal School as the main issue. Yet too many – Deans, Program Directors, Professors - seem to land a position of leadership without a relevant understanding of the authority so demanded of them. Then they have to catch up, pretend and 'manage upwards' as they call it in business handbooks. Instead they usually creak. Perhaps only those with a tendency towards the selfless can cope with the paradox of seduction and authority. Authority invites a seriously unselfish role. Instead it often becomes a display.

In such profligate and excessive times, education truly suffers and, open to such rapidity, learning becomes consumption. Followed by a type of pragmatic information gathering, learning settles on the facile and brushes aside wider issue to go for an attractive core. The attraction of simplicity usually outweighs the richness lost. Most of this is reasonable of course if this core information can expand and take on wider issues once more. Generally it does not. Education is then narrowed by the convergence on a desired performance. Agendas are kept, simple objectives met and the illusion of completion and achievement given. Both students and faculty for example when worrying about an exhibition demonstrated this. The cart is put before the horse, or in this case the house. The idea to perform one's image within the public domain is more important than what might be contained within any scheme or idea. A slow panic creeps in as work is rescued by long nights, and face-saving tactics. Suddenly we are back in the Beaux Arts tradition and loathe the passion necessary for the art we love!

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Over the year of deschooling, no chance to debate or discuss what is taught or what was worth learning was taken. No enquiry into directions, approaches, and the selective criteria used. That this rarely happens is not easy to explain. Is such a school of architecture so secure that it need offer only separate individuals, specialist lecturers, who

visit the school with their own programmes and impart their own knowledge in the form of lectures? Knowledge, easily repeatable, becomes the knowledge passed on. Is this a structural indifference or the indifference due to authority, positions taken by leaders, directors and professors? In one way this individuality expresses confidence and a belief that if information is indeed imparted education occurs. However the indifference is supreme when it ignores content, questions not that content, but assumes the performance necessary. Autonomous, it remains as useful as the authority wishes. Resembling education by remote control, this kind of teaching by proxy shuns participation, shuns shared knowledge and operates like a transfer. This appears to be education only in name; it tolerates no exchange, no upset, and very little selflessness. The royal selves then implode, so keen are all students to be seen doing their work, so keen is everyone to avoid irresponsibility.

Yet irresponsibility itself results from such pained exclusion.

The students if they sense this disorder are told to be more professional. Being more professional - in this case in Stockholm - meant producing ideas that can be packaged successfully to look professional. Any engagement in the wider professional debate was arbitrary. The year spent began to miss the point entirely of the students' desire to participate and to question the professionalism asked of them. Hearing students being told, advised, even warned to be more professional when for so long their own ideas have not received an encouragement, an openness or the possibility to question the very task or critique they are asked to perform, caused constant confusion. To be told to come up with ideas when those ideas must conform already within such narrow bands was futile. The students could study ideas like hybridity, weakness, formlessness, engagement and many others only to find these ideas subservient to schemes and thinking already in place by default.

Schooling was so utterly confused that I asked the students how they managed this. Four explanations emerged, four strategies. Firstly, students opted to save themselves; remain individual within a group, thus remain private and closed. Secondly, some attempted to participate and take some control. This often led to tantrums and psychological stress. Thirdly, others accepted a degree of participation but felt constantly dissatisfied. These became the complainers in the class. Fourthly, the rare students, remained passionately selfless, participated and sometimes reached a higher understanding.

Inevitably with such confusion the outburst occurred that was waiting to occur. Two students turned on each other. It occurred between the two most vocal students, most temperamental, and curiously most stubborn; two students who had clashed earlier. One acted as the professional, stressed by interferences in a discipline like architecture that was losing its way. A lack of confidence and the confusion about leading clashed with the other student; a rebel, an exile, someone aware of the cultural differences. The latter could be brilliant, flaky, spontaneous, stubborn but also scary. Both students were self-centred, pre-occupied with their own selves, so both saw themselves as victims. Both were frustrated and carried the frustration of the whole class and the discipline itself. One tried to work in and utilise the frustration in a tolerant way. The other more rebellious, attempted to derail any conventional thinking whatsoever. The final project itself was challenged by an act that to others appeared shameless. Had they understood the dynamics at work, the students might have seen this as an act of creativity that opened up more, an act that could have broken the pomposity of any scheme idea or exhibition.

But anarchism was misunderstood.

By the end of the year, the *deschooling book* had occurred but only in their minds. No one could pull out, and disinterest framed the contributions. The group could have gained from the explosion but it is doubtful this happened. The show, the idea, the project, the scheme stuttered to an end. It survived by incompleteness but the toll on private relationships and understanding was dramatic. Teaching others what you would like to know yourself or what you already know can hardly be called education. It is a very simple form of exchange: transfer. Without a contract, without a willingness to understand what development and change exists inside one's own person, there can be little understanding of the development and openness to change in another.

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Which books had the students tried to read over the year? Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*, Marie Darrieussecq's *Naissance des Phantômes*, Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities*, John Fowles' *The Magus*, Roy Andersson's *Lyckad nedfrysning av herr moro*, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Robert Pirsig's *Zen & the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Patricia Highsmith's *Natural & Unnatural Catastrophes*, Marcel Proust's *In search of Lost Time*, Edward de Bono's *Po: beyond Yes and No* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of*

Darkness. Could I tell which one was more relevant to the future that had already lasted too long? Texas awaited.

I was on the way to the ‘geography of nowhere’!

zetaville, texas

The purpose of a chronicler of moods and deeds does not require him to express his personal views upon the grave controversy above given. That the twain were happy – between their times of sadness – was indubitable. **Thomas Hardy *Jude the Obscure***¹³

Flight AA55: Manchester to Chicago. I had decided to avoid writing whenever I could and concentrate on the Texan desert up ahead. I had no idea of the consequences of refusing to write. I did not know where this could lead, what I might ignore or refuse to reveal. Would the world, my world, be any the less relevant if it was never written down? I doubted it. In Chicago's O'Hare Airport I sat in a diner and mentally prepared some lecture notes. I read a few chapters of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* before going to the Departure Gate. A lady to my right sat and studied a self-help book. The son was plying his way through a double burger with cheese. He was already as obese as his mother was slight, even fragile. I had to turn away.

The first book I began reading when I settled into the white cabin in Fort Worth, some miles west of Zetaville, was entitled *The Geography of Nowhere*. The students had mentioned it the first day of class. The first chapter was called 'scary places', and the eighth paragraph crashed through the page right in front of me: "Eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last fifty years, and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading – the jive-plastic commuter tract home wastelands, the Potemkin Village shopping plaza with their vast parking lagoons, the Lego-block hotel complexes, the gourmet 'mansardic' junk-food joints, the Orwellian office 'parks' featuring buildings sheathed in the same reflective glass as the

sunglasses worn by chain-gang guards, the particle board garden apartment rising up in every meadow and cornfield, the freeway loops around every big and little city with their clusters of discount merchandise marts, the whole destructive, wasteful, toxic, agoraphobia-inducing spectacle that politicians proudly call ‘growth’.”¹⁴

You can’t top that, the students said to me after I read out the paragraph. The words of James Howard Kunstler slid off like thick marmite into their eyes. Zetaville was no exception, the students told me. In fact Zetaville was the geography of nowhere and everywhere in this country. Only this nowhere was, one of the students prompted, home to over half a million people including about 25000 students all living in a spiral geography of nowhere voids and cardboard cut-out architecture.

What do you teach in such a school of architecture in the middle of Zetaville? To fail, but fail better? To reproduce the lost gems of a modern or contemporary architecture all done better somewhere else in the world? To invent a hopeless vernacular that tries not to be the vernacular right in front of your eyes? Or to carnivalize the whole community into a car dealership showroom and distress buildings like blue jeans or cargo trousers battered and faux to look as if they have a history the owners are comfortable with? The students, if they followed the first programme drafted, had to design a *Hotel for Nowhere*. There were no rules, no generating plan, no regulating lines, and no models that they could look back on. There was no case study they could analyse and re-adapt. There was no famous building that they could make their own look like. There was no theory they should follow. There were no expectations up ahead except to think things through themselves. The graduate students had to take this *nowhere* and make it *somewhere*. Any means were allowed. And if they found a way to call it architecture, even better! If they didn’t, then we’d handle that too as we progressed together. Easy? I thought so, looking over from the brick veneered school of architecture at the distressed land and car-park-for-miles outside.

*

The students didn’t quite know what to make of this ‘geography of nowhere’. They also quickly put me right. Forget it, they said, “we’re not intending to read the whole book. We just don’t have time. Some of us work, some sleep, and some have partners who don’t understand why they are studying architecture at all.”

“Don’t you know the divorce figures for students of architecture?” one of them asked. No, all they wanted, all they could cope with was a quick précis. They wanted the

‘pass notes’; what they call in the US education system, the *cliff notes*. Highlight lines, bullet the issues and sum it all up. Then prick the void that we enter with a privilege of being an architect.

“Nowhere...where is it if it isn’t here? In the white cabin above the white BMW in Fort Worth where I live I am elsewhere,” I tell them. “I am nowhere and of course everywhere at the same time.” They look at me as if the squirrel prancing out on the electric wires a yard from the window electrocuted the visiting professor and fried his brain. “Where is your desire to seek other places, other adventures, to reward the eye or the senses?” The looks softened. What was this person saying? Who really speaks like this? “Stay calm,” I continued to speak slowly, “but please don’t stay too calm for too long. Otherwise you will be in a coma.”

That was the first day, the first three hours in Zetaville!

The words of a teacher, the words of a professor; how they slip into a social intimacy and help allay the melancholy of being unable to swim out of the dense void of the desert. I refused to hire a car thinking it more honourable not to drive in Texas. Fool! Instead of any detailed analysis of the restaurants and chains I am forced to eat in during the first month, I tell the students I am going to list them out. The *nowhereness* of their names and chains will be matched by the food. And so I did.

The first index of nowhere: *La Madelaine*, faux french cuisine served with lashings of free white bread and ‘confiture’; *Keefer’s Burger Bar* saved by the Margarita; *Angelo’s* BBQ fare with green St Patrick’s Day beer; *Taco Lounge* in Dallas, oozing enchiladas and Corona beer with a lime wedged into the top of the bottle; *Wendy’s*, *Ihop*. And so on.

I sleepwalked through the first month in Texas. The usual benign sadness had disappeared to be replaced by Zetaville’s melancholia. To survive, I remembered the words of the therapist: you have to become a completely different person. To use current therapeutic jargon, you have to reframe everything but mostly yourself. Did I not also catch that over the shoulder of the woman reading the self-help book at the Chicago departure gate? To teach under these circumstances was clear. Nothing could be written down or imparted to the students without being generous. Nothing of history could be discussed if it did not suggest a parallel and personal honesty.

The pedagogy of resistance began from there!

Slowly, without wanting to, I monitored the geography of nowhere just as I did the strain of glaucoma I had. Blindness was willed once more as it had been in Poland in the late 1970s when I refused to see the gathering darkness and couldn’t believe my

telephone was tapped. Running along the street to the Social Security office in downtown Fort Worth, I was not the footballer I once was. The wind was hard; the streets were not streets in any conventional sense of the word. By 2'0 clock I was in Dallas, in the sixth floor museum up there in the Depository where Lee Harvey Oswald supposedly shot Kennedy. The space was no longer a Depository, the corner window sealed off by glass as if someone might attempt another angle-shot. The exhibition had made the space and the event unreal. By explanation, nothing was explained. I left with some disappointment not knowing what more I wanted from a museum like that.

By six that evening I had loaded up on more books by the Trappist monk Thomas Merton and began following the affair he had in 1966 with his nurse called S. Anxiety had spread by evening. Europe had not been in contact. So far away, so out of time in this *nowhere* I returned to the cell, the white cabin and the mattress on the floor. Zetaville, Texas began to offer a second-hand life and fear crept into my body. The neighbourhood dogs moaned, the huge freight trains passed and curiously, as if the wind had something to do with this, the bull-toads started up.

The next day I gave the students some notes called *thehotelarchitecture.com*.

*

The Hotel Architecture should invite anyone to stay, including the traveller caught in an imaginary soliloquy, the nomad wishing to experience architecture in progress, the tourist-in-residence never wishing to leave. Visit *hotel escape*, *hotel temperament* or *hotel anxiety*! Be prepared to encounter this world and re-design it online. Be prepared to resist gambling what little you may have left, in the lobby of all lobbies, the room of all rooms, the swimming pool of all swimming pools, the *e-hotel*! There is always an enigma to any departure, an anxiety about arrival and a thrill at travelling. Hotels are always a work-in-progress, imperfect, unfinished, navigated through ignorance as much as awareness, through stupidity as much as sovereignty, through arrival as much as departure. The Hotel Architecture explores the notion of 'arrival' whilst deferring that arrival. Any accepted architecture must be postponed. This is the world of partial destinies.

The Hotel Architecture is to be a model for a perpetually re-invented architectural condition, and different scenarios of how a work of architecture begins. Design your hotel to blur the public misunderstanding of contemporary architecture by imagining an

architecture that has arrived before another architecture sets in. The geography of elsewhere is re-defined by the geography of everywhere: nowhere no longer exists. Interventions are proposed, imaginary encounters negotiated: anxiety, temperament, silence, transit, paternoster, information, fame, event and chance. Each is a potential world 'dissembled' and taken to an extreme. Is this rodeo architecture, controlled instability or a possible response to karaoke architecture? Imagine the hotel architecture as an expanded site for architectural function: anxiety, vectors, temperaments, spaces, silence, zones, events, matrices, medial facades, interaction, intervention and incompleteness. Imagine a new vocabulary is invented and just as quickly erased, open to decay, re-definition and refinement.

This imaginary network of hotel architectures is itself open to invention, rejection and erasure. All play their part in imagining this network of hotel architectures overnight / overday sleep, retreat, movement, calm or anxiety. The hotel may re-assert the notion of public space, may re-define disaster relief, offer retreat, therapy, cuisine, adventure silence, clubbing, fantasy.

To go nowhere fast is no longer a contradiction, it is a perpetual condition of *nowhereness*. Envelopes, spaces, sites, non-sites, buildings, non-buildings; an architecture lying in the wings waiting, delayed, ready to appear, to be re-assembled by each traveller. Each guest is to err along the way to become part of an expanded, postponed, delayed hotel in which architecture explores its own continuities and its own clichés. The Hotel Architecture is to become a user's manual for a potential and postponed life. Remember: the future only lasts a long time if you think you will not be part of it.

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All words, all useless? The initial interest and enthusiasm for planning a hotel, for opening up architecture in ways possibly not encountered previously was high and anticipatory. The potential enquiries into a hitherto un-prescribed architecture through the program were exciting. Each notion could have held valuable lessons to the way architecture could open to itself, the way the contemporary itself could question and expand both the education and learning of architecture as well as the architectural site itself. Brave pedagogies I thought, but after 8 weeks the final under-achievement of the

students however shocked me. This was not laziness. The students seemed overwhelmed by the task required of them. Personal time was often lost without the ability to focus on major ideas. Learning was dissipated. There was a running confusion between presentation of a notion and the performance of these ideas within potential architecture. Too often students would complain of a self-confessed inability to distinguish between hierarchical levels in their own work. Differences between diagram, potential and scenario made for difficult thinking and a tendency to accept the easy mystification of digitalised modelling strategies and sketched structures. Ideas about layering, filtering and prototyping (amongst many other computer generated strategies) often blurred their thinking at the same time as tempting them to experiment. Help was not always at hand, they said. They knew they often opted for easy and unchallenged access to information online. Material in all scales invited a redundancy of their own thinking which they could not recognise. Ideas began to cancel out other ideas but without an understanding they felt their learning was impoverished. Used to the blueprint, these students still knew where their education was failing them. Then too often the need to be more discerning in the clip-art and manipulation of images led to the cognitive delusions in the cut and paste of graphic images and real images which began to make up their architecture.

Thinking had been amputated in Zetaville.

The desire to be given a freedom to take architecture into unknown areas - by its very unconventionality – asked for an immense responsibility given to thinking itself. Neither the faculty nor the students were in a relationship to help this or set up the conditions to make this possible. What in the education process had cancelled this out, and when? It was alarming to see how the responsibility to ‘think through’ initial ideas with discipline and rigour was compromised at all stages by the students. Behind the desire to be set free, there was a consistent desire to imagine what was required, what might have been required. This must have been inculcated very early on in their studies. Ultimately behind all this was the desire to know what the professor wanted in order to satisfy the system and gain the necessary grade. I felt crippled by this obsequiousness.

For them and for me!

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In *The Geography of Nowhere* Kunstler writes about destruction of the American environment and words used to describe that; sprawl, overdevelopment and conurbation. Most of the students at Zetaville grew up in such a place, such an economy. They lived

the pages of the book. "To me," Kunstler wrote "it is a landscape of scary places, the geography of nowhere that has simply ceased to be a credible human habitat." The first visit to Zetaville School of Architecture offered a simple but devastating insight; these students were already educated in the economy and approach to an architecture that would replicate this geography of nowhere. I began to think back to the 'deschooling' ideas I had encountered in the early 1970s. Were they so outdated today? Were they so irrelevant? Was it possible to derail this economy and thinking before it closed the students' minds and produced even more suburbs of nowhere?

How could we, as professors, as teachers, re-engage pedagogies of resistance to get beyond the numbness of known solutions and dull conservative and consumerist strategies? If one rejects the usual requirements of the North American university professor to taskmaster deadlines and results, surely the responsibility for thinking and learning is thrown back on the graduate student. Students would then have to prove both to the faculty and to themselves the quality and width of their thinking. This was not as easy as it sounded. Most students were used to the taskmaster. They wanted the whip cracked, the blueprint provided. They asked for it tirelessly. It had become an alibi for teaching, a disguise for the already accepted norm. Few students seemed able to engage this personal responsibility in their own learning and education.

Zetaville had a more serious problem.

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Outside the white cabin in Fort Worth, Texas a small squirrel stops on the electric lines, two feet away from the window. The squirrel stares straight at me as I lift the Venetian blind to get a better look. Squirrel and man look into and through each other. The bushy tail waving, rocking, keeping balance signals an intensity that all but breaks the solitude. Zetaville School of Architecture, I was told, was a scary place. Hallucinatory, it existed in a city you could not call a city; it was fodder for the car-crazy society. Automobile dealerships were everywhere. The history of the land - a Texan history and an Indian history before that - was neutered. A construction site where construction was perpetually unrealised, Zetaville was a place to come on and off the freeway, a corridor to another corridor to another life. Gas stations, cheap motels, topless bars and diners, Danny's, Dairy Queen and Ihop, dives called Waves and Caves, no liquor stores but liquor points, Mexican migrant workers oozing along the kerb for a day's labour, tire and hair salons, vacuum cleaner showrooms the size and image of, yes, a vacuum cleaner. And a school

of architecture in the middle of a campus, in the middle of a car lot which was in the middle of the biggest car lot sprawl in Texas.

This really was the geography of nowhere.

The Friday before arriving in Texas in the millennial year 2000, as if I knew the desert up ahead, I'd arranged to see the doctor. This benign depression, this slow malignant sadness surely had nothing to do with the Continent I was going to teach in. My mood had darkened. Foot and mouth was spreading across Britain and I knew I'd be taken through the spray at Chicago: "contaminated passengers this way." Is this how the Communists felt in the 1950s and how countless immigrants, blacks and Muslims feel today? I wondered how to shake off this sadness that would, if I was not careful, turn into a deeper paralysis. How do you teach under those conditions? Who really knows about the black dog? When the doctor heard the word *angst*, he lifted his eyebrows. His tweed jacket bristled. "Things are, perhaps, unresolved," he suggested. "Go away and teach, this might resolve them. And I'll see you on return."

Six years on and I have not been back.

In Zetaville I followed the amount of learning carried out through what they called 'case studies'. There was much rote learning in the analysis of previous buildings, previous architects and previous lives. Done well, detached and insightful, there was a hope. But usually it was reduced to a matter of copying and learning how to swerve from someone recognising the copy. Game on; as professors tried to hoodwink students with old programs and students tried to hoodwink professors with old buildings. Of course there was much to be learnt from understanding how the Ancients did it, how the Renaissance did it, how Le Corbusier did it, and how later architects resolved some of these issues. Despite the fact that the models of the buildings would all be beautifully crafted, exquisitely finished in balsa wood or laser cut, the amount learnt, the quality of thinking through didn't seem to have survived.

The conditions for a seriously new or even socially relevant architecture were hardly ever mentioned. The examples students were offered were circular and repetitive. I had twelve students who could all cut balsa wood so exquisitely and hide the glue joint and running seams. But when it came to step out from such a model, the blank faces astonished me. Never before, one of them said, have we been asked to make our own program. Never before have we been told to go away and write our brief. And never before have we been told to interrogate our own thinking. If we can't think that well in the first place, how can we interrogate it? How can we contest something that is so

underdeveloped and that has been so brutally controlled from our first year? We are talking about our minds here. Sure, we can regulate lines, generate ideas from a plan, draw buildings that look fantastic on the walls and will get the best grades. Sure, we can swerve away from work already done by some of the most famous architects. But how can we challenge the thinking that invites this comfort when we haven't even challenged the notions of our own education?

This, I was told in no uncertain terms, was the first step. And that of course, the students concluded with some bitterness in their joy, because they are leaving in two months. "It is far, far too late to make any difference to us."

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An emphasis on teaching not learning, Zetaville school of architecture was slowly revealing its structure. In faculty meetings, I noticed how professors who had been young and liberal in the late 1960s and early 1970s when they were enthusiastic for architecture of modern promise and pretence, seemed to want to control the students with that same promise. They taught regulations but wrapped them up as sensible innovative solutions. They so often played the card of experience, the wisdom card, as if, at their age, no one could or should challenge them. They used humour as if to soften this hubris. Slowly I began to understand what the students had been telling me. Without any faith in allowing students to think for themselves, this was ultimately a prescription for the type of architecture and environments the professors felt should replace the trashy geography of nowhere all around them in Zetaville. A geography, of course, their own education process had helped create.

Prescription and inculcation lay at the heart of this alleged learning process and succeeded to reinforce itself by a domineering faculty. The paradox became clearer as I sat in faculty meeting after faculty meeting. Prescriptive strategies ensure strength is passed on and 'down the line'. The models for an accepted architecture in visual and aesthetic terms flow from the 'stronger' aggressively opinionated faculty to the weaker faculty. Meanwhile the very mechanics of fear and protection produce weak structures that in turn become a weak basis for learning and thinking. Lack of confidence and tolerance works both ways.

Faculty could pull students along with interesting ideas, could suggest greater sophistication, could offer a strong but somewhat misleading image of general capability

whilst the students had no real compulsion or understanding why they designed this or that building. Often the blueprint sufficed. The students then asked for clearer programs that meant not clearer language or clearer conceptual thinking, but simpler requirements. The clearer and cleaner the blueprint, the easier it was to get the grades required to exit the school.

It was not a cynical game; but it was close.

At some stage we all hide our ignorance, but the strongest also work within that understanding of ignorance, turning ignorance into a constant contest with the self. Few educators I met seemed to take this on and instead disguised this as a series of self-seeking, self-justifying cognitive delusions. Early ideas to change the thinking, to map projects, diagram and model new issues were often engaged positively, even full of immense potential. But at some stage the fear of self-education and learning took over. Experiment was curtailed, safe solutions sought, and the general tenor of inferiority applied by a cynical and fatigued teaching staff turned student inwards. The need for restructuring from the 'outside' was mooted, but it too often became another faculty meeting agenda topic, ticked off in favour of 'any other business'.

Zetaville was in danger of cutting lose from its own structure; in favour of spending targets and student enrolment, the school and university began to miss the point of turning engaged pedagogies and 'learning diagrams' into potential architecture. Worse, it began to suggest more serious consequences in the way architecture is imagined and the way education seemed to function. Some students already saw themselves as redundant, as office fodder uninvited to widen the very profession they were working in.

How long would this school survive without protest? Yet had not the clever cynical moves of a paralysed administration ensured protest would not go unpunished. For the faculty, this was clever intimidation accompanying the pedagogy of the fatigued. For the students, this was the pedagogy of fear. What was needed was a ruthless and anarchic pedagogy of resistance.

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Back in the white cabin, the |Hermitage comforted me. I would escape Zetaville and teaching passing my time with impossible but entertaining ideas about *deschooling architecture*. I read thrilling books about personal honesty, death, melancholia and

anxiety. Architectural books held no interest. I would read a Richard Brautigan novel over and over again rather than a tome on architectural theory or innovative design strategies. I read Harold Brodsky's *mémoire* about death from AIDS 'This Wild Darkness'. When I couldn't find any resonance to architecture I was not only happy, I re-invented life as if it existed without this privileged profession. Finishing books on melancholia, I delved into other illnesses. One by Henry Grunwald called 'Twilight' on Macular Degeneration particularly interested me.

I had only been in Texas for two weeks when asked by the students after one weekend: "where'd you go?" We had been continuing our discussion on the hotel architecture as the 'geography of elsewhere'. This confirmed the tendency we had been discussing for people to decide 'mentally' to leave some places before they even arrived. With this in mind, it was taken with some surprise that I had not used the available weekend to exit Zetaville and leave the school of architecture far behind. Perhaps this was innocence on my behalf. "Stay in Texas as long as you've stayed in other places, and it will no longer be interesting." I knew the student was right as he climbed into his truck and headed off to Paris, Texas where his father owned a tire salon. He spoke of Archer City but he could have been speaking of any number of towns.

I soon picked up that most of the students were all desperate to leave Zetaville. Each weekend they took the route out. I was expected to have the same restlessness, to displace one void with another, to turn the geography of nowhere into a geography of somewhere else. Always somewhere else, somebody else, some other architecture or building came up. For the students of Zetaville life was in echo. But I was determined to stay put. As I remained in the hermitage in Fort Worth, in the garage above the white BMW, I remember very clearly thinking only of one other city in the world: Benares, that 'holy city' on the River Ganges in India.

Then, after I left Zetaville after 8 weeks, architecture was on parole.

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"When I left the Dallas-Fort Worth airport I slipped quickly through Zetaville, not so much a city as an area of confusion that manages to combine the worst features of Dallas (just to the east) and Fort Worth (just to the west). My bitter dislike of Zetaville goes back ten years, to a day when I embarrassed myself by getting hopelessly lost in it while attempting to take the world-famous, globally travelled author Jan Morris to lunch. Not

long after this disgrace I complained about Zetaville in a novel called 'Some Can Whistle' but nobody read that novel so no one heard my complaint. Passing through it again I noticed that it had become even uglier – my complaint, if anything, had been understated.”

The author of the above, the author of *The Last Picture Show* and many other books, Larry McMurtry wasn't talking about Zetaville but he could have been. Few have a good word to say about Zetaville (except the residents). 100,000 people exist in Zetaville without a car. The retiring mayor had an anti-tax sentiment and coalitions generally failed because of the Open Meeting Act, prohibiting groups to form. Planning is a carrot and stick game in Zetaville, of no relevance to architects at all. A development in Jackson Creek could attract people to Zetaville. Would any development showing a bit of life do this? Corporate partnerships fail in Zetaville because there is no generosity ('we'll sue you if you say that!'). The poverty of wealth in Zetaville, it is fair to say, ensures protectionism, thus factors out generosity. And slowly the SUV becomes a Hummer! 120,000 starter homes are required in the next five years, all with services. The design of these houses is already pre-scripted; the architect is redundant. No new business will ever come into Zetaville, the mayor announced to the students. He was right. Zetaville is not a city, it is a sprawled awkwardness and no amount of conceptual theory about non-places will rescue Zetaville. Zetaville is sold as a fun city to come to. But to be a 'Fun City' needs more than fun, it really needs to be awake. So perhaps the only future for Zetaville is a drive-in ballpark, amusement centre; a Vegas-on-the-rocks! To ascertain whether the mayor is right and this is a quality of life issue is to ask the city to perform to a cliché

Zetaville is at the crossroads; some said it should stay there. What do you upgrade housing standards to, if the balloon frame structure is cardboard and the stucco part on the outside is an impoverished theatrical Tudor imagination? The Smart House exists, whatever the building type but design itself becomes a belief system that no longer believes in Zetaville.

Democracy in Zetaville is three referenda for a transit system, and the low electoral turn out. Zetaville is handicapped by its own handicaps: its air congestion is worse than Chicago. Security will undoubtedly become the major issue before long and for sure, you won't be allowed to cross the road. What is the rapidly growing area of S.E.Zetaville growing into – an image of itself?

Zetaville is a complaint-driven city in a city of car-dealers and grumblers, enforcing noise levellers, fence builders and stolen car re-sprayers. Finally ignorance and obesity

will begin to design the city that we are all afraid of. Absentee owners will continue to absently own, whilst vigilante groups will repair the streets. What for; for more cars to drive in the imaginary public transit system?

In Zetaville, the bond program will fail and go on failing, unless life gambling takes over. More industries would help the housing tax base, higher paid jobs necessary. More plasma screens will appear as Zetaville is run by ballpark rangers who chew gum backwards, in order to represent the entertainment capital of Texas. Hispanic rage in Zetaville should be Hispanic rage but it isn't allowed to even get that far. Retirement packages will allow the elderly to tell stories to each other from the safety of triple glass. Hired consultants will corrupt the information gathered by students. Mismanagement should be vitally packaged and incinerated allowing inclusiveness to return. Put the city of Zetaville on the Atkins diet, and run off its excess fat. Redefinition of democracy: Zetaville does unto you what it does unto others. Will Zetaville fail Zetaville? Or can Zetaville become a city with more meaning, when meaning meant?

And the school of architecture?

*

5

the new American Revolution

The explosive growth, particularly in the United States, of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis appeared to be encouraging just such critical stance towards the circumstances of one's own existence. Increasing numbers of people found themselves dissatisfied with their lives, and behind that dissatisfaction was the sense of being a passive victim, on whom the coldly mechanised workings of modern society inflicted their worst. The result of too much of this treatment was a bubbling quantum of repressed anger.

Stuart Walton¹⁵

In the biography of John Wesley by Roy Hattersley we come across the following. "But happiness, at least as the world understood it, was of no great consequence to John Wesley. He had been sent into the world to preach redemption. *Sola fide*, by faith alone. He created a new Church through which that all-consuming belief could be preached to his universal parish. And in doing so he became one of the architects of the modern world."¹⁶ Driving along the I-40 from Fort Worth to Zetaville I remember passing the huge Harris Methodist Hospital. In fact periodically, in Texas, the word 'Methodist' would appear and I had no difficulty linking this both back to my own childhood Sundays at the Tarvin Road Primitive Methodist Chapel, Chester and my visits to Zetaville School of Architecture in Texas. The architects of the modern world weren't teaching in Zetaville, but the professors who had founded Zetaville School of Architecture were certainly teaching a passable version of the modern world. The problem was, to many of the students, they were no longer teaching, they were preaching.

In Zetaville it was not hard to come to the conclusion that the evangelism in this Modern Church was alive and well. It was not that the Professors didn't know what architecture was, or how they thought it could be moulded to their own idea of what architecture was. Many of them had their lists of likes and dislikes; their own prejudices

and hubris allowed them to use their minds to condemn buildings they loathed and accept buildings they preferred. They were not backwards in coming forwards and presenting their favourites to the students. In place of a serious teaching program this had become a slow, entertaining but ultimately venomous circle. How did this schooling work? The gentle and less than gentle art of bullying and intimidating, a strange unchallenged osmosis, encouraged students to design mostly the type of buildings that the professors would design themselves. They supported new approaches certainly, but the result was usually a product, a project, a building that left little room for wider issue, new solutions. Over the years this had begun to constitute what it meant to be 'professional'. The stakes had become so small: small potatoes in the biggest state of the United States.

Bullying is harsh; but bullying was the type of education that was being practised in Zetaville. The patterns presented themselves quickly, either in faculty meetings, in delicately shared private conversations or during discussions with the students. As in many schools first and second year students quickly learnt how to navigate awkward, difficult, unreasonable professors. What constituted 'awkwardness', 'difficulty' and 'unreasonableness' were always personal and scripted by each student. Some professors were rude, thoughtless, abusive, even racist, and cared little for personal circumstances that hindered a student's study. Perhaps this is how it had to be. Other professors, a few, were open and personable, stubborn, brilliantly individual and cared little for faculty meetings and any administrative request. These were the committed and engaged professors who generally lost out to the mediocrity and brilliant manoeuvres of the technocrats. These few professors, the students reiterated, were generally marginalised.

Other professors were even worse, if I was to believe the students. I didn't like hearing these comments but they were unavoidable. These were the professors who turned up as at a bakery, put a few things into the oven and hoped, a week, a two, or three later, something like what they'd preached, drawn and demonstrated turned out. No one thought of jeopardising the oven. Small, distorted, burnt offerings often emerged. These professors, appalled once again at the results just like the previous year, swore that the quality of students was getting worse and architecture was dead. Usually it was from their malignant point of view. Remarkably, these complainants did not seem to realise that they were also responsible for the intake of the students. And the bullying increased, along with intimidation, heartlessness and the dead preaching. Actually everybody knew who was dead!

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Of course there were and are those students who wish for a school and university to be a version of Boot Camp. The pattern is familiar. Strong guidelines, strong discipline, not much falling outside the line, punishment when transgressing; accepted, occasionally remarkable results with absolutely no risk. At Zetaville a hint of confusion, a conceptual challenge, something akin to thinking for oneself, led many young students to panic. They gulp. They are afraid already. Many of these young students already realising architecture is not really their forte change course as quickly as they feel they are going to fail. A soft administration allows these students to shift course even after attending up to 8 weeks or even half of the course. This gives rise to what was called the ‘dustbin studio’. This is the so called easy option, the studio where students know they need merely follow the rules, stick to the blueprint provided by the professor and grading is assured. Outsiders are ‘blown off’ as obedience is demanded.

Aggression and individualism make for an uneasy contract under these conditions between professor and student. The professor becomes policeman, warden and preacher. Dissidence needs courage and self-knowledge. A quiet life, no dissent, is required to survive. The result: students go on believing all courses can be negotiated. As dull as this sounds this does not mean it is not prevalent. A slim task ensures an accepted resolution directed by an instructor who more or less allows this to go on as long as they can preach in the New Church which is in fact the Old Church. Jumping across the curriculum becomes acceptable and what might have appeared a comprehensive education becomes an arbitrary romp through an acceptable and prescribed architecture. And when Architectural Boot Camp is over! Graduation is achieved, pizzas eaten, sleep lost and colas drunk. Congratulations! Whether professors were present or absent eventually made no difference; redemption was assured in the all-consuming belief that the professors could teach to a universal parish.

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I heard talk of micro-fascism. I heard students jokingly described as ‘glazed hams’. Were the faculty so sure the offence was so innocuous that these minds are not being destroyed before they even have a chance to progress in their chosen field? Of course this is naïve. Architecture for many of the students was neither a chosen field nor a driven vocation. It was a route to some sort of future. Some professors were right – many students didn’t

know and would never know what architecture was. So who was to blame? I began to see a 'school within a school'. Some students wishing to read more, question more, challenge more and understand more were marginalised. These students chose the professors they preferred who might challenge them. They tempted failure but knew the type of professor chosen would not allow real failure. Development was more important than grading, process rather than performance. All this began to go against the soft administration and changing Deans encountered at Zetaville. These were the students later seen by the Deans as the difficult ones. These were the students, the professors muttered to each other, the ones who complain rather than work. They would roll out the clichés.

Yet whenever nominations for student awards were requested in a faculty meeting, almost every student put up for an award came from this 'school within a school'. These were the few students who thought for themselves, who created without always following the blueprints, and who took their thinking into another realm. These were the students who took the contrary route, could add to the curriculum though they were never asked. These were the students who already knew how to *deschool* and how important it was. They had navigated the necessary courses so far and knew they could navigate more just to graduate. But as soon as they graduated these were the students who spoke about de-employing themselves from an architecture they could not stomach. They chose and kept in touch with those professors who didn't preach. They asked for references to get into other graduate schools in order to do the things they couldn't do at Zetaville. These were the professors who didn't offer a blueprint and who didn't already know the image and project that they were looking for in advance. These were also the professors who didn't believe in the 'precedent', in the case histories of a Modern Architecture that were studied to be cloned in different situations on different sites, in different countries.

I began to recognise what the students had been saying. By graduation, the school of architecture was little more than compounded mismanagement centre. So many meetings were badly run, badly organised and badly prepared. Comments were often made fleetingly and jokingly, as if in a school changing room. Discussions in faculty meetings should have started yet ended precisely at the point they became interesting. The chair, this or that Interim Director, Dean or 'Deanlet', proved almost impossibly unprepared to lead any meeting. The faculty was not so much unruly as passionately indifferent. Pension plans and insurances ensured pricked ears. Curriculum shifts and altering the brief of architecture caused barely a whisper. Perhaps not a collapse, but certainly a moral breakdown, any civility attempted was faked and desolate; any

remaining intellectualism was marginalised by the pension plan seekers. Lower your aspiration was the advice; shut your eyes was the dream.

The mood was often dark, yet faculty always seemed to enjoy banter like a high-school meeting about the school journal. It didn't matter what the topic was: organisational procedure, administration or curriculum, there was a general ennui all around. Suggestions were often thrown out as if what was done previously could be done again - with a little re-scripting. Everyone was involved in this re-scripting.

A soft administration, concerned with learning outcomes, assessment techniques, performative strategies, accreditation measures, computer lists, photo calls and print-outs, surveys, initiatives and feedback, seemed to have missed the point of schooling. The 'methodists', those preachers who may have once been brilliant perpetrators of other people's ideas, the pioneers of Modern Architecture, had lost the plot. The evangelists had also begun to lose their Methodism; they opted for closure and began to check out. The Church of Modern Architecture was tottering and had been tottering for so long that no one recognised it. And every student began to think the prison was a school of architecture. Every student started to ask: where did I go wrong?

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"So I've gone wrong," a graduate student said to me. He was interested in the French philosopher Jacques Derrida but it was to him all odd, very odd and disjointed. He could dismantle a rifle faster than read a paragraph by Derrida. This knowledge that he tried to get from reading something new expressed no real interest and I knew the student knew this. Derrida was a name like many others thrown around at the time. I recommended that he take a look at his own education and why he thought he or it was going wrong. "You might like to re-frame, deconstruct if you like." "Oh that stuff," he said to me, "Deconstruction. Isn't that about literature?" He told me he thought all this new thinking was about some knowledge of the artist, or the author. He thought it consisted of knowing the personal details of an architect and then trying to understand the work through that information. "I understand if I know more about what the architect intended this is Deconstruction."

How had he gone so wrong, if indeed he thought he had gone wrong? This was a student who had served the US army, sat on the Berlin Wall when it began to be dismantled and walked into the Czech Republic. I suggested that Deconstruction was more about understanding the means and mechanics of how the architecture tried to mean

something it couldn't, or how it meant what others thought it meant. What constructions were made out of such flimsy evidence? What it doesn't mean...and so on. He winced. "So I can learn by this where I went wrong, why I dislike architecture so much, why I wish not to be studying what I have to study to graduate, and why," he smiled, "I seem to be so angry."

The privilege sunk me.

"No," I said, "you could learn that you haven't gone wrong, but why you are where you are, and why indeed you actually think you are going wrong."

The seminar students were listening to this. Some of them were powerfully retrospective, others introspective and depressed. The art of looking back and understanding their own education was not how they saw their education. This couldn't lead to the future. They tried to excuse themselves. "Why, why now, all this stuff about philosophy and thinking?" But they sat there a little forlorn. Architecture was rotten, one of them said. They all nodded but didn't quite know why they nodded. They were desperate to understand how the past had shaped their present, and how their future was already scripted by dodging professors who uninspired them, who dulled them, who crushed their own ideas.

"Generosity, opportunity," Ethel who was studying art said. "Thinking about the other person and a new tolerance, I want to know how to engage the messy every day." The students looked on from the circle of chairs created at the beginning of class. Not quite teaching under the mango tree, but near enough! "I don't want some abstract visions defined by Professors and a Dean who has no relation to us or even architecture. I want thrill..."

Engagement on a daily basis - this was a novel idea in a prison. "I saw God," one of the young students interrupted. "We are always becoming. We are nothing but becoming." "God?" I asked. He was talking about Jacques Derrida. Ricardo winced again. "I realise what's happened now at this school," Ricardo held his winced look as it moved into some agony. "They've got what they wanted. I have begun to read it all differently. We have a kind of banker now heading the school. Even dresses like a cowboy crossed with a broker. Fort Worth meets Dallas in Zetaville. They have the person they are comfortable with, the person who will allow everyone else to continue as if nothing really has changed." If Ricardo was right, Zetaville was stagnant. Zetaville was dying. The logic applied to the students' education was superbly mediocre, the micro-management killing. Mediocrity had in fact become aspirational and was the new T-shirt.

Advancements and meetings, initiatives and committees were put in place as if these could take the place of any developments that needed to be made. And those decisions made were cleverly un-minuted to allow a new interpretation to change their effect. The soft administration began to congratulate itself for being soft, but looking hard. Viagra for the eyes!

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Regularly when things go wrong in the US, emails circulate about the President. I had more irreverent emails about President George W. Bush in my faculty mail than any serious emails or feedback about issues of schooling, curriculum, direction, learning and architecture. I tried sending many emails and ideas to different professors but what usually came back were the humorous but ultimately powerless statements. Was I dealing with a pragmatic neo-liberal position, one that Paulo Freire struggled with too? Freire described this neo-liberal approach as a pseudo-neutrality of the educational practice. This was the transfer of informational content to the students who are not required to apprehend it in order to learn it. "Such 'neutrality' serves," Freire writes, "as the foundation for reducing the education of a plumber to training in the techniques and procedures involved in wrench mastering."¹⁷

Architecture was becoming plumbing! Or morticians and electricians were becoming architects, then researchers and then tenured professors. One such email that did the round was the old chestnut called 'changing a light bulb'. It is an old joke usually voiced by the English over the Irish: how many Irishmen does it take to screw in a light bulb? Answer: two - one to hold the bulb, the other to turn the person holding the bulb. When I received this one featuring the current American administration, it was not difficult to change the script for the school of architecture in Zetaville. How many members of the Soft Administration does it take to change a Light bulb? Answer 10. One to deny that a light bulb needs to be changed; one to attack the patriotism of anyone who says the light bulb needs to be changed; one to blame the previous Dean and administration for burning out the light bulb; one to tell the other schools of architecture that they are either responsible for changing the light bulb or for the dark theories now obsessing architecture; one to give a new contract to a professor to organise a studio about the new light bulb; one to arrange a photograph of the students standing in front of a computer animated drawing with the banner: Light Bulb Change Accomplished; one professor to resign and write a book documenting in detail how the Dean was literally in the dark; one

to viciously slime the professor writing a book called *Deschooling Architecture* documenting Zetaville's darkness; one insider to campaign on Campus TV and in Campus committees on how the new 'light changing' program has had a strong enlightenment policy all along; and finally one to confuse the students about the difference between screwing a light bulb and screwing the curriculum.

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I remember the last weeks of the semester. It had happened each year, with at least three Deans. Curriculum changes had crawled along. There had been much talk but so little content. As the students rushed to end their work, to catch up with everything they hadn't done, to re-draw and re-map their computer animations, I began reading furiously. It was always a ritual. Almost a book a day - anything to put a distance between the prison, the news from Iraq and Afghanistan and the threatening state that is still called Texas. The previous year the situation always seemed bad until the present year came round. I had been trying to ignore this. "The atmosphere in the school is dead," one student sat with me on the cold tiles. She wanted to get back to Mexico. "Last Friday after a general meeting with students and faculty, the building was eerily empty. Fatigue is setting in." I wondered if this was a quiet set-up. Just as it happens in prison before a riot ensues or the prisoners take to the roof and start upending the tiles and throwing them down to the ground, smashing anyone and anything in their path, slicing through those running, realising that having no head wouldn't quite be the useful Zen strategy that philosophers suggest.

I felt the same each time a semester finished. I had no head left. Deals were being made. Committees met behind closed door. Other committees pretended to meet and forgot to invite those who would be awkward or difficult. "Oh, did you miss the meeting? Sorry, the email must not have got through." What got through was another motion to pull the school back to the old church and an email about 'How many members of the Current American Administration it takes to change a light bulb'. Committees could meet but then not meet; proceedings were recorded but cleverly altered. Decisions could be scripted beforehand and then the meeting negotiated to get the required result.

Nothing new there!

I had watched and attended so many faculty meetings where this became lamentable and tolerated procedure. The energy was spent. There was no talk of a work ethic. Did I sense my own fatigue? Am I unable to give as much as I gave last year? Was it draining

out every year? Had I exhausted myself at Zetaville school of architecture for no other reason than to stay alive? Time to write to the Dean about *Deschooling Architecture*?

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It was difficult not to teach in Zetaville without thinking that the new American Revolution was always about to arrive. I would succumb to the theories of the American decline propounded by writers like Morris Berman and Curtis White. I made a mental note to catch up with these writers. Each semester during the last three or four weeks I would always long to be elsewhere. Texas did that to me. I would long for North Wales or then, to put as much distance as I could, I longed for Lahore or Karachi. For, whilst teaching in Texas since 2000, I was to continually travel to Lahore. It seemed to me the most appropriate polarity. I remember realising this vividly as I sat in a bootlegger's hut off a side road in the Tribal Area just outside Peshawar, in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. I would be euphoric and would tell the students too. They didn't ask me to 'play the old spice' but they did ask for more stories from a part of the world that their own country had demonised and was continuing to demonise.

During a seminar called 'Stamp Out Architecture' (2005) I had been preparing a text about an Egyptian artist called Lara Baladi. The request had come out of the blue and I found myself writing the piece – inventing the piece I should say – whilst holding the seminar. I was thinking of the jewelled trucks that still ply the Grand Trunk Road. I read the students some of the lines: "The passion for images dangles as the trucks pass by in the dead of night on their way to Kabul, illuminated by exquisitely placed reflector lights. We are scrambled at every turn. We are cinema without knowing any history. Guided into a side street by a young Muslim on a bicycle; the refurbished Mercedes makes its way carefully, majestically: a hummer over a moonscape. Lights from the various shop fronts illuminate the muddy interior. We step out and follow the young man. I am guided to a bench seat. The others take their place for their own business on the low carpet with cushions around. They have all been here before. This is a menu. You can choose the story you wish to hold.

We'd just come from Qureishi's in Peshawar where we'd eaten lamb's tails, cooked in front of our eyes, laid on the boot of the Mercedes; a Turkish newspaper our tablecloth. Inside on the walls in the bootlegger's shop: images of the lives of others. A house, a mountain, a winding road, a lake - always a sky heavily made up like those young Taliban fighters, merely boys, photographed with rouge, lipstick and an enticing gaze

collected by the German photographer Thomas Dworzak.¹⁸ As my companion negotiated the different prices of Vodka, I inspected the Kalashnikov behind me leaning up against the corner. There was laughter in this open secrecy as if we already lived in a new set of ground rules. Some would instantly mock this and call it the ground-zero rules.

Then a bottle of *Finlandia* vodka is produced; the litre size. It is magnificent in comparison with the smaller bootlegged Russian or Tajikistan vodka. The bootlegger knows it. The price rises enormously; out of the roof. The ground zero rules change; the film has become individual. Everyone has a movie poster of their own lives waiting to be scripted and painted digitally or not. The *shish kabab* is manipulated and animated in front of our eyes. We make the magic lantern from this nostalgia and we are asked to re-assemble a world ‘out of place’. Eternally, this is our future and we already know it lasts a long time.”

When I stopped reading not one of the American students in front of me knew what to say, knew of such experience, nor could they even imagine such experience. We laughed. It was a nervous, combined laughter. The image of their professor, dressed in a Chitral hat and shawl, with a Kalashnikov surely did not embarrass them. Even Ricardo who had been on duty for the US army in the Czech Republic was a touch astonished though. I smiled too. I picked up Bob Dylan’s *Chronicles* and read them something. Actually I had wanted to read them something from Jean-Francois Revel’s book ‘Without Marx or Jesus’. This was after all Generation X sitting in front of me. These were the students wondering whether to continue in architecture or go down to Dallas and become – for a period – a taxi driver. I had even written about this for the students’ prospectus. I had called the piece The Taxi-Drivers. It had come from discussions with the students about their fears of becoming architects. They were – though one of them only used this term later – interested in the notion of *de-employing* themselves. Many of them knew what it was like working, as they called it, as CAD jockeys or Console Monkeys. This would see themselves hired by corporate firms from Dallas or Fort Worth, doing computer animated designs and turning their hand to what was little more than a rendering trick.

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The Taxi Driver text was written in 2004. Not one member of the faculty at Zetaville had ever commented about it. Words had become ghosts. A debate might be invited but nothing could get us beyond the desert. The curriculum could amend itself with one or two contemporary notions about ‘technology’, ‘conservation’, ‘construction’ or

‘sustainability’ and adhere to the ‘comprehensive’ recommendations of the National Professional Body that arrives to award Accreditation to each school of architecture, but nothing actually came in between the words. The buzzword was ‘comprehensive’ and I remember underlining Revel’s words at the same time. But what use was that? “Geographically, when we speak of the American Midwest as representing the ‘real’ America, we would add that while America may be real, it is also a desert.”

During the seminars over the years at Zetaville, America was at war, a war of its own making, but never a word, never a discussion, not even an aside broke up the ghosts of words coming out of the mouths of professors, except those convenient joke emails about a cowboy president who lived in Crawford Texas. Sitting with the students I asked them whether they intended to continue in architecture or move to do other things. It was not even a straw poll. But it looked like 50-50, though I suspected more would end up in offices struggling to avoid the thinking about *deschooling*. Possibly more than half of all architectural graduates would decide not to pursue careers in Architecture. Advertising, computer programming, web design, golf course design, film and fashion all seduced the graduate.

Paradoxically, the students were telling me, at least those that survived the navigation and boot camp, the diverse basis of architectural education provided one of the best groundings to work in other disciplines. Perhaps even taxi driving or hospital-portering, I suggested a little cheekily. They smiled. But so rapidly could these graduates commoditize – awful word - their talents into services outside and beyond architecture, there was little surprise they could be so seduced. Meanwhile all graduates had the potential to alter the way architecture works and re-define the conditions necessary for architecture of the future. This potential seemed to be right there, under the nose of the faculty in schools and colleges of architecture around the world.

By then I had been involved in an idea which I had got after visiting Japan in 2002 and being invited to lecture at Yale. I chanced upon the notion of Pulp Architecture and decided to see how far I could run with such an idea. At Zetaville, Pulp Architecture eventually became a series of interrelated, collaborative teaching studios, enquiries and projects. The idea had been to allow graduate students to negotiate the contemporary moment in the profession and discipline of architecture. Research, teaching, practice and feedback could contribute to the growing awareness of process innovation in architecture, engineering, ecology, landscape and information institutes. *To author* designs as artefacts, buildings and objects might be less important in the future than to contribute to

complex, changing environments and understand the agency and social significance of these acts. At least this is what I was getting from the confused but engaged minds sitting in front of me.

‘No matter the building type’ was an idea that fascinated the students. These students didn’t know and sometimes didn’t care why they designed what they designed. The facades they were taught to develop were arbitrary and depended very much on which professor they had taken, on what sort of preaching had gone on. They saw Modern Architecture as a menu. Some professors said: do this, don’t do that. Others said: map this, don’t map that! New materials were mocked until someone else, a little more famous used them. Then the structures or material workshop might introduce them. A laser cutter might allow precision and a digital fabrication but decisions were confusing and few knew how to run a workshop that expanded this knowledge. Ideas were hijacked from other schools, other publications. This measure of the arbitrary and the ad-hoc began to challenge architectural education and the professors at Zetaville either to learn better the typologies and precedents they appeared so comfortable with, or face the redundancy of design exercises which replicate trend, fashion and fetish into branded logos of architectural spectacle.

I looked outside at the houses in Fort Worth where I had my hermitage. Surrounded by what were called McMansions, the lawns were digitally sprayed with water, manicured and strimmed. The fronts were spruced up by teams of Mexican gardeners arriving in Toyota pickups. The last time I sat in what they call the Taliban tank I had been going through the Khyber Pass and a Kalshnikov had also been thrust into my hands. “There, take that, if anyone sees you from the hills, they won’t shoot, they won’t think you are a visitor.” And I remember loving the smell of fear – the guilt of the voyeur - as I looked across at the Pakistani children playing cricket in the clearings of the Pass.

There was nothing though in the smell of these Fort Worth suburbs, so I always drifted to the smells of early evening in Lahore’s Liberty Market. I would dread the summer in this part of Texas even knowing that I would not be part of the fried desert later in the summer. The American President’s message was always reinforced in these parts and the ‘war on terrorism’, as arbitrarily structured as it was, just went on and on. But nothing in the day, in the faces of the neighbours waving from the huge suburban utility vehicles streaming past, showed any sign of the world outside, of the Kalashnikov leaning up against the wall of the bootlegger’s hut. Slowly, guiltily, I retreated again, and

took the monastic option as if quiet, increased solitude was something I deserved after teaching in Zetaville, Texas.

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When was architecture offered the conceit that it could design, organize and orchestrate, upon request, the life of others? The grid loosens, the net intervenes and the matrix beckons. Zetaville was tottering; Zetaville was decaying. Was this the twilight of an education that had meant so much when it all started back in the 1960 and 1970s? This was not just a momentary choice of words. New parameters not only make up the special conditions of our contemporary moment which is so often in flux, but design itself may no longer be an issue about the control of environments, situations and experiences. Did this mean that a meta-professional approach may be crucial to the survival of architecture, but not architecture as we know it, and certainly not architecture as the born-again professors know it, as the neo-liberal professors know it, as the graduate students know it, but architecture as it is imagined, solving problems that transform the world beyond the ego, knowledge and anxiety of the single architect?

Fat chance!

I remember agonisingly watching two employees in the Post Office in Fort Worth. It was near Ernesto's Tacueria. I didn't even know how to spell Tacueria, though I had passed it so many times, even opting sometimes for the refried beans and chilli-beef enchiladas. Now called a Green Post office; certain angles and décor had been 'environmentalised'. The material was super sensitive to the extent that it could bore the eye but smooth the aching body. And if it burnt we'd all be all right. Dead, but no toxic soup! Two of the people waiting were discussing the spring-mix veggie salad and all that came with it. The baby lettuce in a balsamic vinaigrette dressing, the red bell pepper and chickpeas, parmesan cheese and sun-dried tomatoes and all from the Salvage Food Company called *Town Talk*. As the queue slowly decreased, too slowly for many, the two black officials seemed to move in a thick fog.

This was an invisible nightlight that took over all things even in daylight. So painful, it was something else. And for the students of architecture this was something else entirely. It was, to quote Lewis Namier, 'how things do not happen.' Collaboration was dead in Zetaville; generosity was struggling. Collaborations may also prove irresistible but I knew how hard Zetaville would fight this. Faculty meetings cleverly meant that ideas could remain paper-agendas. Initiatives about technology, design and

communication really meant paying lip service to a misunderstood data-complex world. Strategic planning was a confused notion around the other confused ignored notion of things-holistic. New sensibilities were considered little above aromatherapy. Innovative processes, integrated building systems were all unacceptable aspects of globalization and, of course, fragmentation but few were saying this. These were not the words needed by Zetaville. Zetaville could do nothing with these words.

Zetaville could sign under the line, but that was it.

The future I was beginning to see from these young architecture graduates may not include total solutions at all. They were not even interested in total solutions. Most of them had come into the world with the film *War Games* and well after the game *Space Invaders*. Understandably *Ghostbusters* meant more than *L'Aventura*. These students were teaching the preachers only the preachers weren't listening. As the students were asking us professors to appreciate partial systems proposed by new operative strategies, I imagined teaching could take on this professional frustration and, what now appeared so obvious, this educational impasse. Was it possible to explore the very nature of the transition in contemporary architectural education and its potential in practice today? I looked at the students.

Which way would they turn?

They pause, stop, spiral and then continue. Some of them would leave to become taxi-drivers or hotel porters in Chicago. Others would go up to New York or back to Mexico. There was a slim hope. The taxi drivers may turn around and turn us around at the same time. Others students, like God in the 1980s, would move to Dallas and become CAD jockeys.

As Generation X left Architecture School, was I so fatigued that I was about to become a new monk? "The new monk," according to Morris Berman "is a sacred/secular humanist, dedicated not to slogans or the fashionable patois of postmodernism, but to enlightenment values that lie at the heart of all civilisation: the disinterested pursuit of the truth, the cultivation of art, the commitment to critical thinking, inter alia."¹⁹ It was the disinterested in the 'disinterested pursuit of truth' that interested me. I remember feeling this in Minneapolis on 26.1.2004. I was sitting in Starbuck's a few hours before I was to give a lecture called 'Pulp Architecture goes to Minnesota'. I felt no urge to restrain the talk but I really didn't want to speak at all. The architecture all around was of occasional but predictable brilliance, a kind of dismal competence. Frank Gehry's Weisman Museum in Minnesota seemed to be a carefully applied art called architecture. Gehry was

doing what many did as he met the digital drawbridge and turned an assemblage and chaos into a container. Up close the building neither impresses nor invokes all those wonderful readings and, of course, misreadings. It was a disinterested architecture and hinted at all those buildings that have been spoken about in laudatory terms, in phrases that should mean something but often don't. The trade-fair, silver-foil scaffolding of the Museum's applied skin looked like a cosmetic taken further in the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

"Surprise should not come to us so easily, so seductively," the geographer showing me around the museum said. "I prefer the Georgian Square," he continued. I preferred neither, both have their moments but in this new century surely we can come up with something better. "You see, Downtown" the computer programmer told me in the morning, "you'll see the ugliest building in the whole Metroplex."

Here too, and not only in Texas, St. Paul and Minneapolis combined was called a *metroplex*. I disliked the word with its hint at the metropolitan that was nowhere to be seen or experienced. "And which building was that?" I asked. "The ugliest?" It mattered not, for the buildings, tall and small, all interchanged in the bleakness of the winter as the hard chill and the salted snow turned into a blackened crust.

In the film 'Deep Impact' which I caught the previous evening in the hotel, the tidal wave begins coming in after the comet has fallen. I imagined everyone in Minneapolis running along the skyways, running nowhere to escape the inevitable. New Orleans had not happened, though 9-11 had. Elsewhere, a long way from America, a dear friend had shown a glimmer of hope in her otherwise lifelong struggle to avoid suicide. Her last two attempts had failed. The glimmer, that smallest sign in the eyes, however minuscule, however disinterested, was all she had. It is merely a trigger. But it can, it certainly can, be enough.

"Architecture becomes dangerous when it forgoes all that is 'pre-given'," Stanford Kwinter would write, "in this case fixed types and predetermined matter - when, rather, it takes the actual flow of historical connections as its privileged materiality (not the habitual discrete domains of geometry, masonry, stone and glass), and works these, adapts these through transformations and deformations, in order to engender and bind its form."

Perhaps he didn't know it, but Kwinter had got Zetaville about right.

Zetaville was dealing with fixed types and predetermined matter. Zetaville was not really interested in transformations and deformations. Zetaville was interested in

privilege and entitlement; the right of the preacher was in fact privilege. And the students, at least those sitting in front of me, were fighting this.

Looking out from the café in Minneapolis, from the soft armchair, I looked across at the atrium of the IDS centre. Surely architecture could not go on supporting such a wilful loss of life, interest, time, even disgust. The battle lines are drawn. We've had enough. It is only a matter of time before we take over. And beware. You've been warned. It will not be anything recognizable from the softest armchair in Starbucks.

The New American Revolution was stirring.

School is dead

There is always a risk that education may put you at odds with the tasteless, clueless philistines who run the world and whose lexicon stretches only to words like oil, golf, power and cheeseburger. **Terry Eagleton After Theory** ²⁰

Deschooling Architecture? Why deschooling, why now and isn't it an old idea? Google 'deschooling', you are introduced to the website: *deschooling.org*. The first words are as follows: 'What would a world without school be like? Without certified experts? Without forced associations? Coerced tests and grades? Arbitrary rules? We don't mean just for children, but for all of society. What would the ripple effects be? In *Chicken Run*, Ginger said, "You know what the problem is here. The fence isn't just around the farm. It's up here, in your heads." This is our humble attempt at tearing down the fence in our heads. We're glad you've joined us.' Is 'deschooling' as simple as this? And what if the fence in our heads exists? The new revolution is stirring in schools of architecture certainly, but how?

In 1973 I had been 'invited' to leave the school of architecture in Cambridge because my approach had become – to the professors – untenable. I had written about aspects of architecture that I was told was *not architecture* and – at a time of intense computer studies - unquantifiable. I had become fatally interested in semiotics, cultural signs and linguistics, culture itself and had been told by Professors Brawne and Meunier that this was not a serious direction for anyone pursuing studies at the Cambridge School of Architecture. They asked me politely at first, less politely later, to consider moving to another school of architecture. I resisted this move and after a generous offer from my tutor in Jesus College, I enrolled as a student of education.

The first books I read for this course were Ivan's Illich's *Deschooling Society* and *Celebrations of Awareness*, *Letter to a Teacher* by the Pupils of Barnabia, *How Children Fail* by John Holt, *Summerhill* by A.S.Neill and *School is Dead* by Everett Reimer. I still have all these books on my bookshelf and continually found myself returning to them whilst teaching the graduates in Zetaville. The first lines of Ivan Illich's book *Deschooling Society* never really left me: "Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and

substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed: the more treatment there is, the better are the results; or, escalation leads to success. The pupil is thereby 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. His imagination was schooled to accept service in place of value."²¹

Service in place of value, training in place of education: did this reveal itself in architecture school more so than anywhere else? This I doubted. But does not this eminently sensible if 'revolutionary' idea, emanating from a well-respected text emerging out of the 1960s, deserve a second look? Illich does not mince his words and we would do a disservice to them to think they were only relevant in the late 1960s and 1970s. Many students, he begins, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them... In Zetaville, it appeared sometimes too easy to condemn the institution and those who made up the institution. Often it felt as if the very desire to avoid the patterns of an unfavoured teaching strengthened the pattern of an un-required learning. It was not difficult to recognise Illich's words: "The pupil is thereby 'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new." If this was true of Zetaville, the architecture school, had I too been schooled to accept service in place of value?

As I shared experiences with the students of architecture in Zetaville, Texas, history was not history as I saw it, memory was not my memory, and the influences that I had encountered could not and would never be theirs. Their world mostly started in the early 1980s. It started with films like the Star Trek series and the development of rap music. They may not have been black but Hip Hop was more influential than Hopi sayings, Jack Kerouac or Herbert Marcuse. In fact, all of them would say later: who was Marcuse?

Recently a young student showed me one of his papers. It was a history class. The paper went something like this. There are fifteen questions, answer 11 of them, and write the following information in the space required. The information required was listed out; the names of the architect, the special characteristic of a particular building or plan, the date or thereabouts to the decade or century and so on. There was enough space for about three or four lines. Three, if you were untidy. Five, if you were neat. It was not difficult to imagine what was required of the students. The questions assumed they had sat in lectures and listened to the teacher, instructor, professor or preacher repeat what had been sourced in books. There is no real guessing game here. This is not even a trick question

where the professor is trying to get the students to 'guess what the professor has in mind.' In psychological terms these are convergent on the three or four answers required. Date, architect, building and specific characteristic hardly change. The student plays no role whatsoever in this teaching. The biggest demand made on them is on their memory. The requirement is to repeat, or even emulate the answers someone else could give to these questions. Anything written in the margin, anything that might show the student knows a little more than is required would count as irrelevant; it would be marked down or then ignored.

This student had written four lines and was particularly upset that his answers appeared correct but that the marking had faulted him. He was unsure how he had been faulted as no indication had been given. Apparently the students could tell whether the Professor had marked the papers or the Teaching Assistant. This time it had been the TA. I glanced at the answers and though the script was a little untidy, the names a little off sometimes, the facts required appeared right. I felt for this young student. Not because he had a night job, had a young child of two years, had lectures in the morning and studio in the evening. I felt for him because he was already being counted as data, and had begun to count his own education as data. He was doing his best to follow the rules. He recounted how he had followed the rules last year and done exactly the same and had got almost full marks. Others broke in and suggested the obvious: you should have got the paper from someone who took it last year and learnt the answers that were required from the questions. In Zetaville, they said, the questions never change that much. Then all you need to do is repeat the answers. No memory, no pain but no gain. I did, he said, that is what I did.

Here already by second or third year, teaching was confused with rote learning. Was this any different in an architecture school from any other school? Possibly not! Would it have been any different if the quiz had been on building science, construction, and not history? Probably not! Grade advancement seemed to have got hold of the students just as it did in the 1960s and 1970s. To satisfy the needs of the school, architecture and learning had become a way of playing a quiz. The idea that history might offer something other than grade advancement didn't seem to enter the equation. The students didn't need to know Marshall McLuhan to recognise how relentless such testing becomes, and how insidious is the structure of the studio system. By second year, on average, most of the students knew how to survive architecture school. From then onwards they would use their favourite word; they *navigated*. They navigated professors, lectures, subjects and

tests. It was a slalom course; they knew which courses and professors to sail through, they knew which would make them work, they knew which might even make them think, and even more, they knew which would even ask them to think.

Navigation was key!

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Hip Hop music was a progression of Rap music from the 1980s; the spoken word or ‘rap’ is accompanied by a sampling, a looped, regularised heavy beat, and effects produced by manipulating the turntable. It is possible, ever since Modern Architecture attempted to break with the past and set up its own recognisable syntax, architects have ‘sampled’ the works of others. At least it was not difficult for the students to see the last century like this. I began to see how the architect as a choreographer would allow students to re-appraise legacy and heritage. It would even allow them to look back at the 20th century as if it was more recent and more important than it was. To most of the graduates the last century was merely the first two decades of their own lives. Apart from that it was software, their first computer and Sesame Street. The rest was not blank, just a new formulation of an old, old world.

By thinking about Hip Hop music the students could observe how ‘sampling’ may take place in other things besides music. They were interested – and I could see this on everyone’s face - how a process reveals itself by the very patterns and devices it might use to disguise its energy and artistic influence. They knew this without necessarily realising that in their schooling this was precisely what was happening. Most young students at Zetaville could speak in terms of code. They were aware of the messages supposedly given off with the right kind of clothes, cars, sunglasses, bags, shoes, accessories and interiors.

Language itself was key!

They were closer to Brett Easton Ellis’s world rather than Hemingway or even J.D. Salinger. That *David Copperfield kind of crap* in Holden Caulfield had shifted. They didn’t care if Salinger had disappeared. So much of their own life had disappeared at school anyway. They were numb and said so. The phoney world of school and architecture had become a *glamorama*. They were sliding down the surface of things. They knew which professors could define which architecture. They read the signs from the very first lectures, in the first year. They knew too how strong and weak architecture

could be re-defined, re-inscribed and re-scripted within an invisible architecture. Whichever vocabulary was used they knew the surface of things attracted merely the surface of their own mind. Many were uncomfortable without knowing why.

It was around this time that I realised the students had to start dreaming seriously today. But how was this possible? How would they *deschool* the very patterns that were numbing them to a profession many did not want to enter, to build buildings and design environments that they felt little resonance with or to? The students were socially and educationally powerless. Making buildings for them had become faking buildings. The failures at school were still proof that education was a costly misadventure, an arcane and impossible task administered and instructed often by those who had lost touch with the world itself. When Illich announced that the “escalation of the schools is as destructive as the escalation of weapons but less visibly so” we did not sense that, some 30 years on, this would be an issue on everyone’s mind as Islamic terrorists crushed the twin towers and natural forces destroyed the city of New Orleans, whilst the US Government and other agencies ignored all the warnings of these events.

End of cinema and architecture as we know it? Imaginary soliloquies would have to become more imaginable than ever for the students. This would demand work; work on resistance, work on propaganda, anarchism and work on self-education - discipline and dissidence. “People will retreat into their own imaginations which at last they will have the means to explore...” J.G.Ballard puts it. “For the first time, mankind will be able to deny reality and substitute its own preferred version.” I sensed many of the students of Zetaville were beginning to do this. They did not know how, did not always know why, but they were on their way. I imagined I might introduce this by talking about Francois Truffaut or Jean-Luc Godard.

“Truffaut,” I mentioned, “Francois Truffaut. The French film director, the one around the time of Jean-Luc Godard and Claud Chabrol.” The assembled graduates had never heard of Truffaut. There was a pause. They hadn’t heard of the other names either. “You know,” I said trying to stretch toward them, “he was in the Spielberg film, ‘Encounters of the Third Kind’.” That was their reference, in their time zone, after the 1980s, surely they would know. There was some foggy agreement and a certain amount of head nodding that indicated some recognition of the Frenchman that had appeared in the film. But it was not convincing. I tried to make light of this. What did it matter that the latter half of the 20th century had already become history, never to be forgotten, never

to be taught? The last century was much further away than this. It was, to most of the students, already a foreign land.

At Zetaville, it all began to feel as if we were much older than we were in reality. As professors we were ahead of the game, ready to push up daisies. Instead of teaching we should have been thinking how to pass on what little ignorance we had left, instead of the arrogance of thinking we once thought we knew. As if too we could not see how irrelevant we had become, as we continued to believe the multiple choice question would teach anything more than a multiple choice game. History, critical theory, life and death had all been reduced to the gentle hop skip and jump of the three-part multiple choice question. How many of us professors even realised we might be redundant in the change we imagined we might be guiding, and redundant in the protestation of a position that was already lost? I decided to *play the Old Spice*. The music of Carl Orff boomed through me as I looked out over the dismal flat roofs of the University of Zetaville campus.

It was carnival time.

“Godard,” I shouted. “Jean-Luc Godard.” The graduate students looked around. Was the professor loony? “Antonioni?” Nothing. “Duras!” Nothing! “Bertolucci.” Nothing! “Wajda!” Nada! “De Sica.” Nothing, nothing, nothing! I shouted at the top of my lungs. It has never been easy to knock on the insides of one’s own skull and think you still hear a sound. I was *deschooling* at the very moment these students were hitting life’s professional dream and dribbling. The alarm rose. Outside the window it appeared more Texas than Texas. Big, obscene trucks, girls with trucks, students with trucks, bull-trucks, monster trucks, pixelfucker trucks were everywhere. The parking lots looked back and throttled your mind. The language – any language, any looseness – got to you from the very controls of the world that was outside your own ‘outside’. No poetry could save this moment. The last century was officially a foreign land and though I had settled into the role of fugitive, nothing could have prepared me for what was to follow next.

We were talking about orange, about the colour orange, the connotations of ‘orange’. We were not even talking about revolution, at least not yet. The fruit was the easy part. “But what else could it remind you of?” I asked the students. There was a pause. Not firemen, no! Not electrical workers, no! “Oh I remember,” someone else spoke, “prisoners.” “Yes,” I replied, “prisoners. Gauntanamo?” There was a look of utter incomprehension. Why was a professor of architecture talking like this? What had this got to do with what we were supposed to be doing? Was this what our parents were

paying for? “Guantanamo Bay,” I repeated. “Orange. Covered, shackled.” Nothing. “USA? Cuba? Prisoners. Terrorist suspects for almost three years, but not charged.”

Four or five of the students looked at me. What was he talking about? Is this what a visiting professor brings to our country? “G.U.A.N.T.A.N.A.M.O. B.A.Y.” I spelled it out with awkward precision. “Google it, find out.” I said, as near as I could be to anger and tolerance at the same time.

The alertness so briefly in their eyes, in their minds, had suddenly gone. All the lights had flickered and then gone out. It was as if the last century had been buried: *Nine eleven* might just have been the convenience store opening at nine instead of seven, run by white trash who wish to stay in bed rather than South Asians up at the crack of dawn. To each their own bubble. There we were trying to exchange anything but architecture. And there they were? Was Texas to blame, or the US? Was this a pattern of sovereign ignorance? We were burying the years, the months, the days, the hours as fast as they caught up with these students. There was no history now. No alertness. America, I felt, was once more on orange alert. It was threatened, and threatening. Life would not begin again from this. Whole new operations would have to start over. Who cared about architecture if Cuba was down the road, due south from this window and not a sound could reach the ears softened by their own terror?

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I heard the story of a young American teenager who had a series of coaches. She had a coach for Math, a coach for English, a coach for Spanish, a coach for History, a coach for Geography, a coach for Basketball, a coach for Woodwork, a coach for Dancing and a coach for Piano. Her parents however were so worried that she would fall behind the other students they decided she should have a coach for the coaches. So increasingly concerned were the parents that this was not working according to their plans of lifting their daughter’s grades in order to reach the school they had in mind for her, they were thinking of hiring a therapist for the coach of all the coaches and the rest. The therapist was supposed to be the campaign coach.

During the seminar teaching at Zetaville my mind was often elsewhere. I had to try hard to bring it back to the soulless rooms of the prison, especially as the students would reluctantly take the wooden chairs and bring them close to the table. The light was untidy, the blinds had jammed, and the rain outside often slashed the windows in a violence that could only mean one thing, tiredness. I did my best to hide this ennui and

nausea but I could not help thinking of the next book I was writing. I had been haunted by the idea of eventually waking from a life lived with such intensity but with such falseness as to invite a continuous pain. An artist who had died in Lahore in the year 1999 from the bullet of an awkward assassin had, I felt, invited his own death. I had little evidence of this but was convinced he had finally woken to the enormity and pain of a life lived in a world beyond law, in a world beyond love, in a country he knew only as Pakistan. He died a slow death, and I wondered how many of us were doing the same, educating a slow death.

Illich was right surely: “a second major illusion on which the school system rests is that most learning is the result of teaching. Teaching, it is true, may contribute into certain kinds of learning under certain circumstances. But most people acquire most of their knowledge outside school, and in school only in so far as school, in a few rich countries, has become their place of confinement during an increasing part of their lives.”

The prison metaphor was not a long way off. Students would later nickname the school the ‘panopticon’ after its resemblance to the prison model. The architect of the school of architecture at Zetaville surely had been thinking of this. High surveillance, students could watch all professors come in and out of their small cells, and monitor the learning that went on. All-seeing, all powerful, soon I felt the Dean would come in and offer a coach for the coaches in order to make sure learning was actually the result of teaching. Actually I think the Dean was stockpiling automatic weapons. I recalled the words of the French author who had recently died, Marguerite Duras. She had written in 1992 about the slow unmoving affair she had had with a young man, the young man she had called Yann Andrea Steiner. By naming him she had occupied the loss of her own life, the solitude of no further knowledge, that ignorance we all face in the presence of those we think we love. For the Great Duras, the surnamed and mighty Duras as she was known in Paris, the figure of Roland Barthes stood for false writing. It was the falseness, she wrote in the memoir called *Yann Andrea Steiner* that killed him. It was this falseness that stared back at me as I began to speak, as I tried to engage the students in Zetaville during the seminar periods.

What they sensed of this falseness I will never know.

“Do you have anything in mind when you come to class?” One of the graduates asked me once. Had he sensed this wilful disorder within me, the falseness or did he realise that it took off just at points where our ignorance meets? Was he thinking of the

joke: to work in this school you can leave your brain at home. “Usually I do,” I replied, “but today I realised I needed to talk about something else than what I had imagined.”

It was an act of *deschooling*. It began like this. I had gone into the seminar thinking of talking about the Great and Mighty architect Frank, nicknamed O’Gehry in relation to the Great and Mighty Le Corbusier. These were the two figures that currently and devastatingly blinded and polarised the Zetaville school of architecture. Harshly reductive I know, but that was how it was. I imagined - by thinking of these figures - we might try and understand why the school of architecture was so paralysed, why knowledge and thinking was not a shared activity, and why the school had become the prison of the very language architecture was supposed to liberate. I had begun slowly, discussing tiredness.

One of the students, Lenny, was so tired his neck would hardly support his head. He was cold, still dressed in an overcoat, a baseball hat and he looked groggy. I asked him how he was. He answered: ‘Terrible’. He revealed he had not slept since last Thursday. It was Monday. We discovered he was on the night shift and had to attend school each day in the morning and afternoon. At home there was also a small child of two years old. How many students had double jobs and children at home by the age of 23? Before finally falling asleep during the seminar, Lenny had mentioned the South Island Diet and we had tried to discuss the differences with the Atkins Diet. Discussion became difficult, one other student in particular interrupted, refused to finish a sentence, ploughed through the others. Politely I said, “Stop!”

This was foreplay. They were waiting for the wisdom to begin. I felt sick. I don’t know how it began. Suddenly the word ‘agitprop’ was on the board behind. Was it known, had anyone ever heard of it? Did it mean anything? Did they even know what dissidence was? Again the faces looked up, blanker than the century that had passed. I coerced a little. Well, what might the two words be? Slowly, coaxing, cajoling, the words were identified.

Agitation! Propaganda!

I began to speak of the 1920s, of Soviet aesthetics, of the possibility of linking this with the present and some of the concerns one could see in contemporary architecture, even architects like Zaha Hadid and Rem Koolhaas, names well known, mighty names, famous names, abused names.

“I didn’t have this in mind if that’s what you mean,” I said to the student who had asked me. “When I realised no one knew anything about ‘agitprop’ I realised that it might

be useful to go through some of the shapes of ideas that began from this time. No one seems to have introduced you to the movement of these ideas.”

“I know some of it,” he replied “we know the dates. We are shown the buildings and have to learn the dates.” He was right of course. Education was instruction and History was a drilling exercise; lists of buildings and their dates made up the history of the last century. This could all be woven together into accepted movements and received history. It was so dull that it had undoubtedly been forgotten the moment it ceased being a multiple choice exam. And he had been lying, deluding himself. This was the student who, when asked the date of Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp Chapel, said 1926...then 1936.. then....nothing! In this ignorance there was no recognition of hubris. Here was a fugitive knowledge, a lost education, a drilled activity directed by the opinions of the lonely. It was no accident, right at that moment that Illich’s book *Deschooling Society* suggested another book, *Deschooling Architecture*.

Was Illich right? Is Illich still right?

The imagination is schooled to accept service in place of value. The pain is the energy these students involve themselves in trying to conform to an exam they will not recall or remember. They feel many of their teachers should be in another business, anything but teaching. Conforming to professional requirements had become the dulllest game around. None of these students would know McLuhan, Illich, John Dewey or Santayana. But they would have no difficulty understanding if you told them that Santayana believed a fanatic to be someone who redoubled his efforts when his aim was forgotten. The professors had become fanatics too. And had not architects always exchanged ideas and improved upon previous ideas, mediating their own role, asserting their own originality within a prescribed system, whilst disguising the loaned world for the singular (original) world? Was all this at work in the students’ brain, and working by replication? If so does this help us understand how ideas survive, are replaced, mutate and return in other guises? Did modern architects from the last century negate collaboration whilst being involved in the greatest conspiracy of all: hallucination?

I asked the students: “Is Douglas Rushkoff correct: does the best meme win?” They looked confused. “And what if the meme is changing constantly: fashion memes, lasting memes, organic memes, animal memes, digital memes, musical memes, architectural memes?” They continued to look at me in a confused manner. “What relations exist between Darwinism and architecture? Does this help us prepare a re-assessment of the

20th century for the 21st century or does it serve to explain the plurality, multiplicity and pace of change in architectural trends today?”

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I looked outside at the Zetaville Campus: flat-roofed, flat-tongued, flat-earthed and all Texas big sky hubris. Meanwhile, I thought to myself, what amount of ordinary architecture goes on unaffected, housing the majority, whatever building type these students will be taught to imagine, resist or infect? “If we are to obey our own logic,” I turned to the students, “then we must speak in riddle, we must speak of locking the images open in a revolutionary way.” I went onto explain what I had already explained in a book written some years ago. None had read it. None had ever asked me to read it. In literary terms such a riddle, I explained, is known as a *bull* and, according to the critic Christopher Ricks, there is no better, finer example of the bull than in Samuel Beckett’s work. “Nothing is more real than nothing,” I said, and I saw the students lift their heads. Was this architecture? What was this nothing that was not nothing? “I know those little phrases that seem so innocuous and, once you let them in, pollute the whole of speech.... They rise up out of the pit and know no rest until they drag you down into its dark.”

Walking out one of the students said: “That’s it. They rise out of the pit and drag us down into the dark. Then they stamp us. We are architects! Well no thank you. Give me revolution.”

But how?

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Addressing a seminar class of graduates, the word ‘rhizome’ happened to slip out. Out of 13 only one student recognised the word. Should we be so surprised? Were the other 12 the lucky ones, the uncontaminated ones? There was nothing really odd in only one out of 13 knowing this word. The ‘volunteer’ then went on to give a sound explanation of the word, but not of its application or theoretical resonance to contemporary architecture. Later when I concluded class for the day, one of the graduates turned to me as he left and said he would definitely be staying in the seminar class. “I have never in six years of studying had a class like this.”

Is this an example of what Illich described as the two-faced nature of learning? “An insistence on drill alone could be a disaster,” Illich wrote in *Deschooling Society*, “equal

emphasis must be placed on other kinds of learning.” But what then are these other kinds of learning and have they, as it seems, been consistently lost in what now passes for an architectural education. If schools are the wrong places for learning skills, as Illich claims, are they even unsafe places for receiving an education? Can we extend this to the university education of a discipline like architecture? A discipline today, both holding onto a familiar and dulled curriculum and yet eager to introduce into that curriculum a renewed sense of openness and exploration. If but for the precious profession!

Coaching is dull instruction. Yet it grows now in Zetaville. Depending on its emphasis it is more or less an occupation likened to military training. Freed as it is of other curricular restraints, other distractions in class, other students, it implies the mastery of known skills, predictable material and demands an acceptable, obedient behaviour. In the teaching of architecture less can be applied at the early stage where instruction not only introduces the discipline of architecture to sophomores, but introduces the known and accepted frameworks within which both the student and the instructor remain. These ensure the system is locked down and closed. Students unable to follow the early rules, to conform to the framed instruction, are penalised. Students who are drilled into suitable shape to progress on this model of ‘visioning’ architecture begin to question their education and are then also penalised. They are even asked to drop out or go somewhere else to be coached individually. Some, clever enough to pass through to the next stage, have that ‘glaze’ across their eyes that the professors recognise and begin to mock.

No win situation!

According to this model, instruction (which is not in any way connected to the thinking of the individual student) is drilled into the student such that instruction converges – whether planned or not - with that of the instructor or professor. The extension of this is simple to understand. Students are framed, brought under control, moulded and shaped in order to perform architectures that will begun to resemble architecture as their professors know it. Success in Zetaville, success at school, progress through the first, second, third years then depends - students quickly identify - on how successfully the courses, classes, studies and seminars are negotiated. The tighter and more framed the course is, the more handouts, blueprints, rubrics, multiple-choice, objective questioning and guidelines offered, the narrower the vision becomes and the easier the student will recognise the necessary drill and repetitions of the predictable. Grades are more easily achieved and flattened. Accomplishment will and often is measured by how close the student comes to revealing architecture modelled on mimicry

and assimilation. The instructor's goal in this case is a clever transfer of the 'expert' body of knowledge taught repeatedly for about 20 years and the brilliance of the student's assimilation and implementation of it. The clever students have their models kept, their drawings used as examples for the next year and the year after that and so on.

May the best meme win? Replication!

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Really, even with the best will in the world, recognising the sincere energy, passion from the past often put into a drilled and guided instruction on architecture in a school like Zetaville, it is not difficult to recognise, thirty years on, the words of Ivan Illich re-confirmed: "In schools, including universities, most resources are spent to purchase the time and motivation of a limited number of people to take up predetermined problems in a ritually defined setting."²² Is this as dramatic or as melodramatic as it sounds? Does this invite the revolutionary long after the revolutionary student has been calmed and flattened? How, if this is the case in many schools of architecture besides Zetaville, do schools survive, architects emerge and students turn into the open, challenging, engaging professionals necessary to re-define a profession close to its own replication and demise? An architectural profession, in fact, which is so close to supervising its own catastrophe?

Designing and implementing more and more buildings that are predictable and pre-determined, driven from the rendering farms in Dallas or Mumbai by whatever forces in such destitute times of media, fame and investment politics, the market - with a flash of spectacle or brilliant oddity and quirkiness - is not likely to be an inspiring development for architecture of the 21st century. And the consequence is more than urgent: this catastrophic education is unlikely to see the architects serve wider issues in society or affect the infrastructure of failed systems and tired structures.

If school is dead, Zetaville will then be amongst the first to close. Or then the doors will be barricaded. Be assured, something will happen. Somebody will discover the stash of automatic weapons. For *deschooling* can only go on so long until re-schooling takes its own turn and re-structures the very tired and crushing processes in education that appear to need accrediting.

Don't you dare look away, a re-dawning of life awaits!

7

Pedagogies of Resistance

America when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?
When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?
America why are your libraries full of tears.
Allen Ginsberg²³

If it did not exist, I would have had to invent this name for your university, Zetaville. If you don't understand why I am writing this, about a school of architecture in the US in the 21st century, read the obituary of one of the seminar students: Nicholas McCartney (1980—2073): “The architect was known for his complete disregard for new trends in architecture. While quite educated, well travelled, and “locked open” (as he described himself and his work), McCartney never seemed to grasp the current spirit of the times. Compared to many of his contemporaries, McCartney never produced a great amount of work. Rather, he focused on quality and due to this old-fashioned approach, he was deemed dated, quasi-lackadaisical and hermetic. The simplicity with which he visualized building as an art has been criticized for having no relation to the current practice of architecture. It seems that he was born, say colleagues, 100 years too late. He is survived by only 12 actual built projects, only two of which still exist in their original states – the unfortunate result of his lack of aesthetic and programmatic risk-taking. Architectural historians will ultimately decide the fate of such a blank, and yet quaint, body of work.”²⁴

With communication between most of the professors at the school of architecture in Zetaville left so ‘passively aggressive’, an echo to the ‘celebration of apathy’ a phrase

used in the 1960s, decisions were made by proxy. It did not matter what the issues were. Nor did merit enter into these discussions. It was a post-decency world, desert or prairie, Indian or aboriginal, the stares were hard and controlled. It was never an issue about 'quality indicators and the measurements of success' or more general questions like "what do we mean by design?" The administration was fond of inserting these phrases into faculty meetings without any serious explanation of what was involved. Retreats were held to try and understand why students were less engaged in their schooling, instead of the truth and reconciliation process that should have occurred between professors. This begged the question: less engaged than what? The paradox of a faculty of dark souls retreating to a fantasy conference centre with a denuded atmosphere in an attempt to understand this without any students invited appeared crushing. Important themes, big themes were treated the same as small themes. Take the worlds of 'technology' and 'design education'; it was always difficult to know which cliché had taken over, and what part of the education would lead to the desired community engagement. Words no longer carried the meaning they had the week before, let alone six months or a year ago.

Redemption missed out on the communion wafer!

At times it became hard to fathom the thinking behind both professors and students. Students could enter to study architecture after studying something else. There was a quaint name for this, *Path A*. One student, about to graduate, had shown in ten weeks so much skill, talent and charisma in avoiding work and the possibility of thinking for herself that the future looked grim. Secondly the possibility of collaborating was so far from her mind-set that I wondered if knowledge sharing was even possible this century. She didn't, for one second, suggest she might think the opposite of what she had always thought. Was I part of this failure to get students like this to think the opposite of what they think? Or is this the opposite of what is commonly taken for granted? Before one can pass to the opposite of what one thinks, surely it is necessary to have some idea of how and what one thinks? Perhaps it is also a case of knowing not what one is teaching but what is worth learning. Why had this become so difficult?

At the time I was reading what Mary McCarthy had been saying about Jean-Francois Revel, the author of a book popular in the 1970s: "Without Marx or Jesus". McCarthy was speaking of the author's penchant for talking the negative of seemingly unassailable propositions: "This would not be such a bad school for educating not mere mental contortionists versed in paradox but free minds." This would have suited anyone with an

interest in Oscar Wilde but in Zetaville I was having a hard time finding the free minds amongst both students and faculty. If I had given up on most of the professors, I certainly hadn't abandoned the students.

Perhaps we as professors were to blame and should adapt. Was it not our duty to change and not always demand this of students? "There is always the possibility," as Mary McCarthy put it, "that the exact opposite of what you think (or think you think) may be true." The Emperor certainly had no clothes, but the figure of the 'emperor' was changing, dissolving in front of the students' eyes. We had czarinas, cardinals and napoleons, all trying to run a school of architecture, all managing upwards with dire consequences.

Think the authoritarian 1950s. Students treated like subordinates, administration ordering the tuition-payers about, acting *in loco parentis* and maintaining the status quo. Echoes to the Free Speech Movement from the 1960s were relevant, but few had any history to this period. Remember, Berkeley President Kerr and the Reds on Campus: Berkeley was so far yet so near. The university, Kerr claimed in 1965, "is an education institution that has been given to the regents as a trust to administer for education reasons, and not to be used for direct political actions." The response, words of Mario Savio, was as relevant in Zetaville as in Berkeley: "The university is the place where people begin seriously to question the conditions of their existence and raise the issue of whether they can be committed to the society they have been born into."²⁵ Forty years on was this not time for a new Free Thinking Movement?

Worrying though, in seeking the free minds for a course on 'free thinking', was the subtle and unsubtle art of bullying that remained prevalent in Zetaville. I saw tears well up in students' eyes, when clenched mouths left nothing to be generous about, when humans turned on other humans because they thought the exact opposite of what you thought. And all this in that dreadful ritual at architecture school called the 'jury' or the 'crit'. In other universities I had heard of the cruelty, the abuse and humiliations acted out on students. I'd heard of the student suicides though these rarely reach the newsletters in Yale, Harvard, Cambridge, Berkeley or Texas. I have seen students emerging from rooms in a state that would alarm any parent. At Zetaville I have seen students weeping, running the gauntlet of the school, racing along the corridors of the prison, past the white railings, down the flight of stairs and on out holding emotions in and then exploding out in the Texan air. Vomiting and retching, some explode too far. I have seen some students gulp so much air that I think they too will explode. No explosive strapped to these students'

bodies, all potential explosion within. I have seen the pain of being told that what you think is opposite to what you should think. I have seen some students gulp in air as if back there where they come from, there is no air, only orphans to a dead language called 'Architecture'.

This is not education and they know it!

Let's recall what John Holt said about being 'gulpish' in his book 'How Children Fail'. He had asked the pupils in 1958 what went through their mind when the teacher asks a question and you don't know the answer. "It was a bombshell," Holt writes, "Instantly a paralysed silence fell on the room. Everyone stared at me with what I have learned to recognise as a tense expression." Finally one of the students, Ben, answered in a loud voice 'gulp'. "I asked them why they felt gulpish. They said they were afraid of failing, afraid of being kept back, afraid of being called stupid, afraid of feeling themselves stupid."

At Zetaville exactly the same feeling; professors, especially the senior faculty, were so quick to condemn students to stupidity, to laziness, to idiocy. The students were shocked, afraid of failing and often they said with some reluctance, many professors did their best to make them squirm. Perhaps this was a conventional strategy, something we had to learn to live with, they implied scornfully; something used to harden students, something necessarily for life on the outside. And some of the experienced professors actually did speak like this whilst befriending students for their fine grades knowing that their drafting and digital skills could be called on to draw up their own often grubby, second-hand and underhand moonlighting projects. A ritual, they've got to learn, they would say, air deflating from drugged-up frames.

Come on, don't be a wuss!

I wasn't so convinced. I gulped so regularly at hearing this that I had to do something about it. But what? Try to think and help each other I thought, share knowledge even. Help them, listen to them and listen to them again because the hurt is so fresh. Do not let the hurt settle until it is immutable, irreversible. Was it all about self-education, self-learning? Was this the pedagogy of resistance waiting to happen? But what could I really do? Try to teach each other, begin a 'free thinking' course, start the *free thinking movement* so necessary today, abbreviate it to FTM, website it, blog it, YouTube it, Facebook it and disseminate it.

Then go on the lecture tour!

Yet how we, professors, squirm sometimes just as students do when faced with those who think differently. We are unable to accept compassion, as if our fanaticism and obsessions in teaching and the ideologies we have, and hold to, must be translated and transferred into those children and students who are under our care, in loco parentis! We pretend that this is 'life', that this is 'architecture' and you'd better get used to sleepless nights, you'd better get used to the abuse, you'd better get used to the banter and the work outside in the evil world because there you will get no mercy. And all the time we too, teachers, professors and educators believe that life goes on, that life is all this, that life sucks but they must, absolutely must, go on. That students will be addressed at graduation as if it has all been worth it, that they will be forced to listen to brave but fake words, words that try and convince them that from now on they are professional, that life begins from here.

These words are usually well prepared, full of decent clichés and sincere exhortation. The speaker is excited and humbled to be present, but how dull and deterministic, how closed they make the students' journey: "Good morning class of 2005...it is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. And while today may not mark the first step of your journey through architecture, it certainly does mark a significant point on the long and winding road through this challenging but immensely rewarding and exciting profession...So don't be the 'fool on the hill'.."

On and on the echoes and clichés roll out!

"Looking back we can see that you've pulled the all-nighters, you've crashed and crammed for exams. You've binged on pot noodles, beef jerky, cold pizza and coke, you've survived multiple, abusive and unthinking juries run by deans, professors and other unthinking egoists and narcissists shipped in for the 'super-review', and on occasion, have had to give up a grade in one subject, like say the boring one, 'Professional Practice' or 'Soil Mechanics', so that your grades and designs could be that much better; or in some cases...so that you could see your girlfriends or boyfriends and sleep that much longer. Some of you have gone through divorce proceedings and survived the lawyer set on you by your ex-wife's father with that dubious company in Dallas, and you've relished the studios you chose and loathed the Structures and Superstructures Science taught so dully. Some of you have even relished Structures and Superstructures and loathed studio but thankfully never questioned why you wanted to be an architect in the first place. Some of you - against the odds I might add - have surprised even your professors, not that that is so hard, and even mastered the fine art of using

nothing more than the Internet as your sole resource to finish your History paper in the witching hour when the library was no longer open and you were playing basketball or throwing frisbee out in the courtyard. You've articulated concepts and turned them into T-shirts, you've developed par-T's, held parties and run 'partis'. You have even pondered the true meaning of Architecture with a capital A in the precious minutes of the early morning light when someone's mobile phone interrupted your sleep, when the rest of your non-architecture friends - family included - relished sleeping. But most importantly, as you sit here today, squirming, you have persevered even played mini-golf on astro-turf in the school of architecture. With passion, conviction, boredom and desire, you did it. And for that, I know that your parents, families and professors, are all very proud, deceived and gladdened. Their bank balance can recover. So today, indeed, marks a very significant point in the long and winding path, this journey into self-respect, taming and loss of self-esteem. It celebrates the point at which you begin a new phase of your life. Society welcomes you. It celebrates the point at which you are now professionals and you merely wonder how and why you've been educated at all."²⁶

Yes, the students have relished some classes and loathed others. Yes, they have also navigated injustice and impertinence. Yes, they have answered arrogance with another kind of arrogance. Yes, they have listened and not always been listened to. Yes, they have of course eaten pizza, gulped the extra large 'coke' and chomped on beef jerky and chips. Yes, they have slumped over their machines and drowned themselves with software, games and music. Yes, they have, and they admit this, confessed to replacing one idiocy by another. Some have slept under their desks, with their computers or with their dogs. They have argued with the campus police who have even threatened to pepper spray their dog that lies under the desk in the middle of the night. Is this the point where students become 'professionals'?

Mostly, many of them have questioned whether they really wanted to be architects. For a large majority of them, the profession is tired and they dread the shift from relishing and loathing school to relishing and loathing work. If the words of Samuel Beckett are any help to the students who have to listen to these clichés, to those out there who know exactly what I am talking about, then the only advice is: "learn to fail, and fail better" but – importantly – do so on your own terms, not the school's, not the university's, not the professor's, not the President's and not the Dean's.

The more I taught in Zetaville, the more I it was important not to arrive, anywhere! But how do we join forces in something that relies on never being formed? It became more and more obvious, as one Dean passed over to another in a game of musical chairs and double-speak, it would be important to begin *deschooling*. Deschool the manifestos, the theories, the insights, and all ruminations for the future of the designed and built world that we already know, with or without architects! It was important to collapse our knowledge so that we might come in somewhere that is not quite predicted for us, in an age we are now reaching, where architecture is not already scripted for us, professor and students alike. The digital revolution had put many students way ahead of their professors. But there was some holding back. How could we explore and offer new pedagogical and professional ways to understand the theory and practice of resistance; resistance, that is, to just about everything others think we need. Once the students could achieve this level of questioning, surely there would be no need to re-invent their architecture every Monday in order to prove they can stand alone, supreme, the architects of a life unlived and unloved?

In contemporary architecture, those of us imprisoned in its fetish, we are now living in conditions that seduce us into believing we can confront the end of ideology. In fact, the way things are going, the way we are left aside in the wake of decisions made for us by those who know little more than we do, we must take seriously the end of everything. In relation to recent events, the war on terrorism included yet ignored almost every day on campus, the spectacular, the spectacle and the end of society as we know it forces us to ask: can we ever imagine a single dominant mode of operations again?

The duping had to come to an end. The students hadn't heard anyone talk this way. None of their professors spoke this way. Was it so dangerous? Did we ever imagine that we would be subjected to such tyranny and then become teachers of that tyranny thirty years later? 'Try to be absorbed by power' was one of the T-shirts that used to arrest our attention in the 1970s, 'and see how you like it!' As resistance gathered all around Zetaville - questions were being asked by the students.

Not only in architecture!

In many disciplines, in many areas of the world, people do not have to be terrorists to want to change the world or to deny following the world as it is going right now. Many – professors and students - do not want to be part of futures already prescribed for them. Nor are they interested in the monograph to end all monographs or the snatch at someone

else's life that is not theirs. Deschooling in Zetaville would now go on, it was unstoppable. The question was only one of method and application. If the students wished not to participate in strategies, events or an education expected of them, laid out in front of them by a tired faculty and outdated professors, how were they to achieve what is not expected of them, what is not required of them? How were they even to imagine it when there was no blueprint for the exception? The students picked up on this quickly: they no longer contemplated aligning themselves passively with neo-conservative prevailing trends, with a world of architecture based on precedent and anxiety, but how to identify and engage in the resistance available to them. And if contemporary conditions have changed and are in a continual state of change, they began to seek the resistance strategies open to them today. Many students, even young architects do not wish to continue down known paths, repeating known models and precedents, producing works that have already been imagined and created before them.

But how were they to be aware of a *pedagogy of resistance*? How could they be introduced to various scenarios to think the impossible and still pass their exams! Were the students misguided, thinking they should design without giving this any further thought? The students sat in class and gulped. They wished to be educated but today it was special: the taming had to end. They wished to achieve this without relish or loathing, without going 'postal', without buying the trench coat and the guns, without ever arriving and without tyrannising people, place and language into an agenda that cannot be met. They wished to do this with their dog at their feet, in the middle of the night if need be.

"You know," one of the students turned and said to the campus police who bludgeoned their way into their studio, "for many of us in the USA we live in a country that has taken us into a war that was resisted, and we now hear that intelligence reports were exaggerated. You know why?" The campus policeman became fidgety. He knew the answer and didn't want the student to voice it. The student was not going to pull back: "To persuade us to accept the moral case for war! And you know what." The campus policeman is taking out the pepper spray, fingers hovering over the gun in the holster. It's an ugly moment. But the student continues: "The government did this to get us to go along with this action. Do you understand? Were we duped?" The policeman is scratching his head. He may not understand the word 'dupe' at all. The dog under the table is making a move. "Are we constantly being duped?" the student of architecture repeatedly asked the policeman knowing the cop will never ever reply. The policeman

doesn't even wait: "If that dog moves an inch more I'll have to pepper spray it. You have been warned."

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One of the students called Ethel spoke about the notion of a 'lost' or partial education. What exactly did she mean by this? Why are some names, ideas, books and references appearing now in our education? She asked. How have they suddenly gained currency in Zetaville? Are they introduced through new, younger faculty members or is it merely a representation of what has happened elsewhere in other more prestigious schools of architecture?

This was the trickle-down effect as so often ideas enter from the elite schools of architecture into the state-run schools. Why, if Modernism, Postmodernism, Cultural Theory and Critical Thinking are more talked about, thrown about, lipped and abused, should we attend to this? And how would Zetaville be alerted to all this? Is there really an *after-theory* movement when many of these students haven't even had the chance to read some of the theory so abused?

These were Ethel's questions. She was ready to give up. The regular professors thought her a joke, a flake, a whizz-by kid of dreams. Ethel was one of the brightest students in the seminar class. What should the professor do? she asked. Prepare a reading list, make it more accessible and abbreviate all this abused thinking about architecture into pod-notions of theory and communication? Or are we the lucky ones? The 'after-theory' movement may remove these works before we need to read them. That's what the Zetaville administration think, Ethel said. And what of this alarming inability to finish books, as some of the students self-confessed to so little reading, so little writing?

So little time, they laughed, to do any serious thinking?

Ethel was firing up. Do you invent a reading list for the professors, invent a chance route by which they could learn more, correct more and control more? Who teaches the teachers that have lost all direction, all energy and all passion? What about an intense investment in things the students first do not understand? Or what about attempting to understand, for example, Robert Smithson's work or the work of Gordon Matta-Clark?

Welcome to the Free Thinking Movement I thought and smiled at Ethel's creative dress sense that buzzed the aging professors until they were dribbling just this side of sexual harassment. I remembered the US army recruiting slogan which was placed out

there on the Zetaville campus during the last week: “learn, lead, succeed”! None of the students seemed to have much to do with the Army, was that why we discussed the war so rarely? Did they have no way to influence things today? Did the students feel this? Was this the contemporary public condition; to be a bystander in a life decided for them, forever?

It was no longer useful to recognise that students had to graduate to realise how damning it all had become. How many would graduate to realise they only engage seriously with knowledge and experience when they begin questioning it? Which type of students were they? Was it either-or? Either: head down, get some sleep, get some money and pay the bills. Or: stay up, cruise and think widely for the last few moments of life before being let out. Were all these students on parole, glad at least they weren't in Iraq? I thought not. The world is *both-and*, and the difficulty was oscillating and sailing between the two.

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Frustration and celebrations of apathy ran through the faculty and student body in Zetaville but was it possible to identify these features more accurately? What was favoured today in architecture and why? What defines the dominant, collective thought and why were students so seduced by it? Was it defined by the faculty or in spite of faculty? Is it embedded in the arbitrary contacts, or trends read deep within journals? Does an established faculty impede innovation in architecture with their belittling politics of the everyday or guide it toward its own development? Does the Dean or Curriculum Committee have an agenda or become brokers for accessible but safely conservative new ideas? What, for example is all this talk about digital technology, fabrications and modelling and the role of a workshop? Was it in Zetaville a swing to the technical, anti-intellectual and non-theoretical? Does this suit a 'pragmatism' embedded in the eased North American mind, or is this the wise move everyone is waiting for?

Some students wished to write a "manifesto".

Who amongst them was willing to work on it and how would they be educated to do this without being 'punished' within the usual process? Did they really think the professors would visit *blogs* or attend to a recording of a meeting? I was also doubtful that any of them would take the time to do so; the ennui had become entrenched. Blogging to the faculty was something suspect, those involved considered dissenters,

dissidents. Sadly, the reality of the education process meant many students really didn't want to be openly involved. This differed very little from the Movement and the Sixties. It was always a few, that few who risked bank balance and health, who took the bullets or the batons.

Survival had become the main objective.

Many students were afraid of a vindictive faculty clever enough to disguise academic repercussions. Even the questions became tiring: how was one to re-employ the intelligence and passion of senior faculty? In Zetaville, every student could recognise amongst the spectrum of educators those who were tired, those who spent their money on expensive T-shirts and Prada shoes, those who had already checked out and those often marginalised, committed professors struggling to remain enthusiastic and positive. The more intelligent professors did seem to respect the other intelligent professors but there was an undercurrent of inadequacy and disinterest that students did not fail to notice but were afraid of voicing. What defined this disinterest, this lack of intensity? And what were the programmes that could excite the faculty that they so rarely show? What was the answer: a retreat to talk about the failure of student engagement?

I wasn't sure. I have a tendency to put my finger up to my mouth as if in serious contemplation. But I still wasn't sure. Is it possible to teach architecture each year from the same program and merely vary the assignments to suit the mood of the time? Many students, understandably, felt some professors and instructors had not changed their methods or ideologies and what they thought about architecture for two even three decades. Was this a bad thing? Could these professors not instil an engaged education through ideas not necessarily fashionable or contemporary? But the students were right; a kind of nostalgia for known solutions and Modern Architecture of accepted, consistently unchallenged promise did affect the way these professors taught. Pedagogical methods were rarely discussed, rarely changed; New Church became Old Church. True, there were senior professors who could use their own material, whether old or new, and instil in students a necessary enquiring mind. This was pedagogically supported in the cliché: "basic concepts of good design don't change"? But any notion and serious enquiry about the scale and brief of architecture in the 21st. century after its successes and failures in the 20th century seemed further and further away.

If it was necessary to shift to the pedagogies of resistance, how could we suggest this? Would the students advance if they were presented and encouraged to gain more knowledge of the state education system and analyse some of the pedagogical issues

within architecture in more detail? For example, would the readings of a book like Garry Stevens' *The Favoured Circle* offer insight into how deschooling architecture might turn into the advantage of the profession itself? If the students wished for a resistance, how could they retool the workings of the curriculum to allow professors to teach what they find interesting and meanwhile explore new ideas? How would they go about this and how would a school set up the solid foundations and serious thinking necessary for this? It was abundantly clear in Zetaville that not all professors could explore new ideas. Yet did they need to? Some of the professors and instructors approached architecture so differently that it would be necessary almost to map and analyse these differences in relation to the education offered.

Retooling in schools of architecture should not of course be dictated by the apparent disastrous condition of a university like Zetaville. Retooling in fact goes on all the time at many of the more inspiring schools but it can and often does remain either restricted to the elite schools or then marginalised in the unacknowledged work of a few enthusiastic and passionate professors and educators. Le Corbusier is the hero and legend so often used at Zeaville, so often made more iconic if that is at all possible. And yet the reading of Le Corbusier is sporadic, scant and locked within accepted narratives. Le Corbusier was both revolutionary and conservative and over the years there have been many retoolings, but at Zetaville you wouldn't think so.

Zetaville was indeed stagnant; the choice of word was accurate. But it was a microcosm of the profession. To go by visitors and other reports in the journals, the US architectural profession was in a slump of sorts, but why were so few asking for a retooling of education that could help the profession. At least many students who would never enter the profession thought so. But they, of course, to go by the faculty were not even worth listening to. They had become the lazy ones, the dissenters, and when the professors really got angry, I have heard it whispered: "these were the scum of Zetaville. How dare they think they can think about architecture when they know so little and are prepared to accept so little?"

And on it ran.

Was Architecture lucky to have been warded off such students? Was Architecture lucky to get the students so content with the skill of a trained puppet? Just who amongst us in cloud-cuckoo land wearing our black designer outfits, our Prada slip-ons and carrying our spring water bottles is the Devil?

Resistance is always slow, but it begins to appear. One of the students came up with a music analogy. It was good; from ‘commerce’ to ‘grunge’ to ‘post-punk’ and so on back to the ‘neo-sixties’, guitar bands and Hendrix. This is how he saw Zetaville and the faculty, this is how he saw the boredom dripping out of the mouths of his teachers. He was prepared to say it. He felt the cycle of ideology would always be one of echo and rebound. He invented slogans that he was going to put all around the school. He was inspired to lead the fight back slowly. He had just about had enough and, as he slumped into Zetaville for his minimum requirement, I wondered how long he could sustain such resistance without support from others. He spoke of trend and anti-trend, reaction and counter-reaction. Zetaville and its administration were good at this counter-reaction. He knew. He’d been on the student council and seen such comatozed people make and agree with decisions in meetings with faculty that he’d been scarred for life. But the issue may be more complex. And he knew this too. For example the administration just might sometimes be onto the right idea for the wrong reasons; or then pursue the wrong idea for the right reasons? The fascination for an ‘after theory’ world might be just this, he said, it does after all comfort the unthinking and the training programme that the university administration has slipped in instead of serious education.

Whatever happened to that contract between teaching and learning?

He was a bright, one of the brighter, students. Slowly as I saw him deflate, his energy spent, I sensed it was not lost. The new and the revolutionary creep in somewhere else. I recommended once again to the students, Thomas Kuhn's classic “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions” which I had probably recommended endlessly, uselessly. One, maybe two might read it. I had realised they use the word ‘paradigm’ so often that I wondered if any of them understood it, knew where it was from and the significance of this call for the next and the next paradigm, or that Holy Grail, the *paradigm shift*. I remembered what Jacques Derrida said to a journalist in the US who had likened Deconstruction to Seinfeld, the sit-com. “Deconstruction, a sit-com?” Derrida asks incredulously. “You’d better go off and do your homework.” I wanted each and every student to go off and do their homework!

For my part I didn’t tell the students there are no more answers for architecture but that these answers might be re-framed by events they do not witness, in places they are not part of. In other words their ignorance and absence shaped their world too. One of the students sent me an email. She was right. This current malaise – she called it an educational ‘stagnation’, the faculty sees it as educational ‘transition’ - is the

consequence of many years of radical inactivity and rational inertia at the school of architecture and not just a sudden 'explosion'. Any school should take such educational suggestions and concerns in the good spirit they are intended surely, I suggested to her. Are there not serious pedagogical issues here? Can you define them though? Can you voice them? These are issues that may not affect your future but they will affect other students.

During any re-tooling, re-framing of education, it was crucial to stress at all times the need for clarity and intelligence. Insist too, I told her, on constructive pedagogies of resistance and the essential role critical exchange and dialogue can have in the development of the school. It is long overdue, she answered. Another thing: how many of the students were comfortable with uncertainty? Should first year begin with a course on art...not Renaissance art or Greek Art, but art today, art tomorrow in all its messiness and 'incomprehension', instead of the ABC set out by the curriculum committee? Surely to grapple with 'incoherence' and 'incongruities' in contemporary art might be a better first step into the potential world of an architecture that has not been scripted, which is not already in existence? That was when she replied and started talking seriously about her 'lost education' not a 'late-education'?

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I was trying to perfect what is imperfect: the fragment. This is what any good doctors involved in Deschooling call the 'transition strategy'. Sitting in North Wales planning the exit from this part of the world and a return to Zetaville it was cold outside, or at least colder than West Central Texas. I am Architecture, the students said. Wind from the North, or then Siberia and across Scandinavia. If you want to see history at work, I was going to tell the students, close-up, monitor the way the world reacts to the Pope's death and the changing visions and morality that will be re-scripted when the successor is found. For a terrific, almost unreadable novel, but not quite, see Fr. Rolfe's excellent intrigue Hadrian VII. Are Professors misguided into thinking students should design without giving this one further thought? Then I sent the students an email: was this the deschooling email?

I am Architecture. Who is architecture? Are you architecture?

Resist all practicing architects, urbanists and landscape architects. Resist the visually spectacular and intellectually compelling. Resist everything you are expected to

do, everything you have the script for. Resist everything that is inevitable, everything that goes on as it has gone on before. Resist and refuse to inherit the architecture laid out in front of you, come in somewhere that is not quite predicted. Offer new pedagogical and professional ways to understand the theory and practice of resistance to just about everything. Resist proving you too can stand alone, heroic, supreme, the architects of a life unlived and unloved. Resist believing these are the conditions that seduce you into believing you can confront the end of ideology. Resist being left aside in the wake of decisions made for you by those who know little more than you do. Take seriously the end of everything. Resist the propaganda, the way you will be fitted up by the administration to be dissenters. You do not have to be a terrorist to want to change the world or to deny following the world as it is going right now. Resist any future already prescribed. Resist any part of a future architecture scripted by prevailing trends, spectacular projects, heroic masters and the mechanics of obedience. Resist the monograph to end all monographs. Resist snatching at someone else's life that is not yours. Resist and repeat. Resist inaction: if you wish not to participate in strategies, programs and an education already expected of you, do what is not expected of you, do what is not required of you. Resist contemplating whether to align yourselves with conservative, prevailing trends, with a world of architecture based on precedent and anxiety. Identify the resistance available to you. And if contemporary conditions are in a continual state of change, explore the pedagogies of resistance open to you today to think the impossible. Resist the known paths, resist repeating known models and precedents producing the dull competence of works that have already been imagined and created before you. Seek resistance strategies everywhere. Even where they are not! Resistance will grow as will the pedagogies to avoid doing what is scripted before you. Resist arrival, resist tyranny and tyrannizing others, resist places and languages turned into an agenda that you cannot accept.

Resist Zetaville, but begin in Zetaville. Deschool yourselves.

Start again – but for the first time - The Free Thinking Movement.

8

The Death of the Seminar

As teachers we cannot be indifferent to those extra-curricular sources of knowledge which subvert the learning process, change its direction or create alternative histories of their own.

Raphael Samuel Theatres of Memory ²⁷

It was the end of a seminar. In it the students had been encouraged to work through their own education from the moment they entered Zetaville to the current condition they felt about contemporary architecture. They were expected to map their own education, its rise and fall, its promise and predictions. Students grasped this easily from their early expectations at the school of architecture. There were jokes about a de-schooling 'training camp'. They quickly realised how they were trained to assimilate and repeat the school's normative ideology. Quickly, without too much stress, they also realised the demands on their obedience made by what was little more than rote learning strategies. They were aware that a lack of enthusiasm and inspiration changed and mutated as teaching and learning situations became tedious. They knew how to cope with these and often turned 'self-reflexive' – in other words they instantly recognised the educational 'game'. This game became the strategy of negotiating the studios and courses entered. They chose the programs and courses that either suited their mood, fulfilled their intelligence (confirmation bias?) or the odd radical exercise that could 'float their boat'. Did all students play this game, or do some remain oblivious to its mechanism? How important was self-education becoming?

Cloning began there.

Learning to think was about to become secondary to the cloned, trained and tamed 'professional'. When for example does a student start reading and suspecting the (false?) promises or rhetoric of the school (any school)? What are the chances of a serious debate, a serious analysis? There was an obvious running dichotomy between the American architectural profession's (NAAB) tendencies to require the student to learn by all means, to experiment by all means, but ultimately to be 'cloned' for professional service. In this a subtext: a belief that education was redundant if it attempted to widen architecture's struggling professional brief. How quickly students felt they had lost sight of the initial enthusiasm or reasons for studying architecture it wasn't clear, but they really didn't know what sort of professional was implied in their own education. How did the students lose enthusiasm, and when did they read this as the faculty's indifference and intolerance to learning architecture outside their own 'rules'?

The students were honest about being adrift. This reminded me of the very first visit and the palpable, pedagogy of the fatigued. Students felt they were restricted and marginalised without quite understanding why. Often, in underhand ways, they were told that because they knew so little, they were prevented from being invited into the programming and structure of the school's curriculum. They were fodder - mere data - to all intents and purposes. At least they felt this. The conundrum was devastating. Many of the students realised they were actually being educated at the same time as being eliminated from the educational structure. The closing of their architectural minds began from day one for some of them. Not only that; they were being eliminated from having any influence on architecture.

Faced with these issues, it was a reasonable question to ask how students gained inspiration. And if, as many stated, they get so little inspiration, did this feel like a 'slow suicide' where energy and passion gradually leak out until graduation and the choice to leave the pizza-eating days of unsleep and drugs to become a professional serf or clone? Fatigue sets in when? These were serious questions.

Were students being under-stimulated to serve the profession? Were they taught generalised issues to permit shallow debate? What sustained this 'leakage'? What closed off any conversation, any learning in favour of the taught and the routinely instructed? Was the 'normative-praxis' displayed by the school at Zetaville so strong as to eliminate any questioning not to mention opposing ideas? In other words, when do students hit the pedagogical buffers that become architectural buffers? How do students learn to play the system, avoid the 'waste' and get through with minimum pain and stress? Was this the essential zombie-hood that allowed them to conform to some teachers and professors and receive their grades? Were they dumbing down to 'survive' or were they already dumbed-down by self-selection and the Texas State schooling

before they'd even arrived? What would they do if they really did make it to 'serf-city' and the architectural firm?

“Anything else,” they replied looking across the desert of the campus at Zetaville, “anything else but architecture as we know it now?” Who puts up the *firewall* if not the university, the faculty and the administration?

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This slow malaise in the school at Zetaville was uncomfortable. Like a hypochondriac, I was reading the decline in the school of architecture in all the wrong ways. I imagined it was only my fault and I needed but a little cognitive therapy to re-frame everything. Yet the students attempted to voice their concerns. A blog called *Self-education* was created as a place to post concerns about the education received, and the ways the students could fill in the cracks or shift the current system. “As you are thinking about how you would teach a course on architecture history,” it ran “think also about other parts of your architectural education. What would your school day here consist of if you were in control? Why aren't you doing just that?”

Naïve it may have been but the Self-education Blog served a purpose and it occasionally invited the pertinent comment or citation, like the one posted by a student citing Erich Fromm on the state of *silent passivity* from ‘The Art of Loving’ (1956): “Modern Capitalism needs men who cooperate smoothly and in large numbers; who want to consume more and more; and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated. It needs men who feel free and independent, not subject to any authority or principle or conscience - yet willing to be commanded, to do what is expected of them, to fit into the social machine without friction: who can be guided without force, led without leaders, prompted without aim - except the one to make good, to be on the move, to function, to go ahead. What is the outcome? Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. Human relations are essentially those of alienated automatons, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, and not being different in thought, feeling or action. While everybody tries to be as close as possible to the rest, everybody remains utterly alone, pervaded by the deep sense of insecurity, anxiety and guilt which always results when human separateness cannot be overcome.”

The Modern student was equally alienated and this wasn't even the century of alienation anymore. It was becoming clearer, if we took the US administration, if we developed Mark

Twain's idea and included all those criminals in the Congress, Senate and White House, if we considered world politics, the American Century was over. The 21st century looked unlikely to belong to America. The writing was well and truly on the wall, on the screens, on the PDAs: the dream was over. To fit into the Zetaville social machine without friction, the students knew it: they were alienated automatons!

The students were trying to speak about the school of architecture, about the alienation they felt, about the feeling of being utterly alone. No one had spoken about 'Modern Capitalism' for so long. Even Marx was never mentioned, except when a stray professor or student suddenly realised the connection between Le Corbusier and the once-named-now-long-forgotten Soviet Union. The only name that kept coming up was Walter Benjamin; the only strategy - lip service. Why had we lost a whole century and eliminated history with architecture reduced to a numbers game of tuition, grades and jumping through professional hoops.

The students who attended the seminar were about to graduate and leave. One professor or two spoke of these dissenting few who would soon be out of their hair. "They don't do any work anyway," was the riposte. To ignore such brainless flippancy was hopeless. Free Thinking had begun. The students had started something but had to finish it with some dignity. Dissent was not attributable to a small group but part of a larger malaise in the school of architecture and possibly in the country itself. Architecture was as confused as the students, as the Professors, as the Deans. There was an emerging neo-liberal, even neo-conservative approach that had the power to set up a convenient and likely resistance to anything that smacked of a re-awakened or advanced architecture. Anarchy, a concept used recklessly in the Globalisation of International Politics, was what allowed the administration to remain neo-realists. It allowed anything that smacked of speculation, experiment, ideas and new theory to be itself termed 'anarchy'.

Reds on the Campus!

Zetaville students were being boot-camped into favour and obedience. Any advanced architecture seemed to include *les bete noires* of theory, recycling, conservation, agency, activism, sustainability, climate change, globalism, advanced digitalisation and anything that might widen the brief of architecture beyond that of the controlling and dominant ideology. The students began to realise how this hands-tied curriculum virtually ruled out anything that hinted at the experimental or the speculative. Often described as 'antipodal', opposition was deemed unworthy and it became necessary to discover a way to study this. I asked the students to consider all those rhythms that they had not learnt to recognise. How did the collaborative and pedagogical nature of new uncertain programs in architecture become marginalised? What gave them a kind of 'dumb' diversity label on the curriculum? Models of enquiry were narrowing in front of their

eyes. Students lost energy as a more vibrant, discursive enthusiasm for something else besides what they were being taught was so often jeopardised.

The students began to live in fear again and one wondered if this fear had in fact ever really lifted since High School. The somewhat confused and frivolous treatment of *open thinking* or *free thinking* had begun to raise the alarm. Some spoke about the necessity to get this discussion wider and online, in order to take it away from the controlling bodies at their own school of architecture. One student blogged an issue and discussed 'tracing education', citing a piece from the book *mille plateaux*: "I read this passage from Deleuze and Guattari's *a thousand plateaus* and couldn't help but make the connection with the system at work in Zetaville: 'the tracing has already translated the map into an image; it has already transformed the rhizome into roots and radicals. It has organized, stabilized, neutralised the multiplicities, according to the axes of significance and subjectification belonging to it. It has generated, structuralized the rhizome, and *when it thinks it is reproducing something else it is in fact only reproducing itself*. That is why the tracing is so dangerous. It injects redundancies and propagates them. What the tracing reproduces of the map or rhizome are only the impasses, blockages, incipient taproots, or points of structuration.'"

The students sensed it, knew it and vomited it. The faculty mocked such references as D&G trendy, fashionable nonsense without caring for any dialogue. Then the faculty played their air guitars and scoured the Retail Outlets for reduced Hugo Boss and Prada outfits. The school of architecture at Zetaville was in fact now reproducing its own mediocrity as much as the architecture outside was reproducing itself all over Texas through dull normative translations. This was the issue the students wished to address. This 'tracing' had become a staple in the curriculum.

They were sick and sickened!

The Blog posts got more adventurous and in the nonsense of the following post, Zetaville began to explain itself. Architecture had become easy reading, the post began: "I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclyt uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid Aoccdrnig to rscheearch taem at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Such a cdonition is arppoiatly cllaed Typoglycemia :-)-Amzanig huh? Yaeh and yuo awlyas thought slpeling was ipmorantt."

This was Zetaville, this was Architecture!

Triggers reminded the students of Winnie the Pooh and 'Tigger'. Metaphors were edits they could make for themselves. They were changing, just as for Bob Dylan America was changing, it had to change: "I had a feeling of destiny and I was riding the change. New York was as good a place to be as any. My consciousness was beginning to change, too, change and strength. One thing for sure, if I wanted to compose folk songs I would need some kind of new template, some philosophical identity that wouldn't burn out. It would have to come on its own from the outside. Without knowing it in so many words, it was beginning to happen."

It was also happening in Zetaville.

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Around this time the school of architecture's lift was in need of repair. The carpet interior, the lined tomb had as much about it as a transit space between hospital and morgue. Students had begun to pull at a corner of the carpeted sides. Underneath a textured glued timber wall began to emerge. Anything was better than the dull brown coffin carpet and the students began to revel in the removal of the carpet, a little at a time. Whenever they went from the first floor to the second, third or fourth, they could pull more of the carpet away. It was stuck well, so it needed some concentration. No one would see them. CCTV had not yet been installed.

Some students even took the return journey, up to four and back again finger-held-on-the-button-to-avoid-stopping, to pull a little more off. Eventually the interior looked fresher in its undress as it did with its funereal carpet. But something had to be done, one professor remarked. We can't have this. It looks awful. It didn't, but you could see the power game emerging. In Austria or Switzerland contemporary architects would have designed their lift with just that amount of careful distress, but not in Zetaville. The corporate sign was dislodged, the Dean appalled. Committees were suggested to replace the lift interior and designs were mysteriously put forth.

The lift was eventually renovated by Bureaucracy.

The mock revolutionary potential of ripping carpet off the Zetaville lift was lost. Back went clean plastic interiors, a fake floor of fake reality, trimmed steel, a small warning plaque, and the safety of a lift taking you from one floor of Hulen Mall to another floor of Hulen Mall, without breathing. Was this bad maintenance or a scream for a new lift? Or the anti-aesthetic code in need of its corporate aluminium skin? To skin or not to skin? The 'facade police' of Zetaville had introduced the notion of consensus terrorism in architecture. They had produced a dead good solution that had produced a deadly result. And the students knew it. Complexity and

contradiction were two of the big ideas outside architecture that had to force their way back in. *Don't take the lift*, read a sign at the bottom on the ground floor of the school of architecture. *It's not worth it!* Students were learning the shape of resistance, and how to rebuff the accepted narrative. 'Architecture or Life,' one of the students said, 'a lift to zero, or the bored, board game.'

Walking across the Zetaville campus and then onto Chase Manhattan Bank on East Border Street, the song of Interpol, 'Next Exit' came to my mind. How did the words go? "We're not going to the town, we're going to the city... we're going to drag this shit around...." What was the students' next exit? Go figure the following. I posted a list:

- 1 Milan Kundera - The Book of Laughter & Forgetting (see the History of the Blackbird section) consider - angelic laughter/laughter of the devil, consider also Cervantes, Sterne and Brautigan.
- 2 Kundera - The Unbearable Lightness of Being; the notion of coincidence and the confidence of the random - re: USSR/Czech Republic pre-1989.
- 3 Consider adding to/extending the choker's alphabet: provisionality/undecidability/ incongruity/ interiority / exteriority.
- 4 Edward Said – Orientalism: how the West constructed the East and still does...see also Said's many books including 'Covering Islam'. Said died last year. For an interesting (brief) assessment of this see Ahdaf Soueif's Mezzaterra, 'Fragments from a Common Ground' - consider how 'Modernism' re-colonises the common ground!!
- 5 The story of the architecture student and the boss's command - make it Western, well hell, make it Western! And Western it was! Best Western!!
- 6 language & architecture - consider the word for architecture in Finnish "rakennustaide" - rakennus = building (taide = art/skill - the art/skill of building?) consider the untranslatable in building across cultures, consider this at Zetaville.

The students loved lists. Someone also blogged a few quick notes taken during the film 'Derrida':

- 1 an individual's right to privacy
- 2 Heidegger on Aristotle: He was born, he thought, he died! (Is that it?)
- 3 how to love knowing one is dying (eventually) - the impossible confidence of love (Circumfession 1992)
- 4 beware: thinking at work! thinking as an 'action' movie!
- 5 the permanently flawed biography (history?)
- 6 the ear and the other, (1982)

7 Deconstruction - to make 'natural' what is unnaturalised? Deconstruction is not a sitcom - read, do some homework.

8 remember Levi-Strauss: that savage(d) mind or 'thinking-in-the-wild'. (see Edmund Leach)

9 see also The Undoing of Thought/The Defeat of the Mind, Alain Finkielkraut.

10 love is narcissistic –(Points1992)

11 Archive Fever (1998)

12 The secret passions of philosophers: the sexual life of bees, philosophers, architects? a book we all want to read - really?

13 life in Zetaville: exactly what is left out, what is edited?

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Besides the Self-Education Blog, during the semester the students had begun an impromptu ad-hoc bulletin board on the glass screen that divided the faculty administration area from the rest of the school. It was the perfect choice; the fence that divided one zone from the other. It could have developed into a vibrant discussion wall. “The sight yesterday of the beginning of a lively (literal) bulletin board was delightful and reminded me I was possibly in a vibrant school of architecture; it felt like 'coming home'. Please continue intelligently,” I had written to the students. “Getting important relevant issues to the strategic level is important, as the note from Rhizome indicates. Generosity toward the 'other' is as important as stubbornness. To see how ideas shift and indeed should shift when their time comes, consult Thomas Kuhn’s ‘The Structure of Scientific Revolutions’ - Oh dear, how many times have I recommended this to you? Take care with the threshold – you can always come back.”

Discreetly, after a 24hour stint, the bulletin board was cleaned away.

“Behold the window-washer,” one blogger noted, “the ad-hoc 'bulletin board' has been relocated it would seem. The office window has returned to its state of silent passivity. *I cannot help fearing that men may reach a point where they look on every new theory as a danger, every innovation as a toilsome trouble, every social advance as a first step toward revolution, and that they may absolutely refuse to move at all.* Even the words of de Toqueville had been erased, Tippexed out of any short-term memory. No one really knew who did it. No one knew who had taken the cloth and erased the words, pulled down the bulletin board. The students’ comments were treated as unwanted graffiti, acts of an irresponsible mind.

No one said a word.

As they stood pleased with themselves in front of the glass wall, disgruntled young professors and the older ones disgruntled further. They shunted and chortled like old steam trains:

“What do they want, these students? Who are they? They don’t know what they want? And who the fuck is Alexis de Toqueville?” The professors looked rattled and nervous. They shifted awkwardly and behaved like those officials and *apparatchiks* who made sure they airbrushed out Trotsky from the Kremlin Balcony photographs. “Well, well.” they said, “look at that. We have no danger now he was not even present! We’re in the fuckin’ clear again. Students. Fuck ‘em. Nike the lot!” The ‘u’ had changed to an ‘i’. Oh winged Nike; the professors were particularly pleased at the witticism.

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As we moved toward the end of the term we discussed how to close the seminar. At first they discussed an installation concerning the issues that the students felt were dying or had already died in the school. Some spoke of ideas that remained stillborn. What were those ideas that only have a 'half-life' within the school of architecture? How could this type of installation be taken as a dialogue? There was so much indifference and disinterest around the school that few had confidence that an installation would be respected. No one really had the energy to do it and sadly the pedagogy of the fatigued was hitting back. The idea faded away. Energy was already dissipating as the term closed and it was doubtful what would remain. If an installation was attempted, even out in the courtyard, the students needed to present all sides of the situation concerning the education of an architect at Zetaville.

The students prepared the following list, after prompting - clear notions about the ideas they felt may be in danger of disappearing, or have disappeared for whatever reason, from the school’s curriculum. They had constantly pointed out the paradox of attending a school of architecture where issues had to be re-introduced that were already on their third generation in other schools of architecture. What was happening? Had the administration and faculty *deschooled* in just those areas necessary to train obedient souls? Was this the luck of those professors who demonstrated radical apathy and celebrated it? From this a not-so-strange list emerged: Free-hand drawing - Genotype architecture - 2-pt perspective – Microstation - Form Z - Rhino - 3D printing - Dynamic systems - Bio-ethics – Neuro-architecture – Mimetics - paper architecture – Entropy - (Critical) Regionalism – Thesis - Emergent systems – Jargon – Feyerabend - The Fold - Architectural fictions - research – proto-cells - Post-modernism - new materials - Structural Glass - Late Internationalism - Sorenson Squeeze - Pre-fabrication - Born-Again Modernism – Slow architecture - Rapid Prototyping - Scripting - Land Form Architecture - Narrative Architecture – (post) Criticality - History as fiction - Parametrics - GPS & architecture.....

There were many other issues that had a half-life at Zetaville. But everything dripped away. The seminar students sensed death too in a turn away from the conceptual and free thinking. They knew it was inaccurate to speak of any 'after-theory' movement as theory and critical thinking had hardly ever featured in their curriculum. Stress was being put on the quantifiable; the neo-liberal pragmatism was being strengthened. The push toward the technical reminded some students of the neo-conservative politics all around, concept-light became concept-free. Some had gone as far as speaking of the school resembling a Technical College. Only most technical colleges in Texas, many pointed out, were way ahead of anything Zetaville were doing.

Nearing the end of the seminar, in the bar called Waves, many of the students began to relax. The 'Austrian' and the 'Russian' took a drink called the 'bomb'. A small glass of *Jagermeister* herbal liquor was dropped inside a glass of beer and then drunk to the bottom. The Austrian beat the young Russian girl who had difficulty in downing the drink in one. She'd had no difficulty in Moscow doing the same with her own friends, she said. The students began talking about their education. The sight of my cigar probably relaxed them. They asked me what I might do after Zetaville? Why not a book on architectural education, they suggested.

Maybe later, I replied.

Inspired by David Bowie's 'Life on Mars' on the jukebox, they began listing the difficulties they had faced with their professors. Was this ethical? I don't know but it began to echo the general malaise that was disguised in Zetaville. It irked them, they said, that they still had professors who chided them for not following their words and instructions to the letter. They were even chastised for thinking differently, and threatened if they veered from the program. As usual, they all agreed, they learnt quickly how to navigate the course. But there were other confessions. Some professors, they said, without naming names were particularly misogynistic. I didn't even think they knew the word. Some professors I learnt were openly hostile toward the Asians, Mexicans, Costa Ricans; many who had sadly been allowed into the school on the strength of their portfolio only to find their lack of English a huge drawback. "I witnessed another female instructor petulantly chiding a student for wearing a skirt. She commented on another one for using the colour pink in the drawing." It wasn't difficult to agree with this young woman as she concluded: "was this the level of critique one was to be given?" Other professors were more or less forceful. Many, not all, seemed to want to do the thinking for the students and make sure the student followed this. Many, they nodded their heads in agreement as Eric Clapton's *Layla* now boomed across the bar, "made sure the results made them look good as professors, made them look good in juries."

The students were not scathing but gentle.

Many repeated softly: we are glad to be finished. To fail, to experiment, to think for oneself, to expand oneself within architecture had not seemed to be an option in Zetaville. This had been repeated so many times before over 6 years that I wondered the effect on me personally. So much conspiracy, so much calculated gossip and manoeuvring, so much under the table. Just as in Iraq, don't take the lift, pull out now!

*

In the final week at Zetaville, I began walking the campus, sitting on benches, thinking of the profession and education. Was this profession doomed, as some claimed, or was it re-organising its own cultural and aesthetic resistance through schools like Zetaville which would make sure it could go on training students to replicate what it had always taught? The confirmation bias, as psychologists call it. Difficulty was palpable, affected the stomach. I vomited outside facing the University of Texas at Zetaville main library. Back in the school of architecture, there was a program: how to re-skin a building barely 30 years old. The building was the University Library. Times had changed. The heavy brick façade was uninviting. The students proposed double skins, structural glass planes and sun-shading structures. The solutions were all there in the magazine and the atlas of contemporary architecture that the Dean thought should be in every studio as a reference book. Horrified, as he suggested this, I looked through him and all these projects. All reminded me of the sunglasses sold under the brand *Police*.

Students from Texas, from all over America, from Mexico, Asia, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan passed with mobile phones, books, rucksacks, Big Gulp drinks. Squirrels darted out across the sprinkler-controlled manicured lawns, a plane flew overhead, the heavy traffic on the 8-lane highway called Division that actually divided the campus into Art and Sciences was momentarily quiet. It started up again. The dilemma, for me, for many of the students, was not how to start up again but how to kill the seminar? We had to re-think immediately. No one had the time to organise anything outside their own work. The students then remembered one of the lectures given earlier in the 'History of Ideas' seminar: *5 Big Ideas and a Spanner*. It was a kind of stand-up lecture delivered as an outline sketch for a History of Ideas in Architecture. It suggested how history could be introduced as a series of interlocking ideas, as an inter-connective tissue across geographies, cultures, histories and politics. This was an attempt to rescue history from multiple-choice death, and consider the relevance of 'history' to the shaping of architectural thinking in the present and, crucially, to the shaping of the student's own world. The students had to re-occupy the 20th century.

But how to do that?

First change the name. No one understood the word 'spanner'. Too English, monkey wrench, they said. The 20th century could be selectively analysed by considering it under the notion of "5 Big Ideas and a Monkey Wrench". Students threw out as many random, misunderstood, half-understood ideas as they could remember from the last century. These ideas included anything voiced from the students: human rights, fascism, mass production, communism, pop music, the black panthers, modern jazz, space travel, the internet and so on... From this, like a stand-up comedy act, I began to weave an inter-connective tissue from what appeared random. To do this like a good comedian with cue cards, I held to a way of re-occupying the 20th century through the following five big ideas: *Modernism* (incl. modernity, modernisation - progress, equality, democracy and the agendas for social change as the big idea); *Constructivism* (including the Constructive mind, Soviet aesthetics agitprop and propaganda/social mission and Suprematism) which led to the idea of architecture as the paradoxically light but heavily constructed big idea.

After Duchamp?

I asked the question why Dadaism is not necessarily Duchampian? No one answered. I suggested playing chess and R.Mutt's urinal were responsible for art being dumped 'off the canvas'. This was the other big idea that surely led to *Conceptualism*, I suggested.

You would think language was always asking us to be cautious of the way we addressed each other. The students got more than a whiff of language and, learning about the rise of linguistics and Ferdinand de Saussure, they sensed the significance of Semiology and Structuralism; subjects they had taken for granted without knowing anything about their history. No one had heard about the 'open work' and knew little of 1950s literature and other preludes to Post-structuralism. So it seemed natural that *Pluralism and Post-Modernism* was the next big idea we needed to understand. That left us lonely and open, amidst the network of a grandly influential alienated discourse called architecture. No wonder there was talk of 'after theory' as if all this misunderstanding could not go on. The students knew about this latest 'paradigm shift' – or at least the 'jargon' – but were waiting for someone to define it.

Was this the last big idea?

Was it *Digitalism* or was this merely the next paradigm after the one before? We discussed Thomas Kuhn and someone spoke about the 21st century as a computer-aided re-tread of the 20th century. Digital space would become another outer space in the suburbanisation of the mind. J. G. Ballard? No one had read a single book of the writer. There was one obvious thing missing. What was the spanner in the works? Of course that was an English phrase that no student recognised.

“Undoing,” I threw out, “contest, interrogation, self-reflection, whichever way you want to take these. That’s the spanner in the works! That’s the monkey wrench” I remember one student leaving the lecture: “You’ve buzzed me. I’m reeling. I never knew the world could contain itself in just one session.

Can we have more of those?”

Later, the students remembered this lecture when they were trying to kill off the seminar and architecture. “Could you do the same? Could you give us a lunchtime lecture?” one of them asked. “You mean a rapid lecture?” I said. “Yes, something instant and insane, taking on as much as possible in one hour. “Yes,” someone else said, “let’s call it the *Insane Rapid Theory Lecture*.” And so we had the death of the seminar. The students’ challenge was to deliver 30 mini-2 minute lectures in one hour. There was a timekeeper and the lecture topics were to be chosen by another student from a list of 60 prepared from the seminar. As two minutes were up, the next title would be given and the idea was to pass seamlessly from one subject to another, with no pause, no respite. The seminar that began with a reading of Brian Patten’s poem *Little Johnny’s Confession* so died and was closed with a final reading of that poem:

This Morning
Being rather young and foolish
I borrowed a machinegun my father
Had left hidden since the war, went out,
and eliminated a number of small enemies.
Since then I have not returned home.

This morning
Swarms of police with trackerdogs
Wander about the city
With my **description printed**
On their minds, asking
‘Have you seen him?
He is seven years old,
Likes Pluto, Mighty Mouse
And Biffo the Bear,
Have you seen him, anywhere?’

This morning
Sitting alone in a strange playground
Muttering you’ve blundered, you’ve blundered
Over and over to myself

I work out the next move
but cannot move.
The trackerdogs will sniff me out,
they have my lollypops.²⁸

The same poem would also define the irresponsible self. As a professor keen to *deschool* architecture I was working out my next move, just as the students were too. Six years at the School of Architecture in Zetaville. A 'flaneur' ready to take off around the world teaching was my other life-blood. To pass on knowledge, to move it into another realm, to learn to 'lose one's head' - in the Zen sense of D.W Harding 'On Having no Head' - and to leave the question in any student's head - what is worth knowing? are the most important acts we can achieve. Of course knowledge and learning are always in the stage of 'becoming'; they must be to be valid. But remember Jacques Derrida's words when he was asked if Seinfeld was 'Deconstruction': "Deconstruction is not a sitcom; please go away, read more, do your homework." He said it with generosity not arrogance. All of us must do this; do our homework.

And headless, we parted.

My last words to the students at the death of the seminar: If you want to understand your education, understand the conditions for an architecture you might not be taught, keep re-framing issues. Keep looking for how to pass on what you have learnt to those yet to learn. Learn how to 'lose your head', and above all, respect others. Keep reading, keep doing the homework: stay intelligent things will come to you.

And think, freely.

Deschooling Zetaville

Anger can seemingly be made to go away through the cultivation of passivity, but passivity leaves its causes intact all the way down to their foundation. Social justice is not advanced this way.

Stuart Walton, Humanity²⁹

In Texas you can find Paris, Dublin, Archer City, Odessa, Amarillo, Newport, Westport, Eastport, Freeport, Oldport and Texarkana. You can also find Zetaville. Zetaville is a large, sprawling community approaching half a million inhabitants. Zetaville is also one of the campus sites of The University of Texas where the school of architecture sits, known by its nicknames as the ‘panopticon’ or the ‘college of glazed hams’. Zetaville itself, downtown or central, has no real buildings of note, no real thoroughfares of note, no centre of note, nothing of note in fact where there might have been something else of note. Even, and this is no exaggeration, it has no underpasses of note, partly because Zetaville also has no public transportation system. Zetaville, then, is one of those cities in the US that is in permanent exile. More recently there has been an increase in armed response and gated communities. Everyone wants to live there for the very reason that they really don’t live there. Zetaville of course has a history but it belongs to the Indians, or the Mexicans or the Reservationists. Suppressed, the most noticeable part of Zetaville is not part of Zetaville at all. It is the Interstate Highway that is so arrow-straight and convenient that you would not dream of pulling over.

The campus at the University of Texas at Zetaville is also remarkable for not really being remarkable, except for the oceans of parking lots that engulf the university buildings like a circle of wagons. Of the 25000 students, some that live in the bungalows and balloon-frame low rise apartment blocks or condos and all those that commute in from the cities of Dallas, Fort Worth, Richardson, Irving or Plano, one could say that - at a stab - 50% would have a car. Thus in the five or ten minutes before 9'0 clock, before classes begin, you can bet about 12000 cars are driving into the campus and searching for a parking space at the University of Texas at Zetaville.

In the University of Texas at Zetaville there is now a *theory-free* zone. No one really knows it exists but it is everywhere. It says so on the car stickers. You can hear jargon used to describe this condition without the education structure, the administration and its committees quite understanding how an institution gets into this condition. In the school of architecture you can prepare a lengthy paper about ideas, new concepts about learning and how students think, only to be dismissed with the easy phrase: "but what do they do?" The emphasis has long been on 'doing', as if the performative act of seeing drawings pinned up along the corridors of the school of architecture implies teaching has succeeded and learning has occurred. This is far from the truth as most students by year 2 have learnt how to cream the professors and teachers and come up with the requirements for a pass grade.

The fatigue is palpable but the patient remains in denial. The fatigue emerges out of unwillingness to engage inconsistency and uncertainty within the realm of thinking about architecture. Thinking then flat-lines as it leads to a confused dream of the *post-critical*. An awkward phrase, of course, but it belongs to this new *terrain vague* – this zone - evidenced in the discussions between professor and student. There is an impatience that opts for *doing* rather than thinking. This has become a facile neo-conservative environment supported by the dismal lack of dialogue at the highest level in the North American establishment. It is an atmosphere that passes over to the students as they are invited to understand that it might not be worth spending more time thinking than is necessary, if one is to be taught the rudimentary blueprint of an accepted architecture.

If this did not parallel with the current near-perpetual political impasse and pass muster in all university committees and dean-gatherings, this disastrous situation would be revealed for what it is: educationally, an immoral act that condemns students to remain unread, under-achieved and relatively un-schooled. As ideas are accepted without any necessity of active or deep reading, this apparent success is beginning to suit the

professional structure of a discipline – architecture - which has itself become a theory-free, critical-free zone.

Is Zetaville special in this way?

Probably not! But in this way Zetaville school of architecture is the type of institution that accepts the fashionable by default, where pedagogy plays catch up with the present, and administrators manage upwards. It is a teaching environment that knows how to resonate with the fashionable without actually understanding anything of the fashionable, nor the need to resist it. It trends without knowing the meaning and significance of what is happening. Supported by a strong design-based obedience to a professional curriculum, a willed discomfort with theory-as-thinking has emerged. Learning is not only diminished, it is by-passed. Manageable fragments of generalized ‘theories’ are treated like the visual samples of world architecture. Image and text are re-appropriated for immediate use and naturally find their way into studio programs. The result, to go by the ‘disconnect’ between professors and students, is one of an architectural confusion bolstered by a revitalized, theory-free professional obedience

Theory-as-ideas - wider than the demonized French theory - including new structures and mathematics, digital modeling and soft geometry, partial sustainable architectures, emergence, slow architecture or poor architecture, neuro or bio-mimetic architecture, even String Theory and Theories of Everything can all be cunningly mocked and ignored whilst at the same time they trickle in. There may be good reason for this, and many professors are well in possession of the aside and cruel rejection games played on the students’ own thinking potential that can reduce these ideas to nothing. This has the effect of unfairly destabilising ideas which could be thought through and contribute towards the students’ education and architecture itself. Yet as professors and students shift away from the abused theory of the French ‘stars’ and cultural theorists from the post-Marxist critical left, these ideas do begin to creep in by the back door.

The professors who were often so against theory or rather *anti-theory* (that is *non-theory*) in Zetaville begin to catch up with developments over the last 30 years. The system works stealthily. Professors and anti-theorists for example begin to monitor the courses and studios of younger teachers and professors who introduce into their studios: mapping, conceptual art, popular art, Reception Theory, Queer Space, the Frankfurt school, Deconstruction, gender and digital theories and many other ideas. Where a figure like Gordon Matta-Clark was taboo ten years ago his work creeps in to be appropriated by the re-awakened professors.

This is a clever survival ploy in North American and perhaps other universities elsewhere. It is demonstrated in faculty meeting after faculty meeting, in the corridors, in private, and in public. The Zetaville professors generally keep their briefs intact and use these new notions to freshen up an old studio program. Using a tried and tested strategy from the Beaux Arts tradition professors mix and match, thereby re-integrating new aspects into their own 'real architecture' program. When this threatens to lead to questioning the old program and pedagogical brief, some professors however demonstrate unease. This takes various ways of being expressed. Students both know this game and know how to play within it. For these students architecture has not become meaningless, far from it; but they know how essential it is for them to keep the illusion going. It is game on! Students even excuse such behaviour and weak thinking by explaining that this is all part of their learning, because this is exactly what happens outside. "This is how nasty it is outside," they say, "so it's good we learn it inside first!" They speak as if this school is a small-potato prison they need to survive, only to be let out to deal with the cons, snitches and prison wardens on the outside! Hence it is no surprise they nickname their school 'the panopticon'. The notion of 'transparency' has been redefined; students learn to hoodwink their professors whilst the professors hoodwink them. Everyone is out on parole, words no longer mean, images are scarred: blinded! The semi-automatic weapons are smuggled in sports bags.

This is post-decency!

Meanwhile architectural education de-schools and re-schools at the same time. The marginalized, speculative, confessional, avant-garde instructors – young and old - are usually silently mocked whilst students decide their studios challenge them the most. These are the rare studios and courses that even change lives. The result – and this has been repeated throughout the US to go by some students – is a school within a school. We observed this earlier. These 'thinking' studios we might call them – not necessarily theoretical studios – might produce demanding projects, even award-winning student projects but they are generally trivialized. Slowly, after this happens for a period of time, say a decade, the cutting edge, new methods and challenging procedures are further assimilated and appropriated by the other professors and instructors.

This is where the 'after-theory' condition, the theory-free zone, is useful. The anti-theory real-architect professors assimilate and re-absorb this new 'thinking' whilst pretending it is nothing to do with theory. They play catch up in tenure-land. This confirms the master-pupil chain inevitably part of the accepted educational infrastructure.

The result - and students can see this quite clearly - theory-free or anti-theory professors integrate into their own education and hubris what was considered 'frivolous' and 'theoretical' about 5 or 10 years back, and will probably be 5 or 10 years on. Always behind the curve, these are the professors who – politically – can also be cleverly and complacently ahead of the curve. This is the unappetizing cunning seen in American universities and politics at the moment; the notion and characteristic of the neo-conservative who appears to be 'liberal'. It matters not which aspects of theory are resisted - and this has really nothing to do with only French theory – new urbanism, agency and activism, relational architecture, post-production, digital thinking, innovative mapping, interactive and performative architectures and so on. The autonomy of the professional world of architecture both demands this resistance and its own *jeekyll and hyde* game with itself.

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It would be naïve to think Zetaville is the only university to work like this and of course not all professors or teachers operate in this way. Ultimately it matters little though who the Dean or Provost, or Vice Provost or Chief Administrator is, or what sort of narratives a Dean or Director canvasses for or is attracted by. To triumph and feel content within this 'theory-free' zone and the market conditions, architecture is reduced to a thin game that tends to announce itself as professionally relevant, responsive to the public and open to self-congratulation. It resembles the 'told you so' attitude but in fact it merely means those in education who have stayed outside most of the development of the last 20 years in architectural thinking are now applauded for not changing their minds. A clever paradox, this comforts at the same time as appearing to move the curriculum and students forward.

In fact it becomes *inauthentic* whilst representing itself as authentic.

This confused notion of authenticity allows the school of architecture to dump on *theory* (and everything then connected with 'theory': substitute 'thinking' or 'criticality') once again, whenever it suits this decay. The phrases can be heard and are clear: "We never thought much of that French theory anyway.... I haven't read a single work.... We were glad we didn't even bother with it.... No content in that.... Just imagine what we have saved...and so on." Success is an illusion. An intuitive disinterest and ignorance serves the community of the unread, the unreading and the unchanging well.

But does it?

Self-fatigue often shifts architecture into the next useful and imagined paradigm but always leaves a residue of misguided creativity, damaged myth and a lost reality. As an increasing fascination spread during the 1980s to unwritten architecture, paper architecture and crossover inter-disciplinary cultural and critical theories, a resistance was essential, if confused. But this resistance began at the very moment the fascination with writings, theories, and self-promoted manifestos took over. When Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, amongst others, were consuming theory, shifting triggers for architecture, and assembling their telephone directories, like the Beats in the late 1950s, they were also setting up the conditions for resentment and retreat.

They could fly. Others crashed and burnt.

Back in Zetaville Texas, this resistance began to group itself around the re-assessment of Le Corbusier and a healthy derision of anything slightly whimsical or sculptural; in other words to those in the know and coded, anything done by Frank Lloyd Wright or the like was mercilessly derided. The attraction to the loosely consumed and flattened idea of *After Theory* began to present many a faculty with a new pedagogical strategy. What was laziness, an idle engagement with contemporary architecture, became an accepted way of mopping up the last thirty years. The degree zero of tectonic poetry, the grandly regulated neutrality, and a sophisticated Home-Depot aesthetic began to re-script Mies van der Rohe endlessly. It still does.

To do was to be.

Meanwhile this re-assessment gave credibility to old beliefs and helped debunk the new and lost utopian ghost projects even more. The re-appropriation of the selected maestro Corbusier took the form of loaning, then abusing the notion of ‘transparency’ and ‘legibility’. Whilst Colin Rowe, John Hejduk, Alan Colquhoun, Robert Slutzky and Kenneth Frampton could re-assess Le Corbusier’s work, the intellectual apparatus they used to do this was not however disconnected to current philosophy and cultural theory of the time. ‘Theory’ – whether various Ideal Villa reassessments of Le Corbusier or New York Five projections – was altered and useful only when it challenged the narratives of a wider and wilder architecture than the Zetaville professors expected.

Already an arrière-garde, a resistance turned into a retreat in the 1980s and this type of thinking became too local too quickly. For example, a Cornell-inspired ‘collage city’ helped re-script everything that had gone wrong with modern architecture and urbanism. Different revisions and re-awakenings occurred all over the USA. The appendages and experiments of Gehry and Libeskind, Hadid and Tschumi, Absolute Architecture, circa

1980s, were quietly and not triumphantly – ‘I told you so’ – sidelined until later. This was all reinforced by the useful umbrella Post-modernism; abused and scarred on take-off.

Inflatable escape chutes when landing.

It needs stressing here; most architects and professors in Zetaville usefully – or so they imagined - stayed away from the deeper philosophical constructs of Postmodernism. None of them, or very few, would have ever consulted *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean Francois Lyotard, neither would they have considered or given any time to the notion of ‘comparative validities’ expressed by a thinker like Zygmunt Bauman, from his work ‘Intimations of Postmodernity’. Postmodernism was butchered and turned into an unthinking style game and remained so after an oh-so-short but intelligent start. Students however took these ideas differently as they began to make formative inroads into their structure of feeling about architecture and their intellectual relationships to architecture. Often students were at odds with their professors and reacted against the aesthetic blueprints their professors invited them to follow. The intellectual apparatus of the professors was cooked; distorted by fading promises and an unchanging Decorative-Functional dogma, a constructive vision was seriously marred by spiced-up, unthinking, post-modern devices.

The intellectual apparatus of the students was raw, potentially disruptive. Their enthusiasm for a passion similar to what their professors once demonstrated in the 1970s or 1980s meant they would entertain new ideas and had the right to do so. This raw-cooked theoretical and pedagogical cocktail, which passed into architecture during the 1970s and 1980s from linguistics, structuralism and semiotics, entered into most universities during the late 1980s and 1990s. The runaway notion of *reading architecture* stemmed from anthropology and sociology and the theories around reading culture and reading social trends. George Baird and Charles Jencks edited ‘Meaning in Architecture’ and assimilated and ran with many contemporary critical theories. These were topical and often confusingly introduced into the wider pragmatic architectural discourse in schools of architecture. That few understood these ideas (just as in Norberg-Schulz’s *Intentions in Architecture* back in the early 1960s), that very few used these sorts of ideas immediately did not stop them spreading, disseminating and – inevitably - being flat-lined into thin architectural transfer.

A culture of immediacy took over.

Zetaville was not spared this immediacy either. Doubt this, and you doubt the way cultural theory has clashed with a history beyond its own contract. The curriculum in

schools of architecture was out of kilter, but few knew how to right it, if indeed it needed righting. All became meta-language; all became fictive. In the university, a professional structure became legible by shifting parameters or, in more colloquial language, this cocktail of structuralism and post-structuralism made it easy to shift the 'goalposts'. The 'meaningless' at this stage, in an architectural curriculum, could be returned and then actually, mockingly retrieved from being meaningless. So 'theory' – or a version of it that began to include thinking, conceptualising and self-reflection, indeed anything pejoratively considered 'abstract' – could be accepted at a University like Zetaville if it was used to alter or negate other theory. And then it need not be called *theory*, it could be called 'authentic' action.

Full circle to that useful pragmatism known as 'professional practice'!

Yet there is no hiding it, the cloak and dagger disguise games played within Zetaville; architecture were as much about mysticism and the market as they attempted a return to rigorous, practical thinking in the real art of architecture. The result of this mysticism resonated in almost all universities in America and Europe at the end of the 1990s. Professors who might so wish to return to the realness of architecture some 20 or 30 years on in their careers had in fact not really understood the raw, disruptive side of the students' understanding. You would hear them laugh awkwardly and turn everything into a postmodern joke. Underneath their tailored black outfits and savvy suede T-shirts, they were sweating. The pressure-cooked intellectual apparatus closed off so quickly and refused to consider 'theory' in any serious way. Complaints from students about the laziness and superficiality of their own professors began here. Immature in the face of their professors' often willful and whimsical design-based attack on new architecture, students took refuge in the immediacy of an attractive but often confused theory.

The situation blurred even more at Zetaville.

The Post-modern debate which should have led to a serious exchange about architecture, the curriculum, grand narratives, epistemes and pedagogical strategies never happened. There was a hiatus that resulted, in the beginning of the new millennium, in these 'after-theory/anti-theory' alibis for the comfortable narrative of a continuum in modern architectural development. Not unreasonably, this allowed a sophisticated thinness to reinforce the regulating passion for a Modern Architecture that was once – in heritage and resurrectionist terms - its 'solid good self'. The American architectural profession would be satisfied: some universities could still be relied on to train micro-serfs and cad jockeys.

Others beefed up their Peace Corps!

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Zetaville was like a disruptive, dyslectic child in the classroom. Satisfied that it need only cursorily read if not ignore books and theories, the curriculum demanded little reading and a concept-free thinking strengthened arbitrarily. Encouraged by large classes and the multiple-choice question-answer exam, the situation became unbearably trite and remarkably slight, almost harking back to the late 1950s crisis in American education. Much of this left the school in drift and denial. Any understanding of history was doomed to be replaced by rote learning. Anthologies of theories, manifestos and a world atlas of contemporary architecture offered all the models necessary for this mimesis. All that remained necessary was to teach how to copy, but copy well, adding a flourish here and there as Viollet Le Duc had set out in his own *Dictionnaire Raisonné* (1854).

And of course the school of architecture at Zetaville, just as anywhere, had its own internal ideological battles; battles fought over computer software, CAD, laser printers, studio format and the naming of courses in the curriculum; battles which could only be categorized and defined by an understanding of this loose and abused theory. A redefined Corbusier school would use the necessary scaffold from Cornell onwards, to keep the narrative fresh. Coded and re-coded, a misappropriated carnival and cognitive tectonic strain crossed with 'critical regionalism – the art of doing, placing and situating - would re-assess Mies, Aalto and Siza and appropriate serious critical work and prejudices held by architects as useful as Moneo, and critics as consistently brilliant and misunderstood as Frampton. The marginalized amorphous group of Third and Fourth Generation Modernists, once inspired by an expressive Organicism were updated by Aalto's rehabilitation in the 1990s and then helped shift architects like Gehry and even Richard Rogers to swerve and take on the sustainable material and the digital curve.

Elsewhere, beyond Zetaville, these re-assessments of the softer world encouraged tacit critical camps to develop their different discourses and programmes influenced by French theory, by Late Marxism, by Cultural Theory, by Chaos Theory or Digitalism. These were played off across curriculum meeting and curriculum committee. Diluted in a Texan desert, this began to define the way communication within the university structure, within schools of architecture, was misunderstood, the way IT was used as another part of the retreat within the architectural profession and education. Pluralism narrowed itself

into an acceptable anti-theory fog, and even a self-confessed anti-intellectualism was always playfully referred to in Texas as that *theory-free zone*.

Hence the stickers began to appear in the land of race car ya-yas!

‘Theory’ became a dirty word and students could be told in no uncertain words that they could not possibly consider a level of conceptual thinking before they had been taught, directed towards, and inculcated in, the other architecturally-real and essential professionally-sound concepts. And so the spectre of a third or fourth year architectural student who might be introduced to the morphyic sport of widening the brief of architecture had to be taught all over again to ‘think’. But by then the students were often told that they hadn’t learnt enough to develop such thinking. Students would then hit the contemporary Catch 22 double-bind world, and the retreat from theory and thinking at Zetaville began to demonstrate alarmingly serious cognitive effects.

Not only had this drifting and educational impasse amputated free and serious thinking during the 1990s, it began to allow weak blueprints for neo-conservative architecture of little more than facade strength and theatrical sign.

The double bind goes on!

But the condition is now circular and dangerously trapped. A confused and doomed future for this type of closed-thinking, professional corporate and consumerist architecture, ensures a movement, any movement develops a fatigue. Pedagogically this becomes a system yearning to be de-schooled. Whether vague theoretical ideas become fashionable or not in the university, there is no doubt that they influence each and every professor and student in some way. Carefully, the way professors and students can retreat from theory matters. The way ‘theory’ is resisted controls the curriculum development. And even if there is a total suspicion of abstract ideas, poetic and conceptual thinking, professors and students are conditioned by the ‘redundancy’ of these theories within their lives. The pedagogic structure which passes for a curriculum is in fact a *mélange* of ideas from past dogma, recent contemporary theory and confusing materialism and philosophy. This emerges as a drafted and wayward curriculum.

A troubling uncertainty of certainty.

Today there is such a desire to be hip, cool and nonchalant that I wonder if we can extricate ourselves before we drown. Those with a little more grounding in life must be looking on and seeing the death of their sincerity and passion disappear in these easy structures, in the plazma screens that will take over their vision. We are, they feel, in control, but only just. But I cannot and must not speak for others. Myself I admit to miming a life, keen to offer some thinking if only it allows me to think for myself.

All students, not only the brilliant assimilators, replicators or freer thinkers, the opportunists, the indifferent and the cynical know how to negotiate such a failing curriculum. They know how to select courses, electives and studios to gain the necessary credits to pass and achieve their degree. To pass in this case would then not be to successfully explore their own thinking, their own developing position and understanding within architecture, nor would it encourage an attitude to this architecture, the profession or discipline. To pass, as then encouraged by the deans and daddies, by the administrators and a university heavy on the quantifiable, on assessment strategies and performative outcomes (those measurable 'deliverables', So phoney! Holden Caulfield would say!) is to perform to the known script, an outdated model of the profession set out already in the first few obedient months of the students' early instruction.

Close Zetaville now if this is the case!

The architectural students awarded in such a systematisation of mimesis and copy, are generally those that perform, even out-perform their professors and instructors. Many moonlight for their professors, digitally keeping them relevant whilst the professors are far, far behind. Many students also leave to take up positions in offices that their professors would not wish for, but would have liked to take some years earlier. Here in the unenlightened but factory environment of the big city corporate farms, drilled obedience with a sparked brilliance is of best use. This might be in Dallas, Miami, New York, Toronto or Berlin. Professors will then sit in faculty meetings wondering what all the fuss and talk of *deschooling* is about, because their only contact is with the students who followed the rules and return to their alma mater as successes, thereby offering a perfect model of the continuum.

The replica survives, the myth and vocation of a once-favoured architecture survives too, and goes on to produce more replica architecture until these students, now successful architects and partners of their own firms, return to their old school to begin teaching, or handing out the awards like pizza at a graduation ceremony.

Left out of this scenario is the more obvious and long-recognised observation that architecture is as open-ended as ever, is exploratory and speculative, it receives its new impulses from challenges set from within but also just as importantly from without, from science, research and many other disciplines. Adaptive use of expanded skills and thinking, an acquired new skill set of conceptual thinking and cognitive imagination is not easily taught in a school so focussed on the right approach, the linear and the narrowing of excellence to formal games. The accreditation process, in the US, generally supports this trimming as its own framing selects schools to perform for the agendas required; a well-rounded, balanced and sound curriculum is often the result of a heady three days of an intense artificial display of comprehensive skills and the rhetorical fidgeting of a sound but fake design education. Anyone witness to accreditation procedures will recognise the skill at which the known is recognised to be that which is so dearly required.

The language speaks for itself.

‘Quality-indicators’ become a positivistic nightmare as they are paired against those ever-present desires to measure ‘success’, whatever success means under these circumstances. Questions are asked, so general, so vague they rarely get passed the first committee meeting: what do we mean by Design? Words like technology, digitalization, new fabrication and sustainability are used to re-script ill-defined parameters like Design Education. Community Engagement is expected to excite students without it being integrated into the students’ vocabulary or activism. Any attempt at a liberal, progressive education, freethinking or the wider expanded agenda and agency of architecture has reached a point in Zetaville where it is considered ‘flaky’ and un-rigorous. Easily mocked, it is set apart as neither engineering nor a piece of fine art.

The obligations of a professor, the engineered role of the client, contractor, investor or opportunist ensures a discipline of muddled if not obscure processes. Little or no amount of drilled instruction, whether the emphasis is on design pragmatics, self-help, design-build, sustainability or structures will clarify that process, will ‘clean-out’ the profession of architects. It looks likely in the 21st century that this process will get more and more obscure, will be redundant to those issues in economics, information technology, politics and social affairs that now impress so weightily upon architecture.

We can observe the students reaching their final years, having learnt to negotiate every year, designing as they often say, the same building, a film institute or a museum, over and over again, learning nothing of the programming or conceptualising skills

necessary to participate in a deeper architecture and make a difference in society. They learn the skill of meeting every studio and performing to the known. The logistics and demands of teaching large numbers are often given as the reason why lectures are delivered as surveys, why 'survey' is even a valid educational tool, why catalogues offer simple objective testing and multiple-choice grading systems, the quick and brief viva, is detailed information lifting little above the skill at memory. Increased in performative terms if one keeps to the rules, students write in the spaces provided, as succinct as business men or women are in their PowerPoint presentation which explicitly puts onscreen what comes out of their mouths.

Convergence on the known world becomes safe.

The student is congratulated for conforming to the future that is already prescribed. Told to understand the myth of architectural education by a jury system of experts discussing their own egos, the students are also told to dress their part, avoid flip flops and be the professional they are supposed to be the moment they step outside the school. Insistence on drill alone, on narrowly framed once-passionate but unaltered visions of teaching, a skill and passing on an expertly derived architecture of form, design and envelope only, is assumed valid for the future. This is the disaster which Ivan Illich warned about. When this happens institutes have a choice.

Close or deschool: then open up to the counter-institute.

*

Close Zetaville now. Lay everyone off. Make all professors redundant, and turn them out onto the elysian fields, the prairies and deserts of their own making. In the very gaming of negotiating school, or performing to predetermined solutions set by unchallenging professors and ideologies, of learning to outdo the school's requirements whilst doing what each professor wants, in the apparent cynicism of such dulled and devastatingly narrow education path, resistance must come alive. The majority of students, those condemned to find work replicate the education frame and versions of an architecture drilled into them, and those seething with new ideas, opinions, unformed and ill-thought but exciting ideas, have begun to recognise the cul-de-sac in their own education. If it has not led to an outrage right now, then this is merely a matter of time. The pressures to succeed are at present too heavily weighed by the pressures to conform and survive. The politics of fear and reluctance, the threat implied in this, the intimidating tactics of some

instructors begins at school. Until the conditions are removed, outrage will remain unharnessed, muddled by the usual bribes of family, security, home and non-risk.

Safety is uppermost but not for long.

The more global systems and situations meet this ignorance brought on by narrow visions, the more cheated students will be. The more Globalism brings in the uncertainty of increasing oil prices and damaging the world's resources, the more security becomes insecure, the looser these frameworks will become. The School will be unable to control this development.

And Zetaville will be the first to fall.

Eventually, as there must be, there will be nothing to lose. It is then we will begin to realise just what sort of transition and structured anarchism will be necessary to give architecture the exploratory, open-ended vibrancy it deserves to make it different from the struggles and games of the 20th century. To respond to the contemporary condition, if it must resort to games, it must then redefine even those games. There is nothing worse than the arrogance games of the bug-filled old professors intimidating students into believing they know better an architecture that has failed so many times.

Zetaville will be amongst the first to close, or then the doors will be barricaded. Be assured, something will happen. For *deschooling* can only go on so long until re-schooling takes its turn and re-structures the very tired processes that appear to need accrediting. Yet I wonder, too, if it is too late. Here in Zetaville, the mind is closed, the visions are narrowed; the nervousness rising. Life is framed and famed, so much so that we are left to point out to students that, in all this urgency and concern to be cool, there is only one destination, beyond cool.

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Later, mumbling to myself in the corner of the studio where a new city called Zetaville is being planned, with a mind as dark as the espresso I am drinking, I hear someone approach me:

“Beyond cool, I like that. It’s so...it’s so...”

The student could find no other word at that moment.

“Wicked” I replied, as if stuffing chocolate into a disused mailbox.

“Yes, wicked, I like that too,” the student replied not knowing it was a slang phrase used in Britain, abbreviated to an alko-pop drink called WKD and just about to go out of fashion.

Was this *Beyond Cool* the Next Paradigm or the One before the Following Paradigm? Or is it *Post-decency*? Have not architects always exchanged ideas and improved upon previous ideas, mediating their own role, asserting their own originality within a prescribed system, whilst disguising the loaned world for the singular (original) world? Was all this at work in the students' brain and working so cleverly by replication? If so does this help us understand how ideas survive, are replaced, mutate and return in other guises? Did Modern Architects from the last century negate collaboration whilst being involved in the greatest conspiracy of all: hallucination?

Some months after graduation one student contacted me and needed a reference. Over the years a few have done this. I always manage a few lines. I invent a real talent for these young people who have so often become indifferent, disaffected and in danger of losing the real talent they still have. It goes something like this.

I leave this for them all: 'Known to me from our current seminar at the University of Texas School of Architecture in Zetaville, this student was one of those unique students who can not only absorb an idea (conceptually and practically) but knew how to run with it. This is essential. Self-disciplined and witty, the student's approach was exemplary and urgent. An ability to move architecture across disciplines, to use photography and film, made for an inspiring student and augurs an excellent future. Pre-digital, digital or post-digital, after-theory and before-another-theory, whatever paradigm you wish to wait for, students like this are out on their own. Her background and the knowledge gained from transplanting life from Moscow to Zetaville to Dallas, Texas, offered critical routes into projects and solutions that other students do not see so quickly. Unafraid of experimentation, this is the student that also knows how well to control her own deschooling. Too far can be too far, but also not far enough, and this student knows this. We are speaking here of a rare critical intelligence, untamed, bright and extremely alert. If I was hiring I would do so immediately. I hope you do not think it rude of me to say it, I suggest you do too. Take this student, take this architect! There are so few left!'

Could it then be the time for architecture to be disestablished?

We are beginning to understand why it might be necessary to close down a school. To put a line under everything there, close up shop and just disappear. The studio-system, a long-respected method of inculcating students of architecture, perhaps should also be de-schooled. The politics of reluctance and the pedagogy of resistance have been gaining ground. Professors are (mis)guiding schools into a future of their own making, a future reluctantly taking on the present, but a future threateningly close to its own past.

To close off is not easily achieved, yet that is what is happening at Zetaville. Nothing holds innocence so much as this desire to remain uncontaminated, uninfluenced and un-abused. Nothing is less innocent than a 'degree zero.' If you think this is back in the past, forget it. This is the position right now in the University of Zetaville. Zetaville is flat-lining. And if you think Zetaville is only in Texas, forget it. From the desert to the prairie, Zetaville is everywhere and nowhere (baby)!

We used to read books!

.....all panoramic in their banality, cheaply sentimental, profoundly shallow, providing asylum for emotional imbeciles, but that's the way we are; like most people in the phone book. Not Greek heroes or Renaissance scholars. For us, the coolest translation of Catullus comes nowhere near the Drifters' 'Save the Last Dance for Me.' **Richard Neville Playpower**³⁰

Architects, it is said, often with a comical nod, don't read, they turn the pages. Is this a myth, this un-reading architect? Professors and architects themselves laugh at this, as do students in their own way. But they too all turn the pages, and all stare into the mindlessness of a deeply conservative profession and a directionless discipline. Have we forgotten the references and books of the world, past and present, the stories that make and re-make our imaginations? Have we neutered the insights available for us to make further insights, and possibly save ourselves from ourselves? If architects, professors and students really don't read that much – and this is probably true – what effect has the last half century had? There is no doubt the last few decades have offered architecture a series of books, writings, theories, anti-theories and ideas that have emerged, whether we are in any agreement with this or not, from reading. Further, the last half century or so has introduced to many architects, educators and students the notion of reading: reading culture, reading fashion, reading politics, reading architecture, reading life, reading indifference. Reading is meaning, whether we slip into something more comfortable or not. Which means surely we are presented with a paradox? Much of the development in contemporary architecture – questionably spectacular, challengingly thin and sensationally gratuitous at times – has been supported by a set of readings which have now become part of the promise and prejudices of that self-same contemporary architecture. Theoretical anxiety aside, the pretence is high, as is the 'archobabble' which is not going away despite appeals for a Post-Critical, After-Theory world or the comfort

of a Theory-Free zone. We need reading, like theory, to breathe, if but to breathe the zero in us all. We need it for self-reflection. We need it to invite and then force us into a new awareness of our own selves. We need it for the anarchic practices that keep us from being our own worst enemies. Yet if this is the case, and we really do need reading the less we do it, what happens to those today who wish not to read much? Are they 'hanging' until an intense bookish theoretical period finally passes? Or are they missing out on participation, collaboration, and shared worlds which are trying to take the ideas and thinking of architects more seriously? Why should the architect be listened to? Who considers architects thinkers? Why should architects have a voice? To read or not to read: if architects wish to be taken seriously as agents, thinkers and doers, would this not require them to be aware of the ever-changing over-stretched and over-spun ideals in architecture?

Over-reading, over-interpretation, over-done!

Usually, arriving at Dallas Fort Worth airport in the last decade and meeting a blanket of warm air, I am relieved. And though I was committed to this school of architecture at Zetaville in Texas – teaching alongside writing is my life-blood - I generally avoided commenting on more pressing debates and concerns in the school. I chose however to break this rule in a lecture or two, though I continued to speak in code, like a good MI5 officer. I continued a passion to understand ideas not fully formed, a passion – necessarily blind at times - to understand where architecture might be going in the 21st Century. Architecture surely had a right and an urgency to be different from the last century. It had a right to struggle to define its respect to, but difference from, the immense legacy and shadow left by the last century. This left the educators, the professors, the faculty and students at the school with the obvious question. Can they free themselves from it, from this immense, self-drowning legacy, from the masters that engulf them? Do they need to? To survive and become architects, will Zetaville – professor or student - need to?

And will someone ever write a book about this?

DESCHOOLING ARCHITECTURE

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9 The Phoney Island of the Mind

10 iDeath



n.a.x.connah

roger connah

what is to be said can never be said again and if so, then differently – the same goes with biographies and the schools attended, visited or escaped:

Cherry Grove Primary and Junior School, Boughton, Chester; Ellesmere Port County Grammar School, Ellesmere Port; Bristol University School of Architecture; Cambridge University School of Architecture; Cambridge University Department of Education; Jesus College Cambridge; Oulu University School of Architecture, Finland; Jyväskylä University Department of Aesthetics and Art Education, Finland; Tampere University Department of Architecture, Helsinki University Department of Comparative Literature; Helsinki Technical Institute Department of Architecture, Finland; School of Industrial Design, Helsinki; Helsinki Art Academy; Edinburgh University Department of Film Studies; Jamia Millia Islamia University, Mass Communication Research Centre, New Delhi, India; National Institute of Design, Ahmadabad, India; Delhi Trade Fair Authority School; Delhi School of Architecture; Ahmadabad School of Architecture; The JJ School of Art, Bombay; Holywell High School, Holywell, North Wales; Buckley Junior School, Buckley, North Wales; Threeburnford School of Scottish Dancing, Oxtou, Berwickshire; National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan; Beaconhouse University, Lahore; Indus Valley School of Architecture, Karachi; University of Texas at Arlington, School of Architecture; University of Texas at Houston, Gerald D Hines School of Architecture; Texas A & M University School of Architecture; Carleton University, Ottawa, Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism; Lebanese American University, Beirut-Byblos, Lebanon; The Royal Institute of Art (Architecture & Planning), Stockholm, Sweden; The Raketa Academy, Stockholm; The Ruin Academy, Taipei; The Sauna Academy, Helsinki; The Red Mountain Academy, Helsinki....

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- ¹ Edward Bond, *Theatre Poem & Songs* Eyre Methuen 1978, p 138
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- ⁹ Paul Goodman, *Growing up Absurd*, Vintage, New York 1960.
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- ¹² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, Continuum, 1997.
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- ¹⁴ James Howard Kunstler *The Geography of Nowhere, The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscape*, Touchstone, New York, 1994
- ¹⁵ Stuart Walton, *Humanity, An Emotional History*, Atlantic, London, p.73
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- ²⁰ Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*, Penguin, London 2004
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- ²³ Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, City Lights, San Francisco 1956
- ²⁴ cf *I am Architecture*, ed: Connah. Zetaville Press. Texas, 2006
- ²⁵ Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, OUP, New York, 1995, p.105
- ²⁶ freely adapted from a typical address given to UTZ students on Graduation Day, 2003-2005.
- ²⁷ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Verso 1996 p.15
- ²⁸ Brian Patten, *Little Johnny's Confession*, Allen & Unwin, London 1966
- ²⁹ Stuart Walton, *Humanity – an emotional history*, Atlantic, London 2004 UK. p.59
- ³⁰ Richard Neville, *Playpower*, Paladin 1971

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