

Chapter 1 : THE CITY REVISITED | The Subversive Imagination: Dispatches from the American Frontier

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Looks of friendly intoxication turn jaundiced. This is as far as I got. First, I have no idea about how this whole Wall Street culture operates. Because of this, and despite my ignorance, I came away with a rather startling realization: What impressed me most negatively was a snapshot of what most of us seldom see and only hear about. What can be fathomed is how the frog allows itself to get boiled in water as temperatures slowly rise. Thousands and thousands of highly skilled and educated people, all dressed in the same expensive dark suits, toting the same briefcases, constantly meeting in glass rooms over large, expensively built tables made of endangered wood, drinking from lidded Starbucks paper cups, holding I-Pads while shaking hands, exchanging familiar phrases in code learned in law school, adjourning again only to find more meetings in more glass rooms. And again, what impresses me most is the sheer number of those doing the same thing all at the same time while chasing money. As far back as John Adams told his wife, Abigail, that there was no time for art, refinement, and leisure: The country was to be defended, and, to be saved, before it could be enjoyed. Philosophic leisure and literary pursuits were all necessarily postponed to the urgent calls of the public service. But this film amplifies this to a new level, to another plateau an unexplored mental universe. It almost convinced me that the human race, at least in the city conference room, has finally reached its desired goal to become genuinely androidic, computerized, cold and lifeless forms in blue suits. No one shows a patina of moral substance. He simply does not exist. The stigma of fellowship, tenderness, and devotion is not just taken for granted, it is implicitly celebrated. The theme is not about the absence of, and the effort to regain, character and integrity. The real casus belli of real wars through time is never ever really addressed, just its geopolitical, economic, and megalomaniacal excuses. In other words, the dilemma itself is not just about corporate America. Summary predations, ambushes, entrapments and smokescreens are all part of our social-psychology as a civilized people never discussed at length because of what it says about us. Success by definition now precludes all things which might resemble a character flaw. The curriculum vitae details only the features of a machine. Weakness by contrast is construed as not having the instincts of cold predation carefully euphemized in friendly lingo. Old-New friends gone and forgotten. This is why in the highest and most formal echelons of business everyone is on a first-name basis. He never gets too attached to anyone. We aspire to the ways of the corporate junkie now.

Chapter 2 : The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Responsibility - Google Books

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During those times I lived in several complexes and restored Victorian homes converted into apartments. And one of the most interesting features in the heart of the city was what happened after 12 AM. Young and old, I eventually caricatured them in the manner of a distinct style and appearance: Just before dawn they would disappear again, slipping into their small buffet apartments with the parqueted floors, Tiffany lampshades, and ornately etched glass windows. And generally speaking many were tormented in various ways. But my personal impression in the end was vastly different. First of all, those were biases judged by standards requiring different behaviors altogether, ones that automatically dismissed what they were doing which then only added to their torment. In fact these were beings doing incredible work on their own time, in their own inimitable ways, even if they were unconscious of it themselves. This community would influence me so deeply that it would leave me fascinated about the inner city from there on. In time I would mentally reconstruct a storybook village from my imagination filled with characters, corridors, and levels that would rival a Borgean library. So I went alone. No doubt, this was a world comprised of a certain temperament, a state of mind – not unlike democracy and safety, or fear and evil. It was what one made it. They needed solidity and empirical assurances written into the rules of social comportment. To suggest that reality was merely an idea, a kind of mental conspiracy, was a one-way ticket into that subterranean lifestyle and nocturnal hiding. This was and is its nature to create through its imaginative powers and its will to keep changing. The rural community by contrast is all about the past – preservation, history, nostalgia, the stopping of time. The city is the exact opposite – speed, fluidity, the future, nothing anchored down. Its landscape is purely mental and creative, a unified field of vision, and a topography changing with the winds of innovation. With this naturally comes imagined landscapes within landscapes, a city within a city. What this means is that the urban imagination takes off on a myriad of trajectories. Therein lie endless revelations just prior to transformation. It is also rooted in the ground, a geography. The Latin word for the sacredness of a place is *cultus*, the dwelling of a god, the place where a rite is valid. *Cultus* becomes our word for culture. This makes it almost human. Innovation keeps the city alive and yet constantly threatens it because of endless changes. This has historical precedence. For instance, the city brought in railroads which facilitated mobility, which facilitated new markets in newer ports of trade, which kept progress moving, which constantly threatened efforts to lay down stakes for too long anywhere. Hence, the frenzied need to keep inventing to renew itself, to appear like a new settlement indefinitely. The first real modern city was Paris, which made it the archetype for all cities, the consciousness of industrial-technological man – but also man the creator, the aesthete. In that very mixed context the last major movement among artists to have international acclaim was the Surrealist movement a century ago. History testifies to this. Breton himself spoke up for the underground: Walter Benjamin took it further – but just to the precipice, before that first ray of dawn: It is the place of light and dark. It never sleeps and from above becomes a prism of blues, reds, oranges, and yellows. It illuminates and is illuminated. Its allure is also its seduction into dangerous corners. Its residents wear masks, and none more than those living underground. The modern and postmodern are as primal and primordial as it gets. The new is the very old, its subway graffiti the very same glyphs written on the walls of Lascaux. Everything changes, and nothing changes. Surrealism is the subversive imagination. It provokes and shakes the walls of diurnal hardness and complacency. Hence its perfect match for the city. It provokes hostility by taking on all things doctrinaire, fixed, and sentimental. It has no allegiance to anything but itself. It holds that freedom and liberation must be unrestricted and uncensored. From there we learn that modernity is constantly quoting the primeval past. These are the denizens who play with the alternate existential realities between the cracks of existence, cracks we all fall through eventually. These are the portals between plenum and void, dark and light, space and sound. Reality is a mental play the study of *Homo Ludens*: Man the Player which illuminates and darkens, not unlike moving from room-to-room. These are the violet, blue, and red rooms our

shade-donning friends visit every night in the wee hours.

Chapter 3 : The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility | Americans for the Arts

Le Guin never stopped insisting on the beauty and subversive power of the imagination. Fantasy and speculation weren't only about invention; they were about challenging the established order.

Home, imagined, comes to be. She took her readers on journeys to speculative planets, or, in the five novels of her beloved Earthsea series, across an imaginary archipelago. But she was also a homebody. Charles protected her writing time, and her family gave her the freedom of solitude within the routines of the household. Born in Berkeley, California, in 1945, she grew up in a warm, close-knit family, the youngest child and only daughter of the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and the writer Theodora Kroeber. Her father retold California Indian legends, and it was in his library that she found the Tao Te Ching, a book that deeply influenced her thinking. She had, along with a fierce intellect, a profound sense of wonder, formed partly by the summers she spent in the Napa Valley, and by her visits, at ages nine and ten, to the Golden Gate International Exposition. At the fair, she saw Diego Rivera up on a scaffold, painting murals, and she was allowed to sit on the back of a Percheron billed as the Largest Horse in the World. Eventually, Virginia Herne wins a Pulitzer, though Le Guin told me that she found it surprisingly difficult to give her most autobiographical character a prize. Le Guin never stopped insisting on the beauty and subversive power of the imagination. Very often in our artâ€”the art of words. She made such writers feel recognized, as creators and as human beings. It gives her speculations a resonance, a gravity that few writers, mainstream or generic, can match. My job, as she saw it, was to find ways to get around her reticenceâ€”not an easy task. Yet our conversations were punctuated by laughter, giggles, and the occasional indignant snort. To make her laugh felt wonderful, like an exchange of gifts. She was warm, difficult, brilliant, and not afraid to defend her prejudices. I last saw her at her home, in Portland, Oregon, several months ago, when we sat in folding chairs on the porch while her cat, Pard, claimed the space around our legs. Le Guin was, on her blog, a frequent poster of cat pictures. She was jostled in a crowd, her glass tipped, the dress was low-cut, and the beer went right down. I took no responsibility whatsoever. Behind us was the house where they had lived for nearly sixty years, with the portrait of Virginia Woolf over the mantelpiece and the Native Californian baskets on the bookshelf. Now, as then, it seems her most enduring insight. Please follow and like us:

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Cultural critics from around the world offer their views on the issue of the artist's responsibility to society. The contributors to this collection look beyond censorship and free speech issues to emphasize the subject of freedom.

Chapter 5 : The Subversive Imagination: The Artist, Society and Social Responsibility by Carol Becker

"The Subversive Imagination: The Artist, Society, and Social Responsibility" Edited by Carol Becker One of my favorite quotes from her is: "The more that is hidden and suppressed, the more simplistic the representation of daily life, the more one dimensional and caught in the dominant ideology the society is, the more art must reveal."

Chapter 6 : The Subversive Imagination of Ursula K. Le Guin - iPost Now

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