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Caulfield, Jon. *City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. Pp. 253. B&W photos. $17.95 paper/$45.00 cloth

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Having lived in downtown Toronto for some 15 years from the mid-'50s to the early '70s, and having purchased an older inner city house, renovated it, and painted its interior entirely white in the mid-'60s, it is with a certain sense of complicity that I approach Caulfield's analysis, in which I bemusedly find myself depicted as a "social agent" practising "critical social action" as part of a "social movement." The neighbourhood in which I resettled—the Annex—and which I foolishly left just before real estate values took off, is not one of the four treated in the book, but I can certainly recognize the dynamic that Caulfield investigates, and although it appears a little strange to me, garbed in the terminology of critical social science, I find myself in the rare position of being able to confirm its authenticity from the inside, so to speak.

The book reports on research aimed at understanding the "willed action" of individuals who had actively selected older neighbourhoods within the city during the early phases (1960s) of the gentrification movement. A fairly small sample—63 households—was polled using an unstructured interview technique designed to allow respondents a maximum of freedom to control the subjects discussed and the questions raised. The sample was selected in a non-random way, targeted by a suspicion that these early resettlers, consciously or unconsciously, were motivated significantly by "cultural" or "lifeway" issues rather than instrumental or economic ones, and could be considered as "critical social agents." The results, then, are not generalizable to the universe of gentrifiers, particularly not to later ones coming in after prices had escalated, but are intended to present the views and values of a specific subset in their own words. Results show that, as anticipated, these particular individuals made a very conscious choice, actively rejecting both suburbs and high-rise towers as acceptable options. They claimed to have valued the openness, the mix of social classes, the diversity of ethnic identities, the diversity of economic levels, and the diversity of building typologies offered by certain older parts of the city as a more satisfying place to live, even though problematic in some ways and not necessarily the most economically advantageous. Caulfield interprets their responses as indicating a quest for an ideal setting for life rather than a pragmatic accommodation. Richness and diversity, accessibility of both neighbourhood identity and urban anonymity, and a feeling of participation in a historic process (as distinct from one dominated by either commodity or bureaucracy) featured prominently among the values spontaneously brought forward by the respondents. I was particularly intrigued by the account of one respondent who clearly rejected the suburban monological architectural landscape itself, while recognizing that social/cultural conditions in the suburbs could be more diverse than the architectural imagery might suggest, and in this I very clearly recognize my own feelings of the early 1960s.

About half the text is devoted to setting these very focused research results into a broader context of sociological and urban theory, and in particular showing how totalizing modernist and economic models do not fit the cases studied. Caulfield's contention is that gentrification has been debated at length and not well understood because, in part, analysts have not tended to approach the subject from a cultural perspective and, in particular, have not taken into account the "culture of everyday life" as a significant factor. He argues that "middle-class resettlement of older inner-city neighbourhoods" was (in part) a kind of "critical social practice" by "social agents" (the gentrifiers), antagonistic to, or at least trying to maintain "social possibilities" that they saw as "diminished or erased" by "modernist and suburban forms" of city-building. In so doing he opens a critique of "the neo-Marxist structuralist model of urban study" in terms that emphasize "willed human action," the tendency for "certain locations(/)processes (to) seem to defy a strictly economic analysis," "a less monological approach to .. city-building," and he presents an extended reflection on "the meaning of post-modernism for contemporary urban form and urban politics." Of particular value is his treatment of the Toronto phenomenon as a "local manifestation of wider patterns of urban change" in which resettlement of inner-city neighbourhoods (in part) reflects a traditional middle-class love of the urban centre rather than behaviour explicable in terms of economical rationality.

Caulfield concludes with an ironic look at how gentrification has destroyed the very qualities and possibilities that initially inspired it. As real estate values, inflated by resettlement, continue to climb, diversity continues to be lost, and the inner-city neighbourhoods that once attracted certain people have now all but vanished.

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