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THE GARAGE

It is neither in the house nor out of the house, but of the house and somewhere in between, just as it sits between the house and the suburb. It is an open interior space, not exactly neutral, between inside and outside: the zone of transition, the transitional passage, the residence of transit, the exit and the entrance (double doors), the social airlock for car culture. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. Leaving the house to enter the car which waits in the garage to drive to the city which waits; arriving in the garage from the city before entering the house. The garage is at the edge of the house as the suburb is at the edge of the city, as the suburb is the garage of the city. Open. Ended. Disrupted syntax. Like a dangling participle or subordinate clause, it is distinguished by its disconnectedness, by *its* incompleteness and its dependence. Gerundial: garaging. In the garage is in limbo, in transit. Unclaimed. Originally it was the *porte cochere*, the covered annex attached to the house for the carriage, where you could get out of the weather and into the vehicle, or out of the vehicle and into the house. But the vehicle didn't live there; it was just passing through. The separate garage, shed home of the vehicle, moved farther away from the barn and closer to the house. until the two were wedded, in acknowledgment of their inseparable dependence. It made the everyday separation from nature complete: from the house to the car to the office could be accomplished in hermetic climate control, windowed off from the passing image of nature outside, the other.

Garage, pronounced *groj* or *graj* or *grashe* or *giradge* or *garodge*. It is a large space, for a house, often roughly finished (formerly), now often finished like the inside of the house (drywalled, painted, light and bright). In its unfinished state, it was more clearly ambivalent and evocative. Now it looks more like another room. Then it looked like it was going to be finished, but it never was, a mnemonic for the original house. In it the structure of the whole house could be clearly read: an erection of studs (the modular unit of the balloon frame as blunt instrument of reproductive instrumentality, somewhere between the *stump* and the *thud*: tim-berrrrr). From toenails to headers, the skeletal and sartorial physiognomy of the house is revealed and declared: sills, plates, joists, rafters, stringers, risers, trusses (both king and queen; check and mate), posts, lintels, ties, collars: the framing of the house. As the space is framed in the proscenium arch of the garage door, the triumphal arch of the entrance, the vehicle enters the void. The concrete slab. The door comes down. The dark; a hollow space. The car engine pinging and ticking to itself, cooling down. Hot and dark. A window filtering light through warm dust in a Brownian motion of sunbeams. Smells of hot oil, warm grease, boiled antifreeze, cooked rubber. Still. The static image after the blur of



the street. Winding down the cacaphonic visual tunnel that leads here from the city. Dead End. *Cul de Sac*. Into the house.

Things proper for the garage are things that don't fit anywhere else, mostly things about maintenance: taken in hand. *Maintenant, nous sommes dans le garage*. Close to *grange*, the barn, but not the same sense of productive work. Instead. the work of appearances, facades and fronts: mow the lawn, weed the garden, paint the house. Upkeep, and keeping up. The consumption of leisure through the consumption of products to consume leisure. Toro, Lawn Boy ("get the boy to do the lawn") master and slave, lord and manor, home and castle. The atrophied affirmation of the exhausted patriciate, still working. The weed wacker, the hedge trimmer, the blower, the edger, the clippers, the shears, the shovel, the spade, the rake, the fork, the pruners, the hose, the sprayer, the seeder, the watering can. Weapons for the physical rearrangement, ordering, organization and general control of the landscape; its production and reproduction. Cutbacks and yardwork. The rake of the lot. Unruly nature! The paintbrush, the wire brush, the scraper, the roller, the tray, the ladder, the dropcloth, the thinner, the soap, the bucket, the brush, the broom, the dustpan. Surfacing and resurfacing. Touch up, clean up, fix up, cover up.

But first it is about vehicles. Get rolling: wheels. Travel: *kalo taxithi!* Street level, driveway, garage. The concrete connection to every road surface on the continent. A continuous skein of narrow flatness, a web of connectedness in analogue circuit. *Suburbi et Orbi*, The car, the station wagon, the truck, the 4WD, the camper, the van, the ATV, the motorcycle, the moped, the scooter, the bicycle, the ten-speed, the mountain bike, the BMX, the tricycle, the lawn mower, the garden tractor, the stroller, the pram, the umbroller, the wheelbarrow, the skateboard, the rollerskates, even the barbecue (portable hearth: fireplace displaced for ritual burnt offering).

So these things accumulate; things appear out of nowhere and wait forever, out of the weather. in the vault. The privacy of property: the door comes down: locked and loaded. Some are used regularly, some rarely. The garage is the shed, where things are shed and collected. Pending. Last station before the Ministorage. Wet clothes, umbrellas, boots. A lean-to of the house, an out-of-the-house. Things in the garage duplicate the contents of the garage next door, in a modular progression down the street, all the way to the mall. Each is a catalogue, modeled on the mail-order (male-order) taxonomy of self sufficiency and independence, of equality, democracy and property. To each according to their needs, from each according to their ability. Needs exceed abilities. What we want is not what we get. And the garage fills up. More shelves, the shelves fill up. The Garage Sale. Empty the garage, fill the garage; empty the garage, fill the garage. The lungs of material consumption, the tuberculosis of disposable income. Keep



breathing. In, out. In the confused physiology of the house the garage is mouth and anus. In comes the food, out goes the garbage. The groceries are unloaded out of the station wagon, the garbage cans fill up. Frozen food sits lumped in the stomach of the freezer purring in the corner. This is where the animals live. Cat food, dog dish.

The garage is the shop, where the car gets fixed and things get made. Take it to the garage. Mr. Fixit, Popular Mechanic. The factor in his factory, the inventor in his inventory. Tinker Tailor Soldier Sailor: Tinker. Make it, break it, fix it. The workbench, the shop vac, the toolbox: the hammer (carpenter's, ball peen, machinist's, rubber), the hacksaw, the pliers (slipjoint, visegrip, linesman's, wirecutter, needlenose), the screwdriver (Phillips, Robertson, slot), the box end wrench, the open end wrench, the adjustable wrench, the socket set, the ratchet, the torque wrench, the timing light, the voltmeter, the file (mill bastard, triangular, round, half round, flat), the cold chisel, the C-clamp, the drill, the drill bits. Then there's the woodshop. You might want to make something. It's the only place big enough for the table saw. And the bandsaw and the drillpress and the grinder and the sander. Saw (circular, jig, crosscut, rip, mitre, back, fret), level, square (roofing, combination), plane (jack, smooth), gluegun, chisel, gouge, clamp (C, F). This is the creative act: manual labour, men in labour. Or some vague vestigial inkling of it. A confusion of gender and genesis.

But first and always there's the car. Tune it up. change the oil, keep it clean. Pull it out into the driveway, vacuum, shampoo, scrub those whitewalls, soap it up nice and slippery, sluice it off, put it back in. Keep it running so you can keep driving. The teenager with his face in the engine compartment, greased to the elbows. Trouble light. Turning the massproduced vehicle, the same, into otherness. Artificial and artifactual otherness. Customizing: claiming through idiosyncratic application of after-market goods. Not like before, when customization was reconstitution: made over in one's own imagination. A submergence of product identification in self identification through a physical reworking: chopped, channelled, nosed, decked, frenched, skirted, louvered, lakered, lacquered, mooned. Not the contemporary submission to the market as arbiter of your taste. Some guy who couldn't work out a satisfactory personal relationship to save his life but who can do this stuff in the dark. Insides and outside, where mucous membrane becomes flesh, where sliced knuckles meet dead iron. Coming and going. The rite of passage, the right to passage: through here, I'm out of here.

The theatre of the garage, acting out/side). "What are you doing?" "Dis playing". The infinitely alterable space of childhood. The garage can contain all things, like a mind. It is the unconscious of the house. Make believe, the magic show, dressing up, playing doctor. The door down. Open space. First sex, the sex of



the imagination. They can't see us here. A profound recognition (inchoate) of the boundless container of the undefined interior space, physical and psychological, of the self and the other; the body of the other. The architecture of enclosure and disclosure. Revealed and revealing, within limits. This thing is bigger than both of us. I have to take your temperature.

The Garage Band. Rehearsal hall for the romance of the untrammelled self.

Tourism: here collect the paraphernalia and accouterments of temporary travel, of cultural consumption and leisurely absorption. Get away. The mobile home. The camper. The tent, the sleeping bag, the campstove, the axe, the grill, the cooler, the canoe, the kayak, the dinghy, the paddles, the oars, the fishing rods, the tackle box, the lifejackets, the skis, the boots, the poles, the ponchos, the backpacks, the ropes, the canteens, the tarps, the groundcloths, the air mattresses, the flippers, the goggles, the snorkels, the boogie boards, the windsurfers, the roof racks, the wetsuits, the drysuits, the farmer johns. The self sufficient for natural intervention. (The invasion of nature in the nature of invasion.) A suburban membrane between nature and the body. Where flora and fauna meet flotsam and jetsam.

The other side, the flip side, suicide. The garage is the calm centre of the final disorder and dissolution. In the comfort of the idling car with the garage door down, oxygen is methodically consumed and carbon monoxide systematically produced with the fatal efficiency of the internal combustion engine. The private gas chamber, the sleep of unreason, the soporific languor of easeful death. The end.