

HERITAGE AND URBAN MYTH



Gateshead UK – Baltic Center for Contemporary Art

Dinner last night with Peter and Sue MacDonald; Helen of course too. The restaurant is at the top of the old flour mill on the quayside, though it looks like a grain silo. It's now an arts center, 46 million quids worth. Lots of other development here too – smart new apartments, a new concert hall. The Boat, the night club Tuxedo Princess (designed by our old friend Mike Plews) is still nearby.



Great views of the Tyne and Newcastle, particularly from the ladies bathrooms. Trendy place to eat – reservations hard to come by, they say. Food – not so good –

trying too hard.

A room with a view.



Anyway, on the skyline is Gateshead's multistorey car park. It kind of symbolizes the irony of the NE of England's great effort at redevelopment in the 60s. It never really made it – I never knew it in full use. Its own restaurant at the top was never occupied. Peter tells me that the plan to demolish it (due late 2002) has been abandoned. Because of its associations. The car park now has its own web site – it has become an icon. Michael Caine, in Mike Hodges movie Get Carter, threw Brian Mosley off the top (later star of UK soap Coronation Street, Cliff Brumby in the original movie, same character played by Caine in the dreadful remake with Sylvester Stallone). (He fell on a car in the movie, and Helen's cousin Annie Dunn, now herself in the movie industry, insists she was an extra, a little girl dragged from the wreck of the car).



I used to do *Get Carter* tours when I was an archaeologist in Newcastle in the early 80s – touring the locations. I even use the movie in a course I teach here at Stanford about landscape and place. There is now a superbly researched web site, with then and now photos of the locations.



New kinds of urban myths, built on fragments of media.

Here in California natural wonders like the coast of Big Sur are not enough, it would seem, in themselves. You find a media mythology, meaning generated through association with media stars – Henry Miller lived here, Orson Welles bought Rita Hayworth a log cabin here etc etc. The same with Steinbeck and Monterey.

I have no trouble finding web sites about all this!

Peter reckons they should install colored lighting – a different color for each level.