

homeless including the fishermen of Saint-Jean and the everyday people who lived in the area. Some 200 Jews were deported to the concentration camps, together with some 600 from other areas of the city. This was the site of the ancient Greek city, the oldest continually inhabited location in Western Europe. All that was found in this mass destruction were a couple of rifles and home-made bombs, what was left was a vast area of ruins. The German army and the French modernists, and the French property speculators, a fine team of whores and bandits.

Finally in the late 1970s French town-planners, not even needing the the German army to assist them, finished this extended operation by demolishing the Quarters of Les Carmes and the Porte d'Aix, an area inhabited principally by North African immigrants.

The only piece of the old city to survive is the area of Le Panier, at the top of the buttes, with its steep narrow streets and passageways. This area was once inhabited mainly by the poorest immigrants from Corsica and Italy, and had a reputation for overcrowding and dirt. But it has now been cleaned up and turned into a zone for tourists.

Persuaded that the quarters of Saint-Jean and Hotel-de-Ville were harbouring all manner of racial impurity and subversives elements, in particular Jews, poor people, prostitutes and illegal immigrants, the German army dynamited the entire north side of the port, demolishing some 15,000 houses and making 25,000 people

have never been our real enemies. The Germans in Marseille. We have never had anything much to do with the Germans. They The Germans! But what do we really care about SS.

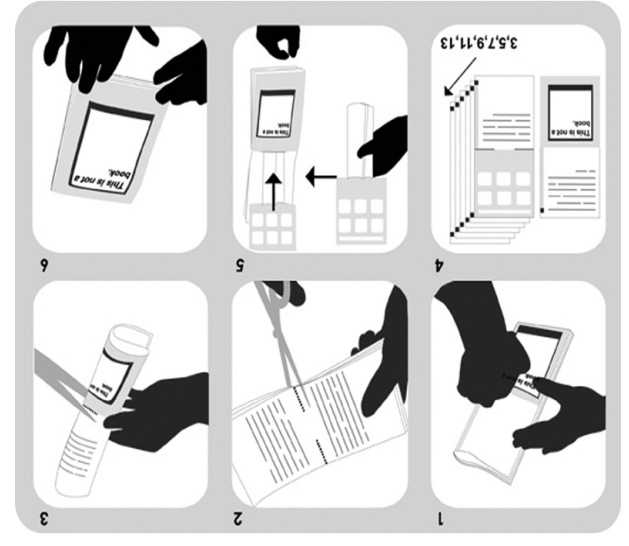
General Oberg, head of the French section of the cannot live as long as Marseille is not purified." This city is the canker of Europe, and Europe. "Marseille is a hide-out for international bandits.

through the pages. Robert took out the his book again and flipped the German Army came to their assistance. Further plans were made by various French modernists, in alliance with property speculators to demolish large areas of the old city. In 1943 decide what to do with the land it remained an open site, a large vacant space in the centre of the city.

Marseille Mix: ideal city

William Firebrace





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William Firebrace
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RESEARCH wrote Sparrow into his small black notebook, INTO THE CITY OF MARSEILLE. He was sitting the beside the window of his hotel, looking down into the narrow street below. Some street-cleaners passed by, seen foreshortened from above, two in front sweeping aside the rubbish, one driving a device spraying out water, two following behind with large mops. Sparrow looked at the words he had written. He underlined the word RESEARCH, then MARSEILLE He looked again down at the street so efficiently cleansed. He underlined the words INTO THE CITY OF. He stood there for a long while. He wrote down one word: ACTION. He stood again, looking down into the street. No action presented itself. Two prostitutes were chatting to each other, occasionally addressing male passers-by, but with little enthusiasm. Several men in African dress were standing a few doors down, outside a street cafe. He wrote, MUCH TOO EXOTIC. He closed the notebook and decided to visit the bookshop of one of his few acquaintances in Marseille, the bookseller Robert.

Robert ran a bookshop specialising in central-American novels, political investigations, criminology, violent thrillers. The shop-floor was

very small, with scarcely room for three people to stand, so anyone visiting the shop was almost forced into conversation with anyone else already there. The high room was lined with shelves of books. Robert was a generous man and often lent Sparrow books rather than selling them to him. If you like the book, then you can come back anytime and buy it.

Robert was always very respectably dressed, in a grey wool suit, worn with a striped open-necked shirt. He expressed his opinions forcefully speaking at length, like an obsessive lecturer, without many pauses, and without waiting for Sparrow to reply, so that Sparrow didn't always catch everything he said. He was particularly voluble on the theme of Marseille and the destructions of the past.

Within Marseille is a continual struggle between various forces:
 those who seek to make the city a normal acceptable city
 those who support its diversity
 those who seek to do business
 those who are trying to make money on speculation

those who think in terms of rational planning
those pushing their political careers
those who love cleanliness
those who love apparent chaos
those who wish to remove the immigrants
those who wish to have fun
those who seek simply to survive.
those, those who...

And the others - those who don't come into any category, because most of the people in Marseille don't like being in any category and so should not be put in any category.

The contradictory actions of all these different groups, added together with a tendency to begin following a certain direction and then abandon it, have created the confusion of the present city, a confusion which may also be viewed as positive, inspiring.

A continual thread in the history of the city has been the assumption that certain groups of people have a right to live in the city and others not. This unending dispute is based on a misunderstanding of just where the city is. Is it part of Europe and therefore should conform to some idea of what a European city is? Or is it part

of the Mediterranean, part of the South, which involves very different ideas about a city and its culture?
The expression of disgust at Marseille have been continuous, outdoing each other in the use of extremes of revision. See here.
Robert took down a small volume of quotations about Marseille. He opened it at random.
"I believe that Marseille is incurable, without the massive deportation of all the inhabitants and a transfusion of people from the North." Louis Freron, proconsul, 1794.
"We are going to cleanse Marseille, which needs it badly." Pierre Laval, 1943.
"We need people who create wealth. It is necessary to get rid of half the population of the city. The centre of the city needs something else."
Claude Valette, assistant to the mayor, 2003.
"On the hill of Accoules, between the Hotel de Ville and the Major, is an obscene slum, a foul cloaque where the froth of the Mediterranean amasses, sad glory of Marseille in a decrepitude and a degree of rottenness which one cannot imagine without having actually seen it; it seems

prevents the city from being satisfied with itself, which throws up the most violent contrasts.

It is even because of this destruction that Marseille has acquired its particular qualities.

Marseille is ugliness transformed into a beauty. Marseille has suffered, and through its suffering something real shows through.

Marseille is made by the sea.

Marseille is made by the light.

Marseille is made by the people.

Nothing should be refused in Marseille.

This is a fragment from *Marseille Mix*, a forthcoming book exploring the city's literary, criminal, urban, gastronomic and cinematic aspects.

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the corruption, the leprosy rot away the very stones. This worm-eaten inferno, this type of decomposing mass grave, is one of the places in the world most ravaged by tuberculosis. It is the empire of sin and death. In these once patrician districts, abandoned to the rabble, to misery and to shame, what method should now be used to empty them of their pus and regenerate them?"
Luis Gillet, member of the Academie Francaise, 1942.

And so on, and so on. Entire volumes can be filled with same expressions, reaching down the centuries and still continuing today. Whores, brothels, bandits. Filth, foreignness, perversion. Disgust with Marseille is an art-form in itself, never quite perfected, always open to a new improvement.

A customer entered the shop, but Robert payed him no attention. He placed the book in his pocket and carried on.

Now, more important, for who cares what these people say, this revulsion against the city has been played out architecturally, through the gradual destruction of the old city, and its replacement by various other ideas for a cleaner more rational city. The old city, as you know, lay

it is created out of a restless nature, which assembled, never quite assembled. Ideal because contradictions. Ideal because it is not quite Ideal because of, not in spite of its divisions and Marseille the ideal city!

In this city there is a piece of everything, nothing is really excluded, all is mixed together.

surprising beauty. I must go now, I must look after the bookshop. Sparrow began to feel fine thoughts flooding through his mind, a flow of thoughts such as his dull brain encountered rarely, thoughts of

oversized statues, a piece of wasteland, a century street faade, a baroque house with tower, a mediaeval street, a piece of nineteenth Everything here was mixed together: a modernist of the Cours Belunce. He looked around. Sparrow was left alone, abandoned in the middle

Robert shook Sparrow's hand formally and departed abruptly. *Not one culture, but an irreconcilable mixture of cultures.*

Marseille, now culture city for 2013. Culture city!

sets. with high houses, grey coloured and like theatre edge of the old city. They stood in a wide street own. They walked fast through the streets to the leaving the customer to study the books on his Robert and Sparrow hurried out the bookshop, *Come we must go and see.*

with the new. a determination to wipe out the old and replace it on the old city was not rational, it was emotional, city, rather than demolish it. However the attack available and it was easier to build beside the old to anything, because there plenty of land avenues leading to the sea. None of these came rational plans - grids, radial systems, grand plans to replace the old city with all kinds of In the eighteenth century there were frequent plague.

unhealthy place, dark, dirty, prone to disease and unwanted immigrants, prostitutes, and an and replaced. It is seen as a haunt of criminals, pursued that the old city should be pulled down enlargement of the Marseille the idea has been north of the old port. From the time of the on the 'buttes', the hills above the sea, to the

Euromediterranee, with the well dressed executives, a colony of the new global economy, isolated in some foreign land.

Each plan aims to throw into the mix some new element which will somehow make rational what is not rational. None of these plans have succeeded, each has been constructed in part and then abandoned for the next. Marseille, if there is still a Marseille, now covers a vast area, extending out over the plain, cluttered with urban freeways, raised highways, suburban centres, groups of housing blocks placed apparently at random, out-of-town shopping centres, areas of vacant territory, pieces of countryside, all adding up to an enormous and uncertain urban zone.

The people who once lived in the centre, people who come from every country and who have aroused such disgust, now for the most part live outside in this landscape of housing blocks and highways, out of the way, where they are not so easily seen by the good citizens of the south.

But it is all the people together who are the real force inside Marseille.

For a moment Robert paused. He seemed uncertain to continue.

In the 1860s this street, the Rue de Republique was cut through to join the old port to the new docks of La Joliette. Since the construction of the straight road involved cutting through the hills, vast amount of soil were excavated, most of which ended up as landfill in the docks. See, there is something unreal about the whole creation, a feeling added to by the fact that the difference of levels leaves parts of the old city perched visibly above the new street. Occasionally the width of the blocks leaves strange narrow spaces, with hardly any light, and curious passageways like, yes, like...

Sparrow and Robert were now in a Neapolitan courtyard, high long and narrow, filled with abandoned cars and hung with washing. No sunlight penetrated through, nothing moved. Robert continued his lecture without a pause.

Well, the Rue de Republic never succeeded as a commercial undertaking and failed to attract the middle classes, for whom who these Parisian houses were designed, but who preferred the streets of the new town to the south. The bourgeoisie of Marseille - what a pathetic rabble! Until recently these grand houses were occupied by the poorest elements of Marseille, and the

They moved into a fine avenue, one side lined with mansions, the other with a row of tower blocks. Crowds of the most varied people pressed by.

See here, the lines of the economic forces at work can be found very precisely. The Cours Belsunce, long abandoned by the middle-classes to successive waves of immigrants, has now been smartened up with a tramway and a library, on the site of the old proletarian music hall, the Alcazar. A few yards away are these long narrow streets with the Asian and African import-export businesses. The small hostels and cafes with North African men, which have been here for some fifty years still do good business. A little further, up one of the few streets to survive the destruction, the Rue d'Aix is lined with jewellery stores, occasionally the scene of armed break-ins. The Porte d'Aix itself is already in the wild zone, a place for immigrants of various lands, pushing their goods in large supermarket trolleys. A little further is the Rue du Bon Pasteur and the site of the Marche du Soleil, where until the recent fire merchants from North Africa sold all manner of goods. A few minutes walk away to the East are the new glazed office buildings of the

shops on the ground floor taken over by telephone shops, cheap restaurants, and electronic discount stores. In the last few years, as part of the effort to clean up Marseille these people have been evicted, the apartments renovated, the rents increased by several times and once again there is an attempt to move in the middle classes, this time the executives working in the offices of the Euromediterranee. The Euromediterranee, what a farce, for businessmen and politicians, who could believe such a farce.

Robert paused for a moment to light a cigarette. They waited for a moment beside a building site, an old house under renovation. Workers pushed out wheelbarrows filled with earth and rubbish. Sparrow tried to catch every word of Robert. If only he could recall later all these complicated details, then he could go beyond the word ACTION. But already he felt the words slipping away before the more direct presence of the city itself.

In the meantime other areas of the old city were declared unacceptable and demolished. A large area behind the Bourse, along here, including some of the fine houses of the Cours Belsunce, was pulled down in the 1920s. Since no-one could