

DOPPIOZERO

Yuppies

Raffaella De Santis

16 Giugno 2011

Giovani, abbronzati, in carriera, devoti al consumo, sono i Young Urban Professionals, i nuovi manager rampanti della giungla urbana. Agenda fitta di appuntamenti, telefono come protesi irrinunciabile, cocktail, aperitivi, party, dieta e palestra. I *golden boys* anni ottanta “fanno affari”, perché gli affari danno status e lo status aiuta gli affari. È l’apoteosi della vita in vetrina. D’altra parte l’edonismo o è sfacciato o non è: dunque, via le tende, via le pareti, case e uffici rigorosamente open-space. Nascono la Milano da bere, i miti dei soldi facili, della Borsa e della finanza per tutti. Tutti possono aspirare al Successo. Basta una Ranger Rover, e il giusto appeal... La nuova categoria mobilita i sociologi. Nel 1988 Ralf Dahrendorf scrive ne *Il conflitto sociale della modernità*: “La parola yuppies è usata per indicare giovani professionisti urbani (o in ascesa), e di loro si dice che desiderassero più spazio per l’iniziativa”. E Slavoj Žižek parlerà per gli yuppie di “ascetismo edonistico”, riferendosi alla narcisistica ed esagerata cura di sé di quei cultori del jogging e dell’alimentazione salutare: “Forse è questo che Nietzsche aveva in mente quando formulò il concetto di Ultimo Uomo” (*La violenza invisibile*). “Volere è potere” è il nuovo credo. Il Sociale cade in disgrazia, annoia, non diverte abbastanza. I nuovi corsari solcano i mari del presente senza la zavorra del passato. I soldi subito! La regola è vivere per sé, nell’immediato, in un eterno presente. E chi non ce la fa? È un fallito. L’altra faccia dello yuppie è, infatti, lo *yuffie*, che sta per Young Urban Failure, e che da noi, più semplicemente, equivale a sfigato. Impietosamente.

The Year of The Yuppie

The young urban professionals have arrived. They're making lots of money, spending it conspicuously and switching political candidates like they test cuisines.

It is on the move again—that restless vanguard of the baby-boom generation, continually reinventing itself as it conquers the undefended decades of the 20th century. In unruly ranks assembled, its members marched through the '60s, then dispersed into a million solitary joggers, riding the crests of their own alpha waves, and now there they go again, barely looking up from the massed gray columns of The Wall Street Journal as they speed toward the airport, advancing on the 1980s in the back seat of a limousine. Just as predicted, economic reality has intruded on their self-absorbed journey, but the unsettling news is that time has done little to dim their fervor. The banker who was horrified in 1968 when Columbia students occupied the president's office will not necessarily be reassured to discover that one of those students now has an M.B.A. and an office down the hall from him, and is full of plans for streamlining the headquarters staff. Anyone who worried that the self-indulgence of the Woodstock generation was sapping America's moral fiber is probably better off not knowing about the woman with \$1,200 worth of pots and pans in her kitchen who eats every meal in a restaurant.

And this was a very good year for them. It was a year in which a presidential candidate, Gary Hart, seemed to crystallize their own vehement impatience with the past (page 30)—but, happily enough, one in which the candidate of prosperity actually won the election. It

was a year in which Madison Avenue saluted their economic clout by elevating them to the status of telephone linemen as heroes of their own beer commercial (page 28). It was a year in which the aging hippies of Doones-

bury returned to the comic pages after a two-year absence with \$20 haircuts and a new set of middle-class values. It was a year, also, in which Carrie Cook, a 25-year-old associate producer for a Boston ad agency, saw the value of her condominium go from \$65,000 to \$95,000, which means she made more money going to sleep each night than she did at work each day; a year in which Barry Lench, a 37-year-old painting contractor, hung ceiling fans in a onetime flophouse in a rundown industrial section of Milwaukee and turned it into "a mecca for social drinkers." Richard Ryan, a 25-year-old sports-marketing executive, took a two-week trip to Ireland, where he stayed in a manor house, and Lisa Diserio, the manager of special events for CBS Sports, discovered several new restaurants. Forty New Yorkers began working out at Definitions, a gym that caters to people who may *already belong to a health club*, but want to spend \$600 a month in individual workouts designed to improve their most prized possessions, their bodies.

Catching On: It was the year, also, in which all these people finally learned who they were. The first person to give them a name in print may have been columnist Bob Greene, writing in March 1983 about the "networking" parties for businessmen and women which erstwhile radical Jerry Rubin was sponsoring at a New York disco. "One social commentator" (a euphemism for somebody Greene ran



The Deleons restoring a Chicago town house: Gentrification

Lo stile anni ottanta è l'apologia del lusso e dell'esagerazione: deve prima di tutto scintillare. La fauna femminile è forse quella che ne risente maggiormente: tacchi alti, trucco vistoso, spalline imbottite, e poi diamanti, paillettes, lamine dorate, pelli di leopardo. Ogni metropoli dell'Occidente opulento ha i suoi yuppies. L'America reaganiana, la Londra thatcheriana e anche la Milano craxiana. In America ci sono gli yuppie perversi dei romanzi di Bret Easton Ellis, gli adolescenti ricchi e viziati che si muovono sullo sfondo di Los Angeles. È una nuova specie umana, felice, euforica, realizzata, che ha sotterrato la generazione dei vecchi militanti e vive unicamente per il successo. Scrive Jean Baudrillard: "Gli Yuppies non sono transfughi della rivolta, è una razza nuova, sicura di sé, amnistiata, gratificata di una nuova verginità, che si muove con disinvoltura nel performativo, mentalmente indifferente a qualsiasi finalità che non sia quella del mutamento e della promozione" (*L'America*). Per la generazione reaganiana "l'infelicità non esiste", dunque anche i poveri non esistono.



In Italia nel 1986 esce il film *Yuppies*, di Carlo Vanzina, in cui la nuova categoria antropologica è rappresentata dalle facce non proprio rampantissime di Massimo Boldi, Jerry Calà, Christian De Sica e Ezio Greggio. Sono loro i giovani di successo, quelli che “viaggiano in turbo”, che “sono firmati dalla scarpa alla mutanda”, che inseguono le “zoccolone da trombare”, ma che resteranno sempre degli irriducibili sfigati. *Yuppies & Yuffies*.

Questo testo è tratto dal libro di Raffaella De Santis, *Le parole disabitate. Il Novecento*, Aragno Editore, Torino 2011

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PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL O'NEILL