

CHAPTER 2

The rise of a builder

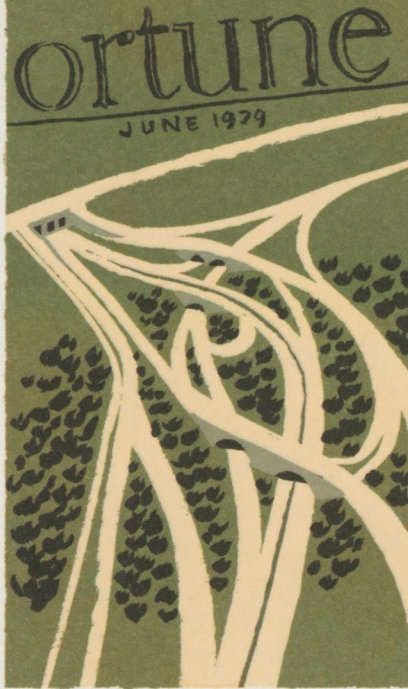
THIS IS THE MOMENT THE AUTOMOBILE
MAKES ITS ENTRANCE INTO THE DAILY
LIVES OF AMERICANS.



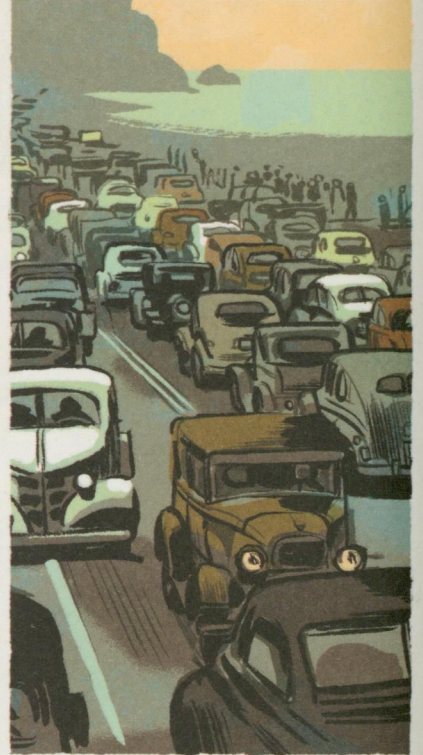
ROBERT MOSES MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN HOW TO DRIVE, BUT HE WILL ALSO NEVER BELIEVE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT.



THUS, AMONG THE AXES AND EVEN THE GREAT AXES ON WHICH HIS PROJECT WILL ALWAYS PIVOT IS THE MASTERING OF TRAFFIC CIRCULATION.



TRAFFIC IS PERPETUALLY CONGESTED AND IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO GET OUT OF MANHATTAN...



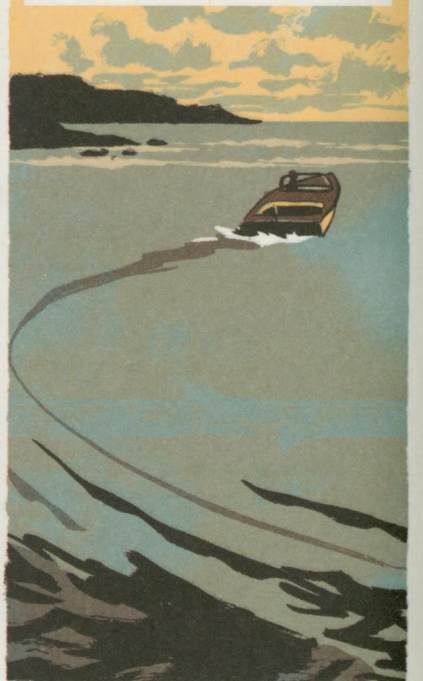
HE WILL TACKLE WHAT HE SEES AS FAILURES DOWNTOWN TO ENCOURAGE THE MIDDLE CLASSES TO STAY THERE (WHICH WON'T REALLY BE THE CASE)...



HIS MAIN INSTRUMENT WILL BE THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY, DRAINING PUBLIC FUNDS FROM THE NEW DEAL, TO INVEST IN LARGE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS.



BUT DESPITE HIS ENORMOUS POWER, MOSES, CONTENT WITH HIS LITTLE BOAT, NAMED "BOB" AFTER HIMSELF, WILL NEVER BECOME A CAPITALIST IN THE USUAL SENSE OF THE WORD.



LIKE BATMAN DOING GOOD (AND BAD) IN GOTHAM CITY FROM HIS SECRET MANOR...



...ROBERT MOSES RESHAPES THE CITY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS FROM HIS EQUALLY PROTECTED LAIR ON RANDALL ISLAND, BY THE EAST RIVER...



A PRIVATE EMPIRE WITH ITS OWN FLOTILLA OF VEHICLES, ITS OWN FLAG, INSIGNIA AND ARMED POLICE PATROLLING HIS TOLLGATES AND ROADS...

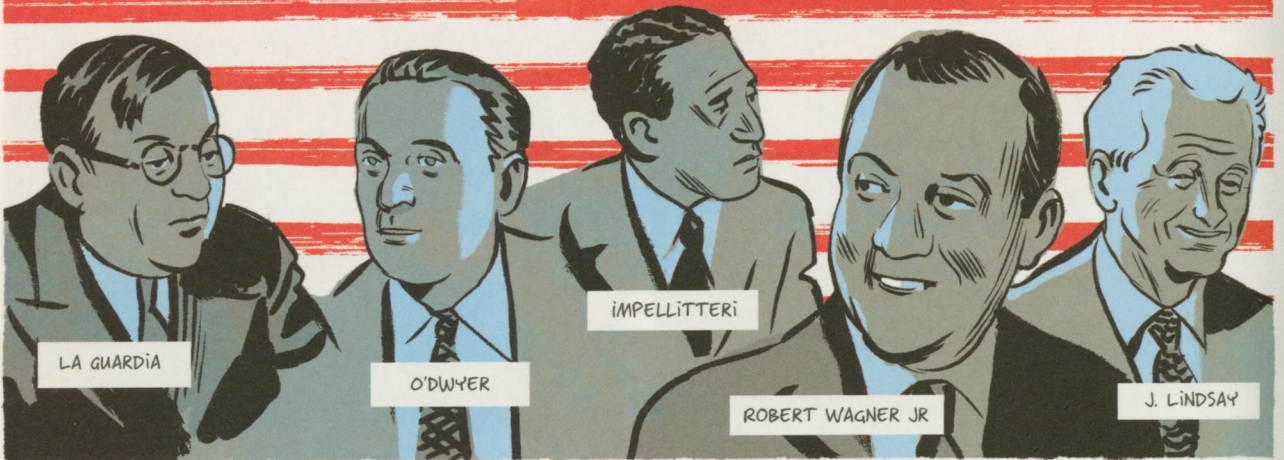


THE MAN WHO LIKES TO BE CALLED "DOCTOR MOSES" WILL STAY IN POWER UNINTERRUPTED FROM 1924 TO 1968...



HE WILL OCCUPY UP TO TWELVE ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY...

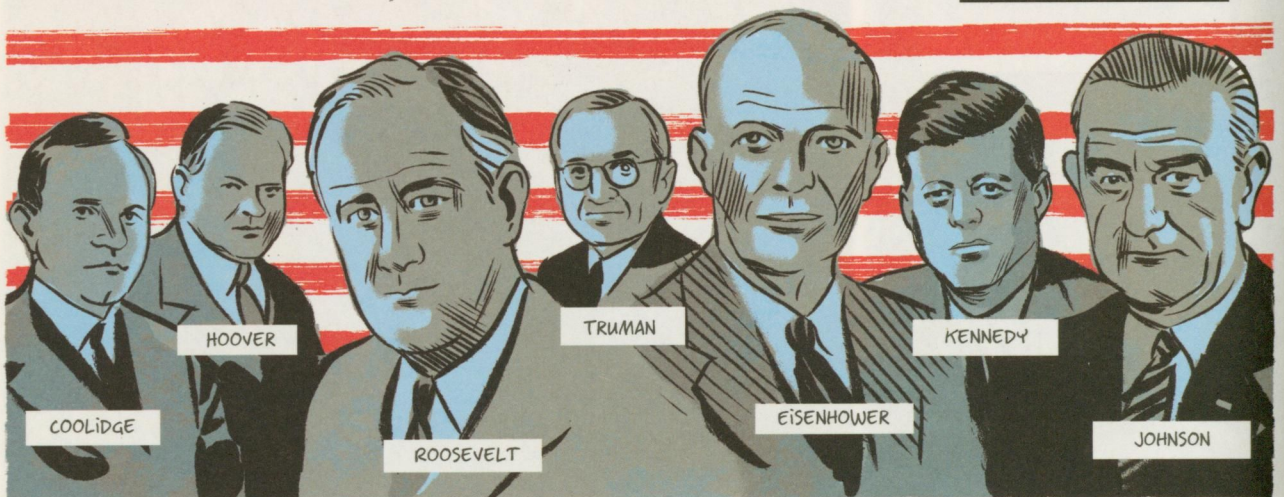
EQUALING J. EDGAR HOOVER, HEAD OF THE FBI, HE WILL SEE FIVE MAYORS COME AND GO...

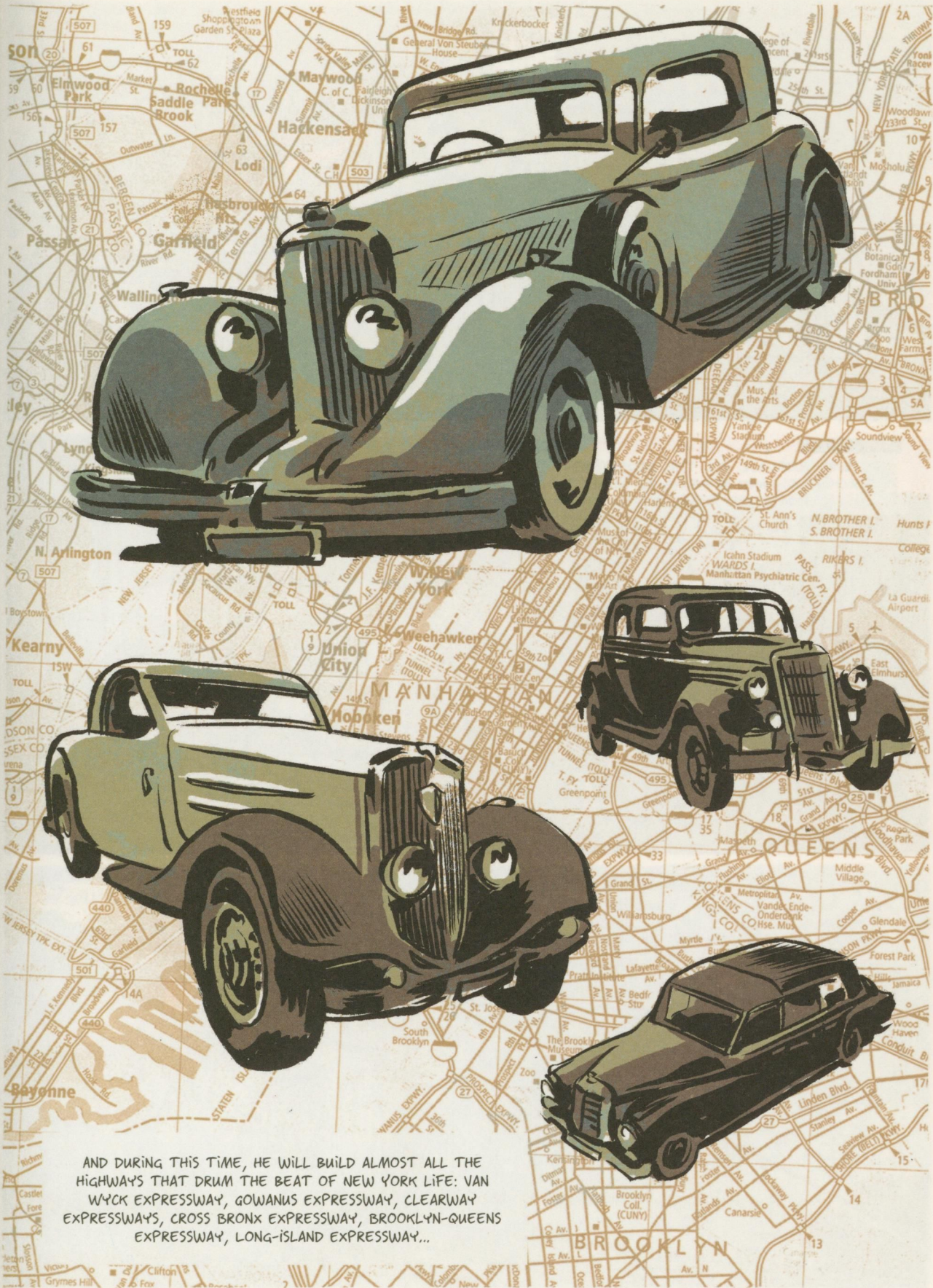


SIX GOVERNORS...



SEVEN PRESIDENTS...





AND DURING THIS TIME, HE WILL BUILD ALMOST ALL THE HIGHWAYS THAT DRUM THE BEAT OF NEW YORK LIFE: VAN WYCK EXPRESSWAY, GOWANUS EXPRESSWAY, CLEARWAY EXPRESSWAYS, CROSS BRONX EXPRESSWAY, BROOKLYN-QUEENS EXPRESSWAY, LONG-ISLAND EXPRESSWAY...

HE WILL ALSO BE THE CREATOR OF SPLENDID LANDSCAPED PARKWAYS CLOSED TO COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC...



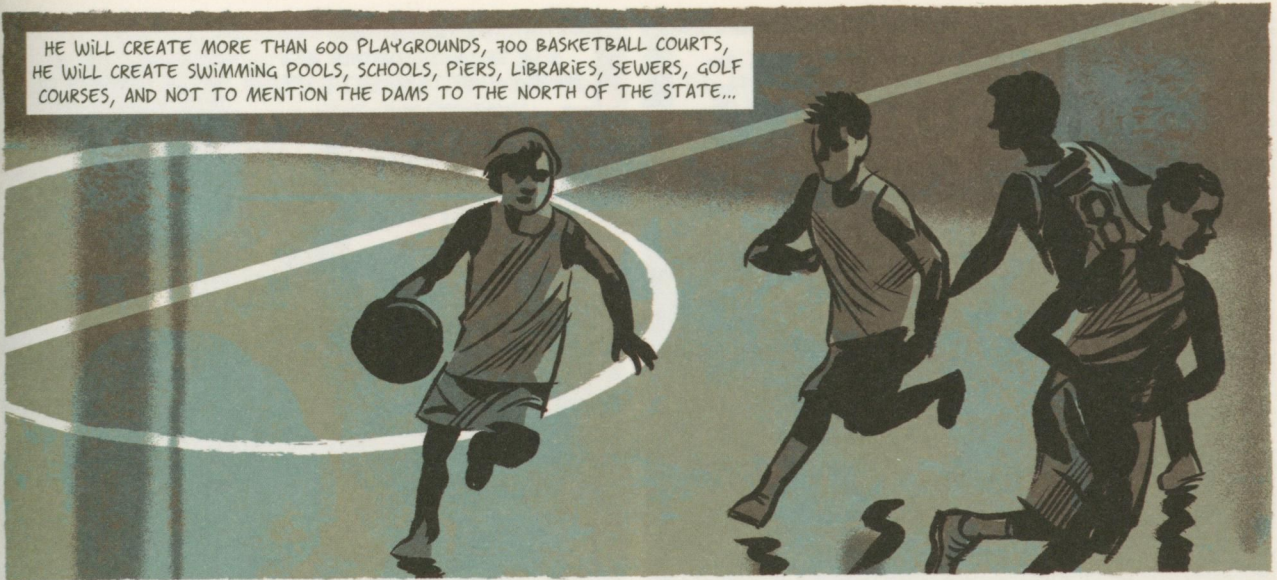
HE WILL REPLACE ALL THE CROSSROADS WITH INTERCHANGES, AND IN DOING SO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY ROAD ACCIDENTS.



HE WILL BUILD THE TRIBOROUGH, VERRAZANO, THROGS NECK AND CROSS BAY BRIDGES AND WILL SEE HIS DREAM OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE VAULTING THE HUDSON BECOME A REALITY...



HE WILL CREATE MORE THAN 600 PLAYGROUNDS, 700 BASKETBALL COURTS, HE WILL CREATE SWIMMING POOLS, SCHOOLS, PIERS, LIBRARIES, SEWERS, GOLF COURSES, AND NOT TO MENTION THE DAMS TO THE NORTH OF THE STATE...



HE WILL BUILD 150,000 HOMES, TO REPLACE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THOSE HE HAD DESTROYED TO REMOVE SO-CALLED SLUMS AND WILL SET DOWN MILES OF ROADS.



HE WILL ALSO EXPEL "LIKE CATTLE", ACCORDING TO ONE MANHATTAN OFFICIAL THE CITY'S POOR AND PREDOMINANTLY MINORITY POPULATIONS.



HE MAKES IT KNOWN THAT IN NEW YORK IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WALK, DRIVE, SWIM, PLAY SPORTS, SIT DOWN OR EVEN SLEEP WITHOUT MAKING USE OF A ROBERT MOSES CREATION.



IT IS, OF COURSE, ANOTHER ALL-POWERFUL BUILDER, ONE HE HIMSELF LOVED TO REFER TO, THAT HE MUST BE COMPARED TO.



THE BARON HAUSSMAN, WHO REIGNED OVER THE PARISIAN BUILDING SITE OF THE SECOND EMPIRE FOR 17 YEARS AND WHO, WITHOUT A MOMENT'S THOUGHT TO THE LOWER CLASSES, CHANGED THE CAPITAL FOREVER.




ON APRIL 30TH 1924, AGED 35, THANKS TO HIS POLITICAL CONNECTIONS, MOSES IS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE NEW STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS.




IT IS THE STARTING POINT IN HIS CAREER AS A MAN OF INFLUENCE AND AS A GREAT BUILDER.

WELL, ROBERT, STILL FULL OF IDEAS, I SUPPOSE?






THE FIRST ONE WASN'T BAD:
WRITING THE LAW THAT CREATED
YOUR OWN POSITION!




YOU ALWAYS TAUGHT ME
THAT THE BEST HELPING
HAND YOU CAN GET IS YOUR
OWN, MRS M. IT'S A PRINCIPLE
I'M PREPARING TO FOLLOW IN
ALL OF MY AFFAIRS.




WHERE ARE YOU
THINKING OF APPLYING
THIS INEXHAUSTIBLE
ENERGY OF YOURS?

NOT FAR
FROM HERE.




BUT THERE'S NOTHING AROUND HERE
FOR MILES, EXCEPT FOR GOLF COURSES!

PRECISELY, CYNTHIA.



YOU ALL LIKE THIS 'PRIVATE
CLUB' ATMOSPHERE, RIGHT?

YOU'VE BECOME SKILLED
AT UNDERSTATEMENT,
ROBERT. YOU'RE SPEAKING
IN RIDDLES NOW. EXPLAIN.



I DON'T BELIEVE COMFORT, HYGIENE, SPORTS
FACILITIES AND NATURAL BEAUTY SHOULD BE THE
EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE RICH.

OH, REALLY?

THAT'S WHAT I'M
ALWAYS SAYING AT OUR
CHARITY GALAS.



FEEDING THE POOR IS ONE THING. BRINGING THEM TO THE COUNTRYSIDE IS QUITE ANOTHER.



LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE JUST GUESSED MY IDEA.

AND IF ANY OF YOU LADIES WOULD LIKE TO GO FOR A QUICK SPIN IN THE CAR...



WHAT A GREAT IDEA! GOLF, ALWAYS GOLF, THERE ARE OTHER THINGS IN LIFE BESIDES GOLF.

THAT OPINION VARIES A LOT ACCORDING TO ONE'S HANDICAP.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, CYNTHIA?

IT DOESN'T MATTER. I'LL BE TAKING YOU OUT IN MY NEW CABRIOLET, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL THAT FRESH AIR.



I BET IT'S YOUR IDEA FOR AN AMUSEMENT PARK AT JONES BEACH?

EXACTLY RIGHT, MRS M. AND I'LL NEED THE SUPPORT OF SOME OF THESE LADIES' HUSBANDS...



...OR AT LEAST THEIR NEUTRALITY. VERY SMART. HAVE A GOOD, AND MOST OF ALL, PRODUCTIVE SPIN, ROBERT.

ARE WE GOING OR ARE WE NOT?

THESE LONG ISLAND ROADS ARE SIMPLY DREADFUL. WHEN I THINK THAT WE'RE NO MORE THAN A HUNDRED MILES FROM MANHATTAN...

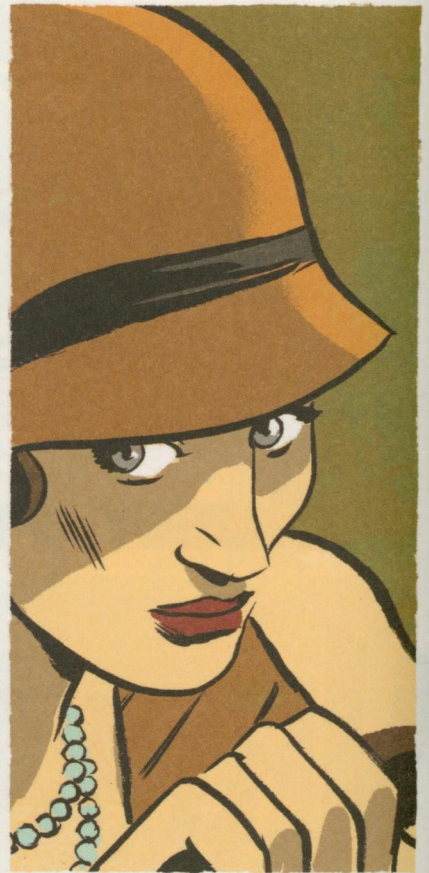
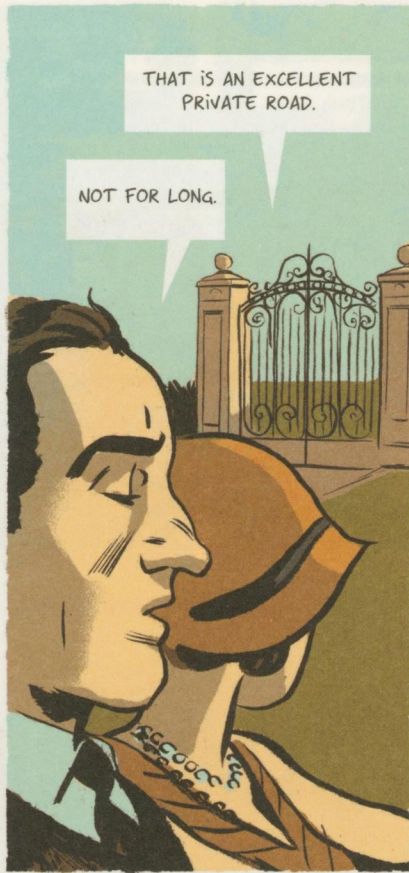
THAT'S ONLY ONE OF THE THINGS I WANT TO CHANGE.

WRRROOOARRR

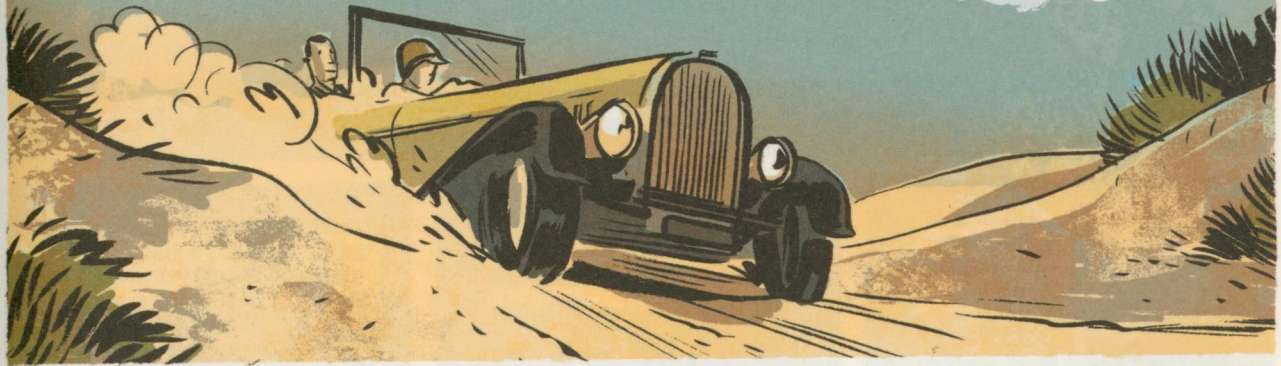
I QUITE LIKE THESE PATHS, SO FULL OF SURPRISES.

NOT EVERYONE SHARES YOUR TASTE FOR ADVENTURE.

BAH... WHEN YOU'VE GOT THE WHEEL, YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO CONTROL IT.

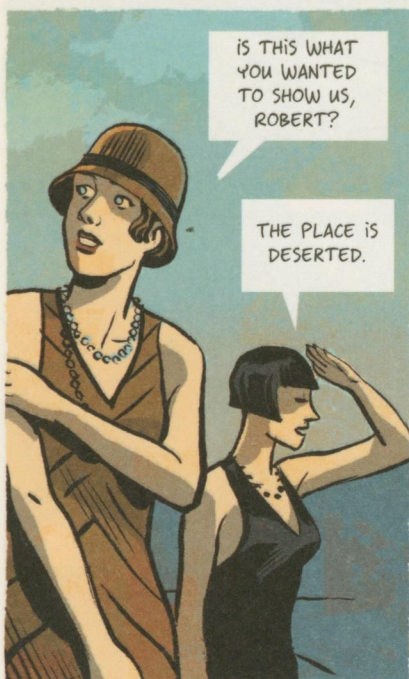
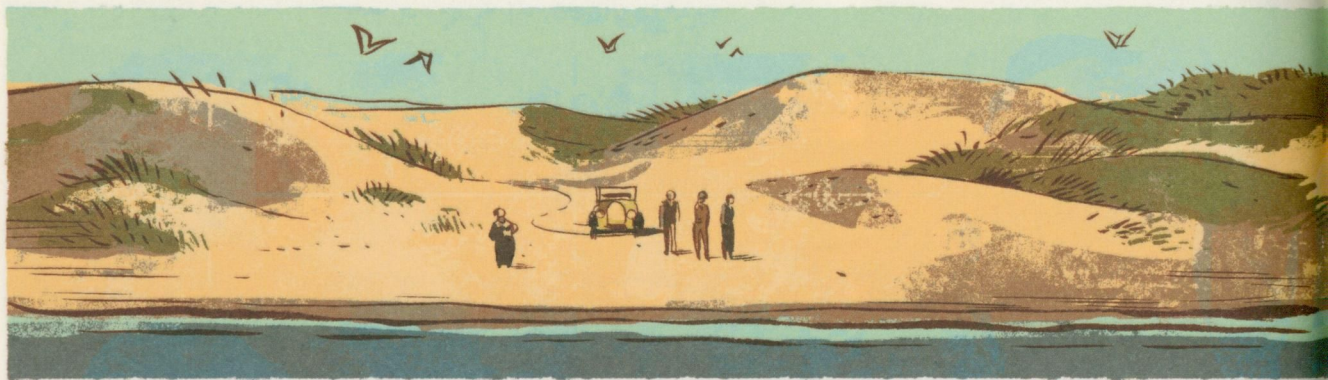


I THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO GET COVERED IN SAND.



NO. WE'VE ARRIVED.





IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED TO SHOW US, ROBERT?

THE PLACE IS DESERTED.



BUT A SPLENDID BEACH, YOU HAVE TO ADMIT.

WERE YOU THINKING OF HAVING PICNICS HERE?



MUCH BETTER THAN THAT! I WANT TO CREATE A PUBLIC SPACE HERE FOR THE MIDDLE CLASSES THAT IS AS COMFORTABLE AS ANY PRIVATE CLUB!

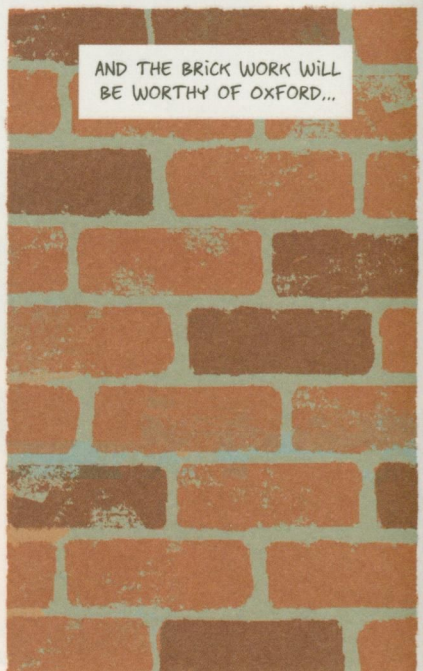


I'LL GET THE BEST ARCHITECTS, ENGINEERS AND DESIGNERS OF THE EAST COAST TO WORK ON IT.



I'LL SUPERVISE EVERY LAST DETAIL OF THE PROJECT.

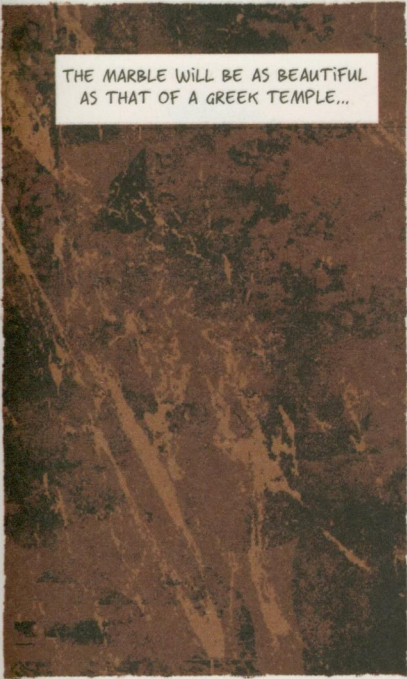
THE STONE WILL BE OF THE SAME QUALITY AS THE ONE USED IN MR HAUSSMAN'S BUILDINGS...



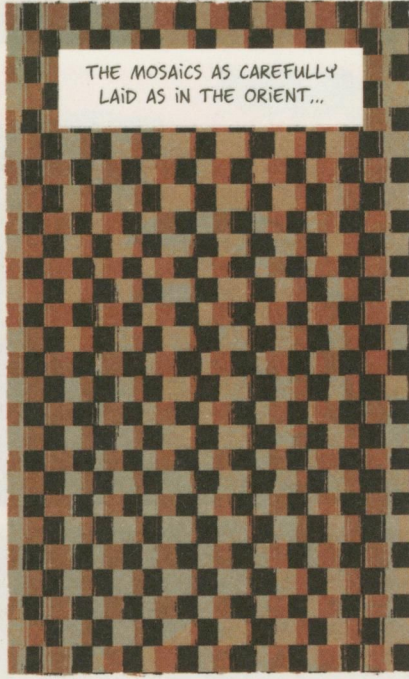
AND THE BRICK WORK WILL BE WORTHY OF OXFORD...



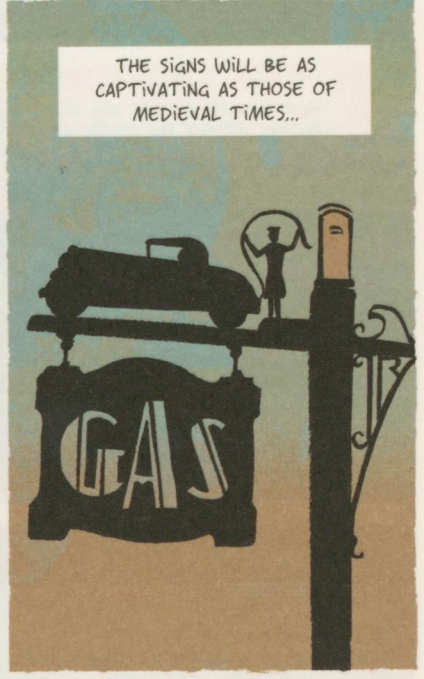
THE MARBLE WILL BE AS BEAUTIFUL
AS THAT OF A GREEK TEMPLE...



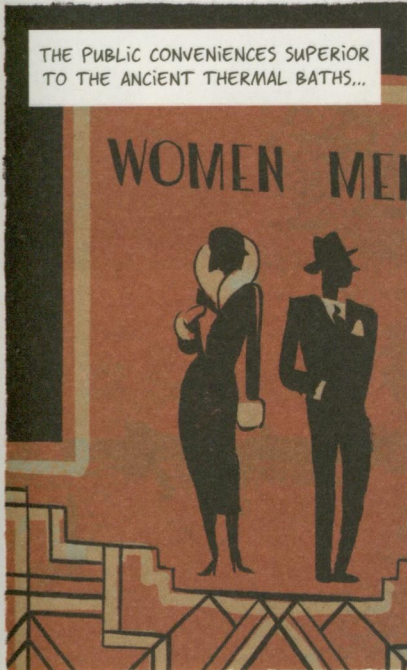
THE MOSAICS AS CAREFULLY
LAID AS IN THE ORIENT...



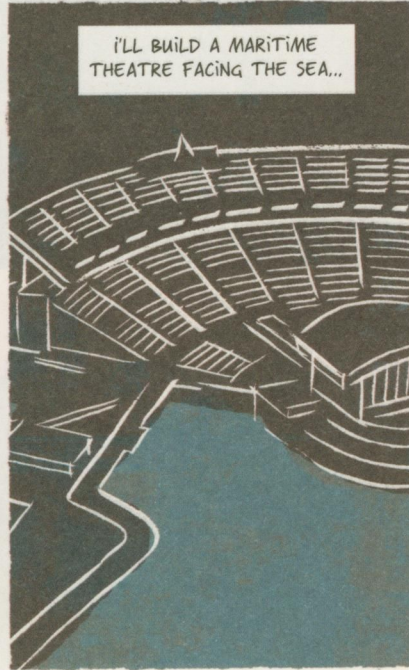
THE SIGNS WILL BE AS
CAPTIVATING AS THOSE OF
MIEVEAL TIMES...



THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES SUPERIOR
TO THE ANCIENT THERMAL BATHS...



I'LL BUILD A MARITIME
THEATRE FACING THE SEA...

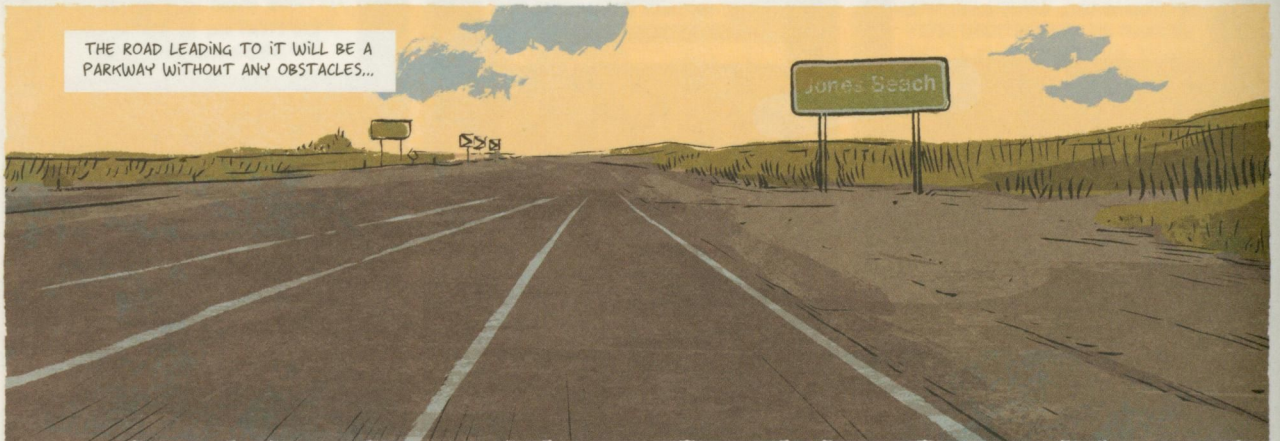


AND THE WATER TOWERS WILL
EVOKE THE TOWERS OF A
TUSCAN CITYSCAPE...

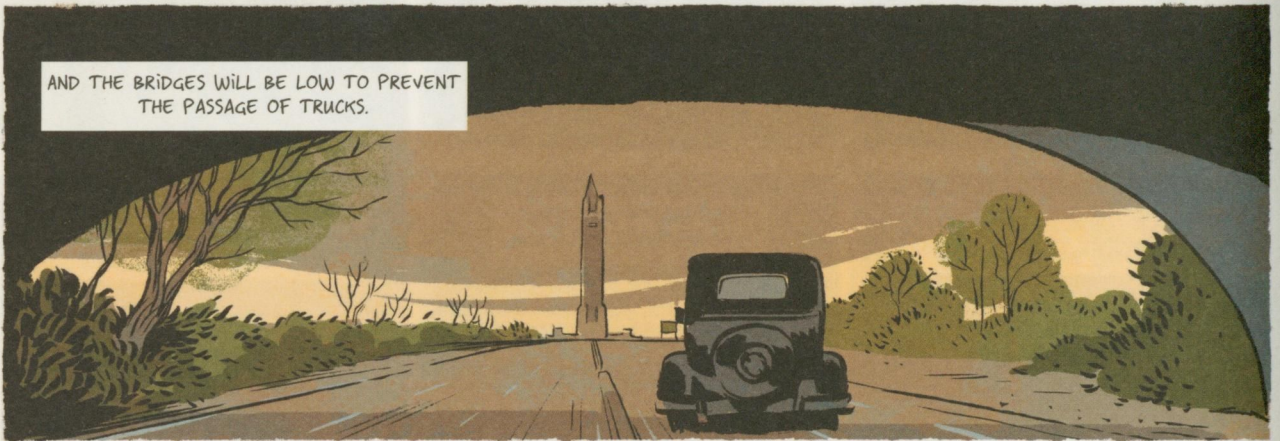




THE CAR PARKS WILL BE DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND GREAT CROWDS...



THE ROAD LEADING TO IT WILL BE A PARKWAY WITHOUT ANY OBSTACLES...



AND THE BRIDGES WILL BE LOW TO PREVENT THE PASSAGE OF TRUCKS.



SO THIS ROAD, WILL IT BE AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE WESTBURY'S?

MORE BEAUTIFUL, CYNTHIA. IT WILL BE LIKE THEIRS BUT MUCH BIGGER.



MY GOD, MR MOSES, YOU WOULDN'T GO SO FAR AS EXPROPRIATIONS NOW WOULD YOU?

THAT WOULD BE SOCIALISM!

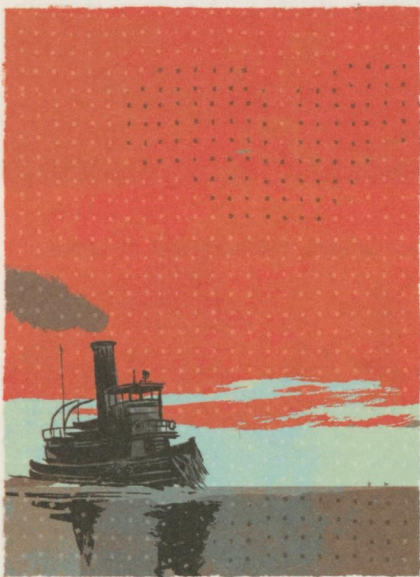


NOTHING, LADIES, COULD BE FURTHER FROM MY INTENTIONS THAN SOCIALISM! I'M PREPARING THE FUTURE OF OUR GREAT CITY, THAT'S ALL...



ON THE DAY OF ITS INAUGURATION IN 1925, JONES BEACH SEES SOME 25,000 VISITORS. A HUGE SUCCESS, THE BEGINNINGS OF GLORY...







THREE CHILDREN
KILLED BY A TOWBOAT
IN THE BRONX ON
WHAT THEY DARE TO
CALL A BEACH!

AND ALL THOSE OTHERS, INTOXICATED BY THE POLLUTED WATERS OF THE HUDSON, FROM SPUYTIN DU-VIL TO MOTT HAVEN, FROM HELL GATE RIGHT UP TO DETROIT, WATER NO LONGER CLEAN ENOUGH TO SWIM IN AND THAT NEVER WILL BE!



DEAR COLLEAGUES, THE TIME HAS COME FOR A NEW AND AMBITIOUS POLICY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SWIMMING POOLS.



I HAVE HERE A LIST OF PROJECTS THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY COVER EVERY DISTRICT...



THE BUDGET, MOSES, YOU'RE FORGETTING THE BUDGET!

AND WHO WILL PAY? THE CITIZEN!

EVEN THE CITIZENS WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO SWIM!



MY FRIENDS, I ASK YOU NOT TO SEE ANY PROVOCATION IN THIS, BUT I REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT IF THIS PROJECT ISN'T ADOPTED...



...I WILL BE FORCED TO ASK FOR THE RESIGNATION OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION...





...AND TO TENDER MY OWN.



HERE HE GOES AGAIN!

TUT TUT, MOSKIE, MY DEAR, YOU'LL SEE...



LET ME REMIND YOU THAT ONLY PUBLIC MONEY IS CONCERNED. THE PEOPLE OF NEW YORK WON'T SEE A PENNY LEAVE THEIR POCKETS!

BRAVO !



NOBODY NEED RESIGN, YES?

OH NO, GOVERNOR, NOBODY.



AND CERTAINLY NOT THE COMMISSION'S PRESIDENT, BY WHICH I MEAN THE EXCELLENT ROBERT MOSES!

BRAVO MOSES!

A GRAND VISION, ROBERT!



NOW THAT YOU ALL SEEM TO HAVE GRANTED ME YOUR CONFIDENCE, LET ME GIVE YOU THE DETAILS ON SOME OF THE DEVELOPMENTS I HAVE IN MIND...

CROTONA IN THE BRONX...



ASTORIA POOL IN QUEENS...






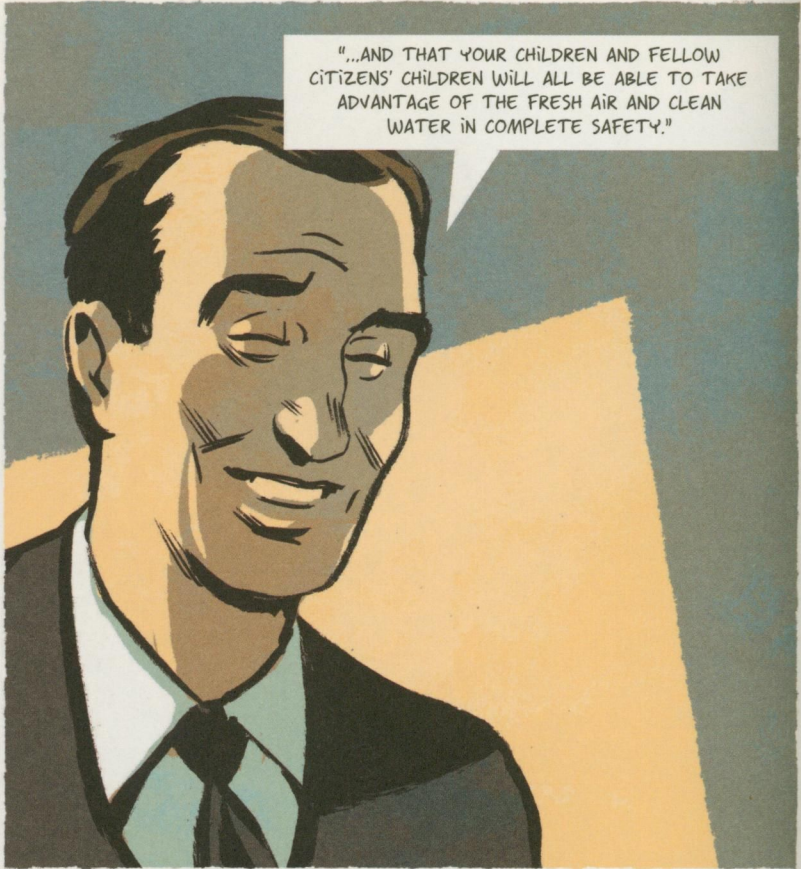
JACOB RIIS PARK IN QUEENS...



AND ALSO THAT OF GREENPOINT OF WHICH THE DESIGN WILL BE PARTICULARLY DARING...



"BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE SAME CARE WILL BE TAKEN EVERYWHERE IN THE MINUTEST OF DETAILS..."



"...AND THAT YOUR CHILDREN AND FELLOW CITIZENS' CHILDREN WILL ALL BE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FRESH AIR AND CLEAN WATER IN COMPLETE SAFETY."

