

Introduction

QUESTIONING THE CAR

Prolegomena for a Historical Analysis of Global Mobility



History ... should be a left hand to us, as of a violinist.

—William Carlos Williams

New Perspectives, New Questions

In a recent ethnography of China's fledgling culture of automobilism just after the turn of the new century, peri-urban outings are described that easily would engender a *déjà vu* experience among students of early Western road motorization. Caravans of automobiles driven by adventurous car owners roam the Chinese countryside, just like the automobile club excursions in Europe more than a century ago, or so it seems. The comparison seems all the more convincing when we realize the Chinese SUVs that take part in such adventures can be considered a revival of the large, heavy contraptions for the European aristocratic and bourgeois extended family, a wrong deviation, it soon turned out, on a path toward more affordable, miniaturized versions, then and now.¹

So, history repeats itself? Perhaps with a twist? Didn't Karl Marx predict it would appear as a farce the second time? And didn't Gilles Deleuze expand on this by saying "repetition is comic when it falls short—that is, when instead of leading to metamorphosis and the production of something new, it forms a kind of involution, the opposite of authentic creation"?² Subtle differences

GLOBALIZING AUTOMOBILISM

Exuberance and the Emergence of Layered Mobility, 1900–1980

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with what I have described in a previous publication as an Atlantic culture around the car as “adventure machine” should warn us against premature conclusions as soon as we shift toward what we, in a similar sketchy (and catchy) style, could call Pacific automobilism. This book documents and analyzes the first phase of this shift: the explosion of Western automobilism and the ambitious and self-confident activities to spread this automobilism beyond the West in an effort to make the world into one giant ‘car society.’ But that is the story of the West, shared, perhaps, by the elite of ‘the Rest.’ From the perspective of the earth’s majority, including many in the West, the story reads quite differently. For them, automobilism appeared as a way of life imposed upon an existing, rich fabric of mobilities. The result was very different from what we have seen emerge and persist in the prewar West, and explode there as exuberant automobilism in the immediate postwar years.

The crucial point here is that we can see this only if we try to look over the shoulder of the mobile Other—if we look, in the words of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, “from below.”³ That would mean we should zoom out of our stare at the car and its immediately surrounding culture (something the ethnography of the Chinese excursions failed to do) and refocus on the multiple mobilities of these societies. What we then see is what I will call a “layeredness” of these mobilities, a coexisting old and new, the old no less ‘modern,’ as we will see, than the new. The central question of this book, then, is what happens with the characteristics of the prewar ‘car society’ when it not only explodes into Western exuberance, reaching well beyond the prewar, relatively prosperous rural and urban middle class into societal pockets occupied by marginals and minorities still in the full process of emancipation, such as children, women, ethnic and sexual minorities, the physically impaired, but also, and at the same time, when it travels beyond the West in much larger amounts than only for the prewar colonials and their indigenous superelites. This central question, governing this book, has two answers: one historical, the other methodological.

From a *historical* perspective, the question arises whether the concept of the automotive adventure, as it emerged during the first half of the twentieth century as the very core of Western car culture, remains valid as a “master category” in a Deleuzian sense if we turn our attention to other countries not covered by our original North Atlantic focus. The second perspective is methodological: what could or should history bring to this issue? Is not social science quite competent in answering such questions, based on a thorough analysis of global car culture’s predicaments? And if history *does* bring something to the analysis that social science cannot provide, can we use the same mix of conventional (archives, trade journals, secondary literature) and unconventional sources (artistic utterances written by and for an ‘automotive middle class’ such as novels and poems) as we did when dealing

exclusively with the prewar West? Are the latter sources as generous in bringing out hidden motifs and motivations as they were in the case of the West? Shouldn't we revise our toolbox before we start to follow the car into the postwar period and beyond the West, if only to include sources from popular culture (such as films and songs, and so-called lowbrow literature) that seem to require a different approach than linear narrativity analysis? And do we need other tools when analyzing the collective mobility of the subaltern than the ones we used to analyze middle-class automobilism, such as the concept of the 'ironic car'?⁴

The answer is a clear and double 'yes.' In an effort to answer the questions formulated above, this book provides an extension and a shift of my previous perspective in two directions: it not only tries to decenter the West methodologically, by complexifying mobility culture from a global perspective, but it also covers the third quarter of the century, by the end of which the West seemed to be on the verge of being dethroned as the natural locus of automotive culture, as the first signs of the next period, that of Doom, became visible by the end of the 1960s. There is one small problem, however: we lack a prehistory of non-Western automobilization, which would only strengthen the prejudice that the car, well prepared during half a century, 'invaded' the South and East as an extraneous object. Therefore, first of all, I owe a correction to my previous analysis of the West by revisiting the pre-World War II period from a non-Western perspective (part I, chap. 1). In so doing, I will continue using the periodization developed on the basis of my 'Western' analysis (Emergence, until World War I; Persistence, until World War II, in this case taken together into one large period of Emergence and Persistence), but with a small, critical addition (also for the postwar periods: "again," "with a twist"), to indicate the periods themselves may fit but that their names may be up for revision once my analysis turns global. So, after the previous two periods of Emergence and Persistence, I will enter the postwar period announced in my previous study (Exuberance) but now described and analyzed from a global point of view (part II, chaps. 2–3), limiting my postwar excursion to the first period of the three, and reserving the other two (Doom, Confusion) for a later publication. World War II, not included in the previous study, appears in this one only in hindsight (from chap. 2, looking back); this is justified, in my opinion, because this war did not form such a breach as did World War I (to which an entire chapter was dedicated in my previous study, as it brought a 'systems approach' to automobilism).

Despite the Anglophone sources on which this study is largely based, the shift to the global perspective will be made visible in two respects: I will, whenever the sources allow, describe Western automobilism through non-Western (or better, formulated from the perspective of mobility studies:

non-canonized) eyes, taking the latter as “point of departure,” following the suggestion by anthropologists Jean and John L. Comaroff that “it is the global south that affords privileged insight into the workings of the world at large, as old margins become new frontiers.” The Comaroffs claim, quoting an American senator, the East and South are a “perfect petri dish of capitalism ... challenging the myth that there is only one authentic version of it.” As I have argued in *Atlantic Automobility*, this is certainly also the case for both American and European automobilisms before the war. The question, then, is, echoing the Comaroffs (including their assertion that “the line of demarcation” between North and South “is not actually drawn in a stable way” and that “the south” is “a *relation*, not a thing in or for itself”): does the “north appear ... to be ‘evolving’ southward” in automobilistic terms as well, and does the South thus “prefigure the future of the global north?” The Comaroffs gave as an example of the non-West figuring as the “laboratory” of global culture the “experiments ... in urban architecture and planning,” as well as “in untried practices of governance and extraction, bureaucracy and warfare, property and pedagogy”: modernity was from the outset a (highly asymmetrical) collaborative endeavor, in which the “peripheries” functioned as places of modernity production “at a discount,” places where “the violence and the magic, the expropriation and alienation, the syncretism and archaism suppressed in Europe ... were often promiscuously visible.” To give a more recent example: “Secure labor contracts have now evaporated such that the precarity that has long been the experience of workers in the subordinated countries and among subordinated populations in the dominant countries is now becoming universal.” Can we find examples, in global automotive culture, of this *prefiguration* that go beyond Hartmut Böhme’s observation that commodity fetishism was transferred from Africa right “into the very core of the European societies”?⁵

Second, heeding anthropologist Paul Rabinow’s warning that one should not replace Orientalism by Occidentalism in an act of “reverse essentialism,” the Western vision on global developments (such as its attempts to ‘develop’ the rest of the world through roadbuilding, a major revolution in the history of global mobility, described in chap. 3) will be explicitly described as a “gaze to the East.” This does not make me immune, *hélas*, to the pitfalls of what David Spurr has called the “curious phenomenon,” that “the West seeks its own identity in Third World attempts at imitating it; it finds its own image, idealized, in the imperfect copies fabricated by other cultures.”⁶ So be it. In the conclusion to this study, I will reach back to the following sections of the introduction, in which I first will provide a recapitulation of the previous study (emphasizing its main conclusions and concepts), concluding that we need to rethink the car as ‘adventure machine,’ especially in relation to its role as a status symbol. We also need to rethink automotive subjectivation,

now that groups and classes other than the white male part of the middle class enter our narrative. Next, we will have to deal with some methodological issues additionally necessary to support the postwar analysis, such as some insights from media studies and travel writing, and the problem of representation: can we trust our popular-culture sources? At the end of this introduction, some paragraphs will be dedicated to the selection of the sources and the use of certain terms.

Looking Back: Emergence and Persistence of the Adventure Machine

I developed the concept of the adventure machine through my analysis of the electric vehicle: it formed the main explanation for this vehicle's 'failure' at the start of Western automobilism, which, from a technological-evolutionary point of view, was not a failure at all, as the vehicle's technology formed a grab bag of innovative solutions taken over by its main competitor, the gasoline car, a phenomenon without which the latter could not have become mainstream so easily.⁷ Only if historians aim, as is often the case, at the entirety of the car as a commodity (only if they chose the history of the car as framework instead of the history of automobilism or of mobility in general) can the electric vehicle be said to have failed, as it could not get rid of its symbolic stereotype of being a woman's (or feminized) car. Instead, the 'adventurous' attractiveness of its internal-combustion rival in a male-dominated culture of sport and leisure was irresistible, in three realms of practices: temporal (racing and speedy touring), spatial (unlimited roaming in the countryside), and functional (tinkering, even if many pioneer motorists, especially in the United States, employed a chauffeur). All three practice-complexes were connected to uncertainty about their outcomes (hence the term adventure), engendering (bodily) thrill. This explanation, based on what I have called inter-artifactual technology transfer (resulting in the gasoline vehicle, once it became mainstream, to 'steal,' as it were, all benign functions of its electric rival, such as the closed body, the cord tire, and electric starting, to name only a few, to prevent potential users to opt in favor of the alternative) avoids the tautological dilemma of explaining the failure of one technology from the success of its rival, an explanation that fosters, misleadingly so, the belief in ubiquitous radical rather than incremental change.⁸

My subsequent analysis of the early gasoline car culture, mostly based on 'autopoetics' (novels, poems, songs, movies, paintings, not necessarily sources on cars, but also including sources in which the car figures directly or indirectly in selected passages, passages I described as 'autopoetic'),

revealed two additional aspects of the automotive adventure. They were not found in my earlier study on the emergence of the electric car, because they were not so crucial in the struggle between the electric and the gasoline option, but also because I did not use autopoetics for that study. It confirms that conventional sources do not form a reliable entrance into the motifs and motivations of historical actors. The two new adventurous aspects were subsumed, in my *Atlantic Automobility* study, under the term conquest, a “war metaphor” (in the analysis of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson) covering the masculine adventure of capturing the passenger (mostly a man ‘conquering’ a woman, although Proust, as a passenger, admired his masculine driver), as well as the touristic “surveying” (by men and some women alike) of the ‘periphery,’ either the noncore parts of the continents under investigation (the Southern United States, Eastern and Southern Europe), or those countries and continents, such as Africa, that were considered a ‘periphery’ in a colonial context. The study of postwar American women’s literature in chapter 2, however, now suggests “control” captures the situation better than ‘conquest.’”

This often violent (if not performative, then certainly structural) amalgam of aggressive attitudes and practices also applies to the colonial context, and one can wonder (as I will do in the following chapters) whether one can still call such experiences ‘adventurous,’ if the experience of the addressee of such “adventures” includes so much suffering and cruelty. This will be one of the main themes of my analysis. After all, ‘adventure’ was coined in a situation of leisurely, tongue-in-cheek play with near death, and the suffering of ‘Others’ was limited to what was deemed acceptable in a ‘modern,’ motorizing society, such as fear for life and limb, and the occasional traffic fatality, that is, if the ‘victim’ was a consideration at all in this largely narcissistic adventurous practice. However named, this fourth aspect, of conquest or control, is a secondary experience, as it presupposes the existence of one of the other three adventurous traits. All these adventurous traits of early car use were part and parcel of the emerging risk society, where danger was gradually being replaced by the calculable occurrence of an ‘accident,’ a shift in which the car played a supporting role, as the choice to take a ride increasingly involved the suppression of the fear for disaster. *Atlantic Automobility* showed how motorists were supported in the statistical reproduction of automotive ‘safety’ by the fledgling expertise of traffic engineering, one of the systemic vanguards of the ‘car society.’¹⁰

Methodologically, in an effort to explain the breakthrough of the gasoline car through the ‘motifs, motives, and motivations’ of early automobility, the analysis of autopoetic sources took place on three ‘levels’: content, symbols, and affinity. I do not claim, as some recent social scientists using literature as a source do, “the novelist, poet, librettist or film director can

often grasp the phenomenology of an event with a sharpness, clarity and resonance which makes the efforts of social and cultural analysts appear (as they indeed often are) clodhopping.”¹¹ The choice of this type of sources was (and in this study again is) justified not only by the insight that they contain information not easily to be found in the traditional historical sources such as archives and trade journals (for instance, because they are taboo as a masculine conversation topic, or because they are part of subconscious, corporeal drives not easily expressed in words) but also by the realization that, historically, literary (or more generally, artistic) and automotive (or more generally, mobility) avant-gardes largely overlapped.

Indeed, we should “take ... advantage of what fiction can do better than polemic or history: put us in the room [with] other human beings,” or, in our case, put us in their car.¹² For the first period of automotive pioneering (and to a certain extent, this applies to the bicycle pioneers a decade or so earlier), one can even claim not a few of the pioneers were writers, who helped shape the experience of driving as much as driving shaped their own literary experiments of a new sensorial ‘grammar.’ Written artistic utterances, I found, are especially attractive as a source because their authors are forced to “translate” their multisensorial experiences into ‘text,’ a skill in which writers are considered exceptionally trained: as such, they can function, the previous study showed, as the contemporary witnesses of the historian. But this is not a free ride: I will come back to the precarious issue of translation, but first let us investigate the three levels of analysis of this type of sources.

As to the first level of analysis, close reading the *textual content* resulted in the conclusion that the automotive adventure during the first Emergence phase was a white, heterosexual, male, urban, middle-class pastime imbued, if not saturated, by violence and aggression, from fantasies of intimidation of farmers and the rape or automotive penetration of villages, to ‘hooliganism’ (the elite counterpart of the Luddism of the movement’s adversaries) and the actual killing of other road users. It is perhaps difficult to see this from a standpoint in history where the number of fatalities of global road traffic are in the order of one million, but for the contemporaries of the pioneers, this was nothing but obvious. The ‘vandalism’ of early automobilism is not a byproduct of an intrinsically benign technology; this insight should work as an antidote to those histories that depict the pioneers as a nostalgic fraternity of car lovers. They were not: they behaved like vandals loyal to their reputation of motorized narcissists. They were not a minority that soon got pushed out of the movement leaving the ‘reasonable motorists’ to spread their gospel of automobilism further, but they represented the very core of what automobilism was all about. This hegemonic minority was able to define automobilism as a seemingly innocent, but deeply violent and aggressive practice.

The crucial second Persistence period of early automobilism then established the systemic character of what after World War II would be called a 'car society,' a period in which highway network building channeled the 'swarms' of motorists into traffic flows and 'traffic engineering' helped make many violent aspects go underground, in a 'covert culture' of road safety statistics. Swarms are groups that act quasi-coordinated without any central command. Fear for disorder inspired this traffic engineering project, enabling the motorists to experience 'transcendence,' the reassuring feeling that one is not alone, despite the 'cocooning' of the driver and his (and increasingly, her) passengers in a capsule that distanced them from their environment. Hence, the coalescence of fear for chaos and desire for swarm-like transcendence enabled the systematization of automobilism into 'traffic.' By the end of this period, the closed 'affordable family car,' governed by a 'tamed adventure' of less aggressive (but, in terms of safety statistics, no less violent) weekend excursions and car holidays, and still mostly driven by the father of the 'nuclear family,' hurried over the highway network that became more or less completed in all industrialized Western countries well before World War II. Women and other marginalized would-be motorists (such as blacks or homosexuals) had a hard time to enter automobilism in the prewar period, and if they did, this took place under the hegemonic conditions of the dominant group (which often boiled down to a reduced and a seemingly more passive role of 'passenger-ing,' a heavily under-researched automotive practice, I concluded at the end of my previous study), thus joining those that already deployed such practices, such as children and the physically impaired (who are virtually invisible as actors in prewar Western automobilism).

Indeed, automobilism in the first half of the twentieth century was far from inclusive, as some historians would have it: even the white worker refrained from joining the middle-class movement, also to a large extent in the United States, despite extensive credit facilities and despite the possibility of alternative, less individualized user practices such as shared car ownership. In the West, the passenger car had become firmly inscribed in a paradigm of individualism, testified, for instance, by the fate of the collective 'jitney' (often operated by Blacks), which was made illegal and then chased from the American urban roads.¹³ And yet, public road transport, especially the bus, slowly emerging from its decade-long struggle against the railway alternative, was the vehicle of choice for all those waiting to become 'free' through car mobility. In other words, by the end of the interbellum, one did not have to own a car in order to feel part of a car society, or indulge in 'road experience,' which from then on decisively would shape the national and transnational discourses on mobility (including the urban crisis, which remained unresolved before the war), as the current study will abundantly show.

Told in this way, the first half of twentieth-century automobilism is a refutation of two powerful myths, still haunting mobility studies: the *functionalist* belief that the success of the car can be attributed to its evolution from a toy of the rich to a petty bourgeois utilitarian contraption,¹⁴ and the *diffusionist* assumption that this transformation took place in the United States, which hence forms the universal model of ‘motorization.’ Instead, this analysis acknowledges the existence of ‘multiple mobilities’ (national and subnational) that—contrary to the diffusion thesis (this remnant of “historicism,” which “assumes we are all heading in the same direction, but that some have got there first and must direct the travel for later arrivals”)—developed in parallel to each other, coagulating in two large ‘Atlantic’ sub-cultures, a European and an American, a diversity that during the following half-century will increase spectacularly, as we will see in this study, and become one of the main characteristics of postwar, global automobilism.¹⁵ The multiplicity of mobilities extends even into the mainstream, where we will distinguish, in the following chapters, between hegemonic mobilities in a certain culture, and alternative mobilities. The latter are often at the same time ‘subversive mobilities,’ because they go against the hegemonic grain, as anti-modernist modernities. As such, they must on their turn be distinguished from ‘subaltern mobilities’ that are (as we will see in this introduction) not only subversive but also not a part of the mainstream. We will also witness, in the first chapter, the importance of ‘forced mobilities.’¹⁶ Contrary to the functionalist belief, the use profile of the car has been dominated, over the entire two periods of Emergence and Persistence, by pleasure and hedonism, even, as often as not, in the fledgling flows of the first car commuters in the 1930s. Indeed, pleasure and violence, hedonism and aggression form mutually enhancing conceptual clusters of experiences in and around the car (albeit in a moderate, middle-class flavor), especially as narrated in novels and other artistic utterances.

This is especially apparent when the second, *symbolic* level of analysis is included. Based on my initial conviction that the dynamic, adventurous use was more important for an explanation than its static, symbolic use (quite adequate for the Western realms, it seemed), I limited my symbolic analysis to the metaphorical realm. During the first period, the car appeared to be compared to a monster or a woman (both to be tamed); it was described as a liberator (of men and especially women), as a unifier of humankind or a compressor of time and space, as vehicle of progress and restorer of the past, while the car trip functioned as the image of life itself or as a Quest of the Self. I identified the latter aspect as a distortion because of the type of sources, which privilege the car trip as a journey into the Self (a perspective uncritically followed by many students of travel writing and of literature), thus hiding the fundamental collective aspects of early

automobility, from the outings guided by car club officials and in general the multiple car and touring club events, to the hidden pleasure of being part of a flow and indulging in collective overspeeding, feeling strong against an often powerless police force, to the family as collective subject during the Persistence phase, or the ‘situational group’ of the taxi or bus trip. During the second, more systemic period, the car then also functioned, conversely, as a reservoir of metaphors to characterize nonautomotive phenomena in society, showing that automobility had become a dominant cultural trait even if the movement itself was carried by a societal minority. Hegemony does not need to be “dominant in quantitative terms.”¹⁷

But the most remarkable result of my symbolic analysis was the discovery of two metaphorical clusters (metaphor specialists Lakoff and Johnson would call it “lexical items ... coherently structured by a single metaphorical concept”) to be found all over the sources: those related to the car as a ‘shell’ (a protective cocoon but also a grenade, now protective, then aggressive, or both at the same time) and the experience of ‘flight’ while driving, the elevated feeling that the motorist left the bumpy road and indulged in a womb-like poising. Flight, indeed, is the literal experience of transcendence, according to Zygmunt Bauman on the first page of his treatise on the individualized society. As such, ‘flight’ is in itself a form of mobility, a transformation from one state into another, into a field of mediated, “transcendental experience” according to Edmund Husserl, from a “field of direct experience.”¹⁸ However, as soon as we extend our analysis beyond the prewar phase and beyond the West, it becomes rapidly clear that the symbolic aspects of the car should be given more attention, a first recognition of the insight of the Comaroffs. After all, the car is not only an adventure machine but also a costly possession, even more so in societies with extreme inequalities. We will come back to this metaphorical level later in this introduction.

It is the third level of analysis, that of the *affinity* between the practice of driving and writing, between the production of a text and of a driving experience, that brought us nearest to an explanation of early Western automobility. In *Atlantic Automobility*, I have called the crucial driving experience an “ironic mobile sublime, enabling transcendence, but tongue-in-cheek, in a distanced way.” I called it ironic because of its affinity with the literary technique of irony (defined in its verbal form as “the use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning,” a form of nonliteral language use, next to, for instance, the use of metaphors), which has helped the (middle-class) writer keep his distance to the world, just like the car cocoon brings the (middle-class) motorist close to the gazed-at other, but always in a distanced way, protected by the shell.¹⁹ For the purpose of our postwar analysis, we should develop this concept of the ‘ironic car’ one step further. Borrowing from literary and linguistic studies

of irony, we can now define the car as a vehicle of nonverbal irony, but in a sense other than the “Louvre’s glass pyramids,” proposed by Rebecca Clift as an “ironic play on our prototypical knowledge of pyramids as solid.” Rather, the car’s irony rests on the affinity between the production of the car trip and the production of texts, both resulting in a distancing effect toward the world. Tellingly, modern studies of linguistic irony distinguish between “wolves” (those who understand irony) and “sheep” (those who do not).²⁰ Others fine-tuned this distinction by adding another opposite pair (those who agree with the intended message and those who do not), resulting in a four-quadrant matrix of “wolf-confederates,” “wolf-victims,” “sheep-confederates,” and “sheep-victims.” Such studies also distinguish between ironic factors and ironic markers (the latter, contrary to the former, can be removed without the irony disappearing).²¹

Thus, automotive perception was shaped by, and on its turn shaped, automotive technology, which in this phase underwent one of the most costly operations in its history: the conversion from an open (like one half of a clam) to a closed body (a shell or cocoon), a process I described as encapsulation. The “ironist,” Italian psychologists have observed in the case of prosodic (vocal nonverbal) irony, uses “his own voice for calibrating strategically his way of (un)masking himself to others.” Just like the car had to undergo technical changes at the factory (ironic factors such as the closed body) and additional changes by the users (ironic markers such as tinted glass) to enable automotive irony, the human voice is inflected to produce ironic markers. Irony (and its somewhat more aggressive twin, sarcasm) thus are “considered as a cold way to wound the victim more harshly: unlike an open insult produced in a moment of rage, a sarcastic comment is more calculated, as it arises from rational and intentional planning.” One can read this last form of linguistic violence as an ironic (if not sarcastic) statement about the car as well (as we have seen in our previous study when dealing with the “cold persona” as motorist, and his statistical inclination to wound and kill): “using irony you can say what you mean without meaning what you say ..., because of the distinction between sentence meaning and intended meaning.”²² In the terms of automotive irony: one can kill (or be killed) on the road as long as one adheres to the rules and regulations of traffic.

In this study, we will witness the gradual loss of irony in the automotive adventure, a shift we will connect to a shift in the class base of automobilism. Indeed, in this study, there is a lot on class, especially middle class. We will use the class concept in a somewhat multilayered, eclectic way, now emphasizing its economic base, then its cultural aspects, then its Weberian (emphasizing status), sometimes its Marxist ‘flavor,’ and sometimes its “wedding” into Bourdieuan practices of the reproduction of hierarchical

‘distinctions.’²³ “Distinction work” is often very mobile: it travels by car. In this study, following Bourdieu through Amy Hanser, class is “an activity or practice rather than ... a category.” For E. P. Thompson, class is a human relationship. Mobility, after all, is part of a possible definition of classes as “broad aggregates of individuals and families, ... distinguished from each other by inequalities in wealth, income, power (or at least access to it), authority, prestige, freedom, life-styles and life chances, including mobility into a different aggregate of individuals.”²⁴ Other forms of affinity—for instance, between the production and consumption of early movies and the vision through the windshield (or windscreen)—helped discover the very core of the automotive experience in this phase: the transcendental experience of going beyond the individual driver (just like literature allows “to draw us into a world beyond ourselves”), the godlike feeling of power, the entrance into the swarm of motorists, being part of a flow, yet only a monad.

For our current project, however, we need a subtler insight into the intricacies of the transcendental process. For instance, seen from the transcendental perspective, the experience of ‘flight’ (popping up time and again in early autopoetic novels counterintuitively: the bumpy roads and the harsh suspension systems really did not seem to allow it) appeared to be a crucial element of the automotive adventure, as it emphasizes the haptic basis of the car driving experience and as such forms a correction to those studies that see the car primarily as an instrument of vision. This is not to say vision is not important as a constitutive element in the automotive adventure, not so much as a gaze, as John Urry argued borrowing a-historically from an earlier phase of railway sensibilities (privileging the static train passenger, or the slow-moving walker), but as a furtive glance, produced at high speed, and constantly changing its direction. Differently put, the ‘gaze’ metaphor universalizes the driver’s experience of the second half of the century along the straight freeways (and projects it back into history), but it neglects the prewar sweeping glances of the driver meandering over the national road system, as well as the car passenger whose vision is not (necessarily) a controlling one.²⁵ Vision may still be the predominant sensation while driving, but this is modulated and enhanced by a multisensorial experience, dominated by touch.²⁶

The question, then, is whether this prewar ironic, moderately adventurous automobilism that draws its energy from a kind of collectively experienced, but covert culture of transcendence can stand the test of the postwar world: what happens to the automotive adventure if its carrier tries to migrate to other continents, and how is the original adventure affected by feedback from these places? To give only one example: if it is true that the colonial state’s hegemony was the result of a shift in the balance between persuasion and coercion toward the latter, then Cotten Seiler’s illuminating

analysis of the role of the car in the United States as a historical stimulant of the ‘persuasion side’ of the state’s hegemony might not be valid, as such, in a colonial society, and its successors.²⁷ Similarly, what happens on a more regional or local scale, when the white, heterosexual, middle-class man is joined by women, blacks and other people of color, homosexuals and other people with marginalized sexual proclivities, children in the passenger seat or even behind the steering wheel, as we will witness in the following chapters? Or when the car ‘lands,’ as an alien contraption, in a society where the appropriating upper or middle class is not white? And most of all: does our thesis, that car and middle class are historically intrinsically linked through the concept of ‘adventure,’ still hold when confronted with the majority-Rest, and its particular tradition of mobility, in a *multilayered world of increasing multimobility* (through the plane, motorized two-wheelers, but also in the non-West by the persistence of ‘old’ mobilities such as the rickshaw, the bullock cart, the trishaw, cycling, and walking)? It seems, indeed, we need to further fine-tune and extend our methodological and theoretical toolbox for this task, equip it with tools able to handle motorists other than the white, middle-class male, and other modes than the affordable family car. In the following four sections, we will do so by investigating two aspects of automobilism hitherto somewhat underexposed in our previous study: the commodity and the media character of the car.

Extending Adventure: The Car as Possession and Status Symbol

In our previous analysis, we emphasized (under the influence of the declared ‘liquidity’ of life, and the ‘fluidity’ of society and its ‘mobility turn’) the *dynamic character of car use*, experienced from the perspective of the human (predominantly white male) bodily sensorium. This was necessary to *corporeally*, haptically ground the concept of automotive adventure. Thus, the car adventure and the adventure car both fitted in the concept of the ‘dual nature of technology’: the technical *properties* (its physical qualities such as weight, color, and maximum engine speed) of the artifact car *afford* (in the terminology of ecological psychologist James Gibson) a set of relational, user *functions*.²⁸ In our previous analysis, these functions were mostly limited to the practice (or user function) of driving, from the internal handling of the car to taking part in road traffic or navigating along the highways on a holiday trip, to name only a few elements of the *use profile* as this emerged during the first decades of the last century. In my previous study, I drew up a matrix of car-related practices as a basis for a taxonomy. At the same time, however, most cars were and are owned by their user, and *ownership* does not fully overlap with *use*, at least not if we define the latter (perhaps somewhat)

narrowly as a dynamic process of driving the car, or passengering in it. After all, the car is immobile (parked, stuck because of a defect, standing in traffic) during by far most of the time, time during which other car-related practices are deployed, such as maintenance and repair in the garage, do-it-yourself activities at home (including washing and polishing), vehicle modifying in the context of a youth culture, studying others stuck in the same jam, and showing off the results through ‘cruising’ and other forms of more static exhibitionist performances such as car shows, or museums.

Thus, ‘consuming the car’ involves not only the ‘use profile’ for which traffic engineering coined ‘modal split,’ a term I try to avoid in the following chapters because of its Western bias, opting for the alternative ‘modal configuration’ if we wish to refer to the competition of several *mobility modes*, such as the car, the bicycle, walking, and the train. Car consumption also involves the act of *purchase* as well as the *display of ownership*—also, and especially, if not moving. And although I dedicated, in my previous study, quite some space to the sociological aspects of the car as commodity (for instance, how it crept into the household budget of the Western nuclear family during the interwar years), there is also an important *corporeal* side to this which would allow us to distinguish between an aggressively masculine form on the one hand, and other forms of masculine and feminine behavior on the other, in the West and especially beyond. Instead of as an aggressive ‘adventure machine,’ the car then appears as a ‘fashion machine,’ a suit in metal and plastic; this would extend our conception of the automotive adventure considerably. In our earlier analysis, we briefly discussed the fetish character of the car as commodity, but for the period under scrutiny here, we need a broader take from the history and theory of consumption. We can do this along several paths, acknowledging that the quite repetitive and abstract treatise on “conspicuous consumption” by Thorstein Veblen from 1899 is no longer adequate.²⁹ One path is psychoanalytical as it is based on Sigmund Freud’s later work, especially *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in which he distinguished between pleasure and satisfaction and “turned his focus to the satisfaction that the subject derives from repeating experiences that don’t provide pleasure.” Todd McGowan called Freud’s conclusion about the ‘death drive’ “misleading,” and instead used his distinction between pleasure and satisfaction to emphasize that we “enjoy ... what we don’t have,” as the title of one of McGowan’s books (2013) runs. “The fundamental gesture of capitalism is promise ... The promise ensures a sense of dissatisfaction with the present in relation to the future,” a phenomenon I have called “expectation” and identified as the basis for innovation.³⁰

On the consumption side, commodification functions through this “promise of a better future,” an insight enabling us to reformulate ‘adventure,’ for the purpose of the present study that includes the car as commodity, as

a risky chase after the future and its promises, “just like auto racing fans go to see cars crashing (or potentially crashing), though this desire remains unconscious.” In this characterization, the commute is no adventure, despite efforts by the Western middle class to reshape it as such (remember, for instance, Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt* [1923] and his efforts in this direction), but car *purchase* is, as an adventurous form of appropriation, a third element of the conquest or control aspect of the automotive adventure, accompanied by ‘thrill,’ if only because of the large amount of money involved. People who don’t own a car *yet* may engage in a derived adventure of desiring the car and fantasizing about its future use. Societies or parts thereof with a large share of commuting in their ‘modal split’ may then have a less adventurous car culture, but an echo of the ‘adventure machine’ is kept alive by its commodification, the desire to acquire a confirmation of one’s societal status, as we will investigate in the case of the American suburbanite in chapter 2. As we will see, car driving thus not only becomes a rite of passage into adulthood; its possession also cements one’s social position as part of the car-owning class, and the ostentatious display of this possession gives an extra twist to car adventurousness. Adventure is the experience of playing out desires; it enjoys the road over the destination, celebrating the struggle over the fulfillment. “The *aim* is the way taken,” in the words of Jacques Lacan. More even: this adventure is intrinsically ironic, as it needs distance: “Proximity has a deleterious effect on both the subject’s desire and the objects desirability.” Also, commodification transforms the sublime that every society needs: “the act of sublimation occurs when the subject creates an object that is out of reach.” Under capitalist conditions, the sublime is tamed (“less terrifying”): commodification “transforms ordinary objects into commodities, which are mystical entities endowed with sublime properties.” This “victory over utility” enables “the transcendence of the everyday ... One buys the SUV for its sublimity even if one insists on its usefulness for hauling things.”³¹

And yet, McGowan’s exclusive focus on the car as (static) object fully neglects the dynamics of the automobile’s use: “Once we traverse the distance and acquire the commodity, we experience the profound disappointment” and

the sublime becom[es] quotidian ... Before we purchase an object, it has transcendent quality, akin to a religious icon from the Middle Ages. After the purchase, the sublimity rushes out of it, and we are left with an ordinary object that falls far short of our expectations ... Immediately after buying the car, it ceases to be sublime, even if one is relatively content with one’s choice ... The religious experience of seeking the commodity becomes immediately secular after one has it.

This may be true for a refrigerator, or a couch, but cannot be true for mobile objects such as dresses and especially automobiles. As we have shown repeatedly for the pre–World War II era (and will do again for the post–World War II era, even if it seems to erode in the West), it is the *dynamic use* of the car that rekindles the sublime, the transcendence, and the religious feeling of being part of the ‘swarm.’ Whereas the user aspect of “consumption” of a refrigerator consists in the opening and closing of its door (and, of course, if it is a prestigious brand, its conspicuous presence in the kitchen), a car or a dress is consumed through driving and wearing. Whereas the milk is kept cold as long as we don’t touch the refrigerator, the car trip is produced by a complex cluster of practices, extensively described in the novels we will deal with (that is, as long as we do not have a refrigerator-prone ‘driverless car’). Indeed, McGowan’s conclusion seems the result of a universalization of the boring experiences of the Western commuter, as we will see in the following chapters. Likewise, mobility history has moved beyond generalizations about the “irrelevance” of “self-conscious ‘display.’” Lynn Pearce, who put forward this claim of irrelevance in her recent analysis of autopoetic British novels, unfortunately does not qualify who those “many drivers” are, who, according to her, are insensitive to their status.³² Let us not forget that a dilapidated Volvo station wagon in the outskirts of Berkeley is as much a status symbol as a red Ferrari stopping in front of the Ritz in Paris.

Another possible conceptual entrance (another ‘path’) into the commodification of the car is provided by social psychologist Helga Dittmar, whose analysis is attractive for our project not only because she emphasizes the social constructedness of personal and social identities (she herself uses the term constructionism) but also because her analytical overview of the discipline is historical. Dittmar focused not on (the promise of) purchase but on (the performative practice of) *ownership*. Tellingly, her first example of the psychological importance of “individual ownership” was the car, in a quote from Erich Fromm, who in 1978 emphasized its status-symbolic character and its ability to provide an “extension of power,” its acquisition adding “a new piece of ego.” Following a long tradition in the social sciences, Dittmar derived the “symbolic meanings of material goods” (which “extend far beyond their immediate physical qualities”) from advertisements, the symbols’ paradise. This strategy is attractive because of the simplicity and one-dimensionality of the message, but I am reluctant to follow her here, as it is conceived from the perspective of the manufacturers and exclusively aimed at inciting its consumers to buy, and buy again. Advertisements are “extremely limited in its expressive range,” anthropologist Grant McCracken, specialized in the study of culture and commerce, opines.³³

Advertisements, despite their “hypnotic spell, especially on sociologists” (*dixit* Marshall McLuhan), are not the best way to enter the world of

motorists' motivations, even if we acknowledge their power derives from the fact that their content resonates with what is already there, as the objects they praise are "magically loaded."³⁴ Our autopoetic sources, on the other hand, are aimed at complexifying the imagined lifeworlds of motorists (just like historians tend to do), offering the reader or viewer a set of alternative options for the 'I,' as well as insights into their motives. Advertisements indeed "provide the meanings of material symbols," but, especially in a mass market, they have a controversial relation with humor, let alone irony, which makes the 'translation' of their messages toward the motives of the motorists much more complex than is the case for fictionally narrated driving experiences. Asking people about their relation with their possessions and their identity, as the surveys do that form the basis of much of advertising scholarship, is extra problematic if we realize that although the respondents "seem aware of the link between possessions and identity, [they] are less happy to admit it—particularly with respect to themselves." Furthermore, those ads that consciously mobilize "rhetorical irony ...[,] demand sophisticated language skills," and are seen by marketing students as "best aimed at an elite or 'class' audience, for downscale targets may miss the point" and "tend in some cases to take the messages literally." Apparently, like experience, meanings are layered: some people (the 'sheep' from literary irony studies) tend to stick to the "surface meaning" of this type of "traditionally postmodern" advertising, missing the nonliteral, "underlying meaning." They miss the ironic "markers" or "cues."³⁵ Irony splits the audience of autopoetic utterances in two, just like the capsule of the ironic car separates the motorists from the 'Other.' I will nevertheless, in this study, have to grant more attention to the contents and symbols of car advertisements (compared to my previous study), as they can provide evidence of the role of the car industry in enforcing masculinity upon a reluctant market, at a moment when women start attacking the masculinist bastion in massive numbers. Advertisements were (and are) a weapon in the masculinization of the car discourse. They are tools of power, powerful tools.

Producing Commodification: Status, Narcissism, and Self-Development

At the start of the post–World War II period, the breakthrough of the mass market of the automobile makes the selection of our sources into a crucial, strategic issue indeed. This is all the more true because translating advertisement messages into the lifeworld of consumers, an operation often neglected in analyses of the symbolisms of the car in advertisements, is a much more burdensome endeavor than in the case of autopoetic novels or movies, even

if the makers of these novels or movies do not coincide anymore with the mainstream motorist, as will increasingly be the case during the phase under scrutiny in this study. Under these conditions, a less ironic car culture seems to emerge, better covered by media belonging to what has been called “popular culture,” such as films, songs, and later (to be analyzed in a later study) the so-called new media. Dittmar’s social constructivism of “symbolic consumption” implies that a symbol, as “an entity which represents and stands for another entity ...[,] can have meaning only to the extent that individuals share the belief that they possess that meaning.”

The symbol as a mediator of meaning between individuals (alone or as part of a group) includes the aspect of *status*, the place an individual or a group is considered to occupy within a social hierarchy, but under one important condition: “driving a ‘prestige’ automobile,” Dittmar quotes marketing scholar Elizabeth C. Hirschman, “will not serve as an effective symbol of one’s social status unless others in the relevant social groups share the driver’s belief that the automobile is, indeed, prestigious.” The coming chapters will give several examples of autopoietic utterances that do not share anymore such a belief, and we have seen Pearce confirming this trend. If a particular market is saturated, then the absence of an object in a household may be a “sign of poverty,” as in the case of television in the West and increasingly, so it seems, in the case of the car. But as long as (or wherever) this is not the case, the car’s transcendental function is twofold: it allows owners to realize functions that go way beyond “instrumental and utilitarian” functions. Second, as a motorized possession on wheels, it enables them to feel part of a *swarm*, as we argued before: a somehow coordinated group of cars without a proper ‘leader.’³⁶ The car is a *social machine*, despite marketers’ hammering on its individualism.

Often, automotive mobility is approached through the car as a unit of analysis, whereas the collective aspect is then limited to the group of passengers, be it the family, the situational group, or the fleeting group of bus passengers. The swarm concept, on the contrary, enables us to follow a middle road between the ‘collective subject’ and the anonymized flow of traffic. As we will see, the swarm is not necessarily “linked to the narrative of fighting back against the established system” (as Mikkel Thelle concluded in his analysis of the [pedestrian] multitude on a Copenhagen square around 1900) but can also be very system-enhancing. Whether people share the belief about the prestige of the car or not, their response is not instinctual, as psychology would have it (the “acquisitive instinct”) until well after World War II, revived recently by sociobiology. Instead, theories about the social construction of the self, theories that view “material possessions as socially shared symbols for identity,” see the function of (status) symbols as an extension of the self, as a prosthesis. Commodities are used as markers of

difference, and, as English and American studies scholar Walter Hesford asserted, “difference—the threat or promise of ‘the Other’—will continue to be the central organizing category for postmodernist culture.”³⁷

In the 1960s, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss analyzed “goods” as “not only economic commodities but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order: influence, power, sympathy, status, emotion.” Also, sociologist Georg Simmel’s “trickle-down” effect (describing, in the paraphrase of Dittmar, how “social groups imitate and adopt the status symbols of those groups slightly more affluent than they are”) has meanwhile been superseded by mechanisms of “advertisement-driven fashion.” Theories of “symbolic self-completion” describing mechanisms of “identity-creating and identity-enhancing” have been followed by suggestions that the postmodern self is “empty.” The latter approach (based on the identity-is-a-container metaphor), proposed by psychotherapist and historian Philip Cushman, emphasized the “loss” of previously highly appreciated values such as “shared meaning” or “family, community, and tradition,” and although historically grounded like Dittmar’s analysis, Cushman’s seems to presuppose an ‘absolute self’ as a container that can be emptied and “‘filled up’ with food, consumer products, and celebrities.” The “gap between society’s expectations of high-sufficiency and the lessened ability of narcissistically wounded individuals to achieve it” creates a “‘false self’ that masks the frightened, hidden ‘true self’” and can be healed only by “advertising and psychotherapy.” From this perspective, the car functions not only as a physical but also as a psychological prosthesis, of the narcissistic automotive self.³⁸

Criticizing Fromm’s very broad definition (equating narcissism nearly with egotism), Christopher Lasch in his famous 1978 book on this topic used a neo- or post-Freudian definition (“narcissism as essentially a defense against aggressive impulses rather than self-love”) that allowed him to draw parallels “between the narcissistic personality type and certain characteristic patterns of contemporary culture, such as the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women.” At first sight, the connection between narcissism and automobilism (as I posited in my previous study) is not immediately clear from Lasch’s more psychoanalytic than cultural characterization, but this changes when we understand the very basis of psychoanalytical research: the “primary narcissist,” the newborn male child, “does not perceive his mother as having an existence separate from his own, and he therefore mistakes dependence on the mother, who satisfies his needs as soon as they arise, with his own omnipotence . . . If the child for some reason experiences (the subsequent) separation trauma [from the mother] with special intensity, he may attempt to reestablish earlier

relationships by creating in his fantasies an omnipotent mother or father who merges with images of his own self.”

Car driving, as argued in my previous study, provided this immediate, but surrogate, seemingly unmediated satisfaction by simulating the womb. This is a *historical* phenomenon: “patients who began to present themselves in the 1940s and 1950s ‘very seldom resembled the classical neuroses Freud described so thoroughly,’” mostly related to what at the turn of the century was called neurasthenia, a condition typical for early motorists; instead, they complained about “vague, diffuse dissatisfactions of life ... subtly experienced yet pervasive feelings of emptiness and depression [and] violent oscillations of self-esteem.” Such postwar patients, Lasch concluded, “act[ed] out’ their conflicts instead of repressing or sublimating them.” From this perspective, early car pioneers can be seen as an *avant-garde* whose aggressive “acting out” prefigured the narcissist that offered himself for therapy after World War II. The evidence is paradoxical, however: although the narcissist is “chronically bored, restless in search of instantaneous intimacy—of emotional titillation without involvement and dependence,” Lasch also emphasized the narcissist “has little capacity for sublimation,” whereas we found the pre-World War II car to be an excellent platform for transcendence.³⁹

In theories about the ‘construction of the self,’ we should be aware of the danger of Eurocentrism, as “the role of possessions in self-development may be a phenomenon which is particularly prominent in [the Western] part of the world,” where individualism has been shaped and defined differently. Dittmar quoted research suggesting the “main distinctive feature (of the West) is the notion of an *independent self*, which contrasts with the *interdependent self* of many non-Western cultures ... and our [Western] very own history,” the latter addition implying a questionable diffusionism, as if the non-West is a replica of the West’s own past. However this may be, “the Western notion of identity combines a sharp distinction of self from others and environment with an emphasis on the autonomy and self-determination of the individual,” a condition we are inclined to call, in light of the distancing effect of the car we analyzed previously, an ironic self. Dittmar even suggested this individual should be characterized as an “Anglo-American” self, concluding: “Our contemporary Western notion of the decontextualized, autonomous and unique person, which does not acknowledge material context, seems [viewed from a global perspective] to be the exception rather than the rule.” Likewise, women and men “undergo very different identity construction processes,” further complexifying the analysis of autopoietic utterances, as we will see later in this book.

Women, recent psychological studies argue, describe themselves in terms of a “relational mode of discourse”; against such “communal” qualities stand the “individualistic” qualities men ascribe to themselves. According

to several psychological case studies reported by Dittmar, men emphasize the “instrumental” or “pragmatic” aspects of their possessions, while women emphasize “emotional” aspects, an essentialist dichotomy that can no longer be upheld, as the following chapters will show, once one goes beyond the self-declaration and -explanation of ethnographic interviews. Similarly, such surveys show how “working-class people seem more concerned with economic security, whereas middle-class people value self-actualization and self-development more highly.” Anthropologist Mary Douglas and economist Baron Isherwood concluded already in the 1970s, “Whereas the middle-class use their possessions for long-term self-development, the working-class engage in repetitive short-term uses.”⁴⁰ In the following chapters, we will encounter motorists (either in real daily life or as virtual personae) who exemplify many of the traits, biases, and dichotomies exposed in this section. However, before we deal with the second new element of postwar automotive culture, the media character of the car as possessive symbol, we will first dig somewhat deeper in the intricacies of the postwar ‘automotive self.’ For this we will borrow extensively from anthropological and ethnographic analyses of mobility phenomena, as it is ethnography that recently gave us a completely new thick narrative about the road, including its occasional breakdown.⁴¹

Diversifying Automotive Identities: The Non-hegemonic Self

Anthropology, including its ethnographic tradition, helped bring about a turn toward the reconstruction and deconstruction of a multiplicity of “non-hegemonic” selves, defined, among others, by their possessions. Such selves varied from women, feminine men, and queers to ethnic minorities in the West and even entire non-Western populations or large parts thereof, such as Chinese men, whether in China or in the diaspora. Parallel to the multiplicity of mobilities, we observe a multiplication of selves. Positioning itself in a sociological rather than psychological tradition, students of cultural studies and related disciplines could refer to early predecessors such as Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen who related “lifestyles, including material lifestyles, . . . to social stratification.” With the car as one of the “important examples of visible consumer behavior” (a less morally loaded term, perhaps, than Veblen’s “conspicuous consumption”), a historical comparison of American research from the 1970s with that of the 1920s suggested not only that “material lifestyles appear to have become more differentiated” but also that income “fails to predict several consumer behaviors effectively.” In the specific case of research quoted here, however, nearly a quarter of the respondents (all white, young, and “native”) from the 1970s in the United States (those who did not

have cars?) failed to rate car makes and models in a hierarchical order. This, of course, is to say not that car ownership as a status symbol did not exist but only that no consensus existed among a rather limited group of Americans about which car does its job of ‘fine distinction’ best. Also, status may come from accessories such as excessive trimming or special wheel hubs, or the possession of a new or secondhand car, as we will see in the following chapters. Yet, it is worthwhile to realize, according to a recent semiotic analysis of Canadian car advertisements by sociologist Jim Conley, in only one-fifth of them is “a message of status or domination ... conveyed.”⁴²

Conley relativized David Riesman’s thesis from the American 1950s of “the symbolic meanings of automobiles [that] overwhelmed instrumental meanings,” as well as Roland Barthes’s and Henri Lefebvre’s assessment of the car as a “magical” object, worthy of worship. Instead, he argued for a balanced approach, stressing the “potent combination” of “the magical [and] the mundane.” But it cannot be denied that “vehicles,” in the generalization of the ethnographer, “possess totem-like qualities,” providing “the agencies by which the moral boundaries of collective life may be traversed.” Conley’s semiotic analysis revealed connections between terms like “excitement,” “luxury,” and “status & dominance” (“luxury is not enough; it needs to be exciting too”) but also confirmed our earlier thesis of the alibi character of the utilitarian argument among motorists.⁴³ No wonder, then, did contemporary transport researchers such as Linda Steg, together with Patricia Lyon Mokhtarian and their coauthors, revive the debate raging in the 1920s about the “necessity” of the passenger car, by emphasizing “motivational factors,” as Steg calls them, in the purchase decision of a car. However, as Todd Litman stressed, “prestige value alone increases vehicle ownership only modestly, perhaps 5–15 percent in the short term ... These impacts probably increase over the long run as higher vehicle ownership further increases automobile dependency.”⁴⁴

Yet, surveys of this type, and research based on them, can have only a limited value for our historical study, not only because they are nonhistorical cross-sections undertaken quite late in the century but also, and mostly, because the multiple opposites of ‘prestige value’ are often grouped under terms like “functional” or “mundane” or “instrumental,” the latter encompassing not only what we have called ‘utilitarian’ functions (such as bringing children to school, doing errands, commuting) but also all our adventurous traits. To give only one example: cultural sociologist Gerhard Schulze, who coined ‘event society’ (*Erlebnisgesellschaft*), claimed on the first page of the introduction to his seminal study:

Since the post-war era the relationship of people to their goods and their services has changed continuously. The direction of this development can be

gauged very clearly from the changes in advertising. While initially the use value of the product formed the core of the presentation—longevity, purposefulness, technical perfection—meanwhile the user is ever more exposed to the event values (*Erlebniswerte*) of the goods on offer. Products are not any more presented as a means to a goal, but as a goal in itself (*Selbstzweck*). They should satisfy as such, independent from their usefulness for a certain purpose.

Schulze illustrated his thesis, for the development of which he “time and again makes a recourse to the artistic realm,” by pointing at the “aesthetics” of products being “obfuscated (*verschleiert*) ironically as purposiveness. All-terrain cars, for instance, are first and foremost purposive (*zweckmässig*), only an all-terrain capacity in our asphalted and concreted environment has hardly a user value, and thus this attribute transforms (*entpuppt sich*) into an aesthetic attribute.” Hence, Schulze claimed, the massive chromed bumper beams on current all-terrain vehicles.⁴⁵ In our reading of the emergence and persistence of the car society, the car challenges this split into two distinct phases of history, which seems to be the result of a lack of knowledge of prewar automobilism followed by a projection of the opposite of the dichotomous pair back into history. It may be true that accurate information regarding reliability and performance was more common in prewar advertising than it is now, but the *pleasurable* driving and passengering *experience* has always been predominant. Instead of the declared attraction of the car’s ‘freedom of mobility,’ the slogan could better be the *pleasure* of mobility.

Similarly, Roland Barthes’s famous assessment of the car as the equivalent of a Gothic cathedral not only emphasized the (quasi-)static totemism of the car (for instance, when it is parked in front of the house, or passed by a somewhat faster-cruising car on the freeway, in the latter case representing a totemism among motorists), but it also took the manufacturer’s advertisement (in this case, the DS as *staged* by Citroën at the Paris Motor Show of 1955) at face value as it seemed to ignore a previous half-century of automotive transcendence. One can hardly maintain that the first gasoline cars manufactured by Benz and Daimler can be seen as cathedrals, so there must be a moment, or a phase, when the “mystification” started, and this was certainly not the case when Barthes made his famous discovery. When Barthes observed through the Citroën DS (the abbreviation for the French equivalent of “goddess”) that the sacred had fallen from heaven, she was already driving millionfold over the earth providing transcendence. The result is the same: the Western motorist, as we have argued, experiences heaven on earth⁴⁶

Literary sociologist Hartmut Böhme, who used Barthes’s analysis as a point of departure for his own analysis of commodity fetishism, likewise characterized the car as “jewellery, ego equipment (*Ich-Ausstattung*), requisite,

accessory, protective space, weapon, lover, companion, in short: a semantically variable sociocultural figuration.” The current study tries to *historicize* this figuration, to trace how, when, and why (and at the cost of what) these single elements emerged before they accumulated (when?) into this metaphorical and fetishistic cocktail, and whether this is typical for the West or more a global phenomenon. This also means, however brilliantly such characterizations might be formulated and however they may guide us in historicizing automotive adventure (some of these with a morbid ending: Barthes died in an accident with a laundry truck), they will have to be treated in this study as part of the empirics, as historical actors. In other words: we need a much more sophisticated diversification and stratification of automotive functions (including symbolic functions) and automotive users, and their identities. After all, Schulz himself stressed the multilayeredness (*Mehrschichtigkeit*) of “personal styles,” even if one of his critics rightly asserted this multilayeredness related to the “*fine* distinctions in a Bourdieuan sense . . . , distinctions within the broad middle class,” and not to less fine distinctions such as those between core and periphery, North and South, middle class and working class, and so on.⁴⁷

Against this background, and for the purpose of the current analysis, it is necessary to diversify and stratify mobility identities. This was first realized by the feminist discovery of “gendered mobilities.” In an excellent overview, Chris Lezotte recently positioned Virginia Scharff and Georgine Clarsen, with their analyses of women’s role in early Western automobility, as founding scholars of this tradition, rightly so, even if Scharff’s analysis can be said to ignore the social constructedness of the electric car and to follow the historical and, to a certain extent, current myth of this vehicle as inadequate, as I have argued elsewhere.⁴⁸ In *Atlantic Automobility*, I dedicated many pages to the (supposed lack of) adventurousness in women drivers, but I measured their form of automobility mostly along a scale of aggressiveness and violent musings in novels. The current study continues this thread but expands it toward other automotive functions, in a context of a much broader analysis of other marginalized (would-be) motorists. This is possible because of the explosion of women writers who formulate their own discourse of automobility, emphasizing, as we will see, concepts such as ‘escape’ and the fear for physical threats.⁴⁹ In terms of scholarly attention, the next step in this diversification of automotive identities was a further nuancing of automotive masculinity itself and its “embodied symbiosis with [the] machine” (including the “noncognitive dimension of embodiment”), based initially on Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell’s concept of “hegemonic masculinity” (and its somewhat dichotomous opposition to non-hegemonic variants such as complicit, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities). Soon, however, a more open investigation into the

diversity and multiplicity of the “materially and symbolically powerful relationship between men and technology” took place, into their cars, and into their characteristic “car talks,” saturated with “metaphors so full of human analogies indicat[ing] an intimate and embodied knowledge about the technology.” Indeed, car talk is as metaphorically loaded (“the car talks to you, the car is stubborn, the car is friendly, and so on”), just like autopoetic texts, but often, it seems, more celebratory and ‘caring’ than critical. “Animating and anthropomorphizing machines,” however, has a long tradition reaching back to the beginnings of automotive times (as I concluded in my previous study), which is often not acknowledged by social scientists unfamiliar with automotive history.⁵⁰

Men and women construct “hybrid masculinities,” a postmodern mixing of hegemonic and non-hegemonic elements. Whatever the type of masculinity, however, ethnographic research unearthed comparable transcendental experiences beyond the mere practice of car driving, such as when tinkering brings a “total absorption in a mechanical problem, when time stops and one gets fully *entranced* by the machine.” Some ethnologists propose the term personification for this type of practice, but “tinkering” seems to be better at capturing its historical roots, going back to the very beginnings of automobilism’s ‘functional adventure.’ In general, such masculinities are characterized by forms of “bodily intelligence, a kind of *savoir faire*,” even if they are generated within a relation with the *static* machine (as object of tinkering and do-it-yourself culture), not during driving or passengering. Masculinity studies, however, still suffer from an unresolved contradiction within the practices of the gendering of the car itself, which is simultaneously called an “extension of the man” and a “feminine persona,” a contradiction that may be resolved by approaching this relationship primarily as covertly homoerotic, masqueraded by an overt heteroerotic relationship, as I have argued elsewhere: it would explain the equally eroticized ‘handling’ of the gearshift lever better. Here, too, just like in women’s mobility studies, young PhD researchers such as Swedish cultural studies scholar Dag Balkmar meanwhile have presented excellent overviews of the varieties of car-related masculinities, in both a static (tinkering, car shows) and a dynamic setting (street racing, low riding). Car tuning for them is “ego tuning” (*Ich-Tuning*, in Böhme’s fetishistic vocabulary) at the same time. Unfortunately, however, such studies are mostly limited to special, car-related (if not car-friendly) subcultures (a term we will keep using throughout our study, despite recent criticism that it would “obscure ... within-group differences”).⁵¹

Balkmar and Lezotte analyzed car modifiers in Sweden and muscle car chicks (young women in souped-up production cars) in Michigan as (what I claim to be) the new, postwar counterparts of the prewar automotive

avant-gardes. Such avant-gardes, I contend, were and are instrumental in shaping special “cultural icons,” super-symbolic archetypes of car models that stand for a certain experiential complex, such as the Ford Falcon muscle car.⁵² And although there are hardly any studies on the late twentieth-century versions of the Babbitts among the motorists (Babbitt being the ‘common,’ mainstream motorist, after American prewar writer Sinclair Lewis’s iconic protagonist), the ethnographical character of these studies (describing these subcultures as tribes with their “rituals through which they construct [their] identities”) provide us with a unique (albeit often poorly historicized) insight in the subversive “performative practices” of these groups, by “modify[ing] their cars into other designs than those originally given them” or by displaying a ‘provocative’ behavior as a female owner of a muscle car.⁵³ Next to subversive car-related practices, we distinguish in the following chapters between several *subaltern practices*, practices by groups that don’t have their own voice, are generally outside mobility historiography, or (in our much more extended definition, well beyond the originators of this historical subfield intended)⁵⁴ stay largely below the radar of ethnographers. Lezotte said it loud and clear in her presentation of her chicks and muscle car drivers: she wanted to “giv[e] the woman driver a voice.” As Chris Brickell in his study of “Men and Masculinities” has argued, “subversive performances and resistances may initially occasion the empowerment of subaltern groups before diffusing into wider social settings,” and even become mainstream.⁵⁵

What is most important for our subsequent analysis, however—next to the already well-established blurring of production and consumption (in the do-it-yourself world around the car)—is the gradual confusion of the borders of the male and female body, as well as the intertwining of the masculinities and femininities of these bodies, in the displayed practices of the masculinized women as muscle car chicks and the feminized men in their care for their modified cars. In the case of the muscle cars, queer theory can help “undermine the more or less taken-for-granted connection between masculinity and the male body.” In his ethnography of “gendered bodies in motorsport,” for instance, Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder met a woman racecar driver who “articulated a sexualized, feminine identity that she blends with her position as an aggressive racer.” These subcultures are important from a historical point of view, because they attract and organize motorists that clearly belong to social strata well ‘below’ the traditional automotive middle-class constituency; such studies thus can help us analyze the process of social stratification within automobilism, but only if we will be able to historicize them: by acknowledging they provide a snapshot of a moment and place indicated by the date and location of the ethnographic research.⁵⁶ They thus form a welcome entrance into the presumed postwar

shift in automotive adventure when groups other than the still dominant white, heterosexual, middle-class men appear on the scene in increasing numbers.⁵⁷ But this is still a shift within *Western* automobilism in a phase that the car as a mass-market article starts to appear in every inhabited spot on the globe. The next step, then, in this postwar fledgling tradition of the diversification of automotive subjectivities is undertaken in the vast world of non-Western automobilism, by Western and non-Western scholars alike. These scholars must struggle against a long Western tradition “to feminize the portrayal of Oriental men.”⁵⁸

Now that the postwar gendering of emerging consumption patterns in Asia is being analyzed extensively, for instance, by the Scandinavian Gendering Asia Network, which is busy developing “a ‘new mobility paradigm’ with a southern focus,” Asian masculinities can be compared with Western patterns. Australian sinologist Kam Louie has been one of the pioneers studying Chinese masculinity as described in belletristic literature, coining the combination of *wen* (cultural attainment) and *wu* (martial valor) as its characteristic. Lamenting the “poverty of theory on the generic man” in the West, and referring to Edward Said’s famous dictum that “the Orient is feminised to such an extent that it ‘is penetrated, silenced and possessed,’” Louie’s social-constructivist analysis (not only of images but also of the body) started by observing “images of Chinese men on billboards in the streets of Beijing or Hong Kong as well as in the American media do not conform to the ‘macho’ stereotype of masculinity currently circulating in the West.” And although we have just seen how this Western image is now in the full process of being nuanced as well, Louie claims not only images of masculinity but also “many Western feminist paradigms” have been shown, by subaltern studies, to be “inapplicab[le] to women of Africa or Asia.” Historically, Western men were stereotypically seen by their Chinese counterparts as “stripped of their civilisation—men of animal instincts and animal sexual drives.”

In contrast, Louie coined a *wen-wu* image to conceptualize the “Chinese [post-Mao Zedong] masculinity matrix,” against the “Western stereotype of the ‘real man’ as someone adorned with “an adventurous spirit, a proclivity to violence, a tendency towards physical rather than oral expression of thoughts and a callous attitude to sexual relations,” but also against the stereotype of the “*yin-yang* notion” of Chinese culture (*yin* being the female, *yang* the male component). Not denying “there is a macho tradition in China,” Louie claimed this tradition is “counterbalanced by a softer, cerebral male tradition—the *caizi* (the talented scholar) and the *wenren* (the cultural man),” also among nonintellectuals, “not found to the same degree in contemporary Western conceptions of maleness.” One wonders what happens with the automotive adventure in such circumstances of self-declared ‘male

weakness.⁵⁹ What is more, such developments bounce back to the West (à la the Comaroffs) through the Chinese diaspora: American research revealed that “while white men considered masculinity to be a highly important component of who they were, this was not so for US-born Asian men and was less so for migrant Asian men.” The result of this *mobility of identities* by immigrant men and women is that they “selectively mix and match ‘traditional’ norms and values with ‘modern’ options to improve their position in the contestant domains of gender and sexuality,” and in a lot more domains, one is inclined to add, a layeredness of identities similar to the layeredness between old and new mobilities we will observe, in the following chapters, to emerge in the Global South.⁶⁰

New Mobility Studies: Bodily Senses, the Car as Medium, and the Challenge of Representation

For an increasing number of those feminized male and masculinized female would-be motorists, car ownership and car use have been constitutive when it comes to subjectivity formation. And whether this identity, as far as it is related to the car, develops in some way adventurous or not thus becomes increasingly more complex to determine, let alone explain, certainly not with the tools developed so far by mobility history, or, for that matter, transport history. This becomes extra complicated, because most research cited so far is nonhistorical, so it is not clear when the traits unearthed by the surveys and the cross-section analyses have emerged. Historian Kate McDonald adds an extra complication by reminding us “scholars of mobility history take movement as the trans-historical basis with which one might explore the constitution of societies past and present. Yet we also write from the vantage point of a modernity that is in part defined by movement.”⁶¹ Because of this tautological conundrum, it is a welcome development to see mobility studies align with media studies in an effort to come to a transdisciplinary field called new mobility studies in which the “transfer” of signs, the translation between mobility realities, is considered at least as important as the “transport” of people, goods and ideas (table 0.1).

Table 0.1. Transfer processes and practices in new mobility studies

MOBILITY			
Transfer processes and practices			
Process	Change	Screen	Flow
Practice	Translation	Mediation/Medium	Transportation

Indeed, even if the second meaning of the term transport may be considered to refer to the transcendental effects of moving and being moved in a vehicle (perhaps more so in French than in English), we need a much more sophisticated toolbox to understand what happens in and through the use and the possession of an automobile, a motorcycle, or a motorbus. “The ultimate purpose of media,” Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin asserted on the first page of their study of new media, “is ... to *transfer* sense experiences from one person to another.” If this ‘other’ also includes the mobility history scholar (and why not?), then this is exactly what we need: a technique enabling us to transfer *historical* driving and passengering experiences to the present. I consider ‘transfers’ a better term than “transition,” proposed, for instance, by Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs in their introduction to their study on travel writing, not only because of the former’s material connotations (just like transport) but also because ‘transition’ has been colonized by the very successful field of transition studies, where it functions in a rather teleological context.⁶² ‘Transfer’ is also a translation of ‘metaphor’ (like cars, metaphors are ‘vehicles’), expressing intention as well as topographic movement. The concept of translation, as a form of transfer, an “articulation” of something stemming from another medium, is a welcome addition to our toolbox, especially what translation studies scholar Michael Cronin calls “intersemiotic translation or translation into or from something other than language,” a procedure described as “the interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs belonging to non-verbal sign systems.” In a way, the “transfer (of) the symbolic meanings of material goods to (individuals), by a number of social practices,” is also a form of translation. Translation, its students propose since they undertook a “cultural turn” in the 1990s, “emerges as the central category for the negotiation of difference beyond representation.”⁶³

Some scholars, however, claim translation happens unmediated. Sociologist John Tomlinson, for instance, observed “a cluster of new cultural phenomena” in the history of speed increase in modern society, engendering a “new condition [that] is coming to influence cultural practices, experiences and values in contemporary, that is to say early-twenty-first-century modernity.” He called this condition “immediacy,” illustrating it, among many other things, by pointing at a “global youth culture in which mobile phones have become defining elements both in terms of style icons and as modalities of interpersonal relationship.” Bolter and Grusin have criticized such observations as a “denial of mediation,” an illusion provoked by the media themselves, a process that “dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented.” In my previous study, this vanishing effect of media was already visible in some early autopoetic travelogues (Edith Wharton springs to mind, when she

hardly mentioned the car as a conveyance through which she made her touring observations),⁶⁴ but the phenomenon seems to take on such a flight in the second half of the century that I will reserve in the chapters that follow a special phrase for it: the ‘absent car,’ present in the description of the movement and the navigating without being mentioned as such (as in “we turned right”; question: how? on foot? on the bike? in a car?).

If we agree translation is mediating, then we can follow Margrit Pernau and Imke Rajamani, who have, in the context of conceptual history (a field of study initiated by Reinhart Koselleck and Raymond Williams, among others), proposed a staged model, in which the corporeal sensorium plays a pivotal role. Emotions, they pointed out, “are developed not only in texts, but in pictures, in sounds, in the way space is organized, and in how people move.” Koselleck’s assertion that “it is the body and the senses that convey experiences to human beings” and that political iconography is “communicated through aesthetic experience, ... those dimensions forming history, which were not and cannot be transmitted in written sources,” also forms the incentive to bring media studies (preferably in its postcolonial form) into the investigation of postwar global automobility. From the start, cars have been designed with (kin)esthetics in mind, not only within the domain of exterior design (the car as an aerodynamic ‘sculpture,’ worthy of exposition in art museums) but also in the domain of nonvisual aesthetics, such as the “orchestration of sound” when the car body became closed in the 1920s. As I argued in a previous study, the human bodily sensorium is much broader than the shortlist of five senses suggests, one of the other senses being proprioception, the perception of small movements by body parts, such as gestures, from waving to smiling.⁶⁵

In an effort to challenge the “ocularcentric view” on the senses, a group of philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists, and an artist, meeting in 2009, formulated a “Hand Manifesto,” in which they analyzed the hands as “perceptual organs.” One of them, Croatian philosopher Zdravko Radman, argued: “There is something like a vocabulary of movement that the body has internalized—a language of manual embodiment according to which the environment means something to the organism just as other forms of perception do in their own way.” “Feeling the car,” in Mimi Sheller’s vision of “an emotional sociology of automobility,” is indeed multisensorial and influences decisively the perception of the world ‘outside’ as well as ‘inside,’ but we should not forget that ‘feeling’ itself is multidimensional: it “refers to a situation or an activity, and these are usually linked. We feel something in order to have a feeling of it.”⁶⁶ Applied to the car, this is true not only for the hands (when they steer and shift the transmission, or push a button at the dashboard) but also for the feet (when they push the pedals), and, in fact, for the entire skin (realizing, it is true, the hands are “the eyes of the skin”). The

skin (especially of the face) is crucial in “producing the feel of affect.” In my previous study, I showed how the car industry became aware of this from the 1920s when American manufacturers and university research teams started to investigate the elusive phenomenon of ‘comfort,’ including the body’s sensitivity to vibrations and rhythms. The authors of the Hand Manifesto, however, also provided an additional conceptual basis for my ‘adventure experience’: whereas “vision reveals a world *seemingly* uncorrupted by any relationship with the viewer, a world that appears as ‘out there,’ ‘independent of me,’” this is not the case for touch, as Merleau-Ponty already argued also, “I cannot forget [in the case of touch] that it is through my body that I go to the world.”⁶⁷

Recently, Ole B. Jensen and Phillip Vannini even observed vehicles (in their case, airplanes) “might not quite ‘feel’ as humans do but still ‘feel’ in consequential ways,” as they are “highly sensitive to certain changing levels of stimuli.” Cars, indeed, might not feel as humans do, but they *do* use anthropomorphic *sensors* that, for instance, lately can *detect* when a driver is falling asleep. And in general, the practice of ‘handling the car’ is a subtle mutual exchange between the two parts of the automotive cyborg: look what happens if you steer too much into a curve; the car will ‘respond’ to your ‘steering error,’ hopefully in a ‘benign’ way. In the following chapters, I will repeatedly point at practices, developed in mature car societies, of communication between motorists, or between those in the interior of a car cocoon and the exterior world, reminiscent of what Raymond Williams already observed when he wrote “private small family units” and “deliberately self-enclosed individuals” experience a “quite unprecedented mobility ... All the other shells are moving, in comparable ways but for their own different private ends. They are not so much other people, in any full sense, but other units which signal and are signalled to.” This communication takes place not only through the human body but also through (literally and figuratively) the car body, for instance, when someone on the freeway suddenly brakes and an entire column of vehicles is forced to brake. For both bodily forms of communication, mostly performed without recourse to verbal language, I will use the term *body language*, as a special form of nonverbal, not very articulated, but nonetheless very important sign language developed within the motoring swarm. The body, according to Donna Haraway, indeed is a medium: she conceptualized the “posthuman” techno-organic “cyborg identity” as a “creation of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.” This type of corporeal language is communicated, Guillemette Bolens assumed (perhaps leaning a bit too much on the cognitive characteristics of this process), by “kinesthetic empathy”: “I cannot feel the kinesthetic sensations in another person’s arm. Yet I may infer his kinesthetic sensations on the basis of the kinetic signals I perceive of his movements. [Thus], I may

internally simulate what these inferred sensations feel like via my own kinesthetic memory and knowledge.”⁶⁸

In a less neuroscientific setting, body language (or “body idiom,” in Erving Goffman’s words) has from the 1970s been studied within the subfield of an “anthropology of human movement” in linguistic terminology (of a basically static interpretation of the “problem of embodiment”), often applied to “choreographed movement systems” such as rituals, ethnic dance, and martial art. Geographer and mobility scholar Peter Merriman even investigated the relation between dance and architecture, “exploring,” in the words of Julia Hildebrand, “space and the possible choreographies that media and modes [of mobility] afford and that messages and moods follow.” Such insights can help us get a grip on the repertoire of bodily movements and skills—their “grammar,” so to speak—inside and around the car. One such movement, of the car-driver ensemble, is the meandering and slow movement of the flâneur that several students of mobility have tried to apply to the movements of the car, inspired by Walter Benjamin’s analysis of Charles Baudelaire’s peripatetics in the arcades of mid-nineteenth-century Paris.⁶⁹ It seems to me that the elasticity of this metaphor, just like Urry’s tourist gaze, is stretched too much to describe a historical car involved in twentieth-century urban traffic. The metaphor of uninhibited flow seems to be more adequate here. By performing a multisensorial approach of automotive practices, I am heeding not only Cronin’s warning (who was aiming at Urry, among others) against “‘an overly visual reading of the travel phenomenon in cultural formation’ at the expense of language,” but also Merriman’s assertion that trying to “separate the physical landscapes of roads [and by extension, the materiality of the car society in general] from the diverse representations that both aestheticize and present them in distinctive ways” is “futile.” In this, indeed, I follow ethnographer David Lipset, who recently coedited a study on ‘moral vehicle metaphors,’ “adopting a position of methodological ambivalence with respect to the politics of representation, one that [is] not entirely given over to poststructural nihilism.”⁷⁰

How, then, does this theory of (metaphorical) translation fit in a media theory of the car? One possible answer goes through the concept of ‘representation.’ Since Roland Barthes’s and Umberto Eco’s “semiotic media theory” was attacked by poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida (1966), Michel Foucault (1970), and Jean Baudrillard (1978), the value and existence of “representation” (especially historical representation) has been severely put to the test, so much so that some historians see this as the start of a “general epistemological uncertainty that characterizes large areas of academic-intellectual life in the humanities and social sciences in the late twentieth century.” Derrida questioned the semiotic authority of symbol “decoding,” whereas Foucault posited that historians can have a “discourse”

only *about* history, a discourse shaped through power relations, including the power of the *dispositif* (a term developed by Jean-Louis Baudry). Baudrillard sharpened Foucault's critique by introducing the concept of simulacra, "in which the borders of fiction and reality are mutually transgressed." Jean-François Lyotard (1979) then announced "the end of metanarratives," but the result, the postmodern text, was criticized by Fredric Jameson as "pastiche," a de-historicized "failure of the new, [an] imprisonment in the past."⁷¹ For literary theorists, more under the spell of postmodernism than many other disciplines, postmodernism "reveal[s] a general 'mistrust of the epistemological authority of the interpretive novel' largely because the complexities of contemporary society ma[kes] 'all interpretations of "reality" arbitrary and therefore at the same time both accurate and absurd.'" The postmodern novelist uses "a flat, expressionless narrative style to encompass reality as 'it is, quite simply' rather than to interpret reality by means of a strong narrative voice and a defined philosophical attitude (as seen in modernist fiction)." Collage rather than plot, one finds in postmodernist novels. Tellingly, and central to our thesis of the fundamental 'middle classness' of the twentieth-century automotive project, Mike Featherstone sees postmodernism as the "lifestyle" of the middle class constituted by "new cultural intermediaries" and the "helping professions."⁷²

No wonder young scholars within the Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T²M) started to question whether they should "throw away more traditional methods and approaches such as interviews, surveys, and archive work" and instead use "ethnography and a focus on new media/communication technology [that promised to offer] a better view onto the phenomenon of mobility than previous methods." Colin Divall, a 'veteran' of the field of transport and mobility history they interviewed, called the idea that one could reach 'reality' without representations (what nineteenth-century German historians would call *Verstehen*) "epistemological nonsense," but he found that "we do have to 'move beyond' representations precisely to appreciate the *fuller reality* of which those traces were but a part," and that, perhaps, "the methodologies of mobility studies [as a set of social sciences] have something to teach us." Another interviewee, media scholar Sunny Stalter-Pace, suggested exactly the opposite: to work with the specificities of representations in order to gain more, as these representations could "give us insight into embodied experiences of movement that we should not get through studying the experiences themselves." We need, indeed (I would like to add), autopoietic translations to get access to these embodied experiences. Such representations, according to Tim Cresswell (another interviewee), should be seen as practices too: we move and at the same time we say, write, imagine to move. But we also just move, as a practice. And for this, we need "tools to think about that

which doesn't make it into the text (to mistranslate Derrida's famous pronouncement)," Stalter-Pace responded. "This means a heightening attention to bodies, sensations, and prelinguistic processing of experience." In doing so, we should always notice representations are not "innocent windows on reality but active agents in the constitution of reality." Representations "fail to *translate* some portion of reality into another domain and ... they simultaneously succeed in constructing their own truth." Cresswell, who formulated these words, called representations "not very trustworthy."⁷³ On the other hand, they may be trusted if they resonate with other 'reading' experiences, and if so, then they may be very evocative, as the following chapters will show. But they are not so in every sense: for instance, their structure may privilege certain experiences (such as the Quest of the Self of prewar autopoetics), and as such, they may be very misleading, indeed. But their advantage remains, namely that their authors have had to perform an *intersensorial translation*, from whichever combination of senses into written text. To the benefit of the mobility historian.

It may come as no surprise, then, that travel writing students especially caution against "a postmodernist mire of co-extensive textuality, the loss of referential worlds and a weakened sense of reality." Indeed, the present study also benefits from travel writers' "traffic between 'real' (mediated) geopolitical worlds, representational worlds (including contexts and intertexts), imaginary worlds (including simulated and artificial) and alternative worlds (including transgressive and counter-hegemonic)." Autopoetic novels, like novels in general, share this intratextual 'mobility,' including the traveling back and forth between the 'real' and a 'parallel,' 'virtual' world, as we will see in the following chapters. However, as late as 2015, a handbook on travel writing studies, complaining about the "invisibility of infrastructures in travel writing [studies]," shows how "infrastructural readings of travel texts bring travel writing studies in line with recent developments in object-oriented ontology and new materialism," although the vehicles themselves are still largely excluded.⁷⁴ The "crisis of representation in ethnographic writing," brought about by, among others, the postwar critique of colonialism and anthropology's role therein (but also because of historians' skeptical attitude toward "narrative's abilities to represent historical objects" after the Holocaust), resulted in the "fus[ing]" of "literary theory and ethnography," as writing itself had become central to the scholarly practices of the anthropologist, whose use of "literary processes—metaphor, figuration, narrative—affect the way phenomena are registered." Anthropologists now produce "true fictions," characterized by, among others, "a rejection of 'visualism.'" This causes some intriguing epistemological problems, especially for a discipline that prides itself to become performative, for what are true fictions? How do we recognize them? To take an example from a fully

different realm, when General Richard Shireff, NATO's second-in-command, wrote a novel about Russia's bellicose intentions and declared: "This is not fiction as such. This is fact-based prediction, very closely modelled on what I know, based on my position as a very senior military insider at the highest and best-informed level," one wonders whether one should act on such a clearly fictional account.⁷⁵

"Rather than mirroring the world, the ethnographer interprets, represents and constructs social reality," a reality that exists beyond "the limits of our minds ... It is deplorably anthropocentric to insist that reality be constrained by what the human mind can conceive," philosopher Colin McGinn argues. "We need to cultivate a vision of reality (a metaphysics) that makes it truly independent of our given cognitive powers, a conception that includes these powers as a proper part." A part of anthropology's move "into areas long occupied by sociology, the novel, or avant-garde cultural critique" is a special care for the mechanisms of "the translation of cultures," especially the "tolerance of [one's] own language for assuming unaccustomed forms." This leads to the following question: How tolerant is mobility history in its translation of the Chinese (Thai, Huasa, mestiza, etc.) automotive experience? And how does it deal with the problems of representation? The point is that when a novelist has her protagonist accelerate her car as an expression of anger, as we repeatedly will observe in all its gendered versions during our readings of contemporary autopoetic novels, she does not claim the real existence of her protagonist, or her car, or all other elements of her physical environment, but the connection between pushing the accelerator pedal and emotion is offered to the reader as something to reexperience, to reimagine (enabled by the Aristotelian process of "mimesis," which is another word for representation) in the hope that she will conclude, indeed, that is how it works (or not), more or less along the lines as explained by Bolens in the case of 'kinesthetic empathy.'⁷⁶ But it is well understood that this mimesis of social practices is loaded with several steps of translation, loaded with their risks of mistranslation and "loss of meaning" even when the translations can be considered technically successful. In my previous study, I gave as an example of such a loss of translation the privileging, by autopoetic authors as well as their students, of the Quest of the Self, ignoring all collective aspects of prewar automobilism (such as the traveling family).⁷⁷

Translating bodily experiences, however, is complexified in another sense: the body is no longer a purely organic entity, nor are its borders well-defined and clear-cut. Instead, the human body is embedded in a nonhuman material base covered by the discipline of media studies, a field that unfortunately got uncoupled in the nineteenth century, when it was subsumed under the umbrella term communication (or *Verkehr*). This is not only true for scholarship, however: since the emergence of telegraphy, media as

material artifacts have been “uncoupl[ed] from their previous reliance on physical movement,” a practice quite usual in engineering when it comes to optimizing one technology (in this case, communication) by isolating it physically from the other technologies. Consequently, “traffic and communication were predominantly understood and analyzed as separate entities, often neglecting the simple fact that any news or press agency requires traveling journalists, that global television pictures since the 1960s were based on satellite technology and space flight, and that even telegraphy had heavily relied on physical transport, including the final door-to-door-delivery of telegrams.” Whereas it often took less than a generation in the history of automotive technology before the split functions were integrated again (for instance, in the case of the automotive suspension’s damping function, which was split from the leaf spring with its internal damping through friction, only to be conceived as an integrated coil spring / friction damper system soon thereafter), it took more than a century to reintegrate media and vehicles, only reluctantly followed by a similar process on their reflexive sides called mobility studies and media studies. Indeed, the split in scholarship did not coevolve with a split in technological development: “media were never that ‘distinct’ as many histories written so far let us assume.” Whereas both technological complexes were considered in competition (the telephone competing with the car, for instance) before this reintegration, by the latter quarter of the past century, they were considered to influence, reinforce, and enhance each other, so much so that present researchers propose to simultaneously analyze “the ‘mobilization’ of media technologies (e.g., the mobile internet) and the ‘mediatization’ of transportation technologies (e.g., the media-saturated car).”⁷⁸

The car, indeed, is a welcome terrain for such investigations, also in the period well before ‘the latter quarter of the past century.’ After all, Raymond Williams used a car metaphor when he characterized television culture as “mobile privatization” (he even used the “flow” metaphor in this context), whereas transport historians (including this one) started to analyze the view through the windscreen as a new type of furtive glance along the landscape. The French discipline of *médiologie* around Régis Debray made Catherine Bertho Lavenir, who wrote her dissertation on telephony, publish a seminal study about the relationship between car driving and writing. One step further and we call theory traveling, as literary theorist Janet Wolff proposed.⁷⁹ At the same time, and parallel to the simultaneous broadening of the concept of ‘transport’ to that of ‘mobility,’ the concept of ‘media’ broadened toward ‘mediations,’ addressing “questions on how ideas or mentalities are manifested via different kinds of transmissions and translations in both the symbolic and in the material world.”⁸⁰ Media studies witnessed a “conceptual shift ... from a past focus on individual media to a

present one on the history of media constellations and their ‘interferences and resonances.’” From this perspective, it is important to notice that irony (and the ironic car) is (are) not the only distancing tool(s): symbols have a similar function, as they “sustain ... the minimum of critical/reflective attitude,” according to the Lacanian-inspired vision of Slavoj Žižek. Referring to Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, Žižek claims “today, in the digitized universe of simulation, Imaginary overlaps with the Real, at the expense of the Symbolic ... reality itself becomes indistinguishable from its simulated double.” In this world, transcendence is impossible; the sublime (Žižek calls it appearance) is lost. Like McGowan’s consumption analysis, Žižek observed, but along another route, the end of the transcendental experience, observations we will find reflected, as the following chapters will show, in many Western autopoietic utterances. Again: we need more sophisticated tools to deal with these changes, an insight that forms, in recent “culturalization of everyday life as being a defining feature of a new, postmodern age,” part and parcel of the “cultural turn” in the social sciences and the humanities, a turn that may protect us from what Charles Taylor has called “the Enlightenment package error.” This scholarly misunderstanding is the result, he claimed, from the use of “an acultural theory [which] unfits us for what is perhaps the most important task of social science in our day: understanding the full gamut of alternative modernities that are in the making in different parts of the world. It locks us into an ethnocentric prison, condemned to project our own forms onto everyone else, and blissfully unaware of what we are doing.”⁸¹

The need of a more sophisticated toolbox than the one offered by transport history becomes all the more urgent if one realizes motorized vehicles, especially passenger cars, from World War II onward, have become more and more *automated*, first by mechanical means (for instance, in the automatic transmission’s breakthrough in the United States after the war) and then slowly (even if it was continuously, and erroneously so, called a revolution) through electronic control systems that took over more and more functions that before the war had belonged to the proudly guarded domain of the masculine motorist. The ‘dethronement’ of the ‘sovereign captain’ of the car into a pilot performing tasks suggested by an ever ‘smarter’ car (against the price of a diminished ‘immersion’ in the intricacies of handling the moving car), enabled other, less knowledgeable motorists all over the planet to join the ‘movement’ of automobilism. This process started well before ‘electronification’ and can be seen as a power struggle between the engineer (as a representative of the manufacturer) and the knowledgeable user, who saw the car under her hands evolve into a foolproof contraption (*narrensicher*), a derogatory qualification still reminiscent of the eventual victory of the engineer in this struggle, a victory that was sealed by a gradual shift from

the ‘software’ (of the human and the mechanical body) to the hardware (of the car). Electronification (also in the realm of production, allowing the development of sophisticated, fine-tuned suspension systems, engines, and dashboard consoles, to name only a few) supported the shift toward the car interior as an ‘entertainment center,’ for children during long holiday trips but also for navigating an unknown city or cruising on the freeway with one’s feet from the pedals. This provisional end phase of the ‘encapsulation’ of the driver and her passengers (before the announced full ‘smartification’ of the car) does not only apply to the car: Jensen and Vannini observe a similar trend of “decreasing the potential for passengers to sense the unique characteristics of airplane travel.”⁸² In other words, the ‘loss of the sublime’ of car travel has a technical base: it enables the shift from a vertical to a horizontal transcendent experience, from feeling godlike to being transferred to a parallel ‘reality.’

The Trouble with Travel Writing: Meandering between Fictionality and Representation

As I have already indicated, one adjacent academic discipline that came under the influence of media studies was travel writing, especially since its revival since the 1970s, when travel texts “began to be considered worthy of academic study.” At the same time, the growing interest in ‘popular culture’ relativized former judgments of these texts as written by “second-rate talents,” in the words of a snobbish literary historian, Paul Fussell. Suddenly, travel writing became “vital and generative” for postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism, together with postmodernism, became “the conceptual cornerstones of contemporary Western culture,” which can be seen as “the result of the arrival of the Third-World intellectual in the First-World academy.” It also became vital for the future of Western anthropology, “part of the necessary reimagining of the world first occasioned by the post–World War Two resistance movements and wars of liberation in the former European colonies, as well as by the wave of immigration that followed.” After all, Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, the seminal attack on the racist Western gaze on the ‘East,’ was partly based on this type of sources. Postwar iconic travel writers such as V. S. Naipaul (*The Middle Passage*, 1962, on the West Indian islands, and three travel books on India), Peter Mathiessen (“I am here to be here,” but how did you get there?), Bruce Chatwin (*In Patagonia*, 1977) and, of course, Claude Lévi-Strauss (*Tristes Tropiques*, 1955: “Adventure has no place in the anthropological professions”) belong to the preferred objects of study.⁸³ Despite the affinity between the practices of the travel writer and the anthropologist (Ivona Grgurinović calls it analogies), we preferred

analyzing “autopoetic” fiction over the declared nonfictionality of the travelogue in our previous study, mainly because the latter’s increasing emphasis (during the first part of the century) on the Quest of the Self and its neglect of the technological and infrastructural aspects of travel “block[ed] our view of the crucial bodily experience.” We were not alone in this opinion: Tim Youngs, in his introduction to a special issue of *Studies in Travel Writing*, as late as 2013 lamented, “in discussions of travel writing a vital aspect often gets overlooked: namely, the traveller’s mode of transport.”⁸⁴

In the second half of the century, when autopoetics became more and more an ironic, outsider’s view on mass mobility (rather than being conceived and written by, on behalf of, and for the same societal group as the authors of such texts), the advantages of the one over the other type of sources have greatly diminished, all the more so as travel writing came out of its crisis by also including, to some extent, the material base of the journey, although many a scholar still seems hesitant to extend this materiality into the realm of mobility.⁸⁵ Also, “a remarkable number of novelists and poets were *travelling* writers” (just as was the case with our autopoetic pioneers at the beginning of the last century), even if they meanwhile represented mainly themselves, as a group of ‘hypermobile’ globetrotters. Critical travel writing scholars Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan now call the object of their study “a refuge for complacent, even nostalgically retrograde, middle-class values.” What makes these sources even less attractive for our study is that travel writers are, within this critical tradition, seen as “retailers of mostly white, male, middle-class heterosexual myths and prejudices, and ... their readers as eager consumers of exotic—culturally ‘othered’—goods.” It seems as if our study of the non-West can expect to profit only negatively from texts that “provide ... an effective alibi for the perpetuation or reinstatement of ethnocentrically superior attitudes to ‘other’ cultures.” Another reason for being skeptical about their usefulness for this study is that the “predominantly Anglophone” travel books “are unreliable to the extreme”: the ‘lie’ of autopoetic fiction is a different one than the nonfictional ‘lie’ from a travel writer. Last, most travel writers, in their “poetics of the wandering subject” and their “*pseudoethnography*” indulging in the “metaphysics of restlessness,” consider speed “antithetical to (their) physical and verbal meandering ..., which relies on modes of transportation (walking, cycling, railtravel) that require the passage of time.” Ironically, travel writing studies seems to have a truly problematic relationship with its object of study, even more so than historical mobility studies with the car!

On the other hand, Holland and Graham call travelogues “one of the most popular and widely read forms of literature today,” and despite their middle classness, they have been compared to the popular culture of the “literary romance,” navigating, as Fussell argues, “between the picaresque mode of

comic misadventure and the pastoral mode of contemplation and elegiac reverie.” And although the (ironic?) critique by travel writing scholars on the “cheerful superficiality” of these texts is reminiscent of Fussell’s derogatory judgment, their inclination to adventurousness (even if travel writers are said to “hid[e] behind the mask of escapist explorer-adventurers”) and their “cool detachment” remind us of the adventure novels of the beginning of the twentieth century analyzed in our previous study and the ‘cool persona’ of the autopoetic art of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe.⁸⁶ Again: travelogues and *some* (lowbrow, autopoetic) novels meanwhile intertwine. Also, like car use, travel (writing) requires a “back home,” which makes it fundamentally different from migration and the flows of refugees, even if the travel writer (and the field’s students in her wake) likes to compare herself with the nomad. Like the car journey, the adventures of the travel writers are circular and, generally, “related to pleasure ... For many travellers the return home is (also) a source of considerable enjoyment.” And like the car trip, travel writing is invasive and colonizing, because never “is the account written for the people or places experienced.” Navigating between travel writing studies’ “hypertheorization of travel-as-displacement” and “its opposite, the naively untheorized celebration of travel-as-freedom,” Holland and Graham see a possibility for critical travel writing studies to benefit from the fact that travel is still “a crucial epistemological category for the displacement of normative values and homogenizing, essentialist views” (started with Said, as we saw), especially since women travel writers and postcolonial writers have discovered its “transgressive potential.”⁸⁷ This is all the more true for the current project, as I am primarily interested in the ‘motifs, motives and motivations’ of the drivers and passengers depicted in the texts, and not in the factual information on mobility and its enveloping system (which I draw from more conventional sources).

As to its history, Helen Carr distinguishes between “three stages” of travel writing so far: a realist period until 1900, a more subjective one during the interbellum, and the period of the emergence of the literary travel book since World War II. Thus, the travelogue became an “alternative form of writing for novelists,” written in a “more impressionistic style” and “focused as much on the travellers’ responses or consciousness as their travels.”⁸⁸ What, then, do both autopoetic texts and travelogues *represent*? Travelogue (*récit de voyage*; *Reisebericht*) is not a literary genre, a recent handbook asserts, but “a loosely defined body of literature.” The representational aspect of a travelogue (that “makes use of fictional techniques”) rests on a “*referential pact* ... between text and reader” and can be defined as “*any narrative characterized by a non-fiction dominant that relates (almost always) in the first person a journey or journeys that the reader supposes to have taken place in reality while assuming or presupposing that author, narrator and principal character are but*

one or identical ... the reader will presume that the author is *predominantly* concerned with the account of a journey he or she actually made” (emphasis in original). In another handbook of the subfield, similar struggles with the issue of fictionality can be observed: “the conventions of the genre with respect to embellishment and minor invention,” argues Peter Hulme, “are well-understood by readers.” Such arguments can be read as an effort to address some “issues that haunt discussion of travel writing in evolving forms, in particular the truth value or representations, inexpressibility and ‘translation,’ and the difficulty of imagining or representing the Other.” The problem of “translating experience into text” haunts both the ethnographer and the travel writer (as well as the historian, I am inclined to add): they struggle with the “narration—description duality ... Unlike travel writing, in ethnographies description was superior to narration, which remained restricted to the ‘arrival stories’ which ‘display [in the words of Mary Louise Pratt] clear continuities with travel writing.” One of the literary techniques travel writers apply is *irony*, in the period under investigation here especially *self-irony*, for instance, when the ‘I’ assumes the role of the “nomad figure.”⁸⁹

From this perspective, the difference between autopoetics and travel writing is that the latter can turn into the former if (one of) the vehicle(s) used is the automobile, or even can be used to illustrate and analyze automobile use, whereas the former encompasses much more. Autopoetics is fictional, can be extraliterary (as film or a television series), but most of all, it is a set of texts (and autopoetic parts thereof) characterized by depicting the movements, the navigating, the internal and external practices while underway, as well as the immobilities (the flow interruptions, the borders as obstacles) of driver-car and passenger-car ensembles. Autopoetics also cover the commute, or the shopping trip, or the weekend spin, the illegal street race and the low-riding experience—practices that are generally not considered ‘travel.’ Perhaps because of the heterogeneity of this scholarly field, travel writing does not seem capable or willing to formulate its proper set of governing research questions, although its obsession by the representation, rather than the represented, seems undeniable. A revealing example is well-known travel writing scholar Mary Louise Pratt’s remarkably morally charged (if not hostile) analysis of Joan Didion’s *Salvador* (1983), a comment nearly fully devoid of information about the country itself, targeting instead Didion’s way of traveling. Holland and Graham, who place themselves in Pratt’s tradition, see the travel book, despite its often condescending attitude against ‘the mass tourist,’ as a constitutive part of the tourism industry, not only where “the spirit of adventure can hold off the threat of exhaustion,” but also where the industry itself can use this literature “to lure the adventure-minded traveler onto an alternative beaten track,” in order “to fuel [its] expansionist ambitions.” They are, indeed “tourists with typewriters.” Thus,

the travel narrative is not a substitution for travel (just like the telephone was not an exclusive alternative to the car in the 1930s, as we saw), but it is “helping to sell holidays,” or better: touristic events and experiences. Tourism agencies nowadays “don’t sell travel anymore, but freedom and adventure . . . , unique, emotional-intensive experiences,” as part of what Marvin Zuckerman has called “sensation seeking.”⁹⁰

This Study: Sources and Terminology

I use belletristic utterances, but also genres from popular culture, to help identify the myriad forms of mobility, including (and especially) its subversive and subaltern forms. I selected these sources through several search strategies, the most important one being following, during the past two decades or so, the public literary, pop-musical, and filmic spaces as discussed in some major newspapers, from the two Dutch (internationally orientated) *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad*, to the *New York Times International Edition*, as well as the *New York Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and the *London Review of Books*. To identify older work, I used specialized secondary sources cited in the chapters to follow, but the first strategy differs from the second, because I selected the (literary) sources based on not whether they contained some clearly announced physical movement (either in the title or in the review) but rather whether they were considered to be(come) part of a literary canon and thus, in some way, expressed a certain kind of ‘popularity’ among the reading public (or expected or hoped-for popularity in the reviews). As to the sources for popular culture: apart from the handbooks and other overviews, I used Google searches to identify the most popular (in terms of size of audience, or simply by consulting ‘best of’ lists, well aware that the way these lists are made are opaque, to say the least, and in some cases the memory of friends old enough to remember pop songs from the 1960s and 1970s).

Now that Theodor Adorno’s critique of the “culture industry” has cured us from the illusion that this culture arose “spontaneously from the masses themselves,” and cultural and American studies convinced us popular culture is neither a false consciousness imprinted “from above” nor an “expression . . . of a genuine people’s culture, opposing and resisting the dominant culture,” the complexity of the phenomenon urges us to define some of the concepts used in this study very clearly.⁹¹ Thus, I call ‘hegemonic’ those (sub)cultures and their traits that dominate a certain society at a certain point in time, even if they are produced by a quantitative minority (for instance, as we will see in the following chapters, many traits of the Western 1960s youth culture became hegemonic in the following decades, challenging the up to

then hegemonic middle-class culture). ‘Hegemonic’ should be clearly distinguished from ‘mainstream,’ which I use as another term for popular culture or media culture. I call cultural traits that challenge either hegemonic or mainstream culture ‘subversive,’ also if they are not characterized by a left-wing signature. I call ‘subaltern’ all those utterances and practices by people who normally leave no trace in the historical records, or who do not wish to be seen or heard. I included popular-cultural utterances not because they express the culture of the ‘lower’ societal echelons better but because they apparently appeal more to their taste, which is not the same! Lastly, if it is true that irony is rare in such utterances, then we have two different accounts on the mobility universe as it changes over time. Would we, consequently, also have two different car types, an ironic and a non-ironic? And two ‘adventures’? Let’s wait and see.

Let’s wait for the chapters to be read and seeing their main thrust: after chapter 1, which returns to the first half century covered by *Atlantic Automobility* (revisiting the Emergence and Persistence periods), but now told from a world-mobility point of view, we pick up the narrative where we left it in that study: in chapter 2, we analyze the Western car abundance, experienced in full ignorance of what happened beyond the West, observing for the first time a leveling off of the car adventure. Remarkably, this observation does not come from the conventional sources (and thus, one is inclined to say, it is not picked up by ‘conventional’ histories that celebrate this abundance as the very epitome of modernity) but is the result of a close, if not subtle, reading of the literary canon of this phase and especially of the Hollywood movies. At the same time, as already hinted at here, we see alternative mobilities emerge, of women, children, ethnic, and sexual minorities. While these automotive novices mobilize the car in their emancipatory practices, a popular mass culture of what we will call carnivalesque automobility, as a flight forward, indulges in what seems to be a caricature of the prewar periods of the adventure machine. Once established as the more or less routine icon of Western mobility, the car becomes the central part of the Western mission to globalize the ‘car society,’ but indirectly so, as a promise, to be realized only once the Global Other is willing to build a road network. Chapter 3 analyzes this missionary ambition of the West, to plug the car as the very epithet of universal modernity, willing to make road (network) building into the very core of “development.” It is the unashamed, naively arrogant conviction that the Other is like ‘us,’ the middle-class fantasy that the ‘freedom of mobility’ is ‘our’ gift to the world, ‘our’ civilizing mission repackaged in asphalt, steel, and plastic. The result looks like ‘chaos,’ a ‘layered’ amalgam of old and new, but it isn’t. It’s just different. In the conclusion, we will come back to the issues raised here, enriched by an overview of the results of the previous three chapters.

Notes

Epigraph: William Carlos Williams quoted in James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1986), 1–26, here: 3.

1. Jun Zhang, “Driving toward Modernity: An Ethnography of Automobiles in Contemporary China” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2009), 147; Gijs Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism: Emergence and Persistence of the Car, 1895–1940* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 99.
2. Jedediah Purdy, *For Common Things: Irony, Trust, and Commitment in America Today* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 11; Marx (“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” 1852) and Deleuze (*Difference and Repetition*, 2001) quoted in Keir Millburn, *Generation Left* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 67.
3. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 78–83 (“What does ‘from below’ mean?”).
4. Gyan Prakash, “Can the ‘Subaltern’ Ride? A Reply to O’Hanlon and Washbrook,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 1 (1992): 171 (Deleuzian); Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 649 (ironic car).
5. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, “Writing Theory from the South: The Global Order from an African Perspective,” *World Financial Review* (September–October 2013), 17 (departure, margins), 18 (petri dish, prefigure), 19 (demarcation); Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory from the South or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa* (London: Boulder, 2012), 5 (laboratory), 6 (peripheries), 47 (*relation*); Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, 103 (universal); Hartmut Böhme, “Das Strahlen fetischistischer Dinge des Konsums: Autos und Mode,” in *In Gegenwart des Fetischs: Dingkonjunktur und Fetischbegriff in der Diskussion*, ed. Christine Blättler and Falko Schmieder (Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2014), 32.
6. Paul Rabinow, “Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-modernity in Anthropology,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 241; David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 36.
7. Gijs Mom, *The Electric Vehicle: Technology and Expectations in the Automobile Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). In this book, I use “mainstream” as a quantitative qualifier, and I use the term interchangeably with popular culture; however, I use “hegemonic” as an indicator of a dominant cultural trait, which may be represented by a minority. See also the last section of this introduction.
8. For an elaboration of this evolutionary perspective, see Gijs Mom, “Translating Properties into Functions (and Vice Versa): Design, User Culture and the Creation of an American and a European Car (1930–1970),” *Journal of Design History* 20, no. 2 (2007).
9. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 48; Marie T. Farr speaks of “govern[ing] (the woman’s) conduct” in “Freedom and Control: Automobiles in American Women’s Fiction of the 70s and 80s,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 29, no. 2 (1995): 164. On the cultural relationship between “core” and “periphery,” see Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 239ff. The two terms seem to have been coined by the Latin American *dependentistas* who formulated a critique on the mainstream modernization theory called developmentalism (see chap. 3, “Developmentalism versus *Dependentismo*”).

10. Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 596–606.
11. John Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed: The Coming of Immediacy* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 12.
12. Francine Prose, “The Passion and Rage of Arundhati Roy,” *New York Review of Books* 64, no. 12 (13 July 2017): 17.
13. Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 612–613.
14. Such as, quite recently, in Katherine J. Parkin, *Women at the Wheel: A Century of Buying, Driving, and Fixing Cars* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 63: “The wealthy enjoyed cars as playthings, while the middle and working classes used their cars for both job opportunities and social excursions.”
15. Sol Inés Peláez, “Beyond Post-dictatorship: Transnational Latin American Literature and the Violence of Writing” (PhD diss., State University of New York, 2010), xxiii (Peláez aims not at the car in her dissertation but on writing in general under and after dictatorships); Vasant Kaiwar, “Towards Orientalism and Nativism: The Impasse of Subaltern Studies,” *Historical Materialism* 12, no. 2 (2004): 192 (historicism).
16. Tim Cresswell, “Black Moves: Moments in the History of African-American Masculine Mobilities,” *Transfers* 6, no. 1 (2016): 14. Cresswell also mentions “furtive” mobility as a reason for New York police officers stopping black and Latino citizens. *Ibid.*, 15.
17. Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 200–201; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 107 (dominant).
18. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 51; Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualized Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 1; Toru Tani, “Transzendenz und Medium,” in *Figuren der Transzendenz: Transformationen eines phänomenologischen Grundbegriffs*, ed. Michael Staudigl and Christian Sternad (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2014), 143 (experience).
19. Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 650; Salvatore Attardo, “Irony as Relevant Inappropriateness,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 32, no. 6 (2000): 794 (definition). For a taxonomy of nonliteral language, see Richard M. Roberts and Roger J. Kreuz, “Why Do People Use Figurative Language?” *Psychological Science* 5, no. 3 (1994). For an effort to establish a phenomenological affinity between driving and “the way we think,” see Lynn Pearce, *Drivetime: Literary Excursions in Automotive Consciousness* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 1 (quote).
20. Rebecca Clift, “Irony in Conversation,” *Language in Society* 28, no. 4 (1999): 535; Attardo, “Irony as Relevant Inappropriateness,” 794; Christian Burgers and Margot van Mulken, “Het ironisch spectrum: Een overzicht van onderzoek naar het begrip en de retorische effecten van verbale ironie,” *Tijdschrift voor Taalbeheersing* 35, no. 2 (2013): 184 (wolves, sheep). This is not to be confused with situational irony, as in Reinhold Niebuhr’s *The Irony of American History* (1952), a Cold War pamphlet trying to invite sympathy for a country that desperately attempts to be the ideal of humankind. However, Niebuhr also acknowledges “the knowledge of irony is usually reserved for observers rather than participants.” For an analysis of the ironic sensibility needed for television watching, see, e.g., John Caughie, “Playing at Being American: Games and Tactics,” in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington / London: Indiana University Press / BFI Publishing, 1990), 52–53.
21. Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., “Are Ironic Acts Deliberate?” *Journal of Pragmatics* 44, no. 1 (2012): 110 (matrix); Christian Burgers, Margot van Mulken, and Peter Jan Schellens, “Verbal Irony: Differences in Usage Across Written Genres,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 31, no. 3 (2012): 292; Christian Burgers, Margot van Mulken, and Peter Jan Schellens, “The Use of Co-textual Irony Markers in Written Discourse,” *Humor*

- 26, no. 1 (2013). I thank Harrie Mazeland, formerly of the University of Groningen, for this suggestion.
22. Luigi Anolli, Rita Ciceri, and Maria Giaele Infantino, "From 'Blame to Praise' to 'Praise to Blame': Analysis of Vocal Patterns in Ironic Communication," *International Journal of Psychology* 37, no. 5 (2002): 266 (ironist), 267 (sarcastic; some researchers distinguish between sarcasm [as a violent form] and irony proper, while others do not), 268 (prosodic, last quote).
 23. The same applies to the elusive concept of "middle class," as we will see in the following chapters. In this study, I use a hybrid approach of this concept, sometimes using econometric data, sometimes lifestyle characteristics to identify middle-class groups. See also Danièle Bélanger, Lisa B. Welch Drummond, and Van Nguyen-Marshall, "Introduction: Who Are the Urban Middle Class in Vietnam?" in *The Reinvention of Distinction: Modernity and the Middle Class in Urban Vietnam*, ed. Van Nguyen-Marshall, Lisa B. Welch Drummond, and Danièle Bélanger (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).
 24. Amy Hanser, *Service Encounters: Class, Gender, and the Market for Social Distinctions in Urban China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 5 (wedding), 7 (category), 9 (distinction work), 187 (Thompson); A. Marwick quoted in Lutz Raphael, "Transformations of Industrial Labour in Western Europe: Intergenerational Change of Life Cycles, Occupation and Mobility 1970–2000," *German History* 30, no. 1 (2012): 103 (class definition). For a recent refutation of the idea that classes are vanishing (on the contrary, they are "very stable over time"), see Geoffrey Evans and James Tilly, *The New Politics of Class: The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 43 (quote).
 25. Walter Hesford, "Overt Appropriation," *College English* 54, no. 4 (1992): 406 (beyond ourselves); John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990); Jonas Larsen, "Tourism Mobilities and the Travel Glance: Experiences of Being on the Move," *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 1, no. 2 (2001). In all fairness, Urry acknowledged there exist "various ways of capturing sights in passing, from a railway carriage, through the car windscreen, the steamship porthole, the camcorder viewfinder, or the mobile phone." John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 49. But the "gaze" metaphor has stuck in mobility (especially tourism) researchers' mind. The distinction between gaze and glance is also used in the media studies treatise by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
 26. Gijs Mom, "Orchestrating Car Technology: Noise, Comfort, and the Construction of the American Closed Automobile, 1917–1940," *Technology and Culture* 55, no. 2 (2014).
 27. Kaiwar, "Towards Orientalism and Nativism," 200 (persuasion, coercion); Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
 28. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006); John Urry, "Moving on the Mobility Turn," in *Tracing Mobilities: Towards a Cosmopolitan Perspective*, ed. Weert Canzler, Vincent Kaufmann and Sven Kesselring (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Edward Reed and Rebecca Jones, eds., *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982).
 29. Mom, *Atlantic Automobility*, 36 (properties), fig. 0.2 (matrix), 287–306 (budget), 654 (fetish); Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994). Although Veblen seems to equate consumption with use, he emphasized the "pecuniar emulation" and focused on commodities for the home and the body. *Ibid.*, 15. However, as a *historical* analysis, his book deals extensively with the violent and aggressive

- (predatory, masculine) roots of consumption acts. In this book, I will refer to secondary sources in the past tense, whereas I retell fictional narratives in the present tense.
30. Todd McGowan, *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 12 (promise), 15 (repeating), 28 (misleading); Todd McGowan, *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013); Gijs Mom, "The Future Is a Shifting Panorama: The Role of Expectations in the History of Mobility," in *Zukünfte des Automobils: Aussichten und Grenzen der autotechnischen Globalisierung*, ed. Weert Canzler and Gert Schmidt (Berlin: edition sigma, 2008); see also Harro van Lente, *Promising Technology: The Dynamics of Expectations in Technological Developments* (Delft: Eburon, 1993).
 31. McGowan, *Capitalism and Desire*, 12 (better future), 29 (racing fans), 31 (Lacan quote), 37 (proximity), 215 (engine and out of reach), 216 (terrifying), 218 (mystical, everyday), 219 (utility), 221 (SUV); Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 465 (*Babbitt*). All italics are found in the original sources unless otherwise noted (i.e., emphasis added).
 32. McGowan, *Capitalism and Desire*, 226–227; L. Pearce, *Drivetime*, 38.
 33. Helga Dittmar, *The Social Psychology of Material Possessions: To Have Is to Be* (Hemel Hempstead / New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf / St. Martin's Press, 1992), 1 (Fromm), 2 (advertisements), 42 (constructionism) ("culture and commerce" quoted in "Grant McCracken," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grant_McCracken [consulted 23 December 2016]). Two reviewers of my earlier monograph lamented the absence of advertisement analysis. Certainly, for the first period, and to a certain extent the second (until 1940), autopoetic novels and other artistic utterances were written by and for the same social group, so they provide a much better entrance into the intricacies of interbellum car culture than advertisements. See Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 177; Peter Merriman, review of Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, *Journal of Transport History* 37, no. 1 (2016): 109–111; Donald Weber, Hubert Bonin, and Antonia Mackay, review of Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, *European Review of History* 24, no. 1 (2017): 158–166.
 34. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2005), 248; Aida Bosch, *Konsum und Exklusion: Eine Kultursociologie der Dinge* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 145 (magical loading). For an example of a failed advertisement study in mobility history, see Dhan Zunino Singh and Mikkel Thelle, "Mobilities and Representations: A Conversation with Peter Merriman, Colin Divall, Sunny Stalter-Pace, and Tim Cresswell," *Mobility in History* 8 (2017): 15, where railway historian Colin Divall recounts his study of railway advertising: "But we never cracked the conundrum of what the intended recipients of all this marketing made of it, or indeed how railing was experienced, bodily and affectively, by these different groups. Interesting, despite the hugely greater resources thrown today at marketing mobility, colleagues who work in the field tell me that while they recognize the importance of people's emotional responses, they often have a poor understanding of this affective dimension."
 35. Dittmar, *Social Psychology of Material Possessions*, 187 (meanings), 197 (aware); Barbara Stern, "Pleasure and Persuasion in Advertising: Rhetorical Irony as a Humor Technique," *Current Issues and Research in Advertising* 12, nos. 1–2 (1990): 26 (controversial), 28 (skills), 33 (elite), 36 (literally); Burgers et al., "Use of Co-textual Irony Markers" (sheep); Ekin Pehlivan, Pierre Berthon, and Leyland Pitt, "Ad Bites: Toward a Theory of Ironic Advertising," *Journal of Advertising Research* 51, no. 2 (2011): 418 (surface, underlying), 420 (cues), 425 (postmodern). For an exemplary analysis of car advertising, see Matthew Paterson, *Automobile Politics: Ecology and Cultural Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 154–162.

36. Dittmar, *Social Psychology of Material Possessions*, 5 (symbolic consumption), 6 (share the belief), 63 (instrumental and utilitarian), 96 (poverty).
37. Mikkel Thelle, "Subversive Mobilities: The Copenhagen Riots, 1900–1919," *Transfers* 3, no. 1 (2013): 15; Dittmar, *Social Psychology of Material Possessions*, 19–20 (instinctual, sociobiology), 41 (extended self), 66 (identity); Hesford, "Overt Appropriation," 415 (the quoted sentence ends with "and literary theory").
38. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (London, 1968) as quoted in Dittmar, *Social Psychology of Material Possessions*, 95, 97 (Simmel), 101 (self-completion), 200 (empty); Philip Cushman, "Why the Self Is Empty: Toward a Historically Situated Psychology," *American Psychologist* 45, no. 5 (1990): 599 (filled up, healed), 600 (loss, shared meaning, family), 605 (false self); Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 51 (container). For an analysis of the car as prosthesis from an art-theoretical point of view, see Charissa Terranova, "Mobile Perception and the Automotive Prosthetic: Photoconceptualism, the Car, and the Posthuman Subject," *Transfers* 1, no. 1 (2011).
39. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1991), 31 (Fromm), 33 (celebrity), 36 (separation), 37 (dissatisfaction) ("acted out" from psychiatrist Otto Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* [1975]), 40 (sublimation); David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 29 (post-Freudian definition).
40. Dittmar, *Social Psychology of Material Possessions*, 57 (Western part: "our part of the world"), 127 (women), 128 (relational), 132 (instrumental, emotional), 133 (pragmatic), 137 (working-class), 188 (independent self), 191 (autonomy), 193 (Anglo-American, exception), 201 (Douglas and Isherwood).
41. See, e.g., Luca Ciabbari, "Biographies of Roads, Biographies of Nations: History, Territory and the Road Effect in Post-conflict Somaliland," in *The Making of the African Road*, ed. Kurt Beck, Gabriel Klæger, and Michael Stasik (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Mark Lamont, "Ruin, or Repair? Infrastructural Sociality and an Economy of Disappearances along a Rural Road in Kenya," in Beck et al., *Making of the African Road*, 177 (breakdown).
42. Marcus Felson, "Invidious Distinctions among Cars, Clothes and Suburbs," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1978): 49 (social stratification), 50 (visible, income), 52 (failed), 52, table 1 (a quarter); Marcus Felson, "The Differentiation of Material Life Styles: 1925 to 1966," *Social Indicators Research* 3, nos. 3–4 (1976): 398 (visible rather than conspicuous), 408 (native); Jim Conley, "Automobile Advertisements: The Magical and the Mundane," in *Car Troubles: Critical Studies of Automobility and Auto-mobility*, ed. Jim Conley and Arlene Tigar McLaren (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 51 (19.4 percent).
43. Conley, "Automobile Advertisements," 37 (Riesman, etc.), 40 (potent), 44 (alibi confirmation); David Lipset, "Introduction: Charon's Boat and Other Vehicles of Moral Imagination," in *Vehicles: Cars, Canoes, and Other Metaphors of Moral Imagination*, ed. David Lipset and Richard Handler (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 3 (qualities, agencies); Mom, *Atlantic Automobility*, 325 (alibi thesis).
44. Linda Steg, "Car Use: Lust and Must—Instrumental, Symbolic and Affective Motives for Car Use," *Transportation Research Part A* 39, nos. 2–3 (2005); Linda Steg, Karst Geurs, and Michael Ras, "The Effects of Motivational Factors on Car Use: A Multidisciplinary Modelling Approach," *Transportation Research Part A* 35, no. 9 (2001); P. L. Mokhtarian, "Travel as a Desired End, Not Just a Means (Guest Editorial)," *Transportation Research Part A* 39, nos. 2–3 (2005); Sangho Choo and Patricia L. Mokhtarian, "What Type of Vehicle Do People Drive? The Role of Attitude and Lifestyle in Influencing Vehicle Type Choice," *Transportation Research Part A* 38, no. 3 (2004); Todd Litman, "Mobility

- as a Positional Good: Implications for Transport Policy and Planning,” in Conley and McLaren, *Car Troubles*, 204–205.
45. Litman, “Mobility as a Positional Good,” 199 (functional); Conley, “Automobile Advertisements,” 40 (mundane), 42 (instrumental); Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kulturosoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2000), 13; Katharina Scherke, “Die These von der ‘Ästhetisierung der Lebenswelt’ als eine Form der Analyse des Modernisierungsprozesses,” in *Analyse und Kritik der Modernisierung um 1900 und um 2000*, ed. Sabine A. Haring and Katharina Scherke (Vienna: Passagen-Verlag, 2000), 111 (recourse). For another, quite devastating critique of Schulze’s study, which allegedly acknowledged only utilitarian and experience values and neglected social, ecological, medical, economic and other values, see Armin Günther, “20 Jahre Erlebnisgesellschaft—und mehr Fragen als Antworten: Zwischenbilanz oder Abgesang auf die Erlebniswelten-Diskussion,” in *Postmoderne Freizeitstile und Freizeiträume: Neue Angebote im Tourismus*, ed. Paul Reuber and Peter Schnell (with Birthe Linden) (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2006), 56.
 46. Roland Barthes, “La nouvelle Citroën,” in *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957); for an English translation, see, e.g., “The DS by Roland Barthes” Citroënët, accessed 19 October 2019, <http://www.citroenet.org.uk/passenger-cars/michelin/ds/32.html>; Böhme, “Das Strahlen fetischistischer Dinge des Konsums,” 37.
 47. Böhme, “Das Strahlen fetischistischer Dinge des Konsums,” 41 (jewellery); Stephen Bayley, *Sex, Drink and Fast Cars: The Creation and Consumption of Images* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 7 (laundry truck); Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft*, 114 (personal styles); Scherke, “Die These von der ‘Ästhetisierung der Lebenswelt,’” 117.
 48. Chris Lezotte, “The Evolution of the ‘Chick Car’ Or: What Came First, the Chick or the Car?” *Journal of Popular Culture* 45, no. 3 (2012): 531; Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Mom, *Atlantic Automobility*, 277–278 (critique on Scharff). Lezotte wrote her dissertation at age sixty, after a career in car advertising. Christine L. Lezotte, “Have You Heard the One about the Woman Driver? Chicks, Muscle, Pickups, and the Reimagining of the Woman behind the Wheel” (PhD diss., Bowling Green State University, 2015), v.
 49. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 20 (explosion), 113 (“fear of rape”); Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson, *Women’s Movement: Escape as Transgression in North American Feminist Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).
 50. Ulf Mellström, “Machines and Masculine Subjectivity: Technology as an Integral Part of Men’s Life Experiences,” *Men and Masculinities* 6, no. 4 (2004): 368 (symbiosis), 369 (powerful), 371 (nongenerative), 377 (metaphors, stubborn), 378 (animating); Dag Balkmar, “On Men and Cars: An Ethnographic Study of Gendered, Risky and Dangerous Relations” (PhD diss., Linköping University, 2012), 45n20 (hegemonic and other masculinities).
 51. Chris Lezotte, “Out on the Highway: Cars, Community, and the Gay Driver,” *Culture, Society & Masculinities* 7, no. 2 (2015): 126 (hybrid); Kam Louie, *Theorizing Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 162 (postmodern); Balkmar, “On Men and Cars,” 83 (personification); Mellström, “Machines and Masculine Subjectivity,” 374 (intelligence), 377 (entranced; emphasis added), 379 (extension, feminine persona); Mom, *Atlantic Automobility*, 97; Böhme, “Das Strahlen fetischistischer Dinge des Konsums,” 37.

52. For the distinction between archetypes (really existing cars that stand for a certain period or geographic area), average types, and ideal types (the latter two virtual artifacts), see Gijs Mom, *The Evolution of Automotive Technology: A Handbook* (Warrendale, PA: SAE International, 2014), 10.
53. Balkmar, "On Men and Cars," 12 (modify), 27 (rituals), 36 (performative).
54. See, e.g., Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan Education, 1988).
55. Lezotte, "Have You Heard the One about the Woman Driver?" vi; Chris Brickell, "Masculinities, Performativity, and Subversion," *Men and Masculinities* 8, no. 1 (2005): 39.
56. Balkmar, "On Men and Cars," 47 (*queer theory*), 51 (*subcultures*); Pflugfelder, "Something Less Than a Driver," 423; Böhme, "Das Strahlen fetischistischer Dinge des Konsums," 39.
57. Robin Law, "Beyond 'Women and Transport': Towards New Geographies of Gender and Daily Mobility," *Progress in Human Geography* 23, no. 4 (1999).
58. Ragnhild Lund and Anna Karlsdottir, "Editorial: Gendered Mobilities in Asia," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift / Norwegian Journal of Geography* 67, no. 4 (2013): 185; Henry Yu quoted in Kam Louie, "Chinese, Japanese and Global Masculine Identities," in *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, ed. Kam Louie and Morris Low (London: Routledge, 2005), 2.
59. Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, v (*wen and wu*), 2 (poverty), 3 (Said quote and macho image), 6 (body), 7 (feminist paradigms), 8 (adventurous; *caizi* quote), 9 (*yinyang*), 12 (animal instincts), 161 (matrix); Xueping Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged? Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 11 ("in Chinese literature of the 1980s ... Chinese men are seen as 'weak' and 'unmanly.'").
60. Roy Hibbins, "Male Gender Identities among Chinese Male Migrants," in Louie and Low, *Asian Masculinities*, 199, 200.
61. Kate McDonald, "Imperial Mobility: Circulation as History in East Asia under Empire," *Transfers* 4, no. 3 (2014): 68.
62. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 3 (emphasis added) (I thank James Miller for providing me with his (then not yet published) chapter on "Mediatization of the Automobile," in *Dynamics of Mediatization: Institutional Change and Everyday Transformations in a Digital Age*, ed. Oliver Driessens, Göran Bolin, Andreas Hepp, and Stig Hjarvard [London: Palgrave Macmillan]); Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs, "Introduction," in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 1; for a recent example of transition studies as applied to the car, see Frank W. Geels, René Kemp, Geoff Dudley, and Glenn Lyons, eds., *Automobility in Transition? A Socio-technical Analysis of Sustainable Transport* (New York: Routledge, 2012); for an attempt to line up transition studies with the no less successful mobility turn, see Laur Kanger and Johan Schot, "User-Made Immobilities: A Transitions Perspective," Science Policy Research Unit Working Paper Series SWPS 2016–13 (University of Sussex, July 2016); for an example of a "historical" transition study fully neglecting mobility history, see, e.g., Benjamin D. Leibowicz, "Policy Recommendations for a Transition to Sustainable Mobility based on Historical Diffusion Dynamics of Transport Systems," *Energy Policy* 119 (2018).
63. Lipset, "Introduction," 2 (metaphor); Bauman, *Individualized Society*, 9 (articulation); Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University

- Press, 2013), 2; Zannagh Hatton, “The Tarmac Combos: an Ethnographic Study of the Cultural World of Boy Racers” (PhD diss., University of Plymouth, 2007), 31 (transfer); Margrit Pernau and Imke Rajamani, “Emotional Translations: Conceptual History beyond Language,” *History and Theory* 55, no. 1 (2016): 52.
64. Tomlinson, *Culture of Speed*, 72–73; Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 6 (disappear), 229 (denial); Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 158–159.
65. Pernau and Rajamani, “Emotional Translations,” 47, 48 (Koselleck) (for an effort to design the concept of postcolonial media studies, see Kai Merten and Lucia Krämer, “Introduction,” in *Postcolonial Studies Meets Media Studies: A Critical Encounter*, ed. Kai Merten and Lucia Krämer [Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2016]); Mom, “Orchestrating Automobile Technology.”
66. Jesse J. Prinz, “Foreword: Hand Manifesto,” in *The Hand, an Organ of the Mind: What the Manual Tells the Mental*, ed. Zdravko Radman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), ix (ocularcentric, organs), xi (linked); Zdravko Radman, “On Displacement of Agency: The Mind Handmade,” in Radman, *Hand*, 379; Mimi Sheller, “Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, nos. 4–5 (2004): 223.
67. J. Cole and A. Dawson quoted in Filip Mattens, “Perception and Representation: Mind the Hand!” in Radman, *Hand*, 159 (eyes); Nigel Thrift, “Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect,” *Geografiska Annaler* 86B, no. 1 (2004): 61 (affect); Mom, “Orchestrating Automobile Technology”; Matthew Ratcliffe, “Touch and the Sense of Reality,” in Radman, *Hand*, 131 (vision, Merleau-Ponty).
68. Ole B. Jensen and Phillip Vannini, “Blue Sky Matter: Toward an (In-Flight) Understanding of the Sensuousness of Mobilities Design,” *Transfers* 6, no. 2 (2016): 38; Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 1974) quoted in Nicola Green, “On the Move: Technology, Mobility, and the Mediation of Social Time and Space,” *Information Society* 18, no. 4 (2002): 283; Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 237 (body as medium); Haraway quoted in Pflugfelder, “Something Less Than a Driver,” 418; Guillemette Bolens, *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narratives, Foreword by Alain Berthoz* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 3.
69. Brenda Farnell, “Moving Bodies, Acting Selves,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): 346 (problem), 348 (static), 351 (Goffman), 354 (anthropology, ritual, linguistic), 355 (choreographed); Peter Merriman, “Roads: Lawrence Halprin, Modern Dance and the American Freeway Landscape,” in *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, ed. Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Julia M. Hildebrand, “Media and Mobilities: Modes, Messages, Movements, and Moods” (unpublished manuscript, Drexel University, 2016), 15 (exploring), 16 (flâneur example). I thank Julia Hildebrand for providing me with this manuscript, which has since been published as “Modal Media: Connecting Media Ecology and Mobilities Research,” *Media, Culture & Society*, 40, no. 3 (2018).
70. Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 6; Cronin quoted and partly paraphrased in Tim Youngs, “Where Are We Going? Cross-Border Approaches to Travel Writing,” in Hooper and Youngs, *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, 174; Peter Merriman, “Road Works: Some Observations on Representing Roads,” *Transfers* 5, no. 1 (2015): 113; Lipset, “Introduction,” 13. Urry later shifted toward “a broader sensory paradigm,” according to Carolyn Birdsall in Carolyn Birdsall, Jan-Friedrich Missfelder, Daniel Morat, and Corine Schleif, “Forum: The Senses,” *German History* 32, no. 2 (2014): 272.
71. Geoff Eley, “Is All the World a Text? From Social History to the History of Society Two Decades Later,” in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald

- (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 194 (uncertainty); Rabinow, "Representations Are Social Facts," 249.
72. Christina Murphy, *Ann Beattie* (Boston: Twayne, 1986), 8 (all quotes), 9 (collage); Featherstone quoted in Hans Bertens, "The Sociology of Postmodernity," in *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*, ed. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1997), 109.
73. Singh and Thelle, "Mobilities and Representations," 7 (traditional methods), 9 (Divall; emphasis added), 10 (Cresswell: "Representation is always also practice and doing stuff"; emphasis added), 13 (prelinguistic, active agents), 16 (trustworthy).
74. Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst, "Introduction," in *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies*, ed. Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2–3 (mire, traffic); Caitlin Vandertop, "Travel Literature and the Infrastructural Unconscious," in Kuehn and Smethurst, *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies*, 132 (invisibility), 141 (readings). On postmodernism and travel writing, see, e.g., Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, chap. 4 ("Postmodern devices have not so consistently infiltrated the travel book as they have the contemporary novel").
75. Rabinow, "Representations Are Social Facts," 251 (crisis); James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, 2 (central), 3 (fuse), 4 (processes), 6 (fictions), 11 (visualism); Seamus O'Malley, *Making History New: Modernism and Historical Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), ix (Holocaust); for a recent example of an ethnography written "as if it were fiction—not as fiction," see Cecilia McCallum, "Racialized Bodies, Naturalized Classes: Moving through the City of Salvador da Bahia," *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 1 (2005): 102; for an example of mobilizing a novel as support of ethnographic scholarship (based on the *affinity* of both in terms of participant observation), see Akhil Gupta, "Narratives of Corruption: Anthropological and Fictional Accounts of the Indian State," *Ethnography* 6, no. 1 (2005); Richard Shirreff, *2017: War with Russia—An Urgent Warning from Senior Military Command* (2016) quoted in Robert Cottrell, "Russia, NATO, Trump: The Shadow World," *New York Review of Books* (22 December 2016), 97.
76. Balkmar, "On Men and Cars," 73 (mirroring); Colin McGinn, "Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?" *Mind* 98, no. 391 (1989): 366; Clifford, "Introduction," 23 (areas); Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," in Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, 141 (translation of cultures), 157 (tolerance; emphasis added); Jan Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology," in Hooper and Youngs, *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, 21 (Aristotelian). Nonetheless, it is quite remarkable none of the reviewers of my earlier study remarked on the "truth value" of belletristic sources, used so prolifically in that study. See Weber et al., review of Mom, *Atlantic Automobility*.
77. Pernau and Rajamani, "Emotional Translations," 55 (loss); Mom, *Atlantic Automobility*, 425.
78. Pernau and Rajamani, "Emotional Translations," 53 (complexified); Gijs Mom, Georgine Clarsen, Peter Merriman, Cotton Seiler, Mimi Sheller, and Heike Weber, "Editorial," *Transfers* 3, no. 1 (2013): 1 (*Verkehr*); Dorit Müller and Heike Weber, "'Traffic': On the Historical Alignment of Media and Mobility," *Transfers* 3, no. 1 (2013): 65 (reliance, traffic), 67 (technologies); Mom, *Evolution of Automotive Technology*, chap. 7 (damping); Regine Buschauer, "The 'Ambulant in-Between': Media Histories of Mobile Communication," *Transfers* 3, no. 1 (2013): 97 (assume); Claude S. Fischer and Glenn R. Carroll, "Telephone and Automobile Diffusion in the United States, 1902–1937," *American Journal of Sociology* 93, no. 5 (1988) (telephone). For an effort to rewrite

- media history as mobility history, see Christoph Neubert and Gabriele Schabacher, eds., *Verkehrsgeschichte und Kulturwissenschaft: Analysen an der Schnittstelle von Technik, Kultur und Medien* (Bielefeld: transcript verlag, 2013).
79. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 2003); Margaret Morse, "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television," in Mellencamp, *Logics of Television*, 218n22 (flow metaphor); Catherine Bertho Lavenir, *La roue et le stylo: Comment nous sommes devenus touristes* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1999); Janet Wolff, "On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism," *Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 225.
 80. See, e.g., Catherine Gudis, *Buyways: Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Müller and Weber, "Traffic," 66 (broadening).
 81. Buschauer, "Ambulant in-Between," 97 (shift); Slavoj Žižek [sic], "What Can Psychoanalysis Tell Us about Cyberspace?" *Psychoanalytic Review* 91, no. 6 (2004): 809–810; Taylor quoted in Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 144 (postmodern), 145 (blissfully).
 82. Mom, *Evolution of Automotive Technology*, esp. chap. 9 ("Automation"); Jensen and Vannini, "Blue Sky Matter," 27.
 83. Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2 (Fussell); Mary Baine Campbell, "Travel Writing and Its Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 261 (vital, result), 266 (Said); Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, xii (cornerstones); Kaiwar, "Towards Orientalism and Nativism," 210 (First-World academy); iconic writers mentioned in Peter Hulme, "Travelling to Write (1940–2000)," in Hulme and Youngs, *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, 89–92.
 84. Ivona Grgurinović, "Anthropology and Travel: Practice and Text," *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 24 (2012): 46; Mom, *Atlantic Automobilism*, 141; Tim Youngs, "Introduction," *Studies in Travel Writing* 17, no. 4 (2013): 331.
 85. E.g., S. Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, dedicated to nineteenth-century women travelers, discusses clothes and personal paraphernalia as part of the women's travel preparations, as well as "preparations for accidents." *Ibid.*, 100–103, 100 (quote). Grgurinović, "Anthropology and Travel," 58 (travel writers "rarely take into account the material conditions," paraphrasing Caren Kaplan).
 86. Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, vii (travelogues), viii (remarkable, refuge), x (Anglophone), xiii (extreme), 6 (cheerful), 7 (mask, cool), 10 (reverie); 12 (*pseudoethnography*), 14 (poetics, metaphysics), 23 (speed); Mom, *Atlantic Automobilism*, 142–143 (adventure novel), 499 (cool persona).
 87. Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, ix (crucial), 4 (transgressive), 5 (home, "round trips"), 11 (account); Charles Burdett, *Journeys through Fascism: Italian Travel Writing between the Wars* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 7 (pleasure).
 88. Helen Carr, "Modernism and Travel (1880–1940)," in Hulme and Youngs, *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, 74 (impressionistic and focused), 75 (three stages).
 89. Hooper and Youngs, "Introduction," 2 (loosely defined); Borm, "Defining Travel," 15 (techniques, *pact*), 17 (*narrative*); Hulme, "Travelling to Write (1940–2000)," 99; Campbell, "Travel Writing and Its Theory," 267 (haunt); Grgurinović, "Anthropology and Travel," 54 (duality); Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, "Varieties of Nostalgia in Contemporary Travel Writing," in Hooper and Youngs, *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, 144 (nomad). "In historical scholarship ... interest is increasingly turning toward approaches

- drawn from anthropology—the portrayal of complex cultural forms, customary ways of life, etc.,” Marcus and Clifford conclude in their report of the famous 1984 seminar on the making of ethnographic texts. George E. Marcus and James Clifford, “The Making of Ethnographic Texts: A Preliminary Report,” *Current Anthropology* 26, no. 2 (1985): 267. On the role of narration in both fiction and history writing, see O’Malley, *Making History New*. For a German and French example of travel writing studies, respectively, see Gerrit Walther, “Auf der Suche nach der ‘Gattung’: Interdisziplinäre Reiseliteraturforschung,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 32 (1992); Roland Le Huen, “Qu’est-ce qu’un récit de voyage?” *Littéraires* 7 (1990).
90. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 225–227 (the quoted section is—ironically—titled “The Lady in the Airport”); Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, ix (expansionist), 2 (exhaustion), 3 (beaten track, holidays); Günther, “20 Jahre Erlebnisgesellschaft,” 48 (freedom); Marvin Zuckerman, *Behavioral Expressions and Biosocial Bases of Sensation Seeking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
91. LeRoy Ashby, “The Rising of Popular Culture: A Historiographical Sketch,” *OAH Magazine of History* 24, no. 2 (2010).