

Claremont Colleges

## Scholarship @ Claremont

---

CGU Theses & Dissertations

CGU Student Scholarship

---

Spring 2020

### Crawl Space: Driving Over the Anthropocene in a Jeep

Michael Pesses

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu\\_etd](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd)



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), [Human Geography Commons](#), [Nature and Society Relations Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Pesses, Michael. (2020). *Crawl Space: Driving Over the Anthropocene in a Jeep*. CGU Theses & Dissertations, 152. [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu\\_etd/152](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd/152). doi: 10.5642/cguetd/152

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the CGU Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in CGU Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact [scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu](mailto:scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu).

Crawl Space: Driving Over the Anthropocene in a Jeep

By  
Michael W. Pesses

Claremont Graduate University  
2020

© Copyright Michael W. Pesses, 2020.  
All rights reserved

## **Approval of the Dissertation Committee**

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Michael W. Pesses as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies.

Eve Oishi, Chair  
Claremont Graduate University  
Associate Professor of Cultural Studies

JoAnna Poblete  
Claremont Graduate University  
Associate Professor of History

David K. Seitz  
Harvey Mudd College  
Assistant Professor of Cultural Geography

## **Abstract**

Crawl Space: Driving Over the Anthropocene in a Jeep

By

Michael W. Pesses

Claremont Graduate University: 2020

The automobile has long been directly and indirectly connected to human conceptions of nature, yet few studies linger with the act of driving as a practice that contributes to how nature is experienced. I argue that a more nuanced understanding of automobility is necessary for any scholars who study both social practices and environmental sustainability. Following the work of the human geographer Doreen Massey, I explore how relations between humans and non-humans, the social and the natural, ideology and practice work together to produce places specific to space and time. I also argue that American automobility is not simply transportation, but is in fact an ideology. As such, specific practices of automobility shift in relation to the ideology, framing how subjects respond to power or to other articulations of subjectivity, and ultimately, produce places.

As an example of the work being done by humans, machines, and nature, I focus on the practice of four-wheeling done in Northern California along the Rubicon Trail, a historical, long unimproved road that is claimed to be the toughest in North America. Operating within the ideology of American automobility, four-wheelers have historically used the Rubicon Trail to make and reproduce a natural place that is connected to the use of machines. When such practices were threatened by

environmental degradation, four-wheelers worked within environmentalist discourse, while maintaining a distinct subjectivity framed counter to that of an environmentalist, to ensure the continuation of use of the Rubicon Trail.

## Acknowledgements

I now realize that I have been working on this project before I even knew exactly what it was I was up to. Much of what follows has been shaped by the excellent education I have received at Claremont Graduate University. Daniel Lewis showed me the inner workings of archives as well as an appreciation of the discovery that comes from sitting in one. Many thanks must go to Darrell Moore who taught me the value of slow reading and gave me plenty of opportunity to reach, fail, and reach again. Not only did our meetings and seminars help me with coursework, but his advice helped me find my footing in academia. Also, Veronica Marrujo with the School of Arts and Humanities was of the utmost help in navigating the path to completion.

My dissertation committee has been of great help and support. David Seitz enthusiastically jumped into something with little background knowledge. Not only has he been supportive, but he has expanded my knowledge of human geography for the better by providing reading that shouldn't be part of an 'inclusive' canon, but simply *the* canon. I look forward to many more years of benefiting from his geographic insight. While I have always been drawn to history, I never completed a college-level history class until taking a seminar with JoAnna Poblete. Established narratives were replaced with new voices and new archives and I was hooked. While I merely dabble in history, I hope to make her proud with projects yet to come. I will also continue to watch my nouns. Eve Oishi is another professor whose advice helped me find 'my people' in

academia. Her advice guided me through this entire process more than she probably realizes. Additionally, she rekindled an interest in popular media as an object of study, not simply for its own sake, but as a means towards understanding the bigger picture. Through both seminars and private discussions, she not only showed me what the field of cultural studies is all about, but that there also was a place in it for me.

I must thank Ed Jackiewicz, Steve Graves, and Ron Davidson of CSU, Northridge for encouragement over a decade ago as well as continued advice and fellowship.

I am grateful to the School of Arts and Humanities for the generous Albert B. Friedman grant that helped me complete this work. I also received a warm reception and much help at archives of the El Dorado County Historical Museum.

I must thank my mom for giving me the love of writing a good story and my dad for teaching me how to work with machines. Both also instilled a love of nature, one that treated the environment as something in which we constantly exist rather than simply visit from time to time. Also, Art and Miki provided invaluable support and kindness that I can only hope to match for my own children.

A final thanks goes to Jack, Zoe, Alex, and Max for their patience, understanding, and field assistance as well as to Sarah for being the silent support that weaves throughout this dissertation. Whether through nursing a sliced hand in between qualifying exams or simply allowing me to vent about, well, everything, you were crucial to all that follows.



# Table of Contents

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....  | <b>1</b>   |
| Automobilities of past and future.....   | 1          |
| Troubling American automobility and the environment.....   | 10         |
| Planning the route.....  | 22         |
| <b>Chapter 1. The Problems with Environmentalism: Spatializing Nature</b> .....                              | <b>33</b>  |
| Not what, but who? .....   | 33         |
| Placing environmentalism .....   | 38         |
| Traditional ecological knowledge.....  | 55         |
| The Anthropocene.....  | 61         |
| Toward a place-based environmentalism?.....  | 82         |
| <b>Chapter 2. Toward an ideology of American automobilities</b> .....  | <b>88</b>  |
| ‘Wax on, wax off’ .....  | 88         |
| Mobilities on the American Road .....  | 91         |
| Driving as discipline? Driving as ideology? .....  | 110        |
| Space, nature, and automobility .....  | 121        |
| Moving through ideological spaces.....   | 133        |
| <b>Chapter 3. ‘Damndest Ride Ever Invented’: Resisting what, exactly? .....</b>                              | <b>142</b> |
| Crossing the Rubicon Trail .....   | 142        |
| Does four-wheel drive make it more authentic than two-? .....  | 152        |
| Mobilities and methodologies .....   | 159        |
| Granite spaces of critique .....   | 166        |
| Driving in the forest.....   | 172        |
| Ideology on the Trail.....   | 183        |
| Ideological driving glasses.....   | 185        |
| <b>Chapter 4. “Why does a beaver cut down trees? Why does a bear shit in the woods?”</b>                     |            |
| <b>Driving over the Rubicon Trail ecosystem.....</b>   | <b>192</b> |
| Ideological reproduction in the forest.....  | 192        |
| Jeeping in the Anthropocene .....  | 195        |
| ‘Significant amount of human fecal waste’: Declaring an environmental emergency on the<br>Rubicon Trail..... | 205        |
| Off-roading with the kids .....  | 219        |
| Annually reproducing place.....  | 233        |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....  | <b>239</b> |
| <b>Bibliography</b> .....  | <b>249</b> |

## Introduction

God took the stars and he tossed 'em  
Can't tell the birds from the blossoms  
You'll never be free of me  
He'll make a tree from me

Tom Waits "Green Grass" *Real Gone*

"However we mark its start, thinking about the Anthropocene makes it difficult to feel that pure grace is available through hand soap used in carbon intensive travel across borders laid down on genocidally colonized land."

Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, 2

## Automobilities of past and future

Speaking of hypermasculinity's role in bringing on climate change through increased fossil-fuel consumption, Stacy Alaimo writes:

Even more noticeable, perhaps, is the fact that [sport utility vehicles] and pickup trucks have not only grown ludicrously huge but are armed with aggressive impenetrability, covered, as they often are, with armor-like accouterments including big, rugged grille guards and hubcaps arrayed with frightening metal cones that look like medieval weapons. Some of these vehicles sport large metal testicles that hang from the trailer hitch (the hitch itself becomes the penis in this ensemble).<sup>1</sup>

Alaimo then links the practice of "coal-rolling," that is, the altering of trucks to belch black soot, to police violence against black males, but her main point is that American automobility is not only gendered, but its masculinity has accelerated carbon emissions by going to war to secure access to oil reserves. The swaggering machismo of

American culture has not just made consumable objects aggressively bigger but has violently altered both the political and natural environment.

“The belief in self-directed motion as an agent of liberation, cleansing, edification, and nationalization is powerful and venerable in American culture,” writes Cotton Seiler in his cultural history of American automobility. The problem with such a belief, however, is that we Americans have damaged our society “by investing our habitation of the social world with the character of driving, and according others the status of anonymous, potentially hostile units of traffic.”<sup>2</sup> By focusing on the individuality of driving personal vehicles, Americans have lost a sense of community.

Here are two damning issues with the American automobile. The car has destroyed a sense of community and its evolution into a brutish, hypermasculine thing has not only continued the antagonism between American citizens but has justified our going to war with other sovereign nations. To make matters worse, driving trucks and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) that are ever-increasing in size is contributing to the carbon emissions that are warming the planet. As environmentalist Bill McKibben has written, “In 1989, I said we needed to drive smaller cars and drive them less; in the intervening years, average Americans took to piloting vehicles that would turn General Patton green with envy. We’re not getting it.”<sup>3</sup>

But are we not getting “it”? Is the overarching system of American automobility simply something we must resist to regain our sense of community and to limit “the

carbon footprint of masculinist consumerism?"<sup>4</sup> Are masculinity and mobility inherently connected to environmental as well as social degradation? *Crawl Space: Driving Over the Anthropocene in a Jeep* is an effort to work outside of a binary of good and bad environmental practice by asking even more questions about the connections between the environment and automobiles. Rather than ask what good might come from driving a large truck or SUV, I am asking how these vehicles affect the driver as he or she traverses through natural spaces. Let us not be too quick to dismiss the American automobile as a social and environmental evil. Let's actually theorize the objects and ideologies of American automobility.

In what follows, I will be arguing that a more nuanced understanding of automobility is necessary for any scholars who study both social practices and environmental sustainability. I am not working towards a technological fix, that is, by shifting to electric cars we heal the planet. Rather, I contend that we must understand what spaces drivers are producing along the roads and what places are made at the destinations. Following the work of the human geographer Doreen Massey, I want to explore how relations between humans and non-humans, the social and the natural, ideology and practice work together to produce places specific to space and time. I will also push for an understanding of American automobility as ideology. As such, specific practices of automobility shift in relation to the ideology, framing how subjects respond to power or to other articulations of subjectivity, and ultimately, produce places.



**Figure 0.1. Modified Jeeps crawl over the Rubicon Trail, a historical road and now four-wheel drive trail famous for its difficulty. Photo by the author.**

As an example of the work being done by humans, machines, and nature, I will focus on the practice of four-wheeling (also known as off-roading or rock crawling) done in Northern California along the Rubicon Trail, a historical, long unimproved road that is claimed to be the toughest in North America (Figure 1.1). The Rubicon Trail, and the Rubicon Springs campground located at the midpoint of the trail, offer a unique site of analysis due to the apparent contradictions. For example, the glacially carved granite slabs, aromatic conifers, and black bears that exist at and around the trail evokes the

concept of wilderness, yet the presence of fossil fuel burning machines suggests something much more human. Perhaps because of its complexity, the Rubicon Trail has been the site of contestation by state, environmental, and four-wheeling groups in recent years. Operating within the ideology of American automobility, four-wheelers have historically used the Rubicon Trail to make and reproduce a natural place that is connected to the use of machines. When such practices were threatened by environmental degradation, four-wheelers worked within environmentalist discourse, while maintaining a distinct subjectivity framed counter to that of an environmentalist, to ensure the continuation of this place.

The ideology of American automobility is always present along the Rubicon Trail, though its subjects are not easily classified. Where Alaimo sees aggressive masculinity in trucks and SUVs as leading to violence against both humans and nature, my work along the Rubicon Trail shows that these seemingly aggressive rigs have led to practices deemed productive by those driving. Additionally, the use of four-wheel drive vehicles to escape easily driven paved surfaces suggests resistance to the dominant ideology of automobility though ultimately such a practice maintains and reproduces that very ideology. Additionally, ideology is always influencing not just how its subjects see the environment but how they ought to move through it. The existing “war of position”<sup>5</sup> between scientific and local knowledges of the environment have yet to convince either group to compromise or adopt the other’s truth. Perhaps this is because

both environmental and cultural studies have not spent enough time really grasping the role of ideology in mobility nor the environment. There is an “ideological struggle” as Stuart Hall would put it, in both the signs and practices of automobility and its connection to the environment.<sup>6</sup> A study of American off-roaders is a small window into how dismissing the ideology of automobility overlooks how subjects operate and struggle within that very ideology. Clearly, fossil-fuel use threatens global climates and ecosystems, but environmental studies is missing ethnographic accounts of how humans are using cars and other machines to engage with nature. Let’s look at the practices and ideology at work when vehicles seemingly at odds with environmentalism are brought into the wilderness.

I grew up in rural Northern California, a place that demands an automobile for mobility. The hilly terrain and the low population density made public transit and walking impossible as a viable means of travel to school, work, or recreation. Getting my driver’s license was not something to wait on, especially because few of my friends wanted to drive down the rutted gravel road leading to my house to come pick me up. Not only was a car necessary, a *capable* truck or sport utility vehicle was crucial for our rural lifestyle. I still remember learning how to use four-wheel drive in mud when, shortly after a rainstorm, my dad sent me on a solo trip to the county landfill. I was quickly stuck in the slop and a few men who were dumping garbage nearby coached

me and the truck out. Moments like that taught me the limits of the automobile, as well as the technology that allows one to push those very limits.

Later on, college in Los Angeles had me leaving my truck parked and relying instead on the Westside's Big Blue Bus to get to and from campus and work. This was completely financial and pragmatic. Not only could I not afford to regularly park in Westwood, California, but the fifteen minutes of travel each way provided valuable reading and studying time. Breathing in the smoggy air of Los Angeles also taught me first-hand about the environmental problems with the modern automobile. After graduation, I returned to Northern California for work and I brought my enjoyment of public transportation with me. Not only that, but I was growing more interested in bicycles (something I had abandoned when I got my driver's license). I picked up an old bicycle from a friend and tried riding from my apartment to work. I felt incredibly naked as I rode on the streets of Downtown Sacramento. The bike was heavy, rusty, and the metal squealed and squeaked in protest of any forward movement. Yet, I was also moving relatively quickly without the aid of fossil fuels. I was free. I convinced my girlfriend, or maybe she was my wife at that point, that I needed a bicycle. We spent \$300 on one at a local bike shop, which felt like a ridiculous amount of money. I rode it consistently to and from work, which meant I rode in heat, cold, and rain. I tweaked my route to maximize both efficiency and fun, though that also meant I would often ride through a tunnel filled with surprisingly friendly drug addicts. They always said hello



and gave a friendly wave. It was work to ride, but by damn I was doing my part to save the environment. I still had a car, but it was simply part of my mobility quiver, and my bicycle was the mode I always picked whenever possible.

When I returned to Southern California and started graduate school, I focused my research on the bicycle. This was the future of transportation if we were facing peak oil, that is, the pending decline of easy-to-access oil reserves.<sup>7</sup> Gas prices were increasing at ridiculous rates. The climate was ever warming. I did not focus on the environmental or health benefits of cycling though. I was most interested in how those of us who were cyclists suffered in the name of authenticity and identity.<sup>8</sup> Choosing to ride a bicycle was to choose to live existentially. But what of those who didn't *choose* the bicycle? This was clearly an elite, privileged group that interested me. The trend in mobility studies towards promoting cycling as a means to sustainable transportation in the United States was seductive at first, but it became clear that such work was not encompassing of all Americans. Most cycling literature that aims toward sustainable transportation is not only solely focused on urban settings, but also fails to consider alternative mobile subjects that are not fit (and often masculine) members of the middle-class. Romanticized place-making and political resistance through riding the bicycle abounds.<sup>9</sup>

Once I had children, I began to realize how impossible cycling became for anything other than recreation or simple commuting that did not involve school pick-

up and drop-off. Perhaps in a truly dense urban environment my wife and I could live a car-free lifestyle, but I have yet to find such a place in Southern California. As our family grew, we bought a minivan, though a minivan with the best fuel economy and I quickly added a bike rack. The rack was a way of signaling that I don't *want* to drive, but I am being forced to by a system that encourages low population densities. While I was no longer convinced that cycling would replace the automobile for an ecologically meaningful number of Americans, I still rode my bike as much as possible, partly out of resistance but really because it was fun.

*Crawl Space* is not about bicycles, nor public transportation. It is a return to the four-wheel drive vehicles of my youth. I still have my \$300 bicycle, as well as two others that cost significantly more. I still have a fondness for public transportation and use it whenever I'm in a dense city. The minivan has since been replaced by an equally efficient Subaru. I also now have a 1999 Jeep Wrangler TJ Sport with a 4.0L inline six-cylinder engine. I love this machine. It has a three-and-a-half-inch lift and 33-inch tires. Armor plating covers the undercarriage and metal rocker panels protect the sides. It has a Banks intake and exhaust, a rear ARB air locker, and 4.10 gearing. This model of Jeep is rated at 16 miles per gallon, though I am sure my fuel economy is lower with all of these modifications. It's heavy and boxy, about as far from a Prius as you can get. Apart from hanging metal testicles, my Jeep sounds like Alaimo's description of conspicuous masculinity. Yet, my own political leanings don't match her connections between SUVs

and the Iraq War. Further, I use my Jeep not to convey a sense of masculine identity (though I cannot deny the Jeep does just that), but I use it to actually drive into the wilderness. Conventional wisdom would say that this vehicle is terrible for the environment. My liberal and environmentally conscious friends and colleagues roll their eyes at my Jeep. How can he say he cares about the Earth and drive *that*?

### **Troubling American automobility and the environment**

My childhood was one surrounded by four-wheel drive trucks and Jeeps. My college years involved walking, pedaling, and hopping on buses. Most of my life I have existed at one end of this mobility spectrum, but I now find myself in the middle. My inability to comfortably fit my mobility choices into a singular ideology of modernity, masculinity, power over nature, or environmentalism has made me realize how little we question the greater work being done by automobiles and our other personal vehicles, as well as the spaces through which we drive. Yes, research has been done on bicycle, or vélo-, mobilities, but as mentioned above, it romanticizes this form of transportation. We also know that the automobile is not a benign object, but little work exists that grapples with *why* a country like the United States cannot escape the automobile despite its clear health, safety, social, and environmental problems.<sup>10</sup> There is a gap in both mobilities and environmental research, a gap that fails to connect our mobilities to ideology and to nuanced conceptions of place and space. Like with my

early cycling research, I am still interested in working with identities formed through a connection to machine-assisted mobilities. The difference now, however, is that I want to dig into the underlying ideology and materiality at work. Americans are fully aware of the problems of the automobile, yet, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two, we show no signs of ending the institution of American automobility. Are we subjects to blame for the resulting social and environmental degradation or are we unwilling participants duped by conservative pundits and oil company trickery?<sup>11</sup> Or could both positions be accurate to a certain extent? Through a study of popular media, we can see the reproduction of both ideology and discourse and through ethnographic accounts we can see ideological practice, which leads to further reproduction. Both sites of analysis show subtle examples of how drivers are unaware of the ideology of American automobility, while simultaneously complicit in its reproduction.

This connection of mobility and the environment is my area of interest, in which I propose the following questions. First, is the automobile and the larger institution of American automobility, as Cotten Seiler argues, something we in the United States either must embrace or resist?<sup>12</sup> If, as I will argue, American automobility is an ideology, is it even possible to resist? Does the ideology of American automobility represent the ruling ideas of the capitalist class?<sup>13</sup> Is this ideology “always-already” present in how we move through space or is it possible to alter American automobility through “shifts of accentuation?”<sup>14</sup> Or perhaps, this ideology is not simply material, but resides within

the subject.<sup>15</sup> Wrestling with reproduction and the implications of American automobility will provide insight into the perceived benefits and problems with plug-in hybrids and SUVs. Even if this ideology is an internal process, as Žižek might claim, it is nonetheless connected to material roads and other infrastructure. Chapters Three and Four will explore what happens when automobiles move off of smooth paved roads and onto more rugged thoroughfares. The automobile can be viewed as a site of resistance to larger institutions of automobility though that very resistance must be questioned. What might appear to be resistance is simply a pressure release that keeps subjects from making real change.

This first question of ideology leads to a second one: how does the automobile factor into studies of the environment? Historians have long argued that the mass production and consumption of cars changed how Americans viewed nature.<sup>16</sup> The emissions of cars have also been linked to environmental degradation.<sup>17</sup> What is lacking though, is the analysis of cars as *part* of the environment as well as how drivers experience and understand that connection to the environment. While a produced object like an automobile might seem to defy inclusion into a natural place, what happens if we take the concept of the ecosystem, a network of flows of energy and objects, biotic and abiotic factors that meets in a local place, and we add humans and their vehicles to those networks? That is, rather than treat human and machinic mobilities as external to an ecosystem, what might we gain if we connect them into

some kind of *ecomobility*? If we exist in the new geological epoch of the Anthropocene, an acknowledgment of human/nature hybridity, we must think about the ways in which our machines have become embedded into how we view nature. The enmeshing of vehicles and nature goes beyond the National Park Service using roads to produce a “windshield wilderness.”<sup>18</sup> Rather than simply using automobiles to quickly and comfortably bring tourists into scenic nature, I want to explore the idea of an assemblage of human and machine that produces a distinct natural space. How we move is just as important as what we move through and the way in which we view nature is influenced by an ideology of automobility. If we cannot grasp that ideology, and then work to alter it, how are we to sustainably use or preserve nature?

This second question is a direct challenge to treating the natural and the social/cultural as discrete objects. This is not a bold move by any means, geographers and environmental historians have long critiqued the act of isolating human activity from a pristine concept of nature.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the radical move might be to call for a return to our discrete categories.<sup>20</sup> Rather than return to Kantian absolutes, I will argue that critiques of the social construction of nature have not gone far enough. I am not calling for a postmodern rejection of nature as object. I am instead pushing for a sincere overlaying of natural objects and human activity that can only come through a theory of space. Doreen Massey’s theory, outlined in her book *For Space*, is an excellent starting point and a means to connect humans, machines, nature, and mobility within the

ecosystem concept. Massey has challenged three existing conceptions of space and its philosophical subservience to time. First, she invokes the imagery of colonial encounters to contest the idea of space as a mere surface. The colonizer, such as Cortes, travels across space to find those who are apparently waiting to be found, such as the Aztec. Space as a surface thus strips the colonized of any history. Second, Massey questions our understanding of globalization and neoliberalism. Less developed countries are seen as being *behind* the more developed nations, which implies linear progression but also that these countries have only one option for development. Globalization strips counties of spatial difference. "That cosmology of 'only one narrative' obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue."<sup>21</sup> Globalization as "total unfettered mobility" misses the point of multiplicity that Massey is arguing.<sup>22</sup> She sees this as "aspatial globalization" which overlooks the actual difference of places like Chad and Mali and instead places them on an American/Western European style path to development.<sup>23</sup> Third, Massey questions the space/place divide she sees continuing in geographic thought. The assumption is always something like "place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as 'home,' a secure retreat; of space as somehow originally regionalized, as always-already divided up."<sup>24</sup> Massey's approach is therefore a three-part reimagining of space. Space is: 1.) "the product of interrelations" at every scale, 2.) multiplicity of "contemporaneous heterogeneity", and 3.) always

becoming; “perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.”<sup>25</sup> Not only is space political, but Massey argues that thinking about space differently means we can think about politics differently. Her contention that space is produced by interrelations means that identities and geographies are never predetermined. Multiplicity acknowledges that the West is not the only history, present, or future. And envisioning space as a process counters the ideas of modernization and progress, as well as Marxist modes of production, which all anticipate a specific future. Not only is the future open, but the spatial interrelations are as well.

The Anthropocene additionally offers promise in the overlaying of nature, space, and place. The term gained popularity when Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer pushed for the acknowledgement of a new moment in geologic time:

Considering these and many other major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales, it seems to us more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of [hu]mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term “anthropocene” for the current geological epoch. The impacts of current human activities will continue over long periods. According to a study by Berger and Loutre, because of the anthropogenic emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, climate may depart significantly from natural behavior over the next 50,000 years.<sup>26</sup>

Officially, we currently exist within the Holocene epoch, which starts roughly 12,000 years ago and corresponds with the end of the Earth’s last major glacial period. The beginning and end of geologic epochs correspond with major changes on the planet. Crutzen and Stoermer place the start of the Anthropocene, and thus the end of the Holocene at the end of the eighteenth century, corresponding with Watt’s steam



engine and the dawn of Britain's Industrial Revolution. Others have argued that large scale anthropogenic climate change began at least eight millennia prior with the development of agriculture.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of the precise origin moment, the new conditions of the Anthropocene reveal how the natural environment does not sit apart from human society's institutions. Scholars of the Anthropocene, for the most part, have acknowledged the very human presence in natural places and vice versa. "In the Anthropocene, it is impossible to hide the fact that 'social' relations are full of biophysical processes, and that the various flows of matter and energy that run through the Earth system at different levels are polarized by socially structured human activities."<sup>28</sup> The flows that enter and exit various ecosystems are complex. Capitalist flows, for example, not simply the movement of naturally occurring atmospheric gases and heat, have helped to create the Earth's new climate regions. We are in a moment of crisis that blurs the boundaries between capital and nature. "Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells."<sup>29</sup> Where Marx and Engels saw such an economic crisis as a possibility for proletarian revolution, I am arguing that scholars of the Anthropocene have yet to acknowledge the ideological work being done within this new epoch.<sup>30</sup> The Anthropocene reminds us of the messiness of both nature and society. By using spatial

theory from human geography and conceptions of ideology from cultural studies, the spaces of nature, humanity, machines, capital, and their connected mobilities are better understood. My goal is to show not only the connections between human ideas and practices and the environment, but to force a rethinking of how humans produce, affect and are affected by the myriad ecosystems on the planet. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, Anthropocene studies have done a good job at looking at hybridity at the global scale, but rarely spend much time at the local sites of specific communities.

Local communities need not mean exotic and othered remote villages in South Asia or small island nations. I am not discounting studies of indigenous groups clashing with colonial forces over environmental resources; such studies are important in understanding the global stakes of resource conservation.<sup>31</sup> Nor, as Mimi Sheller argues, should we ignore the global flows of commodities and capital that are influencing global weather events:

[I]t is the excessive consumption of energy and fossil fuels in the United States that has directly contributed to the global warming and tropical storm intensification into the Category 4 and 5 hurricanes to which the Caribbean now falls victim, despite having contributed little as a region to climate change. It can therefore be argued that this hurricane season is not simply a natural disaster but a man-made disaster of *mobility injustice*. This is just one example of the many crises in the management of uneven mobilities around the world today.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, what of the local communities in the Global North that consume energy and thus contribute to warming oceans and intensifying storms? Sheller's sites of "mobility injustice" are clearly important places of research so that we might understand the

uneven geographies of the Anthropocene, but we run the risk of blending Northern energy use into a monolithic force while also making the Global South passive victims. Sheller argues that we in the Global North need “to stop living in disregard of our own involvement in producing these injustices.”<sup>33</sup> It would be difficult to argue with Sheller that Americans do not question the impacts of their energy and other resource use, but such a debate misses why these mobility injustices continue. Rather than demand the Global North pause and reflect, we ought to question what the consumption of natural resources is doing for those living in a place like the United States. Those living in “automobile cultures”<sup>34</sup> are not choosing fossil-fuel burning passenger cars over electric versions simply out of aesthetic preference or a malevolence of the impoverished Global South. Nor are all trips in an automobile the same. As Sheller, along with Hannam and Urry wrote early on in the development of mobilities studies

There is a complex sensuous ‘relationality’ between the means of travel and the traveler. Such sensuous geographies are not only located within individual bodies, but extend to familial spaces, neighborhoods, regions, national cultures and leisure spaces with particular kinaesthetic dispositions.<sup>35</sup>

Driving a fossil-fuel-burning vehicle is a bodily experience. We drive in cars to complete mundane tasks, like buying groceries, dropping children off at soccer practice, and so on, but we also use the car for recreation, and as will be shown in later chapters, place-making. The following field work suggests that sensuous mobile practices must

be considered, preferably *in situ*, when trying to understand the motivations underlying the use of nature.

In what follows, I also want to expand the archive of both environmental and mobilities research. “An archive may be largely about 'the past' but it is always 're-read' in the light of the present and the future: and in that reprise, as Walter Benjamin reminds us, it always flashes up before us as *a moment of danger*.”<sup>36</sup> I can think of no better moment of danger than the apparently sudden awareness of massive climatic change.<sup>37</sup> Within this moment, we should re-read our archival materials following Benjamin. We should grab a hold of memories from moments leading to this era of staggering environmental change and look for “the continuities, the discursive links... but also chart the paradigm shifts, the moments when the pattern or ‘period’ breaks, when there is rupture and new paradigms very different from earlier prescriptions come into place.”<sup>38</sup> What might the archive of the Anthropocene look like? Clearly it will contain charts of increasing carbon emissions, results of scientific research, and evidence of those in power ignoring or attempting to discredit the possibility of climate change. It will contain quantitative studies of pollution and resource extraction. But it must be more than that. Science can only explain so much. Take the example of racism. Biologically, race is an invalid means of classification; racial categories don’t actually measure difference.<sup>39</sup> But does this scientific fact stop a racist from lashing out at a perceived racial other? The same goes for climatology. The scientific knowledge that

pollution and consumption are bad for the environment does not compel humanity to stop polluting and consuming. Something else is at work here with our behaviors and desires, which means our archive must expand if we are to work towards political change in the Anthropocene. Bringing in the work being done in the “mobilities turn”<sup>40</sup> is a start, specifically the empirical fieldwork in which mobilities and the environment meet. Further, I see a need for the incorporation of popular media into our understandings of the role of movement, the automobile, and how we move through nature. Literature, films, and other visual arts reveal the subjugation done by American automobility. The car may hold a prominent role in a film like George Lucas’ *American Graffiti* or the *Fast and Furious* movies, but ideologies of automobility exist throughout popular media in ways that might not be readily apparent.

Popular media have aided in fitting both automobility and nature into common-sense categories. Nature is often framed within a Holocene epoch understanding that sees anything natural as being different from humans, regardless of any evolutionary relation we might have to wild animals. In the Coen Brothers’ film, *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*, a prospector, played by Tom Waits, ventures into untouched mountain wilderness in search of gold. We hear the prospector before we see him, and before we even hear him, we watch the sun rise over a mountain peak, framed by two fir trees. The sun slowly illuminates a mountain range and then a verdant river valley. Minnows swim and a buck calmly drinks from the river. Butterflies dance over white flowers. A

great horned owl watches all of this from a treetop. The scene is a perfect representation of what a North American forest ought to be but being a Coen Brothers film we wait for the punch. The deer's head swings up. The owl puffs out her feathers. The minnows quickly swim away. Life leaves the meadow as we start to hear the mournful singing of the prospector as he wanders out of the forest. He is taken aback by the sight of the meadow; he removes his hat out of reverence for the beautiful scene. Of course, we know it is no longer pristine, no matter how beautiful the prospector finds it. The presence of a human has tainted the wilderness. Waits' character will dig up the soil in search of gold, but he is at least a *good* human. In search of food, the prospector climbs a tree to steal the owl's four eggs, though thinks better of it and only takes one. Eventually another human will try to rob the prospector of his find. This new human is clearly "bad" in that he has little respect not only for other humans, but for any connection with the biology or the geology of the setting. Such a film reinforces the idea that humans *must* disturb nature by their very presence, but the good ones will only take what they need. Once the prospector leaves the valley with his treasure, the animals return to their pre-contact locations. The scars of human presence remain, but nature can begin to regain ecological balance.

This ecological balance is precisely what the Anthropocene is all about. For too long, we have conceived of ecosystems tainted by human activity. Even as we set aside wilderness areas so that they may remain devoid of human activity, humanity's

presence is forever imposed upon climate systems and thus on all biological life. Such a moment demands a new way of thinking about nature and humans.

### **Planning the route**

Chapter One, “The Problems with Environmentalism: Spatializing Nature,” more fully explores the history of human interactions with nature, beginning with the field of ecology and moving up to existing work on the Anthropocene in order to understand how different groups have come to know nature. Nature has a genealogy, one that is rather white, elite, and imperial. Excellent work has already been done to expose the human production of nature, but as is the case with the evils of the automobile, simply knowing nature is socially produced does not change our behaviors in consuming or preserving it. We can invoke Žižek’s fetishistic disavowal to help explain this phenomenon – I know very well that nature is socially produced, but still... [nature must be held as a sacred, unchangeable object that predates human existence].<sup>41</sup> Work done on traditional ecological knowledges of indigenous, non-Western societies shows that this nature/social divide is not universal, nor are Western conceptions of place and space. Additionally, the growing field of Anthropocene studies offers promise in linking the social and the natural, but both a lack of spatial theory and examples of local phenomena and experiences in the existing work leave it merely descriptive rather than transformative.<sup>42</sup> The difference between these two terms, descriptive and

transformative, is pulled from Deleuze and Guattari in their definition of what philosophy is and is not. Philosophy is the creation of concepts by philosophers, which may sound overly obvious. A concept though, is not something simply to be discovered, nor a universal to be passed down the generations. "There is no heaven for concepts."<sup>43</sup> Following Nietzsche, the philosophers see the act of philosophy as an active, creative process. Philosophy "is not contemplation, reflection, or communication."<sup>44</sup> To create a concept is to work out something new. The Anthropocene must become a concept in this philosophical sense, rather than remain a convenient label to repack the idea that humans and nature (whatever nature really is) are linked. The Anthropocene should not be about contemplation but instead about becoming in the Deleuzian sense of the word. Simply discussing the possibility or even the evidence of a new hybrid climate or socially constructed natural place gets us nowhere. The Anthropocene should not be a lament about self-destruction, but rather a new moment with new possibilities. "Of what concern is it to philosophy that someone has such a view, and thinks this or that, if the problems at stake are not stated? And when they are stated, it is no longer a matter of discussing but rather one of creating concepts for the undiscussable problem posed."<sup>45</sup> Our problem is the meeting of humans, machines, and abiotic objects moving through space *to produce something entirely new*. Rather than conceive of static descriptions of nature and society, the first



chapter will demonstrate how tenuous the prevailing ideas of nature really are through the spatial theorization of nature, global climate, humanity, and our machines.

Chapter Two, "Toward an ideology of American automobilities," delves deeper into the so called mobilities turn, specifically focusing on American automobility in order to explain the influence mobilities have on our perceptions of the natural world. Mobilities studies have been succinctly explained by Cresswell with the signifier A ⊗ B, that is, "to get from Point A to Point B," to illustrate the study of mobilities. For Cresswell, it is important to "explore the content of the line that links A to B, to unpack it, to make sure it is not taken for granted."<sup>46</sup> That line involves the vehicles used (or not used) as well as the places travelled to and through. As mentioned above, Seiler sees the institution of American automobility as detrimental to the public sphere of American life. This institution is more than simply the cars and trucks on the road. Seiler argues that automobility is a Foucauldian *dispositif* that blends both the discourse and materiality of the automobile: "automobility comprises a 'multilinear ensemble' of commodities, bodies of knowledge, laws, techniques, institutions, environments, nodes of capital, sensibilities, and modes of perception."<sup>47</sup> Further, Seiler's use of "American" is deliberate in the word's ability to "signify myth, transmit ideology, and confer power."<sup>48</sup> I too will situate my area of study on a specifically American automobility, though it is important to realize that such a *dispositif*, as is Seiler's claim, or such an ideology, which is my own claim, need not be confined to the United States' territorial

borders. In other words, the term American has little to do with precise boundaries on a map. I will first build on Seiler's history by adding to the automobile's role as an object of desire as well as a mediator of landscapes. Some of this archive exists in academic work, other materials come from a variety of popular media. I also want to explore the state of mobilities research in general as it applies to both the automobile and the Anthropocene. Ultimately, this chapter will work to situate the modern road, automobile, and act of driving into our present moment of the Anthropocene.

Chapter Three, "'Damndest Ride Ever': Resisting What, Exactly?" is the first of two that will explore four-wheel drive vehicles actually used off-road, both of which specifically focus on the rugged Rubicon Trail, a twenty-two-mile unimproved road in California's Sierra Nevada mountains just west of Lake Tahoe. The environmental and mobilities concepts from the first two chapters are explored in the concrete place of the Rubicon. Chapter Three is drawn from participant observation during the 2015 Jeeps Jamboree event, held annually over a period of four days in July. Four-wheelers, most driving Jeeps, though other capable vehicles are welcome, spend the first day driving to the campground at Rubicon Springs, then spend two days relaxing, eating, and socializing in camp, and drive out to the end of the Rubicon Trail in Lake Tahoe on the final day. I recount my own driving experience through notes and video to explore the practice of four-wheeling. The event organizers clearly state that this trip has an "adult atmosphere";<sup>49</sup> drinking and strong language are the norm in camp. It might better be

described as a masculine atmosphere; while women are present, they are a minority. Alaimo's connection between trucks and a specific masculinity is not immediately challenged at the Jeepers Jamboree.

Chapter Three goes into detail about the event and the history of the Rubicon Trail and situates both within the context of American automobility. Participants need to operate within the ideology to drive into Rubicon Springs, but there is a definite tension at work between the daily disciplining of the paved street and what goes on along the Rubicon. During the Jeepers Jamboree, four-wheelers tarry with the ideology of American automobility. The practice of four-wheeling is clearly an effort to escape from the everyday nature of driving on smooth roads, yet, the practice is still firmly connected to American automobility. This apparent paradox invokes the very nature of resistance to power. Foucault claims that "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."<sup>50</sup> What would a resistance to American automobility really look like? Isn't the need for a driver's license, mass-produced vehicles, and government-taxed fuel even on something like the Rubicon Trail still firmly placing the drivers into American automobility? That is, if one cannot resist outside of power's field, what chance do any of us have? Is resistance to any form of power already accounted for by power?<sup>51</sup>

I use Chapter Three to study power in the spaces and places of the Rubicon Trail. I am interested in a Foucauldian concept of power, but I invoke Michel de Certeau's

spatial tactics to work at the site of the subject itself.<sup>52</sup> de Certeau's work is an effort to study power not from the perspective of those holding it, but from where everyday subjects make sense of the spaces in which they inhabit. While de Certeau's concept is useful, it runs the risk of too easily presenting a binary of acceptance/resistance to a dominant ideology. I supplement de Certeau therefore, by using Foucault's later concept of critique as a better means to connect ideology to Foucauldian power. For Foucault, critique was an attitude, an effort "not to be governed quite so much," which is exactly what I witnessed in the participants on the Jeepers Jamboree.<sup>53</sup> A vague, yet clearly American sense of freedom is often evoked along the Rubicon Trail. A freedom from what is never explicitly articulated, and based upon the activities recounted in Chapter Three, this freedom does not preclude state control or the law. As Foucault contend, critique is "*not* accepting as true... what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so."<sup>54</sup> I will also show how such a critique is spatially contingent. While the subjects themselves are studied, the spatial context of the Jeepers Jamboree is stressed. Once again, Massey's spatial theory is important to see how place is made through the interconnectedness of subjects, nature, and institutional forces.

Chapter Four, "'Why does a beaver cut down trees? Why does a bear shit in the woods?' Driving over the Rubicon Trail ecosystem," continues the use of Massey's

theory to understand how a productive assemblage of place and mobility is used by four-wheelers on the Rubicon Trail. By looking at the Rubicon Trail through the ways in which four-wheelers contested and appeased environmental discourse, we see that four-wheeling is about the production of a place that is both human and non-human, rather than an effort to resist or escape prevailing ideologies. Further, this chapter will show how four-wheeling on the Rubicon Trail is not (only) an act of aggressive masculinity but can also generate heteronormative family activities and experiences. Participant observation and mobile methodologies are once again employed, this time on the 2018 Jeep Jamboree. While the event has a similar name and is run by the same organization, the Jeep Jamboree is a three-day trip on the Rubicon that has fewer participants and a more family-friendly atmosphere. Children are encouraged to attend and take part in Camp Rubicon, a program with the mission

to motivate and encourage the next generation of off road and outdoor enthusiasts with programs such as 'Tread Lightly!' where children learn outdoor ethics and stewardship practices. Hands on activities, nature hikes, survival skills, and informative discussions relating to responsible recreation rounds out the experience. Jeep Jamboree Camp Rubicon aims for children of all backgrounds to enjoy our natural surroundings and learn how to preserve them for years to come.<sup>55</sup>

It might seem ridiculous to think that families are driving inefficient fossil-fuel burning Jeeps and trucks into the wilderness to learn how to protect that very wilderness, but as Chapter Four will show, four-wheelers engage in complex negotiations with discourses and ideologies to make and reproduce place. Camp Rubicon is a direct response to a

dominant environmental discourse and issues of degradation along the trail in the early 2000s. Further, this chapter will explore the connections between place and nature and how both are socially reproduced through this activity. Rather than focus on a resistance to American automobility, the Jeep Jamboree presents an opportunity for a positive ideological struggle, again following Hall, towards “shifts of accentuation” of the signs nature, Jeep, and Anthropocene.<sup>56</sup> The Jeep Jamboree is not just a trip that kids may attend; it is directed towards encouraging children to continue to use and protect the Rubicon Trail. The event is a means to tweak, not resist, the dominant ideology to work towards an environmentally sustainable future that still incorporates machines.

The conclusion will connect these lines of thought to consider how human/natural place is produced specifically through mobility and exactly what that means for the new Anthropocene epoch. This work is not an effort to save the environment by driving more nor differently. As the conclusion will show, the four-wheeling community is not simply people who care for the environment slightly differently from environmentalists. Nor will the conclusion offer a blueprint for the dismantling of American automobility. Ultimately, *Crawl Space* is an effort to question existing conceptions of both automobility and environmentalism. Rather than label the large trucks of the world as a masculine disregard of environmental health or lament a lost pre-car American community, I want to trouble American automobility in Donna Haraway’s sense of the term. “Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to

devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places.”<sup>57</sup>

Enough writing exists on the same stories we continue to tell about a damaged environment and frightening climate futures. We repeat tales of injustice while doing little work to question the very foundation of such tales. It is time to engage with our present moment to better understand what futures are desirable, let alone possible for different communities and the places in which they meet.

---

<sup>1</sup> Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 96.

<sup>2</sup> Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*, (New York: Random House, 2006), xv.

<sup>4</sup> Alaimo, *Exposed*, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 238-9.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart Hall, “Signification, Representation, and Ideology,” in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2 (1985): 112.

<sup>7</sup> R.W. Bentley, *Introduction to Peak Oil*, Lecture Notes in Energy, Vol. 34 (Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Michael W. Pesses, “Automobility, Vélomobility, American Mobility: An Exploration of the Bicycle Tour,” *Mobilities* 5, no. 1, (2010): 1-24.

<sup>9</sup> Veronica Ferrari, “Ride the City: A New Way of Living the City and its Unexpected Places,” in *Urban Design Ecologies: Projects for City Environments*, edited by M. Ghibusi, F. Marchetti, 98-109 (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2018).; Justin Spinney, “Cycling the City: Non-Place and the Sensory Construction of Meaning in a Mobile Practice” in *Cycling and Society*, edited by Dave Horton, Paul Rosen, and Peter Cox, 25-45 (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007).; Zack Furness, “Critical Mass, Urban Space, and Vélomobility,” *Mobilities*, 2:2, 2007 299-319

<sup>10</sup> Edward Maibach, Linda Steg, and Jillian Anable, “Promoting physical activity and reducing climate change: Opportunities to replace short car trips with active transportation,” *Preventive Medicine* 49 (2009): 326-7; Hamed Ahangari, Carol Atkinson-Palombo, and Norman W. Garrick, “Automobile-dependency as a barrier to vision zero, evidence from the states in the USA,” *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 107 (2017): 77-85.

<sup>11</sup> Meehan Crist, “How the New Climate Denial Is Like the Old Climate Denial,” *The Atlantic* February 10, 2017, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/02/the-new-rhetoric-of-climate-denial/516198/>; Jeff Tollefson, “New York Sues Exxon Mobil Alleging Climate Change Deception,” *Nature*, October 24, 2018, accessed January 15, 2019 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07178-3>

- 
- <sup>12</sup> Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- <sup>13</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, ed. Robert C. Turner (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978 [1846]), 172.
- <sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012 [1970]), 131; Hall, "Signification," 113.
- <sup>15</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008 [1989]), 43.
- <sup>16</sup> Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010 [1957]), 136; Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 151; William Philpott, *Vacationland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 79.
- <sup>17</sup> George A. Gonzalez, *The Politics of Air Pollution: Urban Growth, Ecological Modernization, and Symbolic Inclusion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 51-2; Maibach et al, "Promoting," 326.
- <sup>18</sup> Christopher W. Wells, *Car Country: An Environmental History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012) 223.
- <sup>19</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983]; William Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (1992): 369-385.
- <sup>20</sup> Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018).
- <sup>21</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 5
- <sup>22</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 81
- <sup>23</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 82
- <sup>24</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 6
- <sup>25</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- <sup>26</sup> Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene'" *Global Change Newsletter*, No, 41 (2000), 17.
- <sup>27</sup> William F. Ruddiman, "The Anthropogenic Greenhouse Era Began Thousands of Years Ago" *Climatic Change* No. 61 (2003): 261-293.
- <sup>28</sup> Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene* (London: Verso, 2017), 33.
- <sup>29</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, ed. Robert C. Turner (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978 [1888]), 478.
- <sup>30</sup> I use the term epoch rather than crisis following Anthropocene studies. Crisis suggests that climate change is a fleeting problem we can fix and move past, whereas all data show that we will not return to a climate normal anytime soon despite our best efforts.
- <sup>31</sup> See, for example, Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
- <sup>32</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes* (London: Verso, 2018), 22, her emphasis.
- <sup>33</sup> Sheller, *Mobility Justice*, 308.
- <sup>34</sup> Sheller, *Mobility Justice*, 308.
- <sup>35</sup> Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities, and Moorings," *Mobilities* 1, no. 1, (2006): 15.
- <sup>36</sup> Stuart Hall, "Constituting an Archive," *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001): 92, his emphasis.
- <sup>37</sup> Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us* (London: Verso, 2017), 52.



- 
- <sup>38</sup> Hall, "Constituting and Archive," 92.
- <sup>39</sup> Jared Diamond, "Race Without Color," *Discover Magazine*, November 1, 1994, <http://discovermagazine.com/1994/nov/racewithoutcolor444>.
- <sup>40</sup> Hannam et al., "Editorial," 1.
- <sup>41</sup> Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 12.
- <sup>42</sup> One example of work that is not merely descriptive and will be discussed in Chapter One is Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
- <sup>43</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 5.
- <sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 6.
- <sup>45</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 28.
- <sup>46</sup> Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.
- <sup>47</sup> Seiler, *Republic*, 6.
- <sup>48</sup> Seiler, *Republic*, 7.
- <sup>49</sup> "Jeepers Jamboree," Jeepers Jamboree & Jeep Jamboree, Inc., accessed January 17, 2019, <https://www.jeepersjamboree.com/jeepers.html>
- <sup>50</sup> Michael Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 95.
- <sup>51</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 34-5.
- <sup>52</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 [1980]), xix. de Certeau himself was critiquing Foucauldian power with this work.
- <sup>53</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" In *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007 [1978]), 45.
- <sup>54</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 46, his emphasis.
- <sup>55</sup> "Jeep Jamboree," Jeepers Jamboree & Jeep Jamboree, Inc., accessed January 17, 2019, <https://www.jeepersjamboree.com/jeep.html>
- <sup>56</sup> Hall "Signification," 113.
- <sup>57</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 1.

## Chapter 1. The Problems with Environmentalism: Spatializing Nature

Americans don't care too much for beauty  
They'll shit in a river, dump battery acid in a stream  
They'll watch dead rats wash up on the beach  
And complain if they can't swim

Lou Reed, "Last Great American Whale" *New York*

"To live in the epoch of the Anthropocene is to force oneself to redefine the political task par excellence: what people are you forming, with what cosmology, and on what territory?"

Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, 143-4.

### Not what, but who?

In my introductory geography classes, I have taken to asking my students what an environmentalist looks like. I have long made the claim in this class that part of studying something means you care for it in some way, thus geographers must be environmentalists of some sort, but my encounters with a diverse student body have rightfully challenged that which I take for granted. Despite my lectures that question the need for a Prius, I realize that the term environmentalist is still very much a symbol for a specific group. Some students will offer up answers to my question that involve tie-died garments or sandals, but at least one will typically give the answer I both expect and dread. An environmentalist is white.

Environmental practices might seem obvious. One works to conserve natural places through recycling used materials or choosing sustainably harvested materials. One purchases the aforementioned Prius rather than, say, a Jeep, to responsibly move from point A to point B. Why must that be a white domain?

Critical scholars have long traced the connection between race and the conservation and preservation of the natural environment. Moore et al. argue that “race provides a critical medium through which ideas of nature operate, even as racialized forces rework the ground of nature itself. *Working together*, race and nature legitimate particular forms of political representation, reproduce social hierarchies, and authorize violent exclusions—often transforming contingent relations into eternal necessities.”<sup>1</sup> Both race and nature have been presented as preceding history, thus seemingly eliminating the need to question these very concepts. Further, the violent exclusions of which Moore et al. speak have used racial difference to justify the denial of natural resources and places to certain groups. In a specifically American context, Carolyn Finney has demonstrated that popular culture has led to an invisibility of African Americans’ connection with the environment. For Finney, a definitive narrative, one that is “deemed at once authentic and universal and that denies the complexity of experiences that nondominant groups have encountered historically” has kept African Americans out of “The Great Outdoors.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, as will become clear below and in Chapters 3 and 4, the historical conjunctures that have produced current ideas of

wilderness, nature, and ecosystems are not simply a matter of race. This is not to diminish the clear racism at work in the production of nature in the United States and elsewhere but is instead an effort to trouble racial categorization even further. Finney's "nondominant" is useful term in that it shifts depending on context. Where one racial classification, like white, might make one dominant in everyday life, class or political affiliations can move that person to the nondominant group when placed in nature. White and environmentalist are not completely synonymous as other power relations further dictate appropriate use of nature. Those with power, however it is grasped, have access to the natural environment.

Recent environmental manifestos might not reveal the origins of environmentalism's unquestioned privilege toward nature, but such books do show the reproduction of the idea. Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*, first published in 1989 but reissued in 2006, is a perfect example of linking nature to a specific population.

We are rarely reminded anymore of the continent's newness. That era of discovery is as firmly closed to us as the age of knights and dragons. Katahdin, though preserved as a park, is so popular that the authorities must strictly limit the number of campers—some days hundreds are at the summit simultaneously.<sup>3</sup>

McKibben gives away a great deal in this passage. The first sentence, calling North America new, uses the 1620 establishment of the Plymouth Colony as a starting date for the continent. Not only does his claim of newness ignore thousands of years of indigenous habitation by non-European humans, McKibben also overlooks the fact that

the current continents are all of the same age. Between 200-250 million years ago, Pangaea, the Earth's only mass of land at the time, broke apart. It is true that North America did not resemble its current shape back then; California is a relatively new addition to the landmass, but nonetheless millions of years old thus predating *Homo sapiens*. So North American is not new, but European knowledge of the continent is. Further, McKibben is writing about the lack of untouched wilderness in the world. Mt. Katahdin loses its naturalness because of the people who want to climb it. While McKibben isn't writing to forcibly remove humans from nature, the message is one of, now that I am here, let's keep people out. No matter how diverse and inclusive other aspects of society might become, the experience of nature ought only to belong to those who truly appreciate it. McKibben continues to lament the existence of other humans. "We go to the woods in part to escape. But now there is nothing except us and so there is no escaping other people."<sup>4</sup> Nature is not tainted just by human bodies, but by the effects of our industry. Pollution has led to dirty rivers, trees destroyed by acid precipitation, and warming climates. McKibben points to myriad contributors toward environmental degradation, like leaf-blowers. "Never mind that they make a horrible racket, or that when you use one the chance of daydreaming disappears—and certainly never mind the thought that they give off greenhouse gases."<sup>5</sup> Again we see the privilege connected to environmentalism. McKibben assumes that anyone using a leaf-blower is a home owner who has the luxury to daydream though yardwork. Such an

image might work in New England, but not in my own Southern California. The landscaping crews driving around cities in an effort to sculpt and clean as many yards as possible have little time to daydream.

I am sympathetic to McKibben's lament of the end of nature, though I think that he and other environmentalists must first question the genealogy of wilderness. We tend to treat nature like we treat pornography – we know it when we see it. This cannot hold; we need to trouble this word nature and find as many of the hidden signs lurking within. This chapter will explore the origins of environmentalism and nature, which are firmly enmeshed in practices of imperial and capitalist expansion. I then want to counter this genealogy with traditional ecological knowledges to show alternative ways of using and protecting nature. Next, I discuss the proposed new geological epoch of the Anthropocene which, despite its problems, offers a hybrid approach to nature that I see as being closer to traditional ecological knowledges than scientific environmentalism. Finally, I want to argue for a both a more spatial and a more critical approach to environmentalism. For all the talk of theorizing the relationship between humans and nature that will follow, nature is still taken for granted and the role of ideology is neglected.

Before proceeding, several concepts should be defined. Environmentalism is a general concern for the continued well-being of the natural environment, be it in urban or wilderness settings. Ecology, however, has the same "eco" as in economy, which was

simply a dictionary editor's effort towards consistency, but has since gone on to influence ecological thought.<sup>6</sup> Rather than saving nature for nature's sake, ecology is the study of holistic relationships between living and non-living objects within ecosystems, the bounded but open systems in which nature operates.<sup>7</sup> Both terms, environmentalism and ecology, need not be mutually exclusive, but the approaches towards knowing about the natural environment are distinct. Another important distinction is between preservation and conservation of natural environments. Preservation of nature seeks to remove human presence and influences in an effort to protect ecosystems. Nature should be left alone. Conservation, on the other hand, works towards responsible human consumption of ecosystems, whether through timber harvesting or recreation. Humans are a part of the ecosystem, and through careful scientific management, can maintain and maybe even improve the ecosystem. In the literature that follows, environmentalism and preservation are often paired, as are conservation and ecology, but such matchings are not firm.

### **Placing environmentalism**

Nature, no matter how wild it may appear, is not completely removed from human influence. This claim is well established. Historian William Cronon's book, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, first published in 1983, not only disputes the idea of a pristine or Edenic pre-contact North America, but

also shows just how connected different human groups are to their natural environments. "The pig was not merely a pig but a creature bound among other things to the fence, the dandelion, and a very special definition of property."<sup>8</sup> Geographer William Denevan continued this line of thought almost a decade later, though in spite of arguing against a pristine North America, contends that any human activity is at odds to a thriving natural environment. "With Indian depopulation in the wake of Old World disease, the environment recovered in many areas. A good argument can be made that the human presence was less visible in 1750 than it was in 1492."<sup>9</sup> While such a statement quickly discounts the sustainable ecological techniques and knowledges of indigenous North Americans (something Cronon does acknowledge), Denevan reflects the common-sense approach of late twentieth century preservationist environmental thought. We can frame Denevan's approach in Finney's phrasing; the nondominant indigenous Americans were incapable of just letting nature do its thing, while the dominant Euro-American group could. What I find interesting is how preservationist thought has maintained a durability in both environmental and ecological thought despite well-received interventions by scholars like Cronon. Why must nature be saved from human activity? What makes this preservation something that the dominant group does, while others appear to be incapable? We cannot point to one singular origin for environmental thought, but there are key moments ranging from the British Empire



to American Suburbia. Despite the different possible origins, each one shares the recurring themes of power and capitalist expansion.

Historians of the British Empire stake their claim that environmentalism came from colonial and imperial practices. In *Empire Forestry and Origins of Environmentalism*, Gregory Barton contends that modern environmentalism, which he defines as “the advocacy of a proper balance between humans and the natural world”<sup>10</sup> grew out of British imperial forestry policy and practice. Modern environmental concerns with climate and pollution arise after World War II. Prior to the war and stretching back to the thirteenth century, environmental interests revolved around forests. Richard Grove argues in his verbose *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism* that trade and colonial expansion revealed the fragility of ecosystems. The discovery of lush environments on the periphery of Europe led to an increased confidence that Eden itself was to be found in the East.<sup>11</sup> Peder Anker’s *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945*, is less interested in getting to the origins of forestry and more focused on the importance of ecology’s intellectual discourse: “Why were the order of knowledge, social crisis, and the environmental havoc of our age framed in *ecological* terms?”<sup>12</sup> In short, each of these histories turn to imperial Britain to uncover the origins of modern environmental and ecological knowledge and practice. Further, the imperial use of natural spaces shows that conservation, not preservation was at the heart of early British environmentalism.

Nature needed to be protected in order to maintain the extraction of its resources that were so necessary for the continuation of empire.

Barton is singularly focused on the forests encountered within the British Empire. There is good reason for this, he argues, as the extraction of timber led to a better understanding of the connections between climate, soil, and biota.<sup>13</sup> Thus, out of the economic need for a continued source of timber arose the greater idea of conserving the entire ecosystem. Barton sees this connection of humans and forests as an important moment in environmental history. What Barton does not question is whether British relationships with forests were indicative of the importance of the forest or if it was the result of Europe's physical geography. If a Briton's habitat was a temperate deciduous forest, would it not then follow that his or her relationship with nature was framed within that space? Western Europeans encountered desert and tundra ecosystems as they expanded their trade and territories, but forests remained important spaces for conservation, whether it was for, as Barton argues, "local and wholly pragmatic" reasons rather than Grove's argument that forest management was a means to connect humans to natural spaces.<sup>14</sup> Despite not agreeing on why forests required preservation, both Grove and Barton point to the initial expansion of Western European kingdoms during the Middle Ages as the moment in which a healthy forest ecosystem was prized. Grove specifically points to German origins for the earliest English policies on the protection of forests: "In Henry VII's sharp restatement of King Rudolph's Forest

Ordinance of 1289... it was said that 'harm come to him and the city of the kingdom in the destruction of the forest of the kingdom' and in its transformation into cultivated land."<sup>15</sup> Both historians acknowledge the importance of what was happening in the Nürnberg Royal Forest, yet both also march quickly onward to England's territorial expansion. Barton moves four centuries into the future to discuss John Evelyn's 1706 report on the state of English forests and the French Forest Ordinance of 1669. Interestingly, he returns to German influences on English and French forestry, now referencing the eighteenth century, but again quickly moves onto what was happening in France and Britain during this moment in time.<sup>16</sup>

Barton argues however, that Lord Dalhousie's Forest Charter in 1855 is the origin moment for what he terms "empire forestry" which then transitioned into modern environmental practices immediately after World War II.<sup>17</sup> Even 1855 is only realized as an important moment because of the Germans: "The stabilization of forestry in this period was due to the utilization of German trained scientists and foresters, and in particular one, Dietrich Brandis. In 1866 Brandis secured the services of Schlich and Ribbentrop, both German-trained."<sup>18</sup> Grove argues that conservation ecology "developed at the periphery of an expanding European system"<sup>19</sup> and began as early as the sixteenth century yet he too points to Germanic beginnings. For both historians to claim that environmental and ecological practices began through British Imperialism,

yet to constantly reference what certainly sounds like German ecology as facilitating empire forestry is puzzling.

Peder Anker is focused on studying specific intellectuals rather than a comprehensive history of British ecology. He is not so much interested in saying from where ecology arose, but instead questions who the men were who framed the discourse in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British environmental practice. Still, beginning with his first subject, British ecologist and botanist (and brief psychologist) Arthur George Tansley, Anker immediately shows the non-Anglo influences. Tansley's formative years began once he learned enough German to read the translation of Danish botanist Eugenius Warming's book *Plantesamfund*. Naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt was a huge influence on Warming, and in turn, became a huge influence on Tansley's approach to ecology.<sup>20</sup> Even more fascinating is Tansley's connection to Sigmund Freud, which led to Tansley stepping back from botany to explore psychology then incorporating psychology into his later framings of an imperial ecological project.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, continental Europe had a major influence on ecological thought in imperial Britain.

This is not to say that these books are without merit. There was something afoot in Victorian Britain that persists to this day. Barton points to nineteenth-century intellectuals like Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, Thomas Malthus, and Karl Marx (a German working in London) who described the dynamic qualities of nature, thus

troubling the prevailing human relationship to an eternal place of nature. It was this very change in the perception of what nature was that led to a seeming demand for state intervention in natural spaces.<sup>22</sup> This connects with Anker's intellectual project in which he presents a clear influence of imperial practices on the field of ecology. For example, the language used by early ecologists is definitively colonial:

Plants 'establish themselves on soil prepared for them,' higher forms of plants 'kill out the lowly pioneers,' and establish new plant 'associations,' 'kingdoms,' 'societies,' 'clans,' and 'colonies,' and certain species 'dominate' these 'communities.'<sup>23</sup>

Yet despite the colonial influence and settings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ecology, other forces are at work in producing the problem in which Anker is interested, that is, why did Britons think in ecological terms? The author H.G. Wells used ecology as a theme in many of his writings, playing Edenic settings against encroaching mechanical technologies.<sup>24</sup> This suggests ecological thought was produced not solely in the realm of science.

Grove rightly draws our attention to the periphery of empire. The physical difference of tropical islands from the British Isles presented a "hard reality of the destructive impact of metropolitan capitalism... [that] demonstrate[d] the contradictions between capitalist development and preservation of the paradisaical vision."<sup>25</sup> Further, Grove argues, in contrast to Barton, that the metropole knew conservation only through responses to timber shortages while imperial projects introduced Britons to new environments that "evoked a necessarily far wider range of

land management and eventually conservationist responses.”<sup>26</sup> This argument is in line with how colonists experienced nature in the midlatitudes of the empire in that natural changes were not simply a reduction of timber.<sup>27</sup>

American environmentalism was also influenced by continental Europe. In *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism*, historian Aaron Sachs makes the case for Alexander von Humboldt’s influence on environmental thought. Humboldt was not an American citizen, but the explorer had a love for the nation and became “an unofficial American hero.”<sup>28</sup> At least in part, Humboldt’s influence on American explorers and naturalists like Clarence King and John Muir came from the fact that he worked to understand the Earth’s systems rather than simply catalog organisms and landscapes. “Tug on one strand in the web of life, and the whole structure quivers.”<sup>29</sup> Such a balanced approach to nature countered imperialist discourse of the right to take new lands from indigenous groups. Yet, Dorceta Taylor contends in *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection* that while modern environmentalism did arise in the United States, it came from elite, white men who protected the wilderness not out of the importance of ecological connections, but “against a backdrop of racism, sexism, class conflicts, and nativism that shaped the nation in profound ways.”<sup>30</sup> Adam Rome uses his book, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* to forgo discussions of nineteenth century America and instead looks

to the spread of suburban housing as producing the environmentalist imagination that is used today. Rather than a concern with the closing of the frontier, Rome contends that environmentalism developed on the edges of wilderness through the tension between production and consumption.<sup>31</sup>

Both Sachs and Taylor look to the nineteenth century for an origin, yet each scholar finds something different. Sachs clearly has a romantic gaze. American explorers at this time were operating within a structure of empire, but, Sachs argues, their work was only “tinged with imperialism.”<sup>32</sup> These were white men exploring lands inhabited by indigenous others, but Humboldt’s influence put them at odds with a purely imperialist project. Sachs views historical figures like John C. Frémont and James W. Abert, despite their flaws in interacting with indigenous North Americans, as struggling with imperialist aims. “What remains interesting and valuable about the intellectual struggles of these men is the very fact that they struggled, that they chafed against the society whose influence on them they could not deny.”<sup>33</sup> This was not an indirect connection to Humboldt’s thoughts and methods; Sachs discusses the prolific correspondence and encouragement between Humboldt and most explorers and naturalists in the United States, leading him to suggest that in the nineteenth century “all official American exploration... [was] essentially Humboldtian.”<sup>34</sup> Sachs goes on to show how John Muir’s travels in the Arctic and his resulting environmentalist consciousness provided a way to cast off the need for American imperialism. “The

white, Western, Scientific imperialist tradition dictated that explorers and pioneers adapt the land to their needs. In the North, Muir recognized an alternative tradition: the natives followed the example of Muir's beloved animals and plants, and adapted themselves to the land."<sup>35</sup> Humboldt's concept of connected ecosystems provided the foundation for later environmentalists to work towards a harmonious balance between the human and non-human world. Sachs sees the Humboldtian legacy of early environmentalist thought as encouraging us to explore and to embrace difference in the world. "What matters, ultimately, is receptivity, subjection, the genuine attempt to connect with differentness."<sup>36</sup> This difference also cuts across human and non-human spaces. Modern environmentalism, as with efforts to prevent drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge invoke images of caribou rather than discuss the conflicting desires of indigenous peoples who live in the area.<sup>37</sup> Environmentalism began with a healthy respect for engaging with all of nature's connections, which environmentalists should reclaim to work toward a sustainable future.

Taylor, on the other hand, looks to nineteenth century America and finds a legacy of racist and sexist attitudes that gave rise to the conservation and preservation efforts that are still employed today. Further, Taylor rejects the romantic notion of lone men exploring the wilderness and discovering connections that demonstrated a need to protect the environment. "Long before outdoor recreationists, wilderness advocates, and wildlife activists began campaigning to protect remote natural spaces, *urban*



environmental activists campaigned for environmental protection and undertook a series of initiatives to improve conditions in the city.”<sup>38</sup> Naturalists like John Muir helped produce some of the ideological tenets of modern environmentalism, but Muir was actually on the periphery of the nineteenth century environmental thought. While Muir was a white male, only true elites, those with real political power like Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot had the ability to enact real change through legislation.<sup>39</sup> These elites did understand ecological connections in the Humboldtian sense, but ecology did not necessarily lead to an acceptance of difference as Sachs argues. For example, the need to protect American bird species originated in the nineteenth century once it became clear that certain bird species were endangered. The blame for the decimation of certain species was placed on women and different racial and ethnic groups while elite hunters were overlooked.<sup>40</sup> Women’s fashion utilized decorative feathers in a manner that was clearly not sustainable. Further, groups like Italian immigrants, poor whites, and blacks who hunted for subsistence purposes took too many birds to allow populations to remain stable.<sup>41</sup> Native Americans were attacked for their ceremonial use of feathers.<sup>42</sup> White men who identified as sportsmen, however, took “trivial” amounts of birds.<sup>43</sup> Even John James Audubon, in his classification efforts, killed plenty of birds for scientific, subsistence, commercial, and sporting purposes, yet his status kept him from blame in declining bird populations.<sup>44</sup> Taylor presents a history that acknowledges a growing concern with ecological connections in American

conservation and preservation efforts, but simultaneously, existing social relationships between race, class, and gender were reproduced, thus negating the wholistic approach adopted by Humboldt and his disciples. It is not that Taylor is negating Sachs argument, but rather she points to figures absent from his celebration of Humboldt.

Rome interestingly departs from the nineteenth century to examine suburban America from 1945 to 1970. He sees this period as being the moment when environmental consciousness arose in everyday life. Rome does not dispute that environmental thought existed prior to the building of suburban tract homes, but it would take these mass-produced homes to get average Americans thinking about environmental issues. Current environmentalism focuses on production issues or those of consumption. Rome sees the suburban home as encapsulating both. Rome is not interested simply in the environmental cost of industrialized home building, but rather how environmentalism became a public issue *through* suburban development.

Home building adopted Taylorist methods of scientific efficiency, which allowed for the mass production of suburban homes. Such efficiency overlooked the physical geography of the building site. "In most postwar subdivisions, the arbitrary geometry of the grid, not the principles of solar orientation, still determined the layout of the houses."<sup>45</sup> The increased ability to produce goods led to a need to encourage consumption, which, after World War II, was framed as a patriotic duty.<sup>46</sup> The economic growth that followed in the postwar years meant that energy was cheap and again

physical geography was overcome in terms of heating and cooling. The sleeping porches found in the American South and thick walls in the Northeast were no longer necessary. "With cheap energy and modern heating-and-cooling technology, the residents of every part of the country could imagine life in a home designed to suit the Mediterranean temperateness of California."<sup>47</sup>

While heating and cooling technologies could overcome local climates, local geologic and hydrologic conditions were a different challenge. Developers utilized septic tanks rather than connected sewer lines to save on production costs. The problem with such a massive use of septic tanks in concentrated areas was that groundwater supplies could be contaminated, both from sewage and detergents that were washed down drains.<sup>48</sup> Government reports from the 1960s show a growing concern with contamination, which led to a shift from thinking about pollution as a local issue to something more national in scope. Not only did pollution from septic tanks lead to regulation and government subsidized sewer construction, the dangers of septic tanks led to the idea that the federal government was responsible for keeping water clean.<sup>49</sup> The US government relied on more scientific specialists, who produced more regulation in order to encourage responsible development. One could no longer do whatever he or she wished on private property, which Rome argues has done some good in protecting the environment.<sup>50</sup> More importantly though, the debates over the proper use of private property have pitted environmental knowledge against concepts of personal

sovereignty. Rome contends that environmentalism in twenty-first century America has less to do with nineteenth-century exploration than it does with twentieth-century sprawl and consumption.

Rome's contention that suburban living led to current American environmental concerns does not preclude Taylor's argument that elite whites shaped environmental practices and ideologies. For all of the talk of the American Dream of the working and middle classes owning their own homes, the Dream was only attainable for a select group. The affordability of these new suburban homes only came from the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the backing of 30-year amortized loans by the federal government. Banks were more willing to give loans knowing that they had little to lose. Of course, the FHA did not back just any loan. This new agency began assessing neighborhoods all over the country to ensure that houses were worth a certain value for both financing and insurance purposes. Official government policy held that wealthy, white neighborhoods were a better investment than poorer mixed-race or black neighborhoods. Assessment maps were drawn using color to denote the class of neighborhood, with black neighborhoods being outlined in red and given the ratings of "D" or "Hazardous." Further, restrictive covenants in housing deeds prevented non-whites from buying homes in the higher ranked neighborhoods.<sup>51</sup> The FHA, an official government agency actively shaped the settlement patterns of the country, and in turn shaped the environmental discourse.

Notably, the scholars of British history do little looking toward the future of environmental thought and practice. Anker and Grove are content with concluding their work by neatly summarizing the fact that environmentalism started in imperial Britain. Barton does give a slight nod to the future of environmentalism, though in a rather imperialistic way. "The almost complete decay of the parks system in Africa and the destruction of forests in the Indian parks... are a warning that western law and effective police power, once removed, may lead to environmental catastrophe."<sup>52</sup> Barton disturbingly calls for a return to the pragmatic and utilitarian laws from British rule without any acknowledgement of the instability that now exists as a legacy of that colonial rule. Yes, he looks to the future, but only as a means to restore the past.

The American historians are more forward thinking. Sachs invokes Humboldt's focus on ecological connections and an acceptance of difference to guide our current environmental problems of oil extraction, automobility, and consumption.<sup>53</sup> Rome uses the lessons of postwar home ownership to also supply warnings about both production and consumption in the modern day United States. As long as Americans are narrowly focused on obtaining a comfortable and profitable house, they will continue to overlook the Humboldtian connections to "the larger living world of plants and animals and microbes, of soil and water and air."<sup>54</sup>

Both British and American historians pine for a balance of resource use and conservation, but the greatest lesson that the search for the origins of environmental

ideology and practice, is how many voices are left out of the discussion. While Taylor does not offer advice for the future of American environmentalism, she clearly shows the problem in searching for historical origins by revealing how women and people of color were kept out of the environmental discourse despite having a wealth of knowledge. Taylor points to Harriet Tubman, who needed a strong knowledge of the environment to successfully move slaves through the Underground Railroad. "Tubman, like other slaves and free blacks, also used the wilderness as a site for healing and a place to express their spirituality and connections to the earth."<sup>55</sup> Tubman, however, is not held up as a key figure in environmentalism. John Muir, on the other hand, is celebrated for his book *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* while women like Tubman, as well as the indigenous Sacagawea, made similar journeys across North America. Again, Muir shaped the discourse, but those not fitting the identity of an environmentalist receive little recognition.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, McKibben's *The End of Nature* is an excellent example of the canonization of white voices. Speaking of that same thousand-mile hike, McKibben celebrates Muir's posthumanist approach toward alligators.<sup>57</sup> While alligators are a threat to human settlement, Muir saw their greater place within their divinely created ecosystem. "Many good people believe that alligators were created by the Devil, thus accounting for their all-consuming appetite and ugliness. But doubtless these creatures are happy and fill the place assigned them by the great Creator of us all. Fierce and cruel they appear to us, but beautiful in the eyes of God."<sup>58</sup> In light of his

appreciation of alligators, Muir's disgust toward California Indians is all the more disturbing in the need to keep non-Christians out of beautiful wilderness.<sup>59</sup> Alligators have a place while the indigenous humans do not.

The conflicting origins of environmentalist thought can mask the elite or white status of environmentalists though. Ideas of how one ought to preserve or use nature have emerged at different moments in different parts of the world. There are connections in terms of pragmatic, ecological thought. Further, both British and American histories reveal an acceptance of specialists trained in managing natural resources. Yet, what is more important is how these ideas have come together in local places today. The better question to ask is not, "when and where did environmentalism begin" but rather, "whose knowledges of the environment have been preserved and institutionalized?" Who has been able to speak about the environment, and who has been overlooked in our quest to tell the story of saving the Earth? Clearly, the image of the environmentalist is white, because white bodies, either elites or middle-class suburbanites were allowed to think in terms of resource conservation and preservation while other bodies were not. But what of other knowledges that predate colonial activities?

## **Traditional ecological knowledge**

Fikret Berkes, in the third edition of his book *Sacred Ecology*, defines traditional ecological knowledge as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment.”<sup>60</sup> Berkes’ goal is to incorporate such knowledges into modern resource management practices in an effort to produce a “holistic and humanistic” ecology.<sup>61</sup> Berkes will at times shift from traditional to indigenous. The former can evoke static and primitive beliefs, whereas the latter describes a precolonial way of life. Science is historically linked to imperial conquest, despite the intentions of the scientist. As described above, modern attitudes towards environmentalism and ecology came from pragmatic efforts to maintain the British Empire. As such, they depart from an indigenous approach towards the environment. “Indigenous knowledge seems to build holistic pictures of the environment by considering a large number of variables qualitatively, whereas science tends to concentrate on a small number of variables quantitatively.”<sup>62</sup> Berkes’ claim here is easily argued against, at least in terms of the number of variables invoked by each approach, but his focus on holistic, qualitative methods does offer a new way to think about ecological conservation. The everyday nature of such a holistic approach provides an interesting counter to the elite environmental knowledges described in the histories discussed above. Further, the very



connection of indigenous humans to ecosystems inherent in traditional ecological knowledge precludes a preservationist approach towards nature.

Traditional ecological knowledge is cataloged by M. Kat Anderson in her dense resource, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*. Anderson, focusing on the relationship between indigenous Californians and their ecosystems, reiterates Cronon's argument against Euro-Americans encountering a pristine environment, and thus makes an argument for conservation over preservation. John Muir, Anderson contends, wrote of beautiful forests and fields as proof of the beauty of nature left to its own devices, but these places "were really the fertile seed, bulb, and greens gathering grounds of the Miwok and Yokuts Indians, kept open and productive by centuries of carefully planned indigenous burning, harvesting, and seed scattering."<sup>63</sup> Anderson presents ample evidence from coastal, valley, and mountain regions of California to show that with the exception of the driest desert areas, the land was far from wilderness at the time of European contact. California Indians conducted deliberate maintenance of the landscape to aid in food harvests, tool production, and overall ease of mobility. Fires were deliberately set to control brush growth, increase plant and insect food supplies, and herd game like deer. The relative regularity of fires in a region, ranging from ten to ninety years, kept grasses and smaller trees down, which prevented larger wildfires from ever starting.<sup>64</sup> It was only after Euro-American settlers prevented fires, harvested

timber, and allowed massive grazing of sheep and cattle did forest health diminish and wildfire became such a devastating force in California.

Descriptions of indigenous practice, such as fire ecology or harvesting methods does not fully depart from Western ecological practices. That is, one could still see the environment as an ecosystem and simply incorporate fire into its management. As I have argued elsewhere, the real strength in studying traditional ecological knowledge comes from challenges to modern conceptions of space and place.<sup>65</sup> Both Berkes and Anderson caution against the writing down of indigenous knowledges. Anderson states that “knowledge living within cultures is reshaped with new information, is learned by direct apprenticeship, and is multidimensional – impossible to capture completely on paper.”<sup>66</sup> Berkes argues that “the written page will never be an adequate format for the teaching of indigenous knowledge. It can only be taught properly on the land.”<sup>67</sup> Rather than contend that writing cannot transmit knowledge (which suggests an othering of some sort, as if Indian knowledge is ontologically different from European knowledge), I would argue that scholars must question the very concept of geography within traditional ecological knowledge. Two sources that illustrate my point are both from indigenous voices themselves, Malcom D. Benally’s collection *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute* and Charlotte Coté’s *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nuuchahnulth Traditions*.

Benally collects four oral histories of land use from Diné women in their indigenous language and then are translated into English. The histories specifically focus on land use disputes stemming from the contested nature of the reservation land in which the American government stuck both the Hopi and Diné. The histories reveal a very different connection to the land as is usually seen in ecological studies. Mae Tso, a Diné woman, describes her connection to the land: “My roots say I come from Where Two Rivers Flow As One. We emerged here. From the water: a little girl was brought home from the river. She gave birth. We are her children.”<sup>68</sup> Not only has she “emerged” from this place, suggesting a stronger connection than the scientific explanation of immigration via Beringia, but the emergence from water shows a much more active connection between humans and the hydrosphere. She continues and explains her people’s agency in the natural environment:

Our grandfathers planted water.

The water was far away: the people traveled on foot to bring back the water here. Barrels did not exist then. A buffalo urine sack was used to carry the water that was then planted here.

The water still flows today.<sup>69</sup>

Such a description of irrigation is clearly at odds with scientific hydrology, but if we look past the seeming impossibility of this story, we discover a conservationist ethic to the land. Human alteration is not at odds with nature; use and modification of the

natural landscape is fundamental to the Diné's emergence. Such a connection also makes their proposed removal from such a "wasteland" all the more tragic.<sup>70</sup>

Charlotte Coté challenges geography by illustrating how practices alter space. Coté, a member of the Pacific Northwest's Nuu-chah-nulth people, discusses the practice of whaling by her people as well as the Makah. Euro-American attitudes have stopped the hunting of whales, yet Coté makes the argument to allow indigenous hunts to resume. Archaeological evidence shows that this practice has occurred for these groups for at least 4,000 years.<sup>71</sup> Whaling was not simply about obtaining calories from within an ecosystem but was connected to every facet of Nuu-chah-nulth and Makah culture. Production, in the material, Marxist sense, was connected to nature, which then facilitated political and social relations through potlatch ceremonies. The outlawing of whaling, as well as potlatches by the Canadian government, destroyed the ecological and social aspects of these indigenous groups, argues Coté:

Our leaders saw that the many of the social problems that plagued our communities could be overcome by strengthening our cultures. They recognized that traditions, customs, and languages were important elements of our cultures that needed to be rejuvenated and reinforced for community growth and development.<sup>72</sup>

Coté, while not invoking him, is suggesting a Lefebvrian production of space in that their geographies changed once they could no longer conduct the spatial practice that produced their relational spaces of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>73</sup> While the hunting and

eating of whales might be disturbing to the modern environmentalist, Côté is arguing for a consideration of a holistic ecology that incorporates different conceptions of space.

At this point it is reasonable to ask why we should concern ourselves with indigenous knowledges when the focus of *Crawl Space* is on primarily Euro-American four-wheelers in the twenty-first century. Rather than propose a direct link between indigenous land use and geographies and off-roading, I want to use both as a means to question the preservationist attitudes towards the Rubicon Trail as well as challenge preconceptions of space. Further, traditional ecological knowledges offer an interesting lens through which to explore the current state of the environment. There are now claims of living in a “*postnatural*”<sup>74</sup> environment, better known as the Anthropocene. In the Anthropocene, no part of the Earth, no matter how remote, is completely devoid of human influence. Greenhouse gases have been produced by human industry, thus warming temperatures and throwing off weather events to the point of permanent climate change. As climates change, so too must the organisms existing within them, as will the geology with either increased or diminished precipitation leading to changes in weathering and erosion rates. Despite the best efforts of scientists to advocate “a proper balance between humans and the natural world”<sup>75</sup> we exist at a moment where society and nature are more negatively amalgamated than ever before. Yet, what is interesting is that while the blending of human and natural objects, spaces, and places is exciting

and new for environmental studies, the Anthropocene has connections to traditional environmental knowledges that have not yet been explored.

### **The Anthropocene**

Bruno Latour's claim that we humans "have never been modern" is an effort to really claim that we humans have never fully separated ourselves from the natural world.<sup>76</sup> Social humans and the objects we refer to as being part of nature have never been truly discrete objects despite the Enlightenment's best efforts. Latour has continued his line of thought on the hybridity of humans and nature over the last several decades, expanding his theory from the mere connection of objects to a metamorphic process of transformation. Invoking the geological process of metamorphism, that is, when an existing rock's molecular structure changes through heat and tectonic pressure, is not, at least according to Latour, a *simple* metaphor.<sup>77</sup> The "human world" and "natural world" offer little of value on their own; the actions of each are revealed through "the exchange of forms of action through the transactions between agencies of multiple origins and forms at the core of the metamorphic zones."<sup>78</sup>

The use of physical science concepts in the humanities has always given me concern. Despite an insistence against metaphor, they typically are ultimately only a metaphor. Even if we take Deleuze and Guattari at their word that machines and strata are not metaphors, other scholars easily slip into such a trap.<sup>79</sup> Latour's invocation of

geology is problematic because his words cannot ever be anything more than a representation. His argument is that a dialectical approach to understanding nature is no longer valid since we cannot separate nature and culture; the biotic and abiotic actants (to use Latour's terminology) transform through their encounters within metamorphic zones.<sup>80</sup> Discrete objects no longer exist to pit against one another. My issue is not with a questioning of dialectical methodology, but rather with the need to bring geology into all of this. The Mississippi River and the Army Corps of Engineers, to use Latour's examples from his lecture on the topic, do not experience a molecular realignment no matter how much they interact, so the term metamorphic cannot go beyond a metaphor. Further, to bring such a term into his project is to submit to the physical sciences, which is odd considering Latour's history of tarrying with scientific knowledge production. At best, Latour's metamorphic zones are a harmless metaphor; at worst they reveal some sort of positivist envy within the humanities that suggests an impotence within environmental studies. Why bother analyzing environmental discourse and ideology if it all gets back to atoms and molecules? Slipping terms from geology and physics into such analyses of power will only reinforce the very fields of power being studied.

This is not to say that Latour's work is without merit. The very questioning of humanity's relationship to nature has been going on for some time now, but few scholars take this questioning as far as Latour. Geographer Clarence Glacken, for

example, spent his mid-twentieth century career tracing and critiquing the history of environmental and ecological thought long before Latour denounced the modern subject. Not only did Glacken uncover emerging moments of environmental thought, but he denounced those, such as Malthusian population concerns, that failed to grasp the complexity of the human-nature relationship.<sup>81</sup> Yet Latour is not satisfied to critique ecological work but instead to point the blame at our efforts to know nature in the first place. "Ecology clearly is not the irruption of nature into the public space but the *end of 'nature'* as a concept that would allow us to sum up our relations to the world and pacify them."<sup>82</sup> Ecology's knowledge of the interconnected systems of biology, geology, and the atmosphere have made it impossible to sincerely envision nature as being apart from human society. Not all ecological work fully escapes the nature/culture binary though, nor does such work say anything new about the environment. Latour links the impotence of holistic environmental studies to an insistence on thinking of the Earth as a sphere or globe: "geohistory can never be conceptualized in the form of a Sphere whose encompassing form has been discovered *once and for all.*"<sup>83</sup> Thinking globally is a trap, argues Latour, one that strips the Earth of history and replaces it with a system. To claim the Earth is a system produces a metaphor of a machine working toward an end goal. All components within a car, for example, such as the cooling system, power steering, and suspension, all work toward the common goal of the car moving from one location to another. A real geohistory of the Earth would explore interactions of biotic



and abiotic objects and energies not as a clever system assisting a greater whole, but rather as discrete interactions that have the ability to affect other interactions. Such a claim might not sound much different from systems models of the Earth, or even that different from early moments in ecology: “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”<sup>84</sup> The difference between John Muir and Bruno Latour however, is that the former assumed a divine connection between ecological objects and processes while the latter is arguing no such plan exists. These interconnected systems do not compose God’s plan nor Spaceship Earth. The Earth is messy and has no final state of equilibrium.

Latour cites James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis as the counter to systems thinking. Latour insists that we have misunderstood Gaia as an overtly spiritual being or as a global system. The Earth envisioned as Gaia does not have a common goal or final stage of equilibrium. Gaia may have interconnected processes, but these interconnections do not produce harmony or order.

The inside and outside of all borders are subverted. Not because everything is connected in a ‘great chain of being’; not because there is some global plan that orders the concatenation of agents; but because the interaction between a neighbor who is actively manipulating his neighbors and all the others who are manipulating the first one defines what could be called *waves of action*, which respect no borders and, even more importantly, never respect any fixed scale.<sup>85</sup>

Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis is an effort to move beyond individual bodies and structures and instead look at what is produced by the manipulations and interactions

that exist throughout the evolutionary record. The individual organisms on Earth do not produce changes in the geologic record, the interactions between organisms, matter, and energy do.

Not all scholars of the new geologic epoch have embraced Latour's rereading of Gaia,<sup>86</sup> but his original refusal of a nature/culture separation has been picked up, celebrated, and critiqued by a growing field of Anthropocene studies. While Crutzen and Stoermer are credited with coining the term and forcing a rethinking of the scale of global warming, Latour laid the groundwork for a sustained critique of nature's ontology.<sup>87</sup> The Anthropocene is not the only term to describe a massive shift on the Earth's surface, though for now appears to be the favored term amongst climatologists and ecologists. To better grasp the enormity of the entire history of the Earth, a time span of over 4.5 Billion years, geologists have devised a time scale based on massive global changes. Extinction events, climate shifts, and new atmospheric gas mixtures lead to distinct eons, eras, periods, and epochs. Currently, the Earth is officially experiencing the Holocene epoch, which began roughly 12,000 years ago as the planet left its last glacial period. This was also the moment in time in which a variety of populations of *Homo sapiens* began to thrive all over the planet. The Anthropocene is not yet part of the official geological record, but rather a proposed new epoch that acknowledges the profound anthropogenic shift in modern climate regions all over the globe. Typically, proponents of the new epoch place the Anthropocene as starting with

Britain's industrial revolution in the eighteenth century. It was at that moment that humans began burning fossil fuels at a rate great enough to affect the balance of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. Because humans have radically altered the Earth through deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels, Jedediah Purdy, following Latour, claims "the familiar divide between people and the natural world is no longer useful or accurate."<sup>88</sup> As human societies have grown and spread around the Earth, forests have been cleared to make way for pasture and crop land, thus removing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) eliminating trees in vast amounts. This deforestation coupled with industry relying on the burning of fossil fuels has dramatically increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere since the start of the Holocene. Greenhouse gases, like CO<sub>2</sub>, delay the release of longwave radiation into space, which regulates temperatures at the Earth's surface. More greenhouse gases mean higher temperatures. In addition to warmer locations on the planet, the new temperatures lead to new weather patterns, which ultimately affects ecosystems. Chemical reactions cannot occur, ice cannot remain, and food sources never materialize. The changes in atmospheric gases, climate, and ecosystems have been well documented in science. "Scientists have built up data and models that already situate us beyond the point of no return to the Holocene, on the timetable of geological epochs. They have produced figures and curves that depict humanity as a major geological force."<sup>89</sup> But geoscientists are not the only ones looking for meaning in the Anthropocene. Scholars of law, politics, literature,

and philosophy have all weighed in to the debate in an effort to make sense of the charts and tables produced by climate researchers. What do the charts that depict a correlation between a post WWII increase in carbon emissions and global temperatures really mean for society?

Latour has argued that our modern conception of nature as being separate from nature has never actually materialized, but Jedediah Purdy's book *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* is more focused on what to do now that the Earth's climate is so intertwined with human influence that we cannot even pretend to be apart from nature. To engage with this new human-nature hybrid will require a new conception of ecology and economics, which Purdy argues can only occur through political activity.<sup>90</sup> Purdy defines politics as not taking anything for granted; he uses the term "anti-politics" to mean the naturalization of an ideology.<sup>91</sup> In order to move past these anti-politics, most of his book is a genealogy of American environmental ideologies, ranging from colonial working of the land to an elitist preservationist attitude that arose in the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup> Purdy points to more sustainable agricultural methods as a way to address the hybrid Anthropocene. The law supports industrialized farming methods, but political work must be done to get more citizens engaged with producing their own food. Growing one's food would connect Americans to ecology without privileging a pristine version of nature. "The food economy and the atmosphere, urban gardens and national parks, would all be part of a world, no longer natural, but never wholly

artificial, in which the foundational work is to go on living.”<sup>93</sup> Purdy’s effort towards a politics of the Anthropocene, however, is more of a work on ethics. What ought one do in this new geologic epoch?

Andreas Malm has argued for a different term to describe this current moment in time, the Capitalocene, departing from the Greek roots use to name epochs in order to highlight capitalism’s role in shaping the planet. “Unlikely to gather anything like a consensus behind it, a more scientifically accurate designation then, would be ‘the Capitalocene.’ This is the geology not of [human]kind, but of capital accumulation.”<sup>94</sup>

Jason Moore has taken up the name to argue against quickly placing the start of the new epoch at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution:

Ask any historian and she will tell you: how one periodizes history powerfully shapes the interpretation of events, and one’s choice of strategic relations. Start the clock in 1784, with James Watt’s rotary steam engine... and we have a very different view of history – and a very different view of modernity – than we do if we begin with the English and Dutch agricultural revolutions, with Columbus and the conquest of the Americas, with the first signs of an epochal transition in landscape transformation after 1450.<sup>95</sup>

Using European colonialism as an important moment in the spread of global capitalism and the beginning of a new capital-focused epoch presents a different perspective on the driving force behind today’s changing climates. Capitalism, not merely through fossil-fuel use, is what has made “cheap nature,” the double push to make nature’s materials cheap in value, both through price and ideologically.<sup>96</sup> This is not to say, however, that Moore sees the need to replace the naming of the Anthropocene. That

name has “sound[ed] the alarm” but fails to do what the term Capitalocene does, which is to signify “capitalism as a way of organizing nature—as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world-ecology.”<sup>97</sup> Rather than completely eliminate the Anthropocene label, which has been a rallying cry or a disconcerting future, the Capitalocene provides a framework for grasping how we came to this moment in history.

Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* does not completely reject the terms Anthropocene or Capitalocene, but rather makes a case for Chthulucene, which she suggests represents a better approach to our changing climate. Rather than fixate on the yet to be developed technological fixes or the cynical acceptance that nothing can be done, Haraway wants to make kin with the Chthonic ones. “Chthonic ones are beings of the earth, both ancient and up-to-the-minute. I imagine chthonic ones as replete with tentacles, feelers, digits, cords, whiptails, spider legs, and very unruly hair.”<sup>98</sup> The term Anthropocene, argues Haraway, is too embedded in the human species at the expense of the “compost” of human and non-human organisms.<sup>99</sup> Humans should not get the sole credit for producing this new epoch, nor should they be its sole savior: “No matter how much he might be caught in the generic masculine universal and how much he only looks up, the Anthropos did not do this fracking thing and he should not name this double-death loving epoch.”<sup>100</sup> Global capitalism has obviously played a role in the burning of fossil-fuels, which means that the term Capitalocene makes much more sense. But, Haraway refuses to

stop and embrace such an epoch. The Chthulucene is not a description of our current moment, but rather Haraway's answer to produce a new epoch of survival and flourishing. She cites the need for revolt against our current global economic system, as it is not compatible with the ecological processes at work on the planet. The histories that we tell through the narrative of the Anthropocene are too fixated on human exceptionalism. "That History must give way to geostories, to Gaia stories, to symchtonic stories; terrans do webbed, braided, and tentacular living and dying in sympoietic multispecies string figures; they do not do History."<sup>101</sup> While Haraway does not dispute the need to understand the past, she is much more focused on possible futures. Most importantly, Haraway embraces an ecosystem approach that is not post-human, but rather more-than-human in the connections between organisms and abiotic objects.

While I am sympathetic to Haraway's critique of the Anthropocene (and I enjoy her poetic style), I cannot help but come away with a Malthusian taste in my mouth. Haraway repeatedly invokes the projected population figures for the year 2100, including when her writing group was tasked with creating a character. "We also felt a vital pressure to ask our baby to be part of learning, over five generations, to radically reduce the pressures of human numbers on earth, currently set on a course to climb to more than 11 billion by the end of the twenty-first century CE."<sup>102</sup> While Haraway isn't directly invoking Malthus, her argument is that more humans are bad for the planet

and the best way to not have more humans is to not have children. “Make kin not babies.”<sup>103</sup> This argument is at the heart of *Essay on the Principle of Population* in which Malthus argues that population grows at a geometric rate while food and other resources grow at an arithmetic rate.<sup>104</sup> Of course, Malthus suggests that the low morals and high breeding rates of the poor are of the utmost concern, which Haraway never claims. The concern with overpopulation has persisted to today without explicit mentions that the immoral poor are to blame for the exploding population. Rather, the ignorant reproduce, those that, like prey animals in the wild, do not consider what impacts their actions will have on environmental resources. Political ecologists have long been leading the charge against this line of thought.<sup>105</sup> Malthus writes, “There is not at present enough for all to have a decent share.”<sup>106</sup> But this assumes that all are taking an equal share of those resources. If this were the case, then yes, too many impoverished people would drain more resources than the affluent. However, the more affluent humans around the world use a higher percentage of the world’s resources than the impoverished do. The energy use in the United States per capita is over 16 times greater than energy use per capita in India. Meat use is over 30 times greater in the US compared to India.<sup>107</sup> To be fair to Haraway, while it is not clear in the book, she has defended her position on the May 8, 2019 episode of *The Dig* Podcast, in which she stressed that she is actually concerned with too many wealthy babies, those that result in an excess of goods in their upbringing.



The books and essays discussed so far are not always in complete agreement in how we ought to deal with our current moment in climate history, but roughly agree on the same underlying concept that the existing separation of nature and society is problematic. Malm's book, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World*, however, departs from the existing Anthro-/Capitolo-/Chthulucene literature in that he insists upon returning nature and society to discrete objects. Yes, nature is affected by human actions, but it does not follow that human actions are the sole force in the construction of nature.<sup>108</sup> Further, the Anthropocene puts an end to postmodern notions of synchronicity and space. History returns through nature; time trumps space. "Insofar as extreme weather is shaped by basal warming, it is the legacy of what people have done, the latest leakage from a malign capsule—indeed, the air is heavy with time."<sup>109</sup> This also negates postmodern notions of a socially constructed nature; extreme weather events reveal the very ontological condition of nature.

Malm classifies the arguments that nature is never devoid of human influence as the "purist" conception of nature.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps nature was once purely natural, but for at least the last 12,000 years, humans have touched natural spaces either through indigenous methods as described by someone like M. Kat Anderson<sup>111</sup> or more detrimental ways as lamented by Haraway.<sup>112</sup> Malm contends that just because one object is added to another, that first object does not negate the second's existence. "If I mix my coffee with sugar, I do not thereby come to believe that the coffee has ended. I

believe it has shed one condition and assumed another: it is no longer black coffee, but sweet.”<sup>113</sup> The increased amount of carbon dioxide gas in the atmosphere, carbon produced by human emissions, does not make the atmosphere no longer a part of nature, just different from its composition 12,000 years ago. Malm continues to attack the various post-structural, post-modernist, and post-human arguments throughout the book, arguing that at their core they represent a Cartesian conception of society and nature. The answer, argues Malm, is to reject the concept of hybridism offered by political ecologists like Robbins,<sup>114</sup> scholars of the Anthropocene like Purdy,<sup>115</sup> and the philosopher who started it all, Latour.<sup>116</sup> “Exactly contrary to the message of hybridism, it follows that *the more problems of environmental degradation we confront, the more imperative it is to pick the unities apart in their poles.*”<sup>117</sup> Malm offers an oil spill as an example, stating that in order to clean it up, the water and the oil, as well as the various living creatures within the ecosystem must be understood as distinct entities. The properties of each object must be known to understand how they work together. To fixate on hybridity, Malm argues, is to become paralyzed to the point of impotency. What Malm fails to grasp is that the hybridity thesis explains *why* the mess exists, not *how* to clean it up. Spending so much time arguing over the ontological condition of nature fails to move the discussion towards a better understanding of how to address the problem of climate change. We should not worry about precisely defining which items in the landscape are social or natural. We should focus more on how the social

influences the natural. How does our conception of nature affect what we are doing to the climate?

Ultimately, none of the discussions of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene offer much thought on the spatiality of a new geologic epoch. Nature and society are connected, we are told, but apart from threats of increased storm activity and drought, little happens to question what happens at a location in which nature and society become entangled. Scale is invoked to caution against global thinking: “The less that the science of the Anthropocene pretends to stand above the world, the more solid and fruitful it will be, and the less the seductive concept of the Anthropocene will risk serving as a legitimizing philosophy for an oligarchic geopower.”<sup>118</sup> Yet for all of the talk of focusing on local interactions, the texts are nonetheless global in scope.

Haraway’s Chthulucene is an attempt at a new geography that embraces a Gaia, or at least a Gorgon,<sup>119</sup> that is composed of rhizomatic connections. To “make kin not babies” though, fails to grasp how capitalism flows throughout spaces of alternative or non-reproduction. And of course, Malm’s privileging of time over space would suggest that the focus is on a history and not a geography of the Anthropocene.

Of course, various geographers have long been working toward a theory of space that incorporates environmental degradation. David Harvey, for example, explicitly engages with the environment in his book *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. His work here is informed by a Marxist tradition, and he is directly interested in how

the connections of space, place, and nature influence political action. Harvey immediately argues that one should not get too caught up in how quickly objects and ideas move across the globe. "But while I accept the general argument that process, flux, and flow should be given a certain ontological priority in understanding the world, I also want to insist that this is precisely the reason why we should pay so much more careful attention to what I call the 'permanences' that surround us and which we also construct to help solidify and give meaning to our lives."<sup>120</sup> Harvey is primarily referring to a Marxist concept of capitalism, which despite trends within postmodernism, he sees as being a powerful and totalizing force. He extends this to environmentalism, which he argues "means such different things to different people, that in aggregate it encompasses quite literally everything there is."<sup>121</sup> By simply acknowledging difference, we lose sight of the bigger picture, which hinders political action. The answer is not to completely reject the lesson of the Enlightenment, though we should be wary of Malthusian arguments that blame the poor for our ecological problems.<sup>122</sup> Harvey argues that by using a specific discourse, bourgeois institutions have actually acknowledged difference in environmental resource use to maintain control. "Bourgeois institutions have a long history of exercising 'repressive tolerance' and the current state of environmental/ecological debate, over goals, values and requirements, appears more and more as an excellent case study of how a limited articulation of difference can play exactly such a sustaining role for hegemonic and

centralized control of the key institutional and material practices that really matter for the perpetuation of capitalist social and power relations.”<sup>123</sup> Cautioning against a blind march towards diverse groups coming together to enact positive change, Harvey contends that groups must work to find common ground and produce an “ecosocialist” politics.<sup>124</sup> This means that groups must contend with the duality of the term universal; everyone must be included, yet different needs and desires must be incorporated.<sup>125</sup> Harvey also argues that a lack of theorizing the concept of scale has led to overlooking that latter notion of universality. He explains this issue in his concept of “militant particularism” in which local struggles lose something as they are elevated to global scales.<sup>126</sup> Harvey is not critiquing the concept of the Earth as a globe as Latour does. Latour sees our conceptions of global events as “Atlas’ curse,” which prevents us from fully grasping local phenomena.<sup>127</sup> If anything, Harvey’s rejection of postmodernism and demand for universals like capitalism is the very global thinking of which Latour is cautioning against. Harvey is pushing for more global conceptions of his “permanences” that have been articulated from multiple local places. This articulation is key for Harvey’s vision of a radical environmentalism, an articulation that will demand a better theorization of place, which Harvey contends, as with space and time, is a social construct.<sup>128</sup> This is not the dwelling of Heidegger, but rather a more fluid concept. “‘Difference’ and ‘otherness’ are *produced* in space through the simple logic of uneven capital investment, a proliferating geographical division of labor, an increasing

segmentation of reproductive activities and the rise of spatially ordered (often segregated) social distinctions."<sup>129</sup> In this framing, place appears natural and eternal, but place is constructed through the meeting of dynamic flows, which for Harvey always returns to the flow of capital, or lack thereof. It is only through the uncovering of this produced difference that separate groups can work towards a common goal of a more socially just access to the environment. For Harvey, a greater attention to the transition from the local to global scale, and thus a greater attention to why and how the romantic readings of practices and cultures gain traction, offers a better chance of enacting meaningful political change.

Unfortunately, Harvey's discussion of difference and local experiences is nominal in that it all funnels into what he sees as a universal goal of dismantling global capitalism. Militant particularism is yet another effort to know nature from above and as a neat systems model. For those old enough to remember the original ending of *The Return of Jedi* before George Lucas rereleased the film with new content, the final scene occurred in the Ewok village with a party celebrating the end of the Empire. There is dancing and music and fireworks in the sky, but the celebration is confined to those key figures who not only defeated the bad guys, but helped the Ewoks overthrow imperial occupiers. The new version of the film cuts from the Ewok's home to a number of planets with millions of faceless inhabitants dancing and cheering in the streets before cutting back to the original village scene. Harvey's militant particularism would take

the local environmental struggle (the Ewoks) and translate it into a larger, universal struggle (the rest of the galaxy). The fade and wipes used by Lucas to move from shot to shot convey the articulation Harvey discusses that is necessary to move from local to global political struggle. Latour is calling for a return to the original *Return of the Jedi*. A focus on the local does not preclude an awareness nor an impact on something like Gaia. For Latour, there is an epistemological arrogance in attempting to know what is happening at the global scale. Filmmakers have the luxury of knowing all that is happening in their worlds, but we humans will never fully know Gaia. Latour's concluding thoughts in his fourth lecture on global scale are a need to shift from the globe to an aesthetic, that is a sensitivity to local environmental issues that will translate to other Earthly environments in the same way Gaia's processes and interactions influence others without a divine plan. A sincere focus on place will have larger impacts.

Where Harvey brings attention to the importance of space and place in environmental work, Massey tears apart the concept of space in order to build a theory that radically challenges that which we take for granted. Harvey suggests a conservative return to the Enlightenment; Massey is interested in a truly radical approach to the spatial. I see Massey's theory as a key component to Latour's conception of the Anthropocene as well as giving substance to the politics and ethics called for by Purdy and Haraway.

In *For Space*, Massey challenges three aspects of prevailing social thought. First, she questions the concept of space as a surface. Colonial encounters are framed as the colonizer (like the Spanish) traveling across space to find those who are apparently waiting to be found (like the Aztec), thus stripping the colonized of any real history.<sup>130</sup> Second, Massey questions our understanding of globalization and neoliberalism. Less developed countries are seen as existing in a time period behind the developed nations, which implies both linear progression, but also that these countries only have one option for development. Globalization strips counties of spatial difference. “That cosmology of ‘only one narrative’ obliterates the multiplicities, the contemporaneous heterogeneities of space. It reduces simultaneous coexistence to place in the historical queue.”<sup>131</sup> Third, Massey questions the space/place divide she sees continuing in geographic thought. The assumption is always something like “place as closed, coherent, integrated as authentic, as ‘home,’ a secure retreat; of space as somehow originally regionalized, as always-already divided up.”<sup>132</sup> While this is not much different from Harvey’s critique of place, Massey theorizes both space and place in a fundamentally different way.

First, space is “the product of interrelations” at every scale.<sup>133</sup> This is not a radical break from existing spatial thought, which Massey acknowledges. Her move comes with her second proposition, which states that space is a multiplicity of “contemporaneous plurality” which must exist if space is also the product of



interrelations.<sup>134</sup> In terms of politics, this acknowledgement of multiplicity must in turn acknowledge space. That is, a true spatialization of theory allows for the “recognition of the simultaneous coexistence of others with their own trajectories and their own stories to tell.”<sup>135</sup> Finally, space is always becoming, that is, “perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.”<sup>136</sup> This may sound as utopian as Harvey’s concept of ecosocialist politics, but Massey rejects the Marxist notions of a future that is already known.<sup>137</sup>

While Massey speaks directly to topics like globalization and development, her work is pushing for an unsettling of the taken for granted and that which is seen as eternal and free of human influence. To unsettle requires a complete rejection of the fixity of place: “Places not as points or areas on a map, but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*.”<sup>138</sup> This challenge to the concept of place also has implications for nature. “[W]hat is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.”<sup>139</sup> Tectonic movement means that, albeit slowly, everything on and even under the Earth’s surface is moving. This is Massey’s contribution to the Anthropocene. She highlights the fact that despite our engagement with and apparent commitment to thinking spatially, we struggle to stop treating place and nature as discrete objects.<sup>140</sup> Harvey’s call for moving

from a local to a global scale loses that acknowledgement of the “throwntogetherness” of nature and society. Massey calls for work in the opposite direction. Where Harvey moves from local practices to global flows of capital, Massey reverses the approach. Political change works from the global flows to dynamic, local places. It is only at a place, within its specific space-time (an ever-changing moment to which we cannot return), that political action might occur.<sup>141</sup> This attention to the local also shows that environmental practices are not universally good or bad. For example, geographer Paul Robbins incorporates a local gaze when he studies attitudes towards ecology in both environmentalists and hunters in the greater Yellowstone region of Wyoming.<sup>142</sup> His quantifying of ideas and attitudes about maintaining healthy elk populations reveals a similarity of thought, though coalitions between the groups have never formed to engage in sustainable conservation. “It will continue to be the economic and discursive power of some coalitions to elevate some kinds of elk knowledge as legitimate and to denigrate others as mere ‘barstool biology’ that will win the day.”<sup>143</sup> But the ways in which the different groups actually engage with the place of northern Yellowstone is not explored. The knowledges of which Robbins speaks are formed in place through outside influence and a direct encounter with non-human objects. By questioning not the knowledges themselves, nor by assigning validity to knowledges, but instead looking at how place and space produce those knowledges, scholars of the Anthropocene might work toward real political action.

## **Toward a place-based environmentalism?**

Despite all this talk of environmental crisis and impending doom, the United States, a leading agent in the alteration of the Earth's climate, has continued to ignore and/or deny the realities of the Anthro-/Capitolo-/Chthulucene in which we now live. The scientific evidence is astoundingly clear that capitalism-driven human actions have led to an increase in greenhouse gases which in turn has altered weather, and thus climate, patterns and the United States electorate responded by voting in the Trump administration. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been gutted, the US has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Agreement (which was simply a pledge to try to limit global temperatures from rising past 2° C above pre-industrial levels), and the country's president once claimed in a tweet that global warming was a Chinese hoax meant to destroy US manufacturing. If our new geologic epoch, whatever its name, is as dangerous as Latour, Malm, Moore, Purdy, and Haraway claim, why have Americans done so little to avoid it, and then once we passed the point of returning to Holocene conditions, mitigate the warming to more tolerable levels? Rather than more of the same, we should see what happens when we trace flows to a specific place, as will be done in Chapters Three and Four. Following Massey, we must acknowledge that everything from the mountains to the machines driving over them exist within a specific space-time. Space, and therefore place, are open, they are stories-so-far that will

never be truly finished. Before a sustained focus on the spaces and places of four-wheel drive vehicles moving off-road, Chapter Two will uncover the ideology behind American automobility which in turn informs an ideology of environmentalism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, "Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nature: Terrains of Power and Practice," in *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*, edited by Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 3, their emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 46.

<sup>4</sup> McKibben, *End of Nature*, 76-7.

<sup>5</sup> McKibben, *End of Nature*, 169.

<sup>6</sup> Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Benjamin Golly, *A History of the Ecosystem Concept in Ecology: More Than the Sum of Parts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>8</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983]. 14.

<sup>9</sup> William Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (1992): 369.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-5.

<sup>12</sup> Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 1, his emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 11; Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 12-3.

<sup>17</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 58. Interestingly, 1855 is the same year William Cronon begins his *Changes in the Land*. Cronon uses Thoreau's reflections on environmental changes in New England to introduce colonial impacts and environmental thinking in America (p. 3).

<sup>19</sup> Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Anker, *Imperial Ecology*, 13-4, Humboldt will also have a huge influence on American environmentalists, which will be shown below.

<sup>21</sup> Anker, *Imperial Ecology*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 26-32.

<sup>23</sup> Anker, *Imperial Ecology*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Anker, *Imperial Ecology*, 198.

<sup>25</sup> Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 72.

- 
- <sup>26</sup> Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 95.
- <sup>27</sup> Cronon, *Changes*, 153.
- <sup>28</sup> Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 17.
- <sup>29</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 12.
- <sup>30</sup> Dorceta E. Taylor, *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 9.
- <sup>31</sup> Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.
- <sup>32</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 20.
- <sup>33</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 20.
- <sup>34</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 93.
- <sup>35</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 324.
- <sup>36</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 339.
- <sup>37</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 345.
- <sup>38</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 2, my emphasis.
- <sup>39</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 388-9.
- <sup>40</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 190.
- <sup>41</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 211.
- <sup>42</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 212.
- <sup>43</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 222.
- <sup>44</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 221-2.
- <sup>45</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 61.
- <sup>46</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 42.
- <sup>47</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 84.
- <sup>48</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 106.
- <sup>49</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 111.
- <sup>50</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 264.
- <sup>51</sup> Bobby Wilson, "The Historical Spaces of African Americans." In *Contemporary Ethnic Geographies in America*, edited by Ines M. Miyares and Christopher A. Airriess (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 71-92.; Ta-Nehesi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- <sup>52</sup> Barton, *Empire Forestry*, 166
- <sup>53</sup> Sachs, *Humboldt*, 345.
- <sup>54</sup> Rome, *Bulldozer*, 270.
- <sup>55</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 134.
- <sup>56</sup> Taylor, *Conservation*, 135.
- <sup>57</sup> McKibben, *End of Nature*, 169-70.
- <sup>58</sup> John Muir, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), accessed March 6, 2019, [https://vault.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/a\\_thousand\\_mile\\_walk\\_to\\_the\\_gulf/chapter\\_5.aspx](https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/a_thousand_mile_walk_to_the_gulf/chapter_5.aspx)
- <sup>59</sup> Michael W. Pesses, "Environmental Knowledge, American Indians, and John Muir's Trap," *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 80 (2018): 119-22.
- <sup>60</sup> Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 7.

- 
- <sup>61</sup> Berkes, *Sacred*, 19
- <sup>62</sup> Berkes, *Sacred*, 214.
- <sup>63</sup> M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.
- <sup>64</sup> Anderson, *Tending*, 284-285.
- <sup>65</sup> Pesses, *Muir*, 125-130.
- <sup>66</sup> Anderson, *Tending*, 332.
- <sup>67</sup> Berkes, *Sacred*, 38.
- <sup>68</sup> Mae Tso, *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*, edited and translated by Malcolm D. Benally (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1999), 15.
- <sup>69</sup> Mae Tso, *Bitter Water*, 18.
- <sup>70</sup> Mae Tso, *Bitter Water*, 18.
- <sup>71</sup> Charlotte Coté, *Spirits of our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth Traditions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 20.
- <sup>72</sup> Coté, *Spirits*, 7-8.
- <sup>73</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 33.
- <sup>74</sup> Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017), 142, his emphasis.
- <sup>75</sup> Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.
- <sup>76</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- <sup>77</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 67. In his second lecture, Latour first calls it a metaphor, but then questions the validity of metaphors in this situation.
- <sup>78</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 58.
- <sup>79</sup> Keith Woodward and John Paul Jones III, "On the Border with Deleuze and Guattari" in *Blordering Space*, edited by Henk van Houtom, Olivier Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 238.
- <sup>80</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 62.
- <sup>81</sup> Clarence J. Glacken, *Genealogies of Environmentalism: The Lost Works of Clarence Glacken*, edited by S. Ravi Rajan, Adam Romero, and Michael Watts, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 196.
- <sup>82</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 36, his emphasis.
- <sup>83</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 138, his emphasis.
- <sup>84</sup> John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (Boston: Marnier Books, 1998 [1911]), 110.
- <sup>85</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 101, his emphasis.
- <sup>86</sup> Most notably Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018), 126-7.
- <sup>87</sup> Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene'" *Global Change Newsletter*, No, 41 (2000), 17.
- <sup>88</sup> Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.
- <sup>89</sup> Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us* (London: Verso, 2017), xii.
- <sup>90</sup> Purdy, *After*, 21.
- <sup>91</sup> Purdy, *After*, 31.
- <sup>92</sup> Purdy, *After*, 191.

- 
- <sup>93</sup> Purdy, *After*, 239.
- <sup>94</sup> Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (Lodon: Verso, 2016), 391.
- <sup>95</sup> Jason W. Moore "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 596.
- <sup>96</sup> Jason W. Moore "Introduction: Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and Crisis of Capitalism." In *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and Crisis of Capitalism*, edited by Jason W. Moore, 1-11. (Oakland: Kairos and PM Press, 2016), 2-3.
- <sup>97</sup> Moore "Introduction," 6.
- <sup>98</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.
- <sup>99</sup> Haraway, *Staying*, 32.
- <sup>100</sup> Haraway, *Staying*, 47.
- <sup>101</sup> Haraway, *Staying*, 49.
- <sup>102</sup> Haraway, *Staying*, 136-7.
- <sup>103</sup> Haraway, *Staying*, 139.
- <sup>104</sup> Thomas Malthus *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 [1798]), 13.
- <sup>105</sup> Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 7-9.
- <sup>106</sup> Malthus, *Essay*, 36.
- <sup>107</sup> Robbins, *Political*, 8.
- <sup>108</sup> Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018), 38.
- <sup>109</sup> Malm, *Progress*, 5.
- <sup>110</sup> Malm, *Progress*, 32.
- <sup>111</sup> Anderson, *Tending*.
- <sup>112</sup> Haraway, *Staying*.
- <sup>113</sup> Malm, *Progress*, 32.
- <sup>114</sup> Robbins, *Political*, 212.
- <sup>115</sup> Purdy, *After*, 15.
- <sup>116</sup> Latour, *We Have Never*, 10-12.
- <sup>117</sup> Malm, *Progress*, 61, his emphasis
- <sup>118</sup> Bonneuil and Fressoz, *Shock*, 288.
- <sup>119</sup> Haraway, *Staying*, 51-7.
- <sup>120</sup> David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 7-8.
- <sup>121</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 117.
- <sup>122</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 149.
- <sup>123</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 174-5.
- <sup>124</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 193.
- <sup>125</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 203.
- <sup>126</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 32.
- <sup>127</sup> Latour, *Gaia*, 130.
- <sup>128</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 293.
- <sup>129</sup> Harvey, *Justice*, 295, his emphasis.
- <sup>130</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 4.

- 
- <sup>131</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 5.
- <sup>132</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 6.
- <sup>133</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- <sup>134</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- <sup>135</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 11.
- <sup>136</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- <sup>137</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 11.
- <sup>138</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 130, her emphasis.
- <sup>139</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 140.
- <sup>140</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 160.
- <sup>141</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 162.
- <sup>142</sup> Paul Robbins, "The Politics of Barstool Biology: Environmental Knowledge and Power in Greater Northern Yellowstone," *Geoforum* 37 no. 2 (2006): 185-99.
- <sup>143</sup> Robbins, "Politics," 198.



## Chapter 2. Toward an ideology of American automobilities

I need a truck to hold my pain  
I need a truck just to haul around my name  
I need a truck to haul all the women from my bed  
I need a truck to haul my body when I'm dead

I need a truck to haul all my guns to town  
I need a truck to haul my bad thoughts around  
I need a truck to haul my Percodan and gin  
And I need a truck to haul all my trucks in

“I Need a Truck” Warren Zevon, *Excitable Boy Reissue*

“These complex jugglings are the consequence of two interdependent features of automobility: that the car is immensely flexible *and* wholly coercive. Automobility is a source of freedom, the ‘freedom of the road,’ because of its flexibility... But at the same time such a flexibility is coerced, it is necessitated by automobility because the moving car forces people to orchestrate in complex and heterogeneous ways their mobilities and socialities across very significant distances.”

John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, 59, his emphasis

### ‘Wax on, wax off’

John G. Avildsen’s original *The Karate Kid* (1984) is a perfect example of the importance of focusing on mobility to understand social relations, fields of power, or a more general culture. The film tells the story of Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio), a teenage transplant from New Jersey who struggles to fit in in his new home in Southern

California. He's picked on by a group of boys who happen to be black belts in karate. Daniel's only true friend is Mr. Miyagi (Pat Morita), the Okinawan-American maintenance man in his apartment building. When he first meets Miyagi, the handheld camera tracks Daniel as he walks to the maintenance shed, so we discover Miyagi in the film at the same moment Daniel does. The shed is cramped and Miyagi's reaction to Daniel is stern. We will learn later that Miyagi is concentrating on catching a fly with chopsticks, which might forgive the brusque response he gives to Daniel. But without such context, Miyagi is about as foreign and scary as a person comes for a kid like Daniel. Their relationship will grow nonetheless, and ultimately Miyagi will teach Daniel karate as well as lessons on balance, friendship, and courage.

But what if we view the film through the lens of mobilities studies? Perhaps most important, Miyagi will give Daniel the means to assimilate into Southern California society. Daniel does not have a car or motorcycle at the start of the film and must either rely on his mother to drive him or use his bicycle. Daniel actually looks pretty cool riding his bicycle to high school, at least, that's what I thought when I first saw the film as a six-year-old boy. The film soon reveals that his absence of a license and a car are actually making Daniel an outcast in the San Fernando Valley. The Cobra Kai bullies can easily overtake his bicycle with their motorcycles. Dating is awkward since it requires helping his mom push-start her car. Mr. Miyagi is aware of these mobility issues and gives Daniel his choice of the fleet of classic cars Miyagi owns. Daniel

driving to the Golf N' Stuff to win back his girlfriend Ali (Elisabeth Shue) is no less important than his winning the All Valley Under 18 Karate Tournament. No wonder we struggle to abandon the car. Automobiles aren't a scientific dilemma; they're an ideological one reproduced within popular culture. My little eyes took in the importance of self-defense and courage, but also saw how important automobility would be when I got older.

In the last chapter, I worked to trace the origins of environmental thought as well as the lack of spatial theory within studies of the Anthropocene. This chapter will continue this line of thought with a sustained look at mobilities studies that also pushes for a greater incorporation of spatial theory. Place and space, whether natural or social, cannot be understood without an effort to understand mobilities. How we move through space informs our very social construction of that space. Simultaneously, space is not simply the product of movement. I first want to outline some of the foundations of mobilities studies, specifically couched within the history of the American road and automobile. I then want to address the possibilities offered by thinking of American automobility as a system of Foucauldian power or as an ideology. Finally, I want to connect this automobility with nature, environmentalism, and economics to see how the ideology informs the production of natural spaces.

## **Mobilities on the American Road**

The “mobilities turn” or “new mobilities paradigm” represents a conscious focus upon movement, or the lack thereof, of energy, bodies, material objects, and ideas.<sup>1</sup> Mobilities help produce space and place and as such, are necessary areas of study if we hope to understand the production of space and place. Returning to *The Karate Kid*, a pre-mobilities turn analysis would overlook Daniel’s migration to Southern California and the struggle of existing at the margins of an ideology of automobility. Once this mobilities lens is applied, it is not surprising that the *Cobra Kai* television series (2018) that continues the story of Daniel and his nemesis Johnny (William Zabka), not only mocks Johnny’s old Trans-Am as a sad reminder of a lost sense of masculinity, but places Daniel as the successful owner of a luxury car dealership in Encino, California. A specific form of automobility is enmeshed within social relations. One cannot begin to understand the Southern California depicted in *The Karate Kid* without tracing the work done by the mobilities present.

The mobilities turn is a response to the perceived fluidity of global capitalism in the twenty-first century and is a call for social scientists and critical theorists to push past static notions of social practice and cultural phenomena. The increased awareness of movement in daily life has led to such a turn, which “is spreading into and transforming the social sciences, not only placing new issues on the table, but also transcending disciplinary boundaries and putting into question the fundamental

'territorial' and 'sedentary' precepts of twentieth-century social science."<sup>2</sup> While one could easily argue that mobilities work existed well before the placing of the academic label, the mobilities turn represents a moment in which disparate studies of economics, disease, diaspora, cyberspace, transportation, security, and cultural diffusion were brought together from across disciplines to specifically explore the role of mobile practices on social and economic events and ideologies.<sup>3</sup> Geographer Tim Cresswell uses the signifier A@B, that is, 'to get from Point A to Point B,' to illustrate the study of mobilities. For Cresswell, it is important to "explore the content of the line that links A to B, to unpack it, to make sure it is not taken for granted."<sup>4</sup> While topics in mobilities studies are wide ranging, the connecting thread is the belief that through this unpacking of our mobilities, be they bodily, machine assisted, or the movement of something else entirely, we might begin to unearth new understandings of social, economic, political, emotional, and aesthetic relationships and interconnections. This unpacking also means that mobilities studies are not the transportation analysis of urban planning and civil engineering. Mobilities studies focuses upon "how the movement of people, goods, information and signs influences human understandings of self, other, and the built environment."<sup>5</sup> Mobilities scholar Ole Jensen points to sociologist John Urry's 2000 work, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, as framing the predominant research questions for mobilities studies, which involves the analysis of five separate mobilities: "corporeal travel, movement of

objects, imaginative travel, virtual travel, and communicative travel.”<sup>6</sup> Urry’s work is perhaps the most radical of early mobilities studies in that it is an effort to get sociologists to move beyond static notions of society as a fixed object. That is, Urry is not simply arguing that the line linking A to B will add to our understandings of society; Urry is arguing that the line *is* society. He sees global capitalism, media, and international tourism as just some of the ways that “are materially reconstructing the ‘social as society’ into the ‘social as mobility.’”<sup>7</sup> Society is not a thing of clear boundaries but rather a series of mobile relations that meet at a place to produce complex relationships between humans and non-human “actants.”<sup>8</sup> Not only is Urry pushing to move sociology past immobile studies of society *qua* object, he insists upon a sociology of the non-visual senses that further produce social relationships. Following Latour, Urry’s sociology is firmly entrenched within the tradition of decentering the human subject by seeking agency that is “achieved in the forming and reforming of chains or networks of humans and non-humans.”<sup>9</sup> Humans and the non-human objects with which they interact produce hybrids, such as “the car driver.”<sup>10</sup> The automobile is an important object within global capitalism but has simultaneously affected national infrastructures and culture.<sup>11</sup> As such, automobility both describes the concept of autonomous mobility, as well as directly invokes the modern automobile. As Urry puts it,

On the one hand, ‘auto’ refers reflexively to the humanist self, such as the meaning of ‘auto’ in autobiography or autoerotic. On the other hand, ‘auto’

refers to objects or machines that possess a capacity for movement, as expressed by automatic, automaton, and especially automobile. This double resonance of 'auto' is suggestive of how the car-driver is a 'hybrid' assemblage, not simply of autonomous humans but simultaneously of machines, roads, buildings, signs and entire cultures of mobility.<sup>12</sup>

The complexity of automobility, that it both represents a capacity for one to travel as well as a dominant system of laws, technical capabilities, and infrastructure suggests a complexity within social relations. For Urry, the car is a source of freedom and flexibility: "Automobility is a source of freedom... because of its flexibility which enables the car driver to travel at speed, at any time in any direction, along the complex road systems of western societies which link together almost all houses, workplaces, and leisure sites."<sup>13</sup> Yet, automobility is also inherently coercive in that this new-found mobility stratifies space. Commutes from home to work get longer and force a dependence on the car. Automobility "is perhaps the best example of how systematic unintended consequences get produced as a result of individual or household desires for flexibility and freedom."<sup>14</sup>

Urry writes of a universal automobility, one that might not be accessible to every human, but certainly a dominant force in the societal relations within developed nations. Cotten Seiler, in his book, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America*, focuses on a distinctly American version and departs from Urry in arguing that automobility as freedom is an illusion and that the system in the United States is wholly coercive. According to Seiler, the concept is "more than merely a set of policies

or attitudes cohering around cars and roads, automobility comprises a 'multilinear ensemble' of commodities, bodies of knowledge, laws, techniques, institutions, environments, nodes of capital, sensibilities, and modes of perception."<sup>15</sup> Automobility is a Foucauldian *dispositif*, that is, a networked apparatus of power. The car is a material thing, but the car is also part of a larger system of governance, such as the use of a driver's license as official identification. The car demands specific infrastructure to be of any use, not only maintained roads but fueling stations, trained mechanics, and places to park the car when it is not being used. Such infrastructure is part of the larger capitalist economy. Automobility goes beyond the superficial use of the car; the concept is political, economic, and sociological. Seiler specifically uses the loaded term "American" to describe the specific form of automobility he is studying and actually sees the system of automobility "as essential to shaping the dominant meanings of 'America' and 'American' in the twentieth century" and that it is important to examine "these terms' ability to signify myth, transmit ideology, and confer power."<sup>16</sup> I will use both American and automobility in the same vein.

In *Republic of Drivers*, Seiler places the rise and peak of American automobility from 1895-1961, which brings into question to oft-cited Interstate Highway System Act of 1956 as the dawn of today's system of American mobility.<sup>17</sup> The first decades of the twentieth century saw not just the mass production of automobiles, but also the incorporation of the automobile into the political, economic, cultural, and physical



landscapes of the United States. This groundwork was what allowed for something like the Interstate Highway System to be conceived. Further, Seiler does not see America's acceptance of the car as a romantic tale of a great invention improving life. These same early decades of the twentieth century saw crises of individualism and selfhood amongst white, male Americans. Seiler argues that "in these moments of danger that threatened capitalist-liberal hegemony by destabilizing its narrative of selfhood, automobility performed a crucial restorative role by giving that selfhood a vital form conducive to the existing arrangement of power."<sup>18</sup> American automobility arose as a system of power that allowed for the appearance of individuality while still maintaining a docile workforce that reproduced the conditions of production. Taylorism, the scientific management of labor through making bodily movements efficient, threatened the Enlightenment concept of the individual. Seiler cites historical figures like John D. Rockefeller and Woodrow Wilson as encouraging the cooperation of workers to produce a better economy and society.<sup>19</sup> Frederick Winslow Taylor's 1895 publication of his scientific management principles threatened the very notion of an individualized worker, yet such a cooperative form of labor allowed for the production of the assembly line and the mass-produced automobile.<sup>20</sup>

Herbert Hoover, writing in 1922, championed a return to individualism while avoiding the perceived threat of individual selfishness disrupting capitalist growth.<sup>21</sup> An American should forgo individualism in the factory for the greater good of the

country, and then reclaim his or her individualism through acts of consumption. The automobile represented a perfect means to purchase individualism, “the mass-produced but endlessly reconfigured automobile, the culture’s most powerful signifier of identity and status, did invaluable work.”<sup>22</sup> Further, the act of driving allowed for a feeling of agency and freedom, despite the regimes of control and order imposed by traffic laws, vehicle registration, and so on. For Seiler, the automobile is a clear indication of the subjugation of labor in the United States.

While Seiler theorizes the effect of automobility on American citizens, it is worth turning to the voices of at least some of these early drivers. Historian Peter J. Blodgett gathers primary documents from the first decade of the twentieth century that recorded “motor touring”<sup>23</sup> across the United States. Blodgett’s *Motoring West, Volume 1: Automobile Pioneers, 1900-1909* is a collection of first-hand accounts of early motoring and a celebration of individual exploration that occurred over a decade prior to Hoover’s return to individualism. The roads available to American motorists in the first decade of the twentieth century were terrible and would not see real improvement until the passage of a second Federal Highway Act in 1921.<sup>24</sup> Blodgett situates the golden age of the road trip from 1921-1956, in that the roads were good, but not so good as to produce a bland efficiency as the Interstates did.<sup>25</sup> Still, the era between 1900 and 1909 provided adventure for those brave enough to drive into the unknown and a promise of working class recreation. Writing in 1901, Henry R. Sutphen contrasted racing

expensive French cars to the more reasonable sport of motor touring, "But touring is for all, and with the betterment of the public highways, it may be pursued at a very moderate cost."<sup>26</sup> Right away, the automobile allowed for individual mobility that was within reach for many Americans. At the same time, collections of touring routes were produced by entrepreneurs working to fill a need. "Pathfinders" were soon employed by organizations like the American Automobile Association (AAA) to obtain accurate information about automobile friendly roads.<sup>27</sup> These pathfinders not only produced guides and maps that showed available roads, but they chose the best routes to take in specific regions. While Blodgett does not expand upon this fact, I do find it interesting that pathfinders helped to shape the geography of motor touring in the first half of the twentieth century. A new geography of the United States was actively produced from the desire to drive across it.

An obvious question is if there is a contradiction between Blodgett's collection of travelogues that stress the freedom of the car starting in 1900 and Seiler's focus on individualism through consumption starting several years after World War I. While Blodgett shows that the automobile was a means to individualism and freedom, these early motorists were an elite few. Some early motorists pushed their machines to see their limits, while simultaneously, "in search of a means to express an often rudimentary but nonetheless pressing dissatisfaction with many aspects of life in contemporary urban-industrial society, other upper-middle class tourists who motored

through the countryside and then camped by the side of the road found in a sentimentalized image of the gypsy or the tramp quite a compelling identity to assume (if only temporarily).”<sup>28</sup> The very fact that these wealthy tourists felt the need to escape urban life, but could only do so temporarily, seems to support Seiler’s ideas of the control of American automobility. This elite group was still tethered to society, “how could the gypsy caravan continue to wend its way through the countryside without someone on hand to fuel it?”<sup>29</sup> One felt as if he or she were roughing it in the wilderness despite the clear connection to civilization. Yet, it is doubtful that these upper-middle class tourists were subjugated to the Taylorist methods that Seiler claims led to automobility. It was years later, with the production of more affordable automobiles, that this freedom without actually escaping automobility’s control was available for working class and marginalized Americans.<sup>30</sup>

Race was an even bigger hurdle than class for American motorists. Where Blodgett puts the golden age of the road trip from 1921-1956, the annual publication of *The Negro Motorist Green Book* from 1936-1967 paints a different picture.<sup>31</sup> More Americans were able to afford an automobile, but mobility was restricted for some. Produced by Victor H. Green, the *Green Books* offered lists of restaurants, hotels, and other services in different cities around the United States that were friendly towards Black motorists. Jim Crow laws in the south and less codified, but no less racist attitudes in the north made a road trip a fraught experience for African American

drivers. Apart from financial barriers, no laws prevented Black motorists from owning an automobile. In fact, as Benj. J. Thomas wrote in the 1938 edition:

The automobile has been a special blessing to the Negro, for the Negro is getting better wages and doing more business in the automobile industry than any other industry in the world. Take for instance 25 years ago, the average young colored man was either doing porter work, bell hopping, running an elevator or waiting on table [*sic*], and the average wage at that time was \$5.00 per week. That same young man, as soon as he learned to operate an automobile, instead of paying him \$5.00 per week, he would begin at not less than \$15.00 per week, and as he progressed and became a mechanic his wages would be raised to \$25.00 per week until today, men that are good mechanics and can master the trade, both as chauffeur and mechanic, are being paid anyway [*sic*] from \$25.00 to \$50.00 per week, therefore, taking men out of the servant class and placing them in the mechanical class.

In New York City alone, one third of Mechanical work is being done by Colored men, and the same that applied to New York, applies to all other cities and towns through the country.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the systemic and social racism inherent along American roads, the *Green Books* work toward joining their own version of American automobility.<sup>33</sup> While the listings in the *Green Books* offer some of the freedom perceived in the road trip, Thomas shows that automobility is also a way to climb up the economic class ranks. Thomas' figures of mechanics making \$25-50 per week equates to roughly \$500-1,000 per week today which could bring an individual up to at least the lower end of the middle class. The books continued to offer hope for Black motorists until 1967. It is often cited that the Civil Rights Act meant that the *Green Books* were no longer necessary, but as Alderman

et al. demonstrate, racism still affects the mobility of African American travelers to this day.<sup>34</sup>

Seiler also misses the sensation of driving, despite his insistence on the importance of the practice of driving as creating automobility's subjects. Blodgett presents the emotions and experiences of drivers at the early stages of American automobility. "There is the joy of exploring, of finding out for yourself what no guide book attempts to explain."<sup>35</sup> Seiler's negative view on the false individualism and freedom of the automobile masks how motorists experienced the act of driving. Seiler writes, "not only has taking to the road voluntarily been a prerogative only of those ascribed full personhood; the road itself is a device by which territories and subjects can be measured and surveilled."<sup>36</sup> But do motorists *feel* measured and surveilled? Blodgett is clearly a romantic and misses much of the power embedded in the highway, but his collection of accounts from the dawn of motor touring suggests that there was a sensation of freedom from the beginning. The surveillance of automobility would not have extended far outside of the city in these early accounts of driving. The disciplinary power of which Seiler speaks would have been confined to the Taylorist factories, while the upper- and middle-class motorists could escape it on those early highways.

Marguerite Shaffer addresses the affect and existentialist aspects of this early, elite motor touring in her essay, "Seeing America First: The Search for Identity in the Tourist Landscape." She examines the slogan "See America First," which was initially

crafted to encourage domestic tourism over European travel, but soon “signified not only the emerging possibilities for touring in the United States, but also an ongoing dialogue concerning American identity and American nationhood.”<sup>37</sup> Much like Blodgett, Shaffer uses narratives from the travelers, though she engages with more analysis of the texts. The accounts “reveal a diverse series of underlying anxieties that suggest that individual tourists took to the tourist landscape not only for pleasure but also to discover or invent an America in which they, as white, upper- and middle-class citizens, threatened not only by increasing immigration, labor unrest, and racial diversity, but also by a sense of powerlessness and ‘weightlessness’ manifested in modern urban-industrial living, could regain some sense of security and self-control.”<sup>38</sup> Seiler sees automobility as being necessary for stabilizing capitalism amongst the working class in response to new labor practices, but Shaffer shows that the initial anxiety mitigated by the automobile was that of the upper and middle classes.

Further, a new landscape was being produced through the automobile. This was not a landscape of being removed from the greater community, as Seiler laments, but rather one that produced a sense of community.<sup>39</sup> “Through the power of the tourist gaze, automobile tourists imagined themselves and their fellow tourists as independent citizens enjoying the bounty of the American land and existing self-sufficiently with the help of their fellow ‘citizens.’”<sup>40</sup> Shaffer acknowledges the homogeneity of the tourists in terms of class and race, but nonetheless, the automobile was a means of connecting

with other citizens rather than a source of alienation. This community was formed outside of the city and in natural, rural America. Nature, as experienced through the use of the automobile, allowed for both spiritual renewal and new subject formations. “The landscape of tourism [in the rural West] offered women a venue outside of the domestic sphere in which they could reimagine themselves as independent, self-sufficient, active members of society.”<sup>41</sup>

Historian Earl Pomeroy’s classic text *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* predates the expansive Interstate Highway System, but nonetheless acknowledges how the machine changed how Americans connected to the landscape. As indicated by Blodgett’s and Shaffer’s primary sources, the automobile was confined to rich tourists at first, only much later becoming an object for the masses. Even after the introduction of the affordable Ford Model T in 1908, motor touring was a difficult endeavor. “Long stretches of the Lincoln Highway were still no more than pious hope and impious propaganda.”<sup>42</sup> In the 1920s this began to change, with the automobile creating “a new democratization of vacation travel.”<sup>43</sup> As more Americans from both the East and the West itself toured this region, more and more associated it with “open spaces and the outdoor life.”<sup>44</sup> Camping became connected with motor touring of the west, which added to the affordability of the recreational practice.<sup>45</sup> Nature was consumed by driving to it. These drivers were active in shaping how the American landscape would be experienced for decades to come.



This is not to say that the automobile solely transformed the American cultural landscape. Another thesis exists within automobility history that argues that changes to the space of city streets precluded the adoption of the automobile. In *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City*, Clay McShane argues that American cities were investing in roads and transportation well before automobiles and bicycles existed. As early as the end of the eighteenth century, cities were undertaking massive paving projects and “by 1800, real estate developers were constructing planned, paved streets in new subdivisions and dedicating them to the public.”<sup>46</sup> The upper classes were commuting by train from the suburbs to the inner city by the mid-nineteenth century. The state of Massachusetts even subsidized the practice.<sup>47</sup> The middle class would follow the wealthy to the suburbs with the introduction of iron rails and horse drawn cars. This new form of transportation, along with flawed medical advice that disease came from environmental conditions (rather than biological germs), encouraged the expansion of cities and peripheral suburban communities.<sup>48</sup> Farther commuting distances meant more traffic on the streets, which led to new perceptions of what streets were used for. “The new suburbanites depended on streets for transportation only. Since their detached lot homes had porches and yards, they lost sight of the older functions of streets as places for recreation and social gatherings.”<sup>49</sup> Newer paving materials like asphalt and concrete were initially used to keep streets clean despite all of the animal-powered transportation, but these new streets also made for faster travel.

These good roads allowed for the development and refining of early automobiles.<sup>50</sup> Even as automobiles became more prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century, the cars were so unreliable that they were not pragmatic choices for commuting. Further, climate affected car use; fully enclosed automobiles were not common until 1925.<sup>51</sup> By tracing the evolution of American streets, McShane makes it clear that the automobile did not suddenly appear and make subjects of every citizen. The landscape of urban and suburban streets led to creation and acceptance of the automobile. While Seiler argues that capitalists have seized on “moments of danger” in the twentieth century to connect individualism to the consumption and use of cars, Americans had been growing dissatisfied with urban living decades prior. Seiler claims that a republic of drivers is missing “a historically nourished sense of community, a more-than-superficial awareness of the conditions of others, and the imaginative faculties to oneself in their shoes.”<sup>52</sup> What Seiler fails to address, though, is that these landscapes of automobility existed before 1895 and before the mass acceptance of the automobile. Could it be possible that Americans have never known the pre-automobility society of which Seiler speaks?

Peter Norton also looks to streets prior to the mass adoption of the automobile in *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City*. Norton is interested in how the automobile shifts from being nuisance on city streets in 1920 to being perfectly accepted on the same streets in 1930.<sup>53</sup> Where McShane is interested in how streets grew

in size well before automobiles were invented, Norton is interested in how attitudes towards proper street use shifted so quickly. Rather than just look at the automobile or the roads, Norton connects both objects by studying changes in traffic safety.

Automobile related fatalities were out of control in American cities in the 1920s. "The dead were city people, they were not in motor vehicles, and they were young."<sup>54</sup>

Women, primarily mothers, fought to ensure that their children were safe in city streets.

Protests and safety councils were formed, and police enforcement also took a conservative approach toward regulating street use. "The message of their methods was clear: automobiles would have to conform to cities as they were; cities would not

conform to the needs of automobiles."<sup>55</sup> The automotive industry responded by defining and attacking jaywalkers. "A 'jay' was a hayseed, out of place in the city; a jaywalker was someone who did not know how to walk in a city."<sup>56</sup> The onus was

placed on the pedestrian to watch for cars and cross at acceptable places, not the other way around. Battles continued between motorists and non-motorists in an effort to

define who belonged on the street. Ultimately, auto clubs, car dealers, and the automobile manufacturers joined forces to take control of the streets. It was the

organization of these social groups toward a common cause that led to their victory.<sup>57</sup>

Norton shows that automobility is not a group with power controlling a group without.

American streets as spaces for cars came about through the continued negotiations of multiple groups with differing amounts of power. This is the tension at work.

Americans have moved through specific landscapes with different technologies, thus influencing how they experience these places. But at the same time, the landscapes themselves, whether it is a smooth urban street that can facilitate the testing of automobile prototypes or crowded streets that lead to overwhelming fatalities, will influence American experience.

This discussion of American roads and machines should not overlook the mobilities work done on the physical and emotional experiences of human mobilities. Nor should any talk of where mobilities occur preclude discussions of where or how they ought to occur. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager's edited volume, *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom, and Environment* addresses the idea that humans gain something more than locomotion from their mobility. While the editors acknowledge that sociologists and geographers have begun the important work of studying mobilities, little has been said by scholars of ethics, philosophy, and theology. "Spatial, ethical, and technical dimensions of mobility, so far not satisfactorily analyzed, are in this collection for the first time related to established research on different mobilities in geography, economics, and sociology. The book departs from the insight that human motion belongs to the existential premises of human beings in natural space as well as in the constructed space of 'postmetropolis.'"<sup>58</sup>

Bergmann, a theologian, extends the critique of existing mobilities work in his chapter, "The Beauty of Speed or the Discovery of Slowness—Why Do We Need to

Rethink Mobility?" His call to slow down evokes Virilio and is a reminder that despite speed's connection to modernity, humans had to evolve to handle new speeds.<sup>59</sup> The speed at which bodies, ideas, capital, etc. travel today also operate at unsustainable levels: "If you run too fast you might fall!"<sup>60</sup> Regardless of the speed at which it exists, Bergmann sees an "existential human dimension of movement" in which humans have a right to move, hence the need for developing an ethics of mobility.<sup>61</sup> While he accepts an inherent human need to move but rejects the "spatial turn" for not breaking past the dichotomy of material and mental space.<sup>62</sup> Bergmann instead claims that space "emerges through human modes of moving."<sup>63</sup> Place can both affect and be affected by human movement.

Interestingly, despite Bergmann's call for greater diversity in the interdisciplinary approach to mobilities studies, the same foundational literature is invoked (and even reproduced through the contributions by Cresswell and Sheller to the volume) and similar conclusions regarding the social and cultural aspects of mobilities are drawn. For example, Bergmann's concern with hypermobility and a return to slowing down invokes the privileging of cycling and walking as a form of mobility, but the volume really only deals with the elite forms, those which participants choose to do, like Critical Mass bicycling events.<sup>64</sup> The political ramifications of Bergmann's rejection of speed are little more than a reinforcement of the flows of capital needed to be able to slow down in most industrialized societies. Further, in the second

part of the volume, essays deal with the spatial turn, but not along the lines of Bergmann's critique. The foundational figures, like David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre are often invoked with little critique, thus negating Bergmann's call for 'new' conceptions of space. As for the ethics involved with mobilities, they are a religious ethics that require a Judeo-Christian creator.<sup>65</sup> The politics afforded by such ontological ethical frameworks severely limits who could benefit from those ethics. To follow such ethics is to lose sight of the historicity embedded within specific ethical practices.<sup>66</sup> It is only the final chapter, in which a more Foucauldian use of a historical and material ethics is invoked. In this essay, Kronlid argues that "if we only assess the social and environmental consequences of machine use, we run the risk of being blind to the powerful emotional and social forces invested in machines as co-creators of certain moral ideals, values, and meanings."<sup>67</sup>

This meeting of place, space, ethics, politics, experience, and history is exactly where mobilities studies should operate. I want to first spend more time discussing the difference between American automobility as disciplinary power or as an ideology, as well as why such a difference might matter. I then will show how both the spaces of American automobility and the ideology are reproduced.

## Driving as discipline? Driving as ideology?

Despite Seiler's contextual gaps in his cultural history of American automobility, his Foucauldian claim of automobility as a *dispositif* should receive further attention.

The next chapter will situate such disciplinary power within specific motoring practices, as well as connect power and practice back to Urry's notion of a hybrid car driver. For now, though, I want to tarry with the *dispositif* of American automobility and set alongside what I see as the ideology of American automobility.

It is important to stress that driving a car does not simply place one within an ideology of American automobility. In his study of the Lac du Flambeau band of Ojibwe Indians in northern Wisconsin for example, Larry Nesper reveals an interesting exception to the ideology of American automobility. Cars and trucks in this case are not so much a part of ideological formation to American systems as they are a tool in indigenous cultural identity. Nesper's book, *The Walleye War: The Struggle for Ojibwe Spearfishing and Treaty Rights* traces the origins and outcomes of the Indians' struggle to maintain their sovereignty of resource use in the late twentieth century. Despite previous treaties with the United States government, the Lac du Flambeau were subjected to Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations on fishing and hunting off their reservation for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Lac du Flambeau took to "violating," a practice of purposefully hunting and fishing off reservation that is both economically beneficial as well as an important step for Indian

boys to become men.<sup>68</sup> While the practice predated the automobile, driving altered violating: “In addition to their usual use, automobiles extended the size of Indian hunting territories and created daytime and nighttime road hunting. In this sense, Lac du Flambeau people assimilated the automobile as a terrestrial canoe.”<sup>69</sup> Even though within the dominant American system the automobile facilitates various rites of passage (getting a license, driving to pick up a date) and can provide economic benefit (commuting, working as a delivery driver), the Lac du Flambeau were not embracing American automobility in this way. The automobile was a new tool that assisted in an already established cultural identity of a warrior fighting against an occupying force. Driving did not transform violating; cars simply extended the practice.

What is most powerful about Nesper’s description of violating is how deplorable the actual act is to outsiders. While long, it is worth quoting in its entirety:

In a typical violating episode, a single deer or a small group of deer is sighted on a hillside or in a field within fifty yards of the pavement, usually at the forest edge. Occupants of the vehicle then scan the highway in both directions for other cars and resume their speed. The location and nearby houses are noted. After driving for about a mile, the hunters return to the place where the deer were sighted. If the deer are still visible and no one else is around, the driver pulls over and one of his companions shoots an animal. The vehicle immediately departs and is driven four or five miles down the road; after allowing time for the deer to die, the hunters return to the kill site. If there are still no other cars in sight, the man who shot the deer, or a designated ‘dragger,’ is dropped off to find and gut the deer—ideally out of sight—if it is too heavy to move easily. Pulling away, the driver goes down the road for about ten minutes, turns around, and comes back. When approaching the point where he dropped off his companion—and again, if there is no one else around—he flashes his lights to signal the



man waiting with the now-gutted deer. The deer is quickly loaded and the group is on its way.<sup>70</sup>

The imagery is far from usual depictions of a noble Indian hunt or acts of resistance to an oppressive occupying force. Nesper also explains that stories of violating often involve deer who are not cleanly shot, thus causing them to suffer before they die. However, as was the case of traditional ecological knowledges discussed in the previous chapter, indigenous practices can challenge the morals, common-sense, or even geographies of Euro-American outsiders. The division between reservation land and the rest of Wisconsin might be overlooked by a non-Indian, but that boundary is a powerful force in how identities are constructed and economies function. Interestingly, the practice of hunting this way on reservation land is not illegal, which, in addition to a general lack of game, is precisely why the Lac du Flambeau hunt like this off reservation. "Violating is one of the most important practices in the constitution of Indian manhood, because it is done 'to feed our families' and because it is against the white man's law. It is the practice of subsistence under circumstances that resemble warfare, and like warfare, it is a reproductive act."<sup>71</sup> Again, the car does not produce the identity, but is a tool to extend the practices necessary to become an Indian man. Ideology of American automobility is a use of the car in an altogether different way.

Notably, Foucault saw the "notion of ideology... difficult to make use of"<sup>72</sup> due to the inherent idea of truth embedded with the concept. Even if one argues against a dominant ideology, such an argument suggests that a true ideology exists and has been

replaced by a false one. For Foucault, searching for truth overlooks the relationship between knowledge and power. Further, to focus on ideology is to miss the possibilities for change:

The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticize the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses – or what's in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.<sup>73</sup>

This “politics of truth” operates to change the very conditions that make ideologies possible. Foucault is focused upon the material conditions that produce both the idea of truth as well as those false ideologies that are supposedly counter to that truth.

The problem I see with a rejection of ideology in favor of a focus on the institutions that produce truth is that such a focus looks for power in the institutions while failing to see what is happening within the subjects. Foucault would have no issue with this; subjects are but products of these conditions of possibility. Stuart Hall, in discussion with the works of Althusser more so than Foucault, pushes for a return to ideas and ideology, which had fallen out of favor in both Marxist and post-structuralist work. Hall looks to the subject to understand the politics occurring at the individual level.

Hall engages with Marx and Engels' claim that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.”<sup>74</sup> Althusser had already worked to explain how ruling

ideas take hold through his essay on ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). An ISA is any institution which is not specifically repressive (though it can occasionally employ such methods), but rather uses positive methods to reproduce “capitalist relations of exploitation.”<sup>75</sup> Althusser suggests that in lieu of Marx and Engels’ notion that ideology is but an illusion, ideas exist through practices. More specifically, ideology exists through an apparatus, which generates practice on the part of the subject, which makes ideology material. The ISA is how the State can reproduce the means of production through positive, i.e. non-repressive, means. Further, we are “always already subjects” because of some ISAs have subjugated us before we were even born. Ideology, through the ISA, is responsible for turning individuals into subjects. An individual is hailed by the call of ideology, and regardless of the type of response, simply responding to the call turns one into a subject of that ruling ideology. As a result, one is always in ideology.<sup>76</sup>

Hall is not satisfied with the ISA concept, however, claiming that Althusser does not go far enough in challenging the “ruling-class/ruling ideas formula.”<sup>77</sup> Hall sees the Gramscian notion of consent as the missing piece that explains how a ruling minority could control a ruled majority. According to Gramsci, consent is “given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.”<sup>78</sup> A subordinated population must choose to follow the ruling class, though that ‘choice’ can be the result of dominant ideas being made to appear as

“historically true.”<sup>79</sup> For Hall, the media reproduce dominant ideologies, yet an analysis of their methods reveals how much more complicated ideological reproduction is than Althusser has argued. The media, for the most part, are free of direct coercion by the State, which aids them in securing consent from the masses through consumption. Yet, the media must work within the consensus. “[T]he media become part and parcel of that dialectical process of the ‘production of consent’—shaping the consensus while reflecting it—which orientates them within the field of force of the dominant social interests represented within the state.”<sup>80</sup> This is what Althusser misses with his ISAs, according to Hall, that ideology need not be reproduced by the state itself. Because we are operating in ideology, it shapes our very discourse to ensure its reproduction. “[I]deology is a function of the discourse and the logic of social processes, rather than the intention of the agent.”<sup>81</sup> This unconscious reproduction illustrates a complexity of ideas unaccounted for in the ISAs.<sup>82</sup> Further, Althusser fetishizes practice to the point where he conflates social discourse and social practice.<sup>83</sup> By tying ideology to practice, Althusser prematurely abandons ideas because “‘practices’ feel concrete.”<sup>84</sup> To demonstrate the importance of ideas as developed through social discourse, Hall uses his personal relationship with the sign ‘black’: “At different times in my thirty years in England, I have been ‘hailed’ or interpellated as ‘colored,’ ‘West-Indian,’ ‘negro,’ ‘black,’ ‘immigrant.’”<sup>85</sup> These related terms all serve to position Hall within a specific identity in England. Yet, back in Jamaica, ‘black’ and ‘colored’ meant completely

different things. 'Black' can be seen as a site of "ideological struggle" as it is reclaimed and re-signified by those hailed by its call.<sup>86</sup> Althusser, in claiming that ideology is "always-already" present, fails to see how ideologies can be altered through "shifts of accentuation."<sup>87</sup> Ideas and practices are not fixed to a ruling ideology, but rather are sites of ideological struggle. Race is one such idea that is both reproduced and reworked by the ruling class as well as those subjected to it.

But what happens if we bring Foucault into conversation with Hall? The former would continue to reject the concept of ideological struggle and push for a genealogy that gets not at ideas, but material conditions that allow for the existence of the both the negative and positive sense of "black." Foucault's focus on the conditions of possibility for the soul is informative here:

Rather than seeing this soul as the reactivated remnants of an ideology, one would see it as the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body. It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished... This is the historical reality of this soul, which, unlike the soul represented by Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision, and constraint.<sup>88</sup>

Foucault is not rejecting ideological objects, but rather placing them in their material realities. The Christian church did not pluck a pre-existing concept of the soul out of the ether; the modern concept of the soul was formed deliberately through methods of punishment, discipline, and surveillance. Foucault is tracing the flows of power to

uncover that which we take for granted in our present moment. Power can work in a positive sense, that is, not as a tool of repression, through what Foucault calls a *dispositif*. According to Stoler, Foucault's concept has typically been translated as "social apparatus" which unfortunately misses the networking and mobile qualities at work. "A *dispositif*... is not a thing but the system of connections among this ensemble of arrangements."<sup>89</sup> Methods of discipline are an example of such a network. Spatial arrangements within schools, prisons, and military camps work to discipline the bodies within in order to turn them into subjects underneath a system of power. Foucault departs Althusser in that a preexisting ideology is not at the root of this discipline. Foucault's genealogical work, be it in prisons, medicine, or sexuality, does not point to a universal, underlying working of a Marxist division of class based upon economic control. Yet, Foucault would also reject Hall's return to ideas because any articulation of signs exists within a greater network of power. Foucault found little use in the study of the individual. The reworking of racial identities by the subjects affected fails to uncover the larger material power/knowledge relationship that allows subjects to conceive of racial categories. Don't focus on the subject, Foucault would argue, but rather how power is used across networked subjects.

While Foucault's genealogical method is of great use to my own work here, I cannot reject the individual subject's use of ideology. Foucault cautions against pitting a true ideology against a false one, a valid point, but subjects will nonetheless think in

ideological terms. As Žižek contends, “we must avoid the simple metaphors of demasking” when it comes to our actions.<sup>90</sup> The scene in which Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) offers the red and blue pills to Neo (Keanu Reeves) in the film *The Matrix* is an analogy to doing genealogical work. Swallowing the blue pill will allow Neo to forget what he has already learned and return to the life of an ignorant, but content subject within the Matrix. The red pill however, will enlighten Neo to the material realities of his world and see what is actually happening around him. Neo will not be able to return to ignorance, but he will have the opportunity to enact change. Žižek complicates this binary though, by offering a third possibility. Subjects can see through the mask of ideology, yet through an ironic cynicism will continue to function within the ideology. “They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*.”<sup>91</sup>

Material networks and internal thought need not be exclusive.

While Žižek’s theory of ideology is of interest to me here, I want to utilize Hall’s focus on a Gramscian consent generated through media rather than a psychoanalytic kernel of trauma.<sup>92</sup> Žižek’s insistence on Lacanian psychoanalysis is an effort to avoid “over-rapid historicization” of events which masks the underlying kernel that reappears throughout different historic periods.<sup>93</sup> It is not that Žižek disregards

historical context, but instead argues for a recurring internal truth (castration, desire) around which historical social relations form. A Foucauldian genealogy, based upon Nietzsche's work, rejects any original truths as it reads through the archives.<sup>94</sup> There are obvious conflicts between the methods employed by Žižek, Foucault, and Hall, but I want to attempt a synthesis as a method for understanding automobility within the Anthropocene.

What happens if we accept Seiler's claim of a *dispositif* of American automobility and also accept an ideological fantasy that exists within individual American drivers? *I know very well that the flexibility of cars masks the coercion of massive fossil fuel extracting corporations and the destruction of the Earth's climate, but I drive a fuel-efficient automobile so that I can take part in the freedom a car provides.* The networked fields of power Seiler describes as existing within American automobility are important. He argues for "automobility as a forge of subjects as well as a rationale and a means for expanding governmentality in the twentieth-century United States."<sup>95</sup> Driving appears to offer freedom, but techniques of power exist throughout the system. Yet, does an American driver exist in blissful blue-pill ignorance of a Foucauldian governmentality? While she may take the origins of some traffic laws for granted, a driver cannot help but be aware of the taxes, fees, fines, and law enforcement involved with driving. She knows very well that driving isn't free, but she acts "as if" it is.<sup>96</sup> This is where Hall's invocation of a Gramscian consent is useful. Drivers have chosen to adopt and reproduce the system of



American automobility, even if that choice was coerced. Something is happening at the site of the driver that complicates the relationship between power and subject.

Following Hall, I contend that media representations of the act, affect, emotion, and feeling of driving, be they film, television shows, or advertisements, are reproducing this ideology, though not at the behest of the state as Althusser argues. In addition to media representations, the next two chapters will show how experience and practice also reproduce the ideology of American automobility.

Jameson's recounting of hearing that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" speaks to the totality of ideology and I think is instructive here.<sup>97</sup> Žižek argues that such a statement allows one to "categorically assert the existence of ideology *qua* generative matrix that regulates the relationship between visible and non-visible, between imaginable and non-imaginable, as well as the changes in this relationship."<sup>98</sup> My argument for automobility being an ideology comes in part from the very fact that apocalyptic films like *The Road Warrior* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* can envision the end of the world, but not a world without the internal combustion engine and automobiles.<sup>99</sup> Where Foucault sees imposed discipline as producing docile subjects, Žižek looks to an internal process of ideological subjugation. Automobility offers an excellent site of study, as it encompasses both imposed discipline (driver training, traffic laws) and bodily sensations (freedom of the open road, new sights

mediated by the windshield). But for that ideology of automobility to take hold, media representations must interpellate the subject.

### **Space, nature, and automobility**

The 2016 film *Monster Trucks* opens with a gorgeous aerial shot of open green mountains and valleys free of obvious human influence. As the camera flies over the landscape it discovers a Ram pickup truck racing along a dirt road, a trail of dust kicked up. The film score goes from reverent to upbeat; the truck is not trespassing on the landscape but rather belongs in it. The camera zooms in to the truck and we can now read the word “Terravex” along the front passenger door. The music grows ominous as an oil derrick appears in the distance. The truck drives into the drilling site and we learn that Terravex (literally “to distress the Earth”) is an oil company working to extract as much oil as possible from a massive reserve discovered in rural North Dakota. A little over a minute has passed since the movie began, but director Chris Wedge has laid his ideological cards upon the table. Nature and fossil-fuel burning trucks are not at odds with one another. In fact, the Ram pickup is evocative of scenes from a whole host of Western films showing a cowboy and horse racing through the pristine landscape (see Figure 2.1). The truck’s habitat is that verdant landscape of the first minute of the film.



**Figure 2.1. Opening scene from *Monster Trucks* (top) compared to a scene from the *Western Hidalgo* (bottom).**

Plans for Terravex to extract the oil are threatened when drilling through an aquifer above the reserve releases three creatures never before seen by science. They resemble a cross between a squid and a whale, with maybe a little manatee as well, and their existence seemingly demands halting any further drilling. One of the scientists overseeing the drilling had already cautioned of a possible ecosystem around the oil,

only to be disregarded by Terravex's CEO Reece Tenneson (Rob Lowe) and head geologist Dr. Jim Dowd (Thomas Lennon). The discovery of new life is not as important as profiting from fossil fuels, though. Tenneson instead captures two of the creatures to keep them secret from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and sends his private security force to track down the third creature that has escaped. Dr. Dowd offers to study the creatures, but simply for pragmatic purposes to ensure drilling can resume. As this scene ends the film cuts to a bright green Ram pickup (the product placement in the film is not subtle) jumping a hill and racing along a dirt road. We cannot see the driver, but we can hear his shouts of joy. The score is peppy once again and the truck, once again, equates freedom in wide open spaces with a four-wheel drive pickup truck. The truck cuts across a field and pulls up alongside a school bus. We now see the driver of the truck and who we presume is his girlfriend in the passenger seat. Tripp (Lucas Till), our protagonist, sits on the bus and makes eye contact with the driver of the truck who mocks him for not having a truck of his own. Much like the automobility of *The Karate Kid*, having a driver's license and a worthy automobile is crucial for social acceptance. The green truck speeds away and Tripp stares ahead looking frustrated with his situation. We will learn that Tripp is working to restore an old truck to fit in as well as escape rural North Dakota. Tripp's truck is without an engine, but fortunately the escaped third creature takes up residence underneath the hood of the old truck. Tripp names him Creech and discovers that his tentacles are able to move his truck's axles

much better than any existing drivetrain. Further blurring the lines between organism and machine, Creech and the rest of his species consume crude oil for nourishment.

Let us return to Urry's work on automobility, specifically how humans and the non-human objects with which they interact produce hybrids like "the car driver." For Urry, cars are one of many objects producing hybrids with humans that "are not mere receptacles of the human subject but can function as 'actants,' defining the roles played by humans within networks... Machines, objects and technologies are neither dominant of, nor subordinate to, human practice, but are jointly constituted with and alongside humans"<sup>100</sup> Objects assist humans in achieving agency that could not occur without the hybridization. Further, the hybridization is a sensuous process, one that must take place through concrete practice that triggers bodily senses. Human experience is crucial to understanding the hybrid, but it is simultaneously decentered to acknowledge the complex networks in which humans exist.

The monster Creech is a representation of this hybrid object. He is a living, organic being, yet consumes oil in order to move metal axles and wheels. He is also an extension of the hybrid car driver in that Tripp fuses with both the creature and the truck to have the agency to thwart the evil oil corporation while also gaining the freedom of automobility. It is not just that Tripp gains mobility; Creech's tentacles make moving on land difficult, but the truck wheels free him as if he were in his natural aquatic habitat.

Tim Dant's essay, "The Driver-Car," is a challenge to Urry and others who see a hybrid or cyborg fusion between driver and car. Dant instead offers the "driver-car assemblage" which "produces a range of social actions that are associated with the car; driving, transporting, parking, consuming, polluting, killing, communicating and so on."<sup>101</sup> Both hybrid and cyborg suggest a permanent fusion between objects, whereas Dant sees the driver-car as "a temporary assemblage within which the human remains complete in his or her self."<sup>102</sup> This assemblage is an embodied practice that informs our interactions with space and place. We understand the world through repeated experience that is remembered by our bodies. Driving is "largely habitual, an embodied skill that becomes a taken-for-granted way of moving through space—it is at between, roughly, 30 and 70 miles per hour that the driver-car in modern societies conquers space."<sup>103</sup> This habit speaks to the everyday practice of driving, which Dant argues we bring with us as we encounter other aspects of the material world. The implications of the driver-car assemblage are that, due to the embodied practice of driving, reducing car use or switching to more environmentally friendly transportation cannot be had by rational decision making by individuals. We cannot "phase out" the automobile without addressing the practice itself.<sup>104</sup> Yet, the very memory of the experience that Dant describes suggests that the assemblage of human and machine cannot be temporary. The fusion of a hybridization between driver and car is not negated once the driver steps away from the machine. Further, driving cannot be limited to an embodied

experience that only exists within the car itself. If there is a durability of the coupling even after the separation of human and object, assemblage is not a strong enough term.

Dant suggests that his use of assemblage has nothing to do with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's better known use of the term. But what happens if we actually compare these two types of assemblage? In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari offer up several types of assemblage. For example, the "machinic assemblage" is a conception of bodies interacting with other bodies, while an "assemblage of enunciation" refers to written and spoken language.<sup>105</sup> Deleuze and Guattari describe a tetravalent assemblage, a four-part bonding of connections that comprise the greater machinic assemblage. The Earth is connected to social groups and there are class/status connections, but, using feudal Europe as an example, they also connect "the body of the knight and the horse to their new relation to the stirrup" as well as "the weapons and tools assuring a symbiosis of bodies."<sup>106</sup> Deleuze and Guattari are connecting human and tool as a symbiosis, an ecological term describing organisms working together, but not necessarily fusing into a hybrid. This machinic assemblage is but one side; mobility, or "deterritorialization," is also important for assemblages in general. Deleuze and Guattari hold the Crusades as an example. The knight and horse assemble, but they are also moving to the East, which cannot be ignored. Deterritorialization is a "line of flight," movement that causes a temporary break in a structure. For Deleuze and Guattari this nomadic behavior, either literal or figurative, strips the assemblage of base

and superstructure by flattening relations.<sup>107</sup> Deterritorialization is a positive for Deleuze and Guattari; to flatten is to exist horizontally, rhizomatically. Mobility is becoming. We should not dig down and follow roots in an effort to find answers, but instead chase a line of flight and see what happens. Another key concept is that of “smooth” versus “striated” space.<sup>108</sup> Smooth space is the space of deterritorialization while striated space is that of the State, that which fixes the vertical hierarchies of which Deleuze and Guattari attack. Or put differently, “smooth space and striated space— nomad space and sedentary space.”<sup>109</sup>

Dant’s invocation of the word assemblage might be better served by embracing Deleuze and Guattari’s concept. The latter are challenging the very notion of a Kantian absolute space. Space is instead comprised of layered, folded strata that continues to build up over time.<sup>110</sup> This is not to say that space is vertical. Verticality suggests a linear progress and privileges time over space. Instead, the strata are those of sedimentation. Much like tectonically active geologic strata, these layers can be rearticulated. Deleuze and Guattari thus focus on consistency rather than objective and eternal truths. “Never unifications, never totalizations, but rather consistencies or consolidations.”<sup>111</sup> Space is thus made and remade by the different assemblages that form. The assemblage of driver and car is not too far removed from that of the body of the knight and the horse and the stirrup. And while this assemblage might not be the physical fusion of flesh to metal, there is a durability in the effects of the assemblage that last long after the human



has separated from the nonhuman object. Just as the knight riding the horse had lasting effects for the spaces of European society, the embodied practice of driving has affected other bodily sensations and ideologies. I am arguing that space is ontologically altered not just at the moment of assemblage, but actually long after, thus suggesting hybridization is in fact at work.

Kristin Ross, in her study of modernity in post-war France entitled *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* argues for the automobile and film as being important components in French ideological subject formation. She connects the new sensation of driving, as well as the French automobile industry, to the French film industry. Both underwent transitions and competition from the respective American industries, but by the 1960s driving and filmmaking were necessary for the free market ideologies at work. Perhaps most important though, was that films and cars were crucial in making sense of a new way of seeing the world. "Rather than representing driving, film is used to represent the kind of perception, the blurred sensation, that film and driving have brought about."<sup>112</sup> Through repeated, embodied practice, the view from behind the windshield or looking up onto the screen became normalized and thus helped reproduce the economic system at work. While maintaining a French nationalism, American influence on daily life produced "the fantasy of timeless, even, and limitless development."<sup>113</sup> Time was eliminated in that life no longer focused on events but rather repetition. As the middle class retreated from the

public sphere to their new modern homes, they were retreating “to their newly comfortable domestic interiors, to the electric kitchens, to the enclosure of private automobiles, to the interior of a new vision of conjugality and an ideology of happiness built around the new unit of middle-class consumption, the couple, and to depoliticization as a response to the increase in bureaucratic control of daily life.”<sup>114</sup> New conceptions of time were predicated on new spaces produced through a shift in how place was to be experienced.

To best understand how mobilities affect the ontology of space, I want to invoke Doreen Massey’s theory outlined in her book *For Space*. Massey challenges that which we have taken for granted regarding space. First, space is not simply a surface upon which things are “discovered.”<sup>115</sup> She uses the example of the Spanish “discovering” the Aztec. Such a framing of the story gives the Spanish history while simultaneously stripping history from the Aztec. It is as if they were simply waiting to be discovered, which would then be when their story begins. In rejecting space as a surface, Massey thus argues that space is made up “of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality.”<sup>116</sup> Additionally, space is never a closed, finished thing. Space is always being made and remade, which means it might best be thought of as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far.”<sup>117</sup> Where Dant sees the driver-car assemblage as conquering space, Massey argues that space can never be conquered, compressed, nor “annihilated.”<sup>118</sup> A space of interactions cannot be reduced to distance.

This separation of space from Euclidian geometry allows for a true politics of mobility. In her theorizing of space, Massey removes the possibility of an ethics based upon a divine moral code. The “coevalness” of space, which views interacting cultures not as the same culture at different stages of a fixed, linear development, but rather as truly different societies that exist together within the same time, allows for a politics to exist that incorporates different groups.<sup>119</sup> Coevalness allows for an open future, a future in which anything is truly possible. The taming of space has led to the classifying of even the unknown. “On a road map you won’t drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine it, you just might.”<sup>120</sup> This theory of an open, contested, anything is possible space means that a place is not about permanence but rather about producing new possibilities. “[W]hat is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.”<sup>121</sup> Nonhuman could mean other living organisms as well as the machines with which we humans fuse.

But what does all of this have to do with our squid monsters in trucks? Thus far, *Monster Trucks* does not appear to offer any new insight into American automobility. Young men like trucks and they look cool driving them on dirt roads. What is fascinating about the film, however, is the overt environmentalism and anti-capitalist stance at work alongside the automobility ideology. Oil companies are bad for the

environment *and* pickup trucks enhance nature. One ideology, American automobility, is invisible in that it is treated as common sense. Of course Tripp needs a truck, look where he lives! At the same time, the ideology of corporate capitalism is critiqued and seemingly resisted. The Terravex corporation is cartoonishly evil. Tripp and Creech are chased by black clad security thugs who drive what can only be described as evil pickup trucks (dark colors, ominous spot lights on the roll bars, and yes, they're Ram pickups). Tenneson sends tanker trucks to a lake in order to poison the remaining creatures to ensure he can continue to drill for oil. People in the town lament the good old days before Terravex came and ruined life there. How the company ruined it is never explored, nor is the relationship between the oil in the Earth and the myriad trucks racing through each scene. Corporate greed is placing an entire species of squid things at risk of extinction, but the carbon emissions from the various vehicles are never questioned.

The product placement of Ram pickups is enlightening. Product placement is nothing new in popular films, but to do so in a film with a seemingly anti-capitalist message produces an absurdity only possible in an ideological context. Branded goods made by a globalized corporation are used to take down a resource-extracting globalized corporation. The only way such storytelling is possible is to have a related ideology masking the absurdity. American automobility demands the use of trucks in these spaces of rural America. The various Rams racing along dirt roads and through

green fields look natural, not because they are, but because of a consent within the ideology that has been produced. Further, the social aspects of automobility like fitting in, gaining independence, enjoying life to its fullest are all represented in this film. Oil extraction has no such social component.

At the end of the film, Tripp and his friends return the creatures back to their habitat while also stopping the poison from reaching the aquifer. Dr. Dowd has helped Tripp after deciding the intelligent creatures are more important than corporate profits. Once the creatures are safe, the film dissolves, briefly, to what appears to be the camera pointing out from a moving car to the side of the road. The song "Home" by Phillip Phillips stitches this and the remaining shots together. We can just make out a wooden fence, green grasses, and wildflowers before the shot quickly dissolves to Dr. Dowd in field attire holding several lizards in a cage. As he releases the reptiles, Meredith (Jane Levy), Tripp's love interest, can be heard in a voice over leaving a message with Fish and Wildlife that she and her friends found several endangered horned lizards at the drill site. Cut to the camera once again driving, this time past the Terravex property with two federal officials locking a gate and posting signs that reads "Environmentally Sensitive Area" and "Closed." Cut to Reece Tenneson being handcuffed and led out of a boardroom by the FBI. The framing of ecological crimes that takes place against Tenneson is justified, of course, because we have seen his blatant disregard for loveable non-human but anthropomorphic squid monsters. The need to frame Tenneson and

Terravex in general reveals the failure of capitalist markets to coexist in harmony with nature. The scene dissolves to the camera driving once again past the wildflowers and wooden fence before dissolving to Tripp finishing the installation of a new engine into his truck with his step father (Barry Pepper). "Now you can do whatever you want this summer," he says to Tripp as they finish the job. Dissolve to the moving camera and wildflowers again, and then another dissolve with the camera driving past smiling and waving supporting characters of the film. The camera finally dissolves to a close-up of Meredith sitting in the cab of Tripp's truck and then cuts to a close-up of Tripp looking at Meredith. The two drive along a dusty dirt road and disappear over the horizon.

### **Moving through ideological spaces**

The wealth of literature on mobilities have extensively traced the evolution of modern human movement, infrastructure, social conventions, and hybridization with the automobile. In the American context, the archive shows the complexity of automobility that cannot simply be seen as technical control or an abuse of state power. Yes, Foucauldian power can be traced throughout the places and spaces of automobility, but there is more at work. American automobility is an ideology. Following Foucault, Seiler's focus on a material history of American automobility is useful in tracing the origins of the freedom of the open road. Yet, to solely focus on the material creates a problem. Stuart Hall has summed this up: "Ideologies are the

frameworks of thinking and calculation about the world—the ‘ideas’ which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it and what they *ought* to do. But the problem for a materialist or nonidealist theory is how to deal with ideas.”<sup>122</sup> Practices are valid and useful sites of study, but Hall sees a privileging of practices due to their concreteness. But what of the ideas occurring within the subject? A history like Seiler’s delves into the practices of driving in America, yet spends little time with the ideas, emotions, and possibilities the driver takes from those very practices.

Another consequence of an ideology of American automobility is its production of common sense mobilities. Hall sees the very concept of common sense as revealing the power of ideology. “The point at which we lose sight of the fact that sense is a production of our systems of representation is the point at which we fall, not into Nature but into the naturalistic illusion: the height (or depth) of ideology.”<sup>123</sup> Or as Žižek puts it, “An ideology is really ‘holding us’ only when we do not feel any opposition between it and reality – that is, when the ideology succeeds in determining the mode of our everyday experience of reality itself.”<sup>124</sup> In a children’s film like *Monster Trucks*, the very use of trucks in nature is presented as and received by the viewer as being perfectly natural. Hall argues that a variety of media serve to reproduce ideology in subjects, though what is considered common sense can change through “shifts of accentuation.”<sup>125</sup>

Historians like Pomeroy and Shaffer have shown the connection between the automobile and the consumption of nature, but the tension between mobility and ecology is far from settled. Fuel economy standards born of the OPEC crisis in the 1970s, as well as hybrid, fuel cell, and electric technologies seen as necessary for a warming climate, show how we refuse to abandon the automobile, and instead try to use it to fix our environment. Despite Seiler's claim, American automobility is not how we became docile workers; automobility informs every bit of how we engage with the world. On February 6, 2018, Elon Musk used his SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket to launch a Tesla Roadster into space. A mannequin dressed in a spacesuit, named 'Starman,' sits in the driver's seat. Even our mobility through outer space involves the car. American automobility did not peak in 1961 as Seiler claims.

Urry's argument for a car driver hybrid is another important component to this ideology. Our ideas of mobility and nature are informed by the agency granted through our fusion with machines. And while our focus on mobility might seem transient, we should keep Jensen's words in mind: "thinking mobilities does NOT turn everything into flows."<sup>126</sup> Despite Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on the nomad, practices and ideas are tied to physical locations. Flows of people, things, and ideas will eventually meet in material locations. Yet, despite the seemingly concrete nature of a material place, Massey shows us to resist ideology and take nothing for granted, such as the immobile perception of nature. "[W]hile we recognize the mobility in culture and



society there is a tendency to be unnerved by the mobility of nonhuman life."<sup>127</sup>

According to Massey, there is a "background assumption that the 'natural' world if left to itself would somehow, still, really, be organized through that modernist territorial spatiality, settled into its coherent regions in rooted indigeneity."<sup>128</sup> To frame nature this way "is a maneuver that hints at a desire for a foundation; a stable bottom to it all; a firm ground on which the global mobilities of technology and culture can play."<sup>129</sup> Massey argues instead, that there has never been a "stable bottom to it all." The mobilities of both nature and culture are all that is necessary to produce space.

Such a theory of space opens up the possibility for new understandings of our various mobilities. We live in a world in which most of our limited choices to move from point A to point B produce emissions that add to the layer of greenhouse gases and thereby adds to rising temperatures on the planet. How ought one travel in the Anthropocene? Yet, to subscribe to a singular ethics of divine creation limits those who are allowed to construct an ethics of Anthropocene mobilities. Do airports need a Christian "eco-theology" for more sustainable growth as Söderblom suggests,<sup>130</sup> or might a rethinking of globalization and capitalism be in order? If anything, to claim that an ethics of mobilities is existential would seem to preclude politics. Much like Purdy's ethics of the Anthropocene, we are asked to think about what we ought to do, but little genealogical tracings occur to ask why this ethics is the best way to move forward.<sup>131</sup>

Space as the interaction of multiple trajectories, as stories-so-far, means that an ethics of mobilities would fit that very “throwntogetherness” of place.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Mimi Sheller and John Urry, “The New Mobilities Paradigm.” *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 207-26; Mimi Sheller, “Mobility, Freedom, and Public Space.” In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 26.
- <sup>2</sup> Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, “Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities, and Moorings,” *Mobilities* 1, (2006), 1-2.
- <sup>3</sup> Important ‘pre-mobilities turn’ works include: Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 [1980]; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980]); Kristin Ross. *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.
- <sup>4</sup> Tim Cresswell *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Ole B. Jensen, *Staging Mobilities*. (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 3-4.
- <sup>6</sup> Jensen, *Staging*, 38.
- <sup>7</sup> John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 78.; Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993),137.
- <sup>10</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 78.
- <sup>11</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 58.
- <sup>12</sup> John Urry, “Inhabiting the car,” *The Sociological Review* 54, no. s1, 2006, p. 18.
- <sup>13</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 59.
- <sup>14</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 60.
- <sup>15</sup> Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6.
- <sup>16</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 7.
- <sup>17</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 3.
- <sup>18</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 3.
- <sup>19</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 25.
- <sup>20</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 27.
- <sup>21</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 32.
- <sup>22</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 41.
- <sup>23</sup> Peter J. Blodgett (ed.), *Motoring West, Volume 1: Automobile Pioneers, 1900-1909* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 19.
- <sup>24</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 26.
- <sup>25</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 45.
- <sup>26</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 77.
- <sup>27</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 32.
- <sup>28</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 39.
- <sup>29</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 42.
- <sup>30</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 108.

- 
- <sup>31</sup> The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture offers an massive digital collection of the Green Books at: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-green-book#/?tab=about&scroll=18>
- <sup>32</sup> Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1938" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed January 2, 2020. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f56e0d60-847a-0132-8e19-58d385a7bbd0>, 11.
- <sup>33</sup> Michael W. Pesses, Road Less Traveled: Race and American Automobility *Mobilities* 12, no. 5 (2017): 677-691; Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 106.
- <sup>34</sup> Jim Hinckley, *The Route 66 Encyclopedia* (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2012), 127; Derek H. Alderman, Kortney Williams, and Ethan Bottone, "Jim Crow Journey Stories: African American Driving as Emotional Labor," *Tourism Geographies* DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2019.1630671.
- <sup>35</sup> Blodgett, *Motoring West*, 293.
- <sup>36</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 133-4.
- <sup>37</sup> Marguerite S. Shaffer, "Seeing America First: The Search for Identity in the Tourist Landscape," in *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*, eds. David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 166.
- <sup>38</sup> Shaffer, "See America First," 171-2.
- <sup>39</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 151; Shaffer, "See America First," 175.
- <sup>40</sup> Shaffer, "See America First," 175.
- <sup>41</sup> Shaffer, "See America First," 181.
- <sup>42</sup> Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010 [1957]), 127.
- <sup>43</sup> Pomeroy, *Golden West*, 130.
- <sup>44</sup> Pomeroy, *Golden West*, 136.
- <sup>45</sup> Pomeroy, *Golden West*, 147-9.
- <sup>46</sup> Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 6.
- <sup>47</sup> McShane, *Asphalt Path*, 13.
- <sup>48</sup> McShane, *Asphalt Path*, 25.
- <sup>49</sup> McShane, *Asphalt Path*, 57.
- <sup>50</sup> McShane, *Asphalt Path*, 104.
- <sup>51</sup> McShane, *Asphalt Path*, 127.
- <sup>52</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 151.
- <sup>53</sup> Peter D. Norton, *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), 5.
- <sup>54</sup> Norton, *Fighting Traffic*, 21.
- <sup>55</sup> Norton, *Fighting Traffic*, 64.
- <sup>56</sup> Norton, *Fighting Traffic*, 72.
- <sup>57</sup> Norton, *Fighting Traffic*, 259.
- <sup>58</sup> Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, "Introduction: In Between Standstill and Hypermobility – Introductory Remarks to a Broader Discourse," In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 8.

- 
- <sup>59</sup> Sigurd Bergmann, "The Beauty of Speed or the Discovery of Slowness—Why Do We Need to Rethink Mobility?" In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 13.
- <sup>60</sup> Bergmann, "Beauty," 17.
- <sup>61</sup> Bergmann, "Beauty," 22.
- <sup>62</sup> Bergmann, "Beauty," 23.
- <sup>63</sup> Bergmann "Beauty," 23.
- <sup>64</sup> Sheller, "Mobility, Freedom," 31.
- <sup>65</sup> Kerstin Söderblom, "The Phenomenon of Mobility at the Frankfurt International Airport – Challenges from a theological Perspective." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 189; Ullrich Zeitler, "The Ontology of Mobility, Morality, and Transport Planning." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 233.
- <sup>66</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 32.
- <sup>67</sup> David Kronlid, "Ecological Approaches to Mobile Machines and Environmental Ethics." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, ed. Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 255.
- <sup>68</sup> Larry Nesper, *The Walleye War: The Struggle for Ojibwe Spearfishing and Treaty Rights* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 53.
- <sup>69</sup> Nesper, *Walleye War*, 51.
- <sup>70</sup> Nesper, *Walleye War*, 54.
- <sup>71</sup> Nesper, *Walleye War*, 55.
- <sup>72</sup> Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage, 1980), 118.
- <sup>73</sup> Foucault, "Truth and Power," 133.
- <sup>74</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Turner (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978 [1846]), 172.
- <sup>75</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012 [1970]), 117.
- <sup>76</sup> Althusser, "Ideology," 126-131.
- <sup>77</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies." In *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran, and Janet Woollacott (London: Methuen, 1982), 85.
- <sup>78</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12.
- <sup>79</sup> Gramsci, *Selections*, 348.
- <sup>80</sup> Hall, "Rediscovery," 87.
- <sup>81</sup> Hall, "Rediscovery," 88.
- <sup>82</sup> Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation and Ideology." In *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2 (1985): 101.
- <sup>83</sup> Hall, "Signification," 104.
- <sup>84</sup> Hall, "Signification," 103.
- <sup>85</sup> Hall, "Signification," 108.

- 
- <sup>86</sup> Hall, "Signification," 112.
- <sup>87</sup> Hall, "Signification," 113.
- <sup>88</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]), 29.
- <sup>89</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 110.
- <sup>90</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008 [1989]), 25.
- <sup>91</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, 30, his emphasis.
- <sup>92</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, 45.
- <sup>93</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, 51.
- <sup>94</sup> Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1977 [1971]), 140.
- <sup>95</sup> Seiler, *Republic of Drivers*, 60.
- <sup>96</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, 34.
- <sup>97</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Future City," *New Left Review* 21 (May/June 2003) 76.
- <sup>98</sup> Žižek, "The Specter of Ideology," in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012 [1970]), 1.
- <sup>99</sup> Michael W. Pesses, "'So Shiny, So Chrome': Images and Ideology of Humans, Machines, and the Earth in George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road*," *cultural geographies* 26 (2019), 43-55.
- <sup>100</sup> Urry, *Sociology*, 77-8
- <sup>101</sup> Tim Dant, "The Driver-Car," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 4/5 (2004), 61-62.
- <sup>102</sup> Dant "The Driver-Car," 62.
- <sup>103</sup> Dant, "The Driver-Car," 73.
- <sup>104</sup> Dant, "The Driver-Car," 75.
- <sup>105</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 88.
- <sup>106</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 89.
- <sup>107</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 90.
- <sup>108</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 353.
- <sup>109</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 474.
- <sup>110</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 40.
- <sup>111</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 507.
- <sup>112</sup> Ross, *Fast Cars*, 40.
- <sup>113</sup> Ross, *Fast Cars*, 10.
- <sup>114</sup> Ross, *Fast Cars*, 11.
- <sup>115</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 7.
- <sup>116</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- <sup>117</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- <sup>118</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 90.
- <sup>119</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 69-70.
- <sup>120</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 111.
- <sup>121</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 140.
- <sup>122</sup> Hall, "Signification" 99, his emphasis.
- <sup>123</sup> Hall, "Signification" 105.
- <sup>124</sup> Žižek, *Sublime*, 49.
- <sup>125</sup> Hall "Signification" 113.
- <sup>126</sup> Jensen, *Staging*, 203, his emphasis.
- <sup>127</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 97.

---

<sup>128</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 97.

<sup>129</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 98.

<sup>130</sup> Söderblom, "Phenomenon of Mobility," 189.

<sup>131</sup> Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

### Chapter 3. 'Damndest Ride Ever Invented': Resisting what, exactly?

Welcome my son, welcome to the machine  
What did you dream?  
It's alright we told you what to dream

Pink Floyd, "Welcome to the Machine," *Wish You Were Here*

"I would therefore propose, as a very first definition of critique, this general characterization: the art of not being governed quite so much."

Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" *Politics of Truth*, 45

#### Crossing the Rubicon Trail

The "Jeepers Jamboree" has been held annually on Northern California's Rubicon Trail since 1953, though four-wheelers, (also known as off-roaders, rock-crawlers, or jeepers) have been driving along the Rubicon since automobiles gained popularity in the early twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> The trail leads to Rubicon Springs, which is currently a campground for four-wheelers but has hosted a variety of activities and industries for almost two centuries. Historian and archaeologist Rick Morris cites the Stevens-Townsend-Murphy wagon party as the first European-American immigrant group to cross the Rubicon River near Rubicon Springs in 1844.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, Southern Maidu, specifically Nisenan Indians and perhaps Washoe Indians drank from the mineral springs and hunted in the area for centuries, if not

millennia prior.<sup>3</sup> Histories of the Rubicon Trail all gloss over the native use of the area, but ethnologies and archaeology of the people indigenous to the Rubicon help construct an idea as to its use prior to Euro-American settlement. The Nisenan people of the Maidu tribe split into valley and foothill groups, populating the lowlands of Sacramento and Marysville and the higher elevations of Nevada City, Coloma, and Placerville, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Archaeological studies from the Eldorado National Forest show that indigenous groups first visited the region at least 7,000 years ago to hunt and gather plants used for tools, medicines, and food.<sup>5</sup> The foothill Nisenan owned land by political groups, in which members were free to camp, hunt, and gather, but the territory from roughly 3,000 feet above sea level (914 meters) to the summit of the Sierra Nevada was free regardless of political affiliation.<sup>6</sup> The large size of the region kept different groups from encountering one another and might be why the Washoe people were free to enter the region from Nevada and the Eastern Sierra. Snow cover restricted this area to summer use and hunting and gathering was done by small groups in temporary camps.<sup>7</sup> We do not have specific evidence of ecological activities at Rubicon Springs, but the Nisenan were known to use controlled burns to manage brush growth and deer populations which made movement through the forests much easier.<sup>8</sup> Since the area surrounding the Rubicon was known for hunting and travel, it follows that the Nisenan employed their ecological practices here.



Nisenan populations were cut in half by disease brought by Euro-American explorers of California in 1833.<sup>9</sup> The 1848 discovery of gold in Northern California (Coloma specifically which is located in Nisenan territory) led to more interest in the region, which led to an encroachment of white settlers into native lands. Indian and Euro-American groups fought, leading to militia formation like that of the “California Blades” that specifically targeted Indian villages.<sup>10</sup> The violence grew so bad that a “in the summer of 1849 a small detachment of [United States Army] troops had been sent... to establish a post for the purpose of preventing conflicts between the Indians and the increasing number of settlers at the mines of the Yuba and Feather Rivers.”<sup>11</sup>

Unlike the American River in which the gold was initially discovered, the geology around the Rubicon River offers little in valuable mineral resources which explains why the region saw less Euro-American activity than other areas of El Dorado County.<sup>12</sup> Of economic use though, were the four carbonated mineral springs that exist at Rubicon Springs, erupting out of small cracks in the granite and granodiorite.<sup>13</sup> In the summer of 1867, complying with the Homestead Act of 1862, John and George Hunsucker settled the area surrounding Rubicon Springs by making a “rudimentary” log cabin.<sup>14</sup> The brothers exploited the region for its natural resources as well as its possibilities for tourism. The Hunsuckers built log cabins and offered fishing and hunting opportunities for those will to travel along the rough mule trail to reach Rubicon Springs. The plentiful game led to wasteful hunting practices in which hides

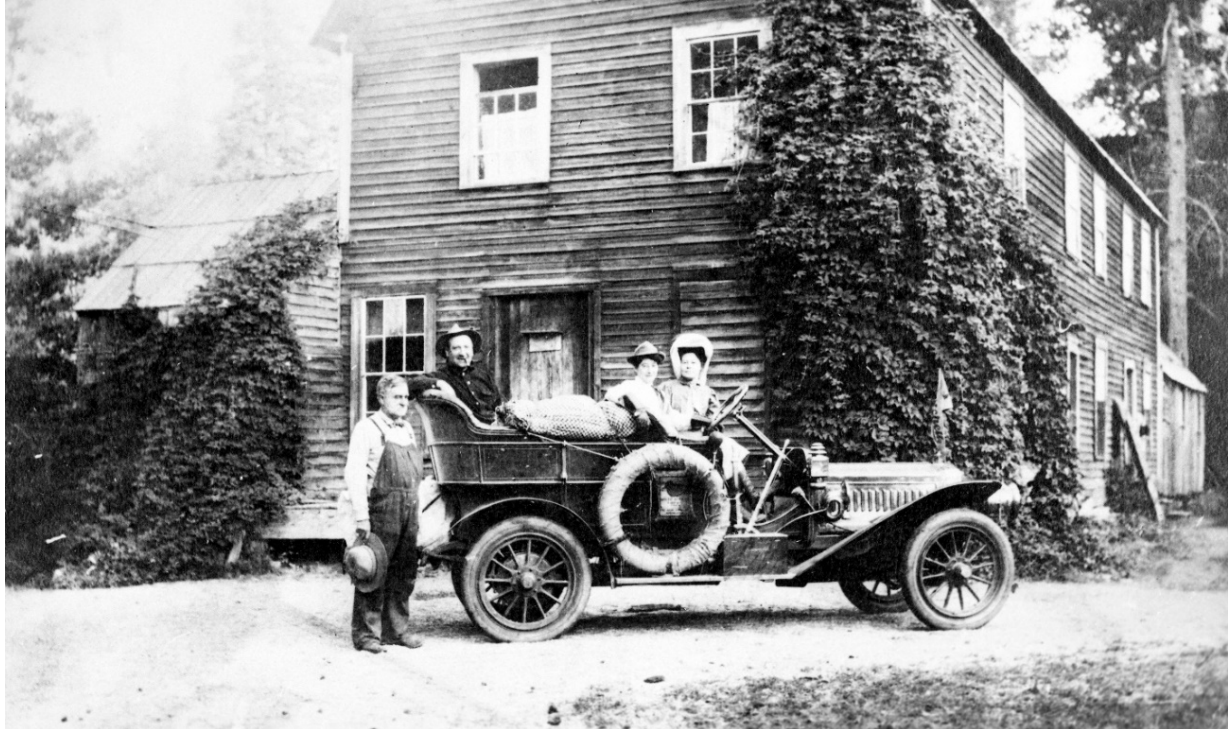
were taken and the meat left behind to rot with no concern of exhausting the deer population. In 1880, the Hunsuckers began bottling the springs' mineral water to sell in California and Nevada cities and towns. The water was in high demand due to its pleasant taste and presumed curative properties: "Rubicon Soda Water: Better Than Whiskey."<sup>15</sup>

The mineral water's popularity led to growing interest in expanding tourism around Rubicon Springs. The Hunsucker brothers would sell off and then repurchase land surrounding the springs until their deaths in the first decade of the twentieth century. Sierra Nevada Phillips Clark (known as Vade to her friends) purchased 40 acres of Rubicon Springs in 1888 and is credited with transforming the region.<sup>16</sup> She built a more comfortable two-and-a-half story hotel to add to the rustic cabins and renamed the property "The Rubicon Mineral Springs Hotel and Resort" to fully capitalize on the mineral water. The hotel boasted glass windows and a refined parlor on the first floor: "To the bone-tired guests arriving from Tahoe and Georgetown, the horsehair furniture and foot-pedal organ were objects of eye-opening splendor."<sup>17</sup>

The increased popularity of Rubicon Springs demanded a better way to get to the location from both the western side of the Sierra via Georgetown and Wentworth Springs, California and the eastern side via Lake Tahoe, California. El Dorado County had begun improvements on the rough Rubicon Trail a year prior to Vade Clark's purchase of the land, though the improvements still left the road a challenge:

The county road, started in 1887, was never more than a simple one lane wagon road, constructed by a small crew of workers as weather and funds permitted, using the natural contours and rock slabs whenever possible. While this effort brought some improvements, travel to Rubicon was still and arduous, albeit breathtaking journey. Wagons traveling in early spring still had to be let down into the gorge over heavy snowdrifts by an engineering feat using cables, blocks, and pulleys. It was inevitable that some teamsters were forced to swim across the river while carriages got stuck or swept away altogether.<sup>18</sup>

To transport tourists, Vade Clark employed the "Rubicon Flyer," a four-horse coach, built for six passengers but carrying up to twelve, that was described as being the "damndest ride ever invented."<sup>19</sup> The road from Lake Tahoe to Rubicon Springs was only nine miles long, but in the best of conditions took at least two and a half hours to travel. To make the long, bumpy ride worse, the seats were upholstered with thick leather and "flint-hard buttons" earning the coach's seats the nickname "bun-bun busters."<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 3.1. Rubicon Hotel guests arrive by a Mitchell Touring Car in 1908, claimed to be the first automobile to reach Rubicon Springs. The hotel no longer exists at the site; today there are only primitive camp sites and a staging area for the Jeep and Jeepers Jamboree events. Photo Courtesy of the El Dorado County Museum.**

As automobiles gained popularity in the early twentieth century, the Rubicon Flyer was retired in favor of a motorized shuttle. Wade Clark sold Rubicon Springs to Daniel Abbott in 1898, though stayed on to manage the resort until 1907. In 1908, two reporters were brought to Rubicon Springs in a dark green Mitchell Touring Car by Abbott's daughter and son-in-law A.E. Hunter. The use of an automobile had commercial implications; Hunter owned Mitchell dealerships in San Jose and San Francisco and used the trip for publicity. The trip was documented at length in the July 1908 issue of *Pacific Coast Motor* by one of the reporters, Marion Walcott. Walcott's description of the journey suggests that a motor did little to improve the trip to Rubicon

Springs. Despite the overall rough conditions of all of California's roads at the time, the short stretch of Rubicon Trail proved to be the worst. "Almost at the outset we were hindered by boulders imbedded in the roadway, which protruded so high that it was only by the most skillful driving that we could get over them."<sup>21</sup> A.E. Hunter also forbade any discussion of just how the motorists would climb out from Rubicon Springs back to Lake Tahoe. Describing that section of the Rubicon Trail that is today known as Cadillac Hill, Walcott wrote, "with the help of block and tackle, some twelve foot planks used to form a runway over each rock too high to clear otherwise, a few cuss words to help over the worst places, after five hours' work to get up what took us five minutes to come down, we finally landed on Observation Point once more, hot tired, dirty, but triumphant."<sup>22</sup>

Almost two decades later, two customized Studebakers were the first cars to travel the entire length of the Rubicon Trail, from Georgetown through Wentworth Springs and to Lake Tahoe. The cars had their fenders and running boards removed for clearance, received "aggressive" tires, and likely had lower gearing installed for the arduous climbing.<sup>23</sup> This trip would lead to others throughout the 1920s which blended the idea of adventure and breathtaking natural scenery with the march of progress. An account from August 13, 1926 in *The Mountain Democrat*, just weeks after the Studebaker trip, described four men driving across the Rubicon in a Ford touring car. Clarence Collins of Georgetown was the party's guide and described as a "road booster."<sup>24</sup> The

article describes the difficulty and the unforgettable views while ensuring readers that the Rubicon would get easier to negotiate: "At present the grade down the Rubicon River is quite steep but Mr. Collins told us a much better grade is being surveyed that will eliminate the worst part, that through what is known as Big Sluice Box."<sup>25</sup> The Sluice Box is a narrow portion of the Rubicon Trail that is divided into two sections, "Little" and "Big." A single vehicle can just fit in between massive granite outcrops and the Big Sluice Box descends into the valley that houses Rubicon Springs. The presence of fallen boulders presents a challenge as there is no way to drive around them.

The development of a passable road from Georgetown to Lake Tahoe would continue to be mentioned in the pages of *The Mountain Democrat* throughout the 1920s:

The improvement of the Georgetown-Lake Tahoe road is one of the projects of the immediate future. A good auto road extends as far as Wentworth Springs, 42 miles above Georgetown, but from there on to McKinneys, Lake Tahoe, via Rubicon Springs, a distance of about 18 miles, considerable work will have to be done to put the road in condition for summer travel, but when it is completed, this will be a beautiful scenic and short route to Lake Tahoe.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 3.2. The two custom Studebakers that make the first motorized trip across the entirety of the Rubicon Trail in June, 1926. In this photograph, the two cars are passing through the “Sluice Box,” through which motorists descend into Rubicon Springs from the West. Photo Courtesy of the El Dorado County Museum.**

The improved road would never be built though, as the Depression and World War II would shift attention away from roadbuilding in the Sierra Nevada. The Rubicon

Springs Hotel lost tourists and was sold off the Sierra Power Company in 1930. The hotel was abandoned and in the early 1950s finally collapsed.<sup>27</sup>

Around this same time, Georgetown residents organized the first Jeepers Jamboree event in 1953.<sup>28</sup> Along with surplus Jeeps, The Willys-Overland Company began producing civilian models of the military vehicle. Mark A. Smith, who would go on to popularize off-roading and in the 1970s lead a Jeep expedition from Tierra del Fuego, Argentina to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, and Ken Collins, a local Jeep dealer, asked Jeep owners in the area if they were up for an adventure. The first Jeepers Jamboree lasted two days, cost \$7.50 per person and had 155 participants driving in 55 Jeeps. Four years later the Jeepers Jamboree boasted roughly 600 people in 189 Jeeps.<sup>29</sup> Water from the Rubicon Springs was even used in the pancake batter during the first few events, though it was suspected to be the reason why the pancakes had a greenish tint.<sup>30</sup>

Today, the Rubicon Trail remains difficult to drive and is claimed to be the most difficult road in America.<sup>31</sup> It is officially an unmaintained county road that is only drivable by a modified four-wheel drive vehicle. The Jeepers Jamboree is now a four-day-long guided trip, which “offers an adult atmosphere... and live entertainment.”<sup>32</sup> The first day has Jeeps or other four-wheel drive vehicles like older Toyota Land Cruisers or Ford Broncos drive the roughly eight miles from the Loon Lake Trailhead to Rubicon Springs. The hotel and log cabins are long gone, though Rubicon Springs hosts



some small structures, a stage, helicopter landing pad and a number of primitive camp sites for off-roaders. The next two days are spent in camp:

At Rubicon Springs the pampering begins. The Jeepers are wined, dined and entertained in high sierra [sic] style. The activities are many. This is the time to just plain relax and be waited on. It's a completely catered trip, we'll even do the dishes. At night there's a raffle drawing with exciting prizes to win from our numerous sponsors followed by entertainment and dancing with the band that has been flown in for the special occasion. What is included in the Trip: Three meals each day, experienced guides on the trail, exclusive use of the Rubicon trail, entertainment, drawings, fun, games and relaxation.<sup>33</sup>

On the final day, off-roaders drive out of Rubicon Springs up Cadillac Hill and exit the trail at the western shore of Lake Tahoe. A few weeks later each summer, the "Jeep Jamboree" takes place, which is a day shorter and more family friendly, though still travels the same route and participants camp in Rubicon Springs.

### **Does four-wheel drive make it more authentic than two-?**

I find the Rubicon Trail to be a fascinating place. First, the suffix of "trail" suggests a small and primitive path, but as this chapter will show, the Rubicon is used by thousands of off-roaders a year and has been a site of heavy political contestation. Second, the Rubicon Trail passes through gorgeous Sierra Nevada forest and evokes a wilderness affect despite the extensive European-American history outlined above. The Rubicon thus provides a unique insight into both political and environmental discourses. The Rubicon Trail, I will argue, is a hybrid space of human and non-human

actants that defies easy definition. The trail has been read by off-roaders, politicians, and environmentalists as a single object: a place for recreation, an ecosystem, a watershed, and so on. Invoking Doreen Massey's theory of space to view the Rubicon Trail as a space of multiplicity offers insight into both its history and its future. Of specific interest is Massey's "coevalness" of space, in which she stresses that too often cultures have been treated as existing at different points on a timeline, each working towards the same goal of becoming developed. Instead, different groups produce space through a "coexisting heterogeneity" of interaction.<sup>34</sup> "Coevalness concerns a stance of recognition and respect in situations of mutual implication. It is an imaginative space of engagement: it speaks of an attitude. And it is informed by a background conceptualization of space and time. It is a political act."<sup>35</sup> Massey uses anthropological fieldwork as an example, the field worker and the Other, but I want to set the four-wheeler, the environmentalist, and the law into this space of engagement to understand the Rubicon Trail's place in the Anthropocene.

Having successfully driven the Rubicon Trail during several Jeepers and Jeep Jamborees, I find myself in a position to offer some hypotheses based on participant observation and an auto/biographical method.<sup>36</sup> My own experiences and interviews with Jeepers Jamboree participants will inform this chapter. The next chapter will discuss the Jeep Jamboree event using the same methods and will delve more into environmental politics in the Anthropocene. I want to use this chapter, however, to

explore what such a unique space says about American automobility. Working off of my claim from the previous chapter that American automobility is both a Foucauldian *dispositif*, as Seiler claims, as well as an ideology, I will show how four-wheeling can be read as tactic, not of resistance, but rather critique of a dominant ideology. It is my contention that four-wheeling on the Rubicon is a spatial practice that does not escape American automobility but rather contests it. Four-wheelers engage with the machine and the road in new ways, which combined with the place-making that occurs at Rubicon Springs, shows a negotiation of American automobility's sense of freedom. As discussed in the previous chapter, American automobility evokes freedom through ideas of the open road, yet is inherently coercive with its myriad disciplining, regulation, and laws. Four-wheelers work to get away from civilization through their activity, yet are well aware that they can never fully escape. As will be shown below, the law's presence at Rubicon Springs presents complex responses to power.

In addition to Massey's theory of space, I will borrow from Michel de Certeau's theory of spatial practice to study power at the site of the subject.<sup>37</sup> Through participant observation, I will focus on the four-wheeler as subject, specifically how four-wheeling at the Jeepers Jamboree and on the Rubicon Trail is a form of de Certeauan consumption, that is, how subjects make use of spaces of power, in which drivers can challenge the apparatus of automobility without actually stepping outside of it. I find de Certeau of great use as a bridge between disciplinary power and individual bodies,

but I will depart from his work in my continued push for feeling, emotion, and affect produced within an ideology of automobility.

Generally speaking, critique of and resistance to automobility are not new concepts. Tim Dant's driver-car assemblage, discussed in the previous chapter, focuses on the social aspect of driving that has produced "a range of social actions that are associated with the car; driving, transporting, parking, consuming, polluting, killing, communication and so on."<sup>38</sup> Rather than use the concept of a cyborg, Dant sees the driver-car as a temporary fusion, one the driver can step away from when necessary. Despite its temporary nature, the driver-car is a very permanent fixture to "the flow of daily social life that cannot simply be removed or phased out (like dangerous drivers or leaded petrol)."<sup>39</sup> The implications are that a government cannot simply force a new form of transportation upon subjects without allowing for the continuation of some type of assemblage.

Within mobilities studies, it is important to understand the systems within which these driver-car assemblages move. Following Foucault, Böhm et al. argue that automobility is a "regime" under which modern society operates.<sup>40</sup> This regime renders alternative forms of mobility deviant. One does not resist the automobile because no other forms of transportation are acceptable. What Böhm et al. argue is that the regime of automobility has constructed its own system of knowledge that produces deviance rather than reveals it.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study of power on American drivers is Seiler's *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* in which a specifically American automobility is treated as a network of power relations. Seiler sees the Foucauldian *dispositif* of American automobility as using a myth of freedom to mask the flows of power existing in regulation of roads and cars.<sup>41</sup> Early twentieth century American roads were built and cars were sold in terms of economic growth, national defense, and to connect the country. Masculinity and individualism were simply "common sense" outcomes of an autonomously mobile population.<sup>42</sup> The masculine subjects of automobility were produced within networks of Foucauldian power. Seiler argues that automobility is a Foucauldian *dispositif* that blends both the discourse and materiality of the automobile. He claims that "automobility comprises a 'multilinear ensemble' of commodities, bodies of knowledge, laws, techniques, institutions, environments, nodes of capital, sensibilities, and modes of perception."<sup>43</sup> American automobility is clearly a white, middle to upper class, male apparatus, though Seiler examines other groups existing in American automobility of the first half of the twentieth century.

Yet, what of those white males who are American automobility's subjects? Do they willingly submit to the power apparatuses at work or do they resist in some way? This question leads to a larger question of methods in these foundational automobility studies. Are existing studies of automobility engaging with the bodies at the site of this

driver-car assemblage or, as I argue, hybrid? Do the studies look at the practices or at broader systems of governance? For example, Sheller approaches the question of “an emotional sociology of automobility” to see how the emotional and affective relationships between human and machine bodies lead to the “stubborn persistence of car-based cultures.”<sup>44</sup> According to Sheller:

By taking seriously how people feel about and in cars, and how the feel of different car cultures elicits specific dispositions and ways of life, we will be in a better position to re-evaluate the ethical dimensions of car consumption and the moral economies of car use... Only then can we consider what will really be necessary to make the transition from today’s car cultures (and the automotive emotions that sustain them) to more socially and environmentally ‘responsible’ transportation cultures.<sup>45</sup>

Sheller works from the position that humans, after emotionally attaching to automobiles, need to separate from those very machines. She is not bluntly connecting feelings to a mediation via objects, but that “emotional geographies” are produced through an embodied experience like driving orienting a body towards specific “material affordances.”<sup>46</sup> For Sheller, there is an ethics of mobility that requires a rejection of the automobile on both social and environmental grounds.<sup>47</sup> This would appear to assuage my concerns that automobility studies are missing practices. Yet, despite Sheller’s commitment to emotions and affective response, she spends little time studying bodies in cars. Sheller describes her six-week-old daughter lighting up when she is strapped into her car seat, but most of her essay looks at feelings evoked by depictions of the automobile through advertising, mass culture, and ‘common sense.’

Further, there is never a questioning of whether drivers agree with the academic's call to work towards rejecting "car cultures" to embrace "transportation cultures." Do drivers want to move away from cars in favor of the broader and potentially less affective "transportation" of which Sheller speaks? How do everyday drivers within the institutions of automobility critique those institutions? And what does that critique look like?

The most compelling definition of critique comes from Michel Foucault, in which he asks how not to be "governed quite so much."<sup>48</sup> Critique means "*not* accepting as true... what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so."<sup>49</sup> For all of Foucault's work on impersonal subjects, this later lecture shows him engaging with how individual subjects negotiate their own personal truths. Thus, Foucault has not abandoned his genealogical method, but he has found a way to account for how subjects respond to power. Seiler rightly extracts the apparatuses at work in American automobility, but what if we shift the Foucauldian gaze from a question of *dispositif* to that of critique? And how would such a critique fit within a larger ideology of automobility? The question I am most interested in is what does off-roading do for the driver within the larger ideology of American automobility? Does rock-crawling in a modified Jeep present a means to not be governed quite so much by paved spaces, traffic regulations, and law enforcement?

This chapter will proceed in three parts. First, the methods used in this study will be discussed and situated among other studies of mobility and the environment. Second, the environmental impact of driving on the Rubicon Trail will be examined using recent events that led to the temporary closure of the road as well as some permanent changes to its surface. I use online forums as another site of ethnographic study to show how these subjects of automobility use the space to elude government power and control. Finally, I use autoethnography to recount my drive along the Rubicon Trail and pay careful attention to the practice of four-wheeling itself. Driving a modified Jeep over a rough surface is a different practice than everyday driving on paved roads and creates new hybrid relationships between the driver, Jeep, and others on the road. The practice of driving a four-wheel drive vehicle on a path like the Rubicon Trail is a form of Foucauldian critique.

### **Mobilities and methodologies**

Before moving into the spaces of rock-crawling, a discussion of method is in order. Perhaps due to the lack of focus on bodies and experience in the foundational literature, recently the mobilities paradigm has called for its own methodology, one that refuses to arrest the movement of the very mobilities it studies. Many of these methods are rooted in sociology and involve the empirical collection of interview results and focus groups.<sup>50</sup> Some researchers have begun to incorporate video, not just to use for



ethnographic notes,<sup>51</sup> but to actually move along with their subjects to capture mobilities *in situ*.<sup>52</sup> Such new methods work to get at bodies as they encounter the spaces of automobility's power. Following this approach, I strapped a GoPro video camera to my Jeep's roof rack to capture bodies, machines, and roads. The camera allowed me to revisit the mobility practice in more detail, which was necessary since at the time I was often focused more on not rolling my Jeep rather than the social practices unfolding. The below descriptions of driving come from this footage.

In addition to video, the other methods I used for this exploratory work were to engage in participant observation and work from an auto/biographical position. As will be seen below, I use participant observation at multiple sites, including online forums discussing changes to the Rubicon Trail. The use of multiple sites of ethnography highlights the interconnections of place in a globalized world and resists classic notions of the mobile ethnographer moving to the static village.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the auto/biographical position has been established with mobilities studies as a way to acknowledge the power dynamics inherent in the social sciences.<sup>54</sup> To write from an auto/biographical position requires the researcher to use their own past experiences or those taking place within the research project itself. While such work has been criticized for being self-indulgent, proponents of the methods argue that not engaging with at least some personal connection to the research is to ignore the subjective role of the researcher. "Indeed, those who protect the self from scrutiny could well be labelled self-

satisfied and arrogant in presuming their presence and relations with others to be unproblematic.”<sup>55</sup> My own auto/biographical position is an effort to work within a space between detached intellectual distance and insider understanding, though finding that space requires self-reflexivity.<sup>56</sup> My own position(s), as a Jeep-owning four-wheeler who enjoys driving over the wilderness and as a leftist intellectual who wants to conserve that very wilderness is situated directly within this insider/outsider dynamic of ethnographic research. I use my hybrid positionality as an anchoring point to acknowledge that I am not merely discovering a subculture within a regime of automobility, but rather constructing a reading of a practice. As Stuart Hall has stated, “in order not to be authoritative, I’ve got to speak autobiographically.”<sup>57</sup> This auto/biographical work specifically comes from notes from participation in the 2015 Jeepers Jamboree from July 23-26.

My ability to exist as both an insider and outsider along a Jeep trail presents an interesting power dynamic. Driving a Jeep of my own and able to discuss issues of “death wobble” or axle size means interview subjects might not realize my role as a researcher at an event like the Jeepers Jamboree. Anytime I spoke to someone with the intention of gathering data, I identified myself as a researcher.

Geographer Paul Robbins writes specifically to the challenges of finding methods to properly study the human-environment research of political ecology. While, as with

mobilities studies, there are multiple methods from which to choose, Robbins does point to the importance of an “object-centered” approach of participant observation:

The product of participant observation data collection in a human-environment context... should have an ‘object centered’ skew to it, detailing social/environmental facts about how crops, technology, or environmental ideas are used, deployed, handled, treated, stored, and manipulated. In the reverse direction too, participant observation can and should reveal the influences, impacts, pressures, limitations, opportunities, and contexts that the object, species, or environmental condition imposes on people.<sup>58</sup>

While Robbins is speaking of incorporating the natural world into studies of human practice, I think this object-centered approach is much needed for participation in automobility practices. In this paper, the Jeep, the trail as a material place, and individual sections of the Rubicon are objects necessary to understanding the practice. There is a materiality to the practice that cannot be overlooked. The Rubicon Trail as a line within the network of American automobility is best understood by driving the route. Further, I see driving the Rubicon as a possibility to invoke Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which provides an entry for thinking about off-roading as practice. The initial challenge is that de Certeau wants to make “everyday practices, ‘ways of operating’ or doing things, no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity.”<sup>59</sup> A focus on the everyday is not directly applicable to leisure activities like off-roading and an annual event like the Jeepers Jamboree. Further, the fact that de Certeau praises walking through urban spaces and refers to rail travel as “a travelling incarceration” and “a bubble of panoptic and classifying power, a

module of imprisonment that makes possible the production of an order, a closed and autonomous insularity” suggests that he would not be the first choice for theoretical insight into the positive aspects of four-wheel drive vehicles.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the widespread use of the chapter “Walking in the City” in disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and geography, de Certeau’s work has a tenuous relationship with automobility studies.<sup>61</sup> Nigel Thrift has worked to make de Certeau applicable to the automobile while resisting the hyperbole of comparing the modern car to travelling incarceration. Thrift sees the use of automobiles as embodied practice, that is, “it is... possible to write of a rich phenomenology of automobility.”<sup>62</sup> Experiences with the car, argues Thrift, “have their own qualities which increasingly approximate the anthropological spaces that de Certeau is so concerned to foster and protect.”<sup>63</sup>

Despite Thrift’s careful effort to bridge “Walking in the City” to automobility studies, he has missed an opportunity. Thrift suggests that modern automobiles, through their technological improvements and increasingly computerized processes, have become an extension of human bodies, albeit through “heavily intermediated representations.”<sup>64</sup> What Thrift does not pursue is that this mediation between the road and body should be viewed as a site of contestation. For Thrift, we exist at a moment “in which knowledge about embodied knowledge is being used to produce new forms of embodiment-cum-spatial practice which are sufficiently subtle and extensive to have every chance of becoming a new background to everyday life.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, bodies do not

enter these hybrid machine spaces free of history written upon those bodies,<sup>66</sup> nor is this space devoid of de Certeauan strategies of governance, the very strategies countered through tactics of everyday practice. There is a politics at play, which Thrift does optimistically reference, though he ends his invocation of de Certeau before he can engage with those very politics.<sup>67</sup>

de Certeau is working to invoke a politics that he sees missing from Foucault's genealogies of regimes of power. He is less interested in panoptic mechanisms and is rather focused upon "bring[ing] to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups of individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline.'"<sup>68</sup> That is, de Certeau wants to explore what happens to bodies within the *dispositifs* of modern society. Foucault speaks of a general resistance to power, yet he never engages with what such resistance might be.<sup>69</sup> This is precisely where de Certeau is working. Further, de Certeau's critique can be directly applied to Böhm et al. and Seiler's Foucauldian *dispositifs* of automobility. Seiler contends that while automobility first looked like a means to freedom, it "served to draw potentially oppositional selves into the hegemonic fold."<sup>70</sup> But how did subjects react to such power? Where is the political response to the hegemony of mobile regulation and control?

For de Certeau, everyday practices might be read as political if one focuses upon them from three connected orientations. First, it is not enough to identify production, representation, and behavioral modes of everyday practices. Consumption, or

specifically how a body uses objects and representations imposed upon it by a dominant structure or institution, can be a means for that body to escape that dominant institution without ever actually getting outside of it.<sup>71</sup> This focus on consumption leads to de Certeau's second orientation, that of Foucault's *dispositifs*, the local procedures allowing for the extension of disciplinary power. For de Certeau, these networks of power can be countered through consumption which produces a "network of antidiscipline."<sup>72</sup>

The third orientation is to address the rules themselves that constitute the logic of the practices studied. Spatial practices, like walking through a city, produce a "space of enunciation" in which individuals can manipulate rules and produce pleasure from that very manipulation.<sup>73</sup> The rules and the "proper" places in which they belong make up "strategies," while "tactics" are opportunities that manipulate, subvert, or resist those strategies.<sup>74</sup> It is this continued tension of strategies and tactics in which de Certeau is most interested. "The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices."<sup>75</sup> It is in this space of a tactics of consumption that rock-crawling is situated as a counter to 'proper' automobility.

## Granite spaces of critique

When one first checks in at the Jeepers Jamboree headquarters in Georgetown, California, prior to driving to the start of the Rubicon Trail, he or she is given a goodie bag full of stickers advertising auto parts and *tchotchkes* all relating to four-wheeling. On my last trip in the summer of 2015, amongst the stickers and brochures of my goodie bag, I received two things of note. First, to my delight, I pulled out a bright red beer can cozy, with the words, “America, F\*ck Yeah!” written largely across it. I am not being polite here; the asterisk was part of the cozy, which is amusing as it hardly obscures the meaning. The second was a key chain made from recycled tires. Not only did this item strike me as contrasting with my new red beer cozy, but the keychain was impressively packaged in a thick clear cylinder, thus negating its virtues as a recycled product. The very plastic it came in could have made three separate keychains. Yet, there should be no doubt about eco-friendliness; the recycling logo of three looping arrows showed up twice on the packaging and there was a warning about the dark stains that may show up on light clothing; such is the cost of using a recycled product like this. These two items say something about the Jeepers Jamboree and the practice of rock-crawling in general. The first is the obnoxiously patriotic item that has little sense of an ironic viewing or distancing when it is used in the context of the Jamboree itself.<sup>76</sup> The phrase is taken from Trey Parker and Matt Stone’s *Team America: World Police*, a satirical, puppet-based film that mocks an aggressive American foreign policy. The beer cozy

gave no wink to suggest that it was made as satire. On the other hand, I read the keychain as an effort of distancing in the Žižekian sense, in which the consumption of a recycled product is an ideological alibi for taking a dirty, oil-spilling, erosion causing Jeep into 'pristine' wilderness.<sup>77</sup> This alibi is unnecessary though, precisely because of the red cozy.

The issue of off-road use and environmentalism have been at odds across the country and the Rubicon Trail is no exception. The Rubicon Trail is an "official unimproved county road" under the jurisdiction of El Dorado County.<sup>78</sup> The Rubicon is therefore an official government space, yet it exudes a sense of wilderness and escape from the built environment of a nearby city like Reno or Sacramento. A portion of the road cuts through National Forest lands, further adding to the idea that the Rubicon Trail imposes on wilderness.<sup>79</sup> This dualism of nature and civilization presents a unique space along the road. On the one hand, the Rubicon Trail is a public road, maintained by tax dollars, and intended to be usable by those who have a vehicle capable of traversing the route. On the other hand, the presence of natural vegetation and wildlife seemingly demands a limit to automobility on the Rubicon Trail.<sup>80</sup> The tension between access and environmental responsibility led to an agreement that the county would "close the trail when weather conditions are likely to result in runoff of sediment and petroleum products."<sup>81</sup>



In addition to occasional closures, El Dorado County needed to conduct maintenance in portions of the 'unmaintained' road to limit soil erosion and the contamination of water bodies. Not only was the possible closure of the trail alarming to off-roaders who used it, but the actions necessary for the continued management of the Rubicon Trail appeared to be at odds with the off-roading practices taking place. For example, part of the maintenance agreed to by federal and county officials as well as environmental groups was the importing of rock to fill in portions of "Little Sluice," the first section of the larger "Sluice Box" encountered when driving from the west. Since the beginning of using motorized vehicles on the Rubicon, both Big and Little Sluice Boxes were known to be punishing for any automobiles attempting the trail. Even Marion Walcott's 1908 account of the first automobile trip on the Rubicon mentions the difficulties of the section:

Then we came to what is known as the 'Sluice Box,' because of its narrowness, and its precipitous sides and rocky bottom. It is only about 150 feet in length, but it goes straight up. Here we unloaded most of our baggage and carried it up the trail. After about an hour's hard work, the machine reached the top, as it was only possible to go a foot or two at a time.<sup>82</sup>

The historical infamy of the Sluice Box meant that any alteration was deemed as a threat to the pristine and authentic quality of the Rubicon Trail. When news of the maintenance was released, rock-crawlers from across the country unleashed a "blizzard" of emails in protest to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.<sup>83</sup> The

online message forum Pirate4x4.com was one source for the protesting emails, due to a post by "BEAR" on 25 September, 2012:

Hey everyone, the famous Little Sluice on the Rubicon trail [sic] is set to be majorly altered this Friday. They are planning of [sic] flying in tons and tons of fill rock and cracking up to 13 boulders in this small 100' section of the Rubicon trail.

We are trying to stop this from happening and can use all the help we can get.

Here is part one of the plan.....

Email El Dorado County and ask them to halt all alterations of the world famous little sluice [sic].

Send El Dorado County Supervisor Jack Sweeney and his fellow Supervisors an email and CC it to the other contacts below. It is important that this be made known to as many people as possible, they need to be pressured into stopping this!<sup>84</sup>

The responses found on Pirate4x4.com ranged from acknowledgements of "email sent" to copies of their emails sent to Supervisor Sweeney to requests for more information.

"Why do they keep wanting too [sic] change stuff who's [sic] behind this?" wrote

"slytowncrawler" whose avatar is an American flag with "I SUPPORT OUR TROOPS!

GO USA!" written in red, white, and blue letters, evocative of my red beer can cozy.

"k5chevyblazer" added an American flag icon to his brief "sent an email" post. Keeping

the Rubicon Trail "pristine" and historically "authentic" was repeated throughout the

posts as was the idea that keeping the Rubicon unmaintained was connected to

American democracy and freedom. To counter actions approved by the Board of

Supervisors, in addition to writing letters several posters suggested physical protest:

“Pull a good old fashioned sit-in. Get a bunch of people together and just park your rigs on the trail and sit there. Dont [sic] leave. Not to be a Debbie-downer but, [sic] writing letters doesnt [sic] do shit, actions speak louder than words” (“Byro”). When the maintenance was being done, no protesters were reported in the area.<sup>85</sup>

One fact not mentioned in the online posts was that off-roaders had been altering Little Sluice for years by moving rocks onto the road to augment its difficulty:

Trail users now range from regular, street-legal 4x4s to specialized vehicles engineered for rock-crawling and “extreme” off-roading. The Little Sluice area has been modified over time to represent a significant challenge to drivers of the specialty machines. The family Jeep or 4x4 truck is incapable of running Little Sluice because of giant boulders that have been winched onto the right of way to increase the “extreme” challenge.<sup>86</sup>

The notion that the trail was authentic to the nineteenth century was blatantly false, but perhaps that was not the reason for the outrage. On the website [zukikrawlers.com](http://zukikrawlers.com), “jenyus” posted his/her disgust at the alteration of Little Sluice on September 28, 2012, three days after the [Pirate4x4.com](http://Pirate4x4.com) posts.<sup>87</sup> When “Reddog1” offered that making little changes were important to avoid a complete closure of the Rubicon Trail, “jenyus” replied “Yeah I understand that. It's just lame how much regulation there is on a 4x4 trail.” The resignation that rock-crawlers must pick their battles and that the sit-in protests never materialized is reminiscent of de Certeau. These tactics used by the rock-crawlers to escape paved roads and their ensuing regulations of use can still be

countered by strategies of government oversight on the Rubicon Trail. Rock-crawlers are forced to consume the spaces of the Rubicon in a new way; accept the changes to Little Sluice to retain other opportunities of tactical resistance. The Jeepers Jamboree event has been able to continue because of the changes to the trail. The next chapter will explore more of these changes, the environmental reasoning behind them, and how off-roaders have come to terms with them by the summer of 2018.

Throughout these online posts there is a sense of rock-crawlers seeking a space in which to not be “governed quite so much.”<sup>88</sup> For Foucault, such a critique involves a questioning of authority and official knowledge:

And finally ‘to not to want to be governed’ is of course *not* accepting as true... what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so. And this time, critique finds its anchoring point in the problem of certainty in its confrontation with authority.<sup>89</sup>

The authority of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors was directly questioned across the online forums (“It was passed by the board of supervisors [sic] which in and of itself was a sham” wrote “Bebe” on Pirate4x4.com, for example). To wrap one’s beer in a cozy that shouts “America, F\*ck Yeah!” speaks to that same questioning of authority despite wrapping oneself in a national identity. The overall theme of democracy, freedom, and resistance in the reaction to the Little Sluice maintenance, combined with American flag iconography found throughout the websites suggests

that this patriotism is not linked to blindly following government officials, but instead following ideals believed to be unique to the United States of America. There is a personal sovereignty associated with being American. This combined love of automobiles and country must be contextualized with the fact that both automobility and patriotism are practiced far from pavement and most institutions of governance or discipline. While the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department maintains a presence at the Jeepers Jamboree, this law enforcement is far from what one gets in an urban setting (as will be discussed below). Rock-crawling is a way to elude the discipline of automobility, that is regulations of what a body/machine hybrid can and cannot do, while never actually getting outside of the institutions that reproduce it. It is through embracing the machines and networks of these institutions that subjects are best able to avoid institutional discipline. Rock-crawling is a tactic, an example of "multi form, resistance, tricky, and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised."<sup>90</sup>

### **Driving in the forest**

The off-road portion of the Jeepers Jamboree begins at the start of the Rubicon Trail at Loon Lake, California. Participants are given a warm breakfast, coffee and a lunch for the road, and then they begin the slow, three mile-per-hour crawl (at best) over seven and a half miles of granite slabs and boulders to get to the Rubicon Springs

campground. This was my experience in 2015. My own Jeep has been modified to do well on a trail like the Rubicon, but it was still a challenge to make it to the campground without breaking an axle or damaging sheet metal.

To drive a Jeep onto a challenging trail can be a terrifying experience and a confusing practice for many who are immersed into prevailing institutions of automobility. As a family friend who was not a rock-crawler once said to my father, "This makes no sense. You spend thousands of dollars on a vehicle just so you can take it into the woods and beat the shit out of it." The difference though, is that Jeeps do things that one would never expect an automobile to be able to do. The flexibility combined with the armor plating of my Jeep allows me to go over obstacles that would halt or even destroy most sport utility vehicles let alone sedans. I have slipped off boulders with a bang that sounds fatal to my gas tank or oil pan, yet it leaves a mere scratch. "America, F\*ck Yeah!" indeed.

Off-roading is not always violent slipping off of boulders though. The practice of rock crawling along the Rubicon can take several forms. Some drivers have invested thousands of dollars into vehicles to the point that they are no longer street legal. Fenders have been removed to make room for oversized tires and stock engines have been swapped out for greater power. These vehicles are towed to the trail head and then drive almost effortlessly over obstacles. Most participants in the Jeepers Jamboree, however, have much more modest vehicles. As is the case with my own, the Jeeps have

been modified to allow for rock crawling but can also be driven as daily commuters.

The vehicles are lifted a few inches, the tires are somewhat larger than stock, and so on.

These vehicles cannot simply dominate the trail surface. As such, one must pick a line in

his or her immediate field of vision. One learns what the machine can do, its wheelbase,

the rough positioning of the front differential (which is a rounded component to an

otherwise smooth straight axle) so as not to get it hung up on a rock. This future line

has to be explored at the same time the Jeep is negotiating its current obstacles, making

the practice of off-road driving one of constant surveillance.



**Figure 3.3. A red Jeep negotiates an obstacle on the Rubicon Trail. His first line was too far to the right, which required backing up and moving to the left to make it over. One passenger watches from the side of the trail while another (obscured by the red Jeep) helps the driver over the boulders. The author's Jeep hood in the foreground. Photo by author.**

Driving a four-wheel drive vehicle in an extreme environment like the Rubicon creates a hybrid relationship between human and machine rather than a mere “driver-car assemblage.”<sup>91</sup> The hybridity comes from the fact that even after the off-roader has exited the vehicle, there is a fusion at work. The lessons taken from negotiating a machine over such difficult obstacles will stay with the driver’s body and affect how he or she drives other cars and travels over other roads. My Jeep is an extension of my body on the Rubicon Trail. I know exactly where my tires should land once they roll over the boulder in front of me. Most of the Jeeps on the trail have their doors removed, which is practical in that the driver can lean out of the vehicle to see his or her front tire if the angle of the machine blocks the view of the trail surface. Simultaneously, the openness of the Jeep (most on the Rubicon Trail in the summer also have their tops removed) brings the driver closer to the natural objects themselves. Passengers will hop out of the Jeep to explore the conditions for the driver and possibly spot the driver by using hand signals as he or she drives along a challenging path. Thus, not only drivers, but passengers in the vehicle are connecting with both the vehicle and the road in a new way.





**Figure 3.4. Another participant guides the author over a tricky obstacle. Photo by author.**

During the Jeepers Jamboree event, “Rock-rollers” line the trail at some of the more difficult locations. These are volunteers who direct Jeeps onto the best line when that line might not obviously present itself. In the absence of an official rock-roller, participants will take turns helping a few Jeeps through sections to ensure that vehicles keep moving on their journey to the campgrounds (see Figure 3.4). This requires trust on the part of the driver. The best line may not be perfectly obvious from the driver’s seat, which means the driver must trust that the directions will get him or her over the obstacle. The driver, passengers, and rock-rollers work together to get the machine over the rocks, which means that the car driver hybrid can form a more complicated social

assemblage. In removing the Jeep's top and doors and relying on those outside the machine, the assemblage actually extends past the driver and the car to produce a larger social space of mobility. It is precisely this space in which resistance to American automobility begins to unfold. Urban road morphology shifted in the nineteenth century to produce roads as objects to pass over rather than spaces to exist in.<sup>92</sup> Streets were no longer used for socializing; suburban porches and yards filled that role. Pedestrians shifted from belonging in the street to being responsible for avoiding it as much as possible.<sup>93</sup> The Rubicon Trail is a different social space in that human bodies beyond the just the driver are necessary for the driver-car assemblage to work. Sheller and Urry define automobility as "autonomous humans *and*... autonomous machines only able to roam in certain time-space scapes."<sup>94</sup> Rock-crawling on the Rubicon pushes the boundaries of the time-space scapes. As such, the practice is a tactic against the *dispositif* of American automobility.

This social space is not confined to moments on the trail, but rather the totality of moving from the start to the destination. Rock-crawling over difficult terrain means reaching a destination like the Rubicon Springs campground is an accomplishment much different from pulling off a freeway and into a motel parking lot. A rock-crawler has earned his or her campsite. This also means that those on an event like the Jeepers Jamboree feel a sense of comradery while hanging out in camp. I could strike up conversations easily about anything from Jeep parts to distilling vodka to the pros and

cons of the University of California system. While I do not have the full demographics of the participants on the event (the Jeepers Jamboree does not keep track of such data), most were white and male, though I met both working class and bourgeois individuals. I spoke to an applied physicist about the cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area and a young waitress who wondered what the little lobsters in the river were (they were crawfish). I was well aware of my own position of power as the semi-detached observer who was at the event as both a participant and an academic. I worked within the understanding that I was more at ease with participants like the above-mentioned physicist than with many of the working class off-roaders with which I spoke. Yet, I also found that my ability to drive over the many obstacles to reach Rubicon Springs as well as my knowledge of Jeeps themselves provided a connection that crossed other social and economic barriers. Further, there was an underlying desire amongst all of the participants with which I spoke to avoid the strategies of disciplinary power. While Foucault was never invoked, participants all enjoyed the “freedom” of escaping paved roads to “be themselves” in the forest. “Don’t Tread on Me” flags and stickers, often attributed to the Tea Party political movement in the United States, were used as symbols of defiance towards government regulation in general. Participants admitted as much. Recently, Foucault has been accused of being a neoliberal despite his apparent leftist bent, or at least, after 1968, engaging in a project that mirrored the growth of the neoliberal project in that both question the purpose and need of large

state institutions.<sup>95</sup> The focus of neoliberal Foucault has been on his concept of biopolitics, in which liberal governments, beginning in the nineteenth century, became fixated on issues of health and hygiene of populations.<sup>96</sup> His apparent distrust of public health and French social security programs suggests that he was at least somewhat responsible for the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s. While I am far from convinced by this argument, my setting Foucauldian thought alongside a rather libertarian approach to governance shows the political messiness of Foucault's project, something that Foucault himself found amusing. The interview on which Daniel Zamora begins his edited collection has Foucault discussing how he has been called everything from a Marxist to an anti-Marxist to a neoliberal.<sup>97</sup> What Zamora leaves out is the following paragraph, in which Foucault playfully admits to being delighted by the confusion of labels and that he is less interested in a single Truth than the act of problematization which is "the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that seem to me to pose problems for politics."<sup>98</sup> As if to prove Foucault's point, for all of the spaces of libertarian resistance at work on the Rubicon, strategies of disciplinary power are simultaneously accepted by four-wheelers.

Figure 3.5 shows one of two Sheriff's Department Jeeps, both used to patrol the county road that is the Rubicon Trail. The "Mark A. Smith Edition" Jeep references one of the founders of the Jeepers Jamboree who was also a member of local law enforcement. The road presents a problem for official enforcement; it falls under the

jurisdiction of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department, while being impossible for standard methods of patrol. The Jeep shown in figure 3.5 was the first to be donated by Fiat Chrysler Automobiles to the Sheriff's Department to help solve this very problem.



**Figure 3.5. The "Mark A. Smith Edition" El Dorado County Sheriff Jeep. Photo by the author.**

During the 2015 Jamboree I attended, one of the other attendees was allegedly selling "pills" of questionable origin to other attendees. One overdosing young man had to be airlifted out to a Reno hospital and the alleged seller was promptly arrested by one of the Sheriff's sergeants on duty at the Jamboree. An official with Jeepers Jamboree spoke with me briefly about it. "We don't do this drugs shit here. He can take his pills back to San Francisco." The official's gruff voice and handlebar mustache added to the

forcefulness of his disgust with drugs at Rubicon Springs. Beer and liquor flowed that entire weekend with many drinking to excess, but drugs were an urban problem. Rock-crawling was a way to escape this.

I also spoke with the arresting sergeant at breakfast the next day and he explained that the suspect was arrested, handcuffed, and then drove out of the Rubicon Springs campsite in the Sheriff's Department Jeep to the nearest county jail. The sergeant was very professional in his recounting of the events and did not seem to be phased by the hours it took to drive out with the suspect and then return to the camp that night. I did not mention it to the sergeant, but I was there when he returned to camp. I was watching the band "Tragically White" (fitting for the demographics of the Jamboree) perform at the main stage of the campground late in the evening when the Sheriff's Jeep pulled into camp. The Jeep had the telltale markings of rock-crawling in this part of the Sierra; a thick layer of mud and dust covered its wheels and sides. I only recognized it by the word "SHERIFF" written across the hood. What was most interesting was how the sergeant parked his Jeep; he drove up on the exposed tires of another Jeep (see Figure 3.6). The half-dozen of us watching this spectacle were stunned at the sergeant's blatant disregard for private property. While this parking maneuver will be performed by friends as a masculine display of dominance as well as to show the capabilities of the driver's Jeep, the fact that this was an officer of the law doing such a move made it different. In unison, we raised our beers and hollered in solidarity.

Even the owner of the parked-upon Jeep cheered. I quickly snapped a picture (Figure 3.6).



**Figure 3.6. The Sheriff’s Department Jeep parked atop another in camp. Photo by the author.**

The obvious question is why was this okay? One could argue that the sergeant was also at odds with strategies of disciplinary power. No one seemed to question the need to remove a drug dealer from Rubicon Springs, yet most attendees were there to get away from regulations and enforcement. The “adult atmosphere” promised by the Jeepers Jamboree meant the freedom to not be governed quite so much, if only for a weekend. The sergeant, despite having a gun on his hip, was also there as a rock-crawler—he could not have been there otherwise. For just a moment, he could step outside of the spaces of disciplinary power without actually leaving them. “The tactics

of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices.”<sup>99</sup> Such politics were contingent upon the road the sergeant drove to get to that moment.

### **Ideology on the Trail**

Of course, it is worth addressing the possibility that the sergeant’s actions were a nominal resistance and instead a reinforcement of the *ideology* of automobility.

Althusser used the example of the police officer to explain his concept of ideological state apparatuses. When the officer calls to you and you turn around in response, you have become a subject in your acknowledgement that the call was addressed to you.

The relationship between an officer of the law and a common subject defines the dominant ideology of the ruling class/State.<sup>100</sup> But what happens when the officer changes the relationship by driving a Jeep just like the rest of us? Does this apparent resistance to the law offer a means to change existing power structures?

We should actually consider the opposite. In appearing to resist the law, does the sergeant support it? Slavoj Žižek speaks of the “obscene superego underside” of the law, that is, those little exceptions to rules that appear as resistance but are instead fundamental to the perpetuation of that very law.<sup>101</sup> Did the sergeant’s tactic thus prevent a “too-literal identification” with the law which would in fact undermine that very law?<sup>102</sup> Resistance to power is so intertwined with the power itself that one might



question the very ability to resist. If anything, such forms of resistance show the limits of studying simply within impersonal systems of power rather than engaging with the subjects themselves. Further, the idea that something can *feel* like resistance even if it does not resist suggests that there is an ideological component at work. Žižek also states, “The ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally.”<sup>103</sup> The sergeant’s seemingly transgressive actions invoked cheering and laughter from the crowd, again, shoring up the ruling ideology itself.

Critique, however, is a more productive avenue for understanding the connection between off-roading and American automobility. Using Foucault’s definition of critique as “the art of not being governed quite so much”<sup>104</sup> we can get away from a binary of application of power/resistance to power. Interestingly, Foucault is often criticized for being too pessimistic in his distrust of state solutions to societal problems<sup>105</sup> or impersonal in going so far as to reject the individual,<sup>106</sup> but careful attention to his work shows that he was in fact most interested in problematization. For Foucault, critique was an attitude, one that involved “*not* accepting as true... what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so.”<sup>107</sup> Rather than subscribe to and use a political identity to interpret everyday life, Foucault suggested a constant questioning of one’s world. What is fascinating about Foucault’s lecture in which he introduces his concept of critique is how much he works in ideology

and the individual. Delivered a decade after his lecture “What is an Author?” in which Foucault dismissed the subject in favor of impersonal conditions of possibility, “What is Critique?” focuses on individuals as a site of political change:

And if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then!: critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.<sup>108</sup>

Foucault speaking of truth seems out of character when considering the rest of his *oeuvre*, but he connects this politics of truth to his project of tracing the interactions between knowledge and power. With this lecture, Foucault is interested in the subject's acceptance of a system of power/knowledge and how he or she might reject such a system.<sup>109</sup> The truth discussed by Foucault is still a product of historical conditions. He is also more interested in the questioning of an existing truth rather than replacing a system with the Truth.

### **Ideological driving glasses**

Off-roaders at the Jeepers Jamboree critique the accepted power relationships inherent within American automobility. As Seiler has rightly pointed out, the system is rife with networks and apparatuses using power in the positive Foucauldian sense. The

regulations and fees are not fully resisted as all of the vehicles on the trail were still regulated by a governing force. As a licensed driver, I drove a registered vehicle on paved public roads to get to the trail. Yet, at least momentarily, participants could use tactics of critique on the trail through new forms of driving practice that extend the hybridity of drivers and machines. Both Foucault and de Certeau have argued that one cannot exist outside of relations of power.<sup>110</sup> Through de Certeauan tactics or Foucauldian critique, subjects of automobility do not passively accept the fields of power as truth. Most importantly, the freedom believed to be a part of American automobility is reaffirmed within the spaces produced on the trail and at Rubicon Springs. The ideology is reproduced when law enforcement officers couch their duties within the hybridization of driver and Jeep and project an affect of freedom.

In the next chapter, I will explore the environmental component of rock crawling on the Rubicon Trail. Critique works to reproduce an ideology within its subjects, yet also allow them to rearticulate the meanings behind the practices. In addition to critique, off-roading provides an opportunity to consume nature, albeit through the continued burning of fossil fuels. The apparent tension between how nature along the Rubicon Trail is used and preserved is also embedded in the social and political sphere. Sheller, who pushes for a utopian concept of “transportation cultures” recognizes just how imbedded such politics are to a knowledge of nature:

So-called ‘Sport Utility Vehicles’ also continue to be embraced as a way of getting closer to nature (safely). Ironically, the very idea of ‘nature’ that

many anti-car campaigners are defending may have been constituted largely through automobility. Gliding through green woods dappled with sunlight, speeding toward the endlessly receding horizon of a vast desert or plain, or shooting along winding hedge-rowed country lanes, driving has long been a way of 'getting out in nature.'<sup>111</sup>

Yet, those Sport Utility Vehicles *that are capable* of "getting out in nature," or at least, another version of nature, complicate how nature can be consumed. And perhaps this means we ought to complicate our conceptions of how nature ought to be consumed. Rubicon Springs is far removed from urban life and is in the middle of untouched forested land. It becomes an ephemeral city during the Jeepers Jamboree, yet the space is read as natural by participants. Where critique may leave those hoping to reduce a dependence on the internal combustion engine wanting, I will show how the environmental practices offer up new political blocs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Rick Morris, *Rubicon Springs and the Rubicon Trail: A History* (Rubicon Springs, CA: The Rubicon Historical Group, 2011), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Norman L. Wilson, "The Nisenan People," The Placer County Historical Society, [www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org/index.htm\\_files/The%20Nisenan%20People.pdf](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org/index.htm_files/The%20Nisenan%20People.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Eldorado National Forest, *Whale Rock Forest Health Multi-Resource Project Final Environmental Impact Statement* (Pollock Pines, CA: United States Department of Agriculture, 1997), III-48.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph L. Beals, "'Ethnology of the Nisenan.'" *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 31, no. 6 (1933), 362-363. The Rubicon Trail is at an elevation of roughly 6,100 feet (1860 meters).

<sup>7</sup> Anne Carlson, *Tahoe National Forest Cultural Resources Overview, Part II: Ethnography* (Nevada City: US Forest Service, 1986), 39.

<sup>8</sup> Beals, "Ethnology," 363.

<sup>9</sup> Norman L. Wilson, and Arlean H. Towne, "Nisenan," *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8: California* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 387-397.

<sup>10</sup> Myron Angel, *History of Placer County California with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Oakland: Thompson & West, 1882), 358.

- 
- <sup>11</sup> George H. Derby and Francis P. Farquhar, "The Topographical Reports of Lieutenant George H. Derby" *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 1932): 101.
- <sup>12</sup> David S. Harwood and Eric E. Cather, "Rubicon Roadless Area, California," in *Wilderness Mineral Potential: Assessment of Mineral-Resource Potential in US Forest Service Lands Studied 1964-1984*, edited by SP Marsh, SJ Kropschot, and RG Dickinson (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1984), 339.
- <sup>13</sup> "Mineral Springs," Report XV of the State Mineralogist: Mines and Mineral Resources of Portions of California (San Francisco: California State Mining Bureau, 1917), 306.
- <sup>14</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 18-19.
- <sup>15</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 17-22; Edward B. Scott, *The Saga of Lake Tahoe: A Complete Documentation of Lake Tahoe's Development Over the Last One Hundred Years* (Lake Tahoe, NV: Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1957), 75.
- <sup>16</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 23.
- <sup>17</sup> Scott, *Saga*, 76.
- <sup>18</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 29.
- <sup>19</sup> Scott, *Saga*, 79-80.
- <sup>20</sup> Scott, *Saga*, 80; Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 30.
- <sup>21</sup> Marion Walcott, "Touring to Tahoe" *Pacific Coast Motor*, July 1908, quoted in Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 136.
- <sup>22</sup> Quoted in Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 139.
- <sup>23</sup> Ken Deibert, "Jeepers Jamboree – The First 60 Years" *The Mountain Democrat*, July 20, 2012, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/special-sections/rubicon-tab-2012-jeepers-jamboree/jeepers-jamboree-the-first-60-years/>; Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 142.
- <sup>24</sup> C.E. Barker, "New Mountain Road: Georgetown Route to Lake Tahoe Offers Thrills for Motorist" *The Mountain Democrat*, August 13, 1926, <https://mountaindemocrat.newspaperarchive.com/placerville-mountain-democrat/1926-08-13/page-9/>
- <sup>25</sup> Barker, "New Mountain Road."
- <sup>26</sup> Maude A. Horn, "Georgetown," *The Mountain Democrat*, January 6, 1928, pg 18, accessed at the El Dorado Historical Museum, Binder 14, pg. 83.
- <sup>27</sup> Scott, *Saga*, 80.
- <sup>28</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 160.
- <sup>29</sup> Deibert, "Jeepers Jamboree."
- <sup>30</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 72.
- <sup>31</sup> "Trail Ratings," Jeep Jamboree USA, Accessed March 9, 2017, <https://jeepjamboreeusa.com/trail-ratings>.
- <sup>32</sup> Jeepers Jamboree and Jeep Jamboree, Inc., <https://www.jeepersjamboree.com>
- <sup>33</sup> "History" Jeepers Jamboree and Jeep Jamboree, Inc., <https://www.jeepersjamboree.com/history.html>
- <sup>34</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 69.
- <sup>35</sup> Massey, *For Space*, 69-70.
- <sup>36</sup> Gayle Letherby, "Have Backpack Will Travel: Auto/biography as a Mobile Method." In *Mobile Methodologies*, ed. Ben Fincham, Mark McGuinness, and Lesley Murray (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- <sup>37</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Translated by Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 [1980]), xiv-xv.
- <sup>38</sup> Tim Dant, "The Driver-Car," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21 (2004): 61.
- <sup>39</sup> Dant, "Driver-Car," 75.

- 
- <sup>40</sup> Steffen Böhm, Campbell Jones, Chris Land, and Mat Paterson, "Introduction: Impossibilities of automobility," *The Sociological Review* 54 (2006): 3.
- <sup>41</sup> Cotten Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 66.
- <sup>42</sup> Seiler, *Republic*, 90.
- <sup>43</sup> Seiler, *Republic*, 6.
- <sup>44</sup> Mimi Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 4/5 (2004): 223.
- <sup>45</sup> Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," 224.
- <sup>46</sup> Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," 228.
- <sup>47</sup> Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," 221.
- <sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" In *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007 [1978]), 45.
- <sup>49</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 46, his emphasis.
- <sup>50</sup> Monika Büscher, John Urry, and Katian Witchger, "Introduction: Mobile Methods," in *Mobile Methods*, ed. Monika Büscher, John Urry, and Katian Witchger, (New York: Routledge, 2011).
- <sup>51</sup> Eric Laurier, "Participant Observation." In *Key Methods in Geography*, ed. Nicholas J. Clifford and Gill Valentine (London: Sage, 2003), 140.
- <sup>52</sup> Katrina Brown and Justin Spinney, "Catching a Glimpse: The Value of Video in Evoking, Understanding, and Representing the Practice of Cycling," In *Mobile Methodologies*, ed. Ben Fincham, Mark McGuinness, and Lesley Murray (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- <sup>53</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- <sup>54</sup> Letherby, "Have Backpack," 154.
- <sup>55</sup> Letherby, "Have Backpack," 158.
- <sup>56</sup> Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock, "Introduction: Awkward Spaces, Productive Places." In *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation*, ed. Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), xi.
- <sup>57</sup> Stuart Hall "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996 [1990]), 262.
- <sup>58</sup> Paul F. Robbins, "Human-Environment Field Study." In *Research Methods in Geography*, ed. Basil Gomez and John Paul Jones III (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 247.
- <sup>59</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xi.
- <sup>60</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, 111.
- <sup>61</sup> Nigel Thrift, "Driving in the City," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21 (2004): 41-59.
- <sup>62</sup> Thrift, "Driving," 46.
- <sup>63</sup> Thrift, "Driving," 46.
- <sup>64</sup> Thrift, "Driving," 51.
- <sup>65</sup> Thrift, "Driving," 52.
- <sup>66</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977 [1971]), 148.
- <sup>67</sup> Thrift, "Driving," 54.
- <sup>68</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xiv-xv.
- <sup>69</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990 [1978]), 95.
- <sup>70</sup> Seiler, *Republic*, 67.

- 
- <sup>71</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xiiiv.
- <sup>72</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xv.
- <sup>73</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, 98.
- <sup>74</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xix.
- <sup>75</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xvii.
- <sup>76</sup> Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1993), 99.
- <sup>77</sup> Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 27.
- <sup>78</sup> Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 160.
- <sup>79</sup> USDA, *Final Environmental Impact Statement: Rubicon Trail Easement and Resource Improvement Project*. Pacific Ranger District, El Dorado National Forest El Dorado County, California, April 2012. iii
- <sup>80</sup> Chris Kassar, *Environmental Impacts of ORVs on the Rubicon Trail*. Oakland: Center for Biological Diversity, 2009. [https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public\\_lands/off-road\\_vehicles/pdfs/Appendix\\_Env\\_Impacts\\_Rubicon.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/off-road_vehicles/pdfs/Appendix_Env_Impacts_Rubicon.pdf); Rubicon Trail Foundation, "Foundation Agrees with EDC to Support Rubicon Trail Easement." *Mountain Democrat*, July 20, 2012. <http://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/foundation-agrees-with-edc-to-support-rubicon-trail-easement/>
- <sup>81</sup> Center for Biological Diversity, "Rubicon Trail Deal Will Protect Water Quality," Press release, July 16, 2012. [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press\\_releases/2012/rubicon-07-16-2012.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2012/rubicon-07-16-2012.html)
- <sup>82</sup> Marion Walcott, quoted in Morris, *Rubicon Springs*, 136.
- <sup>83</sup> Chris Daley, "Top 10 – No. 1: Rubicon Trail Accident, 60th Jamboree." *Mountain Democrat*, January 7, 2013. <http://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/top-10-no-1-rubicon-trail-accident-60th-jamboree/>
- <sup>84</sup> This and following posts found at <http://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/general-4x4-discussion/1093411-urgent-little-sluiice-altered-friday.html>
- <sup>85</sup> Chris Daley, "'Little Sluice' Restoration Brings E-mail Flood." *Mountain Democrat*, October 5, 2012. <http://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/little-sluiice-restoration-brings-e-mail-flood/>
- <sup>86</sup> Daley, "Little Sluice."
- <sup>87</sup> <http://www.zukikrawlers.com/archive/index.php/t-49105.html>
- <sup>88</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 45.
- <sup>89</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 46, his emphasis.
- <sup>90</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, 96.
- <sup>91</sup> Dant, "Driver-Car."
- <sup>92</sup> Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
- <sup>93</sup> Peter Norton, *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008).
- <sup>94</sup> Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The City and the Car." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24 (2000): 739, their emphasis.
- <sup>95</sup> See Danial Zamora and Michael C. Behrent (eds.), *Foucault and Neoliberalism* (Malden: Polity Press, 2016).
- <sup>96</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, edited by Michel Senellart (New York: Picador, 2008), 317.
- <sup>97</sup> Danial Zamora, "Introduction: Foucault, the Left and the 1980s," in *Foucault and Neoliberalism*, edited by Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent (Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 1.
- <sup>98</sup> Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations," in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 1: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 114.

---

<sup>99</sup> de Certeau, *Practice*, xvii.

<sup>100</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012 [1970]), 131-3.

<sup>101</sup> Žižek, *Plague*, 13.

<sup>102</sup> Žižek, *Plague*, 29.

<sup>103</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008 [1989]), 24.

<sup>104</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 45.

<sup>105</sup> Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 317-324.

<sup>106</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is an Author," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>107</sup> Foucault, "Critique," his emphasis.

<sup>108</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 47.

<sup>109</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 61.

<sup>110</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 95; de Certeau, *Practice*, xiii.

<sup>111</sup> Sheller, "Automotive Emotions," 231.



## Chapter 4. “Why does a beaver cut down trees? Why does a bear shit in the woods?” Driving over the Rubicon Trail ecosystem

They took all the trees  
And put them in a tree museum  
And they charged all the people  
A dollar and a half to see 'em  
Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
'Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And they put up a parking lot

Joni Mitchell, “Big Yellow Taxi,” *Ladies of the Canyon*

“Social activities are organized in terms of how people dwell within different places, how they sense such places through sight, smell, hearing, and touch, how they move across and beyond such places and how much power of agency they possess to transform their lives and their immediate environment. Thus different social practices produce different ‘natures.’”

John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, 202

### **Ideological reproduction in the forest**

In the summer of 2018, I drove my two oldest sons in our Jeep along the Rubicon Trail in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. Our destination was the Rubicon Springs Campground for the annual Jeep Jamboree. While the last chapter explored the automobility practices at the adult-oriented Jeepers Jamboree event, this one will analyze the annual family-oriented *Jeep* Jamboree which takes place each year on the following weekend. The Jeep Jamboree started in 1978, a couple of decades after the

first Jeepers Jamboree event. The concept of rock-crawling over the difficult Rubicon Trail is the same, both events follow the same route, but the trip is shortened to three days and the drinking is toned down in an effort to allow children six and older to experience a big event at Rubicon Springs. Starting in 2013, the Jeep Jamboree incorporated “Camp Rubicon” which included extra activities for the children in attendance. The Jeepers and Jeep Jamboree website explains the purpose:

Jeep Jamboree Camp Rubicon’s mission is to motivate and encourage the next generation of off road and outdoor enthusiasts. We sponsor programs such as “Tread Lightly!” where children learn outdoor ethics and stewardship practices. We offer hands on activities, nature hikes, survival skills, and informative discussions relating to responsible recreation. Jeep Jamboree Camp Rubicon aims for children of all backgrounds to enjoy our natural surroundings and learn how to preserve them for years to come.<sup>1</sup>

I find the mission of Camp Rubicon wonderful in its apparent contradictions. Children are taught the importance of natural spaces but do so having traveled to nature in fossil-fuel burning machines that would seemingly contribute to the destruction of that very nature. As this chapter will show however, the people in charge of Camp Rubicon have a sincere commitment to the ecological health of Rubicon Springs and the greater Eldorado National Forest. As the last chapter showed, automobiles have been driving through this forest for over a century, but their continued presence actually shows the intersection of American automobility’s ideology and the prevailing discourse of scientific environmentalism. Once again, I want to resist the binary of a pristine nature and a tainting automobility and instead spend time

questioning the hybridity of practices within the Anthropocene epoch. Further, I will demonstrate how off-roading practices do exist within scientific discourse. The environmental concerns of the Rubicon Trail were discovered and contested within the Foucauldian regimes of truth that make up environmental science. In addition to discourse, however, Camp Rubicon is firmly embedded within an ideology of American automobility that informs a specific production and consumption of nature.

This chapter will continue the methods used in the previous chapter—participant observation and auto/ethnography with an attention to mobile practices—this time recording and analyzing the practices of the 40<sup>th</sup> annual Jeep Jamboree. My findings show that Foucauldian critique is still at work by the adult participants, but the presence of children reveals a production of space and place occurring in a manner befitting the Anthropocene epoch. Further, the focus on sustainability is felt throughout the trail and the camp, even if this version differs from existing concepts of environmentalism. Participants look toward a future that includes healthy forests that will continue to be accessed by off-road vehicles. The Jeep Jamboree reveals both a reproduction of the ideology of American automobility, but also a reproduction of specific ecosystems. Within the Jeep Jamboree, a specific space and place are produced in the Massean sense.

## Jeeping in the Anthropocene

Figure 4.1 is a cartoon that was sent on January 12, 2018 in an email newsletter to members by the California Four Wheel Drive Association (Cal 4Wheel). Just below was the heading “Kind of says it all, doesn’t it?” to stress the common sense underlying the cartoon. Further suggesting the obvious nature was the fact that no explanation was given to the cartoon, other than it was drawn by Colby Martin, the director of the SEMA Action Network, which, according to their website, is the “legislative voice of car fans in the US and Canada.”<sup>2</sup> Members of Cal 4Wheel were encouraged to also join this organization to continue to fight anti-automobile legislation. The very fact that this cartoon “kind of says it all” is a wonderful entry into the environmentalism of off-roaders. Of note is the fact that the fictitious “Tumbleweed National Monument” depicted in the cartoon has a sign with the triangular Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Whether this conflict of federal agencies suggests the overreach of the national monument system over a more recreation friendly agency like the BLM or it is simply a confusion of the myriad agencies that protect lands is unclear. What is clear though, is the idea that federal protection will close lands to a specific type of automobile. Further, the types of lands set aside for national monuments are clearly wastelands that serve no purpose other than to appease environmentalists. The rolling tumbleweed evokes an emptiness of space rather than a thriving ecosystem. What harm could a Jeep do to a landscape so devoid of life? I am less interested here in the ecology behind preserving

desert landscapes rather than the fact that the scientific knowledge that would merit closing off an ecosystem to automobiles is not common sense to off-roaders. Is this a case of off-roaders ignorant of a scientific truth or is it a case of such a truth being contested? Analysis of off-roader critique of environmental work along the Rubicon Trail suggests the latter.

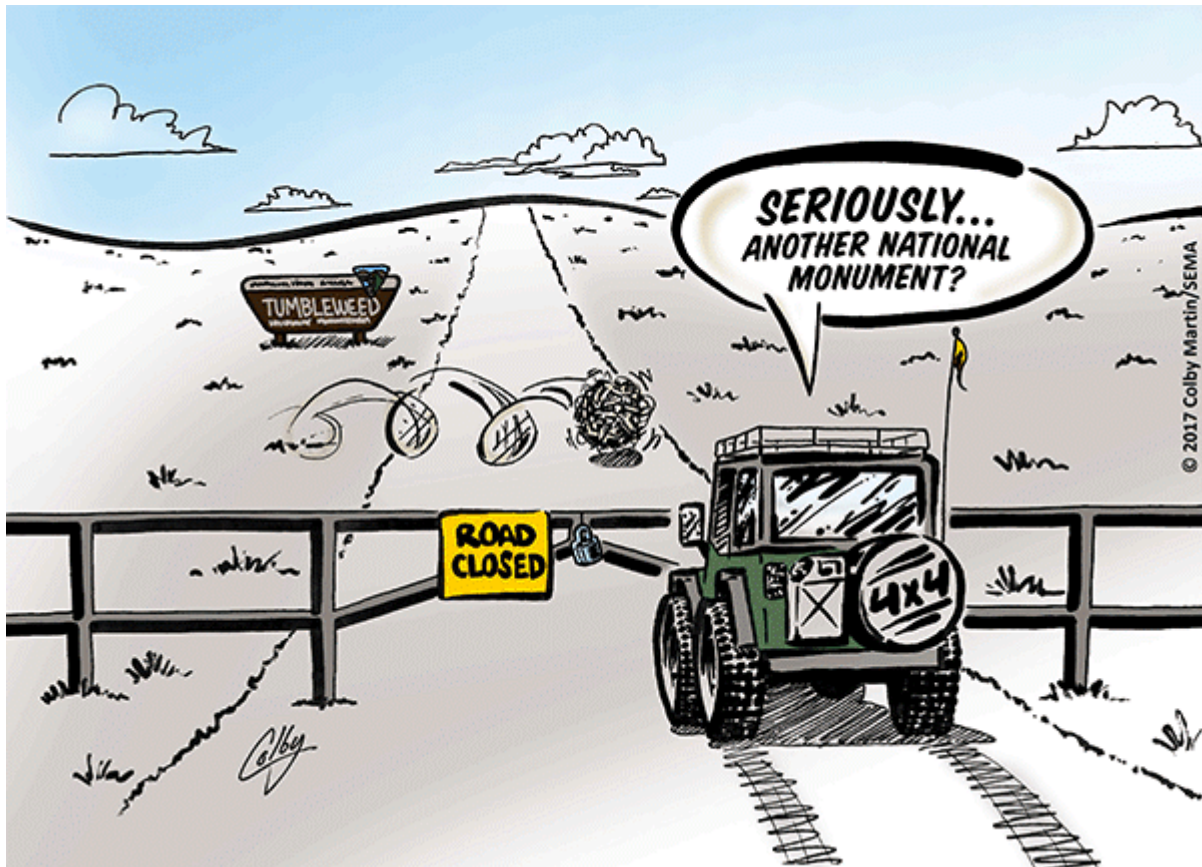


Figure 4.1. “Kind of says it all, doesn’t it?” Cartoon by Colby Martin of the SEMA Action Network.

Colby Martin’s cartoon highlights the apparent gloom, asceticism, and reliance on expert knowledge so often attributed to Western environmentalism. To be a proper environmentalist is to go without the pleasure that might come from using a place like

Tumbleweed National Monument. Experts make decisions about how one ought to experience nature, even if it makes no sense to the average person. Martin's cartoon fits with Nicole Seymour's study of "bad environmentalism," that is, ironic representations that point out the upper-class and dogmatic concept of traditional environmental thought looks to film, television, and literature for a new archive of the Anthropocene.<sup>3</sup> Seymour argues that a study of environmental media that do not fit into mainstream Western environmental narratives is a queer project that does not seek to relabel the media as "good" environmentalism. Her archive exists to "gesture to the dominant preference for environmentalism to be straight, white, clean, and neat, despite the queer, diverse, messy grossness of the world, not to mention of environmental politics."<sup>4</sup> While Seymour's archive is a nod to an alternative environmentalism, her goal is not to provide answers, but rather open up more questions. Nor is she advocating harming the Earth. According to Seymour, bad environmentalist films and television shows "generate multiple, shifting meanings and then implicate their audiences, for better or worse, in the process of sorting those meanings out."<sup>5</sup>

While I see use in troubling environmentalist narratives, both dominant and dissident, such work ought to question not just the archive, but the subjugation and affect brought about by those very works. Stephanie Rutherford's brilliant *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power* argues that a "green governmentality" exists in which state and corporate entities have shaped the discourse of nature. Rutherford speaks of a

Foucauldian governmentality, that is, power is used through productive means (as opposed to negative, repressive power) to shape the narrative of how nature ought to be cared for. Using an archive that involves forests, theme parks, and popular documentaries, Rutherford argues “that what occurs at these sites is a form of *governing*, defining the imaginings, discourse, and practices that make up what the Western bourgeois subject comes to know as nature.”<sup>6</sup> This nature, and the subjectivities produced within such a nature, are constructed through narratives of consumption and proper management. By managing the wilderness and natural resources, one can feel good about consuming nature.

Of note is Rutherford’s careful insistence on narrative in the deployment of power. Narratives can lead to more encompassing discourses, which according to Rutherford, following Foucault, have material consequences. As such, power relations are imbedded within discourses. Rutherford, though, is very clear in the difference between discourse and ideology:

Ideology, at least in the Marxist tradition, is imagined as an oppressive mechanism that seeks to coerce or obtain consent for a particular agenda. In this iteration, the exercise of power seems to come only from above—an authority that aims to control. However, Foucault’s articulation of power as not only repressive but inherently productive provides a key differentiator between ideology and discourse. For Foucault, power, and thus the ability to craft particular discourses, is not possessed or held but circulates via networks that work through and produce bodies, subjects, discourses, practices, institutions, and representations. This can come from anywhere, not necessarily the halls of power. Moreover, unlike ideology, within discourse itself there is a possible space for resistance.<sup>7</sup>

Using Foucault's method outlined in his first *History of Sexuality*, Rutherford continues by explaining that the multiplicity of discourse allows for resistance through re-articulation whereas ideology comes directly from above, most likely from the State.<sup>8</sup> A little later, Rutherford will suggest that one can in fact study discourse from a "Marxist-inspired approach that seeks to understand the operation of ideology and hegemony" though a Foucauldian approach to discourse avoids seeking Truth in order to understand what discourses do.<sup>9</sup>

Rutherford's accounting of Marxist conceptions of ideology suggest the power depicted in a book like George Orwell's *1984*. Orwell describes an authoritarian government that maintains total, repressive control over its subjects, even in ways that seem excessive: "There was even a whole subsection—*Pornosec*, it was called in Newspeak—engaged in producing the lowest kind of pornography, which was sent out in sealed packets and which no Party member, other than those who worked on it, was permitted to look at."<sup>10</sup> The idea that pornography would be produced for certain subjects by the State is exactly the type of repressive power Foucault was not interested in. But I would also argue that it does not follow that a focus on ideology and hegemony means a focus on state-sponsored repressive mechanisms. We can go back to Althusser to see a Marxist conception of positive power through his ideological state apparatuses.<sup>11</sup> What is most interesting here is that Rutherford somewhat echoes Stuart Hall in her concept of a re-articulation of discourses.



In his essay "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," Hall, working towards a more useful concept of ideology, not only critiques the Marxists, a group with which he identifies, but also directly engages with Foucault's concept of discourse. Hall joins Foucault in his rejection of a unified, most likely State, power that controls every aspect of a society. "The State is a contradictory formation which means that it has different modes of action, is active in many different sites: it is pluricentered and multi-dimensional. It has very distinct and dominant tendencies but it does not have a singly inscribed class character."<sup>12</sup> But Hall also sees Foucault as being too quick to replace State power with multiplicity and difference. The State does exist even if it is pluricentered:

The State condenses very different social practices and transforms them into the operation of rule and domination over particular classes and other social groups. The way to reach such a conceptualization is not to substitute difference for its mirror opposite, unity, but to rethink both in terms of a new concept—articulation. This is exactly the step Foucault refuses.<sup>13</sup>

Hall sees a new concept of ideology as being necessary to bridge multiplicity and the State, while simultaneously opening up possibilities for change. It is important to note that Hall is effectively done with Foucault roughly two pages into his essay. His real target is Althusser's concept of the reproduction of ideology rather than Foucault's dismissal of the concept altogether.<sup>14</sup> Althusser eschews "ideas" quite forcefully in his conception of ideology, replacing them instead with "practices."<sup>15</sup> It is through tangible practices that ideology is produced and reproduced, not through some ethereal stuff.

Hall, however, argues that Althusser runs the risk of fetishizing the material world and in turn forgetting about what goes on within the subject's mind. "Social relations exist, independent of mind, independent of thought. And yet they can only be conceptualized in thought, in the head."<sup>16</sup> As such, the mental space of ideology allows for what Hall terms articulation. Through articulation, ideological signs can be altered as resistance to dominant ideas. Following Gramsci, Hall argues that ideology operates using a manufactured "common sense" to convince subjects of the naturalness of both practices and ideas. "The point at which we lose sight of the fact that [common] sense is a production of our systems of representation is the point at which we fall, not into Nature but into the naturalistic illusion: the height (or depth) of ideology."<sup>17</sup> Through articulation, however, signs can be repositioned to challenge that common sense. Hall points to "black" as a term conveying a very negative idea as well as one thought of as being natural within a racially classified society. But Hall also points to a place like Jamaica, where the term has also been taken to signify something more positive. "A particular ideological chain becomes a site of struggle, not only when people try to displace, rupture or contest it by supplanting it with some wholly new alternative set of terms, but also when they interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by changing or re-articulating its associations, for example, from negative to positive."<sup>18</sup> In other words, dominant ideologies can be challenged through shifting the meaning of terms and thus challenging the manufactured consent behind the original

meaning. Rather, than “black,” I want to use this chapter to explore the articulation of “environmentalist.”<sup>19</sup>

We are now in a fuzzy space in which our very terms ideology and discourse appear to overlap. In part, the fault has been attributed to Hall, who has been criticized for blurring the distinction between the two concepts.<sup>20</sup> Purvis and Hunt, in their essay “Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...” wrestle between the two concepts in an effort to move forward with meaningful analytical tools. Despite their criticism of Hall’s loose terminology, they see his Gramscian approach as being the most valuable. Consent and common sense offer political solutions to altering relations of power, whereas Foucault’s claim that power produces resistance offers little insight considering how all-encompassing disciplinary power is. Purvis and Hunt argue that ideology and discourse need not be exclusive, but rather we need “a reformulation that establishes a distinction between discourse as *process* and ideology as *effect*.”<sup>21</sup>

According to Purvis and Hunt, discourse sets the stage for subject formation, but the subject becomes enmeshed in ideology when the signification makes hierarchy seem natural.

A study of ideology does not demand an abandonment of Foucault. Ideology and articulation were not exactly what Foucault was working towards in his lecture, “What is Critique?” and yet, what else could be Foucault be suggesting with his phrase “the politics of truth”?<sup>22</sup> Truth here is not the dogmatic truth of older Marxist

conceptions of ideology, but rather a negotiated truth of re-articulation. In his definition of critique, “the art of not being governed quite so much,”<sup>23</sup> which I utilized in the previous chapter, truth is a subjective concept. Critique means “*not* accepting as true... what an authority tells you is true, or at least not accepting it because an authority tells you that it is true, but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so.”<sup>24</sup> Foucault is connecting his ideas of critique to Kant’s, as well as to both Kant’s and Foucault’s argument of the Enlightenment being an attitude. He is articulating his methods or archaeology, strategy, and genealogy in order to de-implicate truth and knowledge by tracing the implication of knowledge and power. Foucault’s work here actually opens up the possibility for Hall’s concept of articulation.

Our work is limited if we do not account for ideology/critique/articulation. Rutherford’s analysis of power and nature runs into the trouble when ideology emerges. After tracing the power/knowledge produced in the American Museum of Natural History, Rutherford is struck by the ambiguity of reactions by the museum goers themselves. She reads the power/knowledge nexus of the museum as giving specific answers to environmental degradation that are found in many of the other sites of knowledge production she studies. Those concerned with the fate of the Earth can perform individual actions to make larger societal changes. According to Rutherford, “we are not called upon to change global structures of inequality that in large part produce ecological destruction. Rather, the answer lies in making simple changes to our

day-to-day lives.”<sup>25</sup> It is clear to Rutherford what the discourse is doing, but the ideological effects are elusive. “And what remains unclear is whether the intention to provoke people to act—to incorporate the technologies of the self so elaborately placed throughout the exhibit—actually worked, an uncertainty that runs throughout this book.”<sup>26</sup> While it is important to expose the discourse, we cannot stop with an uncertainty of its effects on subjects.

I want to use this chapter to argue that the distinction is important but that both concepts ought to be deployed together as Purvis and Hunt contended. To test the concept of discourse as process and ideology as effect, I will use this chapter to use Rutherford’s (Foucauldian) green governmentality to explore the discourse shaping the environment of the Rubicon Trail and then return to my fieldwork to study the ideological effects upon subjects of American automobility. Following Foucault, I am not interested in the truth about whether four-wheel drive vehicles belong in the wild. I am interested, however, on how the discourses and ideologies of both environmentalism and automobility produce a contested space along the Rubicon Trail. Further, I want to invoke Gramsci’s concept of common sense alongside Foucault’s Kantian critique to address the connection between discourse and ideology. Finally, as my fieldwork will show, Doreen Massey’s theory of space is of tremendous use in making sense of how off-roaders are producing space at the Jeep Jamboree. Placed together, discourse, ideology, common sense, critique, and space offer insight into a

politics of the Anthropocene. We have long passed the point of having a separate nature and society and as such, our work must deal with the entangled material and ideological spaces in which we live and struggle to preserve or change.

We can return to Colby Martin's cartoon depicting Tumbleweed National Monument. The dominant state-sponsored environmental discourse states that protecting nature demands a removal of human activity. Yet, off-roaders like Martin and others at Cal 4Wheel critique such a discourse. Clearly, they are resisting the governmentality behind the practice of setting aside wilderness, but again, we cannot stop there. One critical cartoon is not evidence of ideology. Rather, I want to study the process of discourse as it unfolded on the Rubicon Trail in the early 2000s in terms of environmental compliance with state agencies. Then, we shift to participant observation on the trail itself after the environmental battle in order to pull out the ideological effect of that discourse. The result shows how complex such environmental work is, as well as an articulation of who an environmentalist is and what one does.

### **'Significant amount of human fecal waste': Declaring an environmental emergency on the Rubicon Trail**

The recent environmental battle over the Rubicon Trail began with the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) issuing Cleanup and Abatement Order No. R5-2009-0030 to both El Dorado County and the US Forest Service.<sup>27</sup> While there were clear environmental issues along the Rubicon Trail in previous years, this

order forced the two agencies to quickly come up with a solution to clean up the water bodies surrounding the trail. El Dorado County had been preparing a management plan and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document in 2008 but had to stop due to a lack of funding.<sup>28</sup> After receiving complaints about conditions on the trail from environmentalists like Georgetown, California resident Karen Schambach, a woman who would personify the perceived overreach of environmentalists to many of the four-wheelers involved,<sup>29</sup> the Water Board conducted an investigation that led to the issuance of the Cleanup and Abatement Order.

The Water Board found that both El Dorado County and the US Forest Service were negligent and allowed the contamination of a variety of water bodies near the Rubicon, ranging from lakes to puddles. Legally speaking, both entities were committing a crime in that they allowed pollutants to enter State waters:

The Rubicon Trail is not adequately drained and maintained. Runoff from the trail has discharged, and has the potential to discharge, sediment and other waste into waters of the state. There are human sanitation problems, soil contamination from metals, and water contamination from petroleum-based fluids. Thus, [El Dorado County and the US Forest Service] have caused or permitted waste to be discharged or deposited where it will be, or has the potential to be, discharged to waters of the state. The Responsible Parties have created or threaten to create a condition of pollution or nuisance.<sup>30</sup>

The Water Board issued an ultimatum to both the county and Forest Service that they would need to not only clean up the trail but also produce annual reports documenting

their continued efforts to keep the local waters clean. Failure to comply would result in fines of \$10,000 per day per violation.

The order does mention that the county had spent funds and resources in an effort to clean up environmental conditions of the Rubicon Trail. The county was well aware of environmental degradation along the trail, perhaps most evident by the fact that in 2004, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors issued a “state of local emergency due to the significant amount of human fecal waste littered around the Spider Lake area.”<sup>31</sup> Such a description certainly conjures up images, but the order did not get into the details of this fecal emergency. Spider Lake is one of several lakes accessible from the Rubicon Trail, but more importantly is next to the Little Sluice section of the trail. As described in the previous chapter, Little Sluice has been a notoriously difficult spot to drive through since the beginning of Euro-American use of the Rubicon. In recent years, four-wheelers would spend the day testing their extreme four-wheel drive machines against the obstacles in Little Sluice and then camp near Spider Lake. They were not necessarily interested in reaching Rubicon Springs or traversing the entire route but were instead seeing if the Jeeps they modified were capable of taking on the most extreme terrain. With an absence of toilet facilities near the lake, as well as an inability to dig a latrine due to all of the exposed granite bedrock, four-wheelers had a challenge when it came to their own waste. While packing out any waste is the proper decorum in the backcountry, regardless of the mobilities involved in



getting there, these four-wheelers simply left it on the exposed rock. The term “white flower” was coined to describe the tufts of toilet paper sticking out of piles of feces and scattered all over the rocks.

Despite the obvious health and environmental concerns, El Dorado County did not satisfactorily fix the problem on their own. Environmentalists like Schambach saw off-roaders “whose recreation interests lay in not having a management plan were able to prevent any progress on a management plan.”<sup>32</sup> The California Regional Water Quality Control Board soon began investigating the conditions of the water along the trail and in 2008, four years after the emergency was declared, “Water Board staff observed multiple areas along the trail with visible human excrement and toilet paper.”<sup>33</sup> Vault toilets had been put into place at the Loon Lake trailhead, but nothing existed along the trail itself. Additionally, tests revealed low levels of oil, grease, copper, and cadmium in the water and soil along the trail resulting from damaged vehicles leaking fluid. “One water sample from Spider Lake also tested positive for fecal coliform following a high-use weekend in June.”<sup>34</sup>

White flowers were the most disturbing aspect of the order, but certainly not the only environmental concern. A study conducted by Drew Coe and Marty Hartzell of the Water Board found that “7 surveyed trail segments were contributing approximately 100 yd<sup>3</sup> of sediment annually to waters of the state.”<sup>35</sup> Additionally, a survey at the Ellis Creek trail crossing found that the sediment making up the creek’s

substrate was getting finer, potentially leading to impacts of trout species. Using work done in Coe's masters degree thesis, the authors estimate that the Rubicon Trail is responsible for 50 times the sediment than adjacent logging roads. Coe and Hartzell determined that sediment could be reduced "through a combination of additional and well-placed drainage on the trail, by restricting traffic during the wet season, and/or by limiting the number of vehicles on the trail."<sup>36</sup>

Apart from waste, the general behavior of four-wheelers on the Rubicon was a concern to some groups, though was not in the scope of the Cleanup and Abatement Order. A general sense of "lawlessness" existed around the Little Sluice area.<sup>37</sup> While exact details are sparse, firearms, alcohol, and all-night four-wheeling seem to be the norm. Due to the extreme difficulty in traversing Little Sluice, primarily due to the boulders pulled into the path, the four-wheelers involved drove custom rock crawlers, vehicles that were no longer street legal but instead augmented with gigantic tires and powerful engines to get over obstacles. In an online forum regarding the impending alteration of Little Sluice, "stoneyxj" lamented, "I hope to never experience the zoo that took place at [Little Sluice] on the weekend before Spider [Lake] was shutdown. Their [sic] is no doubt in my mind that the current 'management' is a direct result of that weekend and the many like it that took place prior."<sup>38</sup>

Four-wheelers expressed concern for law enforcement along the Rubicon Trail, but environmental groups like the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation, Public

Employees for Environmental Responsibility, the Snowlands Network, and the Center for Biological Diversity all focused on the ecological aspect of the Water Board's decision. Both primary stakeholders—the environmental groups and the four-wheelers—invoked 'truth' in the Foucauldian sense by appealing to scientific discourse.<sup>39</sup> Initially, the environmental groups demanded a reduction in use along the trail, whether through limits on traffic, seasonal closures, or a complete elimination of automobile use, and engaged with the US Forest Service, El Dorado County, and the Water Board through green governmentality. In keeping with Rutherford's themes, the environmental groups demonstrate "nature threatened, managed, and recuperated."<sup>40</sup> They differ from Rutherford's study in that apart from earning a living through environmental work, the environmentalists are not profiting from a capitalist use of nature. Yet, their version of environmentalism "seeks to govern what we understand and experience as nature, leaving little room for nature to be elsewhere or otherwise."<sup>41</sup> Nature demands governmental protection to limit modern human use.

The most extensive use of green discourse came from Chris Kassar, a biologist working for the Center for Biological Diversity, who prepared a study on the environmental impacts of off-roading along the Rubicon Trail.<sup>42</sup> The study is written for a scientific audience, cites its peer-reviewed and government agency sources, and has multiple charts depicting potentially threatened species. While the Water Board's order specifically discusses local conditions on the trail, Kassar's study is a much broader

treatise on how off-road vehicles (ORVs, though the more common term is off-highway vehicle or OHV) can impact natural environments. Interestingly, Kassar's sources for the environmental hazards of ORVs primarily focused on other environments, ranging from North American deserts to Dutch grasslands. The ORV use of which Kassar speaks is not just the Jeeps and other four-wheel drive vehicles found on the Rubicon, but also motorcycles, snowmobiles, and even jet skis. Further, the Rubicon Trail's status as a road is ambiguous in Kassar's study. Citing studies that have looked at fire roads, Kassar is concerned with the issue of "direct kills" in which ORVs make contact with and kill birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.<sup>43</sup> Kassar stresses that roads should not be thought of as mere linear features on a landscape, but rather larger impacts that maintain a "virtual footprint."<sup>44</sup> Existing government studies had failed to grasp the greater impact of off-road travel on the ecosystems surrounding the centerline of the Rubicon Trail. Of note though, is the similarity between Kassar's study and Rutherford's governmentality found in the American Museum of Natural History. Museum goers are given a "highly prescriptive account" of how they and other humans should engage with nature that invokes an ascetic quality.<sup>45</sup> For Kassar, the answer is simple, remove motorized vehicles and nature will not be harmed: "The most valuable management strategies will prevent damage by avoiding the creation of recreation opportunities in riparian zones and will mitigate damage by closing critical riparian, wetland and meadow areas like those found on the Rubicon trail to use."<sup>46</sup> There is no

discussion of larger national and global structures leading to environmental degradation. Despite Kassir's contention that a road should be thought of in greater context, she confines nature to existing within specific boundaries of riparian areas and ignores social activities occurring outside of such areas.

The green discourse was not left to environmental groups alone however. Members of the off-roading community were aware of the need to engage with the scientific and governmental aspect of the debate. The truth of the activity on the Rubicon was often challenged within the discourse itself. Responding to Coe and Hartzell's sediment study, "Bebe" a registered user on the Pirate4x4.com forums attacked the study through the peer-review process:

All I see is Marty Hartzell's contribution of manipulated aggrandized excuse for science in his "rapid assessment", (which was never peer reviewed, signed or stamped by anyone in the scientific community), as the catalyst for the completion of bridge, the CAO and everything that has happened on the trail since April of 2009. I don't even know how he and Drew Coe still have jobs. Except that whatever it is they are good at, must be advancing the agenda.<sup>47</sup>

The study not only contributed to the initial Cleanup and Abatement Order, but also for the construction of a bridge at the Rubicon Trail's Ellis Creek crossing to limit further sedimentation. A large part of Coe and Hartzell's study involved "pebble counts," in which sediments in the stream bed were measured to get a sense of erosion and its impact on water quality. Coe and Hartzell noted that sediments upstream from the Ellis Creek crossing had a median diameter of 28 mm, whereas the sediments downstream

had a median diameter of 5 mm. The authors of the study concluded that four-wheel drive vehicles led to the finer sediment, which would impact spawning of several species of trout.<sup>48</sup> The bridge was seen as necessary to ensure overall ecosystem health if vehicles were to continue driving on the Rubicon Trail.

The four-wheeling community fought the bridge as it would take away from the natural aesthetic of the trail as well as be what many saw as a waste of tax dollars. In the online fora, off-roaders repeatedly professed that they were not scientists, but then used logic and empirical evidence to refute the professional science behind the need for the bridge. "Bebe" posted before and after photos of Ellis Creek, one from June 2007 and one from May 2013 to show the before and after of the maintenance done on the trail. The 2007 photograph shows a full and fast-moving body of water, while the 2013 image shows fine grey sediment in a creek the more resembles a puddle.<sup>49</sup> Another poster, "sloyoter" played devil's advocate by asking questions of the context of "rain/snow accumulations and time" in causing the difference in the photographs.<sup>50</sup> "Bebe" responds that "the photos speak for themselves."<sup>51</sup> While such a statement departs from the scientific discourse, his position is backed up by Scott Johnston of the Rubicon Trail Foundation who later posts about a separate study of sedimentation in the creek that they had funded. This study was used by El Dorado County to challenge the US Forest Service's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared for management of the Rubicon Trail:

In regard to the pebble counts in Ellis Creek, the Rubicon Trail Foundation arranged for a pebble count study that is more reliable and which contradicts many of the assumptions in the DEIS concerning the effort of vehicles crossing Ellis Creek. El Dorado County requests that the DEIS use that pebble count study. The estimate of a 50-fold difference in erosion rates between logging roads and the Rubicon Trail is scientifically unsupported, factually incorrect, and should not be used.<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately, explicit reference to the Coe and Hartzell study was withdrawn from the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) at the Water Board's request as the study was not published and had been removed from public record.<sup>53</sup> Despite its removal though, the issue of sedimentation loomed over the FEIS and the bridge at Ellis Creek was ultimately built. Members of the four-wheeling community were frustrated by what they saw as environmentalists invoking scientific discourse without adhering to its empirical methods:

It's pretty ridiculous. Karen's [Schambach] science is as close to scientific, as her life is to 50 shades of grey [sic]. Fiction.

She'll have the bridge she really didn't care about, tax payer money will be spent to satisfy 4 people who don't use the trail nor do any work on it, we'll drive over the dumb bridge and mother nature will continue to move more sediment and sand than any tire ever could dream about moving.<sup>54</sup>

Invoking (and assuming much about) Schambach's sexuality has nothing to do with the science at work, and rightly raises questions of misogyny amongst the forum posters.

Nonetheless, such a comment is embedded within the larger question of

power/knowledge and highlights the frustration by four-wheelers that

environmentalists had the power to shape discourse. Despite the invalidation of the

study that led to the need for the bridge, the bridge was still built, suggesting, at least to those posting on the forum, that the battle was less about scientific truth and more about exerting power over those using the trail.

Schambach is an interesting figure in the Northern California off-roading community. According to an article in *High Country News*, a nonprofit, independent magazine that covers “issues and stories that define the American West,” Schambach first encountered off-road vehicles when she moved to Georgetown in 1984.<sup>55</sup> Noisy dirt bikes sped past her property, which led Schambach to research how to keep the machines “out of earshot.” Her research led her to the conclusion that the State of California was not doing enough to regulate Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) and began suing the responsible agencies to force compliance with environmental law. She admits that she initially wanted to ban OHVs altogether, but now is focused on ensuring that drivers comply with environmental regulations.

Four-wheelers involved with environmental compliance on the Rubicon Trail see Schambach as an outsider who is more interested in punitive measures against four-wheelers than in scientific based environmentalism. Interestingly, Schambach helped found the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation, though four-wheelers see her as less of a conservationist, i.e. looking towards a balance of human activity and natural resources, and more as a preservationist looking to keep humans out of nature altogether.



Order No. R5-2009-0030 led to significant work being done by El Dorado County, The US Forest Service, and volunteer organizations like Friends of the Rubicon to ensure that the Rubicon Trail would stay open to off-road use. The Cleanup and Abatement Order criticized the murky nature of the Rubicon's jurisdiction. Beginning in the nineteenth century, there has been no clear consensus as to the exact location of the trail nor of which entity was responsible for maintenance.<sup>56</sup> The El Dorado County Department of Transportation was well aware of the need for a technical understanding of the trail in 2004:

[The Rubicon Trail], owned by El Dorado County and the US Forest Service, with portions traversing private land, is beginning to show significant wear, causing concerns for the region's environmental stability and public safety. The boundaries, as vague as they are, have extended beyond the original trail on to private property, initiating legal questions about trespass, vehicle code enforcement, etc.<sup>57</sup>

The department mapped a centerline for the trail, basing it on historic maps and using differential global positioning system (GPS) equipment mounted to four-wheel drive vehicles. They also developed a map book highlighting the official route of the Rubicon Trail overlaid atop aerial photographs. In January of 2010, after the issuance of the Cleanup and Abatement Order, the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors voted to adopt an official easement of the Rubicon from which to work on repairing environmental damage. Three options were proposed, with the environmental groups advocating for the first and the off-roaders pushing for the third. The first would have

kept the trail close to the existing route with little bypasses, which meant that Little Sluice would need to be altered to allow “non-extreme” vehicles to pass.<sup>58</sup> The third option requested wider corridors for vehicle traffic in key areas to allow Little Sluice to have a bypass for vehicles who could not make it through. Ultimately, the board the second option that met in the middle, but nonetheless would reduce the size of the rocks in Little Sluice in an effort to reduce the extreme off-roaders who were perceived to be the real problem with feces and water quality on the trail.<sup>59</sup> The board meeting was attended by members of the off-roading community who posted updates of the meeting on Pirate4x4.com as well as social media sites like Facebook.<sup>60</sup> The general consensus of those on the forum was that despite well-reasoned arguments from those wanting to limit changes to the Rubicon Trail, government officials were too scared of being sued by environmentalists.

The county was granted full jurisdiction of the Rubicon Trail in 2012 by the US Forest Service.<sup>61</sup> The confusion over responsibility for maintenance and environmental stewardship was thus eliminated and the county and volunteer organizations began working to remove the Cleanup and Abatement Order. Erosion controls were placed on the trail, including the Ellis Creek Bridge. A law enforcement presence was increased to ensure that off-roaders stayed on the trail. Vault toilets were installed at key sites along the trail. The nature of the trail meant that servicing the toilets would be impossible for standard trucks, so the Rubicon Trail Foundation (RTF) built a custom Unimog truck

that still pumps out the toilets. Even this effort is used within the environmental discourse:

in 2010, the anti-Rubicon closurists were watching the trail intently. They campaigned the agencies (El Dorado County and the Forest Service), saying they couldn't spend money putting bathrooms on the trail because they had no way to service them, and of course that they couldn't spend money building a service truck because there was nothing to service. Chicken and egg, if you will. RTF built the truck and started providing the service to help solve the sanitation problem on the trail because it needed to be done, the same way the county built the bathrooms...because it needed to be done.<sup>62</sup>

Little Sluice was eventually altered to allow "a nearly stock four-wheel drive" vehicle to pass through.<sup>63</sup> A monitoring protocol was also implemented to check erosion during the wet season and close the trail should conditions merit.<sup>64</sup> Finally, a public education program was implemented that focused on the "four S's" – Safety, Sanitation, Spills, and Sedimentation.<sup>65</sup> Four color-coded bandanas were produced to hand out to users of the trail and remind them to be mindful of environmental conditions along the trail. In 2014, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board lifted the Cleanup and Abatement Order with the assumption that the county and volunteer groups would continue to monitor and maintain the trail.<sup>66</sup>

El Dorado County continues to document the work being done to maintain the environmental quality of the Rubicon Trail. Currently, the county is working with a variety of volunteers through an "Adopt a Trail" program.<sup>67</sup> In addition to companies like Jeep USA and MetalCloak, four-wheeling clubs like the "Hangtown Night

Crawlers,” “Gate Keepers Jeepers,” and “Mud Suckers 4WD” contribute volunteer hours to maintain the best management practice (BMP) erosion controls along the Rubicon. In 2018, 14.9 cubic yards of sediment was removed from the trail in 596 buckets. “The trail is in good hands with all the volunteers and people looking out for each other and the overall health and wellbeing of the Rubicon Trail.”<sup>68</sup> Despite the efforts, off-trail travel, trash, and white flowers are still reported.<sup>69</sup>

### **Off-roading with the kids**

I used the 2018 Jeep Jamboree as a means to analyze the ramifications of the Cleanup and Abatement Order. I was not simply interested in the presence of toilets, but also how the ideology of American automobility interacted with the environmental discourse within the subjects themselves. The very fact that Jeeps were still allowed on the Rubicon Trail meant that four-wheelers were complying with the environmental discourse surrounding the trail, but I was most interested in the ideologies at work. Camp Rubicon, the environmental program geared towards kids, would offer insight into how the subjects themselves responded to environmental discourse.

Checking into the Georgetown headquarters at the start of the Jeep Jamboree is a similar process to that of the Jeepers Jamboree with the exception that the children are the focus. Bags full of *tchotchkes* are still handed to the drivers and adult passengers, but the kids received special Camp Rubicon branded, insulated, soft lunch boxes that were

filled with a t-shirt, a paracord bracelet, an LED bracelet, hand sanitizer, biodegradable camp soap, an informational booklet, a notebook (recycled paper of course) and a bright orange bandana printed with useful survival information like common knots and animal tracks. Much like the recycled keychain discussed in the previous chapter, the sheer volume of stuff defied the idea of reducing consumption, but it did get my boys excited about spending time in the woods.

Not only was the free stuff centered on kids, but starting at the headquarters, other off-roaders were very excited to see my children traveling with me. The spectacle of my two boys in the Jeep or simply being next to me on this trip aroused joy out of many of our fellow participants. Along the Rubicon, all of the “Rock Rollers,” volunteers who assist drivers through difficult sections of the trail, who were over 25 struck up conversations with the boys as we drove along. There was a clear commitment to making sure that the kids were having a good time on the Rubicon Trail.

Driving from the Georgetown office through Wentworth Springs to the official start of the Rubicon Trail shows the complexity of nature in the Anthropocene. The area is heavily forested and just *feels* natural despite the paved road cutting through it. As I drove through that morning, it was difficult to think about the possible harm coming from my exhaust pipe when I was immersed in such a dense forest. The hybridity of humans and machines is clearly evident as we drive into forested areas. Yet, the

Anthropocene is about greater horizontal connections of all the other humans and machines outside of this forest that nonetheless contribute to changes in its ecosystems. Could I really separate driving a Jeep on this day from flying in a large commercial airplane to a conference across the country earlier in the year?

I had not been to the Rubicon Trail since the 2015 Jeepers Jamboree discussed in the previous chapter. Even though the Cleanup and Abatement Order had been rescinded in 2014, the Rubicon didn't appear much different that following year other than the removal of some boulders and the new bridge at Ellis Creek. The changes in the built environment were quite evident in 2018 however. Signs at the Loon Lake Trailhead clearly stated the basics of environmental responsibility on the Rubicon. Drivers were clearly instructed to stay within 25 feet of the centerline of the trail. The vault toilet at the trailhead was also adorned with signs informing off-roaders that it was their tax dollars that paid for the structure and that fellow off-roading volunteers kept it clean. As we progressed along the trail that day, we drove past multiple toilets installed to comply with Water Board.



**Figure 4.2. One of the vault toilets installed along the Rubicon Trail to combat “white flowers.” Photo by the author.**

The driving was slow; it took seven hours to travel seven and a half miles. Not only is the terrain challenging, but a lot of Jeeps and other four-wheel drives are on the trail at these events and people get stuck or break down. I could not help but think of Kassar’s concern with roadkill on the trail as well as the scene in the first Austin Powers movie in which a henchman is run over by a slow-moving steamroller. Despite the slow crawl, the drivers are in good spirits and socialize when traffic stops. As on the Jeepers Jamboree, the participants are not from one class. I spoke with working class off-roaders

who were driving older but capable rigs and upper-middle class drivers in very new, very expensive Jeeps. We drove next to several obese drivers for a little while, which sparked thoughts on accessibility in the wilderness.

The slow drive meant I also had the opportunity to talk about a variety of things with my boys. The oldest, Jack, asked questions about the mechanics of driving a manual transmission as well as how to negotiate all the rocks in our way. The youngest, Alex, who was six at the time, had been with me on Jeep trips before, but had never been on a trail as difficult as the Rubicon. After driving into "Gatekeeper," the first obstacle encountered from the Loon Lake Trailhead, Alex was panicked, convinced we were all going to die. Gatekeeper had been reduced as part of the Cleanup and Abatement Order, but it still violently threw our Jeep about as we crossed it. I had to assuage Alex's fears as best I could by explaining that our rig could handle the trail, that I wouldn't take him out here if I thought it was dangerous, and so on. A pack of M&Ms also helped to calm him. He still was convinced that the Jeep was going to roll over every time it slightly tilted. At one point we had stopped on the trail where another dad was pulling on the roll bar of his Jeep to show his kids that it was in no danger of rolling.

Not driving an extreme rock crawler, I did not mourn the passing of Little Sluice, nor did any of the drivers I spoke with on the trail. The Rubicon still felt like the Rubicon I had grown up with. Erosion was evident of course. Everyone who drives the



trail comments on how it gets harder in different spots each year. Jeeps are coated with dust. The trail itself has sections that are obviously worn down in relation to the rest of the landscape (see Figure 4.3).



**Figure 4.3. The fact that the Rubicon Trail has sunk into the landscape shows that erosion has taken place. Photo by the author.**

While erosion is evident, so too is environmental compliance. Rocks, logs, and at times survey flagging clearly block off forbidden areas that stray too far from the Rubicon's centerline. Off-roaders were clearly still using the Rubicon Trail to escape urban automobility and to experience nature, but no one complained that they were

confined to the trail itself. In fact, there was plenty of evidence to suggest that environmental compliance did not render the Rubicon impotent in facilitating a nominal resistance to the law.

At the end of the first day, we descended into Rubicon Springs. Even though the campground is near, boulders of all sizes make the drive rough until you are parked. We bounced around until we reached a woman who was helping to direct jeepers to open campsites. When she saw Alex's heavily padded car seat she gave me a fist bump. "You're the second car seat of the day" she announced. Shocked at how many other six-year-olds I assumed had already made it to camp, I responded, "The second? But it's the Rubicon!" She told me that that was the response the other parents had though with a slightly different inflection. It was the Rubicon, meaning that laws about car seats did not apply. Being a registered nurse, she was happy to see me taking the steps to protect my small son. As such, she let me know about one campsite that was still open near where the volunteers camped. The site was secluded but still close to where the food was served so we wouldn't have to hike too far at mealtimes.

We set up our tent and then strolled through Rubicon Springs. Alex described it as looking like the Wild West. The primitive nature of the campground evoked the idea of settlers in his mind. There were a mix of the permanent, yet simple wooden structures of Rubicon Springs interspersed with tents nestled in between large coniferous trees. It was a different spectacle than any of the other campgrounds we had

stayed at in the past. People were out socializing. Rubicon Springs was clearly a human space, but one that connected the social with nature in a way that my boys weren't used to back home in suburban Southern California. They quickly discovered other kids and spent the rest of the afternoon climbing all of the granite that surrounded us.

After dinner was served that night, a movie projector was set up in the middle of camp to show the film *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*. A large screen was erected and families set up camp chairs all around. The company MetalCloak, a manufacturer of aftermarket bumpers, fenders, and armor for Jeeps, sponsored the movie and supplied free popcorn. If the myriad vehicles parked around us were not enough to distinguish this wilderness experience from how environmentalists conceive of getting out into nature, watching a film on a big screen certainly did. Additionally, the film choice was interesting, as it centers around a rainforest based video game. We were sitting in the forest watching a film about kids being sucked into a virtual forest. My children thought nothing of it and I used the time to nap.

The next morning, we learned that we were visited by at least one bear, who left some of his or her fur inside our Jeep. Bears walk throughout the campground at night looking for food left out by careless jeepers. Some of the boys' lunch from the previous day had been left in the backseat and we found the wrapper a few yards away from our campsite. My boys were excited, and a little nervous when they realized we still had another night in camp. Despite all of the machines surrounding us, they had never been

that close to a bear, even if they did sleep through the experience. Again, the experience was not that of roughing it in the backcountry, but rather a new connection of society and nature.

At breakfast, we were in line with Steve Morris, a founding figure in four-wheeling along the Rubicon. Steve was the official historian of the Jeepers and Jeep Jamborees. Morris Rock is named in honor of the spot at which he parked his Jeep and winch at the top of the imposing Cadillac Hill to help pull up those rigs that couldn't quite climb the mountain. As we waited in line for our breakfast, Steve discussed how Rubicon Springs is a place for kids to grow up. The children connect to the place and therefore want to preserve it. The kids represent a continuation of the practices that these adults had grown up with. It was important to keep the trail and the camp open to let future generations have the experience. Sadly, Steve died at the age of 89 at Rubicon Springs the next year during the 2019 Jeepers Jamboree.

Camp Rubicon activities were planned for all of the kids in camp. We met at the main stage in Rubicon Springs and Rubicon Trail Foundation members, both male and female, began instructing the kids, ranging from ages six to fourteen and an even mix of boys and girls, how to properly poop in the woods. Adults demonstrated "wag bags," which are sealable bags used to contain waste that can then be disposed of when the user returns to civilization. A chemical is added to the waste to render it inert and the bag itself is designed to degrade within a year. The kids giggled during the

demonstration, and the adults did their best to maintain composure. Once the kids understood how to relieve themselves in the backcountry, they were given Camp Rubicon branded first-aid kits, refillable water bottles, and drawstring backpacks and then were led on a hike to explore a rock cabin dating back to the early twentieth century. Along the way, adults pointed out different species of plants and animals. The organisms were all connected to human use in some way. We were shown the lodgepole pine, useful for making telephone poles and an area where native trout were farmed in the nineteenth century to feed Virginia City, Nevada during its boom as a mining town. The idea of nature, forest, and wilderness still had a human component.

The adults leading the hike spoke with the kids about the realities of protecting nature and the importance of water quality. All of the issues resulting in the Cleanup and Abatement Order were discussed with these children. Notably, the order itself was not mentioned, nor were the environmental lawsuits filed to stop four-wheeling on the trail. Rather, children were taught that nature was a resource that needed to be treated with respect in order to keep using it. Many of the adults leading the hike were parents of some of the children taking part in the Camp Rubicon activities. One mother spent some time showing her son the locations where she would camp when she was young. The hike made it clear that the members of the Rubicon Trail Foundation were interested in protecting the forest surrounding the Rubicon not for the sake of preserving non-human ecosystems, but rather to ensure the continued reproduction of a

very specific place. After visiting the historical cabin, the hike went into an opening in the forest where members of the Sheriff’s Department waited. The men added to the discussion of the importance of not pooping on the trail and handed out yellow bandanas with the phrase “ERADICATE ‘white flowers.’” The officers clearly felt silly discussing the topic, but nonetheless conveyed the importance. One explained to the kids, “Poop is bad for the environment, cause what it does is gets into the water and all flows to our sinks, which is not where we want it.”



**Figure 4.4.** Officers of the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department hand out bandanas while explaining the importance of proper waste disposal on the trail. Photo by the author.

Once the kids had received bandanas, they were allowed to explore the law enforcement Jeeps and other equipment. Like the actions discussed in the previous chapter, this worked to show that the officers belonged to the four-wheeling community.

I spoke with several officials with the Jeep Jamboree and the Rubicon Trail Foundation about the reaction to and changes imposed by the environmental regulations. The local off-roading community had been resistant and resentful regarding the state control over the Rubicon. It quickly became clear that compliance with environmental groups was “100% of where to focus our attention” if the Rubicon Trail was to stay open.<sup>70</sup> This was a pragmatic environmentalism that focused on the conflict that occurred from 2009-2014. The proper disposal of human waste was of the utmost importance, and that knowledge was being imparted onto the next generation of four-wheelers. Yet, the environmental work was not a cynical effort to assuage outsiders. Camp Rubicon was developed to teach children how to both enjoy and respect the ecosystems of the Sierra Nevada. Kids needed to be taught lessons early like, “why does a beaver cut down trees, why does a bear shit in the woods?” Further, Camp Rubicon was designed to show children that even the scary members of an ecosystem had a right to exist: “rattlesnakes aren’t bad; we’re in their home.” Later that day, a crawfish contest was held, in which the kids explored the Rubicon River and tried to catch the largest crawfish. It was stressed as a purely catch-and-release endeavor; the

kids would get in trouble if the crawfish died. Apart from being cruel to the crustaceans, the adults running the contest explained that they were an important food source for the otters that called the Rubicon home. Some of the kids were comfortable in grabbing the crawfish; others were concerned with their claws. That was the point of the contest though; it was to get the kids to engage with nature. An ecosystem was something to experience as well as respect.

Camp Rubicon showed how nature is produced as space, rather than an essential object to be discovered. Even before the Anthropocene was invoked in such studies, nature and the social have been known to overlap. Rubicon Springs as a place clearly presents a blending of nature/social. Yet, to fully grasp what such a place means within the Anthropocene, we must move beyond a static conception of place. This is not Heideggerian dwelling within a preexisting fourfold.<sup>71</sup> Rubicon Springs and the Rubicon Trail are less poetic than they are political. The spaces are made and remade with each trip. Understanding such places and spaces in the Anthropocene must be understood through a theory of space. Doreen Massey's conception of space reimagines it in three parts. Space is: 1.) "the product of interrelations" at every scale, 2.) multiplicity of "contemporaneous heterogeneity", and 3.) always becoming; "perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far."<sup>72</sup> The forest surrounding the Rubicon Trail is produced through the interrelations of human and non-human actants that are meeting at the same moment in time. The regimes of truth found within the



scientific discourse suggest that the best way to protect nature is through ecological study that limits human and technological intervention. Yet, this modern approach is at odds with those who see nature as something distinctly connected to human use. When both approaches met in the early 2000s, a new environmental space was produced, one that resulted in the blending of stories told about nature and its preservation. Massey sees space as being political as well as never predetermined. The multiplicities at work on the Rubicon Trail prevent a predetermined idea of modernization and progress. It was clear from those in charge of the Jeep Jamboree and Camp Rubicon, that they were working to critique the term “environmentalist” and challenge the discourse.

The ideology of American automobility was also being reproduced at the Jeep Jamboree. In addition to the practices described in the previous chapter, children were shown that nature need not be free of machines. The important aspect though, was that a four-wheel drive vehicle could not be driven with reckless abandon in the forest. Not only would such driving result in a broken axle or cracked radiator, and thus arrest one’s mobility, but an ethics of four-wheeling was taught to show kids how they ought to drive when they are able. The “Tread Lightly” course used small radio-controlled Jeeps to teach the children how to properly approach obstacles and minimize impact on this and other trails. Again, continued compliance with the Cleanup and Abatement Order was highlighted, as was evident by the small port-a-potty on the course (Figure 4.5).



**Figure 4.5. A small port-o-potty is included on the Tread Light R/C Course to teach children environmental responsibility along the Rubicon Trail. The water bottle was simply added for scale. Photo by the author.**

### **Annually reproducing place**

During the 2018 Jeep Jamboree, there was a constant tension between Rubicon Springs and the Rubicon Trail as a liminal space in which everyday lives were left

behind and the political realities of environmental compliance in the forest. Participants took part on the trip in part to see a beautiful, natural place, but there was more to it. In camp, a couple from San Diego, California explained to me that it was their first time on the Rubicon Trail and that it had definitely lived up to the hype as the most difficult trail in North America. This trip wasn't just about getting out in nature, but also meeting a challenge and taking pride in getting to Rubicon Springs. They said that they did not expect the experience that they were having in camp, but it was a bonus. They were talking about the general atmosphere of camp, highlighted by the fact that we had just been served dinner by people in dinosaur costumes. The Rubicon was not a space of everyday, mundane automobility, but rather a liminal space that showed what, at least in the eyes of the four-wheelers, the right kind of automobiles and the right kinds of roads could produce.

Repeatedly, the kids were told that this weekend was all about them. The work done by four-wheelers to comply with the green governmentality of the state was not simply about keeping the Rubicon open at that moment, but to ensure that future generations could continue to experience it. Those in charge of events like the Jeep Jamboree knew that seizing a word like environmentalist and teaching their children how to both respect ecosystems and use four-wheel drive vehicles as a means to get farther into those ecosystems.

On the last day, my boys and I got up early to try and beat the traffic involved with everyone headed out of camp towards Lake Tahoe. We moved a little faster, four hours to travel about eight and a half miles. The Rubicon ends near Highway 89, which follows the west side of the lake and takes traffic to either North or South Lake Tahoe. We were headed south, and now that we were back in civilization, we had to wait for many tourists trying to parallel park their cars along the narrow highway. A number of beautiful hikes and vistas exist in this area, and the tourists were simply driving their cars to the various trailheads to engage with nature. It was a summer weekend, which meant that there were thousands of cars on the highway. I couldn't help but get frustrated with many of the drivers, who nervously and awkwardly maneuvered their vehicles into small parking spaces and therefore stopped traffic on the highway. It wasn't the fact that I was experiencing traffic; my weekend had been filled with waiting for other vehicles. Having just spent the weekend fusing with my own Jeep so that I could competently drive and park it anywhere, I instinctively resented these so-called drivers. Some of this was the fact that I was tired having gotten up at dawn after a long weekend, but I realized that I was really faulting these drivers for not being *good* subjects of American automobility. It was not the fact that they were driving cars to nature, that seemed normal. My problem was that they were not properly driving to nature as I had just spent a weekend understanding it. Thinking about this experience on the long drive back to Southern California, I realized that this was a telling moment

of ideological control. I had accepted that cars in nature were, well, natural, but I was also judging other subjects based upon their abilities within and adherence to American automobility. Ideology had firmly taken hold through the practices of the previous 72 hours.

Having made it past Highway 89, we pulled over to get fuel in South Lake Tahoe. Once done, we pulled back out onto Highway 50 and as we did, we passed a black Jeep CJ-7 who had also just come from the Jeep Jamboree. Both of our Jeeps stood out from the other automobiles, we were covered in dust and mud. I had not interacted with the driver of the black Jeep over the weekend, but he lit up when he saw us and shouted, “see you next year!” There was no question that such an event could not be confined to one weekend in one year. The Rubicon would continue to be there in the years to come.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jeepers and Jeep Jamboree, Inc., “Camp Rubicon,” <https://www.jeepersjamboree.com/camprubicon.html>

<sup>2</sup> SEMA Action Network, “Enlist to Stay Informed,” [https://pages.message.sema.org/SANsignup?\\_ga=2.207686162.1247747569.1566761407-617078894.1566761407](https://pages.message.sema.org/SANsignup?_ga=2.207686162.1247747569.1566761407-617078894.1566761407)

<sup>3</sup> Nicole Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism*, 231.

<sup>6</sup> Stephanie Rutherford, *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xi, her emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, xxiii.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990 [1978]), 100-102.

<sup>9</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, xxv.

<sup>10</sup> George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Signet Classics, 1950), 43.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation).” In *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 2012 [1970]), 117.

- 
- <sup>12</sup> Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2, no. 2 (June 1985): 93.
- <sup>13</sup> Hall, "Signification," 93.
- <sup>14</sup> See Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power" in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage, 1980), 118.
- <sup>15</sup> Althusser, "Ideology," 128.
- <sup>16</sup> Hall "Signification" 105
- <sup>17</sup> Hall, "Signification" 105.
- <sup>18</sup> Hall, "Signification" 112.
- <sup>19</sup> These terms need not be exclusive. See Carolyn Finney *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
- <sup>20</sup> Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (Sept. 1993) :496.
- <sup>21</sup> Purvis and Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology" 496, their emphasis.
- <sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" In *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007 [1978]), 47.
- <sup>23</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 45.
- <sup>24</sup> Foucault, "Critique," 46, his emphasis.
- <sup>25</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, 35.
- <sup>26</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, 38.
- <sup>27</sup> Pamela C. Creedon, Adopted Cleanup and Abatement Order R5-2009-0030, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board\\_decisions/adopted\\_orders/el\\_dorado/r5-2009-0030\\_enf.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/el_dorado/r5-2009-0030_enf.pdf)
- <sup>28</sup> California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region, Executive Officer's Report, July 31/August 1 2008, [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public\\_notices/petitions/water\\_quality/docs/a2239/overview/Document s/AR-Docs%20\(166\).pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality/docs/a2239/overview/Document%20s/AR-Docs%20(166).pdf), 18; the timing coincides with a major recession and general reduction in government services
- <sup>29</sup> Karen Schambach to Gaylon Lee, August 22, 2011.
- <sup>30</sup> Creedon, 7.
- <sup>31</sup> Creedon, 4.
- <sup>32</sup> Schambach to Lee, 11
- <sup>33</sup> Creedon, 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Creedon, 5.
- <sup>35</sup> Drew Coe and Marty Hartzell, *Assessment of Sediment Delivery from the Rubicon Jeep Trail*, accessed at [http://www.calsport.org/RubiconTrail/rubicon\\_trail\\_cao\\_att.pdf](http://www.calsport.org/RubiconTrail/rubicon_trail_cao_att.pdf), 11.
- <sup>36</sup> Coe and Hartzell, *Assessment*, 11.
- <sup>37</sup> <http://www.delalbright.com/Rubicon/FOTR%20Master%20Plan%20Final%20Draft.pdf>
- <sup>38</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/1093082-little-slucce.html>
- <sup>39</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, 184.
- <sup>40</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, xi.
- <sup>41</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, 90.

- 
- <sup>42</sup> Chris Kassar, *Environmental Impacts of ORVs on the Rubicon Trail*, (Oakland: Center for Biological Diversity, March 17, 2009), [https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public\\_lands/off-road\\_vehicles/pdfs/Appendix\\_Env\\_Impacts\\_Rubicon.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/off-road_vehicles/pdfs/Appendix_Env_Impacts_Rubicon.pdf)
- <sup>43</sup> Kassar, *Environmental*, 7.
- <sup>44</sup> Kassar, *Environmental*, 13.
- <sup>45</sup> Rutherford, *Governing*, 34-35.
- <sup>46</sup> Kassar, *Environmental*, 5.
- <sup>47</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/1365337-ellis-creek-bridge-update-5.html>
- <sup>48</sup> Coe and Hartzell, *Assessment*, 7.
- <sup>49</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/1365337-ellis-creek-bridge-update-2.html>
- <sup>50</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/1365337-ellis-creek-bridge-update-2.html>
- <sup>51</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/1365337-ellis-creek-bridge-update-2.html>
- <sup>52</sup> USDA Forest Service, "Appendix C," Final Environmental Impact Statement: Rubicon Trail Easement and Resource Improvement Project, (El Dorado County: USDA, April 2012), 459 (of PDF).
- <sup>53</sup> USDA Forest Service, "Appendix D," Final Environmental Impact Statement: Rubicon Trail Easement and Resource Improvement Project, (El Dorado County: USDA, April 2012), 495 (of PDF.)
- <sup>54</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/1365337-ellis-creek-bridge-update.html>
- <sup>55</sup> Joshua Chaffin, "A Gutsy Activist Challenges a Powerful Industry" *High Country News*, July 3, 2000 <https://www.hcn.org/issues/188/10012>
- <sup>56</sup> Chris Daley, "Forest Service, county ink Rubicon Trail pact," *Mountain Democrat*, August 17, 2012, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/forest-service-county-ink-rubicon-trail-pact/>
- <sup>57</sup> Loren Massaro and Randy Pesses, "The Rubicon Trail: Mapping the World's Wildest County Road" *Professional Surveyor Magazine*, 24, no. 3 (March 2004): 8.
- <sup>58</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/857966-county-board-supervisors-meeting-2.html>
- <sup>59</sup> El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, "Minutes," Placerville, CA, January 26, 2010, 10.
- <sup>60</sup> <https://www.pirate4x4.com/forum/rubicon-trail/857966-county-board-supervisors-meeting.html>
- <sup>61</sup> Daley, "Forest Service."
- <sup>62</sup> <https://www.rubicontrailfoundation.org/blog/>
- <sup>63</sup> Chris Daley and James R. "Jack" Sweeney, "Sweeney defends 'Sluice' work," *Mountain Democrat* October 5, 2012, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/sweeney-defends-sluice-work/>
- <sup>64</sup> El Dorado County Community Development Agency, Transportation Division, "Rubicon Trail Monitoring Protocol," Placerville, CA, July 2013, [https://edcgov.us/government/rubicon/quality%20protection%20plan/documents/RubiconTrail\\_MonitoringProtocol\\_Final2013.pdf](https://edcgov.us/government/rubicon/quality%20protection%20plan/documents/RubiconTrail_MonitoringProtocol_Final2013.pdf)
- <sup>65</sup> El Dorado County, *2014 Rubicon Trail Brochure*, <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/Rubicon/documents/Rubicon%20Trail%20Brochure.pdf>
- <sup>66</sup> Chris Daley, "State lifts Clean-up and Abatement Order for Rubicon Trail," *Mountain Democrat* November 17, 2014, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/state-lifts-clean-up-and-abatement-order-for-rubicon-trail/>
- <sup>67</sup> Vicki Sanders and Justin Williams, *Rubicon Trail 2018 Annual Report*, <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/Rubicon/Pages/monitoring.aspx>
- <sup>68</sup> Sanders and Williams, *Rubicon*, 8.
- <sup>69</sup> Sanders and Williams, *Rubicon*, 9.
- <sup>70</sup> Interviews conducted at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Jeep Jamboree, Rubicon Springs, California, August 3-5, 2018.
- <sup>71</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), 150.
- <sup>72</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 9.

## Conclusion

Wouldn't it be wonderful  
If we could save the world and all  
Simply by collecting up  
Tin cans and empty bottles  
We all want to believe it's true  
But it don't matter what you do  
So long as we continue to  
Burn our way through fossils

Billy Bragg, "King Tide and The Sunny Day Flood" *Bridges Not Walls*

"These days it is a tricky business to critique efforts at environmental regulation. Given the predictions of climate change, biodiversity loss, and species extinction, it seems impolitic to challenge programs that appear to ameliorate human effects on the world."

Stephanie Rutherford, *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power*, 183.

The Anthropocene is bound to get messier as the epoch carries on. The blurred lines of the social and the natural will continue to thwart systems analyses of the Earth's environmental problems.<sup>1</sup> The Anthropocene is not about ecological harmony; such a concept is so Holocene. I would instead argue that making sense of the Anthropocene, or whatever anyone wants to call living on a planet that has increased 1.4° F (0.8° C) since the Industrial Revolution, will entail understanding a sense of place specific to subjects of power and ideological relations. What I have attempted to show here is how a focus on place-making through interconnected objects, flows, and ideas offers if



nothing else, a way to understand how people produce their own hybridized social/natural places. In the absence of an original pristine natural state of the planet, a concept which Chapter One showed has never existed, making sense of the environment requires a sustained study of humans and non-humans interacting within a specific place.

While I have stressed a focus on the local, the global scale should not be abandoned. Mobilities occur at a variety of scales and are illuminating of social and natural phenomena, but it is easy to fixate on one scale at the expense of others. As Billy Bragg's lyrics above explain, individual actions are impotent towards addressing climate change if massive structural changes are not addressed. Both sides on the debate about the continued use of the Rubicon Trail, that is, those wanting to shut it down to all motorized use and those wanting to preserve its designation as a road, either ignored or overlooked the greater environmental problems not confined to the Eldorado National Forest. Environmentalists were focused on local watersheds, but not global flows of both oil and carbon emissions that will continue to threaten ecological health. Effectively, the environmentalist position was not that all automobiles are bad for the environment, but that automobiles should be kept out of nature in order to preserve nature. While such an omission could simply be practical from a political standpoint, the activity on the Rubicon Trail shows just how important spatial analysis of the greater environment is as we continue to make sense of our engagement with the

world. Any geographic work done to trace the flows of ideas and objects into a place will no doubt see just how human nature actually is, but also that there is no inherent problem with mixing humans and nature.

As Stephanie Rutherford laments in her book *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power*, it seems hazardous to environmental health to spend one's time critiquing those who wish to *save* the environment.<sup>2</sup> Alexis Shotwell wrestles with similar concerns as she questions the validity of an original state of natural purity in her book, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*.<sup>3</sup> But what both of these authors are working towards is what they see as a better way of considering the environment. Rutherford is concerned that the use of Foucauldian power to observe, know, and control nature limits the very questions we can ask in an effort to preserve it. Shotwell similarly works against purity because not only has it never existed, but the concept gets in the way of imagining other possible worlds.<sup>4</sup> Rather than root for the continued degradation of ecosystems, both authors are working towards their own ideas of a better Earth.

While I find works like Shotwell's and Rutherford's of great value in that they force the reader to question the common sense of environmentalism, I also fear that such projects often gloss over the dangers of working against a full acceptance of environmental discourse. In *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*, Nicole Seymour collects an archive of art that uses humor to work counter to

Western environmentalism.<sup>5</sup> Seymour stresses that she is not interested in relabeling such art as good environmentalism, but instead wants to show how such works “gesture to the dominant preference for environmentalism to be straight, white, clean, and neat, despite the queer, diverse, messy grossness of the world, not to mention of environmental politics.”<sup>6</sup> The television shows and movies discussed show how characters depicting hypocritical preservationists and well-meaning but ill-informed consumers all nod at, as Shotwell might put it, the impossibility of environmental purity. But what of the *really* bad environmentalists? That is, what happens when irony and satire blur into something else entirely?

Not long ago I was camping and off-roading at an event held by the California Four Wheel Drive Association (Cal4Wheel) in the Panamint Valley of California. This was not so much a research trip as it was to spend some time with one of my kids. At the campsite and headquarters for the event, which was simply a flat space out in the Mojave Desert, a booth was set up to sell Cal4Wheel merchandise and encourage nonmembers to join by explaining the association’s mission. Cal4Wheel is primarily interested in promoting “the advancement of vehicle oriented outdoor recreation” though this requires a certain amount of environmental responsibility and a focus on “conservation projects throughout California.”<sup>7</sup> The booth at this event had two posters highlighting the success of some of these conservation projects. The booth also had a table with a number of patches and stickers for sale, including one with a drawing of a

Jeep and the words “ENDANGERED SPECIES” surrounding it. Another had the words “SIERRA CLUB” with a red line crossing it out. I laughed at the endangered species idea since we were surrounded by dozens if not hundreds of Jeeps at that moment, but the anti-Sierra Club patch juxtaposed with the association’s environmental work was a fascinating tableau of the production of knowledge.

At a Cal4Wheel event like this, motorhomes, trailers, and tents are spread out over a vast distance. As my son and I were walking near our campsite, a Toyota Land Cruiser drove by. The rig was painted with a camouflage design and had a giant sticker across the rear window that read “CLIMATE CHANGER.” While I was interested in the different ways one might be an environmentalist, through either Sierra Club style preservation or four-wheeler style conservation, I was disgusted by this sticker. Such a move is nothing short of taking joy in being an asshole. It is one thing to debate the validity of environmental discourse, it is quite another to want the Earth to burn. So while I still believe it is important to delve into environmental work that isn’t typically seen as such, that I think we need even more work along the lines of Shotwell, Rutherford, and Seymour, I want to stress that the outcome isn’t always a good thing. There is the very simple fact that not everyone driving a four-wheel drive vehicle cares about the environment, whether through traditional or other knowledges. Yet, I still contend that we need to sincerely question the mobilities, spaces, and places produced through SUV use. Ann Pellegrini’s study of Hell House performances, which are

conservative Christian events that resemble Halloween-style haunted houses but designed to teach young people the dangers of homosexuality, satanism, and abortion, is informative here. In addition to a thorough description of what goes on within a Hell House, Pellegrini is making a larger point that cultural critics should not dismiss or mock such events for their content, but rather focus on how emotion plays a role in what the Christian participants are getting from the events. Pellegrini is interested in “what Hell Houses *do*” rather than “what Hell Houses *say*.”<sup>8</sup> Getting angry by a sticker like “Climate Changer” runs the risk of overlooking why someone would attach such a sticker in the first place. The concept of the Anthropocene is a work in progress and is far from neat discussions of technological solutions to our climate woes. The construction of the concept is bound to lead us to individuals and groups with whom we disagree, but a hybrid human/nature future is bound to be messy and disconcerting. If nothing else, we must be willing to risk getting stuck in the slop before we can even begin to figure out a way forward.

Bruno Latour states, “To live in the epoch of the Anthropocene is to force oneself to redefine the political task *par excellence*: what people are you forming, with what cosmology, and on what territory?”<sup>9</sup> I can think of no greater encapsulation of what challenge faces us as the Earth continues to warm. “What people are you forming?” The recent environmental battles on the Rubicon Trail, despite the clear anger and frustration, show multiple groups, ranging from state officials to concerned citizens,

working towards a common goal. Despite the clear environmental degradation, the four-wheelers wanted continued use of the trail. They were not seeking a pristine wilderness, but rather one in which they could escape their everyday lives and reproduce a specific place for their own children. While not pristine, four-wheelers nonetheless wanted their idea of a healthy ecosystem. When faced with an environmental discourse regarding the continued use of the Rubicon Trail, the four-wheelers engaged with a critique that involved both accepting and pushing back against state regulation. Certain measures were seen as valuable, like the necessary removal of human waste from the trail. Environmentalist Karen Schambach personified an environmental power/knowledge discourse for the four-wheelers. Yet, despite her noted distain for the off-road vehicles in general, Schambach's goals were that of a clean environment that would last for generations to come. I am not so naïve as to think that off-roaders and preservationists simply need to share a beer (or kombucha, perhaps) and see how much they have in common. But there is power in acknowledging, as David Harvey argues in his "ecosocialist politics," that the people we are forming in our efforts to keep the Earth habitable will most likely be from unexpected places.<sup>10</sup>

"With what cosmology?" If we are to rethink our imperial and capitalist environmentalism of the past, traditional ecological knowledges offer an already existing alternative. This is not to demand a return to a preindustrial past, but instead to work towards a hybridization of nature and society that has always been possible, but

we in academia only now seem to be aware of. The Anthropocene now announces the end of the separation of nature from society, yet indigenous Americans have always accepted such a concept. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, indigenous ecology has been shown to have been responsible for the sculpting and maintenance of the natural landscapes that first attracted those white immigrants settling in California. Again, the people we form will see the value in keeping ecosystems healthy and functioning despite different backgrounds. What is important though, is a questioning of the capitalist forces that dramatically effect these very ecosystems. We can easily work together to clean up erosion or other local environmental degradation, but global greenhouse emissions are a different matter. As I have worked to show, cars are complicated objects. A Jeep can connect its driver to nature in such a way as to become part of the very experience of those natural places. The carbon emissions from Jeeps driving along the Rubicon Trail are real threats to planetary warming, but not too far away countless other automobiles race up and down Highway 50 and Interstate 80 as people move back and forth from the city to the countryside. Clearly, our thinking about where nature begins and ends must change if we are to address the global degradation at work. This is not to suggest that driving less is our solution to climate stability, however. Those cars we drive, be they fuel-efficient or not, are connected to a larger system of oil extraction. Different from other forms of resource use, the pumping of oil from the ground is never held up as possible for sustainability. Even the oil

guzzling creatures of *Monster Trucks* are threatened by human greed. Neither the environmentalists nor the four-wheelers on the Rubicon were there to make massive profits at the expense of the ecosystem. And yet, in their efforts to conserve the Rubicon, no discussion was made of the fossil fuel industry that threatens its environmental stability most of all.

“And on what territory?” The only way forward is to realize, following Massey, that any territory upon which we act is one that has been made by interrelations between different human and nonhuman actants. There is nothing stable about nature: “what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.”<sup>11</sup> The territory of the Rubicon itself is one of multiple histories meeting up to produce a wonderfully messy place. And there are immeasurable other places on the planet just like this. Most important, though, is that in conceiving of these natural/social places as such interrelations strips place of any predestined outcome. If we are willing to grapple with the multiple histories and encounters that have made up a place, we can conceive of new possibilities for its future.



- 
- <sup>1</sup> Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime* (Medford, MA: Polity, 2017), 85.
- <sup>2</sup> Stephanie Rutherford, *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 183.
- <sup>3</sup> Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 8.
- <sup>4</sup> Shotwell, *Against*, 204.
- <sup>5</sup> Nicole Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 31.
- <sup>6</sup> Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism*, 38.
- <sup>7</sup> "About Cal4Wheel," California Four Wheel Drive Association, accessed January 17, 2019, <https://cal4wheel.com/home/about-cal4wheel>
- <sup>8</sup> Ann Pellegrini, "'Signaling Through the Flames': Hell House Performance and Structures of Religious Feeling," *American Quarterly* 59 no. 3 (September 2007): 912.
- <sup>9</sup> Latour, *Facing Gaia*, 143-144.
- <sup>10</sup> David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 193.
- <sup>11</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 140.

## Bibliography

- Ahangari, Hamed, Carol Atkinson-Palombo, and Norman W. Garrick, "Automobile-dependency as a barrier to vision zero, evidence from the states in the USA," *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 107 (2017): 77-85.
- Agrawal, Arun. *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Alaimo, Stacy. *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- Alderman, Derek H., Kortney Williams, and Ethan Bottone, "Jim Crow Journey Stories: African American Driving as Emotional Labor." *Tourism Geographies* DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2019.1630671.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, 100-140. London: Verso, 2012 [1970].
- Anderson, M. Kat. *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Ang, Ien. *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Angel, Myron. *History of Placer County California with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. Oakland: Thompson & West, 1882.
- Anker, Peder. *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Barker, C.E. "New Mountain Road: Georgetown Route to Lake Tahoe Offers Thrills for Motorist." *The Mountain Democrat* August 13, 1926, <https://mountaindemocrat.newspaperarchive.com/placerville-mountain-democrat/1926-08-13/page-9/>
- Barton, Gregory A. *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Beals, Ralph L. "Ethnology of the Nisenan." *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 31, no. 6 (1933): 335-414.
- Benally, Malcolm D., ed. *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011.
- Bentley, R. W. *Introduction to Peak Oil*. Lecture Notes in Energy, Volume 34. Switzerland: Springer, 2016. 2016. Accessed December 28, 2018. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-26372-4.
- Bergmann, Sigurd. "The Beauty of Speed or the Discovery of Slowness—Why Do We Need to Rethink Mobility?" In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, 13-24. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.

- Bergmann, Sigurd and Tore Sager. "In Between Standstill and Hypermobility – Introductory Remarks to a Broader Discourse." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, 1-9. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Berkes, Fikret. *Sacred Ecology*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Blodgett, Peter J. (ed). *Motoring West, Volume 1: Automobile Pioneers, 1900-1909*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015.
- Böhm, Steffen, Campbell Jones, Chris Land, and Mat Paterson. "Introduction: Impossibilities of automobility." *The Sociological Review* 54, no. s1 (2006): 1-16. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00634.x
- Bonneuil, Christophe and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*. London: Verso, 2017.
- Brabo, Lisa M., Peter H. Kilde, Patrick Pesek-Herriges, Thomas Quinn, and Inger Sanderud-Nordquist. "Driving Out of Poverty in Private Automobiles." *Journal of Poverty* 7 (2003): 183-96. DOI: 10.1300/J134v07n01\_10
- Brown, Katrina and Justin Spinney. "Catching a Glimpse: The Value of Video in Evoking, Understanding, and Representing the Practice of Cycling." In *Mobile Methodologies*, edited by Ben Fincham, Mark McGuinness, and Lesley Murray, 130-151. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Büscher, Monika, John Urry, and Katian Witchger. "Introduction: Mobile Methods." In *Mobile Methods*, edited by Monika Büscher, John Urry, and Katian Witchger, 1-19. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- California State Mineralogist. "Mineral Springs," *Report XV of the State Mineralogist: Mines and Mineral Resources of Portions of California* San Francisco: California State Mining Bureau, 1917.
- Carlson, Anne. *Tahoe National Forest Cultural Resources Overview, Part II: Ethnography*. Nevada City: US Forest Service, 1986.
- Center for Biological Diversity. "Rubicon Trail Deal Will Protect Water Quality." Press release, July 16, 2012. [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press\\_releases/2012/rubicon-07-16-2012.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2012/rubicon-07-16-2012.html)
- Chaffin, Joshua. "A Gutsy Activist Challenges a Powerful Industry." *High Country News*, July 3, 2000. <https://www.hcn.org/issues/188/10012>
- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Coe, Drew and Marty Hartzell, *Assessment of Sediment Delivery from the Rubicon Jeep Trail*, accessed at [http://www.calsport.org/RubiconTrail/rubicon\\_trail\\_cao\\_att.pdf](http://www.calsport.org/RubiconTrail/rubicon_trail_cao_att.pdf), 11.
- Coté, Charlotte. *Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth Traditions*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010.

- Crist, Meehan. "How the New Climate Denial Is Like the Old Climate Denial." *The Atlantic* February 10, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/02/the-new-rhetoric-of-climate-denial/516198/>;
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003 [1983].
- Cresswell, Tim. *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Crutzen, Paul J. and Eugene F. Stoermer, "The 'Anthropocene'" *Global Change Newsletter*, No, 41 (2000): 17-18.
- Daley, Chris. "State lifts Clean-up and Abatement Order for Rubicon Trail," *Mountain Democrat* November 17, 2014, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/state-lifts-clean-up-and-abatement-order-for-rubicon-trail/>
- Daley, Chris. "Top 10 – No. 1: Rubicon Trail Accident, 60<sup>th</sup> Jamboree." *Mountain Democrat*, January 7, 2013. <http://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/top-10-no-1-rubicon-trail-accident-60th-jamboree/>
- Daley, Chris. "'Little Sluice' Restoration Brings E-mail Flood." *Mountain Democrat*, October 5, 2012. <http://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/little-sluice-restoration-brings-e-mail-flood/>
- Daley, Chris. "Forest Service, county ink Rubicon Trail pact." *Mountain Democrat* August 17, 2012, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/forest-service-county-ink-rubicon-trail-pact/>
- Daley, Chris and James R. "Jack" Sweeney, "Sweeney defends 'Sluice' work," *Mountain Democrat* October 5, 2012, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/sweeney-defends-sluice-work/>
- Dant, Tim. "The Driver-Car," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no 4/5 (2004): 61-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046061>
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 [1980].
- Deibert, Ken. "Jeepers Jamboree – The First 60 Years." *The Mountain Democrat* July 20, 2012, <https://www.mtdemocrat.com/special-sections/rubicon-tab-2012-jeepers-jamboree/jeepers-jamboree-the-first-60-years/>
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980].
- Denevan, William M. 1992. The pristine myth: The landscape of the Americas in 1492. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82(3): 369-385.

- Derby, George H. and Francis P. Farquhar. "The Topographical Reports of Lieutenant George H. Derby." *California Historical Society Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (June 1932): 99-123.
- Diamond, Jared. "Race Without Color." *Discover Magazine* November 1, 1994, <http://discovermagazine.com/1994/nov/racewithoutcolor444>.
- Dowling, Robyn and Catherine Simpson. "'Shift-the Way You Move': Reconstituting Automobility." *Continuum* 27, no. 3 (2013): 421-433. DOI: 10.1080/10304312.2013.772111
- Eldorado National Forest. *Whale Rock Forest Health Multi-Resource Project Final Environmental Impact Statement*. Pollock Pines, CA: United States Department of Agriculture, June 1997.
- Ferrari, Veronica. "Ride the City: A New Way of Living the City and its Unexpected Places." In *Urban Design Ecologies: Projects for City Environments*, edited by M. Ghibusi, F. Marchetti, 98-109. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2018.
- Finney, Carolyn. *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Edited by Michel Senellart. New York: Picador, 2008 [1978-1979].
- Foucault, Michel. "What is Critique?" In *The Politics of Truth*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, 41-81. New York: Semiotext(e), 2007 [1978].
- Foucault, Michel. "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations." In *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 1: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*. Edited by Paul Rabinow, 111-119. New York: The New Press, 1997 [1984].
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage, 1995 [1975]), 29.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990 [1978].
- Foucault, Michel. *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. New York: Vintage Books, 1980.
- Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Edited by Donald F. Bouchard, 139-164. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977 [1971].
- Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Edited by Donald F. Bouchard, 113-138. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977 [1969].
- Furness, Zack. "Critical Mass, Urban Space, and Vélomobility." *Mobilities* 2 no. 2, (2007): 299-319.

- Glaeser, Edward. *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*. New York: Penguin Books, 2011.
- Golly, Frank Benjamin. *A History of the Ecosystem Concept in Ecology: More Than the Sum of Parts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Gonzalez, George A. *The Politics of Air Pollution: Urban Growth, Ecological Modernization, and Symbolic Inclusion* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.
- Grove, Richard. *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Hall, Stuart. "Constituting an Archive," *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001): 89-92.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 262-275. London: Routledge, 1996 [1990].
- Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation and Ideology." In *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2 (1985): 91-114.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies." In *Culture, Society and the Media* Edited by Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran, and Janet Woollacott, 56-90. London: Methuen, 1982.
- Hannam, Kevin, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities, and Moorings" *Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2006): 1-22.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Harwood, David S. and Eric E. Cather, "Rubicon Roadless Area, California." In *Wilderness Mineral Potential: Assessment of Mineral-Resource Potential in US Forest Service Lands Studied 1964-1984*. Edited by SP Marsh, SJ Kropschot, and RG Dickinson. Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1984.
- Harvey, David. 1996. *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Malden: Blackwell, 1990.
- Heidegger, Martin. "Building Dwelling Thinking." In *Poetry Language Thought*, 145-161. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971.
- Hinckley, Jim. *The Route 66 Encyclopedia*. Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2012.
- Horn, Maude A. "Georgetown." *The Mountain Democrat* January 6, 1928, pg 18, accessed at the El Dorado Historical Museum, Binder 14, pg. 83.
- Huijbens, Edward H. and Karl Benediktsson. "Practicing Highland Heterotopias: Automobility in the Interior of Iceland," *Mobilities* 2 (2007): 143-65. DOI: 10.1080/17450100601106518

- Hume, Lynne and Jane Mulcock. "Introduction: Awkward Spaces, Productive Places." In *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation*, edited by Lynne Hume and Jane Mulcock, xi-xxvii. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Future City." *New Left Review* 21 (May/June 2003) 65-79.
- Jensen, Ole B. *Staging Mobilities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013.
- Kassar, Chris. *Environmental Impacts of ORVs on the Rubicon Trail*. Oakland: Center for Biological Diversity, March 17, 2009.  
[https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public\\_lands/off-road\\_vehicles/pdfs/Appendix\\_Env\\_Impacts\\_Rubicon.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/public_lands/off-road_vehicles/pdfs/Appendix_Env_Impacts_Rubicon.pdf)
- Kronlid, David. "Ecological Approaches to Mobile Machines and Environmental Ethics." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, 255-268. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2017.
- Laurier, Eric. "Participant Observation." In *Key Methods in Geography*, edited by Nicholas J. Clifford and Gill Valentine, 133-148. London: Sage, 2003.
- Letherby, Gayle. "Have Backpack Will Travel: Auto/biography as a Mobile Method." In *Mobile Methodologies*, edited by Ben Fincham, Mark McGuinness, and Lesley Murray, 152-168. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Edward Maibach, Linda Steg, and Jillian Anable, "Promoting physical activity and reducing climate change: Opportunities to replace short car trips with active transportation," *Preventive Medicine* 49 (2009): 326-327.
- Malm, Andreas. *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World*. London: Verso, 2018.
- Malm, Andreas. *Fossil Capital: the Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. London: Verso, 2016.
- Malthus, Thomas. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 [1798].
- Massaro, Loren and Randy Pesses. "The Rubicon Trail: Mapping the World's Wildest County Road." *Professional Surveyor Magazine*, 24, no. 3 (March 2004): 8-12.
- Massey, Doreen. 2005. *For Space*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, ed. Robert C. Turner, 469-500. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978 [1888].
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. "The German Ideology." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, edited by Robert C. Turner, 146-200. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978 [1846].
- McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. New York: Random House, 2006.

- McNeill, John Robert and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.
- McShane, Clay. *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Moore, Jason W. "Introduction: Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and Crisis of Capitalism." In *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and Crisis of Capitalism*, edited by Jason W. Moore, 1-11. Oakland: Kairos and PM Press, 2016.
- Moore, Jason W. "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 594-630.
- Moore, Donald S., Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, "Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nature: Terrains of Power and Practice." In *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*. Edited by Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, 1-70. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Morris, Rick. *Rubicon Springs and the Rubicon Trail: A History*. Rubicon Soda Springs: The Rubicon Historical Group, 2011.
- Nesper, Larry. *The Walleye War: The Struggle for Ojibwe Spearfishing and Treaty Rights*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.
- Norton, Peter. *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008.
- Orwell, George. 1984. New York: Signet Classics, 1950, 43.
- Pellegrini, Ann. "'Signaling through the Flames': Hell House Performance and Structures of Religious Feeling." *American Quarterly* 59 no. 3 (September 2007): 911-935.
- Pesses, Michael W. "'So Shiny, So Chrome': Images and Ideology of Humans, Machines, and the Earth in George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road*." *cultural geographies* 26, no. 1 (2019): 43-55. DOI: 10.1177/1474474018787308
- Pesses, Michael W. "Environmental Knowledge, American Indians, and John Muir's Trap." *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 80 (2018): 112-133. DOI: 10.1353/pcg.2018.0006
- Pesses, Michael W. "Road Less Traveled: Race and American Automobility." *Mobilities* 12, no. 5 (2017): 677-691. DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2016.1240319
- Pesses, Michael W. "Automobility, Vélomobility, American Mobility: An Exploration of the Bicycle Tour." *Mobilities* 5 (2010): 1-24. DOI:10.1080/17450100903435029.
- Philpott, William. *Vacationland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013.
- Pomeroy, Earl Spencer. *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010 [1957].
- Purdy, Jedediah. 2015. *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.



- Purvis, Trevor and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (Sept. 1993): 473-499.
- Robbins, Paul F. "Human-Environment Field Study." In *Research Methods in Geography*, edited by Basil Gomez and John Paul Jones III, 241-256. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Robbins, Paul F. "The Politics of Barstool Biology: Environmental Knowledge and Power in Greater Northern Yellowstone." *Geoforum* 37, no. 2 (2006): 185-199.
- Robbins, Paul F. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2004.
- Rome, Adam. *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Ross, Kristin. *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.
- Rothman, Hal K. *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998.
- Rubicon Trail Foundation. "Foundation Agrees with EDC to Support Rubicon Trail Easement." *Mountain Democrat*, July 20, 2012.  
<http://www.mtdemocrat.com/news/foundation-agrees-with-edc-to-support-rubicon-trail-easement/>
- Ruddiman, William F. "The Anthropogenic Greenhouse Era Began Thousands of Years Ago." *Climatic Change* 61, no. 3 (2003): 261-293.
- Rutherford, Stephanie. *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Sachs, Aaron. *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.
- Scott, Edward B. *The Saga of Lake Tahoe: A Complete Documentation of Lake Tahoe's Development Over the Last One Hundred Years*. Lake Tahoe, NV: Sierra-Tahoe Publishing Co., 1957.
- Schambach, Karen. Karen Schambach to Gaylon Lee, Sacramento, CA, August 22, 2011.
- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1938" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed January 2, 2020.  
<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f56e0d60-847a-0132-8e19-58d385a7bbd0>
- Seiler, Cotten. *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Seymour, Nicole. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.
- Shaffer, Marguerite S. "Seeing America First: The Search for Identity in the Tourist Landscape." In *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*. Edited by David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long, 165-193. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001.

- Sheller, Mimi. *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes* London: Verso, 2018.
- Sheller, Mimi. "Mobility, Freedom and Public Space." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, 25-64. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Sheller, Mimi. "Automotive Emotions: Feeling the Car." *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 4/5 (2004): 221-242.
- Sheller, Mimi and John Urry. "The New Mobilities Paradigm." *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006): 207-26.
- Sheller, Mimi and John Urry. "The City and the Car." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24 (2000): 737-57.
- Shotwell, Alexis. *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- Shove, Elizabeth. "What is Wrong with Energy Efficiency?" *Building Research and Information* 46, no. 7 (2018): 779-789.
- Shukin, Nicole. "The Mimetics of Mobile Capital." *The Sociological Review* 54, no. s1 (2006): 150-174. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00642.x
- Söderblom, Kerstin. "The Phenomenon of Mobility at the Frankfurt International Airport – Challenges from a theological Perspective." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, 177-193. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Speck, Jeff. *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America One Step at a Time*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012.
- Spinney, Justin. "Cycling the City: Non-Place and the Sensory Construction of Meaning in a Mobile Practice" In *Cycling and Society*, edited by Dave Horton, Paul Rosen, and Peter Cox, 25-45. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Taylor, Dorceta E. *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Thrift, Nigel. "Driving in the City." *Theory, Culture & Society* 21 (2004): 41-59. DOI: 10.1177/0263276404046060
- Tollefson, Jeff. "New York Sues Exxon Mobil Alleging Climate Change Deception." *Nature* October 24, 2018, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07178-3>
- Urry, John. "Inhabiting the car." *The Sociological Review* 54, no. s1 (2006): 17-31. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00635.x
- Urry, John. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* London: Routledge, 2000.

- USDA Forest Service. *Final Environmental Impact Statement: Rubicon Trail Easement and Resource Improvement Project*. Pacific Ranger District, El Dorado National Forest El Dorado County, California, April 2012.
- Wells, Christopher W. *Car Country: An Environmental History* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012.
- Wilson, Norman L. "The Nisenan People." *The Placer County Historical Society*.  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org/index.htm\\_files/The%20Nisenan%20People.pdf](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org/index.htm_files/The%20Nisenan%20People.pdf)
- Wilson, Norman L. and Arlean H. Towne. "Nisenan." In *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 8: California*. Edited by Robert F. Heizer, 387-397. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978.
- Wrobel, David and Patrick Long (eds.). *Seeing & Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001.
- Zamora, Daniel. "Introduction: Foucault, the Left and the 1980s." In *Foucault and Neoliberalism*. Edited by Daniel Zamora and Michael C. Behrent, 1-5. Malden: Polity Press, 2016.
- Zeitler, Ullrich. "The Ontology of Mobility, Morality, and Transport Planning." In *The Ethics of Mobilities: Rethinking Place, Exclusion, Freedom and Environment*, edited by Sigurd Bergmann and Tore Sager, 233-239. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Žižek, Slavoj. "The Specter of Ideology" In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, 1-33. London: Verso, 2012 [1994].
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Courage of Hopelessness: A Year of Acting Dangerously*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Violence*. New York: Picador, 2008.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso, 2008 [1997].
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 2008 [1989].