Robert Braun
Richard Randell

Cycling trauma as ontological violence
Since the appearance of automobiles on public roads, violence has been a constant, intrinsic property of automobility.

Carl Schmitt’s concept of a nomos, constructed on the basis of primordial, violent acts of land appropriation, equally describes the history and processes by which automobility has rizomatically expanded across the globe to become a hegemonic mode of transportation and mobility.

The nomos of automobility is a bracketed space wherein a permanent state of exception holds. On entering this space we are reduced to the status of what Giorgio Agamben has referred to as homo sacer: bare life who may be killed without homicide having been committed.
The imaginary of automobility fixes possibilities, allots potential accounts, generates constraints and openings within which the world is to be interpreted, and in which assessments of identity, legitimacy, and responsibility are conceived and ordered.

Post-automobility is not a future without cars or an alternate cyborg setup but a destitute form of life differently politized: violence made visible and unveiled as absolute (as opposed to its general conceptualization as a means to an end); speed (the key operator of the imaginary) and not humans as reflected upon and controlled.

The book discusses the ontopolitics of automobility as the precondition for even imagining post-automobility futures.
What is a car?

“A road vehicle with an engine and four wheels that can carry a small number of passengers.”

Oxford Dictionary
What is automobility?

“Epistemology talk” within mobilities

John Urry

“a self-organizing autopoietic, nonlinear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs.”

Stephen Böhm

“A regime shaping and producing new types of people consistent with [its] logics.”

Katharina Mandersheid

“[A]n apparatus of dispersed and decentralized power, which consists of automobile landscapes, discourses, formation governance of specific subjectivities and mobility practices.”

Braun & Randell

An ontopolitical imaginary.
○ A flattened, larger **ensemble of relations** and transformed reality to fit the coerced modes of problem-solving visible in its engineering, its artifacts, rulebooks and technologies of governance, managing its policing and imagining its order.

○ Humans have become subjected to life at a permanent threshold in a thanatopolitical **regime of discipline and control** that has become accepted as normal, unremarkable and proper. It is the apprehension we confront whenever it is necessary to cross a street or ride a bicycle.

○ Space appropriated, creating the order, **bracketing and making violence invisible** within the imaginary of automobility.
The political ontology of automobility

- An ontology—a reality, a world—that has been constructed through the activities, efforts and work of political agents, agencies and actants within the world of everyday life.

- The ontology—reality—that has been constructed is an imaginary.

- It is an imaginary comprised of meaningful signifiers that include not just visions (Jasanoff & Kim) but all the material components of automobility.

- What Jasanoff considers to be epistemic constructs, namely the imaginaries are components of a flat ontology.

- The reality we inhabit is an imaginary that we have been convinced is real.

- “Disneyland is presented as an imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real.” —Jean Baudrillard

What is automobility reality?

What we have been convinced it is.

We have been convinced it is real, not imaginary (it is an ontology).

The reality of everyday existence.

— Jean Baudrillard
In traditional political theory the ontology of human and non-human entities is stable.

- Politics reflects on the relationships between persons or things, humans or non-humans that are fixed and given. Political questions concern who holds power over what and whom, by what means, through which institutions and how these processes are made visible or are occluded.

An STS oriented reading of automobility suggests it is not entirely obvious what distinguishes humans from non-humans in this kind of reflection, and that non-humans should be empowered to be included in the material semiotic network of actants.

- The political ontology of automobility to be is that the political constitution of humans and non-humans is the very creation of these entities in terms of mobile human and non-human, or as (fixed) mobile entities.

Automobility as (political) ontology
The political constitution of humans and non-humans is the very creation of these entities in terms of mobile human and non-human:

- Violence is constitutive of the political ontology (cf. bare life/Agamben)
- Entities therein are cyborgs enduring or meting out violence (cf. ontopolitics/Mol)
- Physical violence is transformed into ontological violence (cf. settler colonialism/Wynter)
- Ontological violence is not an act or an accident but an ontological condition of cyborg being in automobility
- Trauma (e.g., the experience of violence) is the form of being-in automobility
- The cyclist is a cyborg being coerced into being the “Other” by power/violence
- Ontological “othering” is mediated by ontological trauma
Traditional understanding of trauma
  • an emotional **response** to an event.

Ontological trauma
  • A constitutive form of power **creating** both event and self.

The bicycle cyborg is created in automobility by ontological trauma
  • The subjectification and onto-othering by the power/violence in automobility;

Power/violence is inscribed in
  • Spatially occluded memoryscapes
  • Imagined “ghosts” of killed others
  • Traumas of potential tragic events

**Trauma as constitute of the cyborg self**
Questions

Thank you

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