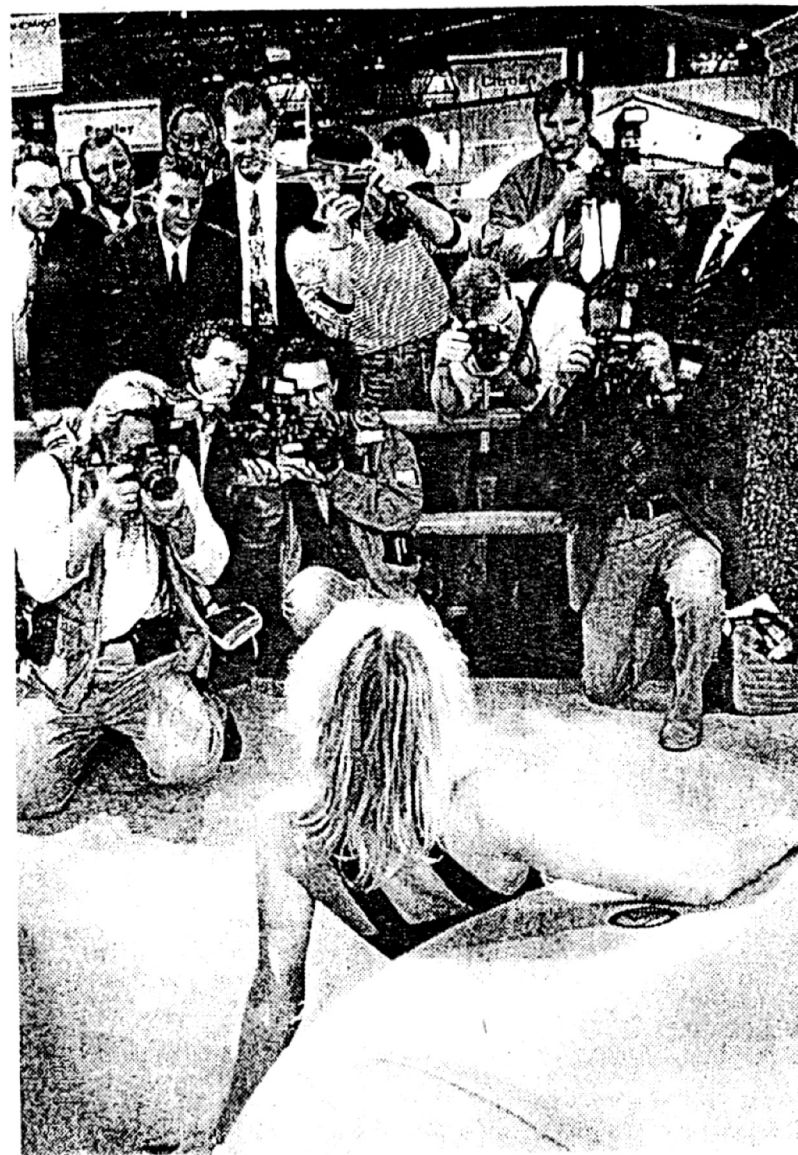


Cars - they're all around us - but what exactly is a car? Do they give us freedom - or are they just a nuisance? Can they be blamed for drink driving - or is it more the beer? In fact, can anything at all be done to halt the spread of these smelly devils?

This luxury high performance pamphlet offers a unique combination of responsive handling and distinctive bodystyling. Its enhanced specifications include advanced antilock staples and its spacious yet economical pages are designed with all the passionate rhetoric and implacable logic that the discerning reader has come to expect from Mr Social Control.



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Away with all Cars
by Mr Social Control

A FEW CONTACTS

Carmageddon . (The "Earth First!" car campaign). c/o PO Box 2573, London, N16 6HN. Tel 081 806 1561. Ask for their list of local groups.

London Greenpeace. c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. This is not Greenpeace plc, and had the name first. They are @narchos.

Whose World? I think these people may be christian environmentalists or something. c/o The Trinity Community, 119 East India Dock Road, Poplar, London E14.

Pedestrians Association. 1 Wandsworth Road, London, SW8 2XX. Nice line in stickers.

Alarm UK (Alliance Against Road Building). 13-15 Stockwell Rd., London, SW9 Tel 071 737 6641

No M11. c/o 4 Colville Rd., London, E11 4EH

Reclaim the Streets. 435-437 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London, SW9 8LN Tel 071 738 6721

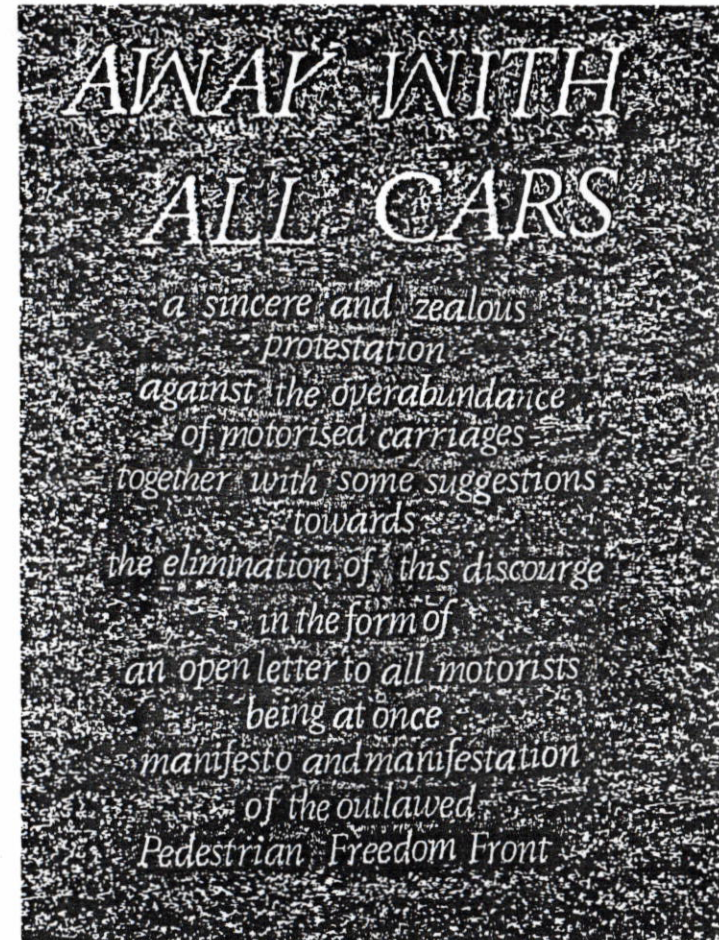
Earth First! Oxford. Box E, 34 Cowley Rd., Oxford, OX4 1HZ

PARC (People Against the River Crossing). c/o 82 Cranbrook Rd., Deptford, London, SE8 4EJ

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For spiritual and material assistance: Ade, Jason, Jason, Mipsi, Leslie, Sned, Boffo from Halifax, Sam, Madame Lily, Oblivia Channon (for the crack), Luke Barcode, Dick Oak, Garry, Sybil, Dave M and my mam.

Lay out at Community CopyArt, 41 Battlebridge Road, London NW1.
Tel 071-833-4417



ISBN 0 9519682 0 3

PLAY TIME FOR EVER PRESS



B.M. JED, London. WC1N 3XX

"The Car Factory, The University and The Working Class". FiFi LaRue 1991. Fascinating account of the malleability of the car as a symbol and of joyriding inside the Cowley factory but downplays the role of joyriders in terrorising local communities and thereby dividing them and letting the cops in. As with much "Class Warrior" writing we are lead to suspect that only gangs of drunken young men can be revolutionary. Available from WRACAU Press, Box B., OXFIN, Unit One, Paradise Street Business Centre, Oxford, OX1 1LT.

"Crash". J.G.Ballard. Brilliant. If cars are sexual potency, then what does crashing represent? This is kind of science fiction except that its all extremely true.

"Concrete Island". J.G.Ballard. Modern day Robinson Crusoe gets stranded on a roundabout off the Westway.

"The Car Culture". James Flick. MIT press. Cambridge Massachusetts. 1975.

"Rethinking the Role of the Automobile". Michael Renner. Worldwatch Paper 84, June 1988. Lots of statistics, chiefly about exhaust fumes.

New Internationalist. May 1989. Special issue entirely about cars.

"Carmageddon the Case against the Car". Bob Finch. Splendid rant. And aeroplanes, they're no better. Available from Terra, 46 Albany St., Spring Bank, Hull, HU3 1PL.

"A Day in the life of the Car: 24 damning facts". 1989. Solid anarchist leaflet from Steve, PO Box 71, Hastings, East Sussex.

Fifth Estate. (US @nacho paper, from PO Box 02548, Detroit(!), Michigan, USA) Spring 1987 edition was an anticar special.

"The Environmental Impact Of The Car". Greenpeace International. 1991. Pretty informative but not worth a fiver.

The Fatuous Times #1. Superb anticar postnihilist poster book. Every one should read it. No-one shouldn't. Available from: PLAYTIME FOR EVER PRESS, PO Box 406, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 4RN.

"Driving Passions: The Psychology of the Car". Marsh and Collett. Johnathan Cape.

"Automania: Man and the Motor Car". Pettifer and Turner. Collins 1984.

Totally Normal #2. Very small rantzine against cars and most other things. From BM CRL, London, WC1N 3XX.

"Energy and Equity". Ivan D. Illich. Caubler and Boyars. 1974.

Motorist 'An Undesirable Member of Community'

SIR—Major Oliver Stewart has got it all wrong. The motorist, he says, used to think of himself as a free and uninhibited member of the community, but now thinks of himself as an undesirable and potentially criminal interloper. Surely the modern motorist is in fact an undesirable member of the community who thinks himself entitled to be uninhibited.

I remember the time when one could enjoy walking, cycling or driving along British roads. Now 18 people a day are killed on them (incredibly, nobody seems to mind very much) and all the pleasure has gone. Not only are the streets of every town cluttered but, in many places, even the pavements—so that pedestrians face the final irony of being compelled to walk in the roadway. Nevertheless, any suggestion that this free-for-all might be curtailed brings howls of rage from car owners.

Meanwhile, nobody seems to be trying to find out the psychological reasons for all this lunatic to-ing and fro-ing. What are all those mobs doing in the West End, for instance? Working? If so they are wasting a tremendous amount of their own, their employers' and everyone else's time. If they are not in the traffic blocks by necessity, why on earth are they there—not only by day but also at all hours of the night? Has the whole nation suddenly got a passion for social calls? Is it the victim of an obsessive compulsion simply to be on the move?

Only one thing is perfectly clear: that no Government will have the moral courage to control this anti-social tide in the interests of civilised living. We shall go on hesitating and tinkering until, before the end of the century, Britain will not be worth living in. (Nor any other country, for that matter, except "backward" ones.)

This, by the way, is not a havenot's moan. I have been driving cars without accident for 40 years. In that time I don't suppose I have blown the horn as often as many selfish and incompetent drivers blow it every day. These free and uninhibited people are turning this island into a mechanised hell. I beats me why Major Stewart should come to their defence.

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR DOWNES.

London, N.W.3.



Truffle country near Patcham, in Sussex, referred to below

Truffle Hunting as a Business

SIR—Mink, tiaras, champagne and . . . ? Surely truffles, "the black diamonds of the kitchen," are also in the romantic picture of opulent high life? Truffle hunting was some weeks ago the subject of a BBC television programme, photographed in Northern Italy. Stay-at-homes may be interested in the following passage written of Patcham in Sussex about 125 years ago:

The beechwoods in this parish and its immediate neighbourhood are very productive of the Truffle (Lycoperdon tuber). About forty years ago William Leach came from the West Indies, with some dogs accustomed to hunt for truffles, and proceeding along the coast from Land's End, in Cornwall, to the mouth of the River Thames, determined to fix on that spot where he found them most abundant. He took four years to try the experiment, and at length settled in this parish, where he carried on the business of truffle-hunter to his death.

The photograph above was taken (in the parish of Patcham, in possible truffle territory) just two years ago. Two years earlier I had been to Winterslow near Salisbury, once famous for truffles because of Eli Collins and his half-bred poodle-terriers and their activities in late Victorian and Edwardian times. Members of the Collins family still lived in Winterslow. It would be interesting to know if anyone in England now harvests truffles.

Yours faithfully,

J. D. U. WARD.

Minehead, Somerset.

G.C.E. Passport to Academic Europe

SIR—In your excellent article on the Atlantic Certificate of Education to the college having obtained agreements about its entrance with the educational authorities in West Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Holland. The next paragraph explains that this is on the basis of three good advance level passes.

My son attends a school in this country from which a Dutch boy two years ago entered a Dutch university on the basis of his advance level passes. A West German boy there at present plans to do the same: G.C.E. equivalent to the German Abitur being well established. Danish boys have already been to the school in then gone on to university.

I admire all educational enterprises such as the Atlantic Certificate but I think it would be wise to make an impression to be given by some new and exclusive movement about university in Europe had been initiated at college.

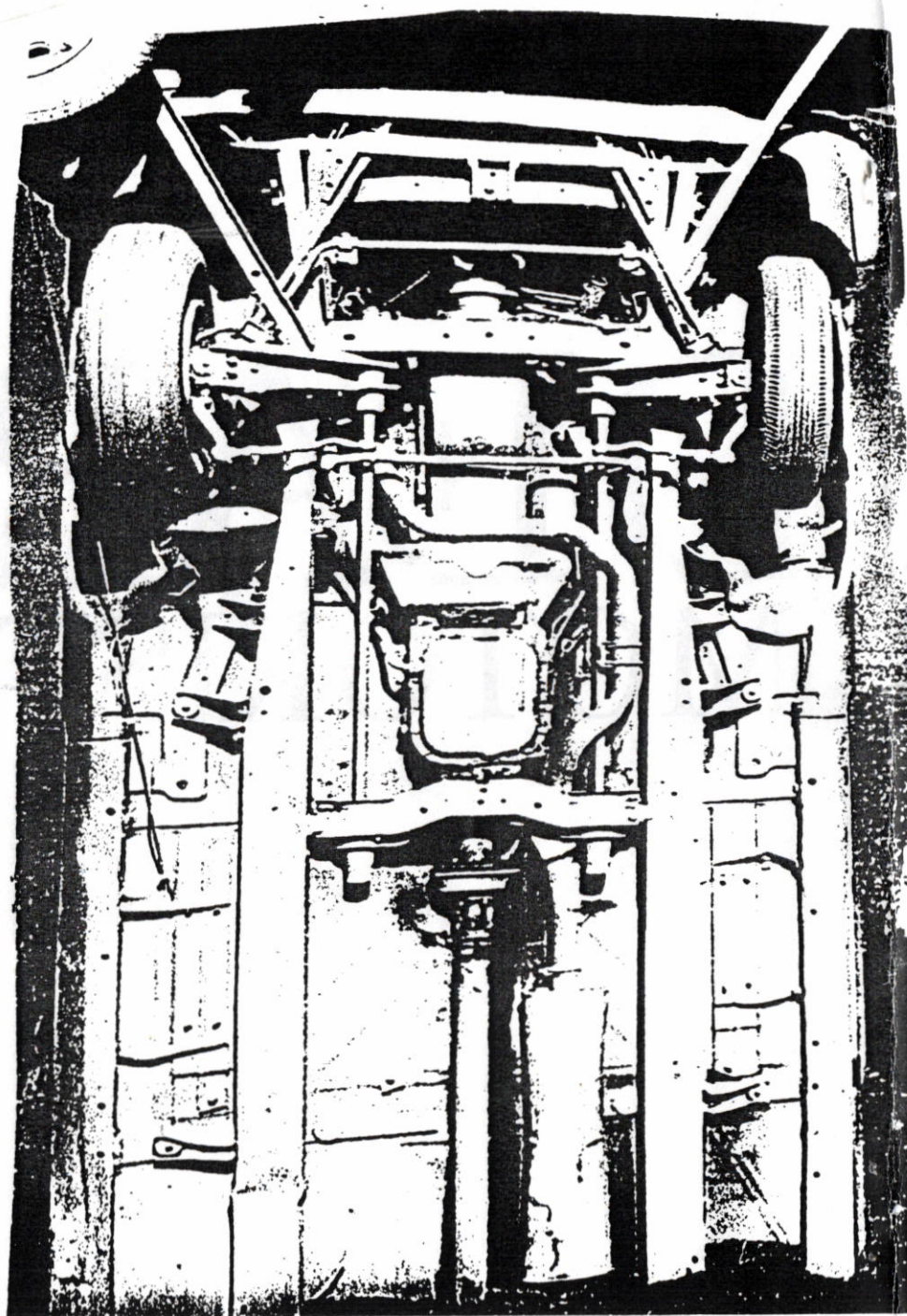
(Mrs.) P. J. L. HOLR
Hampton, Middlesex.

BLACK MARI

Sir—Would Mr. Edwards please explain why a Bolton ticket should not be valid for 15 pence if that is its maximum value.

Yours faithfully,
C. G. PRIMMER:
Ilford, Essex.
Other Letters—P12

DEAR MOTORIST



In the world as a whole there are about 265 000 dead per annum (5) and a good 10 million injured (5).

Car ownership is not as universal as it pretends. In the UK 35% of households have no regular use of a car (1) compared to 48% in 1970. 38% of eligible British adults have no driving license (1). That's 22% of men and 53% of women. The biggest car firm in the world is General Motors which makes 16.1% of the world's cars.(10)

SOURCES (1) Department of Transport. Transport Statistics Great Britain 1979-1989. HMSO. London 1990. (2) John Adams. "Car Ownership Forecasting." Traffic Engineering and Control. March 1990. (3) AutoExpress. 28 September 1989. (4) US Motor Vehicles Manufacturers Association. 1989. (5) European Conference of Ministers of Transport. Paris 1989. (6) Mad Car Disease. Greenpeace UK. Feb 1991. (7) BBC TV. Public Eye. 10 November 1989. (8) JJ MacKenzie & MP Walsh. Driving Forces: Motor Vehicle Trends and their Implication for Global Warming, Energy Strategies and Transportation Planning. World Resources Institute. Washington DC. 1990. (9) Motor Industry of Great Britain. Automotive Statistics. Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. London 1990. (10) World Motor Vehicle Association of United States Inc. World Motor Vehicle Data. 1990. (11) Richard Askwith. "The Transport Crisis" Observer Magazine. 15 April 1990. (12) Stewart Boyle & John Ardil. The Greenhouse Effect. Great Britain. (13) Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva). Statistics of Road Traffic Accidents in Europe. United Nations Publications. New York vol.xxxv 1990.

THE CAR-HATER'S BOOKSHELF

"Autogeddon". heathcote Williams. Jonathan Cape 1991. Coffee table anticar book. Interesting quotes section but the poetry's dreadful. The gratuitous Holocaust metaphor is particularly crass and offensive. People were driven into the ovens they, didn't drive there of their own volition.

"Gridlock". Ben Elton. MacDonald 1991. I've been told this isn't as cheesy as you might think.

"The Automotive Nightmare". Alistair Aird. Hutchinson 1972. Starts off from the drivers' point of view complaining that insurance is a ripoff and that technically the car hasn't been really improved for about 50 years, and gradually expands its consciousness to the point of deciding that cars are rubbish and should be got rid of. Unfortunately he seems to think that planned obsolescence is the special province of the car industry, rather than a general property of capitalism. In fact his main objections are on the grounds of efficiency he keeps harping on about how "we" should provide a proper transport system for "our society". It doesn't really address the problem of how such a monstrosity could have come about if it wasn't a means of social control.

"The Life Of the Automobile". Ilya Ehrenburg. 1929. Reprinted Pluto Press 1985. This is a sort of dramatised history a bit like that "fall of Mrs.Thatcher" programme. Lots of horrifying industrial accidents, lives of grinding poverty in factories and rubber plantations, big industrial belches from Monsieur Citroen and car crashes.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PLANET

ALISON REYNOLDS is 26, a Cambridge graduate and has always worked for environmental organisations. She is currently administrator of the Greenpeace direct actions unit. Reynolds reckons she is paid about one-third less than she would be in the private sector. (After a period of difficulty in attracting good people to the non-campaigning areas, Greenpeace adopted a policy of paying reasonable salaries.) "I've never really considered working in the private sector and I don't have a mortgage or dependants, so I don't need to earn more. But people seem to manage."

5.1 And as if this is not bad enough, it is getting worse. This traffic system can only exist in a state of perpetual expansion. It increases the distances over which goods and people must be transported. Then, ingeniously, it offers a solution to this problem: the car and the truck. It creates unsafe, empty, hateful streets, then offers the car as a form of safety. It creates a rich world greedy for status lifestyles and endless raw materials, then offers itself as an index of the degree of "development" of the poor world. Just as it is transforming the city it is transforming the rest of the planet.

5.2 Mining ores for raw materials carves great opencast scars in the landscape, often dispossessing native pedestrians of their lands and livelihoods at the same time. The ores are processed in huge plants. The metals, components and fractionates are shipped across the globe in leaky hulks. Lives are warped in factories that assemble components, on plantations that grow rubber, in the mines and in the refineries, in the forges and the crippling foundries. And at every stage, up until throwing the burnt out wreckage of the finished product into a concrete ditch, heaving the used tyres out to sea by the bargeload and chucking the acid-leaking batteries into a river, pollution is pumping out into the atmosphere, seeping into the hydrosphere and being buried in the mud.





5.3 On top of this, cars need petrol which pollutes at its points of production and consumption and at every point in between: the supertanker, the filling station and the engine of your car. The fumes from burning petrol are the largest artificial source of atmospheric carbon in the world. The main carbon sinks which take carbon out of the atmosphere are the rainforests and the plankton of the southern seas. Unfortunately the rainforests are being destroyed and the plankton threatened by ozone depletion (a process itself accelerated by car fumes). Even without this destruction, the sinks would be unable to cope with the current number of cars. What is actually at stake here is the habitability of the entire surface of the planet.

5.4 The Earth is not in itself amenable to human, or to any other, life. Its current surface temperature and atmospheric composition have come about through interrelations between organisms over the last three thousand million years and are even today sustained solely by the continuance of those interrelations. It is totally obvious that killing enough of those organisms and pumping enough shite into air, sea and soil is likely to interfere with these delicate feedback loops. The surface of the Earth could easily be made as hostile to life as the surfaces of Mars and Venus. The extinction of our species does not necessarily follow from this. If Moon and Mars bases can be contemplated, if artificial orbital biospheres can be devised, then life could still continue on a devastated Earth. Cities framed by geodesic domes or buried in caves of steel are no less feasible in purely engineering terms than, say, the channel tunnel. It is this very feasibility of life in a completely artificial environment that belies the idea that the classes responsible for the Earth's current malaise will eventually be thanked for its recovery.

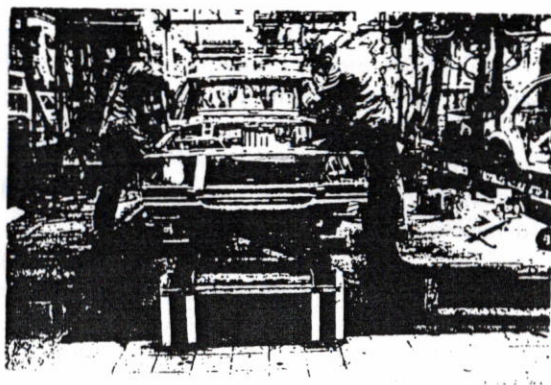
4.2 But the car can only take you where the car has already been. Driving is like shopping in a big supermarket. You are in a little bubble of your own and accountable to no-one. You can buy (drive to) any product (prefabricated destination) you like, but you can only choose from what is on offer. You are isolated and at the same time reincorporated into a grand scheme of domination. You feel privileged but you are being used. The powers that be prefer roads to streets because a busy highway is just a prison with mobile cells. A driver can leave the road but can no more influence others to do likewise than a corpse can start an insurrection in a cemetery. A car is an accident looking for somewhere to happen and the more people have cars the more similar everywhere becomes, so the less meaningful is your "freedom of movement".

4.3 By arranging the space in which human activity takes place, the road network prearranges our movements. Even a "holiday" is nothing but one long journey, a linear sequence of experiences with no connecting structure but "what's next?". Ultimately the prescribing of experiences, prescribes emotions. You have no more power to influence the pictures on the windscreen on your way to work, than those on the television screen at home, so you feel powerless. Separation makes us feel lonely. Endless repetition of the same little rituals, enforced by the intractability of urban geography, makes us feel bored.

4.4 We can observe our boredom, just as we can observe a car park and feel as little empowered to do away with one as the other. The boredom is the consequence of the carpark and the carpark is the reification, the translation into the material world, of the boredom. This boredom is nothing less than the boredom of the Market itself. It takes place within our tiny bubbles. It is a secret and lonely misery, as hidden as the misery of the widows of the motorcar, dreaming every night of their husbands burning helplessly to death, strapped to a plastic seat on a motorway.



THE NECESSITY OF DRIVING



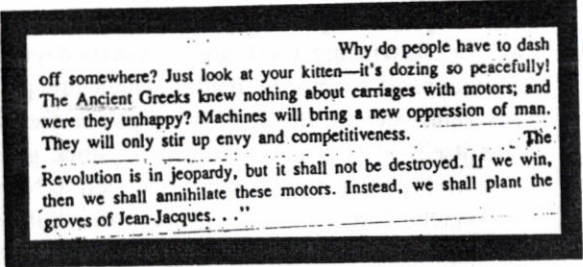
4.1 In a way though, driving has been forced on you. Many suburbs of Los Angeles do not even have pavements. Milton Keynes is little better. Life for many people is now impossible without a car. In order to either earn or spend money, the car has become a necessity. What is this doing to people? Advertisements claim that driving is a form of freedom, a kind of power. The ads are telling the truth but at the same time they're lying. Because cars are expensive, and speak of the physical control of space, they have become emblematic of wealth. Because male sexuality has been constructed as mechanical and thrusting, and because the car is a scale model of the nuclear family, cars have come to represent male power. As a driver you have power over pedestrians and passengers and urban space; so the car represents its own reality: motor power.

5.5 Green experts assure us they know what they are doing, and hurry up with the next 25K wage packet please, but the assertion that the holders of planetary power are not crazed enough to really, really do it is no more convincing now than it was in the days of Mutually Assured Destruction. It does not matter which are psychotic and which benevolent, because the holders of power are always beholden to power itself. In a world governed by stock prices the buck stops nowhere. It passes from Tokyo to London to New York and back to Tokyo again. Why should they care if the whole world is turned into a radiation soaked desert? If no human being can ever see the light of day with their own eyes? What does it mean to them if every beautiful and useless creature in the world is exterminated for ever? If we are reduced to drinking our own piss miles underground, dependent on them for every breath of oxygen we take? And if they are willing to save the biosphere at this late hour then why do the greenest amongst them proclaim that the rainforests should be rescued only in order that the plants be used to make herbal shampoo? If they care about the quality of life that their underlings lead, then why are millions starving in the south of the world to feed the debts imposed by the banks in the north?

5.6 The truth is that ecological disaster would be a stroke of luck for those that benefit from the domination of our lives. The car is an effective device for representing and extending power over space. Yet it is still vulnerable. While our air is still just about breathable, while the experience of sunshine on one's face still remains; then anyone can torch a car, pull a statue, burn down a bank or knock five terraced houses together to make a rambling commune. On the other hand the destruction of the atmosphere, would entail a massive centralisation of political power. The retreat into the silvery domed cities would make physical attacks upon the superstructure of urban life and economic power not only difficult but suicidal. In effect we'd all be living in one huge car and you can't set fire to one when you're sitting in the back seat.



LIFE BEYOND THE WINDSCREEN



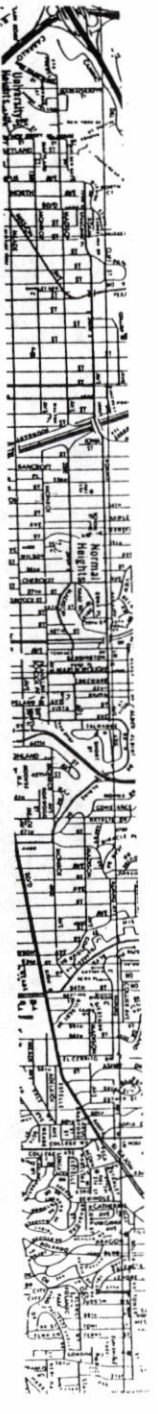
Why do people have to dash off somewhere? Just look at your kitten—it's dozing so peacefully! The Ancient Greeks knew nothing about carriages with motors; and were they unhappy? Machines will bring a new oppression of man. They will only stir up envy and competitiveness. The Revolution is in jeopardy, but it shall not be destroyed. If we win, then we shall annihilate these motors. Instead, we shall plant the groves of Jean-Jacques. . ."

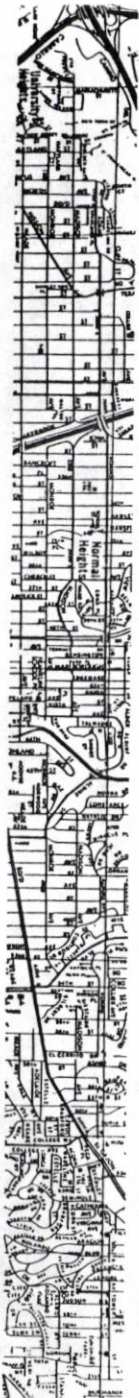
6.1 We are not bursting with alternative methods of transport for you to go to all your ridiculous shopping centres, office blocks and so on. We are not going to sell you a ticket for the airship or a pony for the tow path. We do not believe in improving public transport. We loathe public transport. We hate paying for it, waiting for it, looking out its windows at dirty, car choked city streets.

6.2 Without traffic cities could come alive. If transport were both superceded and liberated then the countryside would become just as unrecognisable. Supercession would allow vast swathes of public land to be freed towards making a city an exciting and pleasant place to be. Gigantic roundabouts in city centres would become public forums once more, planted with trees and gurgling with fountains. The broad highways that slice our cities into fragments would become genuine thoroughfares, linking communities rather than dispersing them. There would be an end to roads and we would have streets to walk down. Perhaps some would have canals cut along their centres with electric trams running along the bank, with decorative footbridges and beautifully plumed birds stepping gingerly across lily pads. If activities were less geographically dispersed they might be forced to become smaller in scale. People would be brought into daily contact with one another. Streets would not be so deserted, so street crime would become virtually impossible, making trust between diverse individuals and communities a realistic goal rather than empty liberal rhetoric. All of which would make feasible the idea of municipal democracy, the idea of small local areas being directly governed by the involvement of their

3.5 Roads determine not only the relative proportions of each type of space but also their distribution. As more people have cars, or rather as more money is spent by motorists, the more places become out of reach to people who do not have cars, witness the exodus of shops from to high streets to ringroads. Ironically the machine that is sold on its ability to bequeath freedom of movement and its ability to cover distances actually creates as much distance as it traverses. So the two dominant tendencies in the spatial distribution of urban activities, namely traffic imperialism and urban zoning, are entirely due to the dominance of the motor vehicle over transportation as a whole. The car is replacing things you want to do with things you have to do, whilst simultaneously moving the things that you have to do further away from each other. This impoverishes your already debased life, as you must spend longer and longer hours in front of the wheel. It also impoverishes our lives, as more facilities move out of our reach, our movements are channelled along ever narrower predetermined paths, we have more and more roads to cross and they are ever busier and more dangerous.

3.6 The final irony is that you can gain no satisfaction from all the space that is being so generously turned over to your use. You do not actually use the space that you pass through even though you prevent us from using it, all you do is try to mitigate it by passing through it as quickly as possible. As far as you are concerned you are never really in it at all, you just watch it go by, a boring television programme projected onto your windscreen. And the more space there is for you to wish that you did not have to drive through, the more unhappy you are because the more obstacles there are to your progress: other cars. You must hate cars, really hate them, more than we, as pedestrians, can ever imagine.





3.3 This would be a dreadful state of affairs in itself but it is exacerbated by the nature of the urban space that traffic has stolen. If we consider a threefold division of non-car space into:

- * private space e.g. houses, gardens;
- * public space e.g. parks, squares and theoretically the public galleries of law courts and of parliament;
- * corporate space, that owned by private firms or rendered inaccessible to public use by the state e.g. police stations, DSS offices, workplaces, shops and colleges;

then several tendencies can be seen within the changing economy of space. Firstly when gender power is mediated by space, it usually happens within these categories, not between them. Although sexual harassment on the street is able to cross the boundary between car space and public space. Secondly, a gradual conquest of public space by corporate space is in progress. The replacement of city squares by corporately-owned shopping centres is an example of this. Thirdly while private space is obviously unaffected by the conquest of public areas it is far from being equitably distributed between its various private users. Lastly car space is in a continuous state of expansion with public space as its chief victim.

3.4 These developments obviously do not provide the greatest freedom of movement for everyone. More finely graded tiers of accessibility ranging from genuinely private (not just family) space through overlapping levels of community-specific and use-specific space to large expanses of genuinely public (not just traffic dominated) space, would provide far greater freedom of movement and so of activity. Though this could not happen unless everybody had at least the spatial control over their own bodies. Current spatial economies dictate activity by channelling movement along narrow corridors, which link highly controlled environments such as the toy superstore, the workplace and the family home. The prospect that a city could be something more than an convenient set of roads linking such controlled spaces seems very distant today, at a time when even the most imposing buildings have an air of monetary expedience about them. But even in victorian England, hardly a utopian society, public space was an automatic consideration of any architectural project.

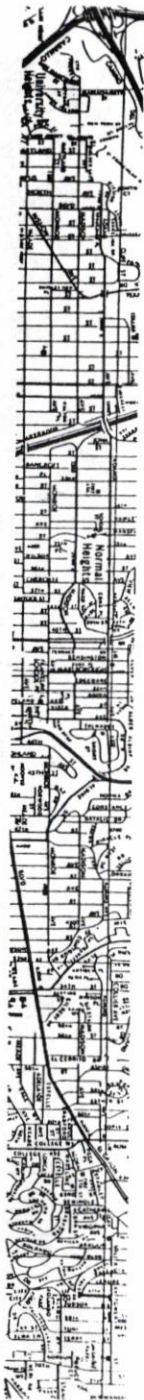
inhabitants. Workers' councils in a factory would not bring workers' control over production, if the factory just made components to be assembled elsewhere into an unknown machine. Similarly in the cities of today municipal democracy would not give people control over the conditions of their lives, they are assembled elsewhere. The supercession of transport would, at the very least, create a possibility of democracy.

6.3 Transport's supercession would open the way to its liberation. No longer bound by the rationalities of traffic, of daily repetition, of time, economy and above all safety; no longer taking place through ravaged, lifeless, empty uglinesses, all journeys could become pleasurable, even frivolous. All riding could be joyriding. As I write the crabapple trees outside my window have just been cut down by the council because drivers thought it a nuisance to find windfalls on their bonnets. It is amazing that you all spend so much time cleaning and polishing machines that make everything else in sight such a filthy stinking mess. Crabapple trees are not a nuisance. Cars are a nuisance. Without cars we could have trees everywhere: Limes, Alders, Rowans, a line of dark Poplars instead of the Westway, great Oaks instead of the Brent Cross flyover. Where do you think oxygen comes from anyway? Out of your fucking exhaust pipe?

6.4 These changes not would be guaranteed by the abandonment of cars, but the lack of these changes is guaranteed by your persistence in driving them. There is nothing revolutionary about anything so rational as abolishing the car, though it might take revolution to liquidate the multinationally vested interests that prevents such rationality being achievable.







THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITY

"...the efforts of all established powers to increase the means of maintaining order in the streets finally culminates in the suppression of the street."

Guy Debord. Society of the Spectacle: 172. 1967

"Urban transportation has to do not only with moving people and goods into, out of and through the city but also with the spatial organisation of all human activities within it."

John W. Dyckman. Transportation in Cities. Scientific American September 1965.

3.1 In the former Vicar Lane Bus Station in Leeds there is a notice which says: "National Car Parks would like to apologise to bus passengers for any inconvenience caused by the demolition of this bus station and its conversion into a car park." That's OK lads, don't mention it. Simply in terms of passenger numbers, replacing a bus station with parking space for 20 cars is hardly efficient. And there is more to cities than efficiency. Vicar Lane Bus Station was no pleasuredome but it did at least provide a meeting place with shelter and seats. A car park in contrast is dead space, empty and functional. It is there only to allow work to happen somewhere else. Many other examples could prove the same point - that even if cars could exist without being traffic, for instance if they could jaunt through hyperspace from A to B without occupying any of the points in between, then they would still be a considerable nuisance in terms of their occupation of urban space. They are far larger than the single human being they often carry. They are privately owned and therefore stand idle much of the time (which makes the short lifespan of their planned obsolescence all the more laughable). They take you to work, to the shops, to the cinema and home again, so that each car through parking occupies an area larger than most people's homes.

3.2 In any case, cars do not exist independently of traffic, they occupy far more space as moving traffic than as parked objects. They are such a poor mode of transport that they cannot go anywhere without special surfaces called 'roads' to drive on, without workshops to mend them, petrol stations to refuel them, without insurance offices, bridges, and of course hospitals. Car occupied land takes up shocking proportions of most cities: 23% of London, 29% of Tokyo, 44% of Los Angeles.

REBELLING AGAINST THE CAR

7.1 To recap: lots of people hate cars it's just that you don't hear much about it because there is very little overlap between people who hate cars and people who own newspapers and TV companies. All people who hate cars are fully paid-up members of the Pedestrian Freedom Front, not to mention its many affiliated organisations such as the Utopia Borough Council and the Society for Cutting Up Motorists. The PFF has no followers, only leaders, members merely differ in their degree of activism. A campaign of orchestrated anger against the car has a peculiar advantage over recent campaigns of direct action. Unlike fur warehouses, politicians and nuclear rockets, motor cars are not hard to find. The thing that is so infuriating about them is also what makes them so vulnerable: they are absolutely everywhere.



The £20,000 Porsche ablaze in St Martin's Lane at the height of the battle





7.2 Traffic is not just an environmental issue to be tackled by reformist measures like the granting of pedestrian precincts, pelican crossings and so forth. This is not to say that reformists have not achieved reforms. However reform cannot challenge the political power of the Road as an institution, nor the power of the Capital which it serves. In fact piffling restrictions on the car can only serve to reinforce and legitimate the machinery of motor power, rather like the way that abuse-spotting social workers can only legitimate the everyday barbarisms of the Family, by picking out its most "dysfunctional" exemplars. The PFF no more recognises the distinction between "green" cars and others, between "green" petrol and its rival products, than it does the macho distinction of performance between "good" and bad driving.

7.3 We hate cars because we are sick of living in a world where we have no control over anything we do. We are sick of watching ourselves do the necessary. We could be participating in the enjoyable. There is a distinction between watching a spectacle of life and really truly living. Unfortunately those anarchists (whoops, out of the closet now) who have adopted this distinction as part of their opinions have often obscured practical political activities that tend to confirm their theories.

7.4 Luckily though there are many car haters turning their hatred into successful, collective, playful transgressions of the law of the motor car. For instance, in December 1991 alone, cyclists in Bristol blocked the M42 (by the simple method of cycling between the cars while they were jammed up and then refusing to move); "Earth First!" protestors in Brighton stopped the traffic in the town centre and wore shiny jerkins to misdirect traffic on the outskirts; and motorways were blocked in Austria and Sweden. Much of this activity has grown out the fact that more and more people are aware of the direct links between profligate overconsumption and environmental degradation. However resistance to the car is not exclusively environmentalist in origin, nor are road blockages the only form this resistance takes.

2.3 In India the cow is supposedly a sacred animal to which motorists must give way. Nowhere in the world is the human being similarly sacred. The fact we cannot cross the road if you are coming is so obvious, so banal, that it scarcely seems questionable. Yet surely this was not always the case, there was a time when we had the right of way. So how did it happen? Imagine a world where you always had to stop for us. What would it be like? And who would spend £20,000 on a car under such circumstances? Perhaps this is the key to the mystery. Perhaps we should not ask: how does society tolerate the annual slaughter of 5000 people a year in Britain, of a million people globally? Perhaps we should ask: how would a society of motorists tolerate anything else? To us, this slaughter is one of the car's many drawbacks. To you, it is one of its many advantages. It is the risk of driving that makes it exciting for you. You consider your car a form of liberty because the only liberty you can imagine is the liberty to kill and maim others. Your life is planned and ritualised in its every detail. Your pension plan, your mortgage and your sexlife are finalised decades in advance. Is it any wonder you hunger for the thrill of reckless driving? Is driving not the only piece of work you do without a supervisor watching over your shoulder? Is it not the only thing you ever do, on your own terms, for your self? Is it even the only time of any sort that you get to yourself?

2.4 Could this be why you are so aggressive when you drive? Is it as much a bored kind of desperation as an arrogant kind of machismo? A man's car says a lot about him. But as you edge your way through a traffic jam at less than walking pace, you have only the potential to reach the dangerous, erotic speed promised in the advert. If this is true, then you have been sold a pup. You have been sold danger without excitement. You have the liberty to go anywhere you like, as long as there is a multistorey at the other end. You have been sold a mere representation of freedom, an individuality that is just like everyone else's, that is just enough to allow you to tolerate your intolerable daily life. We do not weep for you or the time you have spent working to pay for your car and its petrol. We weep for ourselves because drunk or sober you are mutilating and killing us.





YOUR JOURNEYS, OUR BODIES

"Where the MX-5 excels is in its ability to involve the driver in its every action, so that you very quickly feel you are just one of a wealth of moving parts, all in total harmony. Take the gearchange, the way it snaps around its close gate is a revelation!"
Autocar and Motor

2.1 In 1991 a conference of British crime writers was asked "how would you kill someone?" Many ingenious means were proposed, some of which might make excellent mysteries: push them out the porthole, stab them with an icicle. Curiously, the commonest and most practical method suggested was to run them over with a car. Not only is the criminal already in the getaway vehicle when the crime is committed, but even if caught the punishment is likely to be footling. The alarming leniency shown towards murderous motorists is perhaps related to the dissonance between the declared purpose of penal justice and its practical results. To judge by these results, the chief function of legal punishments is not to deter crime but to create, consolidate and train an active criminal class. The spectre of such a subculture makes the rest of society more like a prison in its turn. We become fearful of leaving our cells and begin to regard our warders as protectors rather than oppressors. For criminality to be effectively terrifying it needs the figure of the rapist, the mugger, the burglar, the inexplicable outsider who strikes in the darkness, not the drunken sales rep driving home from the office party. Where fear of the outsider promotes conformity, fear of the sales rep promotes rebellion. So hit-and-run drivers do not get the publicity of serial killers. Their victims are just as dead.

2.2 In fact the laxity of punitive measures against deadly drivers is just one of a skein of double standards used to belittle the dangers of traffic. Politicians will dismiss a rise in crime figures as "mostly traffic offences", whilst becoming quite apoplectic about car theft and joyriding. Policemen complain that they wanted to catch villains but have "ended up on traffic duty". A single death in a railcrash is headline news, meriting a public enquiry and the resignation of transport ministers, whilst the most horrific of motorway pileups is hardly worth a mention in the press.

7.5 But if we affect to despise this system so much, as it presents itself as all a society could ever possibly be, if we hate everything that is part of it, if we are such nihilists as to despise any silly little single issue campaign and favour only an assault on all fronts, then why pick on the car? Is it that the car is a symbol? Well symbol it definitely is but it is also a physical reality. Its ceaseless traffic in traffic is what stops us enjoying life. And maybe even what stops us communicating with you. That's why we want to smash its windscreen; we want to break through to you and tell that there's a world out here. We want to reach out to you and prise your hands from the sweaty steering wheel and gently lift you out of the car. Before we pour petrol on the seat and set light to the ugly thing. By petrol was it brought to life and so by petrol shall it die. So don't say you've not been warned.

PEDESTRIAN FREEDOM FRONT.

Things got too much for author Kudno Mojesic. He was arrested in the street outside his Belgrade [Yugoslavia] home attacking cars with an axe, yelling 'Away with all cars - they are the devil's work.'

Sunday Mirror, London: 11 January 1976



JUST LOOK AT THE FACTS

P.S. Now that you've been persuaded to give up your evil car driving ways you may want to have some solid facts on the subject instead of just some ranting. You'll have to justify yourself to all your old car driving friends for a start. So here are some interesting statistics that have been cleverly kept out of the book so far:

Cars produce 18% of global CO₂ emissions and are the fastest growing source of CO₂ emissions (12). Obviously these figures ignore the CO₂ emissions from areas of the motor industry other than exhaust fumes.

In the UK 28 million gallons of motor oil run off into the hydrosphere every year (3). Oil used for road transport in OECD countries (i.e. the richest countries) has risen from 40% of all oil use in 1973 to 60% in 1989 (1). Globally cars use about a third of the world's oil (8).

In Britain, roads supposedly cover a total area "3 times the size of Berkshire" (11) ie about 3700 sq. km.

Turning crude into leadfree petrol involves raising its benzene levels (6). Benzene has been linked to 5 000 cancer deaths per year in the UK (7).

There were 24 196 000 licensed motor vehicles (ie including lorries etc.) in 1989 (1). There were 19 720 000 cars in 1989 (1) of which 13% were company cars. There were 2 828 900 new licensed motor vehicles in 1989 (1), 2 304 400 were cars of which 51% were company cars. There could be 35 million cars in Britain by 2025 (2).

Worldwide car production in 1989 was more than 35 million (4). This is more than one a second. In 1950 there were 53 million cars altogether. In 1989 there were 423 million, or 555 million if you include trucks and commercial vehicles. These figures are likely to double in 20 years time (9).

32% of the world's cars are in the USA. More than two thirds are in the top seven car owning countries, which by a strange coincidence are also the "G7" countries (14).

Of the 5373 people killed in road accidents in Britain in 1989, 1693 were pedestrians (237 children, 614 people aged 15-59 and 842 people of 60 or more); 293 were cyclists; 636 were motorcyclists; 47 were motorcycle passengers; 1498 were car drivers; 928 were car passengers; 226 were in goods vehicles; 19 were bus passengers but the one I really for sorry is the one bus driver. There were another 63 158 people "seriously injured" and 273 061 not so seriously injured (1).

In the EC as a whole 45 869 people were killed in 1988 of whom only 84 died on Luxembourgish soil whereas fully 23% were killed in France (13).

THE ABSURDITY OF IT ALL

Parking (D9107558)
Employment Secretary Michael Howard, on September 5, launched the Car Park of the Year Award, an ETB award scheme to encourage moves towards the introduction of piped music, plants and pastel coloured walls and the development of shops and restaurants to make car parks more alluring; the Board is also concerned to encourage car park designs to handle an expected increase in continental traffic after the completion of the Channel Tunnel, and will make awards to purpose built car parks in urban and rural areas.

1.1 There are these large pieces of metal hurtling around at high speed in residential areas. They are such a menace to life and limb that every journey made by any other means is chiefly spent dodging these monstrous objects. They are the single biggest cause of atmospheric pollution and global warming. They are the largest market for the warmongering oil industry. Their noise is the noise of the city. These "cars" are so central to the organisation of this society, especially the organisation of work, that an illusion has to be maintained that nobody sees anything wrong with the ever increasing number of cars.

1.2 Protecting ourselves from them has become our responsibility as pedestrians. It is not you who are supposed to stop, look and listen. Road safety is the very first thing that children are taught. We are all supposed to identify our own interests with that of the economy, that is to say, with economic growth. One of the main indicators of a growing economy is rising car sales. Newsreaders announce a slump in the sales of cars with the same sombre tone of voice used for unemployment statistics or terrorist attacks. Adverts, the Media, the “environmentalist” movement, the very designs of our cities, all assert that what is convenient for you the driver is convenient for everyone. This is part of a broader assumption that we all live in car-sized family units and all want to get where we’re going as quickly as possible.

1.3 In fact many people do see something wrong with this situation. But most of them are not drivers. Those people who lack the widespread privilege of a car generally lack the rarer privilege of a voice that may be heard. Most of us just mutter darkly about the subject on the tops of buses and wave our arms impotently at zebra crossings. But some go further

