

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Cruz Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

"The Mechanisms. Light and Miraculous": The Convivial Bicycle in Literature and Film

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6qb7b9dz>

Author

Guevara, J. Josh

Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

**“The Mechanisms. Light and Miraculous”:
The Convivial Bicycle in Literature and Film**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

J. Josh Guevara

June 2012

The Dissertation of J. Josh Guevara is
approved by:

Professor Tyrus Miller, Chair

Professor Norma Klahn

Professor Rob Wilson

Tyrus Miller
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by
J. Josh Guevara
2012

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
Abstract	vi
Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Promise of the Bicycle: Ivan Illich and Convivial Modernity	11
Chapter 2 What Do They Know of Cycling Who Only Cycling Know? or Can the Terrorist Speak in Viken Berberian's Novel <i>The Cyclist</i> ?	78
Chapter 3 Bicycle Thievery: The Bicycle as an Icon of Class Struggle	132
Chapter 4 Cyclotouring, Counter-mapping, and Conviviality: C. S. Giscombe's Pan-African (Dis)location in <i>Giscome Road</i>	219
Epilogue	293
Bibliography	299

List of Figures

Figure 1: Vietnamese use of bicycles	35
Figure 2: Man on a Bicycle. (S. S. Wilson 90)	62
Figure 3: George Hincapie joking about the hell of Beirut during the 2009 Tour de France.	121
Figure 4: Bruno's Bedroom with posters.	134
Figure 5: Matrimonial Sheets carried up for storage.	168
Figure 6: Liu Xiaodong, 自古英雄出少年 布面油画, Through the Ages, Heroes Have Come from the Young, Oil on Canvas, 200cm x200cm, 2000.	189
Figure 7: From the montage of cyclists in Beijing	199
Figure 8: Guei witnessing his bicycle being destroyed	217
Figure 9: (Giscome Portage) map-poem-perimap	254
Figure 10: Map Stanza of Prince George, British Columbia	265
Figure 11: Map of British Columbia, 1871 (31)	267
Figure 12: The Nlak •a'pamux Map of the World (35)	270
Figure 13: Giscome, B.C. Map in the poem. (45)	276
Figure 14: Giscome, B.C. map spliced as a line in the poem. (48)	277
Figure 15: Stanza 6 from "Giscombe, B.C." section. (49)	279
Figure 16: Interior Plateau north of Giscome, B.C. (57)	287

Abstract

J. Josh Guevara

“The Mechanisms. Light and Miraculous”: The Convivial Bicycle in Literature and Film

This dissertation explores the prevalent representation of the bicycle as a liberatory figure in theoretical texts, novels, films, and poetry. Because the bicycle confers unexpected creativity and autonomy, it alters definitions of technology, modernity, and identity. Chapter one recuperates and employs Ivan Illich’s concept of conviviality in order to re-examine the inheritance of the project of modernity and question the definition of technology in the twenty-first century bicycle epoch. For Illich, the bicycle epitomized the community-centered creativity that defines the convivial in his 1970s works *Tools for Conviviality* and *Energy and Equity*. Chapter two investigates the narrative tradition of the road cycling race, especially the Tour de France as theorized by Roland Barthes. To complicate road cycling at the extreme of end of the trope of suffering, the chapter then reads the reform of a terrorist in Viken Berberian’s 2001 novel *The Cyclist*, using the theoretical work of C. L. R. James and Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak. The penultimate chapter argues the bicycle is consistently used as an icon of working-class struggle in world cinema, based upon the evidence of twenty-five films that maintain the working-class bicycle icon theme, by comparing and contrasting Vittorio de

Sica's 1948 Italian neorealist film *Bicycle Thieves* and Xiaoshai Wang's Chinese Sixth Generation 2000 film *Beijing Bicycle*. The final chapter explores the effect of Afro-diasporic history in British Columbia in C. S. Giscombe's long poem *Giscome Road*. Utilizing the travel writing tradition of cyclotour literature since the 1890s juxtaposed with the critical cartography of James Wood, the last chapter renders the full effect of Giscombe's poem as an experimental, postcolonial, counter-mapping cyclotour text with the surprising capacity of what defines the convivial bicycle. Throughout this study the convivial bicycle is found to exceed straightforward arguments of the bicycle's efficiency and self-apparent low carbon footprint. Beyond the proclaimed contrast with the automobile, the bicycle confers an unexpected creativity and autonomy, providing a fuller understanding of what drives and sustains contemporary bicycle culture in the twenty-first century.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not be possible without the tireless and loving support of my life partner, Allison Guevara, who kept me on the convivial bicycle when I wanted to abandon. My son Shaden always inspired and helped whenever and however he could, though “dissertation” was just another unpronounceable word and something keeping his daddy occupied. Deep thanks extend to my mom, Cathy Guevara, and dad, Juno Guevara, for their continued support over the years. Thanks to my in-laws John Sirny and Patty Pate for encouraging me to pursue graduate school. Many extended family members and friends contributed with pabulum and caloric sustenance to keep this project alive, especially Matt Nelson who pushed me onward at key moments in the race of races. Friends Nicole Wilson, Nacho Solis, Andy Hartmann, and Juel Hartmann were great supporters and offered childcare when needed most.

All faults of this work are mine alone. However, this project would never have reached its tenor and tenacity without the direct help and guidance of Professors Tyrus Miller, Norma Klahn, Rob Wilson, Karen Tei Yamashita, Micah Perks, Dana Frank, Gina Dent, and Nathaniel Mackey. Special thanks go to Professor Chih-ming Wang for his insightful comments on the third chapter. Overdue appreciation goes to Myung Mi Kim for her

initial encouragement during my undergraduate career at San Francisco State University.

This study is also indebted to the plethora of bicycle culture producers and institutions that have shaped my bicycle mind over the years including the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, People Power, The Santa Cruz County Cycling Club, the Amgen Tour of California, the Adventure Cycling Association, Jonathan Maus and the bikeportland.org blog, Rick Smith and Yehuda Moon and the Kickstand Cyclery comic, Paul Sadoff and Rock Lobster Bicycles, Grant Petersen and Rivendell Bicycles, the anonymous bike snob NYC, Taller Leñateros, and Stumptown Printers.

This dissertation also directly benefited from the support of my colleagues at the City of Santa Cruz Economic Development Department (and former Redevelopment Agency), especially Julie Hendee and Bonnie Lipscomb. Furthermore, my mind would not be properly tuned without my rank-and-file brothers and sisters and fellow graduate student members of the United Auto Workers Local 2865, including Sara Smith, Adam Hefty, Sherwin Mendoza, and Jesse Saba Kirchner.

Final thanks to my actual bicycles for teaching me to appreciate when I am in shape with constant reminders that I only need to pedal more to understand the road ahead.

Introduction

“The Bicycles and the Apex”

How we loved them
Once, these mechanisms;
We all did. Light
And miraculous,

They have gone stale, part
Of the platitude, the gadgets,
Part of the platitude
Of our discontent.

Van Gogh went hungry and what shoe salesman
Does not envy him now? Let us agree
Once and for all that neither the slums
Nor the tract houses

Represent the apex
Of the culture.
They are the barracks. Food

Produced, garbage disposed of,
Lotions sold, flat tires
Changed and tellers must handle money

Under supervision but it is a credit to no one
So that slums are made dangerous by the gangs
And suburbs by the John Birch Societies

But we loved them once,
The mechanisms. Light
And miraculous... (Oppen 125)

George Oppen’s “The Bicycles and the Apex” begins with a lament for a lost love of the bicycle and then returns to the bicycle as a salvific figure.

The poem uses a book-ended form of opening and closing with the refrain:

“we loved them once, /The mechanisms. Light/ And miraculous...” The final return to the bicycle closes the poem’s argument that modern society

organized with people in slums and, alternatively, in tract housing of the suburbs, do not “represent” the apex or height of the culture. The society is dissatisfied on a cultural level with technologies that seem to make life worse and further segregate the community. The bicycle has now become “stale” and ubiquitous, a platitude of gadgetry amassing with a society building more and more but leading to a perplexing discontent. So much so, in fact, that the two ostensibly opposing groups of people in the poem—those in the slums and those in the suburbs—are collectively compared to being contained in “barracks” like the soldiers of competing, separate armies to be fed and sheltered but ultimately kept for the purposes of those that command them. The poem does not cast blame on a particular commander of these barracked slums and suburbia but the poem makes it clear that these are not modern achievements to claim as the peak of our civilization despite so-called technological progress in the interim.

But what is the lightness and miraculousness the poem recalls? “We” all loved the bicycles “once.” There must be a reason for how they made us take flight and felt like a miracle, an extension of our body responding to each pedal stroke. There must be some light and miracle in these mechanisms as cultural signifiers and tools. It is this range of technological and social possibility through the use of and interpolation of the bicycle that is the focus of this dissertation, which argues the bicycle offers a community values-based modernity in contrast to the march of technological progress at all costs. This

vision entails deciphering how the bicycle, as a cultural signifier and catalyst for identity formation, informs the current infatuation with and advocacy for a bicycle-centered culture. The bicycle fundamentally focuses a plea that modernity can be revised to a mode of life where one can rationally save energy resources while bolstering health and creative freedom through the dominant use of the bicycle.

For the bicycle, such hopes and desires are not new. In the 1890s the bicycle spurred a multi-million dollar industry, changing people's lives, especially helping to alter women's lives with the rational dress movement and greater freedom of movement for all people. The Good Roads Movement organized to demand the infrastructure of paved roads later dominated by automobiles at the expense of bicycles and pedestrians. A smaller resurgence took place in the United States in the 1970s at the time Ivan Illich started to theorize about the bicycle as a model of what he called conviviality. With the quick rise of the Critical Mass bicycle advocacy movement at the end of the twentieth century, bicycle's are now the hip way to alter the urban landscape, align identities with youth and health cultures, and claim a "green" lifestyle in contrast to the automobile in the bicycle friendly city of the twenty-first century.

If the bicycle is not simply a "green machine" as critic Iain Boal warns, what bolsters this resurgence in the bicycle cultural movement? By utilizing Ivan Illich's concept of conviviality, this dissertation illuminates how the bicycle

operates as a consistent figure of liberation in theoretical texts, novels, film and poetry. It is the convivial quality of the bicycle, in terms of its use and identity effects on cyclists, that enlist autonomous creativity while maximizing an equitable society's use of energy, resources, and cultural identities. The bicycle as a transport device—moreover, as a cultural signifier—fosters a community where people are equally enabled to transport themselves while not impinging upon each other. Meanwhile, the bicycle can be repurposed in countless, creative ways catalyzing an autonomous and creative culture. The convivial bicycle is not necessarily bicycle liberation in the utopian sense of a car-free world (though many advocate and desire such a world) nor a quick anti-capitalist salvo but rather the bicycle is a model of social relation. The convivial bicycle utilizes technologies to aid in resource sharing, producing social and creative freedoms rather than reproducing dependence on dominant technologies that have gone "out of control" in the phrase of Langdon Winner.

In the current bicycle epoch, the preponderance of representing the bicycle as a liberating device allows us to re-examine our 21st-century definition of technology and the inheritance of the project of modernity. By investigating the use of suffering and pain in bicycle racing juxtaposed with the reform of a terrorist in Viken Berberian's novel *The Cyclist*, the bicycle is exposed as a creative post-colonial device utilizing the critical work of Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak and C.L.R. James. Next, the role of the working class

representation of the cyclist in world cinema traces the long-standing representation of cyclist as a dignified laborer that cannot be fully overwhelmed by the harsh realities of capitalism. The bicycle provides the means of survival and consistently improves the working-class struggle though it does not overturn the class dynamic. The final chapter reveals how the Afro-diasporic exploration of British Columbia in C. S. Giscombe's experimental long poem *Giscome Road* uses counter-mapping techniques and sustains the kineaesthetic tradition of the cyclotour narrative to create an unexpected text completely dependent upon the imaginary of the bicycle and the landscape. The convivial bicycle illustrates how the device fosters creativity and autonomy as a pivotal characteristic of Ivan Illich's proposed convivial modernity. Understanding representations of the bicycle as convivial further reveals the cultural work neglected in typical technological narratives that concentrate on the engineered development of an artifact.

Chapter one recovers the theoretical work of Ivan Illich as the basis for reconceptualizing our understanding of technology and modernity with the bicycle cast as the central character. Illich's concept of convivial modernity, or the idea that modern society can strike a balance with technology implemented to reduce energy needs while maximizing the autonomy of its members to move and create in any manner they choose. By examining Illich's 1973 *Tools for Conviviality* and 1974 *Energy and Equity*, the critique of the industrial and social dominance of the automobile is revised and found to

be based on demands for social equity, creative empowerment, and long-term health rather than a simple argument of a green economy or pollution-free transportation. Illich's concept of conviviality also provides the means to invite the cultural work of the bicycle as fundamental to the understanding of technical devices. By exploring several sites of conviviality in literature and film, this study establishes the deep-rooted underpinnings of the "light and miraculous" desires that are continually devised as the cultural apex George Oppen wants to recover in the bicycle and what Ivan Illich believes is epitomized only in the bicycle.

Chapter Two discovers the importance of bicycle racing sport and its cultural work as a convivial platform for social change. Relying upon the critical work of C.L.R. James's analysis of the cultural significance of the game of cricket in the West Indies (and sports in general), the chapter examines the narrative trope of suffering and pain in professional bicycle racing, especially in the long-standing tradition of the Tour de France as deciphered by critic Roland Barthes. Then, by using Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?," the chapter relates the apparent myopic vision of European bicycle racing and investigates how the recent 2001 novel *The Cyclist* by Viken Berberian employs the bicycle as the sole means to overcome the pain of a young terrorist who decides to forego his role in the bombing of a upscale hotel in Beirut, Lebanon, in order to finish a bicycle race. Becoming the cyclist rather than the terrorist allows him to heal

his psychological and material grievances. Through the political possibility of sports and the cultural work of the pain of the bicycle race, the unpredictable reform of a terrorist becomes possible through the bicycle.

Chapter Three shifts the object of investigation to world film, exploring the consistent use of the cyclist as a working-class hero. Populated by working-class, immigrant, and female characters, world cinema often portrays the iconography of the bicycle as a class and gender struggle that engages the material, quotidian lives of people far outside the promotion of the grand tour professional races but still within the epic structure of cycling. A comparison and contrast between the Italian Neorealist classic of Vittorio de Sica's 1948 film *Bicycle Thieves* and Xiaoshuai Wang's 2000 Sixth-Generation Chinese film *Beijing Bicycle* provides exemplary readings to illustrate how the bicycle performs the working-class representation with consistency and cultural and historical specificity. The force of the films confirms that the bicycle carries cultural connotations of preserving the dignity of workers even under harsh economic conditions.

Finally, Chapter Four moves to the medium of poetry and the narrative tradition of the cyclotour, or long distance bicycle tour, in reading C. S. Giscombe's experimental poem *Giscome Road*. By maintaining the tradition of the personal journey in travel writing combined with experimental techniques of counter-mapping a territory, the poem illustrates how the bicycle can inform a unique postcolonial vision. *Giscome Road* allows us to

create a North American imaginary that provides for the historical presence of a Jamaican immigrant to British Columbia to inform our understanding of the recent colonial era in Canada and the United States while reshaping our understanding of the diversity of cyclists that undertake long distance tours of the bicycle. Employing the use of Denis Wood's 2010 *Rethinking the Power of Maps* and critical cartography, Giscombe's poem demonstrates techniques of counter-mapping and kineaesthetic engagement with the landscape, further evidencing how the bicycle can be used in unprecedented and innovative ways in a heterodox text.

This unpredictable creativity is ultimately what powers the current resurgence in bicycle culture far more than arguments about the sustainability of the bicycle as a form of low-impact “green” transportation. Studies such as Bob Mionske's 2007 *Bicycling & the Law: Your Rights as a Cyclist*, J. Harry Wray's 2008 *Pedal Power: The Quiet Rise of the Bicycle in American Public Life*, Robert Hurst's 2009 *The Cyclist's Manifesto*, Jeff Mapes's 2009 *Pedaling Revolution: How Cyclists are Changing American Cities*, and Zack Furness's 2010 *One Less Car: Bicycling and the Politics of Automobility* all understand the bicycle through juridical and political frameworks with some consideration of the role of the mass media and the representation of the bicycle in popular culture, especially well performed by Furness. Furness also examines the cultural and political work of free community bicycle workshops, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) bicycle culture, and Critical Mass and bicycle protests reaching

back to the 1960s. Other studies have exhausted reading the effect of the Critical Mass bicycle movement that started in San Francisco in the 1990s especially Chris Carlsson's work which also includes examining bicycles and art at the Burning Man counter-cultural events. Finally, the figure of the bicycle messenger as a cult icon of counterculture servicing the needs of businesses in downtown cores, frequently using a fixed gear, single speed bicycle, has been well researched.¹ The recent primer *Cycling: A Tour de Force* edited by Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza and Michael W. Austin provides brief essays relating cycling to different areas of philosophy but the work is introductory and does not attempt to fully theorize why the bicycle is resurgent as a cultural signifier of liberation. Outside of Furness, no monograph has investigated why bicycles fuel the sustained subcultural shift in such activities as bicycle-themed weddings, bicycle lifestyle and music festivals (including the New Belgium Brewing Company's Tour de Fat), bicycle dance troupes such as the Sprockettes in Portland, Oregon; the competition between cities for bicycle infrastructure awards to brand a city as bicycle friendly with platinum status from the League of American Bicyclists; the success of the ArtCrank bicycle poster show phenomenon; and the burgeoning of publicly-funded bicycle sharing programs around the world with the increase of community demands for full street closures following the decades-long

¹ See Carlsson, Culley, Fincham, and Wehr.

tradition of the Ciclovía program which began in Bogota, Colombia in the early 1980s. This dissertation attempts to explain the cultural work performed by the bicycle as a convivial tool that enhances humanity's creativity and autonomous community when literary and cultural texts are used as unique indexes of the bicycle's convivial effect. The bicycle culture that abounds in the twenty-first century is the latest response to George Oppen's poem, reconstituting and replying that the bicycle has always been the apex of the culture led by the feeling of lightness and the miraculous through the bicycle.

Chapter 1

The Promise of the Bicycle: Ivan Illich and Convivial Modernity

The Metaphor of the Bicycle

In 1620 Francis Bacon claimed in *Novum Organum Scientiarum* the printing press, gunpowder (discovered earlier in China), and the magnet are the triumvirate artifacts that define technological progress in the West. This same trio of devices was also taken up by Karl Marx who examined the impact of technology and its role in the exploitation of the proletariat class in the mid-nineteenth century. In contrast, the iconoclastic defrocked priest Ivan Illich chooses the ball bearing, the tangent-spoked wheel, and the pneumatic tire as the three key components that comprise the convivial bicycle as the technological gateway to a different modern future. (Illich, “Energy and Equity” 135). Illich argues the bicycle forms the basis and is the prime example for a surprising claim: the bicycle is a unique tool in human history that supports a society where autonomy, equity, and creativity will thrive. Counter to the bicycle are a slew of technical systems and specialized institutions which help to shape a society where wealth dominates, knowledge disciplines, and technique tends to service the perpetual use of certain technologies to the detriment for the majority of people who do not share the benefits of technical advances equally.

Illich's ball bearing, tangent-spoked wheel, and the pneumatic tire are not limited to the bicycle alone: these technologies were all used to make the first automobiles and all are still fundamental to modern cars (except for tangent spoked wheels). The car is a brother to the bicycle since the automobile industry grew out of the bicycle industry in terms of production, marketing, and consumption.² The industrial and consumer progression from bicycle to automobile is often narrated in histories of one technology preparing the path of endless progress to be succeeded, presumably, by a more proficient technology in a narrative of scientific positivism.³ Or, so goes the myth of progress inherent in concepts of modernity and ethics.

According Carl Mitcham and Katinka Waelbers, the variety of perspectives on the impact of technology can be mapped on two axes gauging the perceived development of technology within/beyond human control along with the impact of technology on society where artifacts are neutral instruments or substantive shapers of society. On the developmental axis, one end of the spectrum views technology's power to determine its course and alter society by the inherent inner logic of the artifact outside of

² See Hounshell, Rosen, and Sachs.

³ Zack Furness identifies that "a number of bicycle history books seem to follow a standardized timeline in which the final chapters are specifically devoted to the end of the bicycle era, the rise of the automobile, and the heroic perseverance of cyclists in the twentieth century" (Furness 228). Most notably see Smith but Herlihy's history also follows the pattern.

the control of human will and intention (i.e. determinism) versus a conception of technology where humans have free will to develop and wield technology regardless of whether or not a device produces unexpected consequences after its introduction and use (i.e. voluntarism) . Further mapping concepts of technology, the axis of the social impact of technology holds opposing views: on the one hand, technical artifacts are considered to be inherently neutral (i.e. instrumentalism) versus a view where technologies forcefully shape society (i.e. substantivism). Illich proposes the bicycle largely because he views it as a way to break from his critique of current society. For Illich, the vast majority of technical artifacts fall heavily into the deterministic and substantive control of society. Unless people decide to place limits on their technologies and elect to choose technologies that inherently produce different effects (and affects), mapping far more toward the ends of technology with volunteerism. While not going so far as to say the bicycle is purely neutral, Illich argues the bicycle can be a substantive force for Illich's conception of conviviality.

The bicycle is the paragon for what Ivan Illich calls conviviality, or the interdependence of humans to thrive in a community where people can create without limiting others from also using the same resources and repurposing those tools in unexpected ways. Through the use of the bicycle, the technology does not make more demands than it can satisfy nor does it impose ever increasing demands for supplemental technologies required to

solve new needs in order to maintain the original use of the artifact. No large-scale expensive and debilitating infrastructure is required for bicycles to be widely used—trails are needed but full roads are not necessary. People can become healthier, and they are far more aware of their bodies and of each other in their shared environment as well as the natural environment they all share and are (inter)dependent upon.

But is this too easy and a convenient representation of the bicycle as a salvific figure, especially in contrast to the automobile? Critics such as Leo Marx, Paul Rosen, David Hounshell, Iain Boal, Zack Furness, and Wolfgang Sachs all identify how important the bicycle was, not only to industrial production, but also to the stirring of the modern imagination for speed across the landscape and people's consequent market desires for a machine that would deliver the consumer to the marketplace post haste. In the United States, the factories that made mass bicycle manufacturing possible did not have to change much to start making Henry Ford's Model T.⁴ More significantly, the need for such a machine had to be manufactured on a broad scale where the initial high-wheeled ordinary (also called a penny farthing bicycle because of the oversized front wheel and tiny back wheel similar to

⁴ This is after the machinists had already retooled from the armory and weapons industry along with the burgeoning sewing machine and agricultural tool manufacturing industries. If the bicycle prepared the way for the automobile, in terms of the American System of pre-assembly line production, the rifle and cannon cleared the way for the bicycle. (Hounshell)

the difference in the sizes of the British coins) required education and clinics throughout the country for the well-to-do to learn how to mount and pedal the unwieldy but incredibly fast machine. This mass market burgeoned in the 1890s with millions of bicycles sold in a bubble economy where people of means clamored to get the device as the symbol of one's ability to access the urban and rural landscape, breaking boundaries of urbanity. Sexuality and gender mores were also challenged as Susan B. Anthony is often quoted as saying, "the bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world"(9). This cultural shift—which is central to how we understand and define the bicycle as a historical narrative to this day—is dependent upon a consumer market desiring to pedal its own wheels. As Wolfgang Sachs surmises, "The bicycle mobilized desire for an automobile" (106). It did not take much for people to shift gears in the factory and re-fashion their mobile lives in society, abandoning the bicycle for the automobile.

On face value, the bicycle can be examined merely as an technical artifact with David Gordon Wilson's thorough *Bicycling Science* as the best example of the technical examination of the past and future of the bicycle. Even as technical sociologist Wiebe Bijker acknowledges the "semiotic power structure" of devices jockeyed by competing social groups and how these narratives heavily influence a society's definition of a technical

device,⁵ the bicycle occupies a unique position in recent human history. Such examples include Tzevtan Todorov and Sylvia Wynter examining how semiotic systems and epistemic clashing in the colonization of the Americas with the advent of trans-oceanic ship travel and the use of grammar to enforce the nation state's language. Wolfgang Schivelbusch examined the altering of clock time and landscape as people adjusted to the railroad and the structure of rail lines and stations as the hubs of industrializing nations. Jane Jacobs and later Jane Holtz Kay have examined the effects of car culture on the polluted environment, communities, and architecture especially regarding the impact of suburban America. But the bicycle is unique in that it never outperforms its required human who must be pilot, engine, mechanic, and will at once. Histories often concentrate on the change from previous forms of two-wheeled human powered vehicles to the safety bicycle in the 1890s. As performed above, society changed and the narrative emphasizes the bicycle boom with white women (who could afford the bicycle) altering their roles in society, finally able to transport themselves without the need of men to drive the horse drawn carriage. However, little attention has been given to how the bicycle has changed humans in their understanding of themselves, especially in the resurgent popularity of the bicycle in the twenty-first century. More specifically, the semiotic side of the bicycle as a figure of

⁵ See Bijker

belabored liberation is often trumpeted but rarely examined as inherent to the understanding of the bicycle as a device. This means that narratives and the cultural implementation of a device like the bicycle must be provided its full due in the examination of a technology. No artifact is pure and independent from its embedded cultural text and context.

Beyond the technical advances and engineering, beyond the rote history of late nineteenth century bicycle riding, the bicycle occupies a space in the human imagination to keep returning as an amazing little machine. After a brief resurgence in the 1970s during the growing environmentalist movements (producing the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act) and the OPEC-induced oil shortages in the Middle East, the bicycle was used as a symbol of environmental justice and human independence within the context of dominant car culture. A generation later, the bicycle has returned and appears to be a sustaining symbol for a wide variety of bicycle cultures offering alternatives to the automobile as a mainstay of transportation. Resurging with the popularism of the Critical Mass direct actions in the late 1990s, the bicycle has now become a mainstay of corporate America in order to recruit and retain a high-tech workforce.⁶

The bicycle takes us not just from point A to point B. The bicycle offers

⁶. "Companies are in a race to outdo each other on bike friendliness. Google not only gives employees racks and lockers, the company will donate to charity if employees ride to work. Etsy's got an in-house bike mechanic. In New York, Foursquare just chose a new location for it's headquarters, based on where biking would be easy."(Bernstein)

a vision of how people would like things to become not only more accommodating to the bicycle as a common mode of transportation but also, moreover, to shape the kind of world where bicycle lifestyles are hegemonic and other forms of transportation are the minority (if not gone altogether and abandoned). The bicycle is a metaphor for humans transporting themselves into a desired future while it also reveals the cultural machining and retooling of those liberatory desires—especially the figurative and narrative technique of the stories, imagery, theory, and poetry—of these light and miraculous machines. For too long, artifacts are understood as technical inventions arising solely from engineers, machinists, and early adopter users while the representation of the artifact is not included in the full scope of examining how we change and how we are changed by a device. The bicycle offers a way to explore the importance of the coeval production of technology dependent upon how humans represent the bicycle as a consistent figure of liberation. Even if this vision of the bicycle is utopian, why do we persist and imbue the bicycle with such flight?

Tools for Conviviality

After the success of *Deschooling Society*, one could find a young Governor of California, Jerry Brown, photographed in the Los Angeles Times holding a copy of Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality*⁷. in the series that

⁷. Barry Sanders recalls, "looking at a photograph in the Los Angeles Times that showed "the governor, Jerry Brown, with two books in his right hand. With a magnifying glass, I could discern: E.F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* and Ivan Illich's *Tools for*

comprised the pillars of his “counterfoil research,” or investigations into major social institutions that are too easily taken for granted. Outside of critical education studies, most remember Illich for his successive books *Tools of Conviviality* published in 1973 and *Energy and Equity* published in 1974. The timing of both of these coincided with the OPEC oil crisis when people in the industrialized Western nations were suddenly shocked to see how their daily lives were disrupted by the slow trickle of petroleum, sometimes forcing them to queue in long lines to fuel for their automobiles.

Tools of Conviviality introduces Illich’s idea of technology. Following the Greek root *technē*, Illich considers any devices that can be implemented by the hand as well as complex social institutions, like a medical or education system, a tool. *Tools of Conviviality* is Illich’s most general investigation into the supportive role technology should take in terms of maximizing human relationships rather than efficiency, kinetic power, and the technocratic experts’ requirement to fabricate, maintain, and license exactly who is able to distribute and use any given tool. For Illich, what makes a tool convivial is how the tool allows and encourages humans to more fully interact and express themselves through the usage of the tool without such usage curtailing the ability of anyone else similarly innovating and using the tool. This is not the form of innovation so frequently hailed by futurists of the 21st-

Conviviality" (Hoinacki and Mitcham 247).

century business press as a moniker for a company forging new territory, and purportedly innovating with rapid production of their consumer good in Shenzhen, China. Rather, the nature of a convivial tool is the structural inability to anticipate its purposes and how people may repurpose its application in ways that bring people together for further collaboration and enjoyment.

Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning; to the degree that he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his own self-image. Convivial tools are those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision. Industrial tools deny this possibility to those who use them and they allow their designers to determine the meaning and expectations of others. Most tools today cannot be used in a convivial fashion. (Illich, *Tools* 21)

While a Marxist critique of the factory system subjecting the worker to the design, pace, and logic of the assembly line is echoed in Illich's summation, Illich is careful to stress the social status of a technology. He also initiates the dichotomy, which carries throughout *Tools of Conviviality*, between convivial tools and industrial tools. What separates a convivial tool from its opposition in an industrial tool is not a measurement of units per labor hour or other measurement of productivity but rather the likelihood that a tool can generate opportunities for its user to change the environment as an extension of their unique vision.⁸ The apophatic, mystical implication of the person using the

⁸. This extension has a different tenor from Marshall McLuhan's "extension of man" insofar as Illich is nowhere near as celebratory as McLuhan in what Illich identifies as the dominance of industrial tools over convivial tools. While McLuhan may coin the global

convivial tool is more catholic in spirit than Catholic in creed.⁹ Tools that are limited to how they can be employed, with single purpose vision determined by a designer, engineer, or bureaucrat do not allow for a user to imaginatively re-define and re-employ the tool. Illich's contradistinction relies upon an implicit shared disgust of how tools are too often defined as only having a single purpose while not enhancing a user's relationship with other human beings. In the industrial tool paradigm no flourishing takes place besides the preponderance of forced consumers seeking further single-purpose tools to meet growing needs provided by the market without the consumer able to meet her own needs by simpler and far less expensive and less technical means.

Illich's Tools

But what exactly is a tool for Illich? In his series of books in the early 1970s he examines particular tools including compulsory schools, bicycles and cars as transportation systems, professional medicine, and professions as an apparatus in general. All are tools under his definition. Nearly twenty years later, Illich comments on why a hospital or a school is a tool because each "is an engineered device to achieve a purpose, and I needed a simple

village through electronic media and the spread of information beginning in the 1960s, Illich encounters global pillage through tools that force consumption and regulate behavior.

⁹. However, this cast is undoubtedly informed by the defrocked priest that Illich became early in his career and leaving the church during his activism in Puerto Rico in the 1960s.

word anybody would understand. I thought that most people, if they weren't too prejudiced and made a little bit of effort, would understand smilingly, and say, ah-ha!" (Illich and Cayley 108-09). "Tools" is a common word with connotations that Illich wanted to unearth in new ways, poetically and theoretically.

Using the simple word "tools" also hazards a long-standing understanding of technology that Illich may or may not have intended. By calling institutional systems, transportation networks, compulsory school, and large-scale industrial apparatuses all tools, Illich reduces technological devices and intricate systems to the image of a hand implement. It is as if all of the complexity of any given technological system implies a potential for human control and the wielding of the hand even though most people do not readily know how modern public works purify water, manage storm drains, monitor electrical grids, or how any manner of everyday things actually work. Throughout his texts in the 1970s Illich argues the opposite: technologies and modern systems are out-of-control, in the phrasing of Langdon Winner, and precisely *not* easily handled with consideration, understanding, and equity. The image of a craftsman manipulating a simple tool, training his apprentice is an inadequate image to explain the dilemmas of modern technology. Japan cannot reduce the morass of the malfunctioning reactor cores at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant after the March 11, 2011 earthquake to be akin to the mishandling of a hand tool. There are complex technologies that

cannot be grasped from the tool belt and the metaphor is simplistic and misleading. There are, however, also technologies that are inherently dangerous and cannot be characterized as neutral with society sussing out the consequences of its use as good or bad, nuclear power included.

Throughout philosophy of technology critic Langdon Winner's work he dispels the myth of neutral technology, which frequently sneaks into arguments where a form of technology is reduced to a hand tool as an easy kinaesthetic metaphor. While humans may have the volition (and inclination) to stop using a technology, they cannot readily remove the technology from widespread circulation or reverse the unintended effects of a technology once it begins to be used throughout society. Winner uses the example of the television never being predicted to consume several hours per day of an average person's daily activity or how ubiquitous it would become to use the television as a de facto babysitter in the United States. When critics defend technology, they "tend to see complex technologies as if they were handsaws or egg beaters" (Winner *Autonomous Technology* 200). Following Archimedes, defenders of the presumed progress of modernity tout technology as if it has a metaphorical lever that can be manipulated and controlled.

In this way of seeing, therefore, the tool-use model is a source of illusions and misleading cues. We do not *use* technologies so much as *live* them. One begins to think differently about tools when one notices that the tools include persons as functioning parts. Highly developed, complex technologies are tools without handles or, at least, with handles of extremely remote access. Yet we continue to talk as if telephone and electric systems were analogous

in their employment to a simple hand drill, as if an army were similar to an egg beater. (202)

Winner goes on to argue that for the majority of people, they give up on attempting to secure some kind of explanation for the vast complexity of technology because their everyday lives are dependent upon various forms of technology in order to live. The sheer amount of devices to attempt to understand quickly overwhelm the modern person's ability to explain all the specialized ways devices work. Winner, therefore begs moderns to examine technology not as a tool but as a way of life.¹⁰ The myth of neutral technology actually confers a form of religious faith in inevitable technological progress, argues Winner. The faith in technological progress prevents people from bearing the burden of understanding technology and its impact yet claiming that technology is still under their control. The illusion continues as technologies build upon one another when defenders correlate any particular technology, or technology in general, as a tool.

New technologies are institutional structures within an evolving constitution that gives shape to a new polity, the technopolis in which we do increasingly live. For the most part, this constitution still evolves with little public scrutiny or debate. Shielded by the conviction that technology is neutral and tool-like, a whole new order is built-piecemeal, step by step, with the parts and pieces linked together in novel ways—without the slightest public awareness or opportunity to dispute the character of the changes underway. It is somnambulism (rather than determinism) that characterizes technological politics—on the left, right, and center equally. Silence is its distinctive mode of speech. (324)

Rather than the illusion of society determining the role and function of

¹⁰. See Haraway for a related discussion of the interdependence of humans and technology under the rubric of cyborgs.

technology as voluntarists believe, Winner argues that the default position of decrying the undoubted advances of technology, regardless of political ideology, inverts the relationship between the human hand manipulating the tool. We are asleep to the changes the tool enacts and we allow the tool to manipulate us. The tool requires the human to function as an ensemble and shapes the human society to make the function possible. This uncontrolled and ill-considered reshaping through the use of a tool is exactly the dynamic that Illich castigates.

Illich's use of the term tool, therefore, is unique because he wants the accessibility of the word without perpetuating the myth of neutral technology or claiming that tools are always already socially determined. Winner accuses moderns of sleeping and simply trusting technology by default rather than rousing themselves and recognizing that technologies determine ends as a lived experience and, therefore, technologies should not be mistaken for quaint means to achieve the human user's determined end. Like Illich, Winner dichotomizes technological politics because

Different ideas of social and political life entail different technologies for their realization. One can create systems of production, energy, transportation, information handling, and so forth that are compatible with the growth of autonomous, self-determining individuals in a democratic polity. Or one can build, perhaps unwittingly, technical forms that are incompatible with this end and then wonder how things went strangely wrong (325).

The former—"autonomous, self-determining individuals in a democratic polity"—is the vision that Illich proposes with his conception of tools. The latter—"technical forms that are incompatible with" such a vision—shuts down

the possibility of autonomy and self-determination.

In an interview nearly two decades after *Tools for Conviviality* was published, Illich recalls his careful consideration of the term tool.

For thirty years now I've tried to figure out how to use ordinary language in that slightly obscene way that makes people see something new without then knowing exactly why. I've tried to discover very precise terms that let people say what they want to say. It was with the hope of doing this that, against the advice of all my editors and all my colleagues, I stuck to the word tools for a means to an end which people plan and engineer. It is not just a stick picked up in the street. I call a revolver, a gun, or a sword a tool for aggression. I don't call every stone which lies around such a tool. There is a poem I like of Robert Lowell's on this theme. I wish I could recite it for you. (Illich and Cayley 108-09)

The twisting of “ordinary language,” reminding Illich of an unnamed Robert Lowell poem, illustrates why he stuck with the word “tool” to encompass any purposeful technology that does not equally devolve into specialized terminology or jargon. At the same time, Illich is clear that tools are not neutral technology, like a stick in the street determined by the good or ill will of whoever should pick it up. Rather, tools can be evaluated by their design and purpose where weapons are tools for aggression and not explained away by the morality of whomever pulled the trigger. The gun is designed to kill people at a distance.¹¹ Any object that is encountered, like the stick in the road, is not necessarily an immanent tool. While the term “tool” may harbor

¹¹. “A common phrase used to argue for technological neutrality is that ‘guns don’t kill people, people kill people.’ If technology were truly neutral you should be able to substitute any other technology for the word ‘gun.’ Try: ‘Sofas don’t kill people, people kill people.’ This somewhat silly example highlights the fact that we know sofas are not designed to kill people, and guns are. One could kill someone with a sofa, but its affordances are such that it would be a very difficult task” (Bauchspies, Croissant and Restivo 84-85).

connotations of simplicity, Illich wants to retain the sense of surprise by what the concept can grasp and contain through ordinary language.

Toward the end of *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich goes on to say that language is a perfect example of a convivial tool that cannot be contained and predetermined especially when language is used in new and unpredictable ways. In English, “tool” harbors the crux of Illich's differentiation between industrial and convivial. A tool is certainly useful but a person may idiomatically be called a tool: a grammatical direct object controlled by another person, agent, or process to which one willingly (or reluctantly) submits to another's manipulation as nothing but “a tool.” The quick shift from ease and equality toward control and debasement is the social dynamic that Illich highlights. “In *Tools for Conviviality*, I presented a meditation on how tools, when they grow beyond a certain intensity, inevitably turn from means into ends, and frustrate the possibility of the achievement of an end” (Illich and Cayley 110). As a category, a convivial tool is primarily about producing a society where all participants use tools that access and reproduce the equality that is a byproduct of the tool rather than a tool that stratifies the social order into those that have ease and access in contrast to those in dis-ease and disbarment.

It is also important to contextualize Illich's work at CIDOC (Centro Intercultural de Documentación in Cuernavaca, México) and throughout the Americas during the time he is writing *Tools for Conviviality*. His theorization

is based upon conversations with so-called underprivileged kids in Chicago¹² and his vocal criticism of the Vatican and the Peace Corps with their vision of development of the so-called Third World. Illich enraged the Catholic left, such as Dan Berrigan, because of Illich's opposition to missionary work in Latin America along with the Catholic right in Mexico for his instrumental popular education efforts at CIDOC. While Illich was educated in Europe, his experience in Puerto Rico, Mexico, and throughout South America, where he primarily hiked throughout the Andes, informed his examination of institutions and their so-called solutions—tools from the left and the right—through concerted attempts to determine development placed upon vast amounts of people with physical, political, intellectual, and what Gayatri Spivak calls epistemic violence. Illich reflects

When I wrote *Tools for Conviviality* I was in the middle of a political struggle in South America, actually being shot at and beaten up with chains because I ridiculed the Peace Corps and the volunteers the Pope sent down there, and because I questioned the desirability of making the professional state of the art of northern countries into the norm of how schools or hospitals or thinking about health should develop in South America. I was in a different situation, and I saw certain things much more clearly than I see them now. (Illich and Cayley 120)

Illich questions the clarity of his thoughts thirty years later but he does not question the context and the stakes that informed the book and his resolute beliefs at the time. While never more explicit than mentioning the bullets and

¹². “Schools lead to schooled society. I remember once when I discussed this in a slum in Chicago at the Urban Training Center, and a little black girl goes up and said, ‘Yeah, yeah, you're right, we're all schooled up.’ And I answered, ‘Yeah, we're all schooled up.’ So after lunch, I see all these kids there with buttons, ‘School You!’” (Illich and Cayley 109)

chains, Illich was threatening enough to those in power for people to employ the "tools of aggression" against him to get him to stop. Therefore, when Illich is contrasting a convivial tool against an industrial tool, frequently relating to imperialism¹³, he does so with direct lived experience of violent attempts of intimidation in the context of Latin America resisting neocolonial development.

This definition of the tool combined with the convivial is key to understanding an oft cited but little explained dynamic to the reason why the bicycle is resurging as a cultural icon of liberation in the twenty-first century. Bicycle advocates claim that technology brings people together without hindering their enjoyment of the built environment in contradistinction to the arch-nemesis of the automobile. Illich claims that a convivial system must have a balance—popular in anarchist thought—of minimizing the authority of

¹³. "The principal source of injustice in our epoch is political approval for the existence of tools that by their very nature restrict to a very few the liberty to use them in an autonomous way. The pompous rituals by which each man is given a vote to choose between factions only cover up the fact that the imperialism of industrial tools is both arbitrary and growing. Statistics which prove increased outputs and high per capita consumption of professionally defined quanta only veil the enormously high invisible costs. People get better education, better health, better transportation, better entertainment, and often even better nourishment only if the experts' goals are taken as the measurement of what "better" means. The possibility of a convivial society depends therefore on a new consensus about the destructiveness of imperialism on three levels: the pernicious spread of one nation beyond its boundaries; the omnipresent influence of multinational corporations; and the mushrooming of professional monopolies over production. Politics for convivial reconstruction of society must especially face imperialism on this third level, where it takes the form of professionalism. The public ownership of resources and of the means of production, and public control over the market and over net transfers of power, must be complemented by a public determination of the tolerable basic structure of modern tools. This means that politics in a postindustrial society must be mainly concerned with the development of design criteria for tools rather than as now with the choice of production goals. These politics would mean a structural inversion of the institutions now providing and defining new man-made essentials" (Illich, *Tools* 43).

a technology to constrain an individual while valorizing the social world individuals share as autonomous beings.

Tools foster conviviality to the extent to which they can be easily used, by anybody, as often or as seldom as desired, for the accomplishment of a purpose chosen by the user. The use of such tools by one person does not restrain another from using them equally. They do not require previous certification of the user. Their existence does not impose any obligation to use them. They allow the user to express his meaning in action. (Illich, *Tools* 22)

This lack of constraint through the use of the tool reaches a structure where the convivial tool, ultimately, cannot be owned or administered, because “The issue at hand is not the juridical ownership of tools, but rather the discovery of the characteristic of some tools which make it impossible for anybody to ‘own’ them. The concept of ownership cannot be applied to a tool that cannot be controlled” (*Tools* 25). The control of industrial tools is innovative only in the sense of a technology planned by a core of specialists for key purposes in order to maintain the basic structure of their work and knowledge-power as Michel Foucault has examined, whereas convivial tools are “unpredictable, creative, and lively as the people who use them” (75). Illich understands the constraint of capitalism's protection of a consumer market creating the need for an endless (re)supply of the latest "innovative" products available for purchase just as a socialist system justifies centralized production in the name of efficiency.

Industrial innovations are costly, and managers must justify their high cost by producing measurable proof of their superiority. Under the rule of industrial socialism, pseudo science will have to provide the alibi, while in market economies, appeal can be made to a survey of consumer opinion. In any case, periodic innovations in goods or tools foster the belief that anything new will be proven better. This belief has become an integral part of the

modern world view. It is forgotten that whenever a society lives by the delusion, each marketed unit generates more wants than it satisfies. If new things are made because they are better, then the things most people use are not quite good. New models constantly renovate poverty. The consumer feels the lag between what he has and what he ought to get. He believes that products can be made measurably more valuable and allows himself to be constantly re-educated for their consumption. The "better" re-replaces the "good" as the fundamental normative concept. (74-75)

The dichotomy between industrial tool and convivial tool is demarcated by a line of marketed research in a cycle of consumption versus creative research in a cycle of sustainable societies providing equal opportunity for inventiveness. Industrial tools concentrate on “research and development for breakthroughs to the better production of better wares and general systems analysis concerned with protecting man for further consumption” (77). Illich then calls for “counterfoil research” where idealized convivial tool development would “provide guidelines for detecting the incipient stages of murderous logic in a tool; and to devise tools and tool systems that optimize the balance of life, thereby maximizing liberty for all” (77). Rather than the need for a marketing industry to convince people that their consumption will satisfy needs they were not fully aware of before the advertisement, convivial tool research affords a cycle of sustainable maintenance, does not rely upon or create more needs for its constant replacement, and generates the greatest freedom to employ the tools without being mastered by the tool's usage. The industrial tool relies upon a system of lack for the consumer to fulfill repeatedly through a purchase. It enables people insofar as they can access and afford what is available for purchase. The convivial tool is socially

aimed at maximizing the user's ability to create and affect one's environment and lived experience without harming others' ability to engage the world with equal conviviality.

Utopian Postindustrial Thought

Philosophy of technology critic Barry Smart, one of the few to place Illich in context with other utopian postindustrial, post-1960s thinkers, evaluates the loss of autonomy that Illich concentrates on in his opposition of industrial tools versus convivial tools. Though Smart feels Illich “ultimately differentiates his analysis from the idea of utopia,” nonetheless, Illich's chief concern piques our interest in a “post-industrial era of conviviality.” Smart discusses Illich in the context of a wide range of post-industrial thinkers including Theodore Roszak, Andre Gorz, and Rudolph Bahro for they all share a desire for “a genuinely liberated society within which the benefits of advances in knowledge and technology will be deployed so as to enhance, rather than reduce or eradicate, forms of individual autonomy” (84). Smart identifies the loss that Illich claims conviviality reclaims:

The industrial mode of production is conceived to have reached a point where its negative effects or consequences far outweigh its benefits. Increasing scientific rationalization, specialization, and professionalization places individuals in a situation of dependency upon institutionally produced commodities and services. Individuals, as increasingly passive appendages to manipulative 'tools', which prevent the self-production of use-values, have of necessity become consumers of exchange values, of industrially produced commodities and services. Industrial 'tools' (viz. Hardware; machines; commodity producing institutions; and systems of producing intangible commodities such as health, education, knowledge, decisions, etc.) have produced a progressive homogenization of persons and relationships, and an erosion of individual autonomy and creativity. Such 'tools' may offer 'growth', escalating levels of production, development, material 'affluence', and 'progress', but professionally engineered delivery models, judgments, and

evaluations have undermined independence and belief in self-competence, and thereby have eroded the conditions necessary for autonomy. (103)

With industrial tools “use-values are denigrated, and autonomous, self-produced services and values [are] rendered obsolescent or deficient by the endless circuit of innovation, production, marketing, and consumption” (106). But, for Smart, what makes Illich's postindustrial critique unique is how much Illich concentrates on the debilitated imagination and self-defeat, where people are convinced—inverting the mantra of the World Social Forum—another world is *not* possible. “But even if the benefits of the existing system are questionable, inequitably distributed and at times degrading and disabling, Illich suggests that it is extremely difficult for people to envisage the possibility of a viable, appealing, alternative postindustrial or convivial society, in which control and mastery might be exercised over tools, thereby facilitating autonomy, choice, and diversity in the expression of creative energies” (104). Smart affords Illich a unique place amongst postindustrial utopian thinkers because of Illich's concentration on the debilitated political imagination, given “the fact that our vision of the possible and the feasible is so restricted by industrial expectations that any alternative to more mass production sounds like a return to past oppression or like a Utopian design for noble savages” (67).

Illich's concept of convivial tools demands a reshaping of modernity to value autonomy and social cohesion more than the hegemonic march of

technological progress. Convivial tools are also all-encompassing and abstract when it can range from the examination of the tool of compulsory education as discussed in *Deschooling Society* to that of a gun. So what example does Illich repeatedly turn to throughout *Tools of Conviviality* to ground his discussion? The bicycle. Of all the technologies, from educational institutions to even the basis of human language, Illich touts the bicycle as having the quintessential qualities of convivial modernity. For Illich, the bicycle shall deliver us from technological bondage.

Convivial modernity is what allows us to recognize the advances of technologies but only insofar as they support human sociability, sustaining the habitat that makes it possible, and for different cultures to flourish. Until Illich highlighted their ease of use, efficiency, and design, the bicycle was represented as merely a technological ancestor to the industrial and social triumph of the unsurpassable automobile. But after Illich theorized the bicycle in the mid-1970s, the bicycle became the basis for a re-imagining of what it means to be modern. Modernity no longer had to embrace the endless march of capital-intensive technology for faster, bigger, brighter, longer, stronger devices affordable only to elites. Modernity, as a concept of worldwide capitalist development, could return to its rationalism for all, satisfying the needs of a polluted planet, a generation frustrated with imperialist wars. If we all bicycled, we could manage many of our problems including the OPEC oil crisis and the defeat of imperialist invaders, such as in Vietnam, one of Illich's

frequent examples about the superiority of bicycle power.

A grisly contest between bicycles and motors has just come to an end. In Vietnam, a hyperindustrialized army tried to conquer, but could not overcome, a people organized around bicycle speed. The lesson should be clear. High energy armies can annihilate people—both those they defend and those against whom they are launched, but they are of very limited use to a people which defends itself. It remains to be seen if the Vietnamese will apply what they learned in war to an economy of peace, if they will be willing to protect the values that made their victory possible. The dismal likelihood is that the victors, for the sake of industrial progress and increased energy consumption, will tend to defeat themselves by destroying that structure of equity, rationality and autonomy into which American bombers had forced them by depriving them of fuels, motors and roads. (Illich 64; Illich, “Energy and Equity” 137-38)



Fig. 1: Vietnamese use of bicycles in wartime. (Fitzpatrick 176)¹⁴

¹⁴. Fitzpatrick goes on to describe, “there was little nightly footage from the other side of

Conviviality

We have explored Illich's choice of the term "tool," but we have not examined exactly why Illich chooses conviviality as the value to oppose the category of the industrial. According to the Oxford English Dictionary convivial comes from the Old French *convive* and the Latin *convivium*, meaning a feast or banquet. The sociality of eating with others remains in the modern French (with specific cooking variants discussed below) and English as well as the nominal "one who feasts with others; a fellow-banqueter, table-companion, messmate." In its adjectival form, convivial dates back to 1669 in English, denoting not only belonging to a feast or banquet but also "characterized by feasting or jovial companionship." Finally, in 1791, conviviality described the state of quality of "the enjoyment of festive society, festivity." The etymological revelry continues to connote not only joyful merriment at a party but outright insobriety. When Illich was discussing the original pamphlet form of *Tools for Conviviality* (originally in French) with an "aristocratic American director" of a prominent magazine at the time, "The old owner and director of Harper's squinted with his eyes and said, 'Mr. Illich, are you acquainted with American

Vietnamese porters carrying 50-pound loads down steep slopes, or climbing out of holes immediately after heavy bombing attacks to continue pushing heavily laden bicycles along muddy roads. Even if the networks had the footage, such scenes would have been too mundane for prime time news, night after night. Yet, those simple, unspectacular actions, repeated innumerable times around the clock, coupled with the political determination to drive foreigners out of their homeland, was where the war was ultimately won" (175-76).

Slang?' I said, 'Yes, I know how and why I choose my words....'" Apparently the editor of the New York Review then chimed in, "'This is not a correct use of the word. Convivial means only tipsy joviality.'" Illich was unfazed, and then mused about the "aristocratic" Harper's owner joking next about tools as those "between your legs" (Illich and Cayley 108) pushing the convivial toward the sexual. Illich is certainly gesturing toward the feasting, the banquet, the partying, the joviality, the playfulness, and the sexuality in the term conviviality. Many of these aspects are deliberately heightened in the variety of bicycle cultures that utilize the bicycle in the twenty-first century. Illich proposes the possibility that tools (rather than technology) become suffused with the structure for supporting "the shared feast" of one's labor, creativity, and engagement through, with, and by the usage of the convivial tool in a community.

After many doubts, and against the advice of friends whom I respect, I have chosen "convivial" as a technical term to designate a modern society of responsibly limited tools. In part this choice was conditioned by the desire to continue a discourse which had started with its Spanish cognate. The French cognate has been given technical meaning (for the kitchen) by Brillat-Savarin in his *Physiology of Taste: Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*. This specialized use of the term in French might explain why it has already proven effective in the unmistakably different and equally specialized context in which it will appear in this essay. I am aware that in English "convivial" now seeks the company of tipsy jolliness, which is distinct from that indicated by the OED and opposite to the austere meaning of modern "eutrapelia," which I intend. By applying the term "convivial" to tools rather than to people, I hope to forestall confusion. (Illich, *Tools* xxiv)

While Illich fully intends the festive sociality, it is imperative to stress that he is advocating for the arousal of our imaginations to the degree that we would want such a state of being (with others) to be the norm through social

structures and technical artifacts that are conducive and constructive of the qualities of sharing a banquet. Illich goes further to explain how the inherent limits he seeks to place on tools must become a form of chosen "eutrapelia" or austerity¹⁵. As Langdon Winner describes the long-standing tradition of modern philosophy castigating technology as a determinant of humanity in the modern era, Illich is asking us to build a society where the tools no longer seem to control us but rather support us in being and sharing with others.

Considering Illich's milieu in Cuernavaca with a strong Spanish language school component at CIDOC, anthropologists Joanna Overing and Alan Passes credit Illich's use of the term convivial from the Spanish *convivir* meaning "to live together/to share the same life, and *convivencia*, a joint/ shared life" (Overing and Passes xiii).

Throughout his usage of conviviality, Illich makes it clear that the only limit that should be applied to tools in such a society is the limit to guarantee the equal freedom to others to use the same tool in countless, unforeseen ways. This consistent autonomy is what strongly links Illich to anarchist thought. For example, contemporary with Illich, the anarchist critic Murray Bookchin was developing his notion of "deep ecology" as an insistent anarchism where humans are integrated into the natural environment, not

¹⁵. Illich's austerity should not be confused with the neoliberal use of the word referring to the imposed degradation of the modern state's commonweal in order to satisfy a nation's debtors such as Iceland, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and to a large degree, the United States since the worldwide economic recession in 2008.

forgetting their absolute dependence upon the biosphere but also not eschewing technology that can reduce the constant toil of work to produce food, shelter, and fuel in a post-scarcity, but not necessarily post-industrial, society. Illich is certainly advocating for a post-industrial society insofar as tools and their bureaucratic technocrats no longer determine a person's behavior, imagination, and licensed ability to use and create. Bookchin is not far from this view but he does not eschew the results of capital-intensive tools so long as they can theoretically be deployed toward anarchist ends. However, Bookchin's 1965 essay "Toward a Liberatory Technology" argues that technology can "carry a new qualitative promise... of decentralized, communitarian lifestyles," or what Bookchin later calls "technology for life" in a liberated society (Bookchin 116, 157). Bookchin's vision resonates with Illich:

Having acquired a vitalizing respect for the natural environment and its resources, the free decentralized community would give a new interpretation to the word "need." Marx's "realm of necessity," instead of expanding indefinitely, would tend to contract; needs would be humanized and scaled by a higher valuation of life and creativity. Quality and artistry would supplant the current emphasis on quantity and standardization; durability would replace the current emphasis on expendability; an economy of cherished things, sanctified by a sense of tradition and by a sense of wonder for the personality and artistry of dead generations, would replace the mindless seasonal restyling of commodities; innovations would be made with a sensitivity for the natural inclinations of man as distinguished from the engineered pollution of taste by the mass media. Conservation would replace waste in all things. Freed of bureaucratic manipulation, men would rediscover the beauty of a simpler, uncluttered material life. Clothing, diet, furnishings and homes would become more artistic, more personalized and more Spartan. Man would recover a sense of the things that are for man, as against the things that have been imposed upon man. The repulsive ritual of bargaining and hoarding would be replaced by the sensitive acts of making and giving. Things would cease to be the crutches for an impoverished ego and the mediators between aborted personalities; they would become the products of rounded, creative individuals and the gifts of integrated, developing selves. (157)

Bookchin's liberated society has Spartan austerity mixed with the creative quotidian that Illich describes (but not as euphorically as Bookchin).

Conviviality's feast and friendship is one based upon autonomy and the enjoyment of others where people create and give because technology has not only allowed for the provision of needs but also for a new definition of modern liberation—a joyful society of profuse, creative, and supportive growth.

This enlivening dynamic of the convivial can also carry postcolonial joys of ordinary life and potentially rescue the project of multiculturalism. Paul Gilroy recently resuscitates conviviality in his 2005 book *Postcolonial Melancholia*, as a way to describe “the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere” (*Postcolonial Melancholia* xv). Gilroy is attracted to the everyday ways people in urban postcolonial cities have created forms of ordinary multiculture “spontaneously and organically” (124). Eschewing tiring narratives of immigration and assimilation, which can create impenetrable categories of race that maintain stratified societies, the convivial is “defined by a liberating sense of the banality of intermixture and the subversive ordinariness” of daily life where the idea of “race” “is stripped of meaning” and “becomes only an aftereffect of long-gone imperial history” (150). Such a convivial culture of “spontaneous tolerance and openness” can foster “a more sophisticated and political

understanding of cultural change, influence, and adaptation” (131). Gilroy finds conviviality allows him to take on the project of multiculturalism’s failures because of conviviality’s quotidian and “radical openness,” independent from strict categories of identity. Gilroy’s use of conviviality does not reduce a potential multiculturalism to a concept of how “we must learn to love and value human differences rather than fear and misrecognize them,” (151) creating “one more imperialistic particularism dressed up in seductive universal garb” (4). Rather, Gilroy’s conviviality soberly desires “to make it as easy for people to imagine a world without racial differences as it is for them currently to imagine the end of the world” (151). Just as Illich uses conviviality to emphasize the feasting of a community and a radical readjustment of modernity, Gilroy uses conviviality to readjust multiculturalism and escape the boundaries of racial identity toward a genuine but surprisingly pedestrian multiculturalism. Noting Gilroy’s use of the convivial illustrates how Illich did not develop the term but also implies the continued political possibilities of openness endemic to conviviality, which Illich sought in choosing the term convivial.

The Austerity of the Convivial

Meanwhile, this austerity carries a morality that also limits the horizon of convivial autonomous action. John Pauly identifies how Illich utilizes Marxism, Catholicism, and Anarchism in his conception of conviviality while also identifying a conservative bent for the call for austerity. “Illich constantly

refers to conviviality as a self-imposed austerity, and it is this argument for 'joyful renunciation' that often draws criticism from radical readers and praise from conservatives. But again Illich claims that austerity need not be a heroic individual moral choice, but could be the result of a practical group decision in the service of equity and solidarity" (Pauly 268). Anarchism informs the current bicycle epoch, particularly the Critical Mass Movement and community bike workshops,¹⁶ whereas the decades-long government sponsored street closure to motor vehicles so bicycles and pedestrians can recreate on the streets of Bogotá, Colombia is more akin to a socially chosen solution to share the public space in the Ciclovía program.¹⁷ Like Bookchin and Illich sharing aspects of a vision of autonomous activity and shared space, there is a spectrum of belief on the role of the state and how people can build the future of autonomous living. The similarities and differences between conviviality and anarchism are critical to understanding the diversity of political thought the bicycle fosters.

If Murray Bookchin's social ecology begins with the typical modernist

^{16.} See Zack Furness's chapter 6 "DIY Culture" and Chapter 7 "Handouts, Hand Ups, or Just Lending a Hand?: Community Bike Projects, Bicycle Aid, and Competing Visions of Development under Globalization" in *One Less Car: Bicycling and the Politics of Automobility*.

^{17.} See Chris Carlsson's works for the relationship between anarchism and Critical Mass. For the history of Bogotá's Ciclovía program as an affordable means to reduce violence in the city and honor the history of the bicycle in Colombia see *Ciclovía* and Navarro, Heierli and Beck.

myth of technology = teleological progress—albeit a form of technology which enables an autonomous society free from gods, religion, and the power of the state—Bookchin’s liberatory dreams of the future are nonetheless deeply discordant with Ivan Illich’s conception of conviviality. Bookchin sings the praises of a Spartan existence where creativity and giving to others thrive against an industrialized, fragmented society in the 1960-1970s. At the time, Bookchin (and arguably to this day, according to David Watson) imagined the role of society to produce enough wealth without the burden of human labor and toil to produce the material means to reach a desired liberated, anarchist society end point. “Bookchin's flaw from *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* onward was to celebrate this technological transformation as the necessary precondition for a liberatory society, rather than the emergence of a qualitatively new state of domination...” (Watson 214). Bookchin's vision entails machinery performing mining to spare humans the labor of descending into the earth to extract minerals, agricultural tools and complex systems that can spare humans from backbreaking work on the farm at the push of a button, machines able to manufacture other machines so humans can work on creative and inventive endeavors rather than constantly struggle for the means to survive, solar panel farms with wind and geothermal power and even thermonuclear energy (later rescinded by Bookchin) in order to free humanity for the need to seek more energy resources. “What is significant in retrospect is that [Bookchin] was arguing for technicized agricultural efficiency

right when capitalist and state socialist planning bureaucrats, following utilitarian-analytic reason, were promoting not so very different efficiency schemes and a green revolution. Despite the libertarian rhetoric, Bookchin was only able to envision *what capital itself was bringing about*" (Emphasis in the original) (Watson 224). In Bookchin's vision, liberatory society rests upon the a priori idea that basic human needs are scarce and therefore must be overcome in order to found an anarchist society where abundance, with the least amount of human toil, is the prerequisite for the liberatory technology to work its anarchistic magic. Undoubtedly, Illich's conviviality rejects this concatenation of Bookchin's prolegomenon of technology as technical savior to solve scarcity and carry anarchism in its wake.

Illich's Catholic training certainly informs a positive value on human labor but Illich's toil does not necessarily carry the moral purifying beliefs of Judeo-Christian religions with a work ethic beneficial to the growth of capitalism as famously examined by Max Weber. Illich's love of labor retains the power of sweat and toil as a human connection to the embodied environment. The metabolic will never let you forget that the body must expend energy in order to move itself, any tool, or social institution toward an end. If Bookchin privileges sparing human muscle labor (and its complex kinaesthetic knowledge) as much as possible as a condition of seeking the kind of society where autonomy can thrive, then Illich privileges salvaging human labor (reminiscent of economist E.F. Schumacher's coining of

“Appropriate Technology”) as a way to relieve society from the disciplinary power and structure of industrial tools.¹⁸ It is because of the political demands of society structured around high-energy needs, that Illich seeks the political effects in metabolic, labor-intensive technologies.

The so-called energy crisis is, then, a politically ambiguous issue. Public interest in the quantity of power and in the distribution of controls over the use of energy can lead in two opposite directions. On the one hand, questions can be posed that would open the way to political reconstruction by unblocking the search for a postindustrial, labor-intensive, low-energy and high-equity economy. On the other hand, hysterical concern with machine fodder can reinforce the present escalation of capital-intensive institutional growth, and carry us past the last turnoff from a hyperindustrial Armageddon. (Illich, “Energy and Equity” 115)

Illich identifies the human labor as the political and social solution to the ill effects of technological energy demands. It is a slippery slope of green energy demands that require increasing social control and removal of non-technical specialists from the energy process required to power their daily lives in the name of relieving the need for human physical labor. “[T]he last turnoff” is no accident with the automobile in mind. Illich sees one future continuing the trend with further financial and social investment in institutions and technologies that concentrate solely on producing more energy. Illich does not want the so-called silver bullet of renewable energy sources to be mistaken as a solution to the fundamental energy problem. This is because of

¹⁸. According to Langdon Winner, Murray Bookchin was a “onetime teacher of appropriate technology of Goddard College” and Bookchin “joined others, including Theodore Roszak and Ivan Illich, in an interpretation that claimed the [appropriate technology] movement as a rebirth of communitarian anarchism” (Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* 72).

the capital-intensive processes, institutions, and dependence upon a specialized workforce will produce a society that further diminishes equity and leads toward Illich's forewarned "hyperindustrial Armageddon." The other future that Illich proposes is one that is a "post-industrial, labor intensive, low-energy and high-equity economy."

Illich ask us to sweat in conviviality; Bookchin asks us to step aside to let the green machines provide the conditions for post-scarcity anarchism. Nevertheless, given this critical difference, Bookchin's anarchist endpoint helps us to see how resonant Illich's liberatory bicycle was at the same time American Anarchism was informed by the growing environmental movement in Bookchin's shift toward "deep ecology." The bicycle activated new visions of a more liberated society allowing people to be more autonomous because of their relationship to technical devices.

Modernity

Illich does not make a break with other thinkers in his use of the term modernity. But we should better understand how Illich is charting a particular path for modernity by adding the adjective convivial. Illich is certainly not a futurist placing his faith in the solutions and embellished fantasies of the promise to come. Illich is also not a Marxist in the sense of concentrating on the master narrative of class struggle overcome by the eventual, inevitable revolution of the proletariat who shall control the means of production and establish a classless society. Both descriptive and prescriptive in his

conception of what modernity has been and what it should be, Illich is surprisingly allergic to the pace of modernity. The convivial invites change and innovation but not at the expense of reducing a convivial society's ability to imagine, fashion, and shape itself. There are limits on the modern that Illich would like to see in the fabric of the convivial future. With technology no longer in the driver's seat, per se, but placed in its subservient place as an implement of humanity's desire to grow, Illich wants us to think of the journey by bicycle not only as more pleasurable but also satisfying the demands of modernity needing efficiency and speed. But speed must have a speed limit.

Since the terms modernity and modern are "catchwords of particular kinds of change," Raymond Williams warns, "the terms need scrutiny" (209). By modernity, Illich is certainly concerned with the changes in human perception of time, space, and an increasingly fragmented society after the precipitous effects of industrialization. But while this generalization is helpful to describe the effects of the last few hundred years (and arguably since the "discovery" of the New World) modernity is a slippery and ill-defined concept. "What is meant by 'modernity' varies greatly," Tim Armstrong warns, "and depends on the historical narrative one is constructing." Armstrong further identifies two generalizations that are safe to make about modernity.

First, a historical shift which begins as early as the seventeenth century, producing new forms of capitalist organization, social relations, government and technology, accompanied by the development of a scientific, secular world-view. Second, the rise in the Enlightenment of a discourse which actively promotes the modern against the inherited: the discourse of

rationalization, progress and autonomy; the abolition of superstition and the mastery of nature. (2)

While we can argue the validity of early capitalism shifting periods (and geopolitical locations), we can agree upon the significance of the widespread historical shift Armstrong characterizes as well as the rise of a discourse of rational progress and autonomy, especially as it dispels traditional beliefs and how intertwined this modern progress is with its desired mastery of nature. In addition to the historical shift and the instantiation of progress, there is the relentless feeling of constant and ineluctable change that humans experience as capitalism continues to revolutionize its processes, overcome crises, and rebuild, in order to perform the relentless dance all over again.

Marshall Berman famously re-read Karl Marx's writing on modernity by concentrating on the metaphors Marx relied upon in Marx and Frederick Engels's *Communist Manifesto*. In Berman's book and later revised essay *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Berman drums and duns in an incessant style to mimic Marx and Engel's manifesto reflecting the speed, power, and rhythms of modernity

There is a mode of vital experience — experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils — that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience "modernity". To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world — and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a

universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air.' (*All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* 15)

The paradoxical experience of modernity feels like magic somehow offering vast extremes at once. Once held beliefs and foundational processes suddenly vanish under the pressure of change. The pace of this change may increase at such a rate that society experiences what Alvin Toffler coins as “future shock” but the individual and social experience of life amidst and among the changes in work, family structures, immigration, production and the daily experience of the marketplace, all propel and persist apace with change as the one constant. What Armstrong and Berman both identify is how the built-in structure of modernity requires its own salve and cure for the exhilaration and exhaustion we experience. For Armstrong, the anti-modern—especially in its fervent impulse to return to “nature”—is a response to this ceaseless change as a means to calm and counteract the anxiety of modernity. For Berman, he finds that Marx “hopes to heal the wound of modernity through a fuller and deeper modernity” (“All That is Solid Melts Into Air” 110). Illich, too, follows this stream of modifying modernity in order to heal its paradoxical ailment of advancement and anxiety.

As with Berman’s metaphor of violent change as a maelstrom—a storm both natural but startlingly violent in the midst of human efforts at controlling it—David Harvey explains how the narrative of progress simultaneously nurtured liberal ideals. Experiencing anxiety also bore the

horizon of greater human freedoms during the storm.

Enlightenment thought... [e]mbraced the idea of progress, and actively sought that break with history and tradition which modernity espouses. It was, above all, a secular movement that sought the demystification and desacralization of knowledge and social organization in order to liberate human beings from their chains... To the degree that it also lauded human creativity, scientific discovery, and the pursuit of individual excellence in the name of human progress, Enlightenment thinkers welcomed the maelstrom of change and saw the transitoriness, the fleeting, and the fragmentary as a necessary condition through which the modernizing project could be achieved. Doctrines of equality, liberty, faith in human intelligence (once allowed the benefits of education), and universal reason abounded. (12-13)

European Enlightenment's liberal ideals of "equality, liberty, faith in human intelligence" adumbrate the transitory experience of constant change in the experience of modernity. Given Harvey's categorization, Illich is attempting to highlight this experience of constant change when he argues for tools for conviviality as the means to the ends of convivial modernity instantiating autonomy and sociality. Illich does not want to lose the liberal ideals. At the same time, Illich argues that such convivial tools will not hamper human freedom to create (and allow others to create) while minimizing the fretful and anxiety-ridden existence of a society insistent upon the latest industrial tool to drive the next wave in the maelstrom, pounding another new change to accommodate and make compensatory with the experience of one's social life. Therefore, we must be clear that Illich's convivial modernity is starkly conservative (again), allowing human initiated inventiveness while relishing in a more stable social structure where the tools do not make demands but rather follow the classical understanding of the tool following its maker's hand and ministrations. "Many readers of *Tools [for Conviviality]* have complained

that there seem to be two Illiches, one who makes a seemingly radical critique of technology, and one who grounds that critique in a seemingly conservative ethical argument“ (Pauly 266). This can strike an odd chord: hearing Illich’s radical critique of technology while dissonant undertones of preserving and containing society carry throughout Illich’s conception of convivial modernity. While Illich argues that limits must be placed on tools, there is an implicit limit on the very autonomy he protects in order to remain within energy consumption bounds and sustain the society. This paradox of liberatory, autonomous society allowing tools that foster such activity is also tempered and contained by an ethic of stability and maintenance of such an order.

Radical Monopoly

Another important factor, which Illich identifies in the systemic effects of an industrial tool, is how the industrial tool uniquely meets demands that only it can satisfy. The resulting “monopoly” debilitates society by forcing people to use the industrial tool with no other viable choice. Illich calls this characteristic a "radical monopoly" and further relates the tautological nature of how a tool is purportedly produced to solve a need that "radically" consolidates a captive market for which only that tool can now satisfy. This circular structure further compounds the pervasive dependence upon the industrial tool rather than a reasoned solution to the original need that was to be satisfied. Illich is not alone when he harangues the automobile especially

in light of early urbanists such as Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs. However, Illich is unique in using a critical analysis that is not solely limited to the car but rather to the social, structural, and political effects that result when the car begins to organize society around its exclusive usage. For Illich, the greatest loss is not so much, economic as it is psycho-political insofar as people begin to believe that there are no realizable alternatives to the car or that simply switching to a "green" energy source will solve the traffic congestion and costs of the personal automotive vehicle.

"Radical monopoly" thus refers to the psychic as well as the economic consequences of industrial tools. Illich argues that such tools encourage people to believe that they can satisfy their needs only by recourse to one or another commodity. Those who refuse to package their desires—who choose to educate themselves and their children, bear babies at home, move under their own power at speeds less than 15 mph, and talk over problems with friends rather than licensed therapists—face increasing social pressure, and—as in the case of midwives—legal restrictions. Addicted to industrial products that frustrate needs as much as satisfy them, modern people lose their ability to imagine any alternative. (Pauly 263)

This debilitating effect is the result of an industrial tool not only structuring society in such a way as to require its usage and consumption but, ultimately, structuring a hegemonic force where the imaginations of people are condemned to the possibilities that only include the industrial tool.

Illich is quite clear about his definition of a radical monopoly not being mistaken for the common connotations of a monopoly in general where a brand dominates the market.

By "radical monopoly" I mean the dominance of one type of product rather than the dominance of one brand. I speak about radical monopoly when one industrial production process exercises an exclusive control over the satisfaction of a pressing need, and excludes nonindustrial activities from competition. (*Tools* 52)

Rather, a radical monopoly is a singular dominance of an industrial tool that is so widespread that it drastically and thoroughly alters the scope of what people imagine is politically and physically possible. Note also that Illich is insistent upon the correlation between industrial tools and radical monopolies. Illich claims the natural, non-industrial abilities one is born with (assuming a universal ability to be able to walk) are subsumed by the automobile as a radical monopoly displacing one's ability to walk or extend that ability to walk by five times with the convivial tool of the bicycle with nominal caloric energy inputs. "Radical monopoly exists where a major tool rules out natural competence. Radical monopoly imposes compulsory consumption and thereby restricts personal autonomy. It constitutes a special kind of social consumption of a standard product that only large institutions can provide" (*Tools* 52-53). This is not only a need met by large institutions but also one that makes consumers mere recipients or clients as they are forced to purchase the industrial tool as the only solution. "Any industry exercises this kind of deep-seated monopoly when it becomes the dominant means of satisfying needs that formerly occasioned a personal response" (*Energy and Equity* 45; "Energy and Equity" 130). This personal response, such as the ability to walk or its convivial supplement in the bicycle, can be further subsumed when a person is convinced or forced to move around only when able to purchase the product in the marketplace. "When overefficient tools are

applied to facilitate man's relations with the physical environment, they can destroy the balance between man and nature. Overefficient tools corrupt the environment. But tools can also be made overefficient in quite a different way. They can upset the relationship between what people need to do by themselves and what they need to obtain ready-made. In this second dimension overefficient production results in radical monopoly” (*Tools* 51).

In a characteristic effusive and prosaic passage, Illich illustrates the idea of radical monopoly correlating its pervasiveness amongst the several industrial tools that thwart personal abilities:

In New York people with less than twelve years of schooling are treated like cripples: they tend to be unemployable, and are controlled by social workers who decide for them how to live. The radical monopoly of overefficient tools exacts from society the increasing and costly conditioning of clients. Ford produces cars that can be repaired only by trained mechanics. Agriculture departments turn out high-yield crops that can be used only with the assistance of farm managers who have survived an expensive school race. The production of better health, higher speeds, or greater yields depends on more disciplined recipients. The real cost of these doubtful benefits is hidden by unloading much of them on the schools that produce social control. (Illich, *Tools* 63)

It is more common to hear economists discuss “externalities,” or the hidden costs of products and the production contained in items along the production chain that are not included in the market price but are incurred and “paid for” by society or the planet as a whole. However, Illich is not limiting his analysis to the miscalculation of the real and full costs of production. He is concerned with the social and political toll which industrial tools exert through their structuring of society, enforcing demand and orchestrating their required usage and consumption. “Illich wants to evaluate modern people's relation to

their tools,” comments John J. Paul, “but his concern is not just that technology is poorly managed or technically inefficient or even that it is owned by capitalists rather than by workers. The real problem, Illich says, is the unalterable character of industrial tools and organizations. Unless restricted by politics, law, or custom, such tools inevitably crowd out all competing modes of production, thus destroying genuine personal autonomy as well as spirited group life” (Pauly 261). “Spirited group life,” or conviviality, is a cost that we rarely focus upon in economic models. As with Illich warning about the false claims of the early environmental movement, Illich is not focusing on the ill-defined damage to the environment that will be borne by future generations with increased asthma, polluted water sources, piles of used tires burning and the resulting medical and environmental costs that can be valued in economic terms.¹⁹ Rather, the industrial tool structures society in such a way as to paradoxically meet a demand that only it can supply and satisfy without exception, thereby disciplining society and effecting control over humans at the expense of convivial society.

¹⁹. Consider the impact of tires, used by automobiles and bicycles alike. Jane Kaye Holtz describes how tires are disposed of at the rate of roughly one tire per vehicle each year. In that same year, each tire “loses a pound of rubber” with “the small grains” of rubber go into the atmosphere and “they filter down into our lungs and waterways.” For those tires that reach the dump still intact, “[s]ometimes the volatile mix of air and rubber kindles spontaneously” since tires are usually derived from petroleum. “The worst of the 176 fires in the last two decades incinerated some 7 million tires, according to a congressional report, fouling the air of four states and polluting millions of gallons of water with zinc and heavy metals” (87)

Modern people, Illich argues, have allowed industrial tools that require large investments of energy and specialized professional management to all but displace simpler tools that rely on metabolic energy but permit more personal adaptation. Thus, in health and medicine, Illich would say that the purification of water supplies, the regular collection of trash, the control of rats, simple birth control devices such as condoms, and the availability of drugs, such as insulin, that patients can administer to themselves are all inventions that encourage individual autonomy without creating concentrations of power or prestige. At some point, however, unrestrained industrial tools cease to provide a scientifically demonstrable improvement and tend merely to change the social form of a problem or to transfer their counterproductive costs to another domain of the society. From then on, Illich says, industrial tools begin to impose their own kind of tyranny. (Pauly 261)

Illich is proposing that if society places limits on tools and advances only those tools which encourage personal responses to basic needs, such as transportation, we will create a more equitable and enjoyable society, or as Pauly surmises, “a society that understood the problems caused by overindustrialization and limited the power, scope, and speed of its tools could use modern tools to encourage not political or economic domination but a greater sense of relatedness and personal autonomy” (Pauly 263).

Energy and Equity

Before the burgeoning environmentalism movement in the early 1970s evolved, Illich warned that it could be lead astray in the myth of technology solving the energy crisis with a more efficient energy source at the expense of producing a socially stratified society where those who can travel the fastest constitute an elite at the expense of most people who are then forced to travel slowly, with wide social and economic costs. When Illich originally wrote the article version of *Energy and Equity* for the French newspaper *Le Monde* in early 1973, the magazine editor balked at the opening sentence: “It has

recently become fashionable to insist on an impending energy crisis.” The editor argued that the first sentence should not contain an esoteric phrase such as “energy crisis” (“*la crise d’énergie*”) but Illich demanded that the phrase remain and only seven weeks later, the same magazine ran a special issue on the energy crisis. (Illich *Energy and Equity* 110; Illich and Cayley 112). But the historical context is important for a twenty-first-century audience to evaluate what radical critique Illich was making at the time. In many ways, his warning is still applicable throughout industrialized “advanced” countries where “green” practices and the burgeoning “green economy” are often presented as a panacea for solving environmental, economic, and social crises intertwined with global warming.

Energy and Equity enriches Illich’s exploration of convivial modernity through the bicycle as his single positive model of a convivial tool. The bicycle increases equity, improves human relations and creativity, and uses far less energy and resources than any other transportation method. *Energy and Equity* delves into the details that germinated in *Tools for Conviviality* which form the basis of contemporary bicycle advocacy and bike culture articulations in the 21st-century bicycle epoch. *Energy and Equity* provides an accessible, theoretical language to challenge the fundamental inequality in societies that have seemingly taken modernity’s promise of rational technological innovation to forward human needs and created societies that continually require increased demands for more energy and resources. Illich

identifies this path of modernity as stratified by “capital intensive” transport such as airplane travel, private automobiles, and public transport systems as opposed to the low cost, high caloric labor of bicycles and pedestrians. Illich is the first to make the automobile the evil epigone of paradoxical speed in the myth of progress of standard modernity, which, in the end, debilitates the individual and society.²⁰ The car looms as the ultimate arbiter of class privilege including even those able to afford the fastest cars because of the nature of the transport device and the roadway system that makes it possible. But rather than recapitulate the inevitability of the private automobile’s ineluctable triumph of the individual, Illich argues the bicycle is the height of what should define modernity and worthwhile, convivial invention, recalling George Oppen opining “We loved them once” in his poem “The Bicycles and the Apex” since the bicycle is the lost apex of modernity for Illich as well.

In contrast to the automobile, the bicycle is presented as a paragon of personal transit in an equitable society: everyone is able to move farther with less energy and financial cost while not impeding upon the purposes or paths of fellow cyclists, creatively employing the bicycle in all sorts of unpredictable ways. The car on the other hand has the opposite effect: the more individuals

²⁰. Paul Virilio's *Speed and Politics*, originally published in French in 1977, is another prominent analysis of speed that bears some striking similarities to Ivan Illich. Like Illich, Virilio surmises “the more speed increases, the faster freedom decreases” because speed becomes the index of militarism, especially exercised by the technocratic engineer hastening social and political control over our lives (in the vein of Thomas Veblen's beloved engineers) (Virilio 142).

that use it as a primary mode of transportation, the more useless it becomes as an effective means of transport due to the immediate glut of traffic along with the long-term costs of oil dependency, pollution, and multiple service industries to maintain the vehicle comprising the complex of economic, social, and environmental cost of the "capital-intensive" automobile. Ivan Illich (and later Zach Furness) hyphenates auto-mobile to emphasize the lack of self-mobility in the use of the automobile versus the independence imbued in the bicycle. As David Cayley summarizes, *Energy and Equity* "argued that high energy consumption inevitably overpowers and degrades social relations and proposed the bicycle as the epitome of conviviality. Bicycles incorporate sophisticated materials and engineering while operating at non-traumatic speeds and leaving civic space safe, quiet, and clean. One person who uses a bicycle does not constrain others from doing the same; the more people who use cars, the less useful cars become" (Illich and Cayley 18).

Through Illich, we now have a language for describing the enmity between cars versus bikes that reveals the core of urban planning, civic values, and democratic principles (market-based or otherwise): what kind of modern society do we want to live in? One that de facto requires a car or one in which people can get around at their own metabolic, caloric pace where people directly understand the impact of every trip they make and benefit from the exercise? Let us first tackle the issue of efficiency in terms of energy usage before delving into Illich's argument about equity.

The bicycle strikes a balance that is efficient in terms of metabolic energy used and equitable in terms of the bicycle's use and demands on the shared environment. To quote at length from a key passage from *Energy and Equity*

Bicycles let people move with greater speed without taking up significant amounts of scarce space, energy or time. They can spend fewer hours on each mile and still travel more miles in a year. They can get the benefit of technological breakthroughs without putting undue claims on the schedules, energy or space of others. They become masters of their own movements without blocking those of their fellows. Their new tool creates only those demands which it can also satisfy. Every increase in motorized speed creates new demands on space and time. The use of the bicycle is self-limiting. It allows people to create a new relationship between their life-space and their life-time, between their territory and the pulse of their being, without destroying their inherited balance. The advantages of modern self-powered traffic are obvious, and ignored. That better traffics runs faster is asserted, but never proved. Before they ask people to pay for it, those who propose acceleration should try to display the evidence for their claims. (Illich 63; Illich, "Energy and Equity" 137)

Whereas *Tools for Conviviality* introduces the bicycle as a convivial tool as a part of a broader discussion of convivial modernity, *Energy and Equity* explores how and why the bicycle is convivial and its advantages as opposed to the automobile and public transportation. *Energy and Equity* further identifies Illich's startling conclusion that, "Beyond a certain point, more energy means less equity," regardless of capitalist or socialist societies, the higher energy required in a transportation system directly correlates to higher degrees of inequality in the society (Illich 33).

Bicycle Technology — The Most Efficient Ever

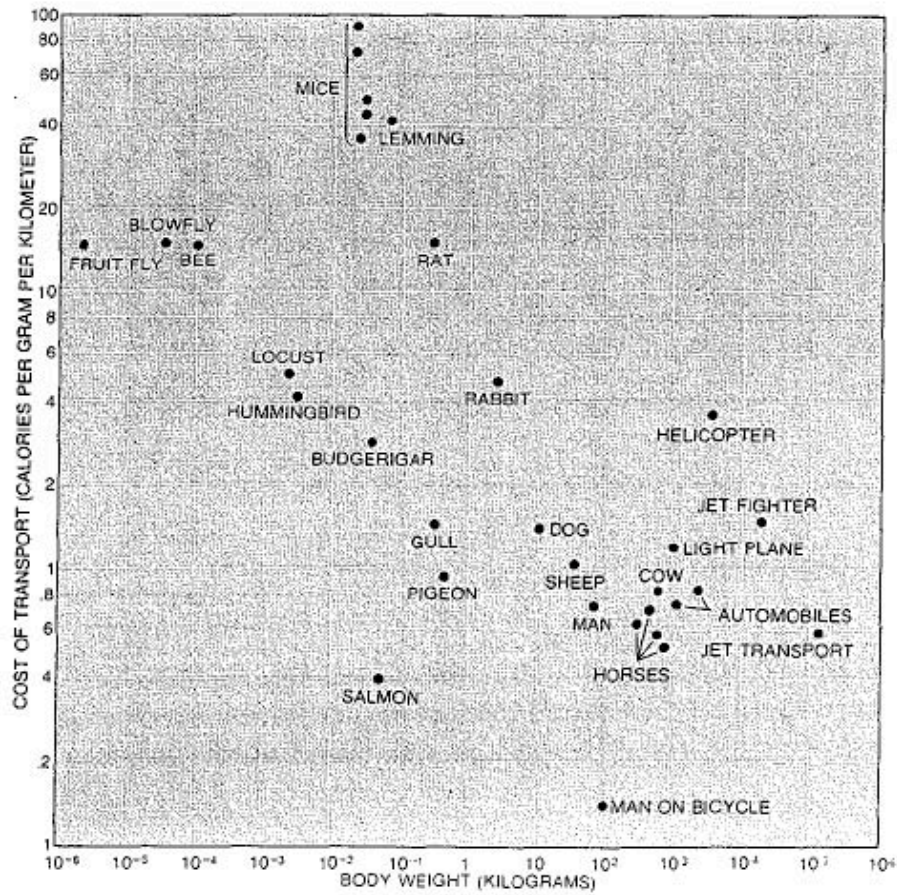
In his interview book with David Cayley, Illich later regrets how his argument reduces a human using a bicycle to a calculation of caloric energy

efficiency in order to compare the bicycle to the energy use of an automobile. Illich incorrectly credits the often-lauded fact of the bicycle's insurmountable efficiency to a paper by "White," but he most likely meant S. S. Wilson²¹. In March of 1973, S. S. Wilson published a cover story article in *Scientific American* titled "Bicycle Technology."²² The article concentrates on the bicycle's efficiency, the use of the ball bearing—which Illich highlights throughout *Energy and Equity*—and the link between bicycle technology and the eventual development of the automobile and airplane²³. But what stirred the imagination and put the bicycle on the pedestal of greatest efficiency was Wilson's graph comparing the bicycle's caloric use to machine vehicles and other animals.

²¹. Throughout *Energy and Equity* and *Tools for Conviviality*, Illich does not readily provide his sources, while this may be due to his initial effort to keep to the pamphlet form, it makes some of his claims more difficult to entertain much less track down the sources.

²². S. S. Wilson should not be confused with David Gordon Wilson's *Bicycling Science*, originally published in 1974 by MIT Press, and now in its third edition in 2004.

²³. The Wright Brothers were avid cyclists, eventually becoming bicycle dealers, using their bicycle knowledge to study the flight of birds and apply the ideas to their airplane prototypes. (Hurst 167-68)



MAN ON A BICYCLE ranks first in efficiency among traveling animals and machines in terms of energy consumed in moving a certain distance as a function of body weight. The rate of energy consumption for a bicyclist (about .15 calorie per gram per kilometer) is approximately a fifth of that for an unaided walking man (about .75 calorie per gram per kilometer). With the exception of the black point representing the bicyclist (lower right), this graph is based on data originally compiled by Vance A. Tucker of Duke University.

Fig. 2: Man on a Bicycle. (S. S. Wilson 90)

Iain Boal, critic and bicycle historian, who is able to bridge the gap between the academy, activism, and independent bicycle historian circles, highlights how important this article was and still remains, joking that Wilson's article is considered the "holy grail," especially in amateur bicycle historian circles

(Boal).²⁴

This magical insight of efficiency was not solely limited to amateur bicycle historians: Apple Computer co-founder Steve Jobs is said to have one day say the early Apple computer should be called Bicycle.²⁵ Despite the biblical tree fruit of knowledge winning out for branding the bicycle remained in Jobs's imaginary of efficiency. In the 1990 documentary *Memory & Imagination*, Jobs describes his idea of a computer as “the most remarkable tool we’ve ever come up with.” He emphatically adds, the computer is “the equivalent of a bicycle for our minds.” Jobs does not mention Wilson directly by name but he does mention reading the *Scientific American* article and being astonished by the bicycle. The documentary provides a close up of the famous graph that appeared in *Scientific American* with the salmon swimming in second place for efficiency rather than Jobs's memory of the condor gliding just below the bicycle.

Wilson's article is the foundation for all of Illich's claims about the

²⁴. The International Cycling History Conference started in 1990 and continues to the present day with an annual conference with professional and amateur bicycle historians participating. <<http://www.cycling-history.org/>>

²⁵. Steve Jobs didn't originally like the code name for the Macintosh Apple computer and he preferred to call the computer “Bicycle.” Isaac Walterson's biography notes, “In various interviews, Jobs had been referring to computers as a bicycle for the mind; the ability of humans to create a bicycle allowed them to move more efficiently than even a condor, and likewise the ability to create computers would multiply the efficiency of their minds. So one day Jobs decreed that henceforth the Macintosh should be known instead as the Bicycle. This did not go over well. ‘Burrell and I thought this was the silliest thing we ever heard, and we simply refused to use the new name,’ recalled Hertzfeld. Within a month the idea was dropped” (Isaacson 115).

bicycle extending the range of a pedestrian while using less energy. Meanwhile, the bicycle also surpasses the movements of all animals as well as the automobile and the airplane in terms of efficiency measured as the fastest movement with the least caloric energy cost. Iain Boal is critical of this energy efficiency logic, but not for the same reasons that Illich later regrets for reducing a human to a caloric input-output calculation. Boal is concerned with how Wilson's graph elides the fact that roadways are a necessary condition for the high-efficiency of the bicycle and its ball bearings and pneumatic tires whirring down the street faster than a sturgeon slices water. Roadways take enormous amounts of resources and labor to build and maintain. To this day, most roads are built with horrendous labor where humans are reduced to breaking stones to build the substrate for the roadway. While a bicycle can certainly function in rough terrain with the right set of wheels and tires or urban planners can create bicycle infrastructure with far less roadway incursions into the built environment, the bicycle, too, has its costs of required resources and infrastructure, that are not completely green nor necessarily close to convivial. Wilson's bicycle "holy grail" of efficiency does not account for the colonial history and cost of rubber manufacture, steel extraction, chemical lubricants, carbon fiber manufacture, and roadway building.²⁶ We

²⁶. Beyond Joseph Campbell's fictive depiction of colonial expansion in the Congo for rubber production in *Heart of Darkness*, see Greg Grandin's excellent exegesis on Henry Ford's expansion into the Brazilian Amazon to create an industrial rubber plantation system.

must heed Boal's warning that the bicycle may be a green machine but it still extracts a cost on natural resources, labor, and the built environment that should not be forgotten in an effort to challenge the effects of automobile infrastructure. Paul Rosen is the most recent technological theorist on the bicycle, who refers to the modern production of the bicycle as the globally flexible bicycle for the new circuits of production and supply chains that span the planet.²⁷ Nevertheless, while we remain cognizant of Boal's critical contextualizing of the inherent costs of the bicycle's production and use—which Illich nor Wilson originally considered—the bicycle still beats all moving competitors in terms of energy efficiency. The most speed with the least amount of energy, the bicycle delivers.

Illich later regretted his comparison of the bicycle versus a car because of how the logic of caloric efficiency can reduce a human to the logic of the engine.

Yes, I was one of the first people who underlined the possibility of calculating the energy efficiency of human beings. It was idiotic. Even more idiotic, if I look back at that book, *Energy and Equity*, was the fact that I had not understood that locomotion is a very modern concept.... Conceiving human beings as engaging in locomotion when they walk leads to something quite common in transportation books where one speaks about feet as the instrument for self-locomotion. Well, you immediately see in what a maddening world we live. (Illich and Cayley 113)

But Illich is not the first to consider the caloric needs of a cyclist and

²⁷. Rosen follows Pinch and Bijker's Social Construction of Technology but he is also aware of the impact of bicycle users outside of the engineers and marketers of the products. While Rosen concentrates on the rise and fall of Raleigh in England and the new "global flexibilization of the bicycle," he acknowledges critiques by Illich, Winner, Bookchin (11).

how those needs can outrun a machine. In 1902, Alfred Jarry humorously depicted a quintessential scene in his novel *Supermale* where a five-member cycling team races and beats a locomotive with the help of arguably the first literary mention of an energy bar dubbed “perpetual motion food.” The idea of humans as machines, arguably started with Rene Descartes, and the twentieth century later became obsessed with how human labor can overcome fatigue and keep its energy going. Anson Rabinbach's comprehensive study *The Human Motor* traces this scientific and philosophical development of refiguring the body as a machine, arguably enabling industrial society to change its notions of work and produce the concept of labor power, which Karl Marx later uses in his political economy. Rabinbach identifies the importance of popular science thinkers, such as Hermann von Helmholtz, applied the metaphor of the machine to the human body and how the dynamic between fatigue and energy became “the dominant trope of scientific materialism” after 1840 with far reaching social effects redefining the human body as central to labor rather than a moral or spiritual code controlling the efforts of humans (45). This was “a profound change in the perception of work and the working body became incorporated in a single metaphor—the frequently invoked “human motor,” a striking image that illuminates an underlying affinity between physiology and technology. This image originated in an equally new perception of the universe as an industrial dynamo, or motor, the accomplishment of the thermodynamic

physics of the nineteenth century” (24). To this day, new parents monitor the “fine and gross motor skills” of an infant to describe kinetic abilities. In professional cycling, training is now tied to the logic of energy with power meters measuring watts of power output in order to analyze an athlete's exertion on a particular type of terrain over a period of time. The technology certainly hazards the quick conversion of a human into the metaphor of the machine and it has become the norm for assessing a cyclist's power and fitness (in addition to maximal oxygen consumption or VO₂). Illich's comparison of the human versus a machine is not the first to do so, and its oversight of the full cost of the bicycle does not detract from Illich's more fundamental argument that fuels the liberatory aspect of the bicycle as a convivial tool. “A people can be just as dangerously overpowered by the wattage of its tools as by the caloric content of its foods, but it is much harder to confess to a national overindulgence in wattage than to a sickening diet... Calories are both biologically and socially healthy only as long as they stay within the narrow range that separates enough from too much” (Illich, “Energy and Equity” 115). Be it calories or wattage, the convivial imagination and the formation of an equitable society is what *Energy and Equity*, ultimately, brings to bear on the question of the bicycle.

Convivial Imagination and *Ecotopia*

In our autocentric society, Illich's vision of a bicycle- and walking-centric society may sound utopian, nostalgic, and backward. But before we

partake in Illich's austere vision of convivial society, Illich is also asking us to consider how the personal automobile transportation system closes our imagination. The cult 1975 science fiction novel by Ernest Callenbach titled *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* describes such a society where the majority of the western states on the Pacific Coast break away from the United States to form a society that values a society similar to Illich's conception of convivial modernity. Not all high technology is abandoned, but a political process has taken place where the society values tools that can be easily repaired and foster social interactions. The foreign newspaper correspondent William Weston is the skeptical protagonist allowed into Ecotopia after the civil war with the remaining United States. He relates his awe and nonplussed reactions to the society while he slowly grows to like and share Ecotopia's values. Weston ultimately defects and remains in Ecotopia because of how it challenged and changed his view of what a society can be. In an early description when Weston arrives in the new San Francisco, capital of the convivial nation state, he is dumbfounded by the lack of motor noise in the vibrant city.

I checked my bag and set out to explore a bit. The first shock hit me at the moment I stepped onto the street. There was a strange hush over everything. I expected to encounter something at least a little like the exciting bustle of our cities—cars honking, taxis swooping, clots of people pushing about in the hurry of urban life. What I found, when I had gotten over my surprise at the quiet, was that Market Street, once a mighty boulevard striking through the city down to the waterfront, has become a mall planted with thousands of trees. The “street” itself, on which electric taxis, minibuses, and delivery carts purr along, has shrunk to a two-lane affair. The remaining space, which is huge, is occupied by bicycle lanes, fountains, sculptures, kiosks, and absurd little gardens surrounded by benches. Over it all hangs the almost sinister

quiet, punctuated by the whirr of bicycles and cries of children. There is even the occasional song of a bird, unbelievable as that may seem on a capital city's crowded main street. (Callenbach 11-12)

Weston later argues with his Ecotopian hosts about the need for speed in the personal automobile and the sacrifice of the road trip rite of passage with a woman sitting at your side in a convertible, to which the Ecotopians are “speechless” as they provide free bicycles similar to the Dutch Provo White Bicycle Program and its contemporary (capital-intensive and publicly financed bicycle sharing programs)²⁸. In another interaction a doctor explains his point of view, common now to alternative commuting advocates and health care strategists alike, calling bicycles

“Preventive transportation.” That’s how doctor Jake, Marissa’s cousin, sardonic of mind but optimist, describes bicycles. Claims that every heart attack costs the medical system, the patient’s living group, the patient’s work group, etc. something between a year and two years’ salary. Saving one heart attack can thus pay for something like 500 free Provo bikes. Besides, he claims that the bicycle is aesthetically beautiful because it is the most efficient means, in calories of energy per person per miles, ever devised for moving bodies—even jumbo jets eat up more energy, he says. (Looked me over as a physical specimen, said I was not in too bad shape for an American. “You’ll probably feel livelier after a few more weeks here. The food, the air, getting in better touch with yourself.” “What do you mean?” “Knowing yourself as an animal creature on the earth, as we do. It can feel more comfortable than your kind of life.” “Well, I’ll let you know,” I said.) (87-88)

By the end of the novel, William Weston renounces the automobile, falls in love, explores his suppressed emotions, and decides to remain in Ecotopia as

²⁸. Major bicycle sharing programs currently in operation include Vélib in Paris, France; Bixi in Montreal Canada, BikeMi in Milan, Italy; EcoBici in México City, México; Nice Ride in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Capital Bike Share in Washington, D.C.; Bicing in Barcelona, Spain; B-cycle in Denver, Colorado; and the Hangzhou bicycle sharing system in Hangzhou, China.

its latest convert and convivial citizen where a natural environment is integral to a different form of modernity operating in the society. The book was popular amongst “appropriate technology” advocacy groups during the 1970s and is still in print with a recent 30th Anniversary edition. A 2008 New York Times article claims that the book's call for eating local foods and having ecologically planned cities predicted the patterns of Portland, Oregon (Timberg).

Ecotopia is not a literary masterpiece but it is an indicator of the horizon of popular utopian thinking shortly after *Tools for Conviviality* and *Energy and Equity* were published.

The Hegemony of the Passenger-Client

Illich not only used the calculation of the bicycle to contrast it with the nefarious automobile; he also calculated the full cost of time wasted in car. What is significant about this tact is that Illich is again attempting to change the perspective of his audience presuming that the automobile is more efficient simply because of its horsepower and potential speed. When a society calculated the hours lost in traffic, time spent working in order to pay for the full cost of the vehicle (private and socialized costs), and the value of this time in terms of lifetime and not just productivity, humans lose quite a bit while demanding that the majority of others also lose time. “The man who claims a seat in a faster vehicle insists that his time is worth more than that of a passenger in a slower one. Beyond a certain velocity, passengers become

consumers of other people's time, and accelerating vehicles become the means for effecting a net transfer of life-time" ("Energy and Equity" 124). This unrecognized transfer of "life-time" is dependent upon the industrial definition of technology valuing ever increasing potential speeds and capital intensive automobiles embedded in a multi-billion dollar aging infrastructure, "inevitably establish[ing] a self-serving industry that hides an inefficient system of locomotion under the apparent technological sophistication" of the automobile ("Energy and Equity" 126). In the urban core of many cities, bicycles are more efficient at 15 miles per hour because it is faster than the potential speed of the cars stuck in traffic moving at far less than bicycle speed.²⁹ In arguably the most frequently quoted passage from *Energy and Equity*, Illich surveys the life-time cost as

The model American male devotes more than 1,600 hours a year to his car. He sits in it while it goes and while it stands idling. He parks it and searches for it. He earns the money to put down on it and to meet the monthly installments. He works to pay for petrol, tolls, insurance, taxes, and tickets. He spends four of his sixteen waking hours on the road or gathering resources for it. And this figure does not take in to account the time consumed by other activities dictated by transport: time spent in hospitals, traffic courts and garages; time spent watching automobile commercials or attending consumer education meetings to improve the quality of the next buy. The model American puts in 1,600 hours to get 7,500 miles: less than five miles per hour. In countries deprived of a transportation industry, people manage to do the same, walking wherever they want to go, and they allocate only three to eight per cent [sic] of their society's time budget to traffic in rich countries from the traffic in poor countries is not more mileage per hour of life-time for the majority, but more hours of compulsory consumption of high doses of energy, packaged and unequally distributed by the transportation industry. (*Energy and Equity* 18-19; "Energy and Equity" 120)

²⁹. The most drastic example was the nine-day traffic jam in Beijing in early August of 2010 (Gura).

According to the American Automobile Association in 2011, the average American spends \$9,859 on their total vehicle costs including gas, maintenance, tires, insurance, depreciation, financing, licensing, registration and taxes. The most recent figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey in 2009 finds that the average of two automobiles per American requires spending 14.6 percent of income on their automobile, including gasoline, oil, and standard maintenance. While this figure is at an all-time low as a percentage of income in private vehicle transportation costs due to the 2008 recession and higher fuel costs (an 11% drop compared to 2008), the costs of the road infrastructure, highway patrol, and the range of subsidies that encourage private car ownership as the full cost of the hegemonic automobile paradigm are not fully reflected. Nor are the economic externalities of the costs of the car once it is no longer serviceable and must be dismantled, with all the fluids, metal frame, tires, wiring, seats, and electronics broken down by a parts recycler before being crushed. As Illich surmises, "Life-time gets cluttered up with activities generated by traffic as soon as vehicles crash through the barrier that guards people from dislocation and space from distortion" ("Energy and Equity" 127). The paradox of the automobile is that the driver is essentially a passenger-client of the automobile industry where one's life-time is determined by the all-encompassing structure of the device demanding extra labor to finance the vehicle and maintain it while socializing the cost of the vast infrastructure for

the private automobile to exist.³⁰

As a bicycle riding, senior editor of *Fortune* magazine, Jane Jacobs was one of the first to connect the automobile to the drastic changes in public life in 1961 with *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. More recently, Jane Holtz Kay's 1998 *Asphalt Nation* examines the changes in quotidian life at the level of public spaces, housing and work architecture, tire yards with hazardous fires, and other aspects of the automobile road demanding more and more space to accommodate its use (249). "At rest, the automobile needs three parking spaces in its daily rounds—one at home, one at work, and one in the shopping center. In motion, going through the ritual of to-ing and fro-ing, driving along the street, circling through the garage to reach that parking space, it needs more. The space for the car's entering, the radius for its turning, and the dimensions for its sitting idle mean that asphalt competes for space with architecture and wins" (63-64). The most recent comprehensive study to engage with the built environment and identify the construction of what can be called the automobile episteme is Zack Furness in his *One Less Car: Bicycling and the Politics of Automobility* (2010). Much like Illich and Kay, Furness identifies how our evaluation of the bicycle is framed and defined by the hegemonic status of the pervasive automobile culture on every level.

³⁰ See Alvord; Balish; Lutz and Lutz Fernandez; Seiler; Vanderbilt

Indeed, just as the physical movements of an urban cyclist are influenced by the presence of cars and framed by a road designed for cars, the processes with which we make sense of bike riders, bicycle technologies, and cycling are similarly framed by the norms and assumptions bundled up with automobility. The power of this regime, in other words, stems from its coercive spatial and temporal organization of bodies and machines, but also from its capacity to structure meaning: to mold the ways we think about, engage with, struggle over, and ultimately make sense of both transportation and mobility itself. (10)

It is difficult to imagine a society that can transport itself without cars, and thus, as the 1970s New York bicycle advocacy group Transportation Alternatives decried, “One Less Car” had to become the paradigm of individuals changing their habits within a consumer society (Kay 340). But Furness’s study is located in the most recent renaissance of the bicycle, placed diametrically against the automobile, to reclaim the definition of self-mobility—auto-mobile. Illich playfully used the term in *Energy and Equity*, and Wolfgang Sachs followed with his contrast study of the car and bicycle as well. “The bicycle renaissance bears witness to the search for a society liberated from an obsession with progress” (203).

The Culture of the Liberatory Bicycle

More important, and the focus of the remainder of this study, the role of culture must be examined in our “obsession with progress.” We can no longer treat artifacts as simple technological Darwinism. While sociology has identified the importance of different stakeholders in the process of a device gaining dominance in the marketplace in Science and Technology Studies and its subset of Sociological Construction of Technology Studies, little purchase is offered to the ways in which technologies as pivotal as the bicycle

and the car compete on the literary, cultural level. Culture must also be taken into account when we evaluate whether or not the liberatory figuration of the bicycle is romantic, honest, or endemic to other forms of competition between groups struggling for space, time, resources, and livelihoods. In many ways, Wolfgang Sachs follows Illich's example, but provides further emphasis on the role of culture in a dialectic with the dominance of technology. The bicycle registers the landscape we neglect to interact with in a car or from a passenger compartment in a public transportation system. The bicycle also allows us to begin to imagine different forms of community made possible by a device that is far more conducive to conviviality as a cultural need to foster a liberated society rather than the client-consumer model required by the automobile.

Why should we, in the human equivalent of lemming behavior, go on seeking our future in "higher, faster, farther"? Is it not time to break the dictate of advancing motorization and bend automotive technology, like residential development, to the service of how we want to live? That does not mean that the automobile should be thrown onto the scrap heap of history; it probably does mean, however, that only a reformed traffic technology is capable of being combined with a respect for nature and the freedom to live independently of the motor. *Today it is not culture that limps along behind technology, but the reverse.* A transformation is on the agenda, one in which technology no longer stems from the dreamworld of the nineteenth century, but does justice to present longings for a society liberated from the compulsion toward progress. (Emphasis added.) (Sachs 217)

If it is not culture but rather technology that is limping behind, then, as Illich argues, the bicycle is the best guarantor to deliver us, at 15 miles per hour, to a liberated, convivial society.³¹ Beyond the bicycle, Illich characteristically

³¹. Architectural Historian John Stilgoe points out that bicycle speed also magically makes most slat fences seem to disappear from the vantage point of a bicyclist (110). The

asks us to question the current vogue of green technology as a panacea for global warming and energy use. What Illich demands of us is the intellectual and political willpower to accept the responsibility of how we want to structure our society. We should not mistake the real impacts of pollution and energy shortages before we examine the needs of what we value as a culture.

Liberation which comes cheap to the poor will cost the rich dear, but they will pay its price once the acceleration of their transportation systems grinds traffic to a halt. A concrete analysis of traffic betrays the truth underlying the energy crisis: the impact of industrially packaged quanta of energy on the social environment tends to be degrading, exhausting and enslaving, and these effects come into play even before those which threaten the pollution of the physical environment and the extinction of the race. The crucial point at which these effects can be reversed is not, however a matter of deduction, but of decision. (*Energy and Equity* 77; "Energy and Equity" 143)

Ivan Illich allows us to understand not only the social and political equity inherent in the bicycle but also the bicycle's ability to produce cultural freedoms dependent upon its rider and practitioner—the cyclist. Let us proceed to further examine how the bicycle is culturally constructed to exceed not only the limits of the automobile, but to surpass the limits of the human body and the very political will we identify with the struggle over petroleum in order to fuel our modern societies. But, be forewarned, bicycles that descend

exploration metaphor of the bicyclist stretches into the local history of a landscape including unearthing the Cold War History of Interstate System legally defined as a weapon. Stilgoe argues that bicycling makes people hyper local explorers that can better understand the civil rights implications of our road systems along with the urban planning effects on the palimpsestic history of a city revealed uniquely to the cyclist (and pedestrians to a lesser degree). On the other hand, Tom Vanderbilt claims automobile drivers lose the ability to make eye contact at speeds greater than 20 miles per hour, which creates selfish drivers that do not recognize other humans on the road. (Vanderbilt 30-33)

from the mountains in road races, far outpace Illich's ideal 15 miles per hour.

The cyclist we shall explore descends into the cultural history of bicycle racing as well as the geopolitical struggles of the twenty-first century at a pace that always demands more feasting.

Chapter 2

What Do They Know of Cycling Who Only Cycling Know? or Can the Terrorist Speak in Viken Berberian's Novel *The Cyclist*?

We could begin with a traditional examination of the history of cycling, the role of the bicycle industry at the turn of the nineteenth century, cycling's forays into literature such as Alfred Jarry's *Le Supermale* and H. G. Wells's 1896 romantic bicycle touring novel *The Wheels of Chance*. However, I want to relegate these pivotal texts to the margins and footnotes, noting their importance and trace but beginning with a different question from a different location in cycling literature. "What do they know of cycling who only cycling know?" Let us take C. L. R. James's canonical batsman or bowler (or whatever the hell those guys in white are doing with the funny bread board bat when they play cricket in India, Pakistan, and the West Indies) and place the batsman on a bicycle.

In the last section of James's 1963 book *Beyond a Boundary*, James famously queried, "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?" catapulting the sport into the realm of art, anti-colonial politics, ethics, mass political education, Marxist training, and a life-long practice that deeply influenced the thinker. While James is well known for his seminal study of the

Haitian revolution in *The Black Jacobins* few critics appreciate James's direct acknowledgment that his political education is suffused with his understanding of cricket in his native Trinidad. As a boy James would watch the cricket field in his backyard and later, when living in the metropole of London, James made his living as a sports journalist concentrating on cricket but watching what he said as he defended the honor of the game in his reporting. James used tropes of epic battle with Phidias and Greek Gods to describe pivotal West Indian cricketers and the stakes of how they played the game. It was not until much later that James realized "cricket had plunged me into politics long before I was aware of it. When I did turn to politics I did not have too much to learn" (65). While I understand James's discussion of sports in general, I am handicapped by having not even a rudimentary grasp of the game of cricket.

Despite Britain's influence on the North American colonies that eventually became the United States of America, their proper sporting export of cricket never took hold in the United States. My confusion is not overlooked by E.P. Thompson, best known for *The Making of the English Working Class* (published the same year as James's *Beyond a Boundary*). Thompson later remarked on James's eightieth birthday, "I'm afraid that American theorists will not understand this, but the clue to everything [in James's thought] lies in [James's] proper appreciation of the game of cricket" (Fryer

336). Another critic comments on the importance of *Beyond a Boundary* as the text where “To neglect [*Beyond a Boundary*] would therefore be to neglect a body of work of the stature of those of Georg Lukács, Mikhail Bakhtin, or Stuart Hall” because “James reveals himself to be one of the truly decisive Marxist cultural theorists of our century” (Lazarus 342). This is a lot of hyperbole for the analysis of a British colonial sport that, as an American, I am somehow doomed to misunderstand and under-appreciate.

However, I do understand where *Beyond a Boundary* is quite clear on how cricket is a representative of nationalist anti-colonial discourse. This concept is not reliant upon a detailed understanding of cricket to appreciate the role of reading the sport as a political and social arena. James directly confronts aestheticians because he believes reading cricket as a cultural activity delivers something far beyond the apparent stakes of the game. “[C]ricket is perhaps the only game in which the end result (except where national or local pride is at stake) is not of great importance” (197). In the end, if winning (unless “national or local pride is at stake”) does not matter, then what does matter in the game?

Again, I do not understand the rudiments much less the nuances of James’s reading of West Indian cricketers pushing the bounds of the game without reverting to a simplistic and violent analogue with Jackie Robinson in American baseball or the struggles of Marshall “Major” Taylor in bicycle track

racings in the 1890s³². Both of these are simplistic, racialized equivalencies only seeing a one-to-one movement from a theoretical text to a direct and corresponding object-of-knowledge that maps easily onto the model.

Selectively quoting from *Beyond a Boundary* may also help to clarify a fetish with cricket as a knowable sport to the American critic, properly locating himself.

Appreciation of cricket has little to do with the end, and less still with what are called 'the finer points', of the game. What matters in cricket, as in all the arts, is not finer points but what everyone with some knowledge of the elements can see and feel. It is only within such a rigid structural frame that the individuality so characteristic of cricket can flourish. (James 198)

Here, James is building his argument that cricket is structurally perfect in that it can offer a balance of representing individuals while providing the unity of a team (or shall we say, at the widest scale, a postcolonial nation). By sublating the score of a game for the "finer points," James propounds cricket is in the same league as drama and the arts. Through the attention to such common details of appreciation in cricket, James ultimately claims the reader can witness the popular knowledge and resistant colonial imaginary of the West Indies beyond the most-perfect frame of the sport of cricket. Following James's model, I wish to also use "what everyone with some knowledge of the elements can see and feel" of the finer points in cycling to better ask, "What do they know of cycling who only cycling know? (As an American, I too,

³². See Ritchie, *Major Taylor: The Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer*; Ritchie, "The League of American Wheelmen, Major Taylor and the 'Color Question' in the United States in the 1890s"; and Taylor

should not know much about the sport of road racing cycling either.)

Moreover, James's study is not just limited to cricket as a sport and art form to analyze and appreciate, because *Beyond a Boundary* allows us to see a project at hand where sports are a vehicle for the postcolonial imagination, redefining the Self/Other through sport as a legible political and cultural practice. Sports were once considered too simple to offer such legible sites of political struggle much less be far too sacrosanct and traditional to transform into other possibilities in colonial contexts. Picture the cricketer's white uniform emblazoned on the consciousness, or what James openly admits as his Puritan sensibilities for the fundamental rules of the game. James is largely responsible for cutting these boundaries, which are not limited to the wicket—whatever the hell a wicket is.

Since sports provide the opportunity to redefine a periphery as a bona-fide center that innovates and produces its own anti-colonial significations, road cycling, too, can be viewed through the Jamesian lens with similar effect. The colonial other is not recuperated and integrated into the imagination of the hegemonic whole; rather, using this kind of reading practice follows tracing "the itinerary of the subject" as suggested by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak throughout her work. If we use the care and breadth of James's treatment of cricket as a model, cycling provides another sporting site to interpret the world—a site with its own unique circumstances that have yet to be fully analyzed.

Where my study differs from James is that I will use a fictional account of road racing in Viken Berberian's novel *The Cyclist* rather than a historical figure such as boundary-breaking individuals like Marshall "Major" Taylor who broke racial lines in the legendary six-day races in the 1890s or the role of the Colombian climbers in the 1980s who tortured the professional peloton with relentless attacks on the climbing stages of the Tour de France. What is unique to cycling as a sport is that that fiction is recognized as the record truth.

The Epic Structure of Cycling

As a part of Roland Barthes series of magazine articles later translated and collected under the two volumes of *Mythology* in English, "The Tour de France as Epic" explains how Barthes identified the role of cyclist's names in conjuring epic battles with Nature and Time through a sport that, in his view, only offers four dynamics for the audience consuming the race to observe. The cyclist racer may effort 1) to lead (or manage), 2) to follow, 3) to escape, or 4) to collapse.

"*To lead* is the hardest action, but also the most useless" because "to lead is always to sacrifice oneself." Barthes characterizes the action of leading, as "pure heroism, destined to parade character much more than to assure results," which is why the servants of the star cyclists are used up to lead and break the wind and perform most of the hard effort to protect the star cyclist. If a cyclist chooses to lead for aggrandizement, such "panache does

not pay directly” because “it is usually reduced by collective tactics” of the peloton able to forward another racer and easily overcome the leader (*“The Tour De France as Epic”* 84).

If cyclists are not leading then they must follow, which “is always a little cowardly, a little treacherous, pertaining to an ambition unconcerned with honor.” The pejorative “wheel-sucker” is someone who follows “to excess, with provocation, openly becomes a part of Evil” and is shamed for not *taking a pull* in the collective pack movement of the peloton (84).

The dream of every cyclist is to breakaway from the peloton either in a small group or, most dangerously and daring, to escape solo. *“To escape* is a poetic episode meant to illustrate a voluntary solitude, though one unlikely to be effective, for the racer is almost always caught up with” by the peloton. The calculations of such escape attempts often come down to the leaders in the race figuring if the cyclist has a chance at winning the overall race. If the cyclist is not a contender for any of the jersey categories for sprinter, mountain climber, or points, and won't jeopardize the overall general classification (GC) standings, the peloton may not chase the cyclist down. Barthes identifies such escape attempts as “glorious in proportion to the kind of useless honor which sustains it,” which is say to make a name for the cyclist should he possibly succeed, alone (84).

The final action, for Barthes, is to collapse, which “prefigures abandon,” or leaving the arduous race. To collapse “is always horrible and

saddens the public like a disaster: on Mount Ventoux, certain collapses have assumed a “Hiroshimatic” character. Before Tommy Simpson's famous death on Mount Ventoux in 1967, he collapsed and demanded, “Put me back on my bike” in his last breath.³³ With leading, following, escaping, and collapsing

These four movements are obviously dramatized, cast into the emphatic vocabulary of the *crisis*; often it is one of them, in the form of an image, which gives its name to the relay, as to the chapter of the novel (Title: *Kübler's Tumultuous Grind*). Language's role is enormous here, it is language which gives the event—ineffable because ceaselessly dissolved into duration—the epic promotion which allows it to be solidified. (84-85)

While Barthes may be reducing the dynamics of a road race to four categories, he does not shirk the role of political power and personalities with stars cast as epic heroes in contrast to their lowly servant teammate cyclists known in French as *domestiques*, or domestics, worthy of the travails of a novel. But what is key, for Barthes, is the role of language employed across the four possibilities and the primary movements of a road race's eventual narrative. Language is pivotal and paradoxical by depicting and creating the epic structure of the race, shortening riders names, and thus onomastically triggering hero status by “a sovereign nominalism which makes the racer's name the stable depository of an eternal value” (85). Barthes also highlights how the race cannot be fully represented by the structure of epic and the ideality versus reality of what fully occurred in the race is always at odds with

³³. Simpson was found to have a high amount of amphetamines in his body. He apparently did not hide this fact before the beginning of the stage. See Fotheringham 2007.

one another³⁴.

For Barthes the representation of Nature in road races is another sign that epic structure is operating at the level of myth because Nature is anthropomorphized, allowing the road race to transfer from historical fact to the essence of Nature. The topography, landscape, wind, rain and blistering heat become “physical characters, successive enemies, individualized by that combination of morphology and morality.” Such humanizing of mountain passes into unearthly hells like Mont Ventoux or, in the case of our hero in Berberian’s *The Cyclist* the steep and ancient cedar slopes of the Shouf Mountains become desolate and foreboding but also welcome the cyclist home. The epic depictions of the landscape to be overcome as adversary “belong to an existential order of qualification and seek to indicate that the racer is at grips not with some natural difficulty but with a veritable theme of existence, a substantial theme in which he engages, by a single impulse, his perception and his judgment” (81). The cyclist “sustains exchanges of nutrition and subjection” for which he then “is always represented in a state of immersion and not in a state of advance: he plunges, he crosses, he flies, he

³⁴. A year after *The Cyclist* was published, The New York Times published in the Opinion section a short piece penned by Viken Berberian on the enduring qualities of the Tour de France despite the increasing remove of the riders from the crowds. Berberian references Barthes’s four movements and proceeds to unveil the French sentiment for the enduring popularity of “forever second” Raymond Poulidor over the dominance of Jacques Anquetil (and later Eddy Merckx) (Berberian, *No Remembrance of the Things They Passed*).

sticks, it is his link to the ground which defines him, often in a state of anguish or apocalypse” (81-82). Barthes says the Tour de France “possesses a veritable Homeric geography” because “the race is here both a periplus of ordeals and a total exploration of the earth’s limits” the road race becomes “an encyclopedia survey of human space” (82-83).

With such human space produced in epic form by playing with the cyclists’ names and epic shorthand, conjuring Nature as a human adversary, and the physicality of the race represented through the tool of language, Barthes claims the Tour de France operates as a utopian and realistic, idealist and realist text, which “permits the legend to mask perfectly, with a veil at once honorable and exciting, the economic determinisms of our great epic” (86). Barthes compares the road race of the Tour de France to the countless interactions of atoms where the role of nature, customs, literature and the rules of the sport “graze each other, hook together, repel each other, and it is from this interplay that the epic is born” (87). While Barthes identifies the components of the genre of road cycling literature as a form, he evaluates the effect of masking “the economic determinisms” of the race.

I believe that the Tour is the best example we have ever encountered of a total, hence an ambiguous myth; the Tour is at once a myth of expression and a myth of projection, realistic and utopian at the same time. The Tour expresses and liberates the French people through a unique fable in which the traditional impostures (psychology of essences, ethics of combat, magism of elements and forces, hierarchy of supermen and servants) mingle with forms of a positive interest, with the utopian image of a world which stubbornly seeks reconciliation by the spectacle of a total clarity of relations between man, men, and Nature. What is vitiated in the Tour is the basis, the economic motives, the ultimate profit of the ordeal, generator of ideological alibis. This does not keep the Tour from being a fascinating national

phenomenon insofar as the epic expresses that fragile moment of History in which man, however clumsy and deceived, nonetheless contemplates through his impure fables a perfect adequation between himself, the community, and the universe. (87-88)

The Tour de France is able to renew its narrative each year by conjuring the forces of epic, managing the debates of the superhuman heroes that are always dependent upon their employed *domestiques* helping them up the mountain, protecting them from the wind and competitors, or preparing the avenue for the star sprinter to jettison to the finish line by resting inside the air slipstream of a teammate until the last moment of godlike acceleration. What is obviated from the epic are the economic bases that make the Tour an enterprise of countless organizers and materiel, a cost and known profit below the surface of the race that inculcates nationalist pride, sportsmanship, and technophilia for the latest in cycling gadgetry much less any discussion of why only certain countries participate in the traditional sport with only world wide coverage of the male cyclists. Barthes does not dwell on the Tour de France as the best example of an ambiguous and totalizing myth that can so satisfyingly and successfully incorporate so many elements of human drama while curtailing the reality of the conditions that make the road race, the racers, and the entire epic possible.

For Barthes the bourgeoisie uses myth in order to recognize problems within their capitalist regime by reconstituting the grievance as a fable, neutralizing the historical specificity and economic needs of the grievants, and thereby maintaining the status quo through the wide consumption of the myth.

“Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact” (Barthes, *Mythologies* 143). Myth confronts reality in order to convert and reduce reality into the narratives based on the child-like struggles of enduring essences, naturalizing the constructed bourgeois order through the simplicity of allegorical characters and themes.

If I *state the fact* of French imperialism without explaining it, I am very near to finding that it is natural and *goes without saying*: I am reassured. In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves. (*Mythologies* 143)

Suddenly the conflict and complexity for those suffering under the bourgeois order is portrayed as a classic Manichean struggle among elements that are abstracted from the reality of competing interests. The end result of Barthes’s conception of myth is the construction of an “alibi” that dwindles inequalities and the unjust exercise of power into a palatable story as self-apparent fact, without the need for explanation or overt justification. Barthesian myth justifies why things are so and shall always be just so through the technology of a narrative of essences because that is how the story of heroes, their triumphs and failures against the universe of evils operates like a road race. In the case of an epic bicycle race such as the Tour de France, it delivers the excitement of the mythic movement of the cyclists in order to construct the

closure of an all-enduring order.

The Cult of Suffering

Throughout the history of road racing, journalists, novelists, and poets have kept to the form of a bicycle race as an epic battle between cyclists, the natural elements (including gravity), and existence in general. Sociologist Benjo Maso maintains the mythic portrayal of cycling in his study *The Sweat of the Gods: Myths and Legends of Bicycle Racing* whereby he identifies “What grips the readers of sports journals is not the progress of the [road] race itself, but the manner in which it is described. Evert Straat, for years the chess columnist of *De Vokskrant*, said once that the chief model for every sports journalist ought to be Homer: a poet who knew how to turn a fight between two bands of robbers over a slut into an immortal epic” (Maso 20). Two Nobel Prize-Winning novelists have followed suit. Italian novelist Dino Buzzati was hired as a contract journalist to cover the 1949 Giro d’Italia and he quickly transformed the competition between Gino Bartali and Fausto Coppi as an reenactment of the fight between Hector and Achilles (73). In 1955, working as a journalist Gabriel García Márquez helped to pen the “autobiography” of three-time Vuelta a Colombia cycling champion Ramon Hoyos with similar fanfare befitting a national hero.³⁵

Besides Barthes's reading of the epic structure of cycling and its

³⁵. See the sixteen-part pseudo auto-biography of Ramon Hoyos in Garcia Márquez’s “The Triple Champion Reveals His Secrets” in *Entre Cachacos* (García Márquez).

relation to the ideological myths of the bourgeoisie, few have fundamentally examined and criticized the tropes of suffering, sacrifice, and pain in cycling³⁶. While the poetic trope of the suffering cyclist certainly carries the weight of Christian sacrifice epitomized in early cycling texts, there are direct historical and political reasons for the prevailing trope of the cyclist that can suffer the most as the heroic figure to constantly recycle and resupply the race narrative. But as *The Nation* magazine's sports columnist, Dave Zerin, has commented, cycling "is a sport that desperately needs organization and labor protections. Cyclists are pushed to extend their bodies beyond all possible human limits. Since 2000, twelve professional cyclists have died during races. Imagine the outcry if twelve NFL players had died on the field during the same time span."

"The cult of suffering and survival informs Tour coverage and the heroism associated with the race since 1903" (Thompson 116). The Tour de

³⁶. Historian Christopher S. Thompson acknowledges Barthes critique in his comprehensive history on the Tour de France but dismisses Barthes's analysis in a footnote because Barthes's "reflections on the race's meanings remain largely speculative, as they are not grounded in primary sources" (Thompson 269-70). While Thompson remarks that Barthes is "at times insightful," such apparent insight seems to be limited because Barthes did not identify primary sources in his original essays written on a monthly basis from 1954-1956 and published in 1957. Barthes was writing his essays during the post World War II so-called "Golden Age" of cycling with the dominance of Fausto Coppi and Louison Bobet, the first to win three consecutive tours from 1953-1955. Like Barthes, Thompson is willing to uncover the political reasons for the media and companies to employ the narrative trope of masculinist suffering in cycling. Yet, Thompson's disciplinary comment recognizes Barthes and simultaneously drops him from the pack of worthy cycling interlocutors because he does not follow the historian's demand for primary source material even though Barthes was commenting during the "Golden Age." Barthes is a primary source.

France was started in 1903 by the fledgling newspaper *L'Auto—Velo*³⁷. Former high-wheel bicycle racer Henri Desgrange wanted to challenge the dominance of the *L'Vélo* sports newspaper, which created one-day classic road races such as the Paris-Brest-Paris, Bordeaux-Paris, and the legendary Paris-Roubaix. Desgrange acted upon his assistant Géo Lefèvre's (whom Desgrange wooed away from Lefèvre's previous employment at *L'Vélo*) idea to outshine *L'Vélo* with a race that was even bigger in scale in order to attract readers. Desgrange, like many in France, was committed not only as a businessman but also to the discourse of athleticism for men as a way for France to instill national renewal³⁸. Before Desgrange started the Tour de France at *L'Auto—Velo*, he had already penned a cycling training manual and a novel about the exploits of track bicycle racers at a velodrome (before the newspaper, Desgrange managed a velodrome in Paris before its closure). Throughout the newspaper's coverage and framing of the race—perpetuated throughout cycling literature to this day—"suffering is cycling's currency," as one journalist recently renewed the trope (Poplak, n. pag.). Or, as a part of

³⁷. Translated as "Automobile-Bicycle," the sports newspaper was committed to the cult of technology in automobiles and bicycles. The paper ironically dropped *vélo* from its masthead once the nemesis paper *L'Vélo* went under. The absence of the bicycle in the name was made up for by the great success of the long-distance bicycle race across France but it is another reminder of how closely tied the history of the bicycle is to the dominance of the automobile.

³⁸. See Christopher S. Thompson's history *Tour de France* for a detailed account of the public discourse on cycling renewing the nation-state, male virility, and creating unity from diversity.

the cycling couture British brand Rapha, writer Graeme Fife penned for Rapha's road cycling enthusiast magazine *Rouleur*³⁹:

The history of cycle racing abounds with stories of endurance, will power and sheer courage on an epic scale. The capacity of bike riders to drive themselves relentlessly day after day through the pain barrier and way beyond makes them a breed apart. They redefine heroism in sport. The suffering is gratuitous, the mileage they cover Herculean, and both make a crucible in which a unique character is forged: an apparently cheerful indifference to the pain inflicted by bike and road, suffused with the transcendent desire to conquer both. (Fife, n. pag.)

Consider the persistent trope of suffering in Tim Krabbe's cycling cult novel *The Rider*. Originally published in Holland in 1978 and only translated into English in 2002, the novel is frequently lauded as the most kinesthetically realistic depiction of a one-day bike race through the semi-autobiographical narrative of the rider suffering. The novel uses the format of the kilometer markers to create a pace in time and space while registering the pain through the monologue voice. In the eyes of cyclists, the novel's mimetic depiction of the rider's effort is convincing enough to have instituted an annual Ronde de Tim Krabbé road race to honor the book and the original race, the Tour of Mont Aigoual in the Cévenne region of southern France (Bray). As with all cycling literature, *The Rider*, too, genuflects to the altar of suffering, especially when recalling the cyclists from the 1910s and 1920s, "Oh, to have been a rider then. Because after the finish all the suffering turns to memories of pleasure, and the greater the suffering, the greater the pleasure. That is

³⁹. *Rouleur* is French for a type of cyclist who can perform and ride, or "roll," all day across a variety of terrains.

Nature's payback to riders for the homage they pay her by suffering" (Krabbé 113).

Add to this a third and the most contemporary invocation of suffering, providing the truth-value of scientific rationale for why road racing is the hardest sport:

No other sport demands the same time, pain, and work ethic. You cannot race a Grand Tour without being in supreme physical shape, so fit that you are actually eating yourself, and must consume the same amount of food and liquid as nearly three grown men — which amounts to about 6,000 calories a day — to stay alive. During a warm weather race, a cyclist will lose three kilograms, and must chug five liters of restorative liquid, or it's game over. (Try that twenty-one days in a row.) Cycling doesn't have a bench. It doesn't have time outs. The boys don't celebrate a good day's racing at a Hennessy-sponsored nightclub. (Poplak, n. pag.)

In the same year the Tour de France started, Alfred Jarry's short story "The Passion of Christ as an Uphill Bicycle Race"⁴⁰ was published in a collection of his work. The story hilariously suffuses the suffering of cycling, especially the exquisite pain of climbing a mountain, with sacrilegious commentary on the godhead of a Western religion based upon the constant renewal of suffering in the crucifixion of Christ, who is forced to carry his "cross frame" bike due to thorns giving him a flat tire during the already tortuous ascent. Needless to say, cycling has not survived without the persistent threnody of images of suffering to sustain the road race for over a century.

⁴⁰. With Jarry's notable satire of the crucifixion juxtaposed with the pain of an uphill climb by bicycle was later revised by J.G. Ballard by inverting the human motor of the cyclist with a motorcycle in "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered As A Downhill Motor Race." (Ballard)

The so-called giants of the road (*géants de la route*) motif was used as much to hyperbolically invoke the travails of road racing as to satiate the desire for heroes, especially in the cycling literary tradition founded by the Tour de France coverage in *L'Auto*. Conversely, the portrayal of epic heroism was also accompanied by a long-standing critique of the convict laborers of the road (*forçats de la route*) as well, due to the criticisms voiced by racers, especially in the 1920s through the 1930s, and fomented by the communist press (Thompson 180). Since the early days of the Tour de France, most cyclists hailed from humble, working-class backgrounds with the press capitalizing on narratives of hard work and perseverance as well as on their labors on the bicycle over the course of thousands of kilometers.

Historian Christopher Thompson further locates the use of the cycling suffering trope in French culture negotiating the threatened masculinity of a defeated France in 1870, World War I and World War II. What Thompson terms the hyper-masculinist “cult of suffering” was also used to relegate women, especially women athletes, to secondary positions in the support of the male hero from the 1890s to this day. Throughout *L'Auto's* coverage of the Tour de France, voluptuous, pretty women were described to be among the crowds adulating the heroic efforts of the male-only cyclists that survived as *rescapés*, or survivors, as if recasting the role of women to remain off the battlefield of the race to await their heroic male combatants on the home front. Thompson contextualizes the Tour de France and cycling in general as

a cultural site of negotiating a host of competing interests. While Thompson is not interested in the semiotic and anti-capitalist bent of Barthes, he does proffer an additional reason for the cult of suffering: healing imperialist loss.

The seven-time Tour champion and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong has recently described the race as “a contest in purpose-less suffering,” and, to the extent that Tour racers could have chosen a career involving less suffering, he is right. The persistence of the Tour’s heroic ethos, however, challenges the cultural historian to explore why survival and “purpose-less suffering” have been widely and continually presented as meaningful throughout a century of extraordinary change for both France and its Tour. Two world wars, the Great Depression, foreign occupation, reconstruction and economic modernization, the development of a strong welfare state, the loss of a colonial empire (and defeats in two wars in the process), several regime changes, European integration, and the country’s declining influence in international affairs have arguably challenged and transformed France as never before over the course of a single century. (138)

Cycling as salve for the imperial nation is an intriguing notion that conjoins with Barthes analysis of the Tour de France as a myth that presents the Tour as a self-apparent epic of heroes in order to cover up the fact that there may be several convict laborers and resources spanning the globe that are used to produce the spectacle.

So let us reconsider the repurposing of the Jamesian sentence: What do they know of cycling who only cycling know? Barthes's category of myth and his insightful comments on the conduct of a road race should not be confused with the genre of road cycling literature’s dependence upon epic and mythical figures. At the same time, the cultural historian cannot help but view the cycling road race from within the French imperial imagination desiring an image of its continual resurgence and survival as a world power. This is, of course, from within the conception of the Eurocentric imaginary of

cycling. Viken Berberian's *The Cyclist* depends upon this background while also transporting the imaginary of cycling into a "marginal" context through the mind and aspirations of a terrorist in Lebanon.

Cricket Cycling is Structurally Perfect

While C. L. R. James claims that his analysis of cricket "will apply to all games" he elucidates why cricket is formally perfect as a "rigid structural frame" and therefore within the realm of "theatre, ballet, opera and the dance" (206, 196). First, James argues that cricket frames its players in a dramatic event that captures the subtlety of a modern subject as individual, teammate, and proxy for a neighborhood or national identity. Cricket creates players that must balance "the One and the Many, Individual and Social, Individual and Universal, leader and followers, representatives and ranks, the part and the whole" when the "batsman facing the ball does not merely represent his side. For that moment, to all intents and purposes, he is his side" (197). At some level, the batsman occupies multiple subject positions of being himself and his team simultaneously. Not surprisingly, I argue that cycling is no different in its multiple subject-formations of the cyclist in the road race. In fact, cycling is further striated with the professional cyclist often in the role of the servant *domestique*, under contract to protect the leader, fetch water and food, and ultimately sacrifice his service to the star rider. But *domestiques* sometimes get their day (or they disobey the team director) and act for themselves as the winner of a race. While riders work for teams, they are frequently identified by

their nationality and bear the burden of being a representative of their country during their exploits in addition to representing the corporate brands that emblazon their racing kit jerseys as human billboards. There are further positions of the road racer that bring us to a corollary to James's second point about the perfect form of cricket.

James argues that the perfection of cricket as a dramatic spectacle is due to the fact that the game allows for the event to have internal episodes that are as rich as the over all whole of the game.

Here also cricket is structurally perfect. The total spectacle consists and must consist of a series of individual, isolated episodes, each in itself completely self contained. Each has its beginning, the ball bowled; its middle, the stroke played; its end, runs no runs, dismissal. Within the fluctuating interest of the rise or fall of the game as a whole, there is this unending series of events, each single one fraught with immense possibilities of expectation and realization. (197)

The embedded episodes in the game of cricket produce "glorious uncertainty" within the framework of its development. The dynamics of a road race are also a constant Machiavellian shuttling of groups of cyclists aiding one another in forming a slipstream to reduce the collective work against the wind while constantly evaluating when the temporary teamwork with other riders will break down the closer the finish line approaches. Teams and riders collude and cooperate and much as they compete and conquest in countless calculations that are acted upon and then shift the reactions of other cyclists and teams. Barthes's four categories of movement—to lead, to follow, to escape, and to collapse—unwittingly reduces the various reasons "to attack,"

or accelerate, in order to force a response from nearby riders, the overall peloton, and teammates. The constant shifting of ad hoc alliances creates a sporting event that is not only dramatic but political in its positioning of all the cyclists, teams, and sponsors. This jockeying of interests is further compounded in stage races that extend the possibilities across multiple days of racing. If cricket is perfect in form, and James recognizes that his analysis can apply to any sport or game, then cycling, too, is (more) perfect in form. The concatenation of subject positions along with the internal episodes of cycling as a framing structure exceeds the ability of participants, spectators, and media from fully apprehending the entirety of a race. Covering a road race is the art of capturing the incalculable peloton, or group of riders constantly assessing, attacking, and counter-attacking as individuals, as teams.

The Unrepresentable Road Race

Road cycling races are, by nature, unrepresentable as sporting events. This is not rooted in a semiotic failure of language but rather a recognition that the race overflows with facts, moments, choices, and exploits that exceed the ability of journalists and writers to use a variety of media to present live, or re-present in language and edited video afterward, the full rundown of what actually went down, so to speak. If the goal of representation is absolute fidelity to the event, the writer covering a road race will fail every time. In the early days of the Tour de France and cycling races in general, journalists

produced fictive accounts that became the historical record of the race. “The sportswriters generally tried to give an account of the race that was attuned as closely as possible to the tastes of their readership, even if this forced them to do violence to the truth—insofar as they were aware of it. In the journalists’ eyes, the riders’ only task was to provide the elements from which they could assemble the exciting stories on which the popularity of cycle sport was based” (Maso 88).

Because it is impossible to observe the progress of a road race with one’s own eyes, the media play a very different role than they do in other sports. Whoever wants to see a football- or tennis-match can sit in the stands and watch what is happening from start to finish. Whoever wants to know anything about the progress of a Tour [de France], or a [one-day] classic, is completely dependent on the media. That does not mean they are given a trustworthy or complete picture. These days, sportswriters covering major races have to drive either far ahead of, or far behind, the peloton, and they get to see the cyclists only before the start or after the finish. Even at the time when reporters still enjoyed the right to move among the riders, seated in a car or on the back of a motorcycle, they caught merely a glimpse of the development of the race and could only hope to be present by coincidence when important incidents took place. The major cycling journalists of the past made no attempt to give detailed accounts of races; they sought to do no more than meld the relatively scarce facts available to them into an exciting whole. (96)

Unlike other sports events that are contained on a field or in a stadium, the road cycling event can be a one-day classic or a three-week-long stage race that varies routes and terrains every year where attendance is free. From the early days of the Tour de France to contemporary races, it is impossible to fully represent the event. Even if every cyclist had a helmet camera *and* an audience could view the exact location, speed and wattage of each cyclist, a sportscast would have to edit, select, and construct a narrative to make sense of all the competing data. Today, with satellite links, it is not uncommon for

camera broadcasts from motorcycle- and helicopter-mounted cameras to short out due to inclement weather and rough, nearly inaccessible terrain. Combine these limits with the nature of a race with live coverage quickly shifting with a breakaway of riders, then the peloton perhaps suffering massive crashes several kilometers away, meanwhile the stragglers (known as a *grupetto* in Italian and usually a group of sprinters struggling on a mountain stage along with the *domestiques* spent from their services for the day) hang on at the rear and attempt to finish the race within the time limit set by the race organizers. Besides the general strategy of the terrain and known conditions of the weather and other cyclists, none of these developments can be reasonably anticipated or represented without a fictive reconstruction of the event.

Briefly returning to Krabbé's 1978 novel, *The Rider* (much like Berberian's cyclist) muses to himself about the truth-value of the depictions of past races and he clearly comes down in support of the anecdotal and fictive construction over any sense of truth-value afforded to the documentary record. Following the onomastic form identified by Barthes of using singular last names as shorthand for mythic figures and pedaling pain once again

[Climber Charly] Gaul couldn't do without pain: pain was his motor. It's a mistake to leave it up to the facts to tell themselves.

In every report from 1967, you'll see that [Tommy] Simpson's heart broke three kilometers from the top of the Ventoux. The monument honoring his death is located one and a half kilometers from the top. Rightly so. More tragic. The facts miss the heart of the matter; to give us a clear picture, the facts need a vehicle, the anecdote.

When Geldermans told me that [Five-time Tour de France winner Jacques] Anquetil always moved his water bottle to his back pocket during climbs, so his bike would be lighter, I began paying attention. I noticed that in all the old pictures of Anquetil climbing, his bidon is always in its holder. That's straining at gnats. Geldermans' story strikes to the soul of the rider, and is therefore true.

Those pictures are inaccurate. (Krabbé 117)

The cycling race is always a constructed fiction. What has held the genre together is the liberal use of imaginative storytelling that supplements the fact-of-what-occurred with the fact-of-what-is-portrayed. It does not deny the ostensible fact but builds upon the fact in order to reconstitute the greater fiction that will override and overcome the truth-value of the fact. The facticity of the fictive portrayal is rooted in following the genre's adherence to the epic structure of cycling, especially to the trope of suffering and survival.

Regardless of advances in technology that can enrich the media used in depicting further factual aspects of cycling, the fictive truth of a road race always trumps the verity of every measured pedal stroke and the image captured of the singular, sweeping hum of the peloton crossing the photo-finish line. The road race is dependent upon the epic structure in order to be re-presentable. I cannot think of another sport that forms its tradition upon recognizing its fundamental inaccessibility, touting the manner in which a race is depicted as more important than the (f)actual developments of the race while trumpeting its de facto fictional accounts as the official record.

What has made bicycle road racing so unique—from the races in Saint-Cloud in 1868 to the present day—has never been its actual history but always its mythical portrait. That is the reason, too, why it continues to renew itself today without losing its special character. In scarcely any other sport does

tradition seem to play a more important role. But that tradition is by no means fixed. On the contrary, it is constantly being reinvented” (Maso 158)

If the bicycle race was first used to display the wonders of the modern device of the bicycle, then the genre of cycling racing literature harbors our excitable trust in storytelling, acknowledging our preference for presentation and style over any demonstrable fact of a race.

This unrepresentability of what really occurred and the tradition of privileging whatever reconstitutes the cult of suffering as a known fiction is something to keep in mind when reading Berberian’s *The Cyclist*. At the end of the novel, during the climactic race, the cyclist realizes he could win and he struggles with the decision to abandon his bombing mission rather than lose his chance at winning the race (something he has dreamed of since he got his first bicycle at age eleven). Throughout the novel, the narrator explains that the terrorist cell was selected for the elite mission of bombing of the five-star Summerland Hotel in Beirut. But the cyclist considers his interests as a father, as the lover of his childhood sweetheart, as a food lover, a survivor of several bike crashes, and as a wounded person whose village was bombed when he was young. “Look close at me, inside my pores. I am not the cipher that you think I am. Who stole our youth, Ghaemi’s and mine? How did the fury of violence, coincidental or designed, partisan or without purpose, tint our vision of the world?” (Berberian, *The Cyclist* 175). As with cycling as a sport, the eponymous cyclist in the novel is unstable, unrepresentable... within the

tradition of cycling.

Allowing Conviviality

Because road cycling relies upon the fictionalized accounts of journalists invoking the epic, there is a need to question how this storytelling functions in the non-fictional context of historical reality. Roland Barthes claims that the Tour de France is the mythology par excellence due to the crafting of the stage race in epic terms while evincing the economic, social, and nationalistic realities that underscore the sporting event. Especially after World War II, Europe's reinvented the cyclist as a human paragon of effort, fitness, and national promise when the Marshall Plan financed the rebuilding of Europe into a landscape threaded by cycling feats to be overcome. Barthes felt that road cycling, especially in France, was a powerful narrative that supplied the means to pattern a nation with localities and personalities while constructing the overarching thematics of humanity conquering the elements and overcoming time far more than simple competition. Meanwhile the narrative of the Tour de France took its embellished fiction to stitch together the nation's narrative of unity and rebuilding, just as Henri Desgrange originally intended nearly four decades earlier. The danger, as with any of Barthes's examples of a myth, is how road cycling delivers the national story of struggle and triumph while subsuming the role of corporations (increasingly having little to do with the bicycle industry when riders began advertising for a variety of non-bicycle companies

in the late 1960s); the interests of the media concocting quarrels and nemesis-centered narratives to sell advertisements in newspapers, radio, and eventually international television; and the nation-state's desire to have a competition that forges nationalism through the ritual of an annual competition without getting caught up in the details of what materials, personnel, and management is required to pull the road cycling ritual toward the climax in Paris every year.

Barthes's analysis seems to preclude road cycling from the conviviality that structures our investigation of the bicycle. However, just as C. L. R. James warns that we should not merely study road cycling in and of itself, we must understand how road cycling is used in different contexts and mediums as a means to signify alternative meanings, especially in anti-colonial imaginaries. If cycling constructs a national narrative while it also occludes the "truth" of what makes the race possible and the "truth" of what ostensibly occurred during the event of the race, then how, exactly, is road cycling able to conjure the paradoxical conviviality as the balance of allowing the fullest growth of the individual in connection with others in the community? The best and most extreme example of following James's insightful *Beyond the Boundary* with cricket can be applied to moving past the peloton of the road cycling race in Viken Berberian's novel *The Cyclist*.

The Cyclist

Berberian's novel was published precariously in early 2001 before the events of September 11 altered the public discourse regarding terrorism. As a journalist for a variety of newspapers and magazines and business analyst, Berberian's novel follows in the footsteps of Dalton Trumbo's anti-war novel *Johnny Got His Gun* whereby the unnamed main character is incapacitated in a hospital bed due to a bicycle accident as a part of his military training. Unlike Trumbo's World War I soldier, Berberian's protagonist is a terrorist from the Druze minority in Lebanon who trained abroad in England and returned to Lebanon for a bicycle race⁴¹. But rather than competing, the race is a means for the terrorist cyclist to circumvent security as a participant in the race, descending the Shouf Mountains into Beirut, in order to deliver a bomb to a comrade at the Summerland Hotel and blow it up with hundreds of people to die. While Trumbo's novel clearly questions the use of abstract concepts with the main character asking for "liberty" to be shown as a tangible thing to motivate him to fight when he is so severely injured and he is nothing but a human torso tortured as a wounded veteran, *The Cyclist* harbors the inner struggle of a wounded young man whose village was bombed by terrorists and who was successfully recruited to return the violence a

⁴¹. For background on the Druze, a minority ethnic and religious community difficult to study, see Betts and Dana.

hundredfold in the clichéd “cycle of violence.” Throughout the novel, the cyclist thrums and ruminates upon the delivery of “the baby,” the code name for the bomb. The nomenclature for the bomb as baby is fully intended and the novel proceeds to complicate the young terrorist's life and decisions about his impact on others' lives.

What makes *The Cyclist* a model text for illustrating what lies beyond cycling sport as a possibility is how we understand the nameless protagonist's journey to the final, climactic race. With the commitment of a dedicated soldier, the reader grows to know the cyclist as one who has always wanted to be in a cycling race as a child and one who cannot avoid the pleasures of a feast with others. The cyclist's exuberance translates cycling and feasting (as in the root sense of the word convivial) into a conflicted character over the course of the novel. *The Cyclist* employs road cycling lore, the pleasures of food, and the pleasures of the text with ebullient prose that frequently defaults into unmetered end-rhyming sentences as if the novel is overflowing (and overdetermined) in a staged portrayal of the terrorist Other as a sympathetic cyclist (however uncomfortable this may be for the reader). He cannot but help to share his enthusiasm for the things he loves, including his mission to destroy a hotel and all its occupants.

A representative passage of the feasting, convivial style of the books occurs when the protagonist discusses the day he met his childhood sweetheart while riding his new bicycle.

Nougat white and licorice black have always been my favorite colors. The source of this discovery was an almond-eyed girl in our village. Her name was Ghaemi Basmati. When I first saw Ghaemi, it was from the saddle of my new birthday gift, that cumbersome bicycle with twelve gears to shift. She skipped and hopped across the dusty souk, lugging a basketful of fruit. It takes a lot to buckle my knees, though not on that particular day. She was a force that I had never seen. Soon after, I lost control of my handlebar. Everything around me turned a celestial white except for Ghaemi, who has the angelic color of light cocoa. By any measure (preferably metric), that was a minor bicycle accident, the first of many more to come. But it was the second most important that I have ever had. It was a collision that shuddered my world. (152)

The passage evokes an unending desire for food, his lover, and his bicycle with end-rhyme sentences that border on obsession throughout the novel.

The convulsions of combining these desires are, ultimately, what turns the cyclist away from terrorism and toward the bicycle race.

And if he is a road cyclist in a race, he is, by definition, an epic hero that must suffer pain and agony in a race that cannot be fully represented. Taking the tradition of the European road cyclist into a colonial context where the cyclist is redefined, much like C. L. R. James's cricketers reinvent and reconstrue the cut and strokes of the batsmen in the West Indies, the novel's cyclist forces the reader to move past the peloton. Moving past the peloton can signify the lone escaping cyclist in a breakaway attempt to win the race while also portraying the cyclist transcending the confines of the race and taking the narrative into the territory of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Can the Terrorist Speak?

The overflow of stylistic gastronomy, cycling, sex, and anti-capital/colonial/imperial-ism perform and draw attention to the staging of re-presenting the terrorist as an accomplished cyclist. Critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls Berberian's novel brilliant and "a brave attempt to imagine the inner world of the suicide bomber" ("Terror: A Speech After 9-11" 97). She also decisively places *The Cyclist* "in that genre with 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'⁴²" ("Rethinking Comparativism" 615). But Spivak also famously warns that this form of artistic representation is related to but should not be conflated with the representation of the unnamed cyclist as a stand-in representative for the voice of the terrorist as a subaltern subject and political agent. *The Cyclist* depicts a terrorist with synesthetic and sympathetic panache spilling these details throughout the text for the reader to come to "know" the terrorist. Through the first-person narrative, we become far more than an acquaintance realizing what drives and fuels the terrorist and in particular, the bombing of his village when he was a child, which destroyed the village market and the

⁴². As this essay has changed over time with the first section rewritten and incorporated as the end of the "History" section in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Spivak, 1999, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the...*, @248-311), I also want to recognize how Spivak's use of the disciplinary metaphor of translation for the future to come of a "comparativism of equivalence" is another reworking of the productive space of the genre of "Can the Subaltern Speak." Later in this chapter, I will briefly touch upon the necessity of what Spivak calls the double-bind of ethics and politics in narratives of suicide bombers as subalterns in the need for "Comparativism in extremis."

parents of his childhood friend and future lover, Ghaemi Basmati. The event supplies the impetus of pain to eventually become an avenging terrorist as a young man. At the same time, the cyclist as terrorist is forced into a overdetermined subject-position of representing all terrorists. Due to the lack of a name, his mixed-heritage background as a secular Druze and Jew from Lebanon, and the overall context of the novel published shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, the terrorist can be forced into the Western frame of 21st-Century terrorism discourse⁴³. This discourse typically figures the terrorist as a religious zealot on a holy war of jihad against the power, culture, and people of the West.

The novel's overdetermined presentation (style) and representation (political voice) of the cyclist as terrorist can create two typical and entangled readings: 1) exclusion of the terrorist Other as opaque and ineffable to the West and/or 2) incorporation of the terrorist Other as transparent and knowable to the West. Both of these subject-effects are the result of the conflation of the presentation of an object-of-knowledge cavorting with the framing of the object-of-knowledge as a substitute subject-agent. Spivak locates this long-standing tendency to merge both types of representation in Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and traces its continued itinerary in the

⁴³. A political science and international studies course at Vassar College recently used Berberian's novel in 2008 as a culminating text for the course. See <http://faculty.vassar.edu/zamampilly/teaching/Fall%202008%20Syllabus.pdf>.

thought of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze when they discuss their intellectual solidarity with so-called third world politics. By following Spivak (and Edouard Glissant) with the dichotomous metaphors of transparency/opacity we can see how the two effects maintain a comfortable distance from the terrorist, outside the blast range, and contain, not so much the radius of the cyclist's explosion in the novel as much as it reconstitutes the borders of the West's epistemic and imperial power.

Subject-effect#1: Excluding the Opaque Terrorist

This is classic alterity. The terrorist can be recognized as an inscrutable Middle Eastern terrorist from start to finish, forever unknowable and always Other. By ontological definition, sympathies are not allowed because no terrorist subject can share culinary desires, cycling lore, and even the hope of becoming a father without jeopardizing the position of the pre-determined terrorist as Other. A value is placed inordinately upon the political position of the terrorist that must be cast away. Regardless of the idiosyncrasies and unique cracks in the character of the cyclist, the positionality of the terrorist trumps the problematic presentation. When the novel reaches the climax when the cyclist overcomes his terrorist mission and decides to remain in the race rather than deliver the bomb, this exclusion maintains: once a terrorist always a terrorist. By excluding the terrorist as the always Other, the text is dismissed for its ridiculous (re)presentation where the conversion of the terrorist is flatly interpreted as unbelievable and a

violation of the terms of the ontological position of the terrorist. The cyclist is doomed to fail in such a reading that is committed to keeping the terrorist as an unknown subject but a worthy object-of-knowledge sublimated as the shadow of the Western self.

Subject-effect #2: Incorporating the Transparent Terrorist

The cyclist can be entertained as somewhat agreeable, somehow “like us” with his proclivities for pungent food, the pleasures of training on his bicycle, and the love of a partner who shares his political views. This presentation and representation can create a means to allow space for the cyclist to represent the terrorist as a somewhat sympathetic actor who can be identified with, so long as the bomb goes off in Beirut, not Brussels or Baltimore. There is a generic generosity of difference allowed only insofar as the terrorist’s motivations are understood as that-which-is-not-us, to where the cyclist and foodie is held close enough in order to extricate the terrorist from the orbit of humanity as defined by the West. This subject-effect excludes through a rote recognition of difference, still maintaining the separation between Same and Other. There is a privileging of the style and presentation of the cyclist in the novel as a knowable and even sympathetic portrayal; meanwhile the political position of the terrorist (as cyclist) is cast away. So long as the cyclist narrator is tolerable in his pining for spicy food, sweet milk, a hard bicycle ride, and the sexual and intellectual comfort of his partner, he is a part of the human fold. When the presentation and style shifts

far enough to portray the grievance of the terrorist, he is no longer agreeable to our aesthetic taste. The terrorist is forced to leave the body of the cyclist.

Beyond these two standard subject-effects, the novel can be read as a productive site of what Spivak has called the genre of “Can the Subaltern Speak.” Her pivotal essay reveals the ways in which ostensibly left-leaning intellectuals like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze reconstitute the universalist position of a hidden gaze and assumptions particular to the investigating Western intellectual. Spivak’s essay turns to Marxism, South Asian Historiography, Freudian Psychology, and especially Postcolonial Feminism as a means to expose the process of discussing figures of the Other. What the essay illuminates is how the Other is silenced through the epistemic technology of presenting (or artistically staging) the subaltern as a subject when, in fact, the presentation of the Other in the intellectual's argument is merely a ruse. The Western intellectual, knowingly or not, substitutes the unacknowledged object-of-knowledge constituting the subaltern as knowable through the ghostly speech of the itinerant intellectual of the West shuffling along appreciating the Other which constitutes the Same of the West. Just as Spivak reads the female suicide of Buvanaswari Bhaduri as a displacement of the social text of *sati*-suicide, I want to suggest that another reading is possible where the cyclist retains the right to opacity, as Edouard Glissant has declared (190), while the reader (and [un]acknowledged theorist) is forced to recognize the epistemic and political process through

which a reader (and, again, also the producing theorist) enforces a notion of the terrorist through either of the two typical subject-effects we've briefly explored. Another possibility is a simple recognition of the process of the terrorist's subject-formation and how the reader is imbricated in the process.

When initially setting up her argument in the "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Spivak looks at Marx's comments in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and draws attention to how Marx discusses the production of a class. In the passage Spivak highlights the easy confusion between how Marx rhetorically stages the class constituting itself as an economic subject as well as how it politically forms the class as a substitutive voice for the group as a collective, political subject. The two forms of representation are related but should not be conflated as one and the same, especially when the theorist (or reader) desires to reveal and disclose the Other by offering a quick synthesis of the two forms of representation. "Again, they are related, but running them together, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act and know for themselves, leads to an essentialist, utopian politics" (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 71). Such a politics of reading leads to the sovereignty of imperialist critics (like myself, usually located in the West) who constitute the Other as the shadow of the self while hiding their position as the all-knowing Subject. If there is a glimmer of hopeful politics of reading, it is where the representation of the terrorist provides the troubling effects, through the style of the text, retaining the opacity of the Other while

illustrating how the stylistic details of the staging of the Other “dissimulates the choice of and need for ‘heroes,’ paternal proxies, agents of power” (74). In other words, the ridiculous cyclist, gourmand, lover, secular Druze terrorist evacuates the subject-effect of the fact of being a terrorist and the space of the recognized but impenetrable difference remains in its place.

That inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text is what a postcolonial critic of imperialism would like to see developed within the European enclosure as the place of the production of theory. The postcolonial critics and intellectuals can attempt to displace their own production only by presupposing that *text-inscribed* blankness. To render thought or the thinking subject transparent or invisible seems, by contrast, to hide the relentless recognition of the Other by assimilation. (89)

Is there a violent shuttling that I am drawing attention to in the attempt to represent—politically and artistically—the terrorist/cyclist? There is the subject-effect of staging a terrorist as a polyglot, amorphous anti-capitalist, food-loving, sex-loving, nostalgic cyclist cathecting the West’s desire to represent the terrorist as a relatable, translated Other—a subaltern⁴⁴ cyclist offering the metaphorical vehicle to register the terrorist to the West. But at the same time, the ridiculousness, dare I say the over-the-top postmodern patchwork of the characterization of the unnamed terrorist who foregoes his

⁴⁴. When Spivak turns to Derrida as the unexpected critic offering a more politically productive and honest critique of the desire to represent the subaltern, Spivak uses the past participle of Freud’s cathexis to account for the build up of desire that is held in the subject-formation of the subaltern. Spivak refers specifically to Derrida’s subjection “Of Grammatology as a Positive Science” in *Of Grammatology* when she comments “Derrida then discloses the vulnerability of his own desire to conserve something that is, paradoxically, both ineffable and nontranscendental. In critiquing the production of the colonial subject, this ineffable, nontranscendental (‘historical’) place is cathected by the subaltern subject.” (89)

bombing run for the desire to win the bicycle race, become a father, and completely commits to the bicycle rather than the terrorist cell—this stylistically stages an unbelievable turn of events. This act is dependent upon “blowing up” the epic structure of cycling in a new context that re-writes the mythology that Barthes identifies in cycling and as C. L. R. James claims is the unexamined potential of sports in general.⁴⁵ What is missing from our discussion of *The Cyclist* is no longer revealing the multiple levels at which the bicycle operates as a convivial figure in the novel. We must confront the terrorist as the cycling hero conversant in cycling lore, cooking, and critique of Western Imperialism.

David Williams provides a good example of a counter-reading that excludes *The Cyclist* as a terrorist because of the staging of the novel’s terrorist as a gourmand cyclist, who also happens to have sex with his lover. Williams finds that these desires are more fitting with the US publishing market’s tastes to offer a vision of the terrorist as someone like “us.”

The novel depicts members of a terrorist group planning a hotel bombing. This “type of person” seems to be, in many ways, remarkably like “us,” as evidenced by detailed information about cuisine and bicycle racing, two topics of interest to the demographic that buys “serious fiction.” Digressions on hip, esoteric subjects have become de rigueur in fiction, which may say more about publishers than writers. The couple at the heart of the story enjoy a vigorous sex life. The woman’s ever ready enthusiasm might be more

⁴⁵. Barthes argues that the best way to counter myth is to take the bourgeois myth as the starting term in a new counter-myth. “Truth to tell, the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language of something, why not rob myth? All that is needed is to use it as the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of a second myth” (Barthes, *Mythologies* 135).

convincing in a harem fantasy, but maybe her desire is supposed to transgress other stereotypes. (D Williams 56)

Undoubtedly, the character of Ghaemi Basmati definitely falls into “the male imaginary,” as pointed out by Spivak, “the female suicide bomber is gender-marked by the reproductive norm” (“Terror: A Speech After 9-11” 97). Ghaemi nurtures her lover with food, moral support, sex, and eventually becomes pregnant as a normative reproducing woman. But as a comrade terrorist she is also the technical expert in explosives and detonators. She designs the plastic explosive “baby” bomb and later reveals her pregnancy to the cyclist, thereby blurring the lines of what code name and signifier is operating at any one time in reference to the “baby.” Still, this blurring is dependent upon the reproductive metaphor of the woman.

For Williams, the bicycles and esoteric food descriptions, which Berberian openly references in the “Notes and Acknowledgement” section as deriving from the mass publication of Harold McGee’s *On Food and Cooking*, the idiosyncrasies and sex life, all reflect the image of the West back to itself when it imagines the terrorist Other. Is Williams protecting the imagery of the Middle East so the real terrorist can speak? Is he performing what Spivak terms, “The white man saving brown women from brown men?”

Williams moves back and forth between an essentialism of what a terrorist is and what a genuine depiction of an Arab should be in a contemporary novel. There is the classic shuffling between the roles of a

representation—in the political proxy sense—and re-presentation—in the aesthetic sense—of how Berberian stages the terrorist as a cyclist, foodie, and sexual being. What irks Williams is the fact that a novel that depicts a terrorist, regardless of its aesthetic, is, by definition, predetermined to reproduce the terrorist.

We know that in our time, the most common victims of political violence are noncombatants. Most victims do not respond with violence. Why is that? A few do. Why is that? To get to the heart of such questions, we may need to go beyond the precise language of the social sciences to the implications of literature. But Berberian's elegant aesthetic seems to exclude most such considerations. Instead, we get esoterica about the chemistry of cooking, which perhaps is meant to stand as a correlative for personal and political relationships, and sadistic fantasies that use food preparation as a metaphor for the devastation of a terrorist attack. (D Williams 57)

Williams first asserts, “For the sake of contrast, I would first like to discuss three novels that were not written by Arab-Americans: *The Cyclist*, *The Secret History*, and *The Last Night of a Damned Soul*” intimating that Berberian (along with Donna Tart and Slimane Benaïssa) cannot be our native informant, “ethnic” novelists. While he makes it clear that Berberian depicts a character of secular Druze background (not to mention the cyclist’s mother is a secular Jew as well), he puts Berberian and his novel in the ethnic category of Donna Tart’s novel about “a group of white American college students who commit two murders, one in a frenzy, the other in cold blood” where the ethics of killing are platitudinous even though the book was lauded by critics and performed well in sales (57). Williams is conflating the lack of a direct explanation of the cyclist's terrorism and the novel's aesthetic style with the desire to reveal the terrorist as Other. Unsatisfied, Williams apparently relies

upon *The Cyclist's* jacket cover, which does not provide the ethnic heritage summary of Berberian's life⁴⁶. It also seems possible that Williams never finished the novel since the cyclist chooses not to go through with his plan to blow up the hotel and the character is constantly struggling with the bombing plan: in the end the cyclist is not a terrorist. *The Cyclist* is essentially reformed because of the bicycle race, the community of food, and the eventual birth of his son with someone he loves. This contradictory treatment of the novel is important because it illustrates the various ways the terrorist is curtailed from speaking: aesthetic presentation style excludes authenticity and/or a terrorist is always already the Other that cannot be confronted in any representation. Williams does trouble the category of so-called ethnic literature as one that can be internally diverse but by doing so, he unwittingly reconstitutes the hegemony of the unacknowledged universal by constantly referring to authors' ethnic backgrounds and then invoking the market's satiability for consuming narrative texts that are exotic but familiar at the same time—an Other than can be included because it does not threaten the West.

⁴⁶. It is not necessary for my argument but, for the record and to satisfy the authentic-ethnically inclined, Berberian's Arermenian Christian family left Beirut for Los Angeles when Berberian was nine years old. His father remained in Lebanon to help the Armenian community and died in an explosion from a terrorist bomb in 1986 when Berberian was nineteen and living in Los Angeles (Marshall). This experiential fact obliterates Williams's exclusion of *The Cyclist* under the force of ethnic-identity, which Williams challenges and reinforces. But it is not the heart of my argument about how *The Cyclist* provides an opportunity to engage the terrorist Other. Things may be easier if Berberian's biography is suspended to the curt sentences on the novel's jacket cover, "Berberian lives in New York. This is his first novel."

It is this set of readings that I want to question in order to keep the terrorist opaque while welcoming the novel to the convivial table of literature, ethnic or otherwise. Berberian's cyclist is not transparent or necessarily palatable with what Spivak terms the double bind (between ethics and politics) of presenting a depiction of the terrorist as cyclist through an extreme story that desires the destruction of many innocent people in the planned "shower party" bombing. The story is also extreme in its style as a paradoxical overflowing of excitement about the pleasures of life, the volupté of cycling⁴⁷, food, a loving partner and the possibility of parenthood all evacuate any pre-conceived conception of the terrorist as absolutely Other. For good reason, the cyclist is nameless, paradoxically portraying an individual and an everyman archetype of all young terrorists in the Middle East. The character's mixed heritage and secular Druze background also contribute to a resistant image of the terrorist as opaque—a subject versus an object of knowledge. As I apply Spivak's reading practice of questioning "Can the Subaltern

⁴⁷. The divine surprise comes when you discover that beyond enjoyment lies the thrill of *la volupté*. The voluptuous pleasure you get from cycling is something else. It does exist, because I have experienced it. Its magic lies in its unexpectedness, its value in its rarity. It is more than a sensation because one's emotions are involved as well as one's actions. At the risk of raising eyebrows, I would maintain that the delight of cycling is not to be found in the arena of competition. In racing, the threat of failure or the excitement of success generates euphoria at best, which seems vulgar in comparison to *la volupté*.

The voluptuous pleasure that cycling can give you is delicate, intimate and ephemeral. It arrives, it takes hold of you, sweeps you up and then leaves you again. It is for you alone. IT is a combination of speed and ease, force and grace. It is pure happiness. (Bobet 101)

Speak?” I also assert that the text is dependent upon its location in Lebanon, far from the European pro cycling teams.

The Peloton in Lebanon

In the documentary film *Chasing Legends*, which follows Team Columbia/HTC in the 2009 Tour de France, long-time American *super-domestique*⁴⁸ George Hincapie, nicknamed “Captain America” after the comic book figure, reacts to his sports director Brian Holm’s comment about the enduring pain and misery in store for the day's stage race.



Fig. 3: George Hincapie joking about the hell of Beirut during the 2009 Tour de France.

In the film, Holm is deep at the far end of the bus lit by a skylight with

⁴⁸. A super-domestique is a sub-category of a domestic grunt cyclist who has the ability to win stages and one-day classics but has been relegated to the service of the *domestique* rather than a superstar leader. As of 2011, George Hincapie has raced in a record sixteen Tours de France.

Hincapie in the foreground on the right of the *mis-en-scène*. Hincapie is filling a water bottle with sports drink powder and making mocking faces as he listens to his sports director's comments. The entire team is between them and anticipates Hincapie's wisecrack. Holm bolsters the team and says that the stage race in store will make the last twelve days "seem like a holiday." Hincapie winces and retorts, "Yeah, maybe a holiday in Beirut or fucking Afghanistan," to which the cycling team laughs in unison as if their grueling days in the saddle should easily be compared to a day in Beirut under siege. The joke depends upon the difference between the conditions of racing in France with cycling's traditional motif of hyperbolic suffering placed in contrast to the recent 2006 34-day war following the long Lebanese Civil War from 1975 to 1990⁴⁹, coupled with the years of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan following Russian intervention in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The joke makes light of the cyclists' hard work ahead at the expense of the populations in the Middle East that endure suffering on a different scale that is imposed by geopolitics, ethnic warfare, and imperialism rather than selected as a professional athletic career. It can only be spoken from the imperialist core rather than uttered from the colonial margin. This moment in film is a place for us to depart the typical confines of cycling in Europe—this chapter's

⁴⁹. See Robert Fisk's *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* for a good account of the complexities and relentless atrocities of the Lebanese Civil War.

preparation of encountering the cyclist as the terrorist Other—and finally see what happens when a road race takes place in Beirut leaving all the laughter about suffering of the Tour de France cyclists remaining thousands of kilometers away.

Like C. L. R. James discussing the significance of cricket in the West Indies, what does this new context perform in our understanding of the terrorist, speaking as a cyclist in Beirut? Lebanon is known more for its paradoxical crossroads of the Middle East, holding a diverse society of Muslims, Jews, Christians, and other religious minorities on a thin spit of land hazardously close to Israel and Syria. What of Barthes's mythology is purposeful in the transference of power and context when a terrorist trains for the "purpose-less suffering" shifting and settling the cycling narrative in the Shouf Mountains of Lebanon and in the treacherous streets of Beirut?

The unnamed narrator uses the Islamic concepts such as the hadj to describe his training in London in the heart of the imperial beast. He trains on country roads, constantly pining for better spices and food, especially since he was a rather rotund youth that took to cycling out of assignment, becoming slim and even more ravenous. The cyclist discusses the training for his bombing mission at the end of the bicycle race:

Let's not pretend. The shower party is the most daring mission assigned to the team. So rigorous was the training that Ghaemi insisted I ride my bicycle for three months through the steep hills of the Shouf. Careening against its cliffs, my muscles grew stiff. While riding downhill, I once lost control of the handlebar and crashed under the weight of my bike. My feet were locked in the pedal cage. There were no cars around, just kilometer after kilometer of

rock, a vista of limestone and gloom. I unbuckled the straps and got up, still reeling from the force of impact. At least my head was intact. My bicycle had turned into a metal cadaver, the front wheel folded like a crepe. (67)

He trains hard, endures physical pain and goes so far as to end up incapacitated in a hospital bed for the majority of the diegesis. The cyclist also registers the pain of the initial blast in his village that caused him to seek out becoming a terrorist in order to avenge the blast, supposedly perpetrated by the “Followers of Fareed.” At the level of the suffering cyclist, this cyclist suffers immensely.

The cyclist is also hard to locate in that his mixed secular Druze and Jewish heritage do not make him the prototypical terrorist of exact equivalence to an Islamic extremist suicide bomber. The smattering of anti-capitalist, anti-colonial arguments of the terrorist group fetchingly known as “The Academy” places the novel in the sphere of Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo*, Thomas Pynchon’s comical leftists in *Vineland* and *Against the Day*, and Karen Tei Yamashita’s *I-Hotel*. For example, while the terrorist cell is on bicycle training rides in the British countryside, comedically reminiscent of Jerome K. Jerome’s *Three Men on a Bummel* or the oddities of Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy*, Sadji, the leader of the cell who is responsible for the clandestine training, muses about how unsure he is of what the purpose of The Academy is. Sadji is forever showing up in expensive Italian suits and elaborate disguises in his role as head of deception. In a key scene, Sadji laments losing, of all things, the Communist Manifesto:

Updating the Communist Manifesto, our Designer of Deception, Sadji, once said: "We don't need to arouse the world's sympathy. We refuse to lose sight of our interests, to not indict the enemy in the interest of peace and security. Let the world know that it was they who first struck at us, violently, and whispered in our ears sinister prophecies of coming catastrophe. In this way arose the Academy: half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking them to the very heart's core; but always tragic in its effect through our belligerent capacity to comprehend the wild ride of modern history." (24)

And later in the novel, Sadji rants

"I will miss the Communist Manifesto," he tells Ghaemi. "If we're no longer a holdover from the end of the cold war, then what are we? A confessional cabal or a paramilitary insurgency? Who are we? An anticolonial gang? A quasi-state-sponsored renegade like the Maximiliano Hernández Martínez Anti-communist Brigade? To be or not to be? And in which shape, cover or form? These are my questions. Yet I cannot give you the answer. It is not that I'm a war looking for a place to happen. But I will never miss a chance to engage the enemy. To crush him under the weight of my will." (66)

If the terrorist leader is confused about his relation to the post-Cold War era and the loss of the Communist vs. Capitalist paradigm what kind of terrorists are we presented with? The cell leader Sadji is far more concerned with capitalism rather than heathen non-believers. This is certainly not the image of a terrorist committed to a holy war but a rather confused and academically educated lot that rhymes throughout the prose and satirizes Hamlet's famous soliloquy of existential angst. For all the fanfare of whether or not the terrorist can speak, the text is at times almost snarky and evasive at pinning down what kind of terrorists, historically and ideologically, the Academy stands for. (Of course the humor of drawing this point in an academic dissertation, where the terrorist cell is name "The Academy," is not lost on me either.)

Similarly, the cyclist himself claims a transnational identity and classifies the "baby" as the bomb to be delivered and the child to be born as "post-

modern kitsch” (86). This playful slippage, differs any exacting placement of the terrorist while constantly shifting the terrorist’s cell’s use of code names. Most importantly is the culmination of the “shower party”—the bombing of the hotel with the “baby,” the plastic explosive bomb—slipping and sliding the referent between the terrorist code name for the bomb and the standard word for an infant child.

It’s difficult to divine whether the baby’s features resemble Ghaemi. And I have observed the little critter for countless hours and from a multitude of angles. The brain is certainly Ghaemi’s, no doubt. The body is a pudgy thing, not unlike the photos of my childhood growing up: a cute little darling, its burning fuse a paean of precision. Ghaemi’s son, our well-preened boy, is a plastic explosive called Composition C and used by the Western military. It’s white in color and resembles nougat candy. Very stable. So feel free to slap it around and it won’t let out a whimper. Comp C’s main advantage is not its plasticity so much as its raw power. It’s 34 percent more malicious than an equal weight of TNT, sufficient to destroy Babel’s tower, or a very tall skyscraper. Like all babies, its stiff and difficult to work with when cold. This may be remedied by sealing it in a plastic bag, then floating it in warm water like a frozen leg of lamb. One caveat: do not attempt this last step with a toddler. (87)

Throughout the novel, the cyclist convalesces from his accident with a Mercedes in downtown Beirut in order to struggle with the shifting terms of the road race and his ulterior mission as a terrorist. The “baby” is simultaneously a child of the love between the cyclist and Ghaemi while also the metaphorical child and purpose of their bombing mission.

The novel is written primarily in rhymed couplets with the sentence as the full measure of the line. While the lack of line breaks embed the rhymes into the tissue of the sentence, eventually the uninitiated reader will be triggered by the rhyming intention to their eye, ear, and tongue. The style is

enough to be distracting at times because when prose discusses terrorism, “realistically” it should not rhyme. While the narrative depends upon the play of the baby as a moniker for the bomb to be delivered near the end of the bicycle race, because of the back-and-forth linguistic play, there is also the haunting of the story by the inverse of the central signifier and its referent: like a film negative, the bomb may be the metaphor carried over to the resultant child baby all along and father-to-be preparing for his new role with all its shock. By the climatic transition for the terrorist deciding to call off the strike as an unwilling soldier cyclist no longer following his sports director the cyclist completes the bicycle race for the pleasure of racing. He is neck and neck with the race leader and has the opportunity to win. This transformation of the terrorist into committed cyclist makes the zealotry of the terrorist equate to the passion of a father deciding to fight to stay alive and live with his life-long lover and child to be. The cyclist muses (with words underlined to highlight the rampant rhyme)

It is my biggest wish that you have a crippling accident one day: an injury as big as the Academy. And surely you will if you have not already had the pleasure of a cracked head that had taken you to the precipice of death. (There is no proxy for practice.) Depending on the magnitude of your injury, a cosmic crash can put a dent in your fate, derail you from a seemingly predestined path, or if you prefer, put you on the path that you always willed but were unable to see; push you beyond the constraints of nationality. Just take a look at me: I am half this, half that. My favorite colors are nougat white and licorice black. And if you look closely at my skin, you will see pigments of purple, Chinese yellow, fawn brown and Bat Yam blue, my mother's favorite hue. But if the nation is dead, why are we together in the same bed? Eating from the same plate; walking hand in hand like two hungry lovers, our cheeks burning a vital and violent red. [underline added to emphasize the rhyme] (153-54)

The Cyclist overflows with a style that is at once poetic and formalist as much as it begs the question of postmodern pastiche and contrivance. The novel's form and style matches the nameless narrator and protagonist as he testifies and reveals his plans to deliver the baby/bomb.

In addition to the rhyme and unexpected representation of the cyclist is the formal use of repetitive refrains throughout the novel, including the use of bookending the novel with the cyclist admonishing readers to always wear their helmets.

You should always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. The helmet should fit snugly. The chin strap should hold firmly against the throat. The buckle should be fastened securely. Consider this: last year there were 11 bike accidents in Iceland, 371 in France and 97 in England. I have no statistics from Holland, but surely, if I had been riding my bicycle on its flat land, I would have been spared my tragedy. (13)

A variation of this refrain is used throughout the novel to emphasize the importance of the helmet, the wish for protection, and a means to secure the climactic end when the cyclist, at his peak performance, rams into a parked car cracking this helmet, just as his childhood hero Dutch cyclist Joop Zoetemelk once did in the 1974 Tour de France. Here is the final bookend, holding up the structure of the novel:

As I glide to the finish line, the crowd roars, feeding my limbs with immense power. It's an outpouring that is more urgent than a bomb and it prods my sore tendons to fight on. The seconds tick. A spectator yells, sending a spoonful of energy into my body, setting off an explosion. If my duty is to escape the collective horror of a carnage, I must sprint as much with the arms as with the legs. There is a progression of purpose to my kinetic motion. A certain process is in place, some would say historic, in spite of the crowd's disjointed commotion, the wild flux that follows a sudden reversal. It is the truth of that movement where one sees the start of a new life and new ways of living. I'm thinking specifically of a pudgy infant with beady little eyes; lips more lush than the pink inside of a salmon; a tummy softer than the heart of an artichoke. And I'll coddle him, then mount him on the back rack of my

bike and take him on stroll. I will make him where a helmet at all times. Make sure that it fits snugly; that the chin strap holds firmly against the throat; that the buckle is fastened securely. (186-87)

All the elements of conviviality unite in the rush of competition and the reform of the terrorist cyclist as father-to-be cyclist. The cyclist is spurred on by the energy of the cheering crowd which fuels his final sprint against “the cannibal” just like food fuels his muscles.⁵⁰ He also recognizes how the purpose of his sprint transcends the race and its original purpose to plant the baby bomb at the hotel. Now, by defying orders, unbecoming of a cyclist who always adheres to the team manager, or in this case Sadji as the unit’s team leader, the cyclist asserts his desire to father a son, recapture the relationship he had with Ghaemi since their youth and the original bomb explosion that sent them into the Academy as easy recruits. “It is the truth of that movement where one sees the start of a new life and new ways of living.” Through plunging himself into the race, the cyclist works in concert with the crowd, his lover, his child-to-be, his body, and ultimately his purpose is transformed into a new imagining of his life outside of the terrorist cell of the Academy. The doublespeak of the baby as bomb is now fully digested as a baby on a bike, helmeted, safe and secure on a stroll.

This climactic shift in consciousness is the opposite of the dispersal of violence that obsessed the cyclist throughout the book. The novel’s

⁵⁰ While the protagonist explains cycling lore throughout, he neglects reminding the reader that the real Cannibal is five-time Tour de France winner Eddy Merckx.

frontispiece quote of Yehuda Amichai's poem "The Diameter of the Bomb" is inverted when the cyclist fully discloses his intentions to win the race and abandon the project of the terrorist cell. It is an implosion upon the individual suddenly reeling in the revelation that his life can be different and centered around family, food, and of course, the bicycle that put him on this path all along. The closing of the novel is also a bookending in terms of the opening frontispiece quote from Michel Foucault regarding the moment of execution as the paradoxical ritual of crime and punishment. It is a paradox because it is the final point in the process of administering justice while also being the point of exhaustion of that process. Much in the same way Spivak locates the suicide bomber throughout her work in the genre of "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

True to form, the kinesthetic reality of sprinting on a bicycle does require all muscle groups to work in concert, especially the arms providing a counter-force on the handlebars to balance the immense amount of force applied to the cranks by the legs. Sprinting, at its peak, requires the rider to stand on the pedals and depend upon the core muscles at the abdomen to hold the countervailing forces of the arms and legs, balancing on the bike frequently with the rider's head down in the final pedal strokes for the finish line. Therefore, it is quite realistic for the cyclist to lose track of a parked car ahead when in the throes of a final race sprint.

If the style or re-presentation of the terrorist in *The Cyclist* is effusive,

overflowing, and excessive, what better way to embody the potential reform of such a terrorist than through the displaced myth of the racing cyclist, recasting the suffering of the road race toward a new myth of healing the terrorist? The epic cyclist is renewed and re-defined by still "drinking from the chalice of pain" in order to overcome the route, not necessarily winning the race, but coming to know the limits of his abilities and his utmost desires. Since its inception, cycling is unrepresentable like the terrorist other and is always already dependent upon the construction of a fiction to found its reality as a road race. In the end of the novel, it is the racing cyclist tumbling in exquisite pain after Herculean effort, that brings us to the table to feast on his body—"My limbs taken from me so that others can eat"—the body of death and renewed life (187). Once a terrorist and now the body of an accomplished cyclist, even if failing to cross the finish line, things have begun. As the refrain of the final line of the novel opaquely chimes, "The millstones grumble when the wheat is ground." (187)

Chapter 3

Bicycle Thievery: The Bicycle as an Icon of Class Struggle

The most prevalent and popular literary use of the bicycle is in film.

While we have discovered the literary techniques of chroniclers of the bicycle race and its relationship to the embodied rider's muscular grace and painful struggle in Viken Berberian's *The Cyclist*, the bicycle is most heavily linked to world cinema as a literary sign of class-specific struggle. The bicycle represented in film is no accident given the confluence of photography and later, motion pictures, developing in the late-nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century alongside the boom and bust cycle of bicycle production around the globe. Even though the bicycle race may be epic in its structure for Roland Barthes, bicycles are primarily used and consumed by people around the world for the transportation of goods and people.

In 1948, Fiorenzo Magni won the grueling Giro d'Italia, one of the three elite multiple stage bicycle road races called Grand Tours. While Magni was always obscured by the fame of Fausto Coppi and Gino Bartali's constructed feud between Communists and Christian Democrats in the post war years, Magni's name is forever tied to the promotional 31st Giro d'Italia news clipping clearly visible on the wall of the Ricci children's room in Vittorio De

Sica's classic film *Bicycle Thieves*, released in the same year.⁵¹ Unlike the posters advertising a product, or the Hollywood movie posters that Antonio Ricci is hired to post around the city of Rome, the Giro newspaper clipping urges Italians to become a nation of *tifosi*, cycling fans lining the race route connecting a nation of stage races after a devastating war and decades of fascist rule. Besides transporting themselves to the race and perhaps picnicking, the real commodity of the Giro is more about the *tifosi* participating in the race as a crowd under a unified Italian narrative identity.⁵² It is for all Italians because the race does not require the purchase of a ticket in order to attend, and it purposefully wove a route through many rural communities rarely touched by professional sports. Unlike any other sporting events, despite the heavy swathes of advertising that has developed over the decades, enjoying a bicycle race is essentially free and unifying.

The 31st Giro d'Italia clipping is visible as a poster montage near the beginning of the film when the family unit is suddenly enervated by the recapture of Antonio's bicycle from the pawnbroker in order to start a new job after two years of unemployment.

^{51.} See Cardoza 2010 and Pivato 1996.

^{52.} For the best explanations of "imagined communities" for the Italian nation after the Risorgimento, see Cardoza. See Sykes for the best general history of the Giro d'Italia in English. For the French context of Tour de France, which Cardoza uses frequently, see Christopher Thompson. For the Vuelta a Columbia, see Rendell.



Fig. 4: Bruno's Bedroom with posters.

While only visible in the mis-en-scène for a brief moment when Antonio fetches his bike from the hanging line where Bruno has provided a tune-up and pointed out the dent that Antonio should have demanded the pawnbroker address, the viewer enters the lives of the Riccis with the Giro in the background. The Riccis are quickly compared to the epic heights of a cyclist, perhaps climbing the infamous Passo Mortirolo in their everyday struggle to make ends meet. Besides the Giro newspaper clipping, the apartment is threadbare with wires hanging from the ceiling, plastered-up holes in the wall,

bric-a-brac on a dresser, and the stern portraits of grandparents overlooking the family in the living room. Soon the family will lose itself in the search for the stolen bicycle, being reduced to the father-and-son duo desperate and ultimately defeated.

Hanging above Bruno's bed, the clipping combines with other illustrations to become a self-made poster quite unlike the posters that Antonio must paste around Rome. Bifurcated by a religious illustration of an angel escorting two children and a magazine, presumably with the portraits of sportsmen (either cycling or soccer, since Bruno can also name the local soccer teams when they pass the stadium later in the film), the only thing visible from the clipping is the boldface title of the 31st Giro d'Italia race above all these images. The image, in many ways, is a symbolic reduction of the film as a race for a bicycle. The shot captures how near-angelic luck guides the narrative of Antonio and Bruno through the tight streets, markets, and underground of Rome in search of the stolen bicycle only to arrive at the harrowing moral decision of Antonio to ultimately steal a bicycle outside a football stadium at the end of the film. Through this simple narrative, the audience experiences the hope and desperation of the father and son attempting to avoid poverty through the search for the bicycle. Rather than sporting fortitude used to sell a sponsor's product or bolster the sales of a particular bicycle component brand such as Bianchi by Fausto Coppi and Legnano by Gino Bartali, or, from the state's perspective, constructing,

promoting, and maintaining a narrative of national unity in a post-war reconstruction, the stakes for Team Ricci are high with hunger and survival. The bicycle was originally sold in order to buy food and it is the tool that greatly increases their collective earning power to buy food. This is just one moment where the epic bicycle race shifts in *Bicycle Thieves* to instantiate the bicycle in world cinema as an emblematic sign of everyday economic struggle.

In the majority of films that use the bicycle as a central icon, the protagonists follow this model of everyday struggle overshadowing the background of the epic bicycle race. Populated by working-class, immigrant, and female characters, world cinema often portrays the iconography of the bicycle as a class and gender struggle that engages the material, quotidian lives of people far outside the promotion of the Grand Tour races but still within the epic structure of cycling. In some films, the bicycle propels the narrative to metaphysical heights, questioning human will, with social critiques of economic systems (including capitalism and socialism), religion, the modern state, and patriarchal power.

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* Gilles Deleuze comments “Bicycle-less Neorealism” is created in Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1957 film *Outcry* because Antonioni “was tending to do without a bicycle – De Sica’s bicycle, naturally” (22). The overdetermined, symbolic artifact was no longer needed in Antonioni’s contribution to the continuation of the project called Neorealism.

This is no accident because Antonioni's film concentrates on a bourgeois protagonist and the character's psychology rather than a working-class protagonist and the social context that produces class division. Amazingly enough, while the immense influence of de Sica's film is central to film studies and the study of Neorealism in particular, there is no general study or any consideration of the weight and significance of De Sica's bicycle in and of itself. Why would subsequent filmmakers like Antonioni feel the need to go metaphorically bicycle-less? Because of *Bicycle Thieves*, the bicycle was, and still is, a problem to be solved for filmmakers and audiences alike, Antonioni apparently had to make it clear,

Now that we have today eliminated the problem of the bicycle (I am using a metaphor, try to understand beyond my words), it is important to see what there is in the spirit and heart of this man whose bicycle has been stolen, how he has adapted, what has stayed with him out of all his past experiences of the war, the post-war and everything that has happened in our country.
(275)

Antonioni doesn't want the audience to be distracted by the bicycle as a plot device or take the theft of the bicycle as a burdensome symbol. As the police officer explains to the detective when Antonio reports the theft, "It's only theft of a bicycle."

This chapter illustrates that the problem of the bicycle is in fact burgeoning despite the decades since Antonioni's efforts to ride film free of the bicycle's weight. Antonioni is careful to separate the concerns of Antonio Ricci's economic and emotional survival from the narrative technique of utilizing the bicycle in order to convey Ricci's spirit, ability to adapt, and the

effects of the war but the bicycle remains inseparable from such subjects in film. It has become an enduring icon that *Bicycle Thieves* largely founded. If there is any bicycle-less-ness to be had, it is not on the level of the bicycle as a signifier divorced from the referent of class and character struggle. Rather, it is at the simple and literal level of the protagonist not having a bicycle because they continue to be stolen throughout most of the narratives that follow and “steal” the narrative trope in subsequent films since *Bicycle Thieves*. The ample amount of films substantiates the bicycle thievery pattern, maintaining and enriching the bicycle as an icon of class struggle. There is something unique to the bicycle/rider relationship that makes it inseparable and inexhaustible as a continuing icon of class struggle started by *Bicycle Thieves*.

Excursus: The Bicycle Icon Since Bicycle Thieves

The quick link between the bicycle and the struggling protagonist deserves closer examination on a wider scale than this dissertation chapter can afford. However, the inclusion of a filmography does not convey the weight of the bicycle icon pattern. Briefly consider the following list of films, which clarifies the overdetermined icon of the working class bicycle in film since Vittorio de Sica's *The Bicycle Thieves* in 1948. This list is organized in chronological order to convey the persistence of the icon over the past several decades.

1950-1960s

Muerte de un ciclista [Death of a Cyclist]. Dir. Juan Antonio Bardem. 1955. Criterion Collection, 2008.

A math professor and his upper class mistress in Franco-era Spain hit a bicycle rider in their car after a tryst. The professor and lover attempt to cover up the manslaughter resulting in the professor's growing guilt. He slowly radicalizes and identifies with student protestors while his mistress solidifies her steely efforts to keep the death hidden. Another faceless cyclist bookends the film as he rushes to the car crash that ultimately kills the mistress. The cyclists are numerous, nameless, and placed in stark contrast to the high-society that feels it can avoid responsibility for having run over one of them and, by intimation, perpetuated the ongoing Francisco Franco dictatorship.

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Collector's ed. Dir. George Roy Hill. 1969. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

As outlaws, a famous montage scene portrays the Sundance Kid flirting with his girlfriend on a bicycle ride with Burt Bachrach's and Hal David's "Rain Drops Keep Falling On My Head" performed by B. J. Thomas as the soundtrack. The bicycle is introduced as the undeniable future of transportation, a future Butch Cassidy dismisses as he throws the bicycle into

the creek when proposes that the trio flee to Bolivia to continue their bank robbing spree as the only work they know.⁵³

1970s-1980s

Breaking Away. Dir. Peter Yates. 20th Century Fox, 1979. DVD.

A group of high school graduates train to take on the local upper class university students in a relay bicycle race in a town where many of the local families have lost their work at the closed marble quarry. The main character is obsessed with his stereotypical perception of Italian culture and their professional racing teams. Allowing him to show his quirkiness, he can win the race and woo the affluent female college girl as well. The film won an Academy Award and relied upon the class differences between town and gown.

Das Fahrrad [The Bicycle]. Dir. Evelyn Schmitt. 1982. IceStorm International, 2002. DVD.

Das Fahrrad is a devastating film by one of the few female directors allowed by the East German film censors. The protagonist fraudulently claims her bicycle is stolen in order to get the insurance money when she quits her

⁵³. The romantic bicycle montage offers respite in the film and it is in keeping with the tradition of bicycle romances since the 1892 song "Daisy Bell." "Daisy Bell" is later sung in 1961 by the IBM 704 and alluded to in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 *2001: A Space Odyssey* when the spaceships computer Hal 9000 is being dismantled as a similar technological harbinger just as the bicycle is used in *The Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* as a signifier of a unwanted future.

unsatisfying factory job while raising her daughter as a single mother. The film exposes the patriarchal social structure with her love interest who shows little compassion for the complexities of her work and family life demands while he enjoys burgeoning opportunities because of his fraternal connections at work. The bicycle represents the mother's financial and emotional independence when she teaches her daughter how to ride the bike at the end of the film.

E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial. Dir. Steven Spielberg. 1982. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

While certainly not working class, the group of suburban kids befriend a stranded juvenile alien separated from its parents and they rely upon their bikes to escape the full force of the state with its cars and military vehicles. The bicycle famously lifts off through the telekinetic power of the alien to escape and be silhouetted by the moon for the iconic movie poster image with the alien bobbling in the milk crate basket fixed to the handlebars of the young Eliot's bicycle. The bikes are tied to the resistance of the youth to the motorized authority and overpowering force of the adults and the militarized state.

Pee-Wee's Big Adventure. Dir. Tim Burton. 1985. Warner Home Video, 2008.

Loosely based upon *The Bicycle Thieves*, the quirky Pee Wee Herman goes on a quest, meeting random characters and threats in his attempt to

retrieve his stolen bicycle from the rich kid, Francis Buxton, in the neighborhood. While a strange comedy, the class positioning of Pee Wee vs. Francis maintains the working class icon of the bicycle.

Quicksilver. Dir. Thomas Michael Donnelly. 1986. Sony Pictures, 2002.

Set in New York City, Jack Casey makes a disastrous decision at his Wall Street job and is forced to become a bicycle messenger for work. Ignoring disappointed family and friends, Jack makes new friends as a messenger and suddenly becomes entangled in a dangerous plot when someone needs to recover a package he delivers. The bicycle messenger is set in contrast to Wall Street just as the bicycle is set against a car in the climactic chase scene.⁵⁴

Bicycleran [The Cyclist]. Dir. Mahmood Mahkmalbaf. 1989. Kimstim, 2004. DVD.

The Cyclist negotiates the self-defined dignity of illegal Afghan immigrant Nasim in Iran after the Iran-Iraq war. Nasim must attempt a grotesque six-day endurance race in the town bazaar in order for the poor laborer to earn enough money from the spectacle to pay for his sick wife's

⁵⁴. The upcoming film *Premium Rush* is a Hollywood action film following a Manhattan bicycle messenger on his fixed gear bicycle as he carries a delivery package that a dirty cop pursues him for as the premise of the film. At the time of this dissertation the film has not yet been released. *Premium Rush*. Dir. David Koepp. Pariah, 2012.

recovery in the hospital. Like *Bicycle Thieves*, the young son aids his father Nasim. The film ends with his success but the cyclist continues to race the circle as if to beg the question of continued poverty and a struggle despite the notoriety.

1990s-2000s

Il Postino. Dir. Michael Radford. 1994. Miramax, 2000. DVD.

An Italian postman delivers mail by bicycle to the famous Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in exile in Italy from the Pinochet dictatorship. The bicycle is the postman's primary mode of transportation and he must climb the steep road everyday to deliver mail and gradually befriend the poet.

Messenger. Dir. Norman Loftis. Xenon Home Video, 1994. VHS.

A remake of *The Bicycle Thieves* set in contemporary New York with a bicycle messenger who must recover his stolen bicycle to make ends meet. The low budget film attempts to closely follow the original as an adaptation featuring an African American protagonist racing through New York.

Cyclo. Dir. Anh Hung Tran. New Yorker Video, 1996. DVD.

Cyclo is the name for a modern Vietnamese tricycle taxi or pedi-cab. The film follows a young man who gets his cyclo stolen only to discover he must deal with the local organized crime thug who has won over his sister to

prostitution and poetry. A vivid and violent contest, with saturated colors and artful scenes, ensues with the sister ultimately unsaved and the cyclo rider's life in ruins, though he does execute a definite measure of revenge. The film shows how the bicycle is necessary for his access to work and how everything unravels as he seeks revenge and attempts to save his sister.

Postman Blues. [Posutoman burusu] Dir. Hiroyuki "Sabu" Tanaka. Nikkatus, Suplex, TV Tokyo, 1997. Film.

A depressed bicycle postman in Tokyo befriends a dying woman while also being mistaken for a yakuza crime boss due to an inept police investigation. A quirky comedy pits the bicycle postman against the full force of the police as he fights to save his new love interest. The final chase scene has three friends on bicycles facing off against the police.

2 Seconds. Dir. Manon Briand. Wolfe Video, Max Films, Alliance Communications, 1998. DVD.

A female professional mountain bike rider hesitates for two seconds at a downhill race and is fired from her sponsored position. She is forced to move back in with her brother and make her way in Montreal as a bicycle messenger. The story revolves around her relationship with a curmudgeon Italian immigrant bicycle shop owner whose friendship and love of the bicycle, along with her struggle on the job, allows the woman to come out of the closet

as a lesbian and regain her love for racing her bicycle unimpeded by any further hesitation.

El Amateur. Dir. Juan Bautista Stagnaro. Venevision International, 1999. DVD.

The film follows a solo six-day race where a local bicycle messenger races a closed track to set the world endurance record with the help of his friend. A light-hearted comedy, the film portrays not only the physical battles but marks the social outcast status placed upon the cyclist before his success and his beloved, who works at the local circus as a trapeze artist. Throughout the film, the protagonist struggles to afford the equipment and find the time to train before the race begins because of his wage work.

The Day I Became a Woman. Dir. Marziyeh Meshkini. 2000. Artificial Eye; World Cinema Ltd., 2005. DVD.

The Day I Became a Woman is a loose collection of three different women's lives, at different turning points, in contemporary Iran. The second story concentrates on a bicycle race where a young woman is harangued by the local tribesman for disobeying the patriarchal orders of not participating in the women's bicycle race. They continue to threaten her for her persistent disobedience by continuing to race on her mountain bike while they yell from their horses even though she is clearly winning. She is summarily divorced in

the midst of the race, kicked out of the clan and eventually attacked off screen, and not allowed to finish the race. Unlike Meshkini's famous filmmaker husband Mahkmalbaf's *The Cyclist*, *The Day I Became a Woman* makes it clear that women are considered a threat just for competing in the metaphoric race and questioning the tone of Mahkmalbaf's original film with the violence set upon the female cyclist.

Kleine Freiheit [A Little Bit of Freedom]. Dir. Yüksel Yavuz. Facets Video, 2003.

Baran is a Kurdish teen who makes bicycle deliveries for a Turkish kebab shop in Germany while trying to deal with the German authorities that deny his political asylum application. He befriends another illegal immigrant from Africa, who deals drugs. The bicycle throughout marks his status as a worker and outsider, exploring his immigrant status and his potential homosexuality in a hostile, xenophobic environment.

The Middle of the World. Dir. Vicente Amorim. Trans. of *O Caminho Das Nuvens* [The Road of Clouds]. Film Movement, 2003.

Based on a true story, a father takes his family on a bicycle tour in a stubborn attempt to find work in order to feed the family. The subplot of the eldest son coming of age underscores the poverty of the seven family members forced to travel over 2,000 miles across Brazil to seek work in Rio

de Janeiro. The family relies upon working in the informal economy, the kindness of strangers, and hard work to make ends meet and reach the city by bicycle.

The Triplets of Belleville. Dir. Sylvain Chomet. Sony Pictures, 2004.

Following the morose Champion as a boy who trains with his grandmother on a bicycle to eventually enter the Tour de France. The racer is determined but kidnapped by the broom wagon (the service vehicle for tired or injured riders) to serve as a “race horse” for a betting parlor run by the mob in Belleville, a spoof on New York City. The grandmother enlists the help of the aged Triplets of Belleville jazz singers to rescue her grandson from the grueling life as an enslaved racer. Throughout the film, the cyclist is compared to a work horse and animal, much in the way the Tour de France was criticized for how it pushed the riders to suffer for L’Auto editor Henri Desgrange’s newspaper event.

Machuca. Dir. Andrés Wood. 2005. Passion River, 2007. DVD.

The story of Pedro Machuca, a poor boy who receives a scholarship to attend an upper-class school in Santiago, Chile. He slowly befriends Gonzalo, an upper class boy, and quickly borrows his bicycle to ride around his neighborhood. Meanwhile, Augusto Pinochet prepares his coup to overthrow the Salvadore Allende government. The bicycle is fought over and marks the

class mobility and political freedom of the young characters throughout the film.

The Flying Scotsman. Dir. Douglas MacKinnon. Twentieth Century Fox, 2006. DVD.

A working bicycle messenger is forced to build his own bicycle frame from his washing machine bearings in order to compete in the track bicycle racing championship on the velodrome to break the world speed record. Throughout the film his working class background and lack of sponsorship are attacked and thwarted but he overcomes the social, physical, and severe medical depression to set the world record, all based on Graeme Obree's true story.

Monkey Warfare. Dir. Reginald Harkema. New Real Films, 2006. DVD.

A deeply unhappy couple relies upon finding items in garage sales and dumpsters to sell on eBay as their Toronto neighborhood slowly becomes gentrified. The couple has been underground due to their bombing of a car dealership in the 1990s to protest the first Gulf War. An idealist young woman who rides her bike and befriends the couple, learns more about their past while threatening the stability of their relationship and blowing their cover from the authorities. The man sometimes "steals" abandoned bicycles as a way to make money and the film features a spoof of the sexualization of the bicycle

with several female riders featured in a montage similar to the British band Queen's 1978 bicycle race video, which featured nude women racing bikes in Wimbledon Stadium. The bicycle is the basis for their economic survival, sexual expression, and political response to the petroleum complex of the automobile, military threat to secure oil fields, and the gentrification of neighborhoods.

Etienne!. Dir. Jeff Mizushima. Category One Entertainment Group, 2009.
Web.

Richard, a despondent college student dropout works a maintenance job at a San Francisco motel. When he finds out that his pet hamster Etienne is diagnosed with cancer he sets upon a bicycle tour of Northern California so he and his hamster can see the world one last time together before putting the hamster down. Along the way he encounters a variety of characters that provide opportunities for Richard to reinforce his love for his pet while enjoying the idyllic countryside. The film is full of independent film quirkiness with characters dressed in 1970s retro fashions. The film also contains many scenes shot in Santa Cruz, California, including scenes at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where a potential romantic interest Elodie also leaves college after a difficult breakup.

While these films certainly make homage to De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*'

use of the bicycle as a central device in the plot, each film makes it clear that the potential for liberation through the bicycle hinges upon greater changes beyond the rider's control, no matter how much effort and agony is suffered through the film's course of events. These representative films offer a new perspective on modernity because of how the bicycle is consistently represented as a working class tool and a desired commodity worth stealing and owning, while offering class-specific forms of liberation through the use of the bicycle as well. It is this representation of the bicycle in world cinema which exposes the degree to which humans are pushed to extremes through the use of the bicycle, not as a racing tool of sport per se, but as a device to achieve paid work and basic necessities.

The *Bicycle Thieves* forms the basis of the chapter as a foundational text, which establishes the film icon that is commented upon and re-formed in the subsequent films. The most recent study of *Bicycle Thieves* is by Robert S. C. Gordon (2008) which reviews the historical context as a part of the postwar Italy, the neorealist production, the architectural and narrative techniques, and furthermore, includes the fullest reading of the many levels of the bicycle's signification in the film. This dissertation chapter is deeply indebted to Gordon's work and builds upon it specifically in reading the role of the bicycle(s) in the film. In his bibliography, Gordon comments "*Bicycle Thieves* is well known enough always to be mentioned in works of film history,

discussed in a few paragraphs often, but relatively rarely analyzed in sustained detail” (122). In fact, outside of a dedicated study in Italian by Giame Alonge (1997), and a focused formalist reading by Christopher Wagstaff (2007), Gordon’s book is the only monograph in English solely on *Bicycle Thieves*. Before this work, the scholarship has been dominated by a prominent and often quoted book chapter by Millicent Marcus (1986) and a seminal article by André Bazín (1971). Both Marcus and Bazín argue that the film’s success balances a simple narrative with a powerful social critique without becoming dross propaganda. Marcus, like Bazín, concentrates on the final scene but considers the technique and execution of the film as effective storytelling tied to the historical moment of reconstructing post war Italy. Bazín famously called the film the only real Communist film of the decade and said that it presented the struggle of working people so well that it essentially destroyed the affect of cinema itself—a trope of the neorealist aesthetic of purportedly documenting life “as it is,” no longer needing the artifice of film. Wagstaff argues heavily against this kind of reading and makes it abundantly clear that the film was intensely crafted within the mainstream commercial film industry system in Italy. The laudatory critics should not be dismissed, however, and Wagstaff may go too far in emphasizing the “aesthetic artifact” of the film in his reading, which claims to look at the minutiae of the whole film without following the track of so-called platitudes of society’s failure to fulfill the Riccis’ needs. While not as strident in the aesthetic separation argument

of Christopher Wagstaff's criticism (2007, 1992), Kristin Thompson (1988) and Marilyn Fabe (2004) offer other considerate formalist readings. Most notably, Fabe concentrates her shot-by-shot reading of the last handholding scene, continuing the tradition in the scholarship that focuses on the final father-son scene after the climax of the failed bicycle theft by Antonio.

Bazin and Marcus initially established the importance of the final scene, but Fabe expertly breaks down the edits of the point-of-view shots shared amongst the film audience, Bruno, Antonio, and the man who decides to let Antonio go. The scene is central not only to the story but also because some critics frequently dismiss the scene as the most obvious proof of the maudlin sentimentality of the film. In these readings, the hand hold is interpreted as a turn from collective political action as Antonio and Bruno fade in the long shot and become indiscernible in the crowd as they walk away from the viewer. Critics like Frank Tomasulo (1982) argue the film is complicit with class oppression because it turns to and ends in this emotional sentimentalist shot and therefore subsumes class politics to the story line of an unresolved future settling for family love. Consequently, the film is criticized for not offering clear political solutions and rather turns to individualism and the liberal state. Ruth Ben-Ghiat (2001) refutes this point of view based on how the film was perceived by working class and bourgeois audiences alike, with different effects. Yet, for Ben-Ghiat, like Marcus, the film is deeply concerned with collective action and actually subsumes the simple

plot of the bicycle theft in order to critique the state's failure to provide for its citizens.

In consideration of this scholarship, Gordon argues that the film is ripe for reinterpretation, also emphasizing the apparent simplicity of the narrative using the bicycle theft as a way to explore a plethora of themes.

The bicycle distills Antonio's predicament into a single, simple image and event (without the bike he has no job, no future), and it crystallizes the larger questions his predicament stands for. It is also an object-lesson in how *Bicycle Thieves* puts its primary materials to work at so many different, intersecting levels: it works as a purely formal narrative device; as an everyday object in the *mise en scène*; as a resonant symbol within the complex symbolic economy of the film; and also as an emblem of the particular moment of historical transition at which Antonio's world Italy, 1948 stands. It would be hard to think of a more studiously overdetermined (and more readily quotable) icon in film history. (38-39)

While Gordon discusses the bicycle and recognizes its iconic effect on subsequent films, within the *Bicycle Thieves* scholarship and film studies in general, however, the bicycle's role in the film is never questioned as a bicycle. Throughout the scholarship the bicycle is considered a stark plot device to organize the film. Mirroring the frequent but brief discussion of the fact of the bicycle in *Bicycle Thieves*, there is no study of how and why the bicycle icon persists as a tradition of registering class and other related forms of struggle.

This persistence begins but does not end with *Bicycle Thieves*. While the bicycle icon is always fundamentally linked to class struggle it changes cultural and historical frameworks while also engaging gender, sexual, and political oppression through the bicycle and its rider throughout world cinema.

This chapter's investigation is especially prescient because of the increase in bicycle-themed films in the current renaissance of bicycle culture. It is this recognized pattern in film that caused Antonioni such anxiety: is it possible that the bicycle is not just a plot device but also an efficient tool to convey the quality and struggle of the character who rides the bike? *"I am speaking metaphorically, try to understand beyond my words."*

The bicycle is unique shorthand for the struggle of the everyday worker and the possibility of the rider to use her or his inherent power to overcome poverty. The widespread use of the bicycle icon reveals that the metaphor and (the "vehicle" of the metaphor in the bicycle) forms an undeniable genre and persistent tradition that surpasses the dismissal of the bicycle as only a recycled plot device. Furthermore, the icon of the bicycle provides additional evidence of the conviviality of the bicycle because of how the icon is continually used to tell a variety of culturally-specific stories through film to communicate the heartache and effort of characters attempting to escape poverty complicated by various forms of oppression. The cultural iconization demonstrates how the role of the bicycle moves beyond the simplistic narrative of the development of a mechanical transport device; our understanding of the bicycle cannot be separated from the cultural work that always already defines the tool. The bicycle has helped us to define insufferable odds with a means of escape and maybe even liberation.

Chapter Methodology

In addition to the *Bicycle Thieves*, I will examine Wang Xiaoshuai's 2000 film *Beijing Bicycle* that is intricately tied in plot and theme to the De Sica's original. *Beijing Bicycle* is frequently reduced as homage to De Sica's classic, taking the working-class theme and retooling and complicating it with the bicycle's growing definition as a status symbol of recreation and leisure in *Beijing Bicycle*. At the same time, *Beijing Bicycle*, is intertextual with and territorialized within the Chinese context especially in consideration of the People's Republic of China and its pivotal role in global capitalism and cultural exchange. The bicycle continues to function as a film icon of class within a Chinese historical context as well as in conversation with de Sica's project in a complex conversation. However, the bicycle gains contemporary significations as the bicycle, as an artifact and product, changes in China from a widespread primary vehicle to a coveted status symbol of class and the affordability of recreation and leisure time where the bicycle is a tool of sport. While the readings in this chapter will not represent a full comparison and contrast of De Sica's and Wang's films, they will further substantiate through two exemplary examples that the bicycle icon is a longstanding motif of class struggle in world cinema by spanning Italian Neorealism in 1948 to current Sixth Generation filmmakers in mainland China in the twenty-first century.

As the excursus above illustrates, there is a plethora of other films that

could be examined as fruitful texts to place in conversation with *Bicycle Thieves*. The scope of a dissertation chapter is certainly a constraint that does not allow wider examination. However, I would be remiss if I did not recognize a significant loss in the focus and research of the bicycle icon by only addressing *Bicycle Thieves* and *Beijing Bicycle*. Most significantly, is a loss of key female directed and female centered films. The majority of the films in the excursus form and maintain a male-centered tradition that is repurposed and expanded upon by female directors with devastating effect in recent decades. Through the use of the bicycle and its theft in new contexts with female-centered narratives, this chapter could expand its exploration and especially include Evelyn Schmidt's 1982 East German film *Das Fahrrad (The Bicycle)* and Marziyeh Meshkini's 2000 Iranian film *The Day I Became a Woman*. The latter film is useful in contrast to Moshen Makhmalbaf's 1989 Iranian film *Bicycleran (The Cyclist)*, another ostensible homage to de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* with a father-son duo who must use the bicycle to survive insurmountable odds. These films, especially those directed by women and featuring female characters would fully allow the bicycle icon its breadth and reach in film to be illuminated in future research.

Ladri de biciclette (Bicycle Thieves)

The bicycles are multiple throughout all these films but they are plural in *Bicycle Thieves* as well. Marcus and Gordon point out to the mis-translated title for a US audience as the singular *The Bicycle Thief*. Gordon also

identifies that *Ladri de biciclette* is pluralized in the number of bicycles in the Italian title (Marcus 70; Gordon 48). The plurality of thieves and bicycles should not go unnoticed in the common mistranslation. While it would be a direct translation that wouldn't roll off the tongue possibilities that would approach the original plurality of thieves and bicycles would be *The Thieves of Bicycles*, *Bicycles and Their Thieves*, *Bicycles and Thieves*, *Thieves and Bicycles*, or, perhaps more outlandish, *Bicycles, Thieves, their Lovers, and Chains* or some other such title would not only reflect that the film references more than the original thief and the unique bicycle that sets the plot in motion, but also gestures to the climactic transmogrification of Antonio becoming a thief out of desperation within the English title. Furthermore, all the surplus bicycles surveyed at the market and the countless bicycles outside the stadium express the amount of excess being held by those that can afford to hoard, hock, and if not steal the commodity directly, they can be involved in an economic system where pawning the bicycle is tantamount to stealing the matrimonial sheets of the Riccis' just so the Riccis can raise the funds to have the tools—a simple bicycle—to keep a well paying job and enter the petty bourgeoisie.

Keeping to the title's use of pluralized bicycles allows us to contemplate the original bicycle-ness of the film. Throughout the film, the bicycle is what is sought, and rarely found. But with the idyllic day at the beginning of the film, reuniting the flirtatious family unit, relieving pressure

from Maria washing clothes and solving Antonio's woes by taking control and selling their linens and allowing Bruno to return to his young son role, the bicycles—the plural—populate the film as excess commodities as much as possibilities of concrete improved life for the Riccis. As Mark Shiel surmises, “The film thus describes the ubiquity of poverty in post-war Rome, using the simple icon of the (missing) bicycle as an index of the collapse and continuing injustice of an entire social and economic system” (58). It is also this aspect that shapes one of the most important motifs of the usage of the bicycle in world cinema—the bicycle as the signifier of the underdog, the modern plight, and class struggle that can be liberated through the use of this unique tool. Unlike a worker's agricultural and industrial hand tools in the Soviet hammer and sickle, the bicycle drives gears that tie to the basic need of transporting oneself to a job, perhaps delivering items or services quickly, as with Antonio's brief opportunity, through the use of the bicycle. While at the same time, the bicycle also signifies, in Marxist terms, fetishization of the commodity, hiding the terms under which labor instills surplus value in a product. Dismantling the bicycle reveals the layers of exploitation. There are several representations of cyclists that ride for leisure where the bicycle is not necessary for labor. It is this apparent dichotomy of possible liberation and potential frustration in the bicycle that is the focus of this chapter.

Vittorio de Sica and Cesare Zavattini

Before Vittorio de Sica became one of the key directors of the Neorealist film aesthetic, he was already a well-known actor in Italian film. Appearing in film at a young age in 1917, his success took off in the 1930s. Frequently playing the romantic lead role, de Sica was drawn to films that explored class differences, such as *Il Signor Max* (1937). The tendency to explore class differences burgeoned when de Sica started his long-time collaboration with Cesare Zavattini in the early 1940s after de Sica directed his first film *Teresa Venerdì* in 1941.

Zavattini is often credited as the key theorist and defender of Neorealism, up until Zavattini's death, when de Sica moved into different filmmaking modalities. Zavattini was an artist of some renown, an experimental novelist, and took to screenwriting in the 1930s. In 1943, de Sica and Zavattini worked together on *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*) where Zavattini supplied the story and the two of them worked diligently to craft the screenplay and production plan. The film's concentration on innocent children continued in their next collaboration, *Shoeshine* in 1946, a story of two boys living on the streets of Rome, shining American soldiers' shoes, and ultimately defeated despite their efforts to survive. According to Robert Gordon, in 1947 a little-known experimental comic novel titled *Bicycle Thieves* written by Luigi Bartolini was given to

Zavattini, who devoured the book in one evening. Zavattini quickly approached de Sica, with a reworking of the novel's protagonist shifting from a middle-class adventurer in the black markets of Rome to a working class hero who must retrieve his bicycle to keep his job. Zavattini and de Sica worked for three months in collaboration with several other writers including Sergio Amidei and Suso Checchi d'Amico. It was de Sica, as director who coordinated the writing to a meticulous detail of shot-by-shot plans with several exhaustive locations and actor searches, which brings the intense production of *Bicycle Thieves* to its seamless Neorealist patina and affect. It was especially difficult to secure funding at first. Millicent Marcus summarizes:

But by 1948, filmmaking was no longer the obstacle-ridden process that it was in the immediate aftermath of the Allied liberation. On the contrary, technical possibilities were wide open to De Sica and Zavattini, who made of *Bicycle Thief* a neorealist superspectacle, complete with big budget, a cast of hundreds, and a meticulously worked out shooting style. The film cost 100 million lire—a sizable sum by contemporary Italian production standards, owing in large part to the vast number of extras who had to be kept on retainer until perfect filming conditions were met. De Sica and Zavattini took six months to prepare the script, discussing every image and carefully selecting the best possible locations for the action to unfold. Shooting was done with painstaking care to maximize visual complexity, while concealing the art that went into its making. (56-56)

Neorealism

Bicycle Thieves is important as a so-called standard or classic of Italian Neorealism. There is a politics to the film that is certainly populist but at the same time, in 1950s America, it received a special Academy Award during the McCarthy era. So it was not viewed as a threatening communist film even though in 1971 Andre Bazin claimed *Bicycle Thieves* was the communist film of the period.

By the time *Bicycle Thieves* was released in 1948, many critics argued that the heyday of Neorealism had already passed because the style of shooting on location, use of natural lighting, use of non-professional actors, smooth editing, and cinematography that used long takes often with medium and long shots were being co-opted by mainstream films (DVD booklet, *Bicycle Thieves* 40). Bazin defended the survival and relevance of Neorealism in *Bicycle Thieves*. He famously argued that the film's success is due to the unique construction of the story and its communist message, immediately anecdotal—unstated, yet clear—and not prone to the faults of obvious propaganda and pedantic moral argument.

The scenario is diabolically clever in its construction; beginning with the alibi of a current event it makes good use of a number of systems of dramatic coordinates radiating in all directions. *Ladri di Biciclette* is certainly the only valid Communist film of the whole past decade precisely because it still has meaning even when you have abstracted its social significance. Its social message is not detached, it remains immanent in the event, but it is so clear that nobody can overlook it, still less take exception to it, since it is never made explicitly a message. The thesis implied is wondrously and outrageously simple: in the world where this workman lives, the poor must steal from each other in order to survive. But this thesis is never stated as such, it is just that events are so linked together that they have the appearance of a formal truth while retaining an anecdotal quality. Basically, the workman might have found his bicycle in the middle of the film; only then there would have been no film. [...] In other words, a propaganda film would try to prove that the workman could not find his bicycle, and that he is inevitably trapped in the vicious circle of poverty. De Sica limits himself to showing that the workman cannot find his bicycle and that as a result he doubtless will be unemployed again. No one can fail to see that it is the accidental nature of the script that gives the thesis its quality of necessity; the slightest doubt cast on the necessity of the events in the scenario of a propaganda film renders the argument hypothetical. (Bazin 51)

There is a compelling story of how chance-ridden Antonio's life is and how institutions are not up to the task of meeting Antonio's needs despite his epic

efforts. While these chances seem like coincidental threads in the fabric of the plot line, they beg the broader social questions of how one might become a bicycle thief if circumstances changed, implying, through the audience's empathy with the protagonist, that they, too, have the defensible potential of becoming one of any number of bicycle thieves. As Bazín argues, this progression is natural to the course of events and Antonio's struggles.

Millicent Marcus also lauds how the film is crafted, "Such deceptive simplicity, or self-concealing art, makes the film, like Antonio's bicycle, the bearer of far heavier and more sophisticated cargo than its fragile exterior would immediately suggest" (Marcus 56). How would one react if you caught the thief in the act? Would it be different if you had a crowd with you? What if you were alone and surrounded? What would you do when you haven't worked for years and a job was suddenly available—if only you had your bicycle?

You, too, would joyously ride your bicycle. If you were Bruno, you would notice the ding/scratch and make sure the gears are clean and well lubricated to protect the long-term usage of the tool because your livelihood at a gas station rewards you for such skills applied to vehicles owned by customers—the bicycle belongs to your family. You, too, would be Maria suddenly awoken to the life in the house with a husband who feels like he can contribute to the well-being of the home after years of unemployment.

Patriarchal device

Bicycle Thieves is criticized because of how the film celebrates the nuclear family. But this critique must be reconsidered within in the film's 1948 Italian context as well as fully decoding how the Ricci family operates as an economic unit. Redefining the family with an empowered wife/mother and son is a radical move in 1948 Italy. Mark Shiel argues that Neorealism in general (and *Bicycle Thieves* in particular) shifted the definition of the family away from conservative social values of fascist ideology and the Catholic Church because the Riccis are on the edge of survival. Their intrapersonal relationships demonstrate the interdependence of family members and do not reinforce the image of the traditional nuclear family.

The initial dramatic peak and emotive exuberance of the characters celebrating Antonio's return to wage earning status and the shared sense of security and future opportunity forms the height of the family's patriarchal structure in the film. Yet, this peak is quickly lost when we examine how the bicycle makes the family's economic reproduction possible. Maria is portrayed as hardworking and *the* driving force behind a despondent husband. She is the one performing multiple domestic tasks at once—doing laundry, carrying water in buckets upstairs after waiting in a long line, tending to a crying baby and girding Antonio, brainstorming to find solutions to his lost bicycle problem—which is everyone's problem as an economic and social family unit.

But once the bicycle is lost the film focuses exclusively on Antonio and Bruno with only minor references to Maria in the restaurant scene for likely chiding Antonio's frivolous spending to try and make up for his quick temper and frustration taken out on Bruno with a slap, who threatens to tell Mom for his father's physical abuse.

While the bicycle is a transport device and a worker's vehicle in the film, its gendered exclusion of women is symptomatic of the society's patriarchal construction of the representation of the worker. More than the film reflecting its more intensified patriarchal time period, we know there is nothing inherently male about the bicycle as a technology.⁵⁵ It is the social implementation of the bicycle, as a technology, which alters its application and, therefore, its social definition becomes gendered outside of the inherent attributes of the device. So, if the bicycle is largely a vehicle of class liberation in film, it is also a vehicle of maintaining gender boundaries and reproducing the nuclear family where class is represented as a male dominated category and construct.

This gender exclusion of Maria is supported by the early reunion with the bicycle and how Antonio and Maria go for a joyride, celebrating and cavorting. The montage inverts the romance tradition of bicycle narratives from the 1890s because it is a result of trading in their matrimonial sheets. It

⁵⁵. See Oddy.

is as if the comforts of their bed are worth the joy of riding free from the pawn shop and back home because the bicycle is the necessary link (pun intended in the chain of events) to access the job, earn wages, and, as Antonio muses with his figures on the napkin in the restaurant scene, the family as a unit would be able to get ahead at a much higher wage-earning rate. The bicycle is the tool that makes this possible. But this possibility is dependent upon the effort and ingenuity of the family as a whole: finding the means to retrieve the bicycle and mend the uniform (Maria), maintaining the mechanics and thereby maintaining the use-value of the bicycle (Bruno), and using the bicycle on the job to earn wages (Antonio). While the bicycle may be reserved for the domain of men in the film (and throughout world cinema) and despite Maria's diegetic absence, the bicycle does carry Maria's material interests. The bicycle's retrieval and use would not be possible without her contributions early in the film. Though she may not be pedaling (and, when riding she is seated side saddle as a passenger rather than the primary rider,) the bicycle carries her interests as well.

In the words of Robert Gordon, "The bicycle distills Antonio's predicament into a single, simple image and event (without the bike he has no job, no future), and it crystallizes the larger questions his predicament stands for" (38). The bicycle, quite simply, is access to a better life in the context of a post-war Rome where solidarity among workers goes so far as one worker seeking out Antonio to inform him that his name has been called for a job.

Yet, no one offers to lend him a bicycle when he most needs one. The bicycle is the tool required for the poster advertising job so the family, as an economic unit—full of an emotional life, tied to the dignity of being able to meet its economic needs—can reproduce itself.

The haunting landscape they occupy is on the outskirts of post World War II Rome. The apartment building is in the style of a Mussolini-era housing project during the Fascist regime where, as one critic argues, the film is tightly composed with such *mis-en-scène* gestures to the political and historical context where the role and definition of the family was, itself, a battleground. To be piqued by how the film promotes—and it definitely exuberates at this newfound joy—the patriarchal structure of the father as wage earner, mother as reproductive and unpaid laborer at home, is valid but it deserves a concerted reading. On the surface it emphasizes the value of the husband/father gaining employment, supporting an individualistic vision of the family as an independently productive unit in the rebuilding of a capitalist postwar Italy. Shiel also recognizes the “foregrounding of the relationship between father and son” could be interpreted “as a relatively conservative move which values the collectivity of the family over the more radical collective potential of the working class, but this interpretation cannot be sustained” (57). A continued reading offers a wider perspective of the solidarity shared amongst the Riccis, relying upon the help of friends to search for the bicycle, and most importantly the shift in gender dynamics that inheres in this particular bicycle. The

patriarchal structure is undercut by the fact that Antonio is noticeably dependent upon Maria and Bruno throughout the film. In many ways, Antonio is depicted as ineffective while Maria and Bruno are inventive, decisive, and absolutely key to keeping the family together emotionally and economically.

During the initial dilemma of not having enough funds to purchase the bicycle back from the pawnshop it is Maria who quickly moves past Antonio's despondency and tears the matrimonial sheets from the bed. While a part of her dowry and a symbol of their marriage, the sheets' use-value and commodity-value outweigh the symbolic value. Maria exclaims, "We can sleep without a sheet!" as she prepares to wash and fold the linens, kicking the water bucket she just struggled to carry to the apartment. When the sheets are sold, Maria haggles with the pawnshop clerk, claiming that the sheets are of the highest quality and should garner the best price. The man responds that they already have enough bed linens, dismissing the qualitative claim, and ultimately the monetized value placed on the bed linens. But he also downplays the value of the marriage and the family unit represented by the sheets. When the sheets are finally accepted and converted into an exchange value, the camera follows a worker scaling the open shelving showing a warehouse full of bedding. Poet and critic Charles Simic acutely recalls the scene

I also remember the bedsheets the Riccis pawn to get the bicycle out of hock. There are shelves and shelves full of old bedsheets. A man climbs the shelves like a monkey to add the new bundle. Thousands of bedsheets in

which people slept and made love. More bedsheets than anyone ever saw. That scene took my breath away every time I saw the movie. (23)

An entire city of similar people, families with the risk of their matrimonial beds, is quickly inferred: the pain, desperation, and need that the audience experiences through the Riccis is expanded to the scope of the entire society in one brief shot. It is at this level of sacrifice, beyond the simple monetary value, with which we must measure the importance of the bicycle, and of course, all bicycles in the film.



Fig. 5: Matrimonial Sheets carried up for storage.

The sheer amount of sheets instills the ubiquity of struggle within the economy of a brief cinematic shot.

Excess

In a similar way, the profusion of bicycles at the market place, where Antonio, Bruno, and their allies from the underground (literally) communist meeting hall are overwhelmed by their search. Their friend suggests they begin looking for separate parts of the bicycle, a Fides brand—Fides meaning “faithful” or “truth” in Latin. But this does not last long as the group keeps finding each other in the market empty handed. Ricci and Bruno attest to their ability to quickly recognize the bike by its separate parts but the magnitude of bicycles compounded with the plethora of separated bike parts, cannibalized and segregated into sections, is similar to the pawn shop scene. The viewer is able to experience a sense of scale on an industrial level that five people cannot surmount with their best efforts and expertise. Critic Robert Gordon distills how this “alchemy” in the film, through the bicycle’s theft and apparent dissolution in the market place is a parody of the industrial production line, where “the bike is no longer a single unit of value, let alone a source of organic labor: it is broken up, split into parts, stripped, recombined, fenced and sold” (46).

The accusation of the seller unwilling to reveal the serial number on the bicycle frame provides dramatic tension because of his personal affront mixed with the known likelihood that many of the bicycles at the market are stolen, repurposed, and sold again. The reliance on the carabinieri police

officer—whom, again, Bruno has to track down rather than his father—also reinforces the dismissive attitude and policy of the police as an institution whose purpose is to protect citizens like the Riccis and provide aid in retrieving the bicycle. While the officer uses his power to force the bicycle vendor to reveal the serial number, he is visibly annoyed, and comments that the mistake is easy because bicycles all look the same. We come away with the growing sense that Antonio and Bruno are doomed to fail because of the “needle in the haystack” task mixed with the time crunch of Antonio needing the bike by the next work day while the bicycle is likely dismantled and repurposed. The police have to be dragged to the scene, as later in the film, at the last moment. When the police are shown to be proactively engaged, they are rushing off in military jeeps to patrol a political rally during the post-war upheaval where consensus amongst left, right, and center was nearly impossible. As the officer taking Antonio’s police report says to the detective, “It’s just a bicycle” is the official opening response of the film, which stands in stark contrast to the police department in Flann O’Brien’s 1940 novel *The Third Policeman*, posthumously published in 1967 to critical acclaim, where the police are solely concerned with bicycles, their theft and how bicycles become citizenry through their riders merging with their bicycles at the atomic level, what a chemist may jokingly call a bicyclic molecule. Such merging of bicycle and rider especially threatens gender definitions of a man and woman’s bicycle and reflects the social anxiety of mid-twentieth century

Ireland in transition.⁵⁶

The motif of excess continues when Antonio tries to make up with Bruno after hitting him in frustration. Excess is fully displayed in the restaurant with Bruno and Antonio ordering pizza, an item that is not served in an establishment of this caliber, so they settle for cheese sandwiches. The drama occurs when Bruno exchanges looks with a haughty, if not gender-confusing, child overemphasizing his/her abundant, multi-course meal as a social enactment of class privilege. Meanwhile Antonio muses about the money he would have earned on a monthly basis, which could be used to pay for such outings, improve their lives, and provide security and potential class mobility to become like the family with the child acutely aware of his/her position being materially above Bruno and his father.

Institutional Dysfunction

But so much depends upon the bicycle, which drives Antonio and Bruno to continue to search the labyrinthine streets of Rome. The representation of the city in tight architecture creates an encroaching sense of impenetrability, supporting the growing desperation of the plot. Furthermore, it is this isolated struggle—where no formal institution is able to help or much less recognize the severity of the Ricci's loss—that creates the working-class drama of the film. The state apparatus, in the forms of the employment office

⁵⁶ See Hopper.

and the police, does not care about Antonio retrieving the bicycle in order to keep the job. He is simply a datum on a list of names or another bureaucratic police report absorbed into the mass of abstract populations that are managed in their respective manners by the employment office lottery system and a police department concerned with more important affairs, presumably needing to rush off to police the public meeting referred to by the speaker who silences Antonio at the Communist meeting (Gordon 90).

During the production of the film, Italy was at a political crossroads. The fragile coalition of anti-fascist groups including Communists and the center-right Christian Democrats had fallen apart by the 1948 elections. The Christian Democrats had the open support of the Vatican along with the covert support of the US Central Intelligence Agency resulting in a landslide victory by the Christian Democrats of 48 percent over the 31 percent of Popular Democratic Front, the remaining coalition of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the socialists. The state and by extension, the police, were concerned with suppressing collective demonstrations after the shooting of the popular Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti on July 14, 1948. Togliatti was severely injured and in a coma. Immediate protests took place with some people being killed, a general strike called and then the Interior Minister of the Christian Democrats banned any demonstrations (Gordon 14-18).

The communist party with its rehearsal space and debriefing meeting underground is similarly dismissive. The scene is a mixture of comedy in stark

contrast to Antonio's ratcheting tension asking for help in finding his bicycle. After Antonio is reprimanded for talking during the speech, Antonio must work hard to gain his friend Baiocco's attention to pull away from the musical rehearsal and explain his desperate situation. Throughout the scene you get the mixture of the male performer laughably unable to sing the two syllables of "gente," the word for "people" in Italian. After being constantly interrupted and corrected, he still sings the same rising interval and cannot hear the difference in pitch while drumming away on the signifier for human collectivity. He cannot break from his version of the melody for "people." Similarly, the political party with the rhetoric of protecting the interests of the working class cannot recognize Antonio's desperate loss. His singular efforts are dismissed as being counter to the greater goal of the lecture and, by implication, the leader organizing the meeting cannot hear or see Antonio's cry for help. The signifier of "the people" must ring out in recognizable and predetermined ways for the institution of the political party to be able to recognize their expected version of "the people."

Frank Tomasulo reads the above scene as further evidence of the lackluster working class orientation of the film. "This scene can be read as privileged in articulating a contradiction between art and politics which is a major antinomy of the film. Further, the song's lyrics actually deal with oppression, but the debate over pitch displaces the political content onto aesthetic form" (2). Tomasulo accuses the film of being complicit with the

Christian Democratic conservative movement that dominated Italian politics until the 1990s because there is no representation of an effective collectivity offering a clear solution to Antonio's dilemma. "No scenes of an organized coalition of workers are seen; instead, groups are set in opposition to individual fulfillment. Thus, the structural absence of a major segment of the postwar republic betrays an ideological position in terms of the 1948 political climate which substitutes a social democratic model of statism—even though state and church intervention throughout the film are unsatisfactory" (11). This is a mischaracterization when we consider how the film altered the original novel that Cesare Zavattini shared with de Sica. Zavattini and de Sica replaced the subject position of an aloof, bourgeois artist adventuring and analyzing the Roman underground with a working-class character and his son attempting to survive within the reality of the networks of thieves. This significant change enraged the novelist Luigi Bartolini so much that he threatened to sue after already signing away the film rights for 100,000 lire. After being paid more money, Bartolini continued to excoriate the film in the press after it was released (Gordon 23-27). If the film is to be evaluated on the basis of providing a clear prescription and solution to Antonio's problem, then Tomasulo and other critiques from the left are justified. "At best, therefore, the film is reformist; at worst, it legitimizes the ideology of bourgeois liberalism" (Tomasulo 4). However, Vittorio de Sica and Cesare Zavattini purposefully avoided crafting the film as an explicit propaganda piece.

Especially in consideration of how Tomasulo, like other critics, focuses on the apparent lack of a community and a solution to Antonio Ricci's crisis at the end of the film, Cesare Zavattini defends the neorealist position with such endings:

Neorealism, it is also said, does not offer solutions. The end of a neorealist film is particularly inconclusive. I cannot accept this at all. With regard to my own work, the characters and situations in films for which I have written the scenario, they remain unresolved from a practical point of view simply because 'this is reality.' But every moment of the film is, in itself, a continuous answer to some question. It is not the concern of an artist to propound solutions. It is enough, and quite a lot, I should say, to make an audience feel the need, the urgency, for them. (56)

The multiple levels of signification of the bicycle counters the dismissal of the film as politically complacent because the act of re-reading—as Tomasulo subtitles his article in the name of ideological deconstruction—reveals how deeply the film imbricates the need for solutions to unemployment through the daily life and description of one worker amongst many workers in the city. As we have discovered, the search for the bicycle continually implies other workers, other thieves, and their desperate attempts to survive. To dismiss the film for not providing a clear solution and a prescribed political path actually reflects the exact ideological blindness and deafness of the Communist Party as a patronizing institution in the film. If attuned to Antonio and Bruno's situation, viewers can hear "gente" clearly throughout the story.

Religion is most ridiculed as being an inadequate institution during the chase scene of the old man as an accomplice to the sought after bicycle thief. After Antonio and Bruno go to the second market and the rain clears, Antonio

spots the thief apparently paying off the old man. The audience overhears the young thief explain that the old man should be glad that he is getting paid what little his cut is. It is not clear if the man was a part of the original scheme too or he was a spotter of some type for the bicycle theft. Perhaps the payoff is for another crime or favor. This is when Ricci seizes the moment, runs after the thief, yelling “Ladron”—Thief. Unlike the climax of the film when Ricci’s role is that of a bicycle thief, in this market and this neighborhood, no one comes to Ricci’s aid and the boy mounts the bike and sprints away. This is where Antonio and Bruno turn to chasing the old man into the church food line.

The church is clearly forcing people who are hungry to attend mass and go through intense indoctrination centered around a full Catholic mass ceremony before they can use their meal ticket. The comic role of the young man asking Ricci to quiet attends to the institution’s rhetoric of holy and all-knowing care yet there is no inquiry into why Ricci is so intent upon following the man. All that is recognized is Antonio’s disturbance of the mass ritual and not the peak of Ricci’s sudden luck of finding the thief and now, his only chance of locating his bike, rests with prying the information from the old man. Religion is shown to be a form of disingenuous charity. Bruno gets slapped for looking behind the curtain of the priest box, Antonio is scolded, and the old man sneaks out.

Sport and Recreation

Besides the market, the police, the communist party, and the church, the bicycle is shown to be a vehicle for transportation and sport throughout the film. While the singular Fides bicycle is largely absent throughout the course of the film, scenes continually include people walking, using overcrowded streetcars, and then, bicycles periodically zoom by, always unimpeded. When Antonio and Bruno are in one section of the film chasing the thief on foot, a recumbent bicycle slips by in the background, interrupting the rhythm of the chase. We frequently see bicycles in use when Antonio and Bruno no longer have their Fides. When we reach the end of the film outside the stadium, the shot tracks from a plethora of parked bicycles to Antonio sulking meanwhile a small group of road cyclists, with wool jerseys and racing shorts cuts through the foreground. They are clearly using the bicycles not for work but for so-called recreation. The quick signification of leisure or the ability to use the bike not for a job but to enjoy the road outside of work and transportation amplifies the excess of bicycles in the final mis-en-scène.

Working Tool vs. Recreation Device

Bicycle Thieves not only provides ample evidence of the bicycle creating a working class but the object itself is demonstrated as a working tool in contrast to recreation or simply a transport vehicle. When Antonio gets trained in a few minutes by a co-worker after a slew of poster workers pick up their posters, glue, brush, and precariously balance long ladders in one arm

as they mount their bicycles, a present day audience is astounded by what the bicycle is asked to carry and what the rider must accomplish.

Before the first day at work, Bruno puts the bike up in a stand and inspects the frame that he knows so well. He uses his skills as a gas station attendant to now clean and inspect the bicycle. We see the bike has a bottle nose generator charged by the spinning of the tire tread sidewall against the tip of the generator to create the magnetic field to power the headlight. We can see the rear rack and the crankcase along with the entire drive train encased in a metal case to prevent pants from getting greasy and to protect the chain from exposure to the elements. This encasing of the chain is still in wide use in modern Chinese and Dutch bicycles. There is a bell and the large headlamp signifying the vehicular status of a vehicle that needs to be among pedestrians and automobile traffic to warn and may need to move at night. This is not a bike for the Giro d'Italia. Even though it may not be a bullet, Antonio proudly dons his uniform and slings the frame over his shoulder when he goes off to work. The bike exudes practicality and lives up to the task in its design.

Many critics comment on Antonio's postering work in relation to the commentary of Hollywood films invading Italy post World War II. The mass production of films with the corresponding budget to advertise extensively is another sign of surplus and excess for a commodity. The reproducibility and and Antonio's poor workmanship producing the wrinkles in the surface patina

of the movie posters make us aware of the ridiculous job that could be turned toward other ends. If nothing else, the audience is aware that the *Bicycle Thieves* is not one of the films starring Rita Hayworth in the leading role but a film with so-called non-actors in the Italian Neorealism framework.

The final shot, where Antonio, defeated, grabs a hold of Bruno's hand and the two walk into the crowd after the soccer game is a typically unresolved ending for the Neorealism style in general. We are not sure what will become of the Riccis when his failed attempt to steal a bike has resulted in his humiliation and near criminalization. We can imagine that Antonio will likely lose his job, which will further strain their marriage, a common effect of joblessness. At the same time we have journeyed with a father and son, who have fought, made up, played, and struggled to help one another throughout the film. In many ways, it is how we read the gesture of the hand-holding and Bruno's crying rescue of his father that we witness and interpret the impact of their relationship. Maudlin or not, the bicycle is secondary to the human relationships that form a family. And while they may not be able to keep the job and they will continue to have stressful and uneasy lives there is a sense that they will survive. As the film starts, so it ends with the idea of the bicycle enhancing this base. The bicycle is the tool that allows Antonio to gain the job because the bicycle can carry a worker and several tools and supplies all around the city in order to advertise questionable Hollywood films. While missed at the end, the bicycle's absence and abandoned pursuit makes us

realize the incredible amount of effort we have witnessed and the height of desperation and moral dilemma Antonio was pushed into because of his poverty and desire to work to release himself from the economic constraints through the bicycle as his primary tool. We understand his dignity, even while Antonio is not the best posterer or the best father and husband. Through the bicycle's absence we understand the stamina of the rider and his potential... if he only had his bicycle.

Beijing Bicycle: Bicycle Thievery Continues

Beijing Bicycle concentrates on contrasting the role of the bicycle as a worker's vehicle and the bicycle as a commodity symbol of class mobility exclusive to young men on the modern edge of an ancient city. In keeping with its initial allusion to Lao She's 1936 novel *Rickshaw*, the character of Guei is said to be stubborn like the novel's protagonist but the audience of the film is also aware of Lao She's warning of individualism through the ostensibly stubborn and willful acts of his rickshaw man continuing to push and pursue on his own. Women, too, are largely absent except as people to be impressed by the bicycle as a status symbol such as the student that follows the boys who happen to have the nice mountain bikes and the young woman who, we later learn, housecleans for a client but dresses up in the high fashion clothes to pretend she is in a different class and is not from the countryside. The bicycle does not tie in to these lives in the same way it did in *Bicycle Thieves*.

In fact, the bicycle intensifies the exploration of how the division between the transport device and status as a recreational class signifier of success differentiate the commodity of the bicycle in contemporary Beijing.

Film Production

Beijing Bicycle was produced with a mixture of capital investment from Taiwan, France, and mainland China (Zhang 241). Not including marketing for China or overseas, the film was produced with a roughly \$400,000 budget (Tang). Though filmed largely in Beijing, frequently having to get the permission of local neighborhood committees and needing to pay off building superintendents for interior shots, the film passed the two-step government censor process (first, the script is reviewed, then the final edited film before release), but did not enjoy an initial domestic release (Lin, “New Chinese Cinema.” 262; Tang n. pag.). Like many films produced by contemporary Chinese directors, *Beijing Bicycle*’s primary audience has been an international audience through the film festival circuit followed by DVD distribution. It won the Jury Grand Prix Silver Bear award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002 (Lin, “New Chinese Cinema.” 261). When asked if he considered his international audience for the film, Wang replied, “As a filmmaker in China, my biggest challenge was to satisfy Chinese audiences” (Tang n. pag.). While the film has an international audience, it is this combination of Chinese audiences that complicates the use of the bicycle in the film’s two protagonists: a young male, rural internal migrant from the

vast majority of the Chinese population drawn to the city for access to economic opportunity and a similarly-aged young male from the growing but struggling urban middle-class, who cannot afford to purchase a bicycle of his own in order to fit in with his peers at his preparatory school.

By concentrating on the conflict and cooperation between a rural migrant and a struggling middle-class student of the same age through the same bicycle that they need for vastly different reasons or use-values, *Beijing Bicycle* maintains the working class iconography of the bicycle in film while also demonstrating how the bicycle has changed from a primary transportation device to a status commodity. Particular to China, the bicycle was, and still is, the symbol of mass transportation that is affordable and accessible. As director Wang Xiaoshuai says in an interview, “The bicycle is the most typical representative of China. Hollywood has its fancy car chases, but we don't have to do action sequences with a car, we can do them with a bicycle” (Tang n. pag.). But to a post-communist society with a central role in global capitalist production in the twenty-first century, the bicycle also has, shall we say, shifted gears to accelerate and illustrate the device's role as a marker of class status for those who can afford to recreate, with the social and sexual connotations, rather than simply transport oneself by using the bicycle.

Secondary Literature

The critical secondary literature on *Beijing Bicycle* in English is a small, but growing body of work primarily in the form of electronic and print journal articles. Unfortunately, much of the online material is only accessible using internet archives, despite several references to key articles like Geremie Barmé's "Bike Envy" (2002), a scathing critique and review of the film, republished online by the now defunct journal *Persimmon: Asian Literature, Arts, and Culture*. Gary Xu authored the most sustained critical work in his book chapter "My Camera Doesn't Lie: Cinematic Realism and Chinese Cityscape in *Beijing Bicycle* and *Suzhou River*" in his monograph *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (2007). Yingjin Zhang also examines the film in "Remapping Beijing: Polylocality, Globalization, Cinema," as a chapter in the 2008 collection *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Global Age* edited by Andreas Huyssen. Finally, there is a 2002 IndieWire online interview with the Wang Xiaoshuai providing some details about the story line, intentions, and production of the *Beijing Bicycle* as well. This limited amount of secondary and critical work primarily concentrates on Wang's neorealist technique, the mapping of contemporary Beijing, the representation of rural migrants in contemporary China, as well as the role of Wang Xiaoshuai as a part of the Sixth Generation filmmakers.

Beyond de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*

While *Beijing Bicycle* is certainly in conversation with Vittorio de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* to say the film is derivative is to grossly oversimplify the relationship and gloss over what *Beijing Bicycle* offers nearly a half century later in response to the working class icon of the bicycle. While the academic literature does not portray Wang's film as derivative the popular press and movie reviews tend to curtail any critical comparison by saying *Beijing Bicycle* is a remake. While the film is not a pure remake as in the 1994 *Messenger* directed by Norman Loftis, largely updating de Sica's film for an African American bicycle messenger in New York City, *Beijing Bicycle* uses neorealist techniques, to a degree, to establish the primary protagonist Guei as the working class messenger dependent upon the bike for his work, self-esteem, and self-realization in the new city as an immigrant.

In the secondary literature, Gary Xu compares and contrasts the two films but elevates *Beijing Bicycle* to a position of postmodern triumph in a transnational context over the befuddled modernist *Bicycle Thieves* in a simplistic teleological argument of progress. This is unfortunate because *Beijing Bicycle* does marshal significant changes because of the contemporary setting and depiction of the changes in capitalism. The stylistic flair in Xu's analysis degrades the importance of how the protagonists portray the new commodity role of the bicycle in ways that illustrate new forces at a

play. Xu argues:

What De Sica's classic emphasizes are the "enduring universal values" against which an individual or Individualist tragedy of declining fortune unfolds. By contrast, Wang Xiaoshuai's film focuses on the "slight, contentless" thing, the abstract value that can be made sense of only in terms of capital's commodification of living labor, the human body, and transnational fashion. (GG Xu 75)

While the dichotomy is helpful for the form of an essay, Xu does not fully illuminate the relationship between the two films, especially considering how the bicycle endures as an icon of working class struggle, despite the shifts in global capitalism in the past fifty years. The differences between the style and technique do not map easily onto the chronology of modernist texts shifting in response now with a postmodern ambivalence in so-called late capitalism particular to a Chinese film consumed largely by a non-Chinese audience market. Xu is mischaracterizing high modernism as an aesthetic mode: on the one hand, *Bicycle Thieves* is "Kafkaesque" in its absurdity of the down-on-your-luck narrative, "implicitly critiz[ing]" a host of modern institutions yet, on the other hand, de Sica's film is tied to the idea of "realism" from the neorealist moniker in style but correspondingly subsuming the represented reality into a battle against fate. This essentializes *Bicycle Thieves* as a film that delivers "enduring universal values" whereas *Beijing Bicycle* offers a "transnational critique" of the bicycle as a "commodification of living labor, the human body, and transnational fashion" (GG Xu 75). In other words, *Beijing Bicycle* provides a message that is much more ambivalent, open-ended, and connotatively, an aesthetic progression matching the socio-political context of

the bicycle as a “contentless” thing. The end of both films is purposefully ambivalent and while a social milieu is explored through the bicycle, the audience is not condemned to a single interpretation.

The confusion of the values placed on the bicycle by Guei and Jian (exactly Marx’s point for discerning how labor power is abstracted in a represented price through the power of capital) remains consistent with how the Ricci’s have different values on the bicycle versus the network of thieves in *Bicycle Thieves*. However, *Beijing Bicycle* provides a contemporary Beijing story where the bicycle is not only a means for work but also a clear commodity of recreation and marker of sexual prowess for youth in ways that de Sica’s film could not approach. In terms of style, both films rely upon neorealistic tropes of shooting on location, using non-professional actors (especially at the opening of *Beijing Bicycle*), and relying upon quotidian story lines. To dichotomize the films under the rubric of high modernism and postmodern flight is to simplify their styles in order to increase a contrast that is not tenable nor is it safe to say the latter is derivative of the former.

In addition to *Bicycle Thieves*, there are other allusions that are important to the analysis of *Beijing Bicycle*. Early in the film, the bicycle messenger company manager compares the new recruits to the protagonist in Lao She’s 1937 novel (originally serialized) *Rickshaw* or sometimes translated as *Camel Rickshaw*, referencing the nickname of the protagonist rickshaw puller Xiangzi who not only pulls the narrative through harrowing

struggles of a working-class rickshaw puller but also pulls the reader through a variety of classes of society before the famous 1929 Rickshaw Pullers strike in Republican China and the proto-Communist Party. In fact, the symbolism of the rickshaw was so hated by Mao Zedong that it was outlawed as a poor example of the new China run by the workers. The allusion to the novel is important because Guei is our new Camel and we must immediately question how he will be changed by the experience of coming to Beijing just as Camel is changed, far for the worse, through his struggles as a rickshaw puller. The exploitation is clear but the underlying questions before the audience of what costs come to Guei as he desperately fights for his bike become questions similar to the social costs of what produces a thief in post world war II Italy when Antonio eventually succumbs and attempts to steal a bike.

Finally, critic Xiaopeng Lin makes two claims that need to be corrected in terms of the film's forbears. Lin argues that *Beijing Bicycle* is actually a sequel to Zhang Yaun's 1993 *Beijing Bastard*. While it certainly follows the film and Wang is frequently grouped with Zhang as a Sixth Generation filmmaker, *Beijing Bicycle* is not concerned with iconoclastic characters on the edge of society and the shock value of portraying such characters on screen. *Beijing Bicycle*, in fact, is quite invested in the changes in traditional Beijing family life along with the role of the growing internal migration of workers to the city that are quite pedestrian compared to the depiction of a rock band, a bar proprietor, and the anti-social behavior of social outsiders in Beijing.

Furthermore, Lin asserts that *Beijing Bicycle* is actually based upon Liu Xiaodong's painting "Since Ancient Times All Heroes Come from Youth" (2000). The visage of Jian and a friend is split by a strong vertical line of a brick traditional hutong wall in old Beijing with Xiao, Jian's love interest, and her friends on bicycles, looking down almost unprepared for the boys ready to pounce, ineffectively from around the corner. Liu Xiaodong's website translates the title into English as "*Through the Ages, Heroes Have Come from the Young.*" In his photograph and memoir book, Liu notes that he was on the *Beijing Bicycle* film set during production and produced the image, which explains the likenesses to the actors (*The Richness of Life* 292). The painting is derived from the film. Unfortunately, Lin has recently republished his article in his 2010 monograph printed by University of Hawaii Press, perpetuating the inaccuracy about the film resulting from the painting rather than the painting commenting upon the film (*Children of Marx and Coca-Cola* 98).



Fig. 6: Liu Xiaodong, 自古英雄出少年 布面油画, Through the Ages, Heroes Have Come from the Young, Oil on Canvas, 200cm x200cm, 2000.

Sixth Generation films

After studying film at the Beijing Film academy, Wang Xiaoshuai started his career with low-budget underground films in the early 1990s. Without needing to seek financial support from investors or going through the official Chinese State censors, Wang enlisted his artist friends to play the roles in his first film, produced in black and white, and shot on the weekends. The 1993 film *The Days* (*Dongchun de rizi*) proved successful as a gritty and, in Wang's words, "subjective" perspective of struggling artists in

contemporary China. Filmed for a mere \$10,000 the rough film earned accolades on the international film festival circuit. However, being an underground film, it was never released in mainland China due to the lack of official censorship vetting. In a 2002 interview Wang explains

China was really missing realistic films that expressed an individual's point of view. There were films expressing what society thought or what the general population thought, what the Chinese Communist Party wanted people to think, and there were some that showed what traditional life was like, these big period films. I wanted to show real thoughts and feelings as they existed and emotions as they really are. "The Days" and "Frozen" are both very subjective, one person's attitude towards life. In China it's very rare to have something be so individualistic. (Olesen n. pag.)

Frozen (Jidu hen leng) followed in 1995 and continued to focus on an artist pushed to the suicidal edge in his vision—again a story focusing on the unique and singular artist as the protagonist. The film also enjoyed success in the international film festival community. Originally released as directed by Wu Ming, or “anonymous,” due to the widespread success and lack of going through the Chinese censors, it is only later that the attribution to Wang has been revealed.

In 1997, Wang made a major shift. Although it took three years in a back-and-forth process, *So Close to Paradise (Biandan, Guninag)* was released with the blessing of the Chinese government censors. The film was made within the state system with financing reaching six figures. This is also a major shift for Wang's filmmaking because *So Close to Paradise* left the narratives of aesthetes for the difficult details of China's internal migrants attempting to survive in the city. The film follows a kidnapping that

complicates a love-triangle amongst urban denizens and migrants adjusting to the industrial city of Wuhan. The film does not avoid representing how poorly the migrants survive with the violence, prostitution, and everyday struggle they must confront. Beyond the shift from artists toward migrant protagonists, most significantly, the film does not present an image of China that the previous Fifth Generation filmmakers are known for, especially when it comes to the portrayal and prognosis for what should be the role of China's rural poor in China's future.

Like fellow directors Zhang Yuan, Zhang Ming, He Yi, and Jia Zhangke, the Sixth Generation filmmakers started creating films in the 1990s that eschew grand narratives of the Communist Party. Rather, the films loosely coalesce around stories of average characters or idiosyncratic people that are never portrayed in film. The films frequently use a gritty film stock and matter-of-fact, almost documentary presentation style, largely with ambiguous endings where didactic storytelling is abandoned, especially with judgment passed upon China's rural population and traditions. This style and portrayal is in contrast to the Fifth Generation of filmmakers such as Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, and Tian Zhuangzhuang who made allegorical films in the 1980s with an idyllic image of rural China to be criticized for the ossified and magical grip rural tradition had on China. Fifth Generation films were deeply embedded in perpetuating a nationalism intent upon changing a perceived backward rural society in order for China to progress in the twentieth century.

“As many film critics have acknowledged,” critic Lin Xiaoping comments, “the film art of the ‘Fifth Generation’ deals with the nation’s political, social and cultural past, with a greater emphasis on the mystique of an unchanging and closed rural communal system that has lasted for thousands of years” (“New Chinese Cinema.” 262-63).

Lin is clear that the concentration on the rural majority of China is the focal point and the fulcrum that separates the Fifth Generation from the Sixth Generation. The placement of the rural characters also shifts to urban environments, reflecting the contemporary shift in the incredible numbers of internal migrants gravitating toward cities as China’s economic system shifts from state-run communism to state-coordinated capitalism. “Above all, the ‘Sixth Generation’ directors resolve to take the modern city and contemporary life as their main themes,” says Lin, “for they have little or no regard for a ‘national’ past that is either chastised or mystified by their precursors of the ‘Fifth Generation’” (“New Chinese Cinema.” 263). As a corollary, the Sixth Generation is also shifting from a mass-based imaginary of the Communist Party to the particular deleterious effects of socioeconomic changes on individuals. The filmic results rarely provide a positive portrayal of new amounts of wealth and economic expansion of China.

In this context, the cinematic discourse of the ‘Sixth Generation’ directors exactly reverses what the ‘Fifth Generation’ considers as ‘the nation’s weakness and ugliness’ resulting from that rural communal system. So the work of the ‘Sixth Generation’ filmmakers is in general a study of China’s painful transformation from a Soviet style socialist state into a new global capitalist country, or, ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. From their

point of view, those drastic changes have a destructive impact on individuals who seek solace in the same rural communal system as denied and derided by the 'Fifth Generation'. ("New Chinese Cinema." 263)

Sixth Generation films, as a group, make a significant shift regarding previous judgment passed upon the rural population; the rural migrants no longer hold China back but rather reflect the social and emotional costs of the effects of global capitalism through the lives of so-called average people forced to look for work in the large cities. In *Beijing Bicycle* Wang Xiaoshuai upholds the Sixth Generation examination of the costs of internal migrants forced to find work in the city along with the costs of a middle-class family living in the traditional section of Beijing, both adjusting to the role of commodities to establish self-worth, status, and survival.

Floating Population (liudong renkou)

In light of this film history and the ongoing discourse on the pivotal role of the rural population in China, the latest figures show that China's rural majority is flooding cities with drastic social and economic consequences. Frequently referred to as the floating population (liudong renkou), they are the latest pool of cheap labor that are chastised for their lack of urbane knowledge while they are nominally accepted as necessary to meeting labor demands for continual economic growth in burgeoning capitalist China.

Where in the official media migrants are perceived, both as the necessary source of labor for the new China, and as obstacles to its achievement, but always subservient to modernized urban society, Wang sees the rural migrants as urban society's "other", and uses them to criticize urban society itself. The actions taken by urban dwellers toward the migrants are significant not so much to arouse pity for the migrants, but for what they show about the urban population. They are seen as arbitrary, humiliating and violent, and

their behavior raises questions about the morals and values of Chinese urban society, ending with a grim outlook for the future. (Kochan)

As a group, the floating population is scapegoated for crime and relegated to the margins of society as economically necessary outcasts that may actually reveal the underside of China's economic progress. "As a critical intervention into the symbolic order of 'market socialism' (or, officially, 'socialism with a market economy')," Critic Jian Xu surmises that Sixth Generation "films represent the rural migrants not as a homogenous group but as a heterogeneous people with different ambitions, work ethics, urban experiences and modes of social belonging. Thus the films challenge the regime of mainstream representation that seeks both to marginalize and to normalize the migrant people" (J Xu 434-35). In keeping with Sixth Generation filmmaking, *Beijing Bicycle* is Wang's second major release that has gone through the official censors with a large-scale budget, focusing on the role of the floating population examined through the character of Guei and his need for his delivery bicycle. Jian and his peers represent the hostility (and possibility for reluctant friendship) that attack and alter Guei during his struggle to retain his bicycle for work and dignity.

A variety of critics of *Beijing Bicycle* compare the character of Guei and the floating population in general to a variety of marginal categories in their analysis with a variety of terms of alterity: for Kochan and Lu, the floating population is the Other; for Xu they are liminal nomads, a new subaltern

class, and the equivalent of China's gypsies. Meanwhile, Barmé accuses that the portrayal of Guei, and by implication the portrayal of the floating population, is an outright stereotype of dumbfounded silence and backwardness in contrast to Wright interpreting Guei's silence as the wonderment at witnessing and learning how to live/survive in the new urban environment. Lu, as with Wright, disagrees with the dismissal of Guei as a stereotype. "Rather, his frequent silence throughout the film only 'acknowledges his difference and wonderment at the city'. True, Guei is represented as a typical new rural immigrant—his dress, behavior, accent (not emphasized in this film though), wonderment, stubbornness, and strong survival instinct almost summarize the collective traits of the newcomers from the countryside" (Lu 729). Furthermore, it must be noted that the concentration on the internal migrant or floating population experience is one that actually chooses to represent a population that is always already in the heart of the metropolis.

Although his rural-ness constitutes the Other of the cosmopolitan, rural immigrants are in fact located in the very center of the metropolis. They are everywhere in the construction sites, service industry (including urban homes), and public space of streets, public buses, and subways. They are both conspicuous and invisible—conspicuous with their country faces and accents, but invisible as a collective whole living in the urban fringes; yet they constitute an integral part of the metropolis and its public scenes. (Lu 729)

While all of these of terms of alterity and interpretations allow for a different emphasis on the marginal position of internal migrants none of these terms is placed in full relation to the role of the bicycle enhancing the portrayal of Guei

as a representative of the floating population. The film begins with several interviews, presumably non-actors, speaking hesitantly as interviewees for a potential bicycle courier job. The variety of people, ages, and genders multiplies until the camera settles on Guei. The audience quickly learns how important and drastic a change the courier job is as an economic opportunity as well as a cultural shift to a new urban life by getting a rapid sense of the number and variety of applicants for the job.

The character of Guei opens and closes the film, with empathetic emphasis given to his plight more than the later introduction of Jian, the middle class boy in preparatory school. As Elizabeth Wright states, “The bike assists in shaping both Guei and Jian's identity and is therefore a precious commodity for each” (Wright). There are great needs for both characters, which the bike satisfies within the context of the floating population represented by Guei and China's unique relationship afforded to the role of the bicycle in family purchases represented by Jian. By examining how the commodity is precious to each, we gain knowledge of how the icon of class struggle has retained and changed in the contemporary film since the making of *Bicycle Thieves*.

Guei's Bicycle as Economic Opportunity

With his bicycle, Guei is the quintessential country boy to an almost comic degree. Guei is just so damn excited pedaling throughout the film, reminiscent of the family romance scenes of *Bicycle Thieves*. His cadence—

the rate of rotating the pedal cranks—on the thick-wheeled mountain bike in the city streets is humorous because he is over-pedaling at a rapid pace on a bike better suited for off-road trail riding. But the characterization is touching in that Guei effuses a sense of astonishment, freedom, and joy. Regardless of his silence, Guei’s bicycling speaks for itself beyond the comic, as theorist Guy Faure comments about riding a bicycle in Beijing as “a language in itself” (Faure 12).⁵⁷ For Faure, bicycle riding in Beijing is a form of embodied negotiation and a language of movement and communication with the bicycle through the city, but also a language of “opacity and uncertainty”—much like Guei’s opaque silence but combined with committed action to retain his bicycle he earns and keep his place in the city. Faure concludes

Thus, bicycle travel in Beijing is a series of negotiations within a systemic flow. These require the implementation of a number of faculties addressing a negotiator’s ability, including: integrating simultaneously a number of signals that must be perceived beforehand; managing uncertainties; anticipating; innovating in informal ways. (14)

Guei’s use of the bicycle is already a language of traffic negotiation inscribed upon the experience of an opportunity in the city for a rural migrant to successfully earn money and even thrive in the city. Furthermore, Guei is not

⁵⁷. Critical Mass is a cross-cultural term based on bicycle riding in urban China. Ted White’s 1992 documentary *Return of the Scorcher* included footage of Chinese cyclists gathering and accreting in larger groups, until large enough to collectively stop automobile and truck traffic and allow the group of cyclists to pass. The Westerners witnessed the traffic flow and the combined numbers of cyclists and used the analogy of “critical mass” to metaphorize the phenomenon of normal bicycle traffic flow among motorized traffic in China. For a bicycle movement using monthly bicycle rides to assert rights to share the roadway, largely associated with the late 1990s beginning in San Francisco and spreading worldwide, it is frequently forgotten that the technique was inspired after observing commonplace bicycle riding in China.

only excited on the bicycle but he is especially determined to earn and then keep the bicycle (just like Xiangzi earns his rickshaw ownership in the novel *Rickshaw*), even in response to senseless and seemingly endless violence and unending bad luck. This tenacity contrasts the potential stereotype of the bumbling, misunderstanding country boy with the individual Guei refusing to give in to the social, economic, and circumstantial forces.

In a 2002 interview, Wang makes it clear that he specifically chose the bicycle because of its long-standing cultural significance in China.

The bicycle has always been an emblem of Beijing and even of China as a whole. For years it was the only means of transport for families. When I was young, the fact of having several bicycles was a sign that you were either wealthy or resourceful. Before China started opening up a family's standard of living was evaluated by what were termed as the "Big Four": a watch, a sewing machine, a radio and a bicycle. Today the Big Four are no longer the same... Although the bicycle has lost a lot of its glory it remains an important means of transport since there aren't many motorcycles or cars. It no longer is the object that everyone wants to own but remains essential even if people wish to replace it. Unlike the sewing machine or the radio, it has gradually become a symbol of a lack of means. (Wang n. pag.)

This lack of means is clear from the short montage of bicycle riders commuting through the city along with three men balancing a refrigerator on a bicycle as well as a tricycle moving two mattresses, a mirror and a man holding it all together for cargo. The bicycle serves to move cargo for a plethora of laborers needing affordable transportation. These cyclists and scenes of effort are compared to Guei who is forced to give up using his friend's old bicycle when he is compelled to share his modern bike with Jian.



Fig. 7: From the montage of cyclists in Beijing

Xu finds this scene, in fact, one of the strongest connections to de Sica's

Neorealism:

Wang Xiaoshuai's long takes, in the typical Neorealist fashion, follow Gu[e]i's eyes and create some of the most memorable moments ever produced in cinematic representations of Beijing. One of the scenes, for example, shows the various ingenious ways Beijing's common folk make use of bi- and tricycles: carrying a refrigerator on the back rack of a bicycle, with one person pushing the bicycle while another holds the refrigerator, or transporting a big armoire on a tricycle, which miraculously also carries a man who pastes himself onto the armoire to balance the entire load. Accompanied by the simple yet memorably rhythmic music, these realistic location shots give the city of Beijing a strong tinge of lyricism and nostalgia. These shots are similar to those used by De Sica, who, in Arthur Miller's words, relies on "a humane view of life" to confront yet lyricize the Rome lying in postwar ruins. Both main characters, Gu[e]i and Ricci, were played by nonprofessional actors for maximum realistic effect. (GG Xu 72)

The bicycle itself also carries the connotations of the latest desirable commodity. Guei's bicycle is a Merida, a well-known brand in China. While not as well known in the U.S., it is nonetheless a status bicycle. Even the competitive and intimidating trick cyclist Da Huan comments on the Merida,

“nice bike,” he says as he leaves Jian in the rain to continue his flirtation with his newly won over Xiao. Like the Fides brand bicycle in *Bicycle Thieves*, the Merida brand carries connotations of merit (with etymological roots in *emeritus* from Latin) while being a local brand for the Chinese domestic market based in Yuanlin, Taiwan. While not a major professional bicycle sponsor at the time of the film, Merida now sponsors a professional level Cross Country (XC) Mountain Bike Racing Team with German carmaker Volkswagen, which includes José Antonio Hermida, the 2010 XC World Champion. The specific bicycle is, as the courier manager claims at the beginning of the film, a status symbol for the company as well as their couriers. It explains why it was the most desirable target of theft when Guei was in the hotel spa for an extended period of time and other bicycles remained untouched.

The film is also economically accurate in the portrayal of the bicycle courier industry. A 2006 market analysis study of the rapid expansion of Beijing argues that the already sizable bicycle delivery service still has room to grow as a profit center while relying upon the floating population for cheap labor.

Bicycle delivery service is a labor-intensive industry. It absorbs surplus laborers from rural areas. It is supported by low-cost immigrant rural labor and low-cost vehicles (bicycles); therefore, it reduces the cost of distribution services. It improves the incomes of the rural population and at the same time increases the rate of urbanization, providing a major challenge to urban development managers. In recent years, there has been substantial growth in bicycle delivery service systems in China. For example, in Beijing, thousands of bicycle delivery companies employ tens of thousands of laborers. The industry still has major growth potential and should be

considered an integral part of sustainable urban transport development.
(Hong, Zhiliang and Wei 45)

As an internal migrant, Guei is filling the labor pool gap as a new courier. But his actions also speak to the representation of the floating population in the film as a hard won struggle of acculturation and economic survival. Guei's

desperate search for his stolen bicycle not only shows his determination to stay in the city, but also his gradual understanding of how to survive in the city. To some extent, the film depicts how modernity mediates the process by which rural people such as Guei are forced to come to terms with the urban environment—finding work, searching for the bike, learning how to survive in the city, and learning urban culture and lifestyle. (Lu 731-32)

This sense of modernity not only mediates Guei's adjustment to the City, but Guei's experience of modernity is specifically mediated through the use and abuse of his bicycle. The bicycle is not simply an artifact of the film set; it carries the working class struggle connotations as an icon with specific contemporary Chinese resonances which heighten our experience of the violent transition that Guei must make to survive Beijing.

Early in the film when, as previously mentioned, the bicycle courier company manager alludes to Lao She's 1936 novel *Rickshaw*. His largess is reminiscent of the character of Master Liu, a "combination of benevolence and menace" as historian David Strand characterizes the rickshaw rental garage owner portrayed in Lao's novel. Even though he is dependent upon the immigrant laborers, he vacillates between avuncular care and patronizing domination by the employer over Guei's misfortune. When the latest group of new couriers, including Guei, are uniformed and ready to begin, the manager calls upon them to memorize every alleyway of Beijing. The manager lauds

them as “today’s pigeons.” He further entices that they can eventually earn their bicycles, which are rented to the employees, and earn even more while mastering the irascible city, their new home and economic boon. Zhang Yingjin analyzes the pep talk speech as a story of capitalist penetration while relating the manager to Lao She’s *Rickshaw*:

The manager acts as if he were a commander dispatching his troops (migrant workers) to secure a territory (the market) so impeccably delineated on the Beijing map, but, significantly, his remapping takes a verbal detour through the reference to “Rickshaw Boy” (Xiangzi), a quintessential Beijing figure made memorable by Lao She’s novel *Camel Xiangzi* (1936). Like Xiangzi—an example of “homo economicus,” who worked industriously, pulling a rented rickshaw along Beijing hutong in the early decades of the twentieth century, and who calculated his savings obsessively in the hope of buying a rickshaw of his own—Guei (Cui Lin), a migrant worker in *Beijing Bicycle*, keeps a record of his deliveries and anticipates the day when will earn enough money to own his mountain bike. (Zhang 226)

Beijing Bicycle’s early allusion to *Rickshaw* carries the connotation of a warning about our feelings toward Guei and his potential growth. Throughout Lao She’s novel, the protagonist Hsiang Tzu (or Camel as he is nicknamed after surviving a kidnapping by mercenary soldiers where he steals camels to later trade) is shown to become increasingly driven by individual desires fed by the rickshaw meeting his economic needs. “All he was concerned about was his rickshaw; his rickshaw could produce wheat cakes and everything else he ate. It was an all-powerful field which followed obediently after him, a piece of animated, precious earth” (Lao 12-13). Like Guei, Hsiang Tzu came from the country, leaving a subsistence farming life for the economic opportunity of the city. And further, like Guei’s relationship to his bicycle, Hsiang Tzu becomes incredibly connected to his rickshaw as his sole means

to support himself and build his identity as a masterful rickshaw puller with style. Early in the novel, Hsiang Tzu becomes one with his rickshaw the day he has saved up enough to purchase his own rickshaw.

All right, today he had bought a new rickshaw. Let today be his birthday, his and the rickshaw's. It would be easy to remember. Besides, the rickshaw was his heart's blood. There was simply no reason to separate man from rickshaw. (Lao 10)

With this powerful allusion and well-known novel, especially for a Chinese audience, we can better understand Guei's petulant persistence, correcting the administrative woman who claims he has not earned the bicycle. It is reminiscent of the red letter day in *Rickshaw* where rickshaw puller becomes coeval with his bicycle.

While we must recognize the incredible amount of tenacity Guei surmounts to keep his steed, the perseverance is haunted by the allusion and similarity of Guei and Hsiang Tzu in *Rickshaw*. Throughout the novel, the protagonist is thrown into countless misfortunes and continual exploitation, allowing Lao She to examine Republican China and its injustices and inequities. Historian David Strand, who examines the pivotal 1929 Beijing Rickshaw Pullers strike, elucidates the importance of the rickshaw as the central organizing device in Lao She's novel

In deciding to "place rickshaw pulling at the center of things," Lao She necessarily rejected other possibilities in the tableau of figures representative of Republican urban society: rebellious students, iconoclastic intellectuals, ambitious politicians, ruthless militarists, petty bureaucrats, and profit-minded entrepreneurs. These latter individuals and images appear in the novel tied to Xiangzi in such a way as to force the reader to evaluate the dynamism and decay of the times in terms of their effect on the travail of an ordinary person. Lao She set the action of the work outside the palaces, ministries, mansions, and universities of the old capital and in the midst of the city's markets,

teahouses, alleyways, and courtyard tenements where Beijing's ordinary folk lived and worked. Lao She imagines the forces impinging on rickshaw men—both societal forces, like the urban transportation market, and natural ones, like dust storms and the winter cold—and then mapped out the rest of the city from a rickshaw man's perspective. "Thinking about it in this way, a simple story was transformed into a vast society." (Strand 22-23)

While Lao She focuses on the rickshaw puller to examine the excesses and abuse of common laborers who frequently witness (and at times, as Strand emphasizes, directly affect history by shutting down the city and attacking the rail cars), Camel or Hsiang Tzu is drastically altered during the process by all the economic and social forces that he must adjust and adapt to in order to survive. In some ways Hsiang Tzu is transmogrified, commenting upon the society that changed his potential through the persistent rewards to the opportunist. Hating his wife, getting out of countless dead-end jobs and threatening situations, Hsiang Tzu eventually informs on a friend and confidant who is wanted for union organizing and who admits to asking an inappropriate favor of a professor. Hsiang Tzu betrays in order to get ahead. The novel ends with Hsiang Tzu no longer able to pull rickshaws, destitute and gaining wages by working at intermittent weddings or funerals by holding ceremonial umbrellas or flags. The novel closes with the following, castigating paragraph condemning what has become of Hsiang Tzu:

Handsome, ambitious, dreamer of fine dreams, selfish, individualistic, sturdy, great Hsiang Tzu. No one knows how many funerals he marched in, and no one knows when or where he was able to get himself buried, that degenerate, selfish, unlucky offspring of society's diseased womb, a ghost caught in Individualism's blind alley. (Lao 249)

Hsiang Tzu is depicted throughout the novel as increasingly only caring about

himself with little sense of solidarity ever complicating, much less trumping, self-interest and opportunity.

By allusive comparison, Guei may too face a similar fate, despite his dreams and ambition. Therefore, the allusion to *Rickshaw* not only makes *Beijing Bicycle* a film that is not dismissible as a derivative of *Bicycle Thieves*. The film also contains a kernel of judgment that Guei, too, may be crushed by his experience in Beijing and become the individualist and opportunist that drove Hsiang Tzu's rickshaw pulling to the grave. Wang Xiaoshuai and his Sixth Generation cohort who recast China through the experiences of the floating population, may not be passing judgment upon the floating population as their Fifth Generation forbears have done. However, *Beijing Bicycle's* portrayal of Guei's need for the bicycle with sustained early allusions to *Rickshaw* allow judgments to be passed upon Chinese society as a whole, where the floating population are sacrificed in the name of market socialism in the so-called new China of the twenty-first century.

Jian's Bicycle as Status Commodity

For Guei, the bicycle is direct access to wages in order to survive in Beijing, whereas for Jian, the bicycle is a status symbol, in order to socially measure his worth and his heterosexual male power among his peers. The bicycle also functions to keep his father's promise of a gift when the father consistently denied the purchase of a bike with the need to spend the funds on educating his step-daughter in a good school. When Jian acquires the

bicycle on the black market, he is purchasing a device that marks his belonging to the middle class.

Even though bicycles are afforded by all of his friends, Jian is in a unique family with a half-sister and step-mother that complicate the family's finances. By not being able to afford a bicycle, Jian is constantly reminded that his hard efforts at school are not met with promised rewards of a coveted bicycle by his father. Wang explains the subtle commentary that is apparent because Jian's family cannot afford a bicycle.

Ten or twenty years ago, families had to have four major things to be considered modern: a sewing machine, a bicycle, a TV and a washer/dryer. Back then, you needed ration coupons or a letter of introduction to purchase a bicycle. That's now completely obsolete; for an urban family to be hip today it needs a car, a computer, etc. Under contemporary circumstances, if a family is struggling for a bicycle, there's something wrong—they're basically backwards and very poor. By today's standards, Jian's family is not a wealthy one. Back then, bicycles were a real status symbol. Today, you can just go and purchase one in the store. (Tang n. pag.)

Elizabeth Wright finds the broken promises of the father to be an effective means for the audience to identify with Jian's need to steal the money for the bike. But Gary Xu complicates this middle-class struggle to afford a bicycle by using the concept of *suzhi*, or middle-class-ness, which emphasizes accumulating education in the modern Chinese family's single child. Since there is state enforcement allowing couples to have only one child, Jian's family is atypical. Jian has a half-sister with whom he shares the family's expectations of educational success along with a financial burden split between the siblings.

Education is the first priority in Jian's family, as in almost all Chinese families. The strange equation that links the cost of education with Jian's dream of owning a mountain bike makes explicit the inherent contradictions of the postsocialist logic based on suzhi: better education enhances the overall quality of the nuclear family's single child, but the eventual goal of education, which is to produce capable and hedonistic consumers for luxury items such as recreational mountain bikes, tends to trigger early commodity envy that is harmful to the improvement of suzhi. (GG Xu 76)

With suzhi operating as a social force, the only child is imbued with investment logic with educational achievement, reflecting the goals and values of the middle class family gaining access to better wage-earning power through the child's education. Because the financial investment in education is split between Jian and his half-sister, and the bicycle naturally falls out of the equation due to their tight budget. But, as Xu argues, access to better wages further increases the desire for commodities, now affordable, which suzhi creates in a more affluent generation able to desire not just bicycles, but any and all commodities to adorn as symbols of success. Once Jian becomes the owner of the bike through its purchase on the black or "used-bike" market, and consequently a contrasting protagonist to Guei, we understand how unequal their uses of the bicycle really are. However, Gary Xu further argues that this very inequality in the use of the bicycle between the two boys is actually commensurable. If we consider the threat of individualism implied by the persistent allusions to Lao She's indignant novel, Guei may desire the bicycle in ways that closely resemble Jian, especially with Guei's voyeuristic spying on the woman pretending to be a upper-class urbanite. She is only later found out to be the house cleaner from the

countryside who adorns her client's dresses in an act of momentary social status to be performed for the men at the local corner store. Guei and his friend are captivated but tellingly repulsed when they find out they have been duped in the class masquerade. The commodities of the clothing expose how the men desire her wealth and apparent opulence while slurping noodles and peering through the hole in the wall of their makeshift shack. While we do not gain a sympathetic portrayal of her plight as a housecleaner, the parallel theme of the affect of the clothing in this subplot compared to the affect of the bicycle performing for the protagonists is telling.

For Jian, the bicycle is a signifier of recreational time, a fashion accoutrement connoting athleticism and power, and, most importantly, the ability to attract the young woman Xaio's attention. Jian and his friends have ample time to go to their private preparatory school, play video games at the arcade, conspire to steal the bike back from Guei, and then spend hours on their bikes in an empty skyscraper construction site, performing track stands (holding the bike in place without the need to set a foot down by subtle balancing movements on all points of contact with the bicycle) and hopping tricks. The bicycle is portrayed as undoubtedly impressing Xaio and therefore is a device tied to Jian's sexual maturity and socialization. As this dissertation argues throughout, Xu goes so far as to say the bicycle delivers Jian to liberatory heights:

Two moments in the film signal Jian's "liberation." In the first scene, he goes with his friends to an unfinished building to perform bicycle stunts. Their joyful howling and yelling reverberate in the empty building, which overlooks an old section of Beijing, a position that foreshadows imminent changes to the once-tranquil cityscape. In the second scene, Jian escorts the girl back to her home; afterward, he rides his bicycle along a segment of Beijing's Qianhu Lake, with both hands leaving the handlebars and arms outstretched. The bicycle, it seems, brings Jian instant symbolic power. (GG Xu 74)

However, this early success is soon frustrated by Jian's actions as much by complications of retrieving and eventually sharing the bike with Guei. Jian may be comfortable in the city in contrast to Guei's astonishment and silence as a migrant, but in terms of Jian's social skills with courting a young woman and competing with another young male, his inability to act and attract Xiao is equally reticent and out of place when interacting with the opposite sex. In this way, there is a commensurability of sentimental education for Jian and Guei. Jian is inept and his sexual frustration culminates in a violent and jealous attack on the new suitor and accomplished trick bike rider Da Huan. While this may be a coming-of-age motif, as Wang comments such a story line was his intention in the 2002 interview, the inability of Jian to engage and communicate with Xiao must be recognized as equally perplexing as Guei's adjustment to urban life and corresponding silence throughout the film. Another important scene, where the bike is pivotal to understanding how Jian begins to understand his sexuality and competition with Da Huan through their bicycle skills and success in courting Xiao occurs after Jian silently confronts and bullies Xiao in the rain. The film cuts to Xiao in her rain cape and then tracks Jian circling her as she is forced to stop on her bicycle. Jian is

stalking but silent. Xiao is clearly annoyed and meets up with Da Huan on his trick bicycle at the end of the street. Without any protection from the rain, Jian is sopping wet, his business suit school uniform soaked. Da Huan then comes over and confronts Jian on his bicycle and stares him down. Da Huan grabs a cigarette and breaks the silence by demanding a light from Jian. Not being a steady smoker, Jian struggles to find a lighter and Da Huan lights the cigarette himself. (This scene immediately follows the forcing of the cigarette upon Guei by Jian's friends as they press for a negotiated way to share the bicycle.) Da Huan suddenly comments, "not a bad bike," looking at Jian's Merida frame. Then Da Huan asserts his masculine power and triumph by putting the cigarette in Jian's mouth with all its standard phallic charge in the mis-en-scène burning in the rain, emasculating Jian and foreshadowing the violence to come between Jian and Da Huan. The scene provides clear motivation for Jian to seek some vengeance to save face in terms of his masculinity, especially since it is clear that he has lost Xiao's interest.

The entire time it is the bicycle that transports these young adults through the scene, allows them to stop, circle, assess, threaten, flee, and pursue. The evaluation of who is worthy to be a sexual partner or who should be intimidated and passed by are all mediated through the bicycle as the commodity device through which the performance takes place. In the 2002 interview, Wang clarifies what he sees behind the importance of the bicycle for this dynamic:

When I conceived the idea for the film, people said to me, "Who would spend so much energy fighting about a bicycle in this day and age?" But that's the viewpoint of someone who has lost a certain amount of sensitivity or nostalgia about his or her own youth. We all went through this at one point or another; now we're simply on to the next major possession. So you're right; I wanted to capture nostalgia for both the past and for growing up. It's a universal sentiment; even in America, it may be the hottest new Nikes instead of a bicycle, but it's still the same sentiment. (Tang n. pag.)

The Cityscape

The cityscape in *Beijing Bicycle* is one of stark contrasts with the ancient, walled city boxed-in by the latest skyscrapers. Modern China is slowly redeveloping its ancient city residences into high-end real estate with financial and cultural costs. Jian lives in a traditional *siheyuan* residential compound shared by many families. Yet he plays with his peers in the skeletal worksites of new high-rise buildings where they can practice bike tricks unsupervised as the new cityscape pushes at the edges of their youth and their traditional neighborhood. According to Elizabeth Wright, "The visual crossover between hutongs and modern high-rise architecture throughout the film is also symbolic of the bicycle, which has been forced to address an old versus new dichotomy" (Wright). In this spatial reality, the bicycle is forced to address not only the floating population and the working class struggle of Guei but also the uncertain and precarious middle-class future of Jian, who is at the lower rungs of his social class with a mixed family unable to afford a bicycle without Jian stealing his father's savings and purchasing a bike on the black market. Visually, the skyscrapers versus the hutongs comment on each other in architectural cadences throughout the film. The stark contrast in size and

patina heightens the sense of awe and dominance the audience identifies with in Guei's dumbfounded behavior along with Jian's uncertain future. Jian may be dressed in his business suit school uniform but he is also out of place without being able to afford a bicycle without theft much less a modern apartment of the rising middle class in China. Critic Jie Lu claims the architectural differences reflect the fissures of Chinese development in the twenty-first century creating a center and periphery, or what Lu terms a metropolarity.

The severe verticality of those skyscrapers, glass pyramids, and high rises of modernist icons represents a striking contrast to the lateral architectural styles of the old cities; their spectacular facades cast a long shadow over the city and redefine the city, and in doing so, obscure whatever does not fit its characteristic shape. This fragmented and polarized urban topography—the coexistence of glamorous public spaces, glittering global sites, and luxurious apartments along with shadowy street corners of gray professions, rundown hutong houses and makeshift shelters—is in essence a spatial manifestation of socioeconomic conditions and uneven development in contemporary urban China (717).

While Guei lives in a shack, Jian lives in a housing compound that is quickly disappearing to make room for the footpads of high rises. When viewed from the extreme verticality and imposition of the megastructures, Guei and Jian retain their class differences while they are both mapped onto the periphery of the new globalized cityscape.

If the high rises are part of skyscraper iconography that epitomizes and defines the contemporary city and city life, it also renders invisible whatever does not fit its configuration of modernity. It constitutes a new urban geographic centrality and marginality. In a broader sense, the architectural change from the horizontal aesthetic/style to the vertical one through appropriation of the Western architectural symbol of modernity, political and economic power—represented by skyscrapers/high rises—is paradigmatic of larger socioeconomic transformations in contemporary China. (Lu 728)

Furthermore, there is a convergence in their sharing of the bicycle and their

uncertain futures, economically and psychologically. The old-city alleys that Camel Xiangzi used as a rickshaw puller in Lao She's novel remain unforgiving and impenetrable in *Beijing Bicycle*. The *hutongs* entrap Guei and Jian at the climax in the film. Lu admits that the hutong is represented as a stereotype in the film with the walled in elderly encased in a sense of old Beijing while the skyscrapers lay outside. "In the reconfiguration of the city, hutong is relegated to the status of history, left behind in both time and space. Perhaps it still keeps its historical significance in serving as a site for the tourist's gaze, but it can no longer epitomize the city and the urban. Yet in an uncanny way, peripheralization of hutong makes history entwined with the physical and social production of space" (730). But this trope of old Beijing (Peking) (what Lu ties to the architectural registration of time and socioeconomic contrasts in the use of the term *chronotope*) is a part of Chinese film tradition in representing Beijing. The use of it is not simply a stereotype but rather another way to register the stark contrasts in uneven development in modern China. In fact, as Yingjin Zhang explains, the depiction of the hutongs with a traditional Beijing is part and parcel of Chinese film contrasting with the standard representation of Shanghai as the key city of modernization in Chinese film.

Because the Chinese film industry was concentrated in Shanghai before 1949, Chinese films of the time tended to privilege Shanghai over Beijing, and Beijing thus functioned as the other to cosmopolitan Shanghai. Instead of using rapid-fire montages of the cityscape as they did in films about Shanghai, Chinese filmmakers entertained a rather nostalgic vision of Beijing as a safeguarded hometown relatively intact from the onslaught of modernity.

Rather than the tram that zigzags through Shanghai streets, the preferred images of Beijing included the teahouse, where locals indulge in leisure talks, and the rickshaw, which brings residents through a maze of narrow back alleys (hutong). As late as the 1980s, and despite decades of socialist propaganda, Chinese filmmakers were still delighted at the sight of the teahouse, the rickshaw, the hutong, and the siheyuan (a traditional one-story residential compound typically shared by several families), all of which tend to evoke nostalgia for the lost or disappearing hometown in the popular imagination. (224-25)

The critic who most strongly condemns Wang's (mis)representation of Beijing in the film is Geremie Barmé. But it is unfair and inaccurate of Barmé to presume that Wang misrepresents Beijing. Wang is, in fact, quite upfront about the effort it took to shoot on location in order to create the "traditional" hutong representation of old Beijing.

Beijing is a town of great variety: in some areas there are courtyards, mazes of small streets with old people taking in the sunshine, buildings with traditional rooftops, and in others there are modern buildings and all the hustle and bustle of major modern cities. However, there are fewer and fewer small streets, the places where we were able to film were in fact very limited, we had to move the whole crew from one place to another. Each time I wanted to change the angle of my shots in the chase scenes so we couldn't use the same locations all the time. We always had to negotiate with the residents and the local associations. I sadly realized that this picturesque aspect of the city was disappearing, whilst I remained aware of the fact that the inhabitants of these neighborhoods also had the right to enjoy better living conditions. (Wang n. pag.)

Wang is quite open about the amount of time and effort it took to hunt down the disappearing hutong shots in order to create the stark contrast between traditional Beijing and contemporary Beijing in the architecture and landscape of *Beijing Bicycle*. The conscious decision was not performed to misrepresent Beijing but rather to emphasize the growing scarcity of what was once Beijing, almost as an etude. Wang, however, doesn't deny the construction of the *Beijing Bicycle* reality.

In light of the cultural connotations of the bicycle already discussed, Wang comments, “The bicycle is the most typical representative of China. Hollywood has its fancy car chases, but we don't have to do action sequences with a car, we can do them with a bicycle” (Tang n. pag.). In many ways, Barmé's conclusion may reflect how homogenous the international audience of *Beijing Bicycle* really is. Just as Barmé accuses Wang, Barmé may be constructing his own misrepresentation of the misunderstood sinologist: while castigating the success of the *Beijing Bicycle* after winning international film awards, Barmé believes he can distinguish the “real” Beijing from the false representations of Beijing. In the name of protecting the genuine and authentic, such a reading misses the scale of the consistent contrasts between the hutongs and the skyscraper monoliths as indicative of the migrant poor and the struggling middle class left behind in the post socialist China.

Beijing Bicycle's use of the cityscape, especially creating strong contrasts between the skyscrapers and the hutongs neighborhoods, makes it clear that modernity is fast encroaching upon the stereotypical depiction of Beijing as a protectorate of Chinese tradition. Throughout the film, key scenes that concentrate on the bicycle's ownership between Guei and Jian take place in the skeletal framework of new high rises or in the bowels of an unused parking garage. There is no escape from the prevalence and ubiquity for a cityscape that towers above these characters. When the film shifts to the

hutong, as Guei and Jian reconcile their bike sharing differences and Jian resolves to give up his share, both characters are trapped in the labyrinthine network of old hutong alleyways.

It is the climactic scene when Guei and Jian, as co-owners of the bicycle, now become full-fledged allies fleeing from Da Huan and his friends. But just as their commensurability has a limit, their economic and social losses become blatantly divergent at the end of the film. In an echo of Guei's determination and need, he cradles the destroyed bike, crying and bloody. If it wasn't stolen, it was fully paid for by his labor in the messenger job. Now, due to a duel of masculine display for the attention of a girl on the part of Jian, the bike is destroyed and Guei no longer even has partial access to his job. We now see Guei completely defeated and the memory of his high cadence in uniform on the mountain bike is a nostalgic loss, whereas Jian's loss is much more ambivalent. Jian has essentially lost face, perhaps gaining some empathy for Guei. However, Guei is transmogrified by the experience of moving to the city in search of economic opportunity. While critics like Xu argue that Guei and Jian are equated as peripheral protagonists in contrast to the central and abstract forces of globalization inscribed upon Beijing residents, there is no leveling of the impact of the loss of the bicycle as it devastates Guei far more than Jian on an emotional level because of Guei's dependence upon the bicycle for economic survival. Henceforth, Guei's stubborn perseverance may no longer serve him. His aspect—dusted, bloody

and cradling a smashed bicycle frame—is disturbingly ambivalent in the closing shot. The bike is thoroughly damaged, beyond worthwhile repair.



Fig. 8: Guei witnessing his bicycle being destroyed

Guei must eventually strike the final assailant with a brick to stop him from completely mangling his bicycle and then find his way out of the hutong, leaving Jian. After a cut Guei exits into the throngs of people, to disappear among countless others confronted by the skyscrapers. The closing shot pulls away in a zoom-out just as the camera pulls away from the crowd in which Antonio and Bruno Ricci walk away and meld into the crowd at the end of *Bicycle Thieves*. There is no resolution but there is a clear understanding that the bicycle is the icon of the working-class character struggling to survive in film. While *Beijing Bicycle* illuminates how the bicycle's commodity status has shifted and how it has particular resonance in contemporary China, the use of the bicycle as a working-class icon is unmistakable. The filmed bicycle is

always already a bicycle of a working-class cyclist just trying to get by in the struggle for economic survival. Rather than the hammer and sickle, the silhouette of the bicycle should be emblazoned on the worker's flag especially when filmed.

Chapter 4

Cyclotouring, Counter-mapping, and Conviviality: C. S. Giscombe's Pan-African (Dis)location in *Giscome Road*

As the bicycle is an icon of class struggle in world cinema, it, too, is a mode of transportation and recreation that people choose because of the physical labor involved. The physical labor combines with the sense of independence and freedom when the cyclist goes on an extended bicycle trip, or what has been dubbed the cyclotour. Bicycle tours began in the 1880s with the high wheel and accounts of traveling around the world such as Thomas Stevens's *1887 Around the World on a Bicycle*.⁵⁸ Once the bicycle became more affordable in the safety bicycle (as discussed in Chapter 1) in the 1890s, cyclotouring became more widespread and ranged from a day around the countryside extending to years around the world. Such cyclotour classics include H. G. Wells's romantic and comedic 1896 novel *Wheels of Chance*, Kate Chopin's 1895 short story "The Unexpected," Octave Thanet's 1897 short story "The Stout Miss Hopkins' Bicycle," and the 1895 women's bicycle riding guide book by Frances Willard.⁵⁹ All of these initial cyclotour texts were

^{58.} See Dunham for the early history of cyclotouring in the United States with most evidence from newspaper sources.

^{59.} A later 1930 example of the cyclotour narrative includes W. Somerset Maugham's *Cakes*

a part of the shifting attitudes and struggle for women's role in a society (in the United States and Britain) where they were far more independent and no longer had to tolerate the standard narrative of courtship within bicycle fiction. But bicycle manufacturers, through the magazines they advertised in, strongly supported developing the female bicycle market as analyzed by Ellen Garvey in *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*.

Recent non-fiction books continue the cyclotour tradition and recover the history of cyclotourists such as Frank Lenz, a high-wheeled racer that disappeared in Turkey in 1894 on his cyclotour attempt to travel around the world; the story of Annie Londonderry, a Jewish immigrant mother of three from Boston, who succeeded in 1895 in a cyclotour around the world; and two high school graduates that traveled from Santa Rosa, California to Seattle, Washington in 1909 to see the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition (Gibb; Herlihy, *The Lost Cyclist*; Zheutlin). This tradition of unfathomable distance combined with personal stories of triumph continue to this day to support a conception of conviviality in the bicycle: unexpected, autonomous uses of the bicycle that connect people through the narrative tradition of the cyclotour. However, C. S. Giscombe's experimental poem *Giscome Road* extends the cyclotour into the territory of innovative, experimental poetry. *Giscome Road* is an

and Ale.

unprecedented cultural practice employing the bicycle as a convivial tool for imaginative applications with vast cross-cultural and post-colonial implications in addition to the bicycle recounted and supplementing traditional cyclotour travel narratives.

In the long poem *Giscome Road*, the bicycle is the ultimate connective device as a physical and metaphorical vehicle. The bicycle authenticates the landscape for the poet re-searching a pan-African immigrant's impact on British Columbia, whose last name is now relegated to a series of place markers on maps of British Columbia. The poem follows the name of the Jamaican immigrant John R. Giscome that is the only trace that remains of Giscome throughout the poem's plenitude of references. The name "Giscome" begins as the trill of sound and becoming the role of confluence, fluidity, and the elemental in rivers, traverses the genealogical search for a Caribbean ancestor as a forever-suspended possibility and irresolvable position. *Giscome Road* performs the cyclotouring poet's act of bridging the diverse panoply of interests, dredging his ancestral history as indicative of a wider, unrecognized history of the New World, especially as one crossing into the north of Canada creating a North American imaginary space. These thematic movements are all reliant upon the connective experience through the cyclotour in *Giscome Road*.⁶⁰

⁶⁰. It is humorous that Dalkey Archive Press is the publisher of *Giscome Road* given that Flann O'Brien's novel *The Dalkey Archive* reused much of the at-the-time unpublished

In his comparison of Giscombe's long poems *Giscombe Road* and *Here*, critic Alan Gilbert argues that "poetry," as in *Ars Poetica* or poetics in general, is the primary connective metaphor and operating vehicle throughout the poem. Gilbert finds Giscombe performing a postcolonial, deconstructive de-centering, "eliminating the binary constituted by center and periphery" by a method "to empty out and displace the notion of a cultural or geographical center." There is no meaningful etiology or source, no absolute authenticity that is not coterminous with the dissolution of the center | periphery binary.

Giscombe's

way of doing this is both subtle and sophisticated. First of all, he makes the center fluid and roaming. In *Here*, this displacement assumes the metaphor of the railroad. In *Giscombe Road*, it takes the form of rivers. Thus, the center becomes pervasive without necessarily being omnipotent. In other words, when the center is conceived of as a power snaking through the landscape, it's no longer a static center surrounded by peripheries, but a dynamic and active process. This increases the reach of a now dispersed center, but also leaves gaps and edges where it can be briefly eluded. And in these gaps and at these edges oppositional practices—including poetry—can be arrayed against its power. (Gilbert 121)

This casts the poetic act as deeply political and revolutionary. Binaries are overcome through an experimental, personal but simultaneously historical and local poem. Status is overturned by a processual surrounding of the center by the multiple peripheries, engulfing the center like a flood. In Gilbert's explanatory metaphor the poetry as portage has become wet with the weight of the bodies of water that were once connected by John R. Giscombe's

material in *The Third Policeman* with the bicycle fears held by the police officer in both novels. The connotation of the novel's title, now the publisher, carries a bicycle theme by the allusion.

inverted bridge of the historical Giscome Portage

Way up here in Canada the most public legacy of John R. was the trail connecting the watersheds. It was not the edge but the way between edges: a bridge over a river connects two static, locatable shores, but John R.'s way connected two river systems themselves, the farthest inland reaches of two oceans. His way's a reversal of the assumptions and emphases of bridge. And here I was to look for images or language or anything that might have something to do with his presence. My previous experiences in the unpeopled North had suggested to me that the jungle takes back whatever relics you leave, that its density prevails. [...] This was winter in Fort George, though, and the density, the jungle, was snow; and here I was a black Marlow going into that seeking black Mistah Kurtz. And for whom? (Giscombe, *Into and Out* 110-11)

Giscombe doesn't necessarily want to succumb to Kurtz's madness in the jungle of *Heart of Darkness* inscribed upon the British Columbia landscape. Is Giscombe working for King Leopold in the fetching of a desired history, actually plundering and re-enacting a colonial claim on North America? Is the poet overcome by the "density" of the displaced jungle, the vast snow of a wintered British Columbia? If John R. Giscome inverts the metaphor of the bridge with his eponymous portage by connecting two oceans together, it is the cyclist that further enhances the metaphor of the bridge by not merely connecting two spits of land but rather conjoining two continents through the bicycle.

Really the over-arching metaphor is not "that poetry is a kind of portage between rivers of song" but rather that the bicycle connects continents, embodies and enables the unique history of the Giscom(b)es as the poet exclaims in parenthesis, closing the penultimate section of the poem "Giscome, B.C."

(I'm wilderness," I sd on Upper Fraser Rd, I was

Africa & America on the same bicycle,

"I'm Books in Print," I sd & a shout of this name coming
on in edges across the field— (Giscombe Road 53)

Just as Ivan Illich settles on the bicycle as the only model of the convivial as discussed in Chapter One, so too, Giscombe saddles and rides the bicycle as a means to convey the complexity of history through the edges and bloodline, the unmapped territory of the cyclotouring experience in poetic form. The unexpected result is the bicycle's effect on human experience of the historicized land(scape).

Giscombe is not the first poet to go on bicycle tour and integrate the experience in a long poem. Much of Kenneth Rexroth's apophatic *The Dragon and the Unicorn* recounts Rexroth's bicycle tour (and train travel) throughout Europe after World War II. But unlike Rexroth, Giscombe's cyclotour poem is dependent upon the bicycle beyond the incidental. It is this unpredictable, creative application of the bicycle and the poetic form using the bicycle as a geographical imaginary device, that conviviality is enacted through and by the bicycle. The bicycle is not merely an engineer's dream or a simple symbol of liberation for the middle-class cyclotourist to rejuvenate one's life. The bicycle enables a counter-cartography, decolonizing geography and history through a poetic representation of the cyclotouring experience that does not envelope and contain what it connects but rather expands the innate abilities of the poet to muscle the land and gain a sense of what it means/meant to traverse

the land as John R. Giscombe once did.

Kineaesthetics

It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and can coast down them.... Thus you remember them as they actually are, while in a motorcar only a high hill impresses you, and you have no such accurate remembrance of country you have driven through as you gain by riding a bicycle. (Hemingway 364)

From the oft-quoted Hemingway article, we can employ the term kineaesthetic or the embodied knowledge gained through experiencing the world as a conscious body. Our muscle fibers fire to create tension and they eventually fatigue. We have a skeleton that bears the weight of the muscles, organs, and fluids of the body inside the force of gravity felt as weight especially when climbing an incline. The sense of the inner ear judges pitch and balance as a fast curve demands adjustment on the bicycle. A body requires more oxygen and calories as it ascends a ten-percent gradient of land to suddenly plunge and move as fast as an automobile on a descent of the terrain through the knowledge of a physical body. Kineaesthetics attunes, acknowledges, and appreciates such felt experience of the cycling route.

Like Hemingway, the French Oulipo poet and writer Paul Fournel expands upon Hemingway's point and cultivates the knowledge of the mapped landscape specific to the cyclist as an obsession in his prose poem homage *Need for the Bike*. In his life of writing/riding, Fournel finds that, "Contrary to what happens when I'm in a car and the landscape allows itself to be seen and not 'be,' on a bike I'm sitting in it (89). Furthermore, the

imagined landscape of a cyclist reviewing and using maps is far different compared to the motorist:

Road maps for me are dream machines. I like to read them as if they're adventure stories. When I drive my car I use them to find the shortest route, to find the long roads where cities join, roads that don't go through the country. As a bike rider I use them for everything else. If I know an area, every centimeter of the map is a landscape laid out before me. If I don't know it yet, every centimeter is an imagined landscape that I will explore. For example, I like maps of Brittany, which is a cyclist's region I've never ridden. It's my storeroom, my wine cellar. It's the masterpiece in my library I've not yet read. (79)

If known, the centimeter scale of the map is translated into detailed knowledge of the cyclist familiar with an area and what traversing that area entails. If unknown, the map is a "wine cellar" or an unread "masterpiece" that is stored, imagined with anticipation, and eventually savored through exertion through the landscape on the bicycle. In the case of Fournel and Hemingway the automobile is incapable of this felt experience. Fournel asserts, "To get on a bike is to get a hold of the landscape" (31). The bicycle offers a physical and aesthetic experience of the landscape that is unmatched, and to some degree unmappable.

The category of the kineaesthetic proves useful in condensing this dynamic of the physical and the artful into the bodily experience of the cyclist. Justin Spinney extends fellow anthropologist Tim Ingold's concept of the kineaesthetic (and the use of dwelling from Maurice Merleau-Ponty) in order to provide an ethnographic account of Spinney's ascent of the infamous Mont Ventoux in France (where fellow Briton Tommy Simpson died in the 1967 Tour de France). Hemingway's hills (and valleys) are recapitulated as

kineaesthetic oppositions rather than topographical variations.

Of course, 'hill' and 'valley' are opposed terms, but the opposition is not spatial or altitudinal but kineaesthetic. It is the movements of falling away from, and rising up towards, that specify the form of the hill; and the movements of falling away towards, and rising up from, that specify the form of the valley. Through the exercises of descending and climbing, and their different muscular entailments, the contours of the landscape are not so much measured as *felt* — they are directly incorporated into our bodily experience. (Ingold 203; Spinney 725)⁶¹

The altitudinal measure of the height or relative depth of a route is not used to measure the difference between what we call “hill” and “valley.” Rather, the measure is the felt experience of effort and ease as bodily expressions of cyclists engaging with the land. The “falling away from” | “falling away toward” and “rising up from” | “rising up toward” create a muscular and physical measurement of the land through the body of the cyclist. The body is the subject and instrument of experience with the landscape as a human geography that does not require or depend upon the altimeter to gauge how high a hill is or how low a valley descends. Meeting and meting out the land through physical effort becomes the pleasurable measure, both in terms of a range of levels of exertion, and measure, in the sense of musicality, rhythm, or cadence, in what cyclists (and their cyclocomputers) count as the revolutions of their pedals in a period of time. As a concept, kineaesthesia

⁶¹. Justin Spinney applies the section on the knowledge of muscles in the landscape from Tim Ingold but the application is slightly out of context because Ingold is reading a representation of a landscape in the Pieter Bruegel painting *The Harvesters* rather than discussing the actual movement through a landscape. Regardless the imaginative muscular reenactment is kineaesthetic nonetheless.

combines the embodied, physical experience of kinesis with appreciating and valuing of the aesthetic experience of the artful. Insofar as people seek out such climbs as the barren and steep landscape of Mont Ventoux to relish the challenge in knowing, kineaesthetically, what it means to ascend that particular place, the cycling kineaesthetic helps to explain why people cherish such an experience. As Hemingway notes, just as the muscles deliver the cyclist over the hill, the hill is incorporated into the muscle memory of the cyclist in a way that an automobile cannot provide without the hill being especially steep. Unlike walking or hiking, cycling maximizes speed and muscular effort propelling the cyclist farther and faster than possible on foot. While John Muir communes with the California Sierras in the structure of feeling of the natural sublime and Rebecca Solnit reveals the intensity of human geography through walking in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, the kineaesthetics of the cyclist are most acutely tied to the landscape in the genre of cyclotouring.

The Cyclotour Tradition

Since the popularity of the safety bicycle in the late nineteenth century, writers have taken their bicycles on tour to far off lands and penned travel writing in a tradition of cyclotour literature. Men and women have written about their experiences crossing continents and encountering new cultures and terrain. While the genre does not have a tradition of ethnographic critique in a way that would reflect anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski's position of

the participant observer, the form and thematics of the genre typically foreground the kineaesthetic travel with the subtext of a personal journey or bildungsroman threading the text as the narrative structure. Of all the various forms of bicycle literature, cyclotouring is the most popular form. Men and women made (and many still make) careers of riding their bicycles on tour somewhere and then reflect and relate the travel experience for a hungry audience. Of all the cyclotouring books, I want to briefly highlight two relatively contemporary texts that reveal how the genre maintains the conventions of travel writing and personal growth.⁶²

Barbara Savage's *Miles from Nowhere* is a modern cult classic in cyclotour literature. As an account of her journey with her husband around the world on their bicycles, Savage provides travel anecdotes of culture shock, ingenuity, humor, and care that quickly became a popular in 1985. Shortly after the book was published, Savage was killed by an automobile near her home in Santa Barbara, California. Her death occurred as the book was going to press and the event is quickly noted in the afterward, which changed the reception of the cyclotour book from travel writing to another example of the dominance of car culture in the United States. A cyclist can travel the world and write about it but upon her return she is quickly killed by an automobile

⁶². In addition to Barbara Savage and Andrew Pham see also several titles by Lynette Chiang, Josie Dew, Joe Kurmaskie, Anne Mustoe, and Willie Weir.

near her home.⁶³

Fourteen years later the popularity of Savage's cyclotour account inspired Andrew X. Pham to embark upon and write about his own cyclotour in his successful *Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam*. Grieving and attempting to understand his sister's recent suicide by hanging, Pham quits his job and begins a cyclotour to Mexico, the West Coast of the United States, Japan, and Vietnam in the tradition of the cyclotour genre. Pham muses that the cyclotour "appeals to me. Riding out my front door on a bicycle for the defining event of my life. It is so American, pioneering, courageous, romantic, self-indulgent. I'd read *Miles from Nowhere* by Barbara Savage, who had ridden her bike around the world with her husband, Larry. It is so simple. All I need I learned in grade school" (29). The cyclotour is a return to simplicity, a reconnection with his humanity, and understood to be a uniquely American rite of passage. As with all cyclotour literature, Pham encounters problems throughout his journey but *Catfish and Mandala* is a text that is unsettled about Pham's status as a Vietnamese American and the ethnic and racial identity that he explores as a Viet-kieu, or foreign-living Vietnamese, who journeys to his father's homeland. Throughout the book, the cyclotour is at once a

⁶³. The book does not specify a bike/car accident but that the passage of time has specified this throughout the cycling community especially online, that Savage died near her home from the impact with an automobile.

deracinated American pilgrimage that Pham calls “unethnic” (26) and, at the same time, the cyclotour is Pham’s most authentic access to the beauty and history of his native Vietnam. The cyclotour especially grants understanding of his fallout with his father who, Pham learns, was a high level intelligence officer in Vietnam who tortured and interrogated many Viet Cong before being captured and fleeing Communist Vietnam. Despite being on an “unethnic” cyclotour, Pham cannot avoid the privileging of white Westerners as the only capable cyclotourists when a cousin “draws a deep breath, leans closer, and says with utter conviction, ‘*You won’t make it. Trust me, I’ve been around a long time. Vietnamese just don’t have that sort of physical endurance and mental stamina. We are weak. Only Westerners can do it. They are stronger and better than us*’” (77).⁶⁴ At another point, after already traveling hundreds of miles, Pham is cycling the California coast, noting, “The coast is gorgeous. I cannot swallow, breathe, soak it in fast enough. At least once a day, there is a moment of absolute perfection when my muscles sing with power, full of vigor, raw and very alive—the air sweet with grass and pine, the whirling chain and the humming tires but extensions of me” (35). *Catfish and Mandala*’s cyclotour dilemma is multifaceted and extends the cyclotour to the racial and ethnic imagination in ways that provide complexity that cannot be

⁶⁴. See Chapter One regarding the pivotal role of the bicycle in the Vietnamese triumph in the Vietnam War.

reduced to the sleek contours of a journey of the self in a foreign land testing one's Western resourcefulness. Pham's memoir avoids and engages with the complexity of the racial imagination through the cyclotour as a kineasthetic experience compounded by the racial and ethnic tensions that make up his family history and force him to revise the definitions of what it means to be Asian American.

A few years ago at a friend's party in Oakland, California, I met a fellow Asian American cyclist who had read *Catfish and Mandala* and we shared our political concerns about Pham coming to terms with the role of his father in the Vietnam War while not really engaging with the imperialist interests of the United States much less fully recognizing the desires of the Vietnamese people. When discussing what kind of bicycle riding we prefer and where we have gone on tour, we both acknowledged that even in the San Francisco Bay Area, seeing a cyclist of color is still an oddity. This cycling rarity is noted by poet, writer, professor, and cyclist C. S. Giscombe in his memoir *Into and Out of Dislocation*, a book written after the poem *Giscome Road* as another attempt to register the idea of John R. Giscome interspersed with C. S. Giscombe's autobiography.

Giscombe was raised in the Midwest in a middle-class African American family in post World War II America. But throughout his life, Giscombe the cyclist, especially the traveling cyclotourist, was a rarity that always unsettled people he encountered because the definition of an

adventurous cyclist is either deracinated or presumed to be white.⁶⁵ Early in his undergraduate career, Giscombe was cycling to explore the New York countryside and sometimes he would extend his tours into Canada, he recalls, “I began to understand that I’d not only made it to where I said I was going but that I’d done something even more unusual as well. Hardly anyone who didn’t have to bicycled any distance back then—what we now call the “day ride” (and dress in bright Spandex for) was unknown. And certainly no one black was riding out into the rural north or traveling out into it in any other way for that matter—this hasn’t changed much over the last three decades” (*Into and Out* 266). Despite the foundational success in the sport of cycling by Major Taylor, Columbian racing cyclists changing European climbing stages in the Tour de France, professional Japanese riders in the Tour de France, the foundation of the Tour de Faso in Burkina Faso and the recent success of the Tour of Beijing in China, the conception of the cyclist is reserved, admittedly or not, as a white affair.

This hegemony of who can and cannot be a cyclist also holds for the definition of who can or who cannot be an explorer of the land in the historic sense, especially when territory is later named after the explorer. Exploring as penetrating a territory to be named (from the explorer’s perspective),

^{65.} Giscombe’s memoir *Into and Out of Dislocation* also explains the circumstances under which he had his arm amputated as the result of a boyhood accident. So Giscombe on a bicycle is doubly other on racial and physical ability, though Giscombe concentrates on the racialized dislocation metaphor far more than his prosthetic arm.

identifying resources to be exploited along with easy routes to extract and transport those resources, has been an activity primarily reserved for a white male hegemony. When Giscombe arrives at Giscome Portage, he is not surprised at how little information and significance the historical markers and the operations of the local historical society provide about John R. Giscome and his business partner Henry McDame, two black Jamaican immigrants who “discovered” the portage and for whom the area is named after.

Giscombe notes

The whole place is under the administration of the Giscome Portage Historical Society and John R. Giscome and Henry McDame are mentioned on a couple of the signs, and even identified as black men from the West Indies; but the focus of the history in northern B.C. is white penetration and settlement, the narrative that started with [John] Mackenzie in 1793 and that continues rolling on down the Hart Highway in the recreational vehicles an increasing number of modern British Columbians call home. (*Into and Out* 104-05)

At the beginning of *Giscome Road* as well as at one point in *Into and Out of Dislocation*, Giscombe also clarifies the historical context in which several hundred black Americans were immigrating to British Columbia at the time John R. Giscombe made his way from working the railroad lines in Panama in order to make enough money to work his way up the West Coast of North America.

[...] by the end of 1858 six hundred black people had quit San Francisco and come north to Vancouver Island. This is an important—meaning often-referred to—moment in British Columbia’s history: it is, I think part of the basis for the province’s whites’ ongoing liberal view of themselves, and the fact of such a wholesale black immigration helps allow the province, and Canada, to claim the moral high ground, to class itself off from the crudeness and prejudice of American culture. (*Into and Out* 234)

The black migration from San Francisco to British Columbia (primarily

Vancouver Island more than mainland British Columbia) is touted in Canadian history but rarely, if ever, mentioned in U.S. history. Following Ishmael Reed's humorous novel *Flight to Canada* using the trope of Canada as flight from the oppressive United States, Giscombe is concerned with how that flight quickly becomes fleeting when chasing the ghost of John R. Giscome, whose name dots the landscape of British Columbia but whose sustained history is spotty at best. Despite the diminished status of John R. Giscome's presence at the historical site named after him, John R. Giscome became a means for the poet and writer C. S. Giscombe to counter the continuing historical trend of not fully reflecting the complexity of human geography written and inscribed upon the landscape.

But this African diasporic imaginary still maintains the genre of middle-class American journey, especially as a turning point to reinvigorate the cyclotourist's life. In his memoir Giscombe reveals, "I was forty years old then and continuing to do this, to take these long bike tours I'd started after kicking cigarettes so many years before" (*Into and Out* 79). Like Savage and Pham, the genre of the cyclotour is used as a means for physical and emotional change, healing and revelation.

Another great example of the cyclotour narrative is Ron McLarty's 2004 novel *The Memory of Running*, which follows the cross country journey of a forty-three year-old, overweight alcoholic Smithy Ide. In a single week Smith learns of his parents death in a freeway accident and then finds out

about his estranged sister whose dead body is identified in a Los Angeles morgue. Smithy mounts his bicycle in Rhode Island and rides through the pain throughout his life as he crosses the country, becomes fit and sober, heals his relationships and comes to terms with his decisions and the death of loved ones in a brisk novel form reminiscent of the pace of a screenplay.

Giscombe's racialized and experimental cyclotour poem and memoir adhere to this tradition of rejuvenation and recompense. Toward the end of *Into and Out of Dislocation*, Giscombe recounts how "I was forty-four years old and I'd bicycled over the Rocky Mountains for the first time" (280). The rain finally stopped and Giscombe is cleaning up at the motel he stopped at, walks out of the shower room to take in the scenery, reflecting upon his accomplishment, and suddenly the expanse of his life:

A cool breeze touched me and I let the towel fall and stood there in the mountains realizing how much I liked my body, the portable old site of my being alive. I remembered feeling the same way as I'd stood in the open station door in New Liskeard, Ontario, seven years earlier—I was still the same in this doorway, just seven years older and naked. I leaned against the frame and remembered the women I'd been with. I remembered quitting cigarettes, I thought about asthma, and I recalled losing my arm. I remembered getting drunk and I remembered being stoned. I thought about the East, about the times I'd gone walking in the Adirondacks and Catskills and in the Green Mountains in Vermont. (Giscombe, *Into and Out* 280)

True to form, while the experimental poem *Giscome Road* and the later accompanying memoir *Into and Out of Dislocation* defy the vanilla tradition of the cyclotour, the texts also maintain recognizable aspects of the journey through the countryside as a means to heal one's life during midlife crises and engage with the unknown.

At a different point in the memoir, Giscombe reminisces about important bicycle frames he has owned and still owns, telling the story of about a Gitane frame he regrets selling on the streets of Edinburgh.⁶⁶ When he finally encounters another Gitane steel frame that is lighter and more aggressively angled than his standard Raleigh touring frame he nabs it. His wife later refers to the new bicycle as his sports car, as if the fast road racing bicycle filled his need of signifying his virility at middle age (275). The passage performs the accounting of the type of bicycle equipment he uses (Campagnolo shifters instead of Shimano or SRAM) while instilling the narrative of a mid-life cyclotourist seeking adventure and speed.

Critical Cartography and Counter-mapping

In addition to the cyclotouring tradition, *Giscome Road* also depends upon the technology of the map. The map is not always recognized as a colonial tool because it may be so self-apparent. Walter Mignolo, among others, locates one of the first grammars of vernacular Castilian by Elio de Antonio de Nebrija as an essential tool of early capitalism to spread and colonize the New World.⁶⁷ Nebrija's publication of his grammar shares the

^{66.} *Gitane* is the French word for gypsy and was one of the first long-standing bicycle racing brands since 1930. The diaspora of the Romany ethnic group known as gypsies carries a connotation of movement intermixed with a racing bicycle brand associated with such famous bicycle racers as three Tour de France winners in the 1980s: Bernard Hinault (the Badger), Laurent Fignon (the Professor), and the first American Tour de France winner Greg Lemond (Andranian).

^{67.} See Walter D. Mignolo, Chapter 1 "Nebrija in the New World: Renaissance Philosophy of Language and the Spread of Western Literacy" in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance:*

same portentous year of 1492 when Cristobol Colon made his effort to find a shorter trade route to India and ran aground in the Caribbean. Yet the map is another key technology of the European Enlightenment and it should also be examined for its role in empowering the colonial project.

The technology of the map certainly helped colonizers circumnavigate the globe but it also allowed the colonizer to transmogrify the landscape, and the people they encountered on that land, into conceptual frameworks of owned and occupied land with resources as abstractions on a two-dimensional piece of paper. Maps have their own grammar, or set of codes, that work to convince the map reader of the authority of the map's argument: that the represented shape of the land, in fact, belongs to a group of people where territorial lines appear on a map but the same imaginary lines do not appear on the real land with the same contrast between the conquerors and vanquished demarcated neatly on the page.

In the 1980s a group of cartographers were influenced by post-structuralism gaining ground throughout many disciplines in the U.S. Academe. A school of critical cartography began to question the fundamental tenets of maps and mapmaking at a time when the broad field of geography was undergoing its own disciplinary "culture war" between cartography and human geography. This disciplinary "culture war" can be periodized in the late

1980s and throughout the 1990s but this movement should be understood as part of a sustained tradition of critique of cartography (Crampton and Krygier 19).⁶⁸ The geography discipline split between the technological implementation of satellite and airplane imagery in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in quantitative geography and technical cartography versus the critique of such practices by human geographers accusing geography of being complicit in empowering warfare at the time (i.e. the first invasion of Iraq in 1990). The exacting detail of computer-aided maps elided the layers of presumptions made by the cartographer. Furthermore, the implementation of maps to make territorial demands and enforce such demands, began in earnest in the colonial era, and this history and continuing practice was not submitted to deconstructive or semiotic reading practices until the critical cartographers took issue.

Geographers like John Brian Harley, Denis Wood, John Pickles, John Fels, and John Krygier loosely formed a school of thought in human geography under the rubric of “critical cartography.” Critical cartography was deeply influenced by the semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes, the social and intellectual investigations of Michel Foucault, the Frankfurt School and Critical

⁶⁸. Crampton and Krygier argue that French Marxist geographer Yves Lacoste was posing similar critiques of cartography in the 1970s. Arno Peters’s critique of the mercator map projection overvaluing the global north as a racist representation was an ongoing debate from 1974 - 1990. Crampton and Krygier also uncover the questioning of cartographer Mark Jefferson in the early twentieth century critiquing mapmaking in ways that prefigure the critique of critical cartography (Crampton and Krygier 21-23).

Theory, and the project of deconstruction reluctantly demurred but demonstrated by Jacques Derrida. In 1989, J.B. Harley's article "Deconstructing the Map" argued that maps rely upon an unquestioned authority, portraying a pseudo-scientific objectivity and positivism, without recognizing the rhetorical and metaphorical techniques endemic to maps that impose a viewpoint in order to exercise power. Following Harley, Denis Wood published *The Power of Maps* (with John Fels and John Kryger co-authoring key chapters) in 1992, which became a popular bestselling book and garnered a Smithsonian exhibit. "It exerted a considerable influence on academics and non-academics through its argument that maps expressed interests that are often hidden. Its populist message that those interests could be made to work for others was a manifesto for many counter-mapping projects" (Crampton and Krygier 15).

Wood recently rewrote, expanded, and refined the argument in 2010 publishing *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, offering surprising examples of counter-mapping and map art in Dada, Surrealism, and Situationist traditions and providing an incisive case study in counter-mapping by examining the mapping of modern day Palestine. "We are always mapping the invisible or the unattainable or the erasable," Wood argues, this includes, "the future of the past, the whatever-is-not-here-present-to-our-senses-now and, through the gift of maps, transmuting it in to everything it is not...into the real, into the everyday" (*Rethinking the Power of Maps* 15). Wood frames the map as an

encoded performance with subjective propositions that are obscured by how long the practice of mapmaking and map-reading has endured in the modern era. This practice of the performing map only solidified in the last 500 years where “relatively stable states with entrenched, centralized bureaucracies and well-established academies” benefited from maps “[b]y arguing for the nation’s existence with all the facticity at its command, the map turned the fiction...into a fact” (27, 34).⁶⁹

At a basic level, maps “affirm the existence of the things on them. ‘This is here,’ maps say, ‘and that is there,’ as they do so simultaneously affirming the precedent existence of whatever is in question (the *this*, the *state*) and its location (the *there*, its *borders*). Such affirmations constitute powerful existence claims” (emphasis in the original) (34). It is this kind of existence claim that *Giscome Road* seeks to explore and eventually counter-maps, or in C. S. Giscombe’s phrasing, unmaps:

⁶⁹. Wood contextualizes his periodization:

Look, I’m not saying maps had *no* role in human affairs prior to 1500, but that after 1500 maps began to play the role they continue to play today. The decision to draw the line here is like Ian Hacking’s drawing of the line for the birth of statistics at 1660. It’s not that there hadn’t been all kinds of precursors—the tossing of Sumerian knucklebones, dice throwing by Marcus Aurelius, 9th-century Indian theorizing about probability—but that, “We do not ask how *some* concept of probability became possible. Rather we need to understand a quite specific event that occurred around 1660: the emergence of *our* concept of probability.” Why? Because “for me the search for preconditions is more than an attempt at historical explanation. I am inclined to think that the preconditions for the emergence of our concept of probability determine the very nature of this intellectual object,” and therefore, he continues, the very nature of quantum mechanics, statistical inference, and inductive logic (Wood, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* 23).

I'll reject the idea of poetics as being a map through the wild and side with [Canadian poet] Barry McKinnon's long understanding—including his resistance to the determinate/ indeterminate binary—of "a/ the world *unmapped*"; I've added the italics again because that's what we do, we unmap, we try to break the static order down. (Giscombe, *In the Way* n. pag.)

But this countermapping through the poem does not abandon mapmaking as a poetic code in the poem. In fact, the limited criticism on *Giscome Road* merely mentions the use of maps as graphic elements or contrapuntal marginalia. Certainly, no one comments on the role of the bicycle—preferring to cast the poem as being organized around sound, performance, and race (Nielsen 1997, Hudson 2000, and Gilbert 2006). Nielsen only briefly discusses *Giscome Road* and it is in the service of the poem playing with the concepts and the sound of the poem "I was / Africa & America on the same bicycle," a brief line that is not examined for its reliance upon the bicycle nor its marriage of two continents in the context of a long poem with several map elements used throughout (21). (We will return, again, to this key moment in the poem later in this chapter.) Peter Hudson identifies that Giscome "problematizes the geography of Black British Columbia" by "construct[ing] narratives of space" that remind Hudson of Edward Said's concept of "rival geographies" along with Michel de Certeau's commentary on space in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Despite recognizing the role of geographical space, Hudson does not analyze the role of the graphic geography of the maps throughout the poem. While recognizing how Giscome counters "the official mappings of North American space" Hudson finds that *Giscome Road*

“appropriately combines a spacial metaphor with a musical” metaphor. Undoubtedly, musicality is a strong element throughout the poem, however, the incessant “trill” that carries throughout *Giscome Road* may be an “oblique reference” to the death of Miles Davis and his use of the Harmon mute on his trumpet with the central stem removed causing a higher-pitched, signature trill throughout Davis’s oeuvre in early albums *Kind of Blue* and *Sketches of Spain*.⁷⁰ The opening section “Sound Carries” is certainly musical but it concentrates on literalizing the place names on a map haunting a landscape that has no natural tie to human nomination. It is all about the facticity of the map not matching the landscape. Finally, critic Alan Gilbert, too, gathers the multiplicity of *Giscome Road* into a metaphor of poetry as portage where “poetry is a kind of portage between rivers of song,” which also “means that language, history, and identity are actively constructed” (128). The flow of the trill is not strictly limited to music, orality, and performance because of the prominence of maps and the bicycle throughout the poem.

This avoidance of the central role of the map—a role that is more than a graphic element merely supplementing the primacy of the ostensible text—is similar to the way critics of Charles Olson’s poetry tend to privilege his

⁷⁰. “Miles Davis died while we were living in Vancouver, he died early that fall[...]. “So What,” “Human Nature,” all of *Sketches of Spain*. I’d seen him play “Human Nature” at the Kool Jazz Festival in Saratoga the year before [Giscombe’s daughter] Madeline was born—much of my 1998 poetry book *Giscome Road* is an oblique reference to that performance, or an homage to it” (Giscombe, *Into and Out* 276).

projective verse solely in its aural/oral plane. Critic and poet Nathaniel Mackey first identified Olson's active use of the page as a pictorial device with charged lines scattered like a musical score where the words have a projective physicality and force upon the page. Critic Eleanor Berry argues Olson's lines approach concrete poetry, and are not necessarily in the service of the musicality, with one of the Maximus Poems arguably shaped like the masthead of a sailing ship (Berry 65).⁷¹ Just as Mackey and Berry have shown how Olson used the field of the page as a graphic intention, we must investigate the counter-mapping that *Giscome Road* performs, just as Denis Wood argues, all maps perform an argument.⁷²

Postings

On the surface maps are simple graphic communications about a territory. But the underlying system and the propositional nature of maps are what is of greatest concern to Wood and critical cartographers. The signification system of a map is a complex plane relying upon a mixture of signifiers in what Wood openly calls a myth, following the semiotic reading practices of Roland Barthes. The structure of the myth of the map is made

^{71.} The jagged lines of the poem do not necessarily correspond to the masthead of a ship but Berry's argument still stands as Olson's poetry has a definite graphic charge to it on the page.

^{72.} Excellent examples of counter-mapping projects include Denis Wood's *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*, Rebecca Solnit et al.'s *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*, and Lize Mogel et al.'s *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*.

possible by five broad categories, what Wood terms a “conceptual scaffold:”

1. The map is a vehicle for creating and conveying *authority* about and over territory.
2. The map’s *authority* is the social manifestation of its *factuality*.
3. The *factuality* of the map is established by the social assent given to the *propositions* it embodies.
4. The *propositions* assume the form of *linkages* among conditions, states, processes, and behaviors conjoined in the territory.
5. The *linkages* are realized through *postings*, fundamental, spatial/meaning propositions expressed in the sign plane of the map. This is to say that the power of the map is, quite literally, a function of the power of the posting which, by embedding a fundamental, ontological proposition inside a locative one, leverages the power of both into a...performance of the real. (Wood, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* 52)

The power of the map, like Barthes’s particular use of a semiotic myth (see Chapter 2), is to perform the proposition through the map postings to illicit the resulting facticity and social consent, collectively to assert the authority of the map as a natural, objective reality, even though the map has always been a constructed argument. This undressing of the map is what made Wood’s initial publication of *The Power of Maps* so intriguing for a wide audience because map readers were suddenly provided a theoretical framework to engage the process by which maps make factual propositions enmeshed in a gestural, deictic motion that such a fact exists in a particular place in the real world—*here*—even though the map is a representational system that elides the confluences of a entire host of signifying elements in order to create a “performance of the real.”

Wood identifies how the map is constructed in such a way as to be self

apparent and factual when, through the combination of several different sub-sign systems encoded in the map, the map is always promoting a specific argument about the relationships that congeal within and surround the map plane, pictorially and socially. Just as Barthes graphs additional levels of signification before a sign system produces the elegant simplicity and ideological force of a myth, Wood refers to “codes of intrasignification” as those elements that operate and converse within the plane field of the map whereas “codes of extrasignification” operate “outside the map...*at the level of myth* (they are involved in supporting the map’s authoritativeness)” (81). In conjunction with John Fels, Wood terms the individual relationships and effects of these sub-systems of significations as codes or “postings.”

Postings are “spatial/meaning” propositions that can be simple or complex throughout the map plane. These postings are different types of marks on the map that collude, conjoin, and interact with one another to perform the proposal of the map. Ranging from the date range on a map, the border and typographical presentation, the tectonic scale of a map, the printed language used to signify a map element or place name such as Giscome Portage or Giscome, B.C., and the graphic icon all create the types of codes or “postings” that circulate within the map. This must also include elements that border the map and would not necessarily be thought of as part of the map. These latter types of postings are what Wood terms the “perimap” and include “titles, dates, legends, keys, scale statements, graphs, diagrams,

tables, pictures, photographs, more map images, emblems, texts, references, footnotes, potentially any device of visual expression” where the “map image is surrounded, sometimes invaded by a *perimap*, a crowd of signs.” These constitutive elements are gathered as natural and self apparent where all of the elements become an over-arching presentational code, creating “a structured, ordered, articulated, and affective display: a legitimate discourse” (97).

It is this ceaseless circulation of meaning within the sign plane of the map that makes the map the potent instrument for management that it is. Its ability to present ontological propositions (such as the existence of counties, zoning districts, ecological domains) as locative ones (that are located here) gives the map an unrivaled ability to transform desires, guesses, suppositions—you name it—into facts, facts the map then composes into territories that it hierarchically layers to permit the transmission of authority along with all the rest of the combinatorial legerdemain this opens the door to. (66)

Map readers must “unfold” these multiple layers of postings that create complex signs and supersigns within and without the plane of the map proper in “a cycle of interpretation” that map readers “continually tear down and rebuild” on multiple levels. The interpretation can enter at a variety of levels such as: the “elemental level,” or the level of the most basic mark; the “systemic level,” where postings become systems of features such gatherings of lines becoming a river or highway system because the postings operate together as a system; the “synthetic level,” where different posting systems “enter into an alliance” and “collude in the genesis of an embracing geographic icon;” and finally the encompassing “presentation level” where the map postings and the *perimap* join and comprise “a complete and legitimized

map” (98-99).

Of all these various layers and levels of postings, I want to enter *Giscome Road*, at what Wood calls the elemental level, in order to identify how the poem challenges the signified waters, lines, contours, place names and the overall conception of the map. The iconic code, the linguistic code, and the tectonic code are the posting types that will prove to be most useful in exposing how *Giscome Road* counter-maps: because the physical demands of the cyclotour and the absorption of the landscape at a kineaesthetic level do not correspond to the Giscome locations as a convincing “there” or “here” gestured by the authoritative map, the authority of the map is undermined.⁷³ “But then, this is what maps do, affirm the existence of the things on them. ‘This is here,’ maps say, ‘and that is there,’” (34). A map “presents us with the reality we *know* as differentiated from the reality we *see* and *hear* and *feel*. The map doesn’t let us *see* anything” (16). The discrepancies between the kineaesthetic knowledge of the cyclotouring poet’s muscles and phenomenological experience absorbing the landscape do not correspond to the postings on the map. In this way the poem is a perimap, a new border, and ultimately the poem attempts to subsume the maps as references in the poem, operating as a counter-map, to locate the poetic presence of John-R-Giscome-ness in a way the conventional map cannot portray or satisfy

⁷³. *Here* is also the title of Giscombe's previous collection of poems obsessed with place.

through typical mapping techniques. Like all maps, though, the resulting perimap poem of *Giscome Road* has an argument.

“Sound Carries” the Map into the Poem

The reader encounters the first map in the first section of the poem, which has no discernible sub-sections or stanzaic breaks besides the page-break. The epigraph as paratext includes two short paragraphs where the poet explains who John R. Giscome was as a historical figure from Jamaica and what he accomplished in his lifetime. The second paragraph describes the book’s cover photo as a 1926 photo of Giscome’s business partner Henry McDame, a fellow Jamaican immigrant to Canada, and how the buildings are long gone “though the location persists—as do the places named Giscome—in various descriptions. The name’s the last thing to disappear” (Giscombe, *Giscome Road* 7). The opening poem “Sound Carries” enacts what exactly this means for the place name to be the last thing to disappear on a landscape. Throughout the first section of the poem, the ghostly demarcations are traced through the landscape as if the place names on the map existed in the real world independent of the map proposing that such a place named “Giscome Portage” is “here.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴. This phrase carries the connotations of the famous ending to Wallace Stevens's poem "The Idea of Order at Key West": "In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds." (W Stevens 106). The phrase was later used in the study on Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. Stevens, Hamlet, Marx, or Derrida are not on cyclotour with Giscombe but the phrase is appropriate nonetheless for the postings performed on the map and the revenant effect of the historical erasure of John R. Giscome approaching the effect of Steven's original poetic phrasing of the poet and Derrida's investigation of the role of

The poem begins by tracing the sounds of maps with the place names that do not exist in the real world. But the combination of the Dahomey river god from West Africa⁷⁵ and Giscome's name moving along the landscape create, "no line

between the old river god & the old man's name coming up along the river & on the road:

an endless invisible present going on, a noise

(with nothing at the other side of it) (*Giscome Road* 13)

Space, time, culture, and geography become impenetrable as the poem immediately enters the area. The "endless invisible present" is disconnected from the impact of John R. Giscome much less his ancestry extending to the West African slave trade. The name is but a noise with nothing responding to confirm a correlation and "nothing at the other side of it" because no line or limn is discernible. "Sound Carries" the name of Giscome but nothing in the landscape accepts the nomination as valid.

The actions of the "Giscome" namesake travel along the landscape in the surface of the map/the geography of the poem but through the imaginary of the poem attempting to reconnect to the past. The name Giscome performs several actions in its movement on page fourteen: "the name rowed (because water's got its ways," "the name rode along being/ a commotion," and "the

hauntology/ontology in the work of Karl Marx .

⁷⁵. Among other allusions, Giscombe claims the poem references Dahomey gods in his memoir on page 78.

name oar'd along / in the current & the description." Later, after the map image interjects and becomes the poem, "the name cycled along sourceless in the trees" (16). Critic Peter Hudson interprets this shuttling of the place name as "the prediscursive moments of sound" but the physicality of the movement with transportational agency is undeniable. The name moves first as John R. Giscome did with a canoe across the waterways to discover the portage. Then the name moves as Giscombe the poet moves as a cyclotourist, entering the landscape in the most physical way possible by cycling and riding. In his memoir, Giscombe clarifies how important it was for him to decide upon a cyclotour in order to engage the landscape for the first time. On his "Tour of Cariboo," C. S. Giscombe notes

And toward the end of September I set out to bicycle the five hundred miles up into the Cariboo, up to Giscome itself, up to the site in the far North that named John R. Giscome's arrival there. I was writing more and more about geography, so I wanted to experience—in as profoundly physical a way as I could—the country changing as I went north; plus approaches are important in that one does, often, choose how to make them. It's not that there would have been a "wrong" way to get, for the first time, to the country where John R. had flourished, but if one has—as I did—several choices at one's disposal then the act of choosing one way to start (over others) has obvious value, obvious significance. The choices that come after that first one come out of other exigencies, other—unforeseen—obligations: such is as good a definition as any for "adventure." [Emphasis added](Giscombe, *Into and Out* 78-79)

The choice of a kineaesthetic experience by bicycle "in as profoundly physical a way as" he could rather than any other means of transport was imperative to Giscombe. Of all the possible ways to travel north, Giscombe decisively mounted his Raleigh touring bicycle and "rode" and "cycled" after John R. Giscome. Therefore, the physicality of the name performed throughout the

notes as place names through the chosen route of the cyclist.

The page break at page fourteen carries the next line syntactically to another line on the adjacent page but there are two inches of white space separating the top of the page from the next line, as if the first line on page fifteen can stand alone but the line is also far closer to being a part of the map sign below the poem line.

bending north (out of range, peripheral & sourceless):

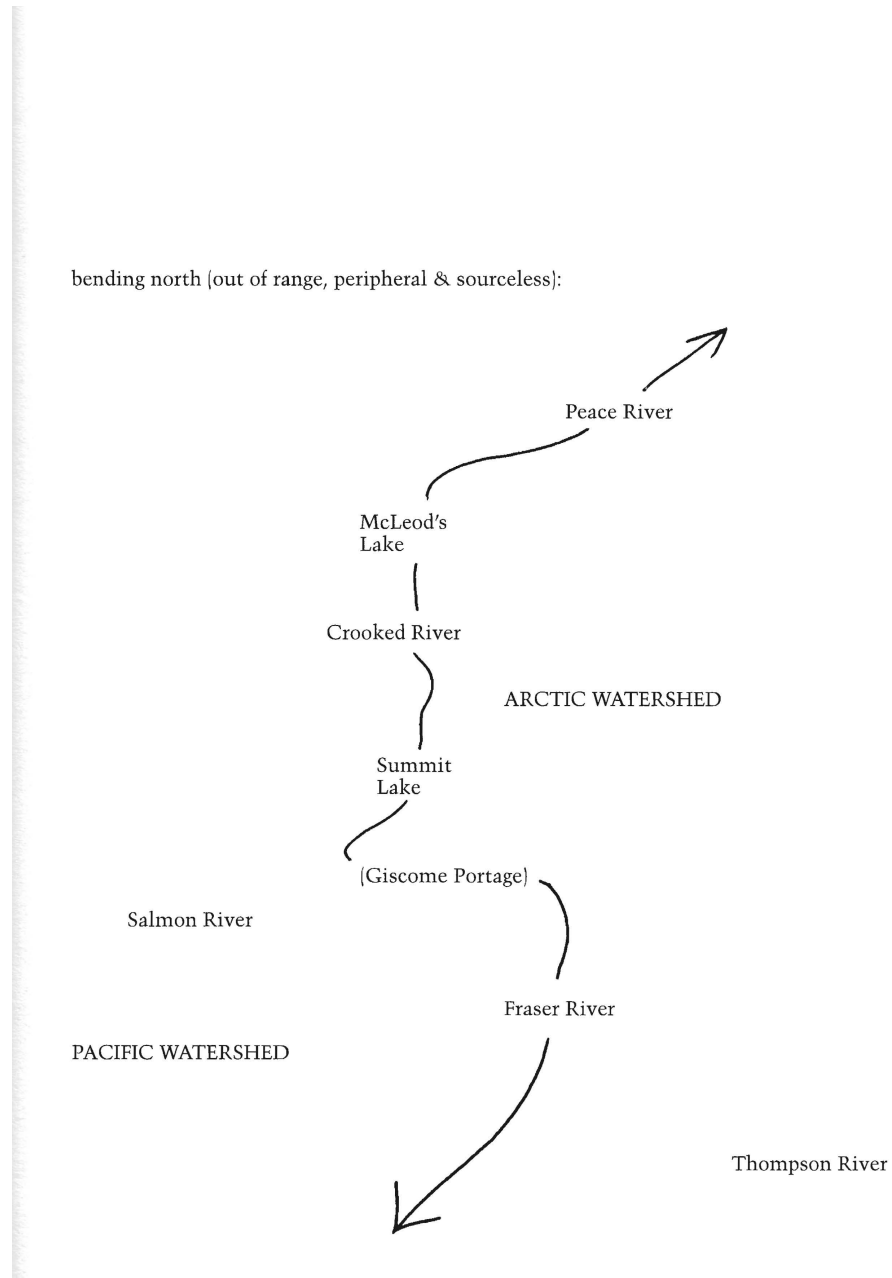


Fig. 9: (Giscome Portage) map-poem-perimap (15)

After reading a page and one-half of staggered lines organized around the pressing actions carrying the sound of the place name, the first map sign in the poem is striking in its simplicity and informality. Only words ("linguistic

codes” in Wood’s schema) and the arrow markings (or “icon codes”) move up the page and down the page as encoded postings. There is no discernible edge to this map in the initial section of the poem whereas “over the edge” is the title and heavy trope at the end of *Giscome Road*. There are no boundaries or contour lines to post the topographical code but the performance of the words create the mountain ranges by reference to the majuscule “WATERSHED.” The large amount of white space, operating as a subtle negative space, creates further scalar codes of expansion and vast regions that subtly collude with the uppercase “ARTIC WATERSHED” and “PACIFIC WATERSHED” on the page. Now creeks, streams, and rivers become tributaries to the two primary outward-seeking arrows that transport the rivers to the two oceans. The primary use of linguistic postings—the word markings creating a code of a geographical concept located in a specific place—creates the posting for the watershed system across a vast landscape. Without iconic markings of blue lines, shadowed peaks, or detailed satellite imagery all of these postings interrelate simultaneously to signify a simple river system emanating from the parenthetical “(Giscome Portage)” located at the center of the map sign. All of these postings perform an apparently simple map. But the proposal, once decoded, is that Giscome Portage is the central link to massive watershed systems that connect entire oceans across a large continent. This is a subtle but forceful argument that must be decoded in the confluence of map codes to illuminate the force of the

argument.

But the map and poem continue to counter-map outside the bounds of what the reader may consider to be the bounds of the-map-in-the-poem. The commentary of the line of poetry that introduces the map—“bending north (out of range, peripheral & sourceless):”—functions as part of the map. The line of poetry is not completely outside of the map—even though it is outside of the plane field of the map proper. The line above the map should be read as a perimap element, just as we consider the paratext of the front matter of the book, because it blurs “the line” between map and poem, form and function, of what operates as a line of poetry and what operates as factual, authoritative map.

This traffic between ostensible poetry and integrated graphic-only map is essential for how *Giscome Road* constantly performs map postings as a thorough counter-mapping practice. The map postings are inseparable from the boundaries of the linguistic poem and the maps cannot be overlooked (under-looked, really) as graphic ephemera or eye-flavor. “bending north (out of range, peripheral & sourceless):” bears the introductory colon of prefacing the map but it also provides a cardinal direction like a compass rose in a perimap identifying north; the line reinforces the borderlessness of the map as a conceptual figure of that-which-can-not-be-located, or is therefore “sourceless;” the map is proffered without a scale but the linguistic code of the rivers and oceans create the hemispheric order as postings that become “out

of range;” and the line reinforces the ontologically “peripheral” position of Giscome (and by extension Giscombe) because the voice of the poem is cognizant of the historical status of Giscome Portage as a lesser known location and therefore something to be counter-mapped.

All of these layered significations are operating simultaneously and pervasively within the greater sign system of the map slipping into the poem. As a whole, page fifteen argues—as a map sign system and poem as perimap—that the “there” place of Giscome Portage should be conceived as the center of a wide berth of geographical systems including watersheds building major rivers that lead to the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. Giscome Portage is the center-point. The map, with the poetic line perimap, operates as a seemingly simple sign but the proposal is complex and poignant, once we decode the map as a new mythological system: Giscome Portage is an unrecognized center of a large watershed system; the geographic and historical significance of Giscome Portage should be accorded a corresponding social status of importance (e.g. similar to the status of the Great Divide in the Rocky Mountains). Yet the place name “(Giscome Portage)” is diminished, parenthetical, begging the question of its exact location, peripheral even at the core, and the presentational code of the map—the overall styling—communicates a hand drawn musing with typeset names perhaps entered at the typesetting of the book. The map is also a demurred declaration by its greater context: while Giscome Portage should be

an important and historically significant site that was the result of a Jamaican immigrant making his “mark” on the human geography, the “(Giscome Portage)” map remains within a poem and it will not attain the full authoritative stature of the traditional map with a state author compelling recognition and often willing to use force to get people to believe the authority of the map and the state.

But the idea of a source, an elusive etiology of beginning in the river systems as well as John R. Giscome as a potential ancestor is reconstituted in an archival rush of what little is known to end the “Sound Carries” section of the poem. As historical sources, the poem cites

SOURCE

(& MOUTH): John Robert Giscome, “a negro miner,” “a pioneer,” John Robert

Giscome, “native of Jamaica West India” (self-described: “miner & explorer”), he flourished in 19th C. British Columbia, found a short way up into the Arctic & back out.

After whom: Giscome Canyon & the Giscome Rapids on the Fraser,

Giscome, B.C. In the Cariboo, Giscome Portage between

the watersheds, the Giscome Portage Historical Site, the Giscome Portage Historical Society,

real Giscome Road from Old Cariboo Hwy in Prince George to Rte 16 —fabled Yellowhead Hwy—east of town. (*Giscome Road* 13)

All the places with the derived Giscome place name are then connected to the Caribbean and the Pan-African diaspora, or what Paul Gilroy described in *The Black Atlantic* as modern black political culture’s ontological possibility for “seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more

appropriately approached via the homonym routes” rather than a typical “relationship of identity to roots and rootedness” (Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* 19). The poem then references Barbadian poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s long poem trilogy *The Arrivants*, when further connecting Giscome to “the name that came & comes from *the Islands*” (*Giscome Road* 17), which is the final book title in Brathwaite’s trilogy originally published in 1969.

Various other designations:

the rootless surname up on the river names rocks & water up there, the beauty

of apparitions is broken down & inflected both, the old Islands name,

the name that came & comes from *the Islands*,

the arrival, w/ John R. Giscome, of the blackest name’s edge (& its variations & the effaced speaker’s own name & parentage, Afro-

Caribbean, the spiral of announced approaches,

of descent & association, the long heart’s most basic necessity out where ambiguous fields meet the rim of houses, something

presignified, uninhabited—

a fleshy little bridge among the continents:

a little “Spanish” stole into view up along the river, islands appeared

to heave into situation) (Giscombe, *Giscome Road* 17)

The poem purposefully mixes the name of historical category now crossing the contents of the actual river as a revenant of a singular arrival of the immigrant John R. Giscome from Jamaica. The black name “Giscome” is black in the ink on the map but also as a racialized trace of the Afro-diasporic

“arrival” of Giscome to British Columbia. The parenthetical aside of the poem’s speaker, sharing a variation of the same name, briefly interrupts the threading of the name. Territorial markers on the map and historical racial place names intermix as if the name “Giscome” is the gathering of letters like “the spiral of announced approaches” on the page. Where the words float above the imagined landscape and eventually the viewer must make a “descent & association” to get at the land that precedes the name— “presignified, uninhabited.” Whereas the name—Giscome—now becomes “a fleshy little bridge” much like the odd bridge between watersheds that makes Giscome Portage a bridge between the Arctic and the Pacific. But this “fleshy little bridge” now spans further into the Americas and West Africa, with the reference to “a little ‘Spanish’” in the blood of the name, later explained by a reference to a text by a “Dr. Rogers” who interprets a portrait of Simone Bolivar, the liberator of South America, as containing “a trace of Negroid strain in the fullness of the lips, usually the last trace of Negro ancestry to disappear” (17). This trope of “the lip” and the racialized “Spanish” euphemism carries throughout the poem as if the namesake of Giscome not only floats above the land but also bears the burden of the one drop rule of African blood descent under the hegemony of white European settlement, all decoded by the apparent “fullness” of a person’s lips reminiscent of phrenology and other racist belief systems.

Entered and Failed to Enter History

Giscombe finds the symbolism contained in the enigmatic presence and absence of John R. Giscombe throughout Canadian geography as “the figure of outward,” re-purposing Charles Olson’s dedication to his friend and fellow poet Robert Creeley at the beginning of *The Maximus Poems* (Butterick 3).

John R. inhabited parts not scripted for him, he became finally—in the geography of Canada—a person out of place. I think it’s because his place of origin was not England or Ontario or the United States that he falls so far outside of “history”: he did not clear a way for others like him to follow, he was not a “pioneer.” ...To me he became the presence of qualification and the demand for compound sentences of description, a symbol of that for which there is no symbol or image—he is, to me, what Olson described Robert Creeley as being, “the figure of outward.” (Giscombe, *Into and Out* 165)

With John R. being “out of place,” where “he falls so far outside of ‘history,’” he becomes the figure of that which cannot be represented. This is different from Olson ascribing to the homebound Creeley as someone engaged in the world in a Heideggerian sense of being out in the world. Giscombe is focusing on the outward as liminal periphery but with an outsider status that resists easy representation because “Giscombe” remains as a place name throughout the British Columbian landscape. Though Giscombe may only live on in obscure references and finally in forgotten place markers across the British Columbian landscape, “he got all outside the lines that geography, race, and the languages of white people had made for him and, that way, both entered and failed to enter history. He went on over into Canada” (150-51).

Eventually, Giscombe realizes that there is likely no discernible blood relation to John R. Giscome

There were no conventional bloodlines, hidden or unhidden, and no family resemblance to claim or lack of family resemblance to wonder over: instead [John R. Giscome] was a series of references and, more important, he was a landscape itself and the way through landscape both. He loomed over life, bigger than it. He was the context for life—it went on quite literally in his name without his having to have much, directly, to do with it. He was aloof in the past [...] he'd been, simply enough, an impossible man who several times or, better, ways *outdistanced* his descriptions. Yet he was no hasty symbol or paltry image. (*Into and Out* 193)

Critic Peter Hudson views Giscombe's references to blood as a means to question the colonial fictions of origin embedded in the geography of place as a part of the poem creating a "rival geography" as termed by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. For Hudson, *Giscome Road* not only allows the poet to ruminate on the movement into Canada as outward and northward but it is specifically "important in a Black Canadian context for evoking the possibilities of the poetics of place" (Hudson 235). Ruminating on the lack of black British Columbian history as well as steeling himself when feeling himself as an outsider in Fort George, British Columbia, Giscombe quips in a grocery store check out line, "I stood in the cashier's line with the white Fort George people, feeling literary and a little smug in that ability to *read*, aware of myself as black, as a Giscombe, thinking this is the heritage, O my brothers and cousins in Canada, I'm what is hidden in the blood" (Giscombe, *Into and Out* 192). This carriage of the blood is another trope of presence | absence of John R. Giscome throughout the poem. Hudson relates blood and the edge

as an endless etiology.

Importantly, the blood to which Giscombe refers here is not a marker of purity. Blood—or more specifically the persistence of what he calls, drawing on J.A. Roger's *Sex and Race*, a "Negroid stain" (17)—circulates throughout *Giscome Road*. It acts as a trope for the "longest nuance" of miscegenation, casting doubt on a unified and pure nation or space. Paired with a metaphor of space, Giscombe's insistent one drop becomes, paradoxically, both a source and the impossibility of sources. It is both a center or root, as well as a sign of the ambivalent peripheries of space: "the outermost edge," a border, a verge. It is as if the search for the center, for origins, always leads one further away from grounded truth and towards a Derridean "series of explanations". (Hudson 235)

This exasperating "series of explanations" is what the poem continually encounters and may have been cause for Giscombe writing the memoir afterward because he felt that the initial poem was a failure (including the subsequent memoir) (Giscombe, *In the Way* n. pag.). Nonetheless, the poem obsesses as much about racialized bloodlines as much as it countermaps and claims the bicycle.

The Northernmost Road

The Northernmost Road section is undoubtedly concerned with the liminal, the edge, the "up" of Canada, and reaching the exploration of the road that C. S. Giscombe describes driving (not biking). It is as if the poem is the verification of the map: "—Giscome Road's a real road" and the poem confirms the factual reality of the existence of the road. But this road continues to be racialized as having "flamenco overtones to it" when describing unknown music overheard on Quebecois radio, or the return of the black Bolivarian lip:

"Spanish" was always a euphemism, the word used

among planter families down in the Islands,

now among the descendants in Canada: (Giscombe, *Giscome Road* 17)

The voice of this section of the poem is concerned with sources, beginnings, and origins but not at the expense of losing the edge of the map: the limit of description where lines and words no longer carry across a geographic space.

The sub-sections of the second section of *Giscome Road* contain numbering in a subtle sequence: 1, 2, 2.5, 2.7, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The facing section 2 appears on the left hand page with 2.5 and 2.7 following on the right hand page, as if the sections are numerically a necessary part of the series but not full integers or as if some kind of unexplained metrics is necessary. The technique connotes exact measurement, hierarchal ordering, even cadastral surveying, while keeping the reader guessing at the sudden numbering that does not return after the partial decimal sections of 2.5 and 2.7. William Carlos Williams played with unexpected numbering in his 1923 *Spring and All* where section numbers are typographically inverted on the page and out of order, switching between Roman numerals and Arabic numerals, with unpredictable ordering that cannot be reduced to a formula or equation (WC Williams 178-82). While reminiscent of Williams, Giscombe's use of the numerals sets the stage for the entry of the map as a full stanza within the poem.

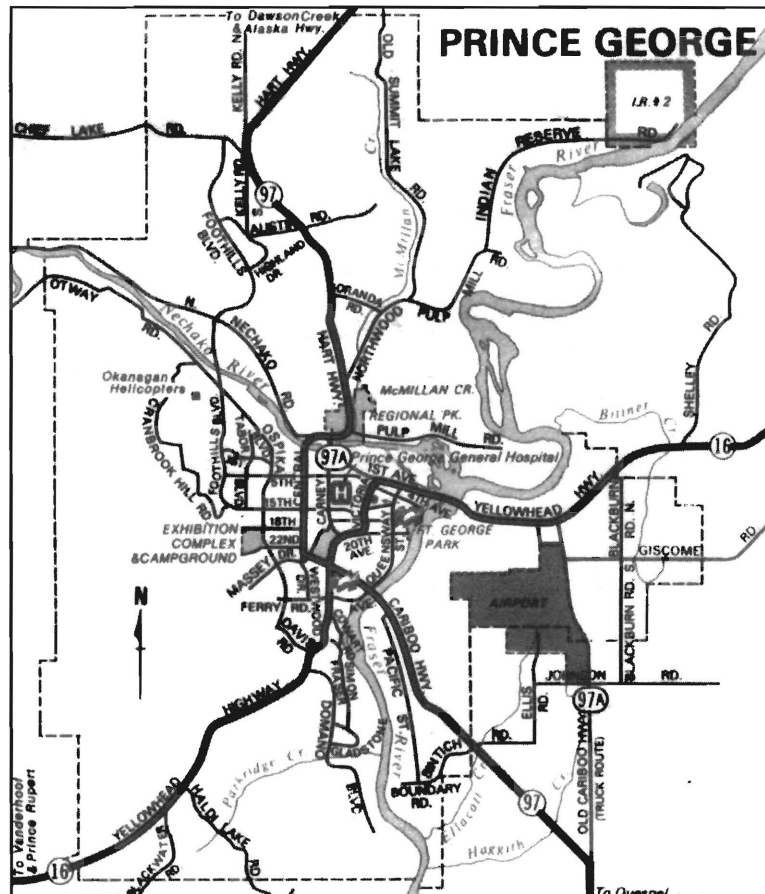


Fig. 10: Map Stanza of Prince George, British Columbia (25)

Through the numeral sequence the reader is to accept the Prince George map as a whole stanzaic unit within the poem. The image can be taken as a form of heteroglossia, another map form like the seemingly hand drawn map that depicted Giscome Portage connecting two watersheds. But upon closer inspection, as with any stanza (or room), the map certainly has an edge and Giscome Road, “a real road,” is right there, on the page of the poem, as a

part of the poem, within the poem, with the road hitting the edge of the contained stanza map at the right margin. This is not simply literalizing the metaphors of liminality and the edge of the map. The poem integrates the map as a poetic device while embodying the experience of the landscape as a synesthetic edge of sound, where the name “Giscome Road” carries past the confounding lines and postings of the map toward what the poem can perform in going beyond the edge—what the map cannot convey—without the poem as perimap and the map as poem.

Giscome Portage

The edge of the map, as an embodied exploration by the cycling poet continues in the “Giscome Portage” the third section of the poem. Whereas the poem integrates the map of Prince George as a stanza, the “Giscome Portage” section begins with a darkened reproduction of an 1871 map of British Columbia.

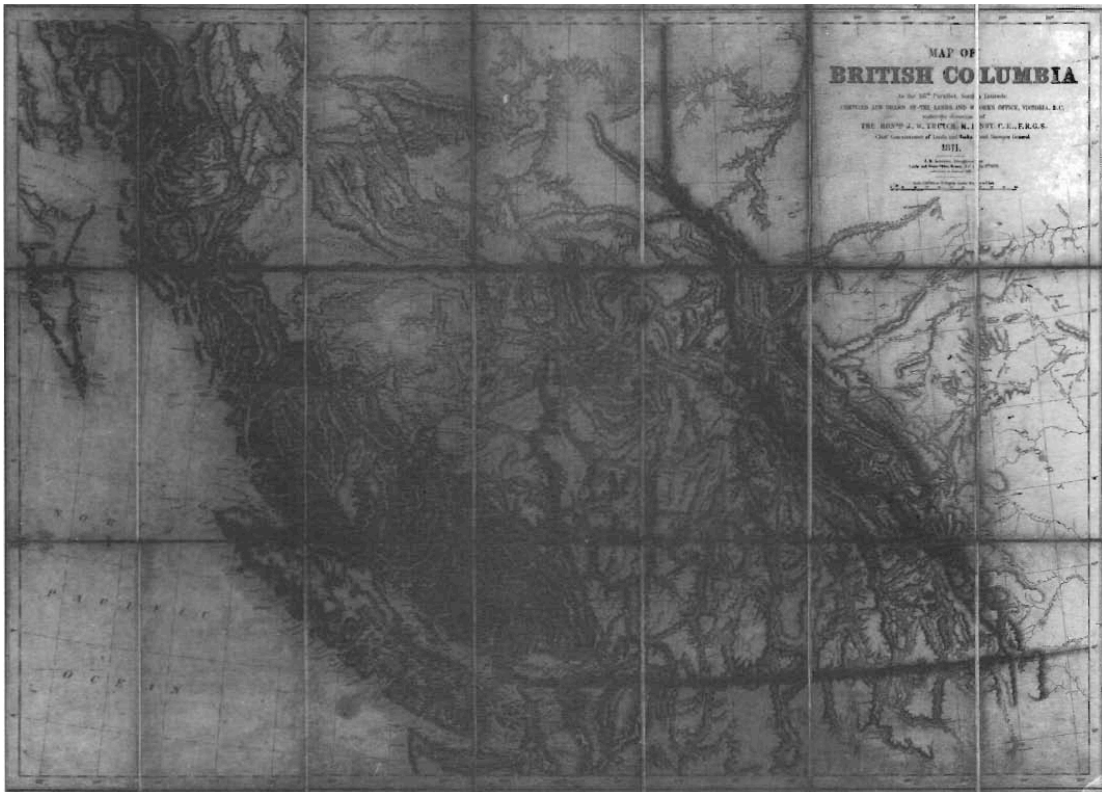


Fig. 11: Map of British Columbia, 1871 (31)

The map is contemporary with what John R. Giscome would have used in order to prospect for gold and eventually “discover” the Giscome Portage. The reproduction shows the folds of the map with dense, dark quadrants where the mountain ranges and rivers concentrate on the page. It can be taken as a “dark continent” to be explored in the sense that Joseph Conrad’s Marlowe refers to the mystery of maps cast upon Africa. Throughout the entirety of the poem, *Giscome Road* can be taken as a counter-response to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, in particular, who is recognized in official history as influencing an area and who is relegated to the peripheries. The line “The

edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green” later opens the final section of the poem along with “we pounded along” as incorporated quotes from *Heart of Darkness*. To prepare for the use of those quotations the “Giscome Portage” section discerns the lines between who gets to exploit and whom becomes the exploited in colonial territories.

After the dark rendition of the British Columbia map the text of the poem then begins, parenthetically denoting “(3 Gentlemen)”—Dunlevy, Runnalls, and Gauvreau—who are all white settlers. The parenthesis marks their decentralized positions while maintaining the veneer of their social status as “Gentlemen.” Then the poem re-enacts the confluences and interconnections of the various rivers as if transposing the map into the lines of the poem where names such as Clearwater, Fraser, Canoe, Parsnip, Finlay, and Yukon are the recognized names for the density of river ways amassing in the map and now in the poem. Then, the three gentleman enter from the archive at Giscome Portage:

“To further his ends,” Fr. Morice sd, of Dunlevy, “he established a post at Giscome Portage, a section of land named after a man he had for some time in his employ as cook.”

But Rev. Runnalls gets to the point: “To further his trade w/ the natives he established a number of outposts, one of wch was at Giscome Portage, a place wch was named for a negro cook in Dunlevy’s employ.”

(And Mr. Gauvreau:

“The Fraser River at Giscombe Portage is a noble stream—”

the portage through wch to step further in or through wch to come

through groups of people eating—continuous, (33)

Despite John R. Giscombe's namesake attributed to the portage in Giscombe's obituary, the sources from the archive with the voices and authority of the three gentlemen make John R. Giscombe a minor character. "[B]ut as a cook," says critic Alan Gilbert, Giscome "seems only to be given credit as the one for whom the portage was named after, not the one who discovered it" (125-26). As if the portage could only be named by the white settlers who were graceful enough to name a place after an employee because a black settler cannot nominate the landscape in the same way. At the same time, the use of portage as a connector, a meeting place, a portal to access "further in" or a place "through wch to come" is construed as of vital importance to the human geography of the place named "Giscome Portage."

Of course, the landscape had pre-Colombian names with the native populations and the Giscome Portage section of the poem connects to the history of the Thompson River Indians as well. This edge of history and knowledge is plumbed with an insistence on the word "edge" in the next page, just before the poem includes the map of the cosmological world of the Thompson River Indians.

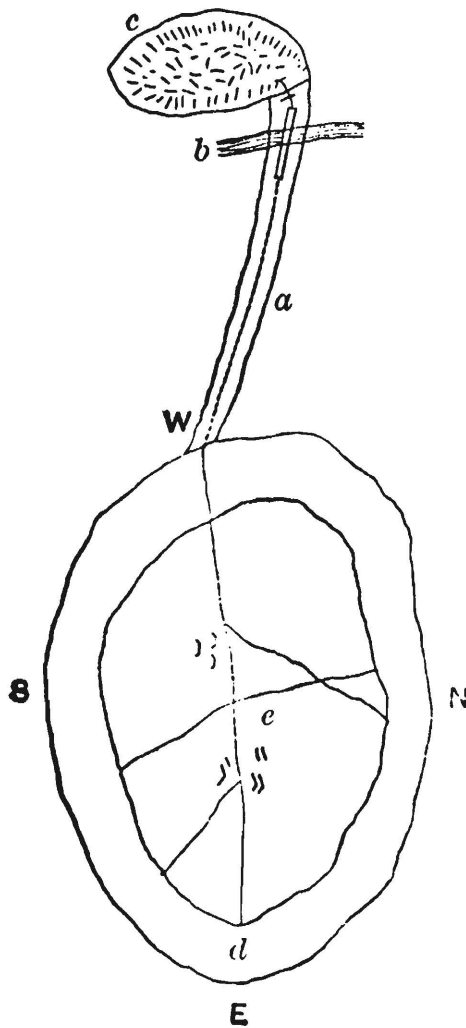


Fig. 290. Sketch of World. *a*, Trail leading from the earth to the land of the ghosts, with tracks of the souls; *b*, River and log on which the souls cross; *c*, Land of the ghosts, and dancing souls; *d*, Lake surrounding the earth; *e*, Earth, with rivers and villages; N, S, E, W, Points of the compass.

Fig. 12: The Nlak •a'pamux Map of the World (35)

The cardinal directions of North, South, East and West are reordered to emphasize the role of the sun, especially at sunset in the West, as the access point to “Land of the ghosts, and dancing souls.” Below the map, the

commentary from the archive returns:

Said Jas. Teit, "They call their entire tribe Nlak •a'pamux." But are called the Thompson River Indians, that name "taken from the name of the river in the neighborhood of wch they make their homes." (35)

The map exposes the multiple possibilities for how human geography can relate to the area now dubbed British Columbia, a name resulting from British Colonial rule following the Anglicization of Colon into Columbus as the first colonizer of the Americas. The following comment with the linguistic spelling of "Nlak •a'pamux" with the consonant combinations unfamiliar to English, the use of the bullet symbol and apostrophe to register the type of pronunciation or stress, all work to contrast strongly with the ubiquitous "Thompson" name imposed upon the first nations people.

The inclusion of the poem not only further questions the layering of names but it is reminiscent of the re-evaluation and stance of the cross-cultural poetics in the 1970s under the rubric of ethnopoetics. After the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and the variety of ethnic-based struggles including the American Indian Movement, the Black Power Movement, and the Asian American Movement, poets and anthropologists argued that so-called "primitive" and non-Western poetics were complex models of innovation, and as such, worthy of experimental poetry's attention. In anthologies such as *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia & Oceania* (1968), *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas* (1972), and *Symposium of the Whole: A*

Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics (1983), Jerome Rothenberg gathered examples of poetry that especially struggled to register oral speech acts into poems on the page. Ethnopoetics provided the means for poets to claim—with all the cross-cultural complexities of authenticity and potential mis-representation of native cultures—the traditions that preceded the colonization of the Americas. The experimentation with glyphs as "transcreated" or lineated interpretations was also used by British Columbian poet (of Chinese and Scots-Irish descent) Fred Wah, especially in his 1975 book of poems *Pictographs from the Interior of B.C.* While *Giscome Road* is highlighting the act of naming, and naming over, the variety of peoples and historical persons that survive as place names, the poetic context should include the influence of ethnopoetics as a strategy to employ the native traditions to circumvent their loss and invert the hierarchy of cultural domination. Clarence Major's long poem *Some Observations of a Stranger at Zuni in the Latter Part of the Century* in 1989 is another precedent by an African American poet that *Giscome Road* follows in its brief reference to the Thompson River Indians. While *Giscome Road* is not completely revealing in its variety of sources and *Into and Out of Dislocation* does not further clarify the source of the underworld poem, Denise Low cites Giscombe's poem in order to discuss examples of pictographic map signs when comparing the Thompson River Indian pictographic ledger art compared to Algonquin traditions. Low argues "Such Native-created textual sources sustain

Indigenous sovereignty. As my students and I have encountered these sign-texts, European categories collapse. The images assert a legitimate alternative literacy" (84). The path to the underworld predates and precedes the colonial era ontologically, epistemically, and historically.

But as with the "series of explanations" for the presence and absence of Giscome in the landscape, a previous presence and absence is already layered on the land with the native mapping practices. To respond with a map that can unmap the colonizers' perspective, the unmapping practice still leads to the fundamental problems of how a map proposes and argues. Critical cartographer Denis Wood highlights how "First Nations, or Indigenous, mapping offers a critique of official mapmaking with respect to its prerogatives, its form, and its content, at the very time that it proposes to undo—or at least to complicate—many of the historical achievements of official mapmaking" (*Rethinking the Power of Maps* 129). The Canadian Supreme Court had to recognize the maps of the Nisga'a Nation Tribal Council in an unprecedented "three-volume *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Project* that pioneered the use of individual map biographies" (130). Through a concerted amount of explanation between the natives and the British Columbian officials, massive amounts of detailed mapping and sociological data were documented within the technology of the map performed by the native populations under their terms and suit against the court, which enabled the Inuit to assert aboriginal title to the 2 million square kilometers of Canada

today known as "Nunavut" (*Rethinking the Power of Maps* 131). But even with this juridical and epistemic success, Wood warns that the community-sponsored map may still fail.

Central here is the fact that since *maps are instruments of the state*, trying to use maps against it like spitting in the wind. Once this is acknowledged, much of the excitement about Indigenous mapping begins to sound like no more than...excitement. For example, [Bernard] Nietschmann's "A map of homelands of homewater automatically makes all other maps—be they antecedent or subsequent—subject to suspicion because they are made by the occupier's cartographers," begs the question, *suspicious in whose eyes?* Not in the eyes of the occupier, certainly, who rather looks with suspicion on Indigenous maps and...*whose eyes matter?* Since in almost every one of these cases mapping is advanced as part of a land claims strategy, ultimately the only eyes that matter are those of the state. [Emphasis in the original.] (*Rethinking the Power of Maps* 139)

The power of maps that Wood interrogates and enables map readers to discern does not change the power of the state or the power-knowledge structure of cartography. The "Giscome Portage" section plays both sides by incorporating the ethnocartography of the Thompson River Indians while aligning its failure to counter the dominant historical and geographical narrative with the poem unmapping or countermapping the colonial and state-sponsored reality of who and what constitutes areas of importance in British Columbia. The failure is inherent in the map and not in the horizon of the poem.

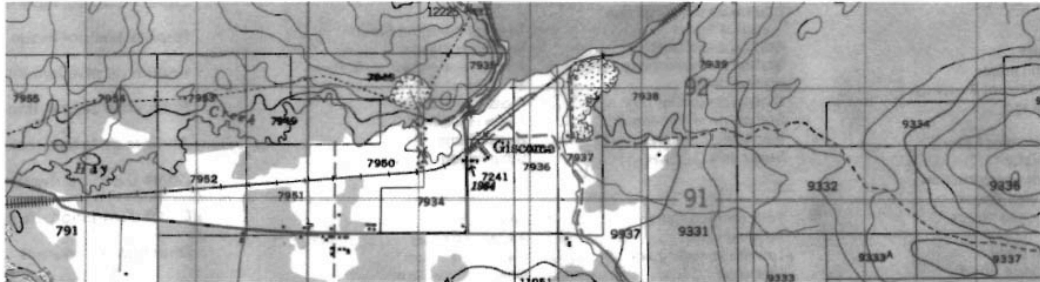
Giscome, B.C.

The penultimate "Giscome, B.C." section begins by questioning the iconic codes of the map. The "location" of the town is immediately set aside in parentheses and the poem identifies the cross icon and crosshatching markers that are "indicative, representing" the "indomitable" Canadian

National Railroad (45). Whereas the previous sections of the poem have used a map as equivalent to a stanza or, as in the “Giscome Portage,” the poem begins with a large and dark expanse of a map of British Columbia as an opening graphic element and also using indigenous maps of the underworld with pictographs (37), the “Giscome, B.C.” section further incorporates portions of the map at the level of the poetic line. The placement of the map, with all of its hidden arguments that Wood identifies, is placed in stark contrast with the reality of a desolate company town that has fallen into disrepair. The map provides a section with the town of Giscome in the middle of the map section and graphically filling the page from left margin to right margin.

(Location)

A cross is for St. Frederick's (R.C.)—indicative, representing that—as is the crosshatching for rr tracks the indomitable C.N.R.:



gaptooth fence of many houses missing is Giscome's

countenance in the 1990s, Giscome's grim face now:

but now's a seamless—wch is to say “unquantifiable”—present wch is to say “unincorporated” and “place” & “as if painted” innumerable ways.

Location: trackside, lakeside, the sound of cars (on the road in) being described.

Fig. 13: Giscome, B.C. Map in the poem. (45)

The town is “grim” with “gaptooth fences” and the scare quotes around the terms “unquantifiable,” “unincorporated,” “place,” “as if painted” all seem to question the ability to register the present state of the town that the map does not reflect. Then “Location” is no longer a parenthetical but a restatement of the actuality of what is witnessed: a location to be passed through by “trackside, lakeside, the sound of cars (on the road in) being described.”

Later in the section of the poem with the loose title “(Notes incorporating 2 lines by Barry McKinnon),” the same map portion is cut-up into thin strips in the sixth numbered sub-section of the poem, reappportioning the map as partial lines in the poem. The textual place name of Giscome or

the crosshatching of the railroad track are brought into the conventions of the poem as graphic and textual elements with the linguistic encoding of the place names but where the poem is central and the map is peripheral and subsumed. A thin line retains the town name of Giscome at the bottom of page 48, the heavy emphasis on the importance of the Fraser River follows on page 49 with the Canadian National Railroad line becoming a line in the poem. But unlike previous uses of map elements incorporated into the poem, the syntax of the standard text is not dependent upon the map elements as utterances that affect the adjacent lines. If anything, the maps intercede and interrupt.

6
 no more/ saturday nights there
 the town bull
 dozed but the evidentness on passing even quickly through of some-
 thing having happened there, some things having taken place there, even people
 fucking, say, in the houses (those gone & the few ones left)



or in the fields just past there,

Fig. 14: Giscome, B.C. map spliced as a line in the poem. (48)

Questions of the daily lives on townspeople still living in Giscome versus the representation of the location as a map name, with the solidity and facticity of the map place name, create an ontological contrast. The cyclotourist questions what actually happened when the town of Giscome was dismantled and continues to transpire since that time. How does this Jamaican

immigrant's name survive in such a place without a second thought or comment?

The section ends by repeating the trope of racialized lips of Simon Bolivar as code for African descent while talking of the water moving from river to river, as blood can move from person to person, without readily identifying an exact source of ancestry and traits, influences and confluences.

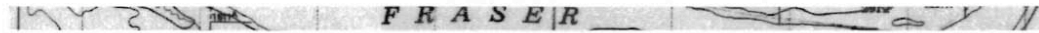
some congresses having taken place in a series, links that turn
into metaphors, some easier

to see than others: the woman's body verging

on a man's, 2-backed is obvious

(shape's a little less so, the act becoming a stage

show, a geographic of the human doubling back onto itself, onto the surface



of one another in a cacaphony of reference,

or a staged show—

the endless old story footlit, the same old story

endlessly leaping from river to river but just ahead of the words

& without narration to give itself quantity—, one set in the north, in

its continuing-to-exist locations].

A beach-la-mer's where water seeks its own level, its source and then its several



appearances and arrivals: water's itself a stage-door johnny or water's tentacles form

a branched halo 'round the speaking mouth & its prominent lips—a little "Spanish" leaked

into the location: what house disappeared first in the description? Which went last?

Fig. 15: Stanza 6 from "Giscombe, B.C." section. (49)

Just as the first section of the poem "Sound Carries" used the place names physically pulsing through the landscape with "almost an apparition" (13), this section continues to re-trace the lines of argument of the map and the paradoxical presence and absence of Giscome as a name in the landscape. The return of African descent is recounted as the cyclotourist wonders which home was first destroyed and who was the last to remain. While four sections of the poem reveal fissures in the geographical and historical record of the

land, "Giscome, B.C." suddenly finds resolve and a connection that temporarily mends the gaps in the record with Giscome's Pan-African mark on the Canadian landscape.

The sub-sections proceed with titles in parentheses and the poem concentrates on "un-mapping" the place of Giscome, B.C. The reader learns that the sawmill town was originally the site of Giscome station where it meets the edge of Eaglet Lake. This edge or limn is contrapuntally recapitulated throughout the "Giscombe, B.C." section in preparation for the final "Over the Edge" closing section of the poem. But while traversing or re-searching the land, the poem quickly intercedes how the poet is traveling

(On the long road back from there I drifted
—I was on my English bicycle—
down through some commotion I made
in the landscape.) (48)

Again, the cyclist/poet is frustrated by the paradoxical presence and absence of "the name" of Giscome everywhere as a map location but no where as a place, per se. In response to the place name hovering and haunting, the cyclist begins to shout in response

(Northern Road)

A long song edges in & in it I'd shout so my voice too
would be surfacing,
so sound would be all plural like description is,
or all parallel: (52)

The name Giscome evades the poem and the landscape and continues to be "the figure of outward" for Giscombe. Here again, such routes or "ways

outdistanced his descriptions” and Giscome “became the presence of qualification and the demand for compound sentences of description, a symbol of that for which there is no symbol or image” (*Giscome Road* 165,193). The pervasive plurality and parallelism is compounded by verb tenses also failing to register Giscome with the place experienced as a “nowhere.” As the poet nears the town on his bicycle suddenly

no empire of tenses but an endless present

the empire of no tense but this invisibility, received

like an exchange of greetings

& the mix of fluids & hair, appearances:

some of the *places* (the white woman in a book realized) where a vision could be had, not a map to the vision itself

that too being nowhere, no flash of arrival there but the lights

going on down forever in a theatre, like that,

no show

ever

(*Giscome Road* 53)

The appearances of the place of Giscome are apparently received as an invisibility with “an endless present” where the pan-African history reaches into the northern road. The appearance or arrival of the place is compared to the house lights of a theater continually dimming but never completely turning off before the performance on the stage can begin. The show never arrives though the stage is set. The “Giscombe, B.C.” section now has arrived at a nowhere place where the bloodline is imagined but untraceable and where the place name of Giscome is “being nowhere.” Again, the map is derided as

not providing a means to the vision of presence.

This section also clarifies an oblique reference to Margaret Atwood's 1972 novel *Surfacing*, which follows the homecoming of an unnamed female protagonist coming to terms with the mysterious disappearance of her father and returning, in the company of her lover and a married couple, to the isolated Quebec island where she grew up. As the book progresses her history and the country vs. city, nature vs. machine dynamic overwhelm the character, thinking her father has gone insane and is watching her and her friends from a distance in the woods like an animal. The motif of water and the suppressed history and emotions of an abortion and potential rape in a Canadian context are apt corollaries to *Giscome Road's* inability to come to terms with the sought-after Giscome. *Surfacing's* unnamed protagonist uses a map her father left behind to search for the indigenous rock paintings he was documenting underwater in the lake. In the titular scene the woman makes concerted attempts to dive below the surface to find the indigenous rock paintings and on one attempt her vision is interrupted by an unstoppable flow of memories. Like Giscombe the poet, realizes "where a vision / could be had, not a map to the vision itself // that too being nowhere." Giscome Road continues to reference Atwood's *Surfacing*

(& realized later in the book her own whiteness as well
or the nearness of it

so close to her it was nameless—

"I'm a place," she sd, nowhere.

(*Giscome Road* 53)

The actor on the stage of conjuring the place is now the place itself by declaring it. And the nowhere place is decidedly racialized. Returning to the pivotal moment in the poem, the cyclist follows the protagonist's lead in *Surfacing*, by making his own declaration in the location of nowhere, even if the map claims he is located in Giscome, B.C.

(I'm wilderness," I sd on Upper Fraser Rd, I was
Africa & America on the same bicycle,
"I'm Books in Print," I sd & a shout of this name coming
On in edges across the field—

(to M. Atwood) (53)

Mirroring the novel, the cyclist attempts to hold the experience of the wilderness and nature simultaneously, and recuperate a (potentially) lost relative, with the vast knowledge of modern society contained in R. R. Bowker, LLC's Books in Print publication database. He names himself across the landscape, reaching the edge of his voice and the edge of the field in view. While these declarations are in quotation and marked as verbal utterances, the more significant marriage of continents is stated within the line of the poem. Without the quotation marks, "I was / Africa & America on the same bicycle" has a far stronger factual status in contrast to the speech acts of crying wilderness and Books in Print. Throughout the frustration of not locating John R. Giscome's impact or finding any satisfying trace of Giscome throughout the Canadian landscape and history, the poet realizes that he, like Giscome, is a sudden conjoining of the pan-African diaspora. It is upon his

bicycle that the poet reaches this “nowhere” state of being, at that “nowhere” place having muscled and struggled physically and psychically to reach an impossible registration of the continental drift of people across the black Atlantic. While the cyclotour literature tradition always uses a climatic point of revelation to mark the cyclotourist’s psychic journey of self-realization, *Giscome Road* abandons the map and the location of Giscome by arriving at this unexpected cross-cultural cycling identity. The cyclist claims Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas are the undercurrents of history which the cyclist claims, as if crossing the Rocky Mountains for the first time when turning forty-years-old, atop his bicycle.

In Whitmanesque barbaric yawp styling of a mid-life crisis cyclist, triumphant on the cyclotour, decrying his multiple names, encapsulating experience equivalent with “wilderness” and the repository database of “Books in Print,” the poet becomes “Africa & America on the same bicycle.” As if the bicycle can be limited to only Africa or only America, now, the cyclotouring poet is the portage—the connective—through the bicycle, joining once separated continents and navigating cross-cultural confluences by tracing the evanescent history of a possible ancestor from Jamaica. The “shout of this name coming / On in edges across the field—” is a new name for the land that cuts in edges as a remapping of any place name falls upon the represented, imagined field of land, or as Charles Olson once termed the poetic space of the page: poetry as field.

This moment is, however, also a limited triumphalism—the long em dash cuts off and ends the section of the poem (before parenthetically dedicating the section to Margaret Atwood in parentheses) as if the edge of possibility has been reached and identified. The edge of the field on the page, the understanding that the vision is not offered by the map or the historical archive, and the poem as a defeat for the poet unable to locate, in a satisfying way, the place of Giscombe in the Canadian landscape all convince the poet of his hopeless impossibility.

I went to British Columbia in 1991, 1995, and 1999 with the intention of making something comprehensible—coherent in some sense—out of the fact of John R. Giscome's life and travels and (though I have "produced" two books and some other items that do refer to that fact) I failed each time. And each time I encountered the geography—"the endless bush" and, later, the streets of Victoria which have maintained their names and arrangement since Giscome died of old age on one of them, Fort Street, in 1907. The bush can be mapped but it's still the bush: the jungle takes back and my travels led me—as Steve McCaffery says—north of intention, if intention is that desire to triumph over both my own incoherence and the "impossibility" of pan-African history mated to Canadian landscape. I [got] bogged down in the material and lost my way. (Giscombe, *In the Way* n. pag.)

C. S. Giscombe refers to the poem *Giscome Road* and the memoir *Into and Out of Dislocation* as failures for their shared attempt to make "something comprehensible—coherent in some sense—out of the fact of John R. Giscome's life and travels." (Giscombe, *In the Way* n. pag.) But at this point (location) in the poem, the poem nullifies impossibility of pan-African history by embodying the reality of the cyclist/poet's effort and experience of the landscape as the connective and expansive device.

Over the Edge

The final section proffers another expanded map of Giscome, B.C. as the direct representation of “what’s what / out in the watersheds.” The map unfolds to a size twice that of the single page reserved for the text of the poem, showing the small company town of Giscome, B.C. at the far southwest corner of Eaglet Lake amid a matrix of markers, a grid work of numbered surveying quadrants, the shading and borders of ownership overlaid on the topographic contours, the imposing majuscule of “INTERIOR PLATEAU” is the largest textual icon above Eaglet Lake, and the dark line of the Canadian National railroad line cuts across the map from the town of Giscome over to the eponymous edge of the map. We now see the larger context of the Giscome, B.C. on a scale where the map is twice the size of the text.

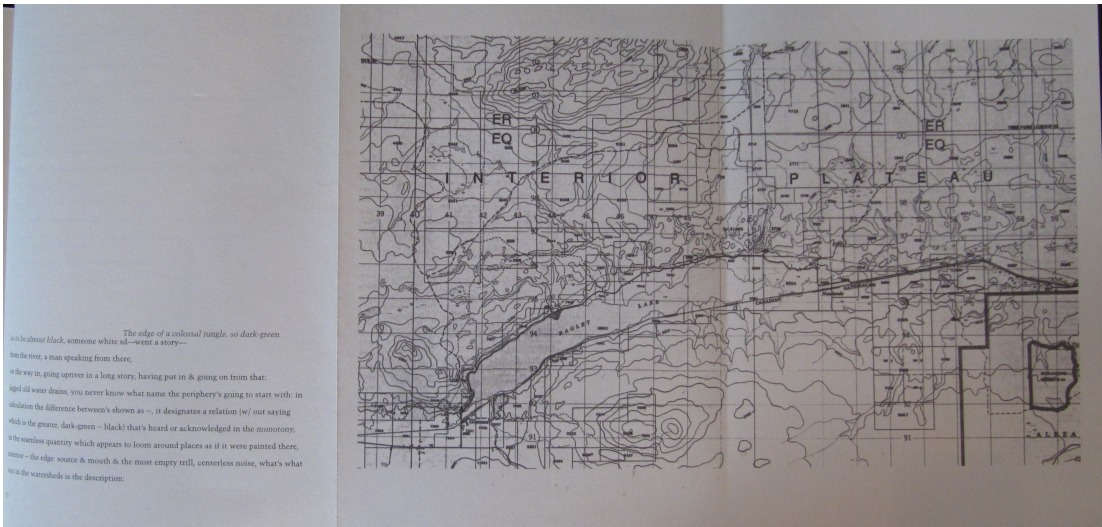


Fig. 16: Interior Plateau north of Giscome, B.C. (57)

After a ruminating section of the sounds exceeding the ability of the map to contain such demarcations of place and the blood lines that may flow across the land, the next section directly challenges the mythic position of the map as an objective representation of the land. “The talking map began to seem inauthentic, began to look to be the stylized reproduction of a *series* of explanations” (Giscombe, *Giscome Road* 60). Or later, when describing a synesthetic movement of an imagined film (also covered in *Into and Out of Dislocation*) the map is again questioned and found to be inauthentic:

a *geographical* cover, a *cover* of trajectory sliding on in, sloppy cover
 in that it's imprecise & overstated, the fragment *doing*,
 that phrase out there working for you: (62)

Even the genre of film is inarticulate, inappropriate to represent the confluence of the re-searched land named after Giscome because in

the shooting script north's no revenant or ha't in the talk, it's
 contrapuntal in the face of the woods, dialogue looking like monologue,

in the shooting script are lead-ups to some same old edge.
(*Giscome Road* 62)

The poem's voice (Giscombe) obsesses on how the arrival at the town of Giscombe collides with the representation of the place name of Giscome placed across the map. The mixture of possible hereditary ties and the already known edge and limit of the physical map, meets the metaphysical limits of obviating everything the poem "Giscome Road" continually states and restates in contrast to the singular statement of the map. The locative place name of "Interior Plateau," the largest and most imposing linguistic code posting on the large map, becomes an interiorized doubling of the Giscom(b)es as one and the same name.

I arrived
on the edge
of the interior plateau
where I was the word

that happened,
repeatingly,
speakingly,

—the word's opening
onto the interior plateau,

the blood having arrived

& become reiterative,

the word for that, the words. (Giscombe, *Giscome Road* 66)

Giscombe is the repeat of Giscome "where I was the word." The poem merges historical precursor with the poet, the cyclist absorbs the landscape and combines continents, and the poem makes it clear that "all the cyclists have a face & peculiar detailed history" in the poem's constant "theory for the

recombination of lost parts” (*Giscombe Road* 68). But this journey, or what Giscombe has called “a poet’s solipsism” is enhanced and activated by the cultural employment of the bicycle physically into the landscape and creatively into the map-poem (Giscombe, *In the Way* n. pag.)

While not identified with italics or noted with other primary sources in the front matter of the poem, Giscombe’s final section is also a cyclical interplay with the first section of Theodore Roethke’s poem “The Long Journey Out of the Self.” Giscombe encountered the poem when living in England and he flipped through the book by chance and landed on Roethke’s poem. To a cyclotourist poet of Giscombe’s caliber, the tortuous landscape, the hanging of the wheel on the road, and the “journey out of the self” afforded Giscombe an image to enact the “over the edge.” In a conference talk, Giscombe selectively cites the poem:

In the long journey out of the self,
There are many detours, washed-out interrupted raw places
Where the shale slides dangerously
And the back wheels hang almost *over the edge*
At the sudden veering, the moment of turning.

Giscombe skips a few lines in his quotation and closes

— Or the path narrowing,
Winding upward toward the stream with its sharp stones,
The upland of alder and birchtrees,
Through the swamp alive with quicksand,
The way blocked at last by a fallen fir-tree,
The thickets darkening,
The ravines ugly. (Giscombe, *In the Way* n. pag; Roethke 188)

Roethke’s poem concerns the brooding poet navigating the psychologized landscape as torment and frustration. While Roethke’s poem is from an

automobile driver's perspective, claiming taking corners at eighty miles per hour in the second section of the poem, where the speaker later claims "the road was part of me" (188), the cyclist's knowledge of the road is apt and fitting, and arguably far more intimate and kinaesthetic with professional cyclists easily exceeding sixty miles per hour on mountain descents and many having gone "over the edge." "Over the Edge," in fact, happened to Giscome while on tour with his rear bicycle rack snapping on a descent, hurtling Giscombe into the road and sending him to the hospital. It is necessary to quote the passage at length.

The road was banked and there was a little curve to it, a slight twist, unlike the hills I'd come down an hour or so before. I was thinking about food—I was remembering having seen an ad for a Vietnamese restaurant in with the Chinese places—and watching the speedometer when something bad happened: I'd been at forty and accelerating and suddenly I was skidding. First I thought the rear tire had gone flat again but I'd had flats at speed before and this was different—I was rocking violently from side to side and I grabbed the brakes and tried to stay upright and keep straight. And though all this took just a few seconds to transpire, from out of nowhere as I struggled with balance and speed and direction came the actual sentence from a *Reader's Digest* article I'd read twenty years before in some supermarket line or doctor's office, something from "Drama in Real Life," the diver saying, "I realized I was being gripped in the jaws of a giant shark"; and I squeezed the brakes and the bike shuddered and kept skidding but I felt it start to slow and I thought, I'm gonna make it, I'm gonna fucking make it, I'm *not* gonna go down, and then I was dreaming: it was a bright day and Katharine [Giscombe's wife] was smiling and kneeling in the grass while dogs—Siberian huskies, big puppies—ran around her, their tongues lolling. The dream faded and I became aware that my face was pressed hard into the dirt. (Giscombe, *Into and Out* 282-83)

The following trip to the hospital conjured Giscombe's memory of going to the hospital as a ten-year-old boy with his arm amputated due to gangrene setting in after a backyard childhood accident. Indeed, "all the cyclists have a face & peculiar detailed history" and to perform his "peculiar detailed history"

in *Giscome Road* and *Into and Out of Dislocation* is an extraordinary example of the unintended creative extensions of the bicycle informing his life and literature in ways that outpace the ordinary cyclotour journey. “Over the Edge” is performed as the limit of the perimap-poem as well as the limit of the embodied cyclist’s efforts to contain the landscape that will resist and torment the rider.

Giscome Road is not only an experimental long poem in the best traditions of contemporary poetry but it also employs the cyclotour literature tradition in combination with critical cartography to effect its triumphant journey of the self while not eschewing the reality of colonial defeat. The connections of pan-African history, autobiography, experimental poetics, and anti-colonial implications while inviting the reader to take pleasure in the journey are conviviality at its peak: autonomous and unpredictable use of the bicycle figuring new identities. These identities expand upon Ivan Illich’s conviviality by also prefiguring the genuine post-ethnic imaginary of Paul Gilroy’s conviviality in *Postcolonial Melancholia*. The combination of elements in *Giscome Road* is unanticipated and unique. Giscombe’s vision is offered but the reader (and map reader) is not impinged upon nor forced to go “over the edge” by following *Giscome Road* as a practice. Autonomy and sharing of the convivial feast are balanced and the book’s economy of representation is as efficiently packed as the bicycle propels the poet across the absorbed and re-performed landscape. As the final road that leads out, closes the poem, it

too shall end our study as an invitation to find other, unexpected peripheries of the bicycle's continual conviviality in literature and film.

The road out is an inflection between the houses on the road. The road out passes

underneath shapes of light. The road out's fluid, it's shapely itself, it's the way around.

It's one of the several roads that meets the wilderness.

Sentences find you, style finds you on the road out; it overtakes you effortlessly, it palavers.

We pounded along said the white man from near the beginning of his fable on the river.

You never know what name the periphery's going to start with.

(END OF GISCOME ROAD) (Giscombe, *Giscome Road* 69)

We may "never know what name the periphery's going to start with" but now we know how expansive the bicycle has become in forging convivial identities upon the cyclist.

Epilogue

Building upon Ivan Illich's notion of conviviality and the exemplary texts examined in this dissertation, further study of the convivial bicycle has more territory to cover, more literary objects worthy of research and readings, and more space for future theoretical work. The scope of this dissertation could not accommodate the variety of texts well-deserving of such study. The following texts allow for possible research to extend into comparative literature, cultural studies, area studies, technology studies, and film studies. By considering the wider scope of the convivial bicycle, we can begin to ask questions regarding the limits of English-only texts, the role of gender performance and sexuality, the ideality and utopian representation of the bicycle in experimental and popular texts, and finally, proposing a new theory of the convivial bicycle.

In the Latin American context, I initially intended to use three key Spanish texts. Gabriel García Márquez's ghostwritten "autobiography" of Ramon Hoyos deserves attention under the rubric of conviviality and the tradition of the road race along with Mempo Giardinell's 1980 novel *La revolución en bicicleta*, which follows a retired Paraguayan General who pedals his bicycle and recalls the potential for a revolutionized country. Andrés Ruggeri's 2001 cyclotour memoir *América en bicicleta* can be examined in maintaining the cyclotour tradition but used comparatively to

counter the ethnocentric tendencies of American and English cyclotour literature. Outside of the application of appropriate technology as advocated by E. F. Schumacher and the convivial bicycle by Ivan Illich, Richard Navarro's 1985 *Alternativas de Transporte en America Latina: La bicicleta y los triciclos* theorizes and advances using the bicycle as a means to develop El Salvador's independence through a local economy. The text clarifies how bicycle advocacy and theory is not well served by the ethnocentric dominance of the frame work of US DIY culture. Similarly, further research on the theory of athletics and the role of the bicycle in Thomas Sankara's thought is another real world site to test the convivial bicycle in Burkina Faso during his administration form 1983-1987 after his popularly supported coup.⁷⁶

Queering the bicycle is also a productive site in comparing Lynn Breedlove's 2002 novel *Godspeed* about a lesbian bicycle messenger struggling with drug addiction and Lucy Jane Bledsoe's 1997 novel *Working Parts* about a lesbian bicycle mechanic who works hard to overcome her illiteracy. The male and heteronormative dominance of the bicycle has always

⁷⁶. Giovanni Giommi's 2007 documentary *Les Ninjas du Japon* relies upon the lack of knowledge about Sankara, who started the Tour de Faso professional bike race, and who frequently refused to use state vehicles so he could travel like the majority of people by bicycle. In an interview, Sankara tells a childhood story where he stole a bicycle from a rich boy who flaunted the possession and Sankara's father was arrested and thrown into prison for his son's theft of the bicycle (Sankara 192). Sankara encouraged sports for men and women and is responsible for coining the cross ethnic name of Burkina Faso in an attempt to create a national identity that could span the country with the Tour de Faso as the nationa-building sporting event that all bicycle races have become.

been challenged since the 1890s but is usually only examined in the standard retelling of the bicycle's role in women's suffrage and first wave feminism. The performance of sexual identities through the bicycle can also move to objects of study such as so-called bicycle chic fashion and the implications of the bicycle dance troupe the Sprockettes out of Portland, Oregon. As stated in the third chapter Evelyn Schmidt's 1982 film *Das Fahrrad* (The Bicycle) and Marziyeh Meshkini's 2000 film *The Day I Became A Woman* are brilliant, incisive feminist works that directly challenge male dominance of the bicycle through the depiction of female bicycle riders and workers that refuse to give in to the patriarchal order. All of these works question what the bicycle enables if a woman rider continues to push the boundaries of gender and sexuality norms.

Works by male modernists are also potential objects of fruitful study considering the implications of the convivial bicycle in Flann O'Brien's novel *The Third Policeman*, Samuel Beckett novel *Molloy*, and two short stories by Guy Davenport, "The Bicycle Rider," and "Au Tombeau de Charles Fourier" (the latter collected in the book *Da Vinci's Bicycle*). These enigmatic and often humorous texts utilize the bicycle in unpredictable and erudite ways that, like Vittorio de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, have not been examined for their use of the bicycle as a liberatory figure. What relationship do so-called experimental and self-effacing forms have to the conviviality of a bicycle when the text is "difficult" and disorienting?

Nontraditional texts are also potential sites of further research. Rick Smith's daily online bicycle comic *Yehuda Moon and the Kickstand Cyclery* has matured to garner a worldwide audience by following the antics of a Cleveland bicycle shop with a fervent bicycle advocate, a stereotypical road racer co-owner, and a woman of color engineer who prefers her bicycle mechanic job so she can spend more time with her young daughter and help innovate the small business. A key story line in the series follows the death of the original store owner who mentored the main characters and who is memorialized using a ghost bike, or an old bicycle painted white and placed at the site of the cyclist's death. The phenomenon is a tactic in the bicycle advocacy movement designed to make the death of cyclists more visible and resonant in the dominant automobile culture. By examining the comic and relating to the real-world application of the ghost bike, performance art and examination of psychological melancholia can be demonstrated in the furtherance of the convivial bicycle.

Finally, Illich's concept of conviviality can expand and benefit from new theoretical work. The brief discussion of Paul Gilroy's use of conviviality in a postcolonial framework in chapter one along with the majority of chapter two reading Viken Berberian's *The Cyclist*, allows us to consider the racialized and postcolonial contexts of the bicycle, which deserve renewed consideration. Illich may have been composing and thinking of Latin America when devising conviviality from Cuernavaca, Mexico but the theory

concentrated on the difference between developed and underdeveloped nations in general. With this dichotomy, conviviality needs to expand to areas that Gilroy challenges in racialized terms with postcolonial possibilities. Adding to this line of theory is the need for a more nuanced way to understand how the bicycle is able to interconnect such a heteroglossia of cultural and cross-genre works as an identity-producing machine. How is the current moment of worldwide bicycle culture producing conviviality in ways that are not addressed and recognized by Illich's conception? Is this fashion reproducing narratives of a central "universal" core of a hidden Western male cyclist at the expense of any peripheries, thereby reproducing old patterns of epistemic violence? Why are people drawn to the bicycle as a central component of their lives and how can the bicycle accommodate the diversity of cyclists?

As this dissertation has demonstrated, unexpected results can bring disparate elements to the table of the bicycle feast. The bicycle can be a force for an equitable society rather than a mere symbol of green ecology in the argument of conviviality by Ivan Illich. The bicycle can alter the course of a committed terrorist because of the allure of the difficult bicycle race and provide postcolonial vistas of how far reaching the bicycle can become through sport. The bicycle continues to feed a filmic need to represent the working-class struggle especially when economic exigencies reach extreme difficulties. The bicycle allows the diverse colonial history of the New World to

be redefined, allowing for poetic imaginaries that cannot be represented by the statist order of the map. Through these examinations I hope further research is spurred to help clarify how we are only just beginning to realize the potential of the bicycle and its enabling cultural effect on us and our artistic and political imaginations set out on new rides.

Bibliography

- 2 Seconds*. Dir. Manon Briand. New Almaden, CA: Wolfe Video, Max Films, Alliance Communications, 1998. DVD.
- Bicycle Thieves*. Dir. Vittorio De Sica. Criterion Collection, 2007. DVD.
- Breaking Away*. Dir. Peter Yates. Beverly Hills, CA: 20th Century Fox, 1979. DVD.
- Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. Collector's ed. Dir. George Roy Hill. Beverly Hills, CA: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2006. DVD.
- Chasing Legends*. Dir. Jason Berry. Gripped Films, 2010. DVD.
- Ciclovía: Bogotá, Colombia*. Dir. Jr. Eckerson, Clarence. New York: Streetfilms, 2007. Web.
- The Cyclist*. Dir. Muhsin Makhmalbäf. Brooklyn, NY: Kimstim, 2004. DVD.
- Cyclo*. Dir. Anh Hung Tran. New York: New Yorker Video, 1996. DVD.
- The Day I Became a Woman*. Dir. Marziyeh Meshkini. London: Artificial Eye; World Cinema Ltd., 2005. DVD.
- Death of a Cyclist*. Dir. Juan Antonio Bardem. New York: Criterion Collection, 2008. DVD.
- E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Hollywood, CA: Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.
- El Amateur*. Dir. Juan Bautista Stagnaro. Miami, FL: Venevision International, 1999. DVD.
- Etienne!* Dir. Jeff Mizushima. Category One Entertainment Group, 2009. Web.
- The Flying Scotsman*. Dir. Douglas MacKinnon. New York: Twentieth Century Fox, 2006. DVD.
- Il Postino*. Dir. Michael Radford. New York: Miramax, 2000. Film.

- Machuca*. Dir. Andrés Wood. Passion River, 2007. DVD.
- Memory & Imagination: New Pathways to the Library of Congress*. Dir. Michael R. Lawrence. Michael Lawrence Films, 1990. Web.
- Messenger*. Dir. Norman Loftis. Santa Monica, CA: Xenon Home Video, 1994. VHS.
- The Middle of the World*. Dir. Vicente Amorim. New York: Film Movement, 2003. DVD.
- Monkey Warfare*. Dir. Reginald Harkema. Toronto, Can.: New Real Films, 2006. DVD.
- Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*. Dir. Tim Burton. Warner Home Video, 2008. DVD.
- Postman Blues*. Dir. Hiroyuki "Sabu" Tanaka. Nikkatus; Suplex; TV Tokyo, 1997. Film.
- Premium Rush*. Dir. David Koepp. Pariah, 2012. Film.
- Quicksilver*. Dir. Thomas Michael Donnelly. Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 2002. DVD.
- Return of the Scorcher*. Dir. Ted White. San Francisco, CA: Green Planet Films, 1992. DVD.
- The Triplets of Belleville*. Dir. Sylvain Chomet. New York: Sony Pictures, 2004. DVD.
- Alvord, Katharin T. *Divorce Your Car!: Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2000. Print.
- Andranian, Stephan. "Gitane USA History." 2011. Web. <<http://www.gitaneusa.com/history.asp>>.
- Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005. Print.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Surfacing*. New York: Batam Books, 1996. Print.

- Balish, Chris. *How to Live Well Without Owning a Car: Save Money, Breathe Easier, and Get More Mileage Out of Life*. Berkeley and Toronto: Ten Speed Press, 2006. Print.
- Ballard, J. G. "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered As a Downhill Motor Race." London: Flamingo, 2001. 720-21. Print.
- Barmé, Geremie R. Persimmon: Asian Literature, Arts, and Culture, "Bike Envy." 3(3). 2003. Web. <<http://web.archive.org/web/20030507035721/http://persimmon-mag.com/winter2003/Departments1.htm>>.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. Print.
- . "The Tour de France as Epic." *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1997. 79-90. Print.
- Bauchspies, Wenda K., Jennifer Croissant, and Sal Restivo. "STS and Power in the Postmodern World." *Science, Technology, and Society: A Sociological Approach*. Malden, Massachusetts; Oxford, UK; Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 73-101. Print.
- Bazin, André. "Bicycle Thief." *What is Cinema?* Trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005. 47-60. Print. 2. 2.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Molloy*. Trans. Patrick Bowles. New York: Grove Press, 1955. Print.
- Berberian, Viken. *The Cyclist*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. Print.
- . "No Remembrance Of the Things They Passed." *New York Times* July 3, 2003, Opinion sec. Web.
- Berman, Marshall. "All That Is Solid Melts Into Air." *Adventures in Marxism*. London; New York: Verso, 1999. Print.
- . *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. Print.
- Bernstein, Andrea. "Techies on the Cutting Edge of. Bike Commuting." *Marketplace Transportation Nation* (February 22, 2012): Radio

broadcast.

- Berry, Eleanor. "The Emergence of Charles Olson's Prosody of the Page Space." *Journal of English Linguistics* 30.1 (2002): 51-72. Print.
- Betts, Robert Brenton. *The Druze*. New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 1988. Print.
- Bijker, Wiebe E. "Understanding Technological Culture Through a Constructivist View of Science, Technology, and Society." *Visions of STS: Counterpoints in Science, Technology, and Society Studies*. Eds. S. H. Cutcliffe and Carl Micham. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2001. 19-34. Print.
- Bledsoe, Lucy Jane. *Working Parts: A Novel*. ?: Seal Press, 1997.
- Bly, Nelly. "Champion of Her Sex." Trans. February 2. *New York Sunday World* February 2 1896: 9-10. Print.
- Boal, Iain A. Copenhagen, Denmark. "The Green Machine." Copenhagen Museum, April 13, 2010. Web. <<http://www.copenhageneize.com/2010/04/green-machine-by-iain-boal-all-5.html>>.
- Bobet, Jean. *Tomorrow, We Ride*. Trans. Adam Berry. Norwich, England: Mousehold Press, 2008. Print.
- Bookchin, Murray. *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. 3rd. ed. Edinburgh; Oakland, Ca: AK Press, 2004. Print.
- Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1973. Print.
- Bray, Julian. "Interview with Tim Krabbé." *Rouleur* 2 (August 2006): 68-79. Print.
- Breedlove, Lynn. *Godspeed*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Print.
- Butterick, Geroge F. *A Guide to The Maximus Poems of Charles Olson*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1980. Print.
- Callenbach, Ernest. *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William*

- Weston. New York: Bantam Books, 1990. Print.
- Cardoza, Anthony. "Making Italians?: Cycling and National Identity in Italy: 1900-1950." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15.3 (June 2010): 354-77. Print.
- Carlsson, Chris, ed. *Critical Mass: Bicycling's Defiant Celebration*. Edinburgh, Scotland; Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2002. Print.
- . *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-lot Gardeners Are Inventing the Future Today*. Oakland, CA ; Edinburgh, Scotland: AK Press, 2008. Print.
- Chiang, Lynette. *The Handsomest Man in Cuba: An Escapade*. New York: Globe Pequot, 2007. Print.
- Crampton, Jeremy W., and John Krygier. "An Introduction to Critical Cartography." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4.1 (2006): 11-33. Print.
- Culley, Travis Hugh. *The Immortal Class: Bike Messengers and the Cult of Human Power*. New York: Villard Books, 2001. Print.
- Dana, Nissim. *The Druze in the Middle East: Their Faith, Leadership, Identity and Status*. Brighton; Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2003. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Mars: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Dew, Josie. *Long Cloud Ride: A Cycling Adventure Across New Zealand*. New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 2008. Print.
- . *Ride in the Neon Sun*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2001. Print.
- . *Saddled At Sea: A 15,000 Mile Journey To New Zealand By Russian Freighter*. New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 2008. Print.
- . *Slow Coast Home: A 5,000 Mile Cycle Journey Around The Shores*

- Of England And Wales*. New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 2003. Print.
- . *The Sun In My Eyes: Two-Wheeling East*. New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 2002. Print.
- . *Travels in a Strange State: Cycling across the USA*. New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 2004. Print.
- . *The Wind in My Wheels: Travel Tales from the Saddle*. New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 1993. Print.
- Dunham, Norman Leslie. "The Bicycle Era in American History." Harvard University, 1957. Print.
- Faure, Guy Olivier. "Nonverbal Negotiation in China: Cycling in Beijing." *Negotiation Journal* 11.10 (2 July 2007): 11-17. Print.
- Fife, Graeme. *Other Stories*, London. "Glory Through Suffering." Rapha, 2009. Web. <<http://www.rapha.cc/index.php?page=131>>.
- Fincham, Ben. "Bicycle Messengers and the Road to Freedom." *Against Automobility*. Eds. Steffen Böhm, et al. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 208-22. Print.
- . "Bicycle Messengers: Image, Identity and Community." *Cycling and Society*. Eds. Dave Horton, Paul Rosen and Peter Cox. Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007. 179-95. Print.
- Fisk, Robert. *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. Print.
- Fitzpatrick, Jim. *The Bicycle in Wartime: An Illustrated History*. Revised ed. Kilcoy, Australia: Star Hill Studio, 2011. Print.
- Fotheringham, William. *Put Me Back on My Bike: In Search of Tom Simpson*. London: Random House UK, 2007. Print.
- Fournel, Paul. *Need for the Bike*. Trans. Allan Stoekl. U of Nebraska P, 2003. Print.
- Fryer, Peter. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London:

- Pluto Press, 1984. Print.
- Furness, Zack. *One Less Car: Bicycling and the Politics of Automobility*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2010. Print.
- García Márquez, Gabriel. "El triple campeón revela sus secretos." *Entre cachacos*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Sudamericana, 1989. 171-262. Print.
- Garvey, Ellen Gruber. "Reframing the Bicycle: Magazines and Scorching Women." *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 106-34, 207-211. Print.
- Giardinelli, Mempo. *La revolucion en bicicleta*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Brugera, 1984. Print.
- Gibb, Evelyn McDaniel. *Two Wheels North: Bicycling the West Coast in 1909*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2000. Print.
- Gilbert, Alan. "'There's no center where/similarity would begin': C.S. Giscombe's *Giscome Road* and *Here*." *Another Future: Poetry and Art in a Postmodern Twilight*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2006. 118-31. Print.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993. Print.
- . *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York; Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print.
- Giscombe, C. S. *Giscome Road*. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998. Print.
- . *Here*. Normal, Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 1994. Print.
- . "IN THE WAY." *Kansas Conference on Imagination and Place*. October 18, 2001. Print.
- . *Into and Out of Dislocation*. New York: North Point Press, 2000. Print.
- Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor,

- Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997. Print.
- Gordon, Robert S. C. *Bicycle Thieves*. Basingstroke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Grandin, Greg. *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009. Print.
- Gura, David. The Two-Way, "Nightmarish Nine-Day Traffic Jam: In China, Cars Crawl Along 60-Mile Stretch." NPR, 2010. Web. <<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2010/08/23/129376194/traffic-jam-beijing-tibet>>.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminsim in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New YorkQ: Routledge, 1991. 149-81. Print.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: an Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford, England; New York: Blackwell, 1989. Print.
- Hemingway, Ernest. "Battle for Paris." *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway; Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades*. New York: Scribner, 1967. 364-73. Print.
- Herlihy, David V. *Bicycle: The History*. Taunton, Mass.: Quebecor World, 2004. Print.
- . *The Lost Cyclist: The Epic Tale of an American Adventurer and His Mysterious Disappearance*. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010. Print.
- Hoinacki, Lee, and Carl Mitcham. *The Challenges of Ivan Illich: A Collective Reflection*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002. Print.
- Hong, Zhao, Wei Zhiliang, and Li Wei. "Bicycle-based Courier and Delivery Services in Beijing: Market Analysis." *Transportation Research Record 1954* (2006): 45-51. Print.
- Hounshell, David A. *From the American System toward Mass Production: The Bicycle Industry in the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univeristy Press, 1985. Print.

- Hudson, Peter. "The Past Names Nothing Anyplace: Wayde Compton, CS Giscombe, and the Poetics of Black British Columbia." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 30.2 (2000): 229-36. Print.
- Hurst, Robert. *The Cyclist's Manifesto*. New York: Falcon, 2009. Print.
- Illich, Ivan. *Energy and Equity*. Ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. Print.
- . "Energy and Equity." *Toward a History of Needs*. Ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. 110-43. Print.
- . *Tools for Conviviality*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973. Print.
- Illich, Ivan, and David Cayley. *Ivan Illich in Conversation*. Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1992. Print.
- Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Isaacson, Walter. *Steve Jobs*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.
- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. 50th Anniversary ed. New York: Modern Library, 2011. Print.
- James, C. L. R. *Beyond a Boundary*. Duke University Press, 1993. Print.
- Kay, Jane Holtz. *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America, and How We Can Take It Back*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997. Print.
- Kochan, Dror. Senses of Cinema, "Wang Xiaoshuai." September 2003. Web. <<http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/wang.html#senses>>.
- Krabbé, Tim. *The Rider*. Trans. Sam Garrett. New York: Bloomsbury, 2002. Print.
- Kurmaskie, Joe. *Metal Cowboy: Tales from the Road Less Pedaled*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002. Print.
- . *Metal Cowboy: Ten Years Further Down the Road Less Pedaled*.

- Halcottsville, New York: Breakaway Books, 2010. Print.
- . *Momentum Is Your Friend: The Metal Cowboy and His Pint-Sized Posse Take on America*. Halcottsville, New York: Breakaway Books, 2006. Print.
- . *Mud, Sweat, and Gears: A Rowdy Family Bike Adventure Across Canada on Seven Wheels*. Halcottsville, New York: Breakaway Books, 2011. Print.
- . *Riding Outside the Lines: International Incidents and Other Misadventures with the Metal Cowboy*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003. Print.
- Lao, She. *Rickshaw: the Novel by Lo-t'o Hsiang Tzu*. Trans. Jean M. James. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979. Print.
- Lazarus, Neil. "Cricket and National Culture in the Writings of C. L. R. James." Eds. Hilary McD Beckles and Brian Stoddart. Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. 342-55. Print.
- Lin, Xiaoping. *Children of Marx and Coca-Cola: Chinese Avant-Garde Art and Independent Cinema*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010. Print.
- . "New Chinese Cinema of the 'Sixth Generation': A Distant Cry of Forsaken Children." *Third Text* 16:3 (2002): 261 – 284.
- Liu, Xiaodong. *The Richness of Life: The Personal Photographs of Contemporary Chinese Artist Liu Xiaodong: 1984-2006*. Hong Kong: Timezone 8, 2007. Print.
- . "Through the Ages, Heroes Have Come from the Young." (2000): Web. Oil on Canvas.
- Low, Denise. "Composite Indigenous Genre Cheyenne Ledger Art as Literature." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 18.2 (2006): 83-104. Print.
- Lu, Jie. "Metropolarities: *The Troubled Lot* and *Beijing Bicycle*." *Journal of Contemporary China* 17.57 (2008): 717-32. Print.
- Lutz, Catherine, and Anne Lutz Fernandez. *Carjacked: The Culture of the Automobile and Its Effect on Our Lives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan,

2010. Print.

Mackey, Nathaniel. "That Words Can Be on the Page: The Graphic Aspect of Charles Olson's Poetics." *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000. 121-38. Print.

Major, Clarence. *Some Observations of a Stranger at Zuni in the Latter Park of the Century*. Los Angeles, CA: Sun & Moon Press, 1989. Print.

Mapes, Jeff. *Pedaling Revolution: How Cyclists are Changing American Cities*. Corvallis: Oregon State University, 2009. Print.

Marcus, Millicent Joy. "De Sica's *Bicycle Thief*: Casting Shadows on the Visionary City." *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986. 54-75. Print.

Marshall, Jeannie. "Inside the Mind and Appetite of a Terrorist." *National Post (Canada)* August 1, 2002, Toronto Edition ed., Arts & Life sec.: AL1. Print.

Maso, Benjo. *The Sweat of the Gods: Myths and Legends of Bicycle Racing*. Trans. Michael Horn. Norwich, UK: Mousehold Press, 2005. Print.

Maugham, W. Somerset. *Cakes and Ale*. 1st Vintage International ed. New York: Vintage International, 2000. Print.

McLarty, Ron. *The Memory of Running*. New York: Viking, 2004. Print.

Mignolo, Walter D. "Nebrija in the New World: Renaissance Philosophy of Language and the Spread of Western Literacy." *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*. Second ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. 29-68. Print.

Mionske, Bob. *Bicycling and the Law*. Boulder, CO: Velo Press, 2007. Print.

Mogel, Lize, and Alexis Bhagat, ed. *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*. Los Angeles, CA: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest Press, 2009. Print.

Mustoe, Anne. *Amber, Furs and Cockleshells: Bike Rides with Pilgrims and Merchants*. London: Virgin Books, 2005. Print.

———. *A Bike Ride: 12,000 Miles Around the World*. London: Virgin, 1994.

Print.

- . *Che Guevara and the Mountain of Silver: by Bicycle and Train through South America*. London: Virgin, 2007. Print.
- . *Cleopatra's Needle: Two Wheels by the Water to Cairo*. London: Virgin Books, 2003.
- . *Lone Traveller: One Woman, Two Wheels, and the World*. London, UK: Virgin Publishing, 2002. Print.
- Navarro, Ricardo, Urs Heierli, and Victor Beck. *Alternativas de Transporte en America Latina: La bicicleta y los triciclos*. St. Gallen, Switzerland: SKAT Centro Suizo de Technolgica Apropiada, 1993. Print.
- Nielsen, Aldon Lynn. *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.
- Oddy, Nicholas. "Bicycle." *The Gendered Object*. Ed. Pat Kirkham. Manchester, UK and New York: Manchester UP, 1996. 60-69. Print.
- Olesen, Alexa. Virtual China, "Wang Xiaoshuai Talks with Virtual China." 2002. Web. <<http://web.archive.org/web/20020822195422/www.virtualchina.com/archive/leisure/film/wxs-talks.html>>.
- Oppen, George. "The Bicycles and the Apex." *Collected Poems*. New York: New Directions, 1975. 125. Print.
- Overing, Joanna, and Alan Passes. *The Anthropology of Love and Anger: the Aesthetics of Conviviality in Native Amazonia*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Pauly, John J. "Ivan Illich and Mass Communication Studies." *Communication Research* 10.2 (1983): 259-80. Print.
- Pham, Andrew X. *Catfish & Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. Print.
- Pivato, Stefano. "Italian Cycling and the Creation of a Catholic Hero." *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, and Sport*. Eds. Richard Holt, J.A. Mangan and Pierre Lanfranchi. London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass,

1996. Print.
- Poplak, Richard. "The Pain Principle." *The Walrus* (July 2011): Web.
- Rabinbach, Anson. *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1990. Print.
- Rendell, Matt. *Kings of the Mountains: How Colombia's Cycling Heroes Changed their Nation's History*. London: Aurum Press, 2002. Print.
- Rexroth, Kenneth. *The Dragon and the Unicorn*. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1952. Print.
- Ritchie, Andrew. "The League of American Wheelmen, Major Taylor and the 'Color Question' in the United States in the 1890s." *Ethnicity, Sport, Identity*. Eds. J. A. Mangan and Andrew Ritchie. London: Frank Cass, 2004. 13-43. Print.
- . *Major Taylor: the Extraordinary Career of a Champion Bicycle Racer*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Print.
- Roethke, Theodore. *The Collected Poems*. New York: Anchor Books, 1975. Print.
- Rosen, Paul. *Framing Production: Technology, Culture, and Change in the British Bicycle Industry*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002. Print.
- Rothenberg, Jerome, ed. *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North American*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972. Print.
- Rothenberg, Jerome, ed. *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, & Oceania*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1968. Print.
- Rothenberg, Jerome, and Diane Rothenberg, ed. *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983. Print.
- Sachs, Wolfgang. *For the Love of the Automobile: Looking Back into the Histories of Our Desires*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992. Print.
- Sankara, Thomas. *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution*,

- 1983-1987. Michel Prairie, ed. New York: Pathfinder, 2007. Print.
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space*. Berkeley: University of California, 1987. Print.
- Seiler, Cotten. *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.
- Shiel, Mark. *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City*. London; New York: Wallflower Press, 2006. Print.
- Simic, Charles. "Bicycle Thieves." *The Unemployed Fortune-Teller*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. 22-25. Print.
- Smart, Barry. *Modern Conditions: Postmodern Controversies*. London; New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- Smith, Robert A. *A Social History of the Bicycle, its Early Life and Times in America*. New York: American Heritage P, 1972.
- Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: a History of Walking*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.
- Solnit, Rebecca, Ben Pease, and Shizue Siegel. *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print.
- Spinney, Justin. "A Place of Sense: A Kinaesthetic Ethnography of Cyclists on Mont Ventoux." *Environment and Planning D: Space and Society* 24.5 (2006): 709-32. Print.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 271-313. Print.
- . "Rethinking Comparativism." *New Literary History* 40.2((Summer 2009): 609-26. Print.
- . "Terror: A Speech after 9-11." *boundary 2* 31.2 (Summer 2004): 81-111. Print.
- Stevens, Thomas. *Around the World on a Bicycle*. New York: C. Scribner's

- Sons, 1887. Print.
- Stevens, Wallace. *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*. Eds. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1997. Print.
- Stilgoe, John R. *Outside Lies Magic*. New York: Walker and Co., 1998. Print.
- Strand, David. *Rickshaw Beijing: City, People, and Politics in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. Print.
- Sykes, Herbie. *Maglia Rosa: Triumph and Tragedy at the Giro d'Italia*. London: Rouleur Limited, 2011. Print.
- Tang, Jean. "Interview: Paradise Lost: Wang Xiaoshuai's Nostalgic *Beijing Bicycle*." indieWIRE, 25 January 2002. Web. <http://www.indiewire.com/article/interview_paradise_lost_wang_xiaoshuais_nostalgic_beijing_bicycle/>.
- Taylor, Major. *The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World: the Story of a Colored Boy's Indomitable Courage and Success Against Great Odds, an Autobiography*. Worcester, Mass: Wormsley Publishing Company, 1928. Print.
- Thompson, Christopher. *The Tour de France: A Cultural History*. Updated with a New Preface ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. Print.
- Timberg, Scott. "The Novel that Predicted Portland." *New York Times* 12 December 2008, Fashion & Style sec. Web.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. University of Oklahoma Press, Print.
- Tomasulo, Frank P. "'Bicycle Thieves': A Re-Reading." *Cinema Journal* 21.2 (Spring 1982): 2-13. Print.
- Vanderbilt, Tom. *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (And What It Says About Us)*. New York: Vintage, 2009. Print.
- Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Politics*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2006. Print.
- Wah, Fred. *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* Vancouver, B.C.: Talonbooks,

1975. Print.
- Wang, Xiaoshuai. Asian Film Connections, "Director's Statement." 2003. Web. <<http://web.archive.org/web/20030526081658/http://www.asianfilms.org/china/danche.html>>.
- Watson, David. "Social Ecology and the Problem of Technology." *Social Ecology after Bookchin*. New York and London: Guilford Press, 1998. 211-39. Print.
- Wehr, Kevin. *Hermes on Two Wheels: The Sociology of Bicycle Messengers*. Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 2009. Print.
- Weir, Willie. *Spokesongs: Bicycle Adventures on Three Continents*. Halcottsville, New York: Breakaway Books, 2000. Print.
- . *Travels with Willie: Adventure Cyclist*. Halcottsville, New York: Breakaway Books, 2009. Print.
- Williams, David. "This Hyphen Called My Spinal Cord: Arab-American Literature at the Beginning of the 21st Century." *World Literature Today* 81.1 (Jan. - Feb., 2007): 55-63. Print.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. Print. *Revised*.
- Williams, William Carlos. "Spring and All." *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*. New York: New Directions, 1986. 175-236. Print. 2. 1 1909-1939.
- Wilson, David Gordon. *Bicycling Science*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004. Print.
- Wilson, S. S. "Bicycle Technology." *Scientific American* 228.3 (March 1973): 81-91, 128. Print.
- Winner, Langdon. *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out-of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 1977. Print.
- . *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Print.

Wood, Denis. *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*. Los Angeles, CA: Siglio, 2010. Print.

———. *Rethinking the Power of Maps*. New York: Guilford Press, 2010. Print.

Wray, J. Harry. *Pedal Power: The Quiet Rise of the Bicycle in American Public Life*. Boulder, CO; London: Paradigm Publishers, 2008. Print.

Wright, Elizabeth. "Riding Towards the Future: Wang Xiaoshuai's *Beijing Bicycle*." 18. January-February 2002. Web. <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/18/beijing_bicycle.html>.

Wynter, Sylvia. "1492: A New World View." *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas*. Eds. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1995. 5-57. Print.

———. "Columbus, the Ocean Blue, and Fables that Stir the Mind: To Reinvent the Study of Letters." *Poetics of the Americas: Race, Founding, and Textuality*. Eds. Bainard Cowan and Jefferson Humphries. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1997. Print.

———. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation - An Argument". *The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 257-337. Print.

Xu, Gary G. "'My Camera Doesn't Lie': Cinematic Realism and Chinese Cityscape in *Beijing Bicycle* and *Suzhoe River*." *Sinascapes: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007. 67-88. Print.

Xu, Jian. "Representing Rural Migrants in the City: Experimentalism in Wang Xiaoshuai's *So Close to Paradise* and *Beijing Bicycle*." *Screen* 4 (Winter 2005): 433-50. Print.

Zavatini, Cesare. "Some Ideas on the Cinema." *Vittoria de Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. 50-61. Print.

Zerin, Dave. The Nation, "Why Lance Armstrong Will Survive '60 Minutes' and the Feds." May 23, 2011. Web. <<http://www.thenation.com/blog/160861/why-lance-armstrong-will-survive-60-minutes-and-feds>>.

Zhang, Yingjin. "Remapping Beijing: Polylocality, Globalization, Cinema."
Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age. Ed.
Andreas Huyssen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. 219-41.
Print.

Zheutlin, Peter. *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry's
Extraordinary Ride*. New York: Citadel; Kensington Publishing Corp.,
2007. Print.