

12 dedications

THE AGE OF OIL
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(1989)

Cars, as everyone knows, are powered by oil, a condition that powerful interests have aligned Western countries, America in particular, to for many decades. Oil is the law for a car's operation, and the law, or as the French would say, la loi, is oil. The loi/law of oil is thus necessary for the American car to go anywhere. And where will the ego goe without oil, without a car? Heretofore the loi has always been cars driven by oil. This is witnessed by the failure of steam driven and electrically powered cars to have any success on the internal combustion machine market, the present-day oil powered cars made in Detroit. Without the loi of oil (conditioned by car companies and oil companies), there would be the likelihood of no oil, no oil for egos to goe on. This is the supreme threat to America's ego for without it nothing will goe, unless America's interests liquidate the aggressive, oil-hoarding counterpart. Goe over there...

Within the car there is a radio, and within the word car there is the anagram RCA. Originally a company aligned to the technical innovation of transmitting sound over distances, RCA became equatable with the radio. And nearly every car has a radio or RCA (letterally) within it.

Cars and radios are thus in intimate connection, rhetorically a metonymic one. What is interesting is that cars are powered by oil just as radios, in association, are powered by oil. Both are in conjunction with oil, cars burn oil while radios play oil, that is, records, made of oil or vinyl, are played over the apparatus of a radio. The car that burns oil reproduces the radio that plays oil, here records, an oil-derived product. Even the word radio has two essential letters for car.

Again without oil our cars or RCA could not goe. The loss of oil to power our cars is as threatening as the loss of oil/vinyl/records for our

RCA, our popular music, played over the car radio, the radio cryptically echoing the car it is contained in. We hear the radio with our cars, noting another similarity between car and ear. Ears hear the car radio. Also, ear is within hear. Since we have ended up identifying with our cars so much, we've also ended up identifying with the stars our ears hear, our popular musicians heard on music stations over the radio. Elvis Presley loved cars, which is inevitable since he was signed over to the record company RCA. America loves cars and loves to hear Elvis Presley. The lack of oil will then make loving cars and hearing rock stars an impossibility (since their voices are on an oil/vinyl record).

Ears have wax in them. Wax too is synonymous with oil, as demonstrated by the title for a hit record called Hot Wax, now transformable into Hot Oil. There is already oil in our ears, the wax, enforced by the

idea that there is oil in our cars, in our radios. To be close to the music played over the radio seems to be a condition we have already met up with because the wax/oil makes the distantly playing record much more interior and proximate. Popular music resolves this distance by using words in songs that are exchangeable with its listeners. We then presume the sung material to be our very own, our "feelings." Singing the record to oneself is an introjection, an interiorization of the distant singer. The singer is brought closer to ourselves, just as the unconscious idea is one of already possessing that record inside our ears, but as ear wax or ear oil.

Around the time that cars and radios were assuming their egological power over American citizens, UFO's were being cited in great numbers. You could surmise this bit of common knowledge to be widespread around the beginning of the 1950s, the beginning of a wide scale

introjection of records played on car radios. UFO's, or flying saucers, were also often cited from people's ears. I'll venture a correspondence that might illuminate these mutual car/radio/UFO phenomena. A flying saucer is a disco, the Spanish word for saucer or disc. A UFO is often described as a disc-like object, resembling in many instances, a record. Since a record playing on the radio cannot be seen, a UFO can, though very rarely. To see a UFO, to be the lucky person, is also the desire, the delusion to see the disco, disc or record that we never see in a car when the radio plays that record/music we enjoy so much. And that playing record is a burning one, a condensation that accounts for the reported brilliance of UFO's, the UFO's that are brightly lit, lit as if on fire or burning. Granted the accounts of people who might have truly seen a saucer, it also bespeaks a delirious curiosity, at heart a desire to see as opposed to hear what those purely heard saucers look like. And their

appearance is conditioned by the confusion of burning and playing, transforming the UFO disc into a bright, fiery object.

Furthermore when a radio plays a song, we have no visual equivalent as to how that sound reached the ear, the car's radio or the radios in our homes. A flying saucer, seen by someone, is the visual transmission of a purely auditory stimulus. And with our reflexes reduced to staring (while driving) so much, the mysterious radio sound is perforce given its sheer visual support, a record that flies into our car. The quickness of the radio signal is also in relation to the UFO, that ultra-fast disc. Crazy as this idea might seem, it fits in with the craziness of the teenagers then who loved to listen to car radios as were those people called "crazy" if they saw a UFO, or fou, the French word for mad or crazy. People who hear pop music go crazy like the people who see UFO discs. A record, a

piece of wax, a waxen disc, flies into my ear, a nonidentifiable object, a nonvisual object, the sound. Already crazy with a nonscopic sound in my ear, the record/wax sound makes me crazier and the record/wax/disco/UFO makes me the craziest, since I'm really seeing what I can only hear. Incidentally, a major record and stereo equipment entrepreneur goes by the name "Crazy Eddie."

When cars go or drive on tar, they drive over the asphalt on such roads. Without asphalt or tar, there would be no surface for a car to drive on, no tar or oil for a car to drive with and no tar or sound from the records heard over the car radio to listen to. A car travels along a road, a path, a trail. These are the "grooves" on a road, associative with the "grooves" on a record. Road equals record, since both are derived from oil, roads being made of asphalt and records composed of vinyl, derived as asphalt is, of oil products.

The stylus that plays the record is the car that drives along the road. A record's turning motion allows the stylus to move. The turntable is powered by electricity, often a transformation of energy from oil. A stylus, besides being a writing instrument, is also related to a ship's prow, the edge that cuts through water. Every car has a hood, a "prow" of sorts. Ships travel as do cars, one on water, the other on land. Both are called "she." The car/ship has a stylus, podium, prow that cuts along a path, and thus its mark or trail is made. The wake of churned-up water is the ship's path as the drippings of oil is the car's path. The oil drippings of cars are the indicia of a car's path (not to mention its tire marks). The record's sound from an LP is the index of a stylus' path. Sound travels on tar/oil/vinyl records as cars travel on tar/oil/asphalt. Thus a stylus traveling down a record groove is an allegory of a car traveling down a road.

In another vein, without oil there would be no art. In art, there's the word tar, an anagram. Tar is derived from oil. Painters, of course, use oil to make their art. There are many kinds of oil, or many tars: vinyl, records, acrylic, etc. Artists need tar. Artist-musicians need tar/oil, the same kind of tar that's involved in the manufacture of records. Painters and musicians employ different art forms or they use different tar forms. Some of them can become a star after becoming successful with their art made of tar, such tar allowing them to go far. The anagrams arts/tars/star are crucial to the symbols that determine an identification in our culture.

With stars on tars doing arts, the lack of oil threatens their activity too. No oil means no arts, not a single star because of the lack of tars. Again without art or tars or star(s), what will that do to star(ing), what will happen to our sight, since no arts/star(s) will

be able to be looked at? What films will we see and what car windows will we look through? As well, no ear wax/oil/tars/arts/star(s) over the car's radio also means an imminent crisis for our hearing. No records played or burned, no RCA and no car, means no sound heard as it means no oil for cars to drive on. Not being able to see and hear, taken in their sense as drives, is also a lack of the energy or oil to keep those drives goeing. The other drives, the oral and anal, also derive from this collapse of culturally shared images, pleasure words, mythologies and lois. Thus an ego will then not goe without being driven by the four-wheeled drives of the apertures of our bodies, our bodies that have energy or oil along with the rims or sources from which to discharge that energy: the ears, the eyes, the mouth and the anus. Egos go(es) to drive with oil and aim at oil. Oil drives us from one state of oil to another state/taste of oil.

To taste oil introduces oil's relation to the third gear of the oral drive, noting another phonic resemblance. America's addiction to tar is as bad as its addiction to the tar in cigarettes. Even low-tar or ultra low-tar cigarettes resonate with the desire to move away from tar, too much tar, too much oil. Low-mileage cars are really low in tar as some cigarettes are. Low-tar cigarettes are a "rationing" of tar, like the inevitable "rationing" of oil when supplies get low. The oral drive, exemplified by smoking, is also present in the repetitive and pleasurable activity in listening to songs over the radio, on the jukebox, on one's stereo. Both smoking and listening involve tar/art and oil/vinyl records. Both are an inhalation, since with smoking one interiorizes tar and in the other, in listening, one can interiorize via the mouth the record's voice. Resinging a popular song that is played on oil is inhaling a cigarette that has "tar" in it. Introjection is an oral affair, and

The exhaust of a car resembles either the cigarette smoke that then passes through the lungs, throat and mouth, as an exhalation, as exhaust. Smoking a cigarette is then an allegory of a car burning oil as both of them spew forth "exhaust."

Another attenuation of the oral/oil drive. The LP for a vinyl record could bear an i between the letters l and p, producing lip. LPs are sung on our lips, our singing reproduces the singing on the record. Lip synch is LP synch, a truism to the argument that our culture is heavily involved in the introjection, the filling of an oral void, of records and oil.

Also, introjecting oil is implicated in the confusion as to whether oil is water or not. Oil is not water, but then water is a liquid, just as oil is.

The fourth gear in the "drive" is the anal drive.

Oil companies have a lot of gold from all the money they've made.

Gold and oil are nearly synonymous, since their prices affect the status of the world market so radically. Oil is precious, but more precious in its refined state. Black, crude, "dirty," the oil is originally shitty. Refined, made clean by oil refinery, sewage system plants, the oil loses its shittiness and becomes more valuable, like gold, and circulatable, rather than in its less valuable, "dirty," crude state.

But if oil is shitty in its crude state and then valuable in its refined state, a hit record, or one of the hits, here was once shit, since shit and hits are anagrams of each other. From crude oil equals shit to refined oil or vinyl equals hits, as in the phrase "Top 40 Hits" (Shit), oil will always bear the meaning of its excremental status. Records, as texts, are involved in the problematic of being "extrinsic excrement" or "intrinsic ideality" (Derrida). Oil pollutes too, as in oil slicks or massive refinery plant fires. The dead remnants of prehistoric forests left

their rich deposits behind so as to fuel our possessions. Oil is the manure of ancient forests just as it is a manure when “crude” or “dirty” before it is cleaned and refined into the Top 40 Hits (Shit) vinyl LPs. The anal drive completes oil’s four-wheel drive that helps the American (to) drive.

Also the anality of oil is prefigured in the means to mine it. Drilling into the earth to yield the riches (Atlantic Richfield) withheld by resistant layers of crust obeys sadistic, coprophagic ideas. (Coprophagia is “feeding off dung.”) For the earth to withhold its riches is much like the constipated retention of faeces that enemas or in similar fashion oil rigs relieve.

Oil is gold and gold is shit. Thus oil is shit, either because it resembles shit (dark, untouchable, nauseating, hidden from view) or because its extremely valued state allows us to compare it with what is the least valued as gold is with shit. Gifts, and

the symbology derived from them, obey oblativity, anal drive ideas. Oil companies and oil rich countries give us oil, or they, in their withholding, retain the precious gift. This is sadism in its truest sense. Furthermore, concern over the profits oil companies make propels moral ideas as to a more proper distribution, another facet of the ablativity character of the anal drive. The shit/oil/gold should be circulated in equivalent amounts, otherwise retention forces those lacking into accusations of hoarding, another anal motif.

America's desire to ration its oil supplies demonstrates what attenuations the anal drive can go to. Frugality and judicious use of oil are not without their sadistic connotations, a sodomy done to all, while elsewhere lurks the greater sadists, Arabia and the large oil companies.

The unseen character of oil, its abstractness, after all this gross materiality, and its transformation

into fire, energy, combustion, etc. is another important idea. I've already tried to explain that with records/oil played/burned on an RCA/car, the unseen disc of vinyl returns in the form of a flying saucer. Oil's invisibility returns in the form of a disco/disc/vinyl record that flies into the car/RCA burning or playing the music. This music is the beat that goes/egos on, drives egos on. Oil is usually the fuel that our eyes do not see. Oftentimes it is a simple mathematical quota in terms of the car's registration that the fuel is low. It can also be the rapid calculation of gallons and fractions of gallons seen at the gas pump along with its calculation into a price at another adjacent window on the pump. Its abstract character is further testified by its facilitation of general movement from one place to another. Oil is simply energy, and that energy makes things happen, but energy is not the thing, the idea, it simply allows the thing or idea or event to take place. Like the crucial

distinction in psychoanalysis between idea and instinct, oil is instinct, the drive to which the idea is "soldered." (Although Freud distinguished the two.) Oil determines the drive's energy as well as the object of the drive, the oil-related product. The record's idea, its music, is made possible by its oil/vinyl as are the housewife's errands made possible by car fuel. Oil drives the car just as ideas are aligned to drives, the economic factors that account for the ideas' repetition, their persistence. There can be no idea without its concomitant energetic investment, no idea without the pressure that realizes it. Conversely there can be no energy without an idea attached to such a quantity-ridden abstraction, a notion prey to alinguistic, transcendental assertions. Oil neither escapes its idea, its conceptual, linguistic, presentational status nor does it escape its energetic quanta, its reducibility to simple distributions of affects. The word oil is just as important as its unseen combustions, its

mysterious pervasiveness that organizes things while at the same time remains invisible to them.

There is the vulgarity of those who stress pure, nonverbal ascensions into absolute energy, vibration, impulse, quanta, etc. They are at once giving an idea to a sensation (a sign too), this distribution of pressures that is never independent of representation, language, speaking subjects, discourse.

The fad of jogging is a near mystical embrace of this idea of pure energy, but why would they be jogging but in a time-bound situation where the deprivation of oil or energy insists that they have vitality, a lot of energy or oil? Joggers presume their freedom from oil at the very moment when their livelihoods are threatened by its absence. The fastest jogger inversely affirms a slowing down of the I go in cars. One reminder: race and car. Eliminate the e in race and permute the rest of the letters into

car. Joggers are in a race, a strange car race. Even the ger in jogger echoes car (c and g are both velar stops). Mania, here in the jogger, is close to mourning, where the oil-ideal (usually an ego-ideal) is now about to become lost forever to the historical specificity of driving oil-powered automobiles.

Other movement manias, the disco-mania and the roller skating mania, are close to the problem of the disappearance of oil. Dancing in discos and roller skating obey the general idea of movement and lots of it. Disco music is the music that is in our ears whose ear wax is also the oil that constitutes the records played over sound systems. Hearing oil is also moving to it and being driven by it. Dancing and its euphonic embrace, this mania for the ego in perfect self-presentation, is only about to mourn the loss of what makes the dancers goe so energetically, the oil record or the car/ear oil/

wax under question. When we dance
our cars are driven by oil and when
we drive our cars are driven by oil.

Oil as instinct will probably find its
greatest threat in the future when no
oil makes impossible libidinal contact
with others. The freedom for a young
man and woman in a car, flaunting
parental admonitions against sex, to
have that pleasure (and the car/RCA/
radio music that serves to express
that impulse) is threatened by no
more oil. Going elsewhere for sex is
becoming an archaism, at least when
fuel, energy, oil is involved. Granted
there will always be libido, drives
and instincts, it's just that oil has
tyrannized ourselves, our autos to the
point where its exclusion would result
in the deprivation of key ideas gov-
erning so much human intercourse.
No energy (oil) is no sex, a thought
related to Ernest Jones's observation
that what the subject fears most is the
loss of libido, aphanisis, an idea more
threatening than the irreducibility

of castration. Will no oil castrate the Western/ American subject so radically as to force libidinal contact into retreat? Will the lack of oil dismiss representation altogether? An impossibility, despite the intimate congruence between its manufacture and the significations surrounding it. No sex, no art, no stars, no records, along with the absence of their energetic foundations, shows the profound anxiety we're going through. Its resolution appears to be intractably elusive, considering oil's complex impregnation into our culture's discourse, our intramental and socially exterior selves, our autos. How can our auto/ego let go of oil?

from Duncan Smith "On the Current Symbolic Status of Oil". Originally published in D. Smith "The Age of Oil", 1987 by Slate Pr.
Brussels, 17/12/2022. Edition of 50.

