

On the Current Symbolic Status of Oil (1987)
From The Age of Oil
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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.

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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. 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

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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.

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.

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 record assures us of oral stimulation by the silent, but still vocalized, activity under-going when we listen, when we hear the wax in our car that we cannot see.

True, the ear wax is invisible, the partition between seeing the ear's contents and the eye that is to accomplish that act is permanent, unless you were enterprising enough to have a photograph taken of it. Oil is not only in our cars, but in our ears, in our eyes (our stares), and in our mouths. A cigarette, believe it or not, is a small car, an i caret get, an I get(te) a car, or simplified, an I get car. Car's rhyme with tar could mean I get tar for cigarette, "I smoke cigarettes" can translate into either "I smoke I get cars" or "I smoke I get tars." With smoking, the cigarette's smoke is similar to the exhaust that comes from a car, the remains of burnt-up car oil are also the remains of burnt-up tar. But is the cigarette filter's passage of smoke the only "exhaust" when we, as smokers, exhale the "exhaust" from our mouth? 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."