



# **Statist Means to Individualist Ends: Subjectivity, Automobility, and the Cold-War State**

**Cotten Seiler**

Autonomous individuals are artefacts, made possible by the power of the modern state.

John Gray<sup>1</sup>

It seems at first sight as if all the minds of the Americans were formed upon one model, so accurately do they follow the same route.

Alexis de Tocqueville<sup>2</sup>

## **The Cold-War Crisis of the Individual**

The primary antagonists of the Cold War never engaged in direct military combat; instead, they engaged one another on the numerous fronts of culture. Thomas Haskell and Richard Teichgraber note that the world-historical conflict between capitalism and socialism that crystallized into the Cold War has been in essence an ontological debate over “certain key questions concerning the status of the self and the authenticity of its experience of autonomy.”<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly, the first decade of the Cold War witnessed a widespread and

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manifold defense of “the individual” both at home and abroad. Policy architects of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations lamented the enervation of the individualistic “American character.”<sup>4</sup> Domestic prosperity and global hegemony, these elites feared, had undermined the nation’s singular virtues, particularly those rooted in Calvinist Protestantism and the Jeffersonian yeoman ideal.<sup>5</sup> The strategists of the Cold-War state were not alone in their misgivings; rather, the populist suspicion that the “autonomous self, long a linchpin of liberal culture, was being rendered unreal” emerged as a prominent postwar anxiety, informing and setting the parameters for a great deal of scholarly discourse, cultural production, and material culture.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, during the 1950s, the Cold War “began to be waged about everything.”<sup>7</sup> The specter of totalitarianism haunted a great many American social scientists, historians, economists, theologians, artists, and cultural critics; it hung over a public sphere in which “expressions of support for liberal individualism . . . were frequent and endless.”<sup>8</sup> The most salient postwar scholarly studies of American society, such as David Riesman’s *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), William Whyte’s *The Organization Man* (1956), and C. Wright Mills’ *White Collar* (1951), testified to the threat to individual autonomy posed by the “culture of abundance.” These works focused on white middle-class men in their prime earning years (with the exception of Betty Friedan’s 1963 *The Feminine Mystique*, which plumbed the inner desolation endured by their wives), an ostensibly representative group for which “the most compelling dilemma [was] the waning of independent individualism as a life-style and as a social value, and the disappearance of social types and groups that made individualism a living reality.”<sup>9</sup> These studies reflected what William Graebner has described as the “new fear (or, rather, anxiety, in a common distinction of the time) . . . that modern Americans—as well as Germans and Russians—had somehow fashioned for themselves a straitjacket of institutions and values that contained and thwarted the most basic desires for freedom of action and freedom of will.” Many postwar visual artists, filmmakers, writers, and musicians, too, took up the task of extricating themselves and their audiences from this straitjacket.<sup>10</sup>

This widespread preoccupation with the decline of individualism indicated a shift by many intellectuals from prewar collectivistic movements for social justice to a focus on the pathologies afflicting the liberal-capitalist atom, the autonomous individual.<sup>11</sup> While scholars’ anxious eulogies for the latter and their lambasting of conformist culture did more than merely parrot Cold Warriors’ contempt for American infantility and drift, they did appear to share the political elites’ disdain for what William Whyte, in *The Organization Man*, called the “social ethic.”<sup>12</sup> The abject “lost individuals” who wandered the landscape of postwar social science bore an uncomfortable resemblance to the *homo politicus* that populated the Communist dystopia, a figure denied “all title to individuality,” for whom “abnegation of self [is] the core of his morality and the first article of his faith.”<sup>13</sup> Even Friedan’s feminist critique reflected and contributed to a decidedly anti-collectivist cultural climate, and thus complemented the state’s

“narrative repetition of the Cold War message” of individual freedom.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, both implicitly and explicitly, the pejorative assessments of American life levied by Cold Warriors and cultural critics alike were suffused with gendered tropes of softness, frivolity, and vulnerability. The resuscitation of the autonomous self, to which so many mid-century social critics directed their energies, seemed inseparable from a reaffirmation of masculinity; what Guy Oakes has called “the creation of a new civic ethic tailored to the requirements of the Cold War” was tantamount to encouraging traits diametrically opposed to the feminine.<sup>15</sup>

Revitalizing (and re-masculinizing) the American character involved reasserting the “first principles” of American life.<sup>16</sup> “The Soviet Union,” one *Foreign Affairs* writer declared in 1950, “is challenging the United States to renew and develop for our time the magnificent inheritance of western individualism.”<sup>17</sup> That same year, the National Security Council asserted that, despite the immensity of the collectivist threat, “the system of values which animates our society—the principles of freedom, tolerance, the importance of the individual, and the supremacy of reason over will—are valid and more vital than the ideology which is the fuel of Soviet dynamism.” Crucial to the successful prosecution of the Cold War, the Council argued, was the “practical affirmation, abroad as well as at home, of our essential values, that we can preserve our own integrity, in which lies the real frustration of the Kremlin design.”<sup>18</sup> Hence U.S. propaganda showed that the nation was “fighting enemy tyranny through the power of the individual.”<sup>19</sup>

American propagandists, however, found their difficult task of formulating “an equivalent dogma” for the Cold War further compounded by the vagueness of the term “freedom” (formally defined as “the absence of restraint”) and the fact that both of the belligerents claimed to embrace it.<sup>20</sup> Most Western political philosophers characterized freedom as “the protection of the individual against tyranny,” whereas their Soviet and Chinese counterparts asserted the historical-materialist doctrine of freedom as “an actor’s conscious control over the necessity which dictates one’s actions.”<sup>21</sup> A prodigiously oversignifying signifier, “freedom” has always required clarification through material expression, “a fence,” cultural anthropologist Dorothy Lee wrote, “around [its] formless idea.”<sup>22</sup> Clearly, a merely rhetorical affirmation of individual freedom, even one forcefully and consistently reiterated in official pronouncements, the scholarship of the intelligentsia, and the middlebrow media, would not suffice to mobilize the necessary martial energies. Addressing the crucial question at the center of Cold-War America, “what are we for?,” Eisenhower aide Arthur Larson asserted that “It is less important to stress that we are for freedom (since most uncommitted peoples accept freedom as an ideal) than to stress that *we are for the institutions that in fact create and advance freedom.*”<sup>23</sup>

Which institutions performed this work? *Red Nightmare*, a 1962 propaganda film produced by Warner Brothers for the Department of Defense, concludes its dystopian tale of small-town American life under Soviet domination by

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cataloguing the social and political freedoms Americans enjoy. Over a series of wholesomely typical images of American life, the narrator, *Dragnet's* Jack Webb, gravely voices the film's moral:

Freedom: no single word in all the languages of mankind has come to mean so much. Freedom to enjoy the simple things in life, in the circle of family and friends. Freedom to work in a vocation of our choosing. To vote, in open elections, for the candidate we believe best qualified. To come, to go, as we please.

*Red Nightmare* conveyed perhaps more than the filmmakers intended in its final appraisal of freedom: "no single word . . . has come to mean so much." Given the context of the film's bleak narrative, one assumes that the filmmakers were emphasizing freedom's preciousness to Americans; but parse the sentence differently, and it reveals the exhaustion "freedom" suffered from oversignification. Yet as Webb intones *Red Nightmare's* last line, aerial footage of an urban highway, cars streaming in both directions, comes onscreen.<sup>24</sup>

I contend that mobility—more specifically, *automobility*, a term James Flink has used to encapsulate "the combined import of the motor vehicle, the automobile industry and the highway, plus the emotional connotations of this import for Americans"—took on crucial symbolic value during the 1950s.<sup>25</sup> I am particularly interested in the ways in which the state, industry, and the middlebrow media worked in concert to confer "an aura of naturalness and necessity"<sup>26</sup> upon the practice of automobility, and thereby upon the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways (authorized in 1956). Whatever their commercial and military benefits, the Interstates were also a massive propaganda event dramatizing to foreign and domestic audiences the freedom for which, *The New Republic* wrote, "in these uncertain times Americans hunger for tangible evidence."<sup>27</sup> In assuring "the right and even the ability to move from place to place,"<sup>28</sup> through this monumental project, the state provided a space in which those modes of acting and being that fostered a Cold-War species of individualism prevailed; the state made (forgive the pun) a concrete commitment to a particular type of "American."

Automobility, then, provided a set of practical parameters for an American *subjectivity* suited to the ideological demands of the Cold War. My use here of subjectivity is informed by the poststructuralist project of reinterpreting selfhood and identity as historical, social, and always in process. Nan Enstad defines subjectivity as "the particular way that an individual becomes a social being, part and product of the corner of the world she or he inhabits. Subjectivity is thus related to the concepts self and identity, with a crucial distinction: subjectivity emphasizes a *process* of becoming that is never completed. It is based on the premise that *who one is* is neither essential nor fixed, but is continually shaped

and reshaped in human social exchange.”<sup>29</sup> The idealized American subject of the Cold War was an analogue, ironically, of what Soviet psychologists heralded as the “New Man.”

While it is not my purpose to explore the evolution of Soviet social science, it is important to note that by the 1930s Soviet theorists had largely abandoned the extreme environmentalism of “vulgar” Marxist conceptions of the individual, and reevaluated the degree to which individuals could be “conscious, purposeful actors” in society. The revised model of subjectivity, known as the “New Man,” informed Party-sanctioned literature, history, and economic policy under Stalin. Whatever the American image of Soviet citizen as degraded “mass man” and automaton, the “New Man” model ascribed greater agency to the individual; one Soviet psychologist lauded the state’s attempt to produce “a socially ‘open’ man who is easily collectivized and quickly and profoundly transformed in behaviour—a man capable of being a steady, conscious and independent person, politically and ideologically well trained.”<sup>30</sup> However, as the American social psychologist Raymond A. Bauer insisted, the independence of the “New Man” was dependent upon his total internalization of Party doctrine; the individual was thus “free to act only within the limits circumscribed by the regime, free to act only in the pursuit of socially-accepted goals.”<sup>31</sup>

Soviet psychology held only passing interest to American political elites, except as an egregious example of the way in which social science played handmaiden to the Soviet state. More crucial to their critique of the Soviet system was the underlying assumption that the state could, through structured environments, education, propaganda, coercion, or reward, manufacture the types of citizens it desired.<sup>32</sup> For American Cold Warriors, the idea that individuals were shaped by the state, and existed only by its imprimatur, exposed the monstrous nature of the Soviet system. Yet as the Soviet Union engineered its “New Man”—“politically and ideologically well-trained”—so did the United States require a representative countersubject, the salient quality of which was individual autonomy. As a *Foreign Affairs* commentator asserted in 1949, “the end and aim of society and the state ought to be the nurture and propagation of a certain kind of man—the independent and self-directing individual.”<sup>33</sup> Of course, this aim, articulated in this manner, acknowledged the role of collectivities such as the state in crafting subjectivity. The American Cold-War state would have to use, as I argue below, “statist means to individualist ends;” that is, it would have to craft policy and institutions conducive to the creation of a subject whose dispositions and practices harkened back to the idealized American character of old. Like the Soviet “New Man,” the American subject was free to act and to choose, but only “within the limits circumscribed by the regime.” Automobility—in particular that of the elevated, limited-access highway of the postwar era—metaphorically invoked that freedom *and* those limits, and thus served as an effective symbolic practice of an American subjectivity particularly suited to the ideological exigencies of the Cold War.

## (Auto)mobility and the American Character

A free American in pursuit of happiness . . . is *mobile*, is, has been, will be, in motion . . .

James Oliver Robertson<sup>34</sup>

Conceptions of individual freedom in the United States have been nurtured by spatial and social mobility; or, rather, mobility and individualism have been parallel and mutually dependent myths. Leslie Dale Feldman has recently identified a strain of liberal individualism, derived from the political theory of Thomas Hobbes, that conceives of the freedom to *move* as primary and essential to a range of other freedoms.<sup>35</sup> “The intrinsic relationship between movement and personal freedom,” Gerald R. Houseman has similarly observed, “is verified by historical experience which ranges from feudalism to the contrasting conditions of black and white settlement in America, from Horatio Alger dreams of maximum mobility, social as well as physical, to the hopeless finality of Dachau.”<sup>36</sup> The geographer Eric Leed has also examined the the persistent trope of “travel as a demonstration of freedom and means to autonomy”:

The right to travel had entered into the Western definition of the free autonomous individual whose associations to others are a result of conscious acts of connection, of allegiance and contract. . . . These factors—the voluntariness of departure, the freedom implicit in the indeterminacies of mobility, the pleasure of travel free from necessity, the notion that travel signifies autonomy and is a means for demonstrating what one “really” is independent of one context or set of defining associations—remain the characteristics of the modern conception of travel.<sup>37</sup>

Mobility has thus been idealized as freedom’s inaugural moment and its affirming performance. Of course, self-determined mobility—as opposed to that of the refugee—has generally been a perquisite of social, political, and economic power. The traveler, James Clifford has observed, “is someone who has the security and privilege to move about in relatively unconstrained ways.”<sup>38</sup> Hence the free traveler as a cultural and political symbol reinforces and is reinforced by specific discourses that distribute power along lines of race, gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, and other visible markers of identity. Mobility, ostensibly a universal right, has remained a condition of status insofar as its true goal is “not movement as such; it is *access to people and facilities*.”<sup>39</sup> Hence the mobility of the traveler has symbolized proprietorship and mastery over both space and self.<sup>40</sup>

In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner enshrined mobility as the formative and sustaining practice of American life, one that remained crucial even as white

migration to the west subsided over the latter half of the nineteenth century. “He would be a rash prophet indeed,” Turner wrote, “who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise.”<sup>41</sup> Many postwar voices echoed Turner. The historian George W. Pierson, for example, isolated the American genius in what he called the “M-Factor”—movement, migration, and mobility. Affirming that “[m]ovement has always been a major ligament in our culture, knit into the bone and sinew of that body of experience which we call our history. . . . [and] in the forging of an ‘American’ character,” Pierson noted that American archetypes—pioneers, cowboys, rags-to-riches industrialists—had been shaped by experiences of migration.<sup>42</sup> Pierson argued that Americans were in the process of “reconstructing *the entire gamut of relations* for western (or mobile) man.” Such a reconstruction, he suggested, could bring “new institutions patterned in part on free movement . . . new relations with the physical environment based on a view of nature different from the European . . . a new conception of human fellowship . . . and . . . even possibly a new attitude toward the self.”<sup>43</sup> Pierson made grand claims for mobility, but he was not alone. Oscar Handlin credited the formation of a specifically American personality to the often-traumatic practice of “uprooting.”<sup>44</sup> Even Lewis Mumford, no great proponent of the mobility-oriented built environment of the United States, affirmed that movement had been the historical process by which “the social man could become an individual.”<sup>45</sup>

During the Cold War, Suzanne Clark observes, mobility invoked “a brand new configuration of cultural history,” one that “called upon the old discourses of the West . . . to claim that there was and always had been one real American identity.”<sup>46</sup> That identity was the frontier-ranging male individualist, whose heroic qualities derived from his constant movement, and who was now all but extinguished by the closing of the frontier, the crush of expanding population density, and the stagnating comfort of abundance. Could he be resuscitated? Or could his twentieth-century analogue arise from current conditions?

To postwar social scientists like David Riesman, who diagnosed anomie and conformity among the white professional-managerial class, “the overwhelming experience of American mobility” held promise as a therapeutic-regenerative practice for the diminished selves of American modernity.<sup>47</sup> The mobile individual was removed, if only temporarily, from a constricting social context, and thrown into situations both disorienting and liberating—what Pierson called “experiments in displacement.” A good deal of postwar American scholarship and literature reaffirmed the journey as a salutary trial by which the individual might locate the core of the authentic self.<sup>48</sup> Jack Kerouac, one of the foremost celebrants of mobility, imagined the road as a maternal space (yet one free of women) that revived those white men who took flight from the vitiating mediocrity of square society; *On the Road*’s Sal Paradise sought to leave

“confusion and nonsense behind and [perform] our one and only noble function of the time, *move*.”<sup>49</sup>

If the American road had traditionally been imagined as a sort of spartan retreat for the cultivation of the true self, that image complemented another, also implicit in Kerouac and other postwar writers: the road as an emporium, stocked with an array of lifeways from which the individual could select. “Only in America,” Riesman wrote in *Faces in the Crowd* (1952),

with all class and customary conventions nearly gone, does each geographical move imply a set of new and chancy human encounters—encounters with people who . . . compel and invite us to treat them to some degree as individuals. As tennis and golf players keep looking for those whose game is just a little better than theirs—but a game to which they can lift themselves by effort—so this mobility allows us to look for those whose life is in significant respects just a little better but whose “lifemanship” is still within our potential grasp.<sup>50</sup>

*Faces in the Crowd* and its predecessor, the popular *The Lonely Crowd*, rehearsed for the era of social psychology what had become a standard agon in American social criticism, namely, reconciling the individualistic tenets of the culture’s value system and the increasingly corporate nature of everyday life. Riesman and his collaborators asserted that “Americans”—implicitly defined as white, middle-class American men, and perhaps a few women—no longer possessed an individualistic orientation. However hoary its thesis, *The Lonely Crowd* refrained from the polemic and moralizing that usually attended claims, scholarly and otherwise, of Americans’ growing conformity. Instead, Riesman and his coauthors developed an ostensibly less normative terminology of American social character, redescribing the much-lamented “conformity” as a shift in social character resulting from the experience of political and economic consolidation. In recent decades, “inner direction,” the stuff of the rugged individualist, had given way to “other-direction,” the code of the abject organization man: *The Lonely Crowd*’s prescriptive was “autonomy,” which merged the best traits of both character types. Riesman envisioned “an organic development of autonomy out of other-direction,” as the latter enabled “a sensitivity and rapidity of movement which under prevailing American institutions provide a large opportunity to explore the resources of character.”<sup>51</sup>

Other social scientists shared a view of the resourcefulness and mutability of the “mobile self” as indicative of nascent associational forms. Some argued that other-direction had always been the most prevalent and appropriate social character for a democratic society.<sup>52</sup> Daniel Lerner affirmed the idea that mobility offered a wealth of resources for the construction of an authentic self; mobility had been both the cause of the shift in social character and the font of the best



elements of other-direction—toleration, egalitarianism, facility for adaptation, and empathy. “The crucial word in the transformation of American lifeways,” Lerner wrote, “is ‘mobility.’”

This nation was founded upon the mobility of the individual. . . . Mobile society required a mobile personality, a self-system so adaptive to change that rearrangement is its permanent mode. . . . The mobile person shows a high capacity for identifying himself with new and strange aspects of the environment. He is capable of handling unfamiliar demands upon himself outside his habitual experience. . . . Empathy is the psychic instrument which enables newly mobile persons to act effectively in the world. This is why the mobile personality is not to be regarded as mere psychic aberration or moral degeneration, but as a social phenomenon with a history. . . . [T]he style of modern society is distinctive for its capacity to rearrange the “self-system” on short notice.<sup>53</sup>

Even among those social scientists sympathetic to other-direction, however, there remained suspicions that these best traits of the mobile personality ossified when the individual became ensconced in the “organization.” Whatever their evaluations of other-direction, the proponents of therapeutic mobility had to acknowledge that the conditions of displacement and flux that had hewn the American character no longer governed the increasingly suburban, corporate present. Yet the new world of the postwar white middle class remained one of movement; and its instrument was the automobile.

### **Automobility as Regenerative Practice**

As early as 1907, when the automobile remained largely a toy of the wealthy, *Harper’s Weekly* predicted that it would become “the ready, tireless and faithful servant of man throughout the world where civilization has a home or freedom a banner.”<sup>54</sup> As Leslie Dale Feldman notes, “Any technological invention which facilitated freedom of movement was certain to be prized in America, where Hobbesian atomism and the conception of liberty in terms of freedom *from* impediment were two basic tenets of society.”<sup>55</sup> By providing the “means for an individual to detach herself from an environment of givens and move out to an environment of choice, a world of possibilities and unknowns,” the automobile held promise as an agent of democratization, individuation, and regeneration.<sup>56</sup> Early twentieth-century writings on the automobile emphasized its ability to reanimate “the values of the frontier by making movement a permanent state of mind.”<sup>57</sup> The first generation of motor touring narratives, authored mostly by white elites, viewed movement across the continent as a direct way of tapping into and being refreshed by a pure and authentic America; indeed, as George

Pierson quipped, the archetypal pioneer in westward motion had been “the first auto-mobile.”<sup>58</sup>

Of course, there was a different valence to the mobility practiced in the expansionist past and the automobility of contemporary motorists. The historical experiences of American mobility had generally been those of immigration or migration across great distances (though what constituted a great distance had changed); automobility related more to circulation, shorter-distance movement for the purposes of commuting, consumption, and tourism.<sup>59</sup> The controlled environments of modern roads, sumptuous car interiors, and plentiful roadside amenities differed dramatically from the hardship of earlier movement; rather than occasions for the testing of inner mettle, the environment and experiences of contemporary driving increasingly became objects of consumption.<sup>60</sup>

The postwar celebration of mobility as a revitalizing force was predictably gender-coded. As mentioned above, many social critics’ conceptions of the new American character equated the transformation of that character with the assumption of traditionally feminine qualities and sensibilities; a number saw mobility as a practice capable of counteracting what, in the Cold War context, appeared to be a crippling “domestication” of American men. If men were to reclaim their manhood, the “open road” stood as one of the sites of that reclamation. Male social critics of the era tended, therefore, to emphasize actual and metaphorical motion in their prescriptions for the revitalization of American society (which was inseparable from a renewal of masculinity). Yet in an age of effortless automobility, the vision of journey-as-trial became increasingly difficult to sustain. Hence George Pierson lamented the process of travel standardization as “the emasculation of the journey,” movement in which “much of the excitement has been drained off.”<sup>61</sup> Yet despite the less arduous nature of travel by modern automobile, the notion of the journey as recreating the salutary conditions of the male pioneer remained powerful and pervasive.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, the genius of the automobile, its supporters maintained, was its ability to join the heroic *self-determination* of a mythologized past to that of a limitless future. Well before the Cold War, automobility promised “the dream of modernity, of self-actualized individuals unconstrained by their pasts, or by place, with their lives shaped only by their choices.”<sup>63</sup> The rhetoric of early motorists, the automobile industry, and advocacy organizations such as the American Automobile Association, enthused that “Everything was up to *you*; everything was open, like the road itself.”<sup>64</sup> Motoring through Indiana in 1916, Theodore Dreiser observed that “the prospect of new and varied roads . . . appears to make a man independent and give him a choice in life.”<sup>65</sup> The roads that stretched out before Dreiser beckoned not only because they were well-constructed or had historical import as drover trails, rutted prairie schooner tracks, or routes of the exiled and the called, but also as opportunities for the exercise of his autonomous will, opportunities that the crush of urban life had narrowed or precluded. Americans in the postwar era “were constantly reminded

in advertising, television shows, and popular songs,” that, on the road, “they were truly ‘free,’ modern versions of western pioneers.”<sup>66</sup> *Time*, in a 1957 article on roadbuilding, asserted that the “panorama of road builders stringing highways across the land reflects a peculiarly American genius, one that lies deep in the traditional pioneering instincts of the nation.”<sup>67</sup>

The individuation of movement enabled by the automobile threw into relief the constraints imposed by rail travel and other multiuser conveyances, with their inflexible schedules and itineraries. Cast “as rail’s natural, democratic rival,” the automobile came to dominate American transportation policy by the mid-twentieth century.<sup>68</sup> The assertion of the automobile as an individualist machine grew more vigorous with the tremendous growth in sales between 1915 and 1930. During this time ownership and driver licensing began to “trickle down” to working-class whites, people of color and recent immigrants, and women, as Fordist production brought prices down and the state pursued increasingly aggressive roadbuilding policies and expanded the bureaucracy servicing automobility. Indeed, the rise of the automobile as both the foundation of a juggernaut industry and as a cultural symbol was predicated on the extension of its promise to these more marginalized communities. No longer the prohibitively expensive contraption of the wealthy, the mass-produced automobile came to represent “the kind of individualist equality particularly well suited to American values.”<sup>69</sup> Its ascendancy, moreover, was and continues to be characterized not as a mandate of the state or of industry, but as the consequence of individual Americans overwhelmingly “voting” in favor of automobility.<sup>70</sup>

Of course, automobile and related industries had, from the very first, spent liberally “on advertising to define freedom as equivalent to individual mobility,” and had promoted the automobile’s “application as a status object and symbol of liberation.”<sup>71</sup> By the 1930s, those industries had begun to appeal directly to the public to press for more roadbuilding initiatives. General Motors, for example, sponsored industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes’s “Futurama” exhibit at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York. Futurama conveyed fairgoers through a future America (the world of 1960) in which automotive traffic flowed effortlessly through urban areas, and scenic, landscaped, high-speed highways (based on the German *autobahnen*) traversed the countryside. Futurama and other industrial appeals to the public linked highways inextricably with *progress* and the material abundance and ease of living, freedom, and social harmony that term signified. Writing in support of his urban and suburban plan, Bel Geddes explicitly tethered his proposed “magic motorways” to a modern vision of the good life:

Already the automobile has done great things for people. It has taken man out beyond the small confines of the world in which he used to live. Distant communities have been brought closer together. Throughout all recorded history, man has made repeated efforts to reach out farther and farther and to

communicate with other men more easily and quickly, and these efforts have reached the climax of their success in the twentieth century. This increasing freedom of movement makes possible a magnificently full, rich life for the people of our time. A free-flowing movement of people and goods across our nation is a requirement of modern living and prosperity.<sup>72</sup>

Bel Geddes's 1940 paean to automobility would be echoed over the next decade by a growing chorus of industrial interests and representatives of the state (who often were one and the same). Auto executive George Romney was confident, as Frederick Jackson Turner had been before him, that the American tradition of mobility would compel further and grander roadbuilding. "For we Americans," he concluded, "are inherently the most restless of peoples; and, as long as this trait is dominant in us, our land shall doubtless continue to provide the ideal climate for the vehicle's road-creative proclivity."<sup>73</sup> "America lives on wheels," Eisenhower's Treasury Secretary George Humphrey proclaimed, "and we have to provide the highways to keep America living on wheels and keep the kind and form of life we want."<sup>74</sup> In many cases, the automobile and related industries underwrote scholars' "analyses" of automobility: "One comes to perceive," wrote the historian Bernard DeVoto in a 1956 Ford highway-advocacy pamphlet, "that the American road represents a way of life."<sup>75</sup> A participant at the 1950 "Highways in Our National Life" symposium at Princeton University similarly stated that "the dynamic character of American society owes much to the first rude highways over which toiled the pioneers on horseback, on foot, in wagons, and in prairie schooners. It owes even more to the hard-surfaced highway which today links the country in a huge and mobile network."<sup>76</sup> A 1956 *Collier's* article promoting the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways asserted that "it is the automobile, more than any single phenomenon, that sets our way of life apart from the rest of the world."<sup>77</sup> Another author observed in 1952 that, to the car owner

the family bus means a number of things, but above all it spells a freedom of movement undreamed of by his ancestors and known to all too few of his neighbors in other lands. Perhaps it is an unconscious realization of the deeper meaning of this freedom which puts added timbre in his voice as he drives up to the gasoline pump and calls out expansively, "Fill 'er up!"<sup>78</sup>

To be sure, *Red Nightmare* was not alone in its deployment of the automobilized cityscape as a defining image of American freedom. Automobility, its supporters in the 1950s declared, was not merely dominant; it was gloriously regnant.<sup>79</sup> Its reign continues, as transportation analyst James A. Dunn, Jr. has recently averred: "the kind of planning, land-use, and auto-restrictive powers needed to stem the tide of automobility are literally, un-American."<sup>80</sup>

## Something to Want: The Interstate Highway System

Automobility's promise in the postwar imagination could be read in a 1955 highway-promoting advertisement for Republic Steel—a major contractor for the Interstates—which asked *Saturday Evening Post* readers, “Do you ever dream of an *open* road?” The ad depicted a young white man and woman out for a leisurely drive on a modern highway, the overpasses in the distance confirming that it is one of the limited-access highways newly proposed to Congress. The man wears a suit and tie and a pleasantly surprised smile. The woman smiles broadly, her face angled toward him. They are likely a young married couple, suburban, middle-class, the intended beneficiaries of the postwar economic boom. “To whirl along with all the joy your car has to offer,” the copy enthused, “that’s something to want.”<sup>81</sup>

In the years leading up to its authorization by Congress in 1956, the proposed National System of Interstate and Defense Highways was portrayed by politicians, bureaucrats, engineers, military officials, business leaders, and the popular media as the fulfillment of middle-class Americans’ desires for automotive safety, national security, economic prosperity, and expanded mobility. It was to be the most massive public works project in human history: from 1956 to 1975, over 42,500 miles of the continental U.S. would be paved; and a federal trust fund would raise and distribute over \$100 billion in construction costs. First approved as a public works priority in 1944, the Interstates had been forcefully promoted over the previous three decades by a constellation of interests known collectively as the highway lobby or the “Road Gang”: the oil, cement, rubber, automobile, insurance, trucking, chemical, and construction industries; consumer and political groups such as the American Automobile Association, the National Highway Users’ Conference, and the American Association of State Highway Officials; investment bankers, who sought to finance roadbuilding; and the military, which, having seen Hitler’s *autobahnen*, envisioned a network of efficient and durable highways for the rapid movement of troops and matériel.

Historians have noted that President Eisenhower has received perhaps inordinate credit for implementing a highway plan that had been formulated by previous administrations.<sup>82</sup> However, as Richard O. Davies argues, an examination of the Eisenhower administration does “provide an understanding of the temper of the times and the thinking of the administrative leaders that is essential for understanding the political climate that produced the Interstate system.”<sup>83</sup> Eisenhower’s political sensibilities reflected the “ideologically rooted, interest-driven, and institutionally amplified anti-statist influences [that] acted to constrict, constrain, and mold the federal government’s efforts at power creation” during the Cold War.<sup>84</sup> This anti-statism mandated the public perception “that the U.S. Government, unlike its evil Soviet counterpart, did not direct labor activity or academic research or journalistic endeavors; it was all the product of individuals freely making their own decisions and pursuing their own objectives.”<sup>85</sup> Yet this highly individualistic view of society put the American



Figure 1: The automotive utopia, circa 1955. Reprinted courtesy of Republic Engineered Products.

warfare state at odds with itself, as it simultaneously sought to marshal power as a collective entity (in its policy acts) *and* to emphasize the superfluity and illegitimacy of collectivities (in its propaganda).

The dilemma seemed particularly acute for the Eisenhower Administration, which was charged by its Republican supporters with the daunting task of curtailing and dismantling a popular and, for the most part, successful Democratic New Deal. Eisenhower consistently admonished against “regimented statism” and dependence upon government to “bring us happiness, security and opportunity,” and he sought to “[arrest] the momentum of New Deal liberalism and [ensure] . . . that ‘our economy . . . remain, to the greatest possible extent, in private hands.’”<sup>86</sup> The statism Eisenhower feared was not merely the incipient socialism he and other Republicans saw reflected in the New Deal, but also the transformation of the United States into the garrison society that his predecessor, Truman, had indicated might be a Cold-War necessity.<sup>87</sup> However, as a career military officer, Eisenhower respected the efficacy of bureaucratic entities in orchestrating massive projects and in enforcing harmony among a plurality of competing interests. His faith in centralized command organizations (of which the state and private corporations were both examples), coupled with his distrust of popular politics, led him to a political faith that mediated between laissez-faire economics and state activism on a case-by-case basis. This “middle of the road” sensibility, Eisenhower believed, safeguarded the freedom of the individual from all threats, whether they came from the operations of the private economy, from class conflict fueled by demagoguery, or from the creeping socialism that the most interventionist programs of the New Deal represented.

Whatever its anxieties over state power, then, the Eisenhower Administration demonstrated a willingness to channel public resources to reinforce a “system that encourages individualism” that the President considered the genius of American society.<sup>88</sup> Aware that in the middle of the twentieth century “the old values of individualism and self-help had been grievously discredited . . . and could never be resuscitated in their starkest form,” Eisenhower lauded an ethic that was not “rugged individualism in the old-fashioned Republican sense of the word,” but “freedom and independence for the individual with its collateral responsibility for cooperation.”<sup>89</sup> He was not averse to using the power of the state to remedy situations in which “the individual”—defined variously as an economic agent, as a political and social atom, and as ideological ordnance—was imperiled.

Although the anachronistic ideology of “pure” individualism rejected the notion that collectivities such as the state could or should take an active role in shaping selfhood, the individualism of mid-twentieth century American culture acknowledged the environmental contexts of the self, and even celebrated the individual’s identity as a member of a “team.” The individual, asserted Eisenhower aide Gabriel Hauge, “comes into this world a bundle of unrealized potentials with a capacity for growth. Our concept of the interaction between the individual and his environment is that his capacities must be exercised to

attain their full potential and must be developed in order to be effectively exercised.”<sup>90</sup> Taking a similarly optimistic (some might have said suspiciously Marxist) view of what could be characterized as a *social self* was the historian of Russia and the Soviet Union and Rockefeller Foundation consultant Geroid Tanquary Robinson, who, in 1949, had pondered the ambit of the state in cultivating the individuals required for the “ideological combat” of the Cold War:

Today there is hardly a man in the United States who does not believe that within recent decades it has become necessary for the Government to do more for the people than it did a hundred years ago. Yet there still persists . . . much more vigorously here than in any other great country, a vigorous individualism and a strong and wholesome fear of all great concentrations of power, whether in private or public hands. If the fundamental objective were agreed upon, and kept steadily in mind—the nurture of a certain kind of man—might there not be hope of at least a partial reconciliation of the old individualism with the new stateism [*sic*] of today? Could not the beginnings of a reconciliation be made by recognizing as fundamental the difference between government action which is designed to build up the independence and self-sufficiency of the individual citizen, and government action which tends to establish permanent discipline and dependence?<sup>91</sup>

It is this principle, using—(to borrow, with apologies, from Herbert Croly) statist means to achieve individualist ends—that I see behind the Eisenhower administration’s creation of the Interstate Highway System.

Eisenhower was careful to differentiate the highway initiative in character and in financing scheme from the Democratic public-works projects of the recent past. His intention was to make the project appear less statist than it inevitably was, and thereby to avoid what critics in his own party would condemn as “another ascent into the stratosphere of New Deal jitterbug economics.”<sup>92</sup> He was generally unsympathetic to the utopian plans of social planners such as Robert Moses and Norman Bel Geddes; their conceptions, while sharing Eisenhower’s enthusiasm for automobility, evinced too much of a “planning” sensibility. Instead of proposing the highway system as a form of progressive social engineering, Eisenhower emphasized it as *a response to a crisis*, necessitated by the democratically-produced and therefore unplanned triumph of automobility.<sup>93</sup> The modern highway, George Romney asserted, was, “like the vehicles that created it . . . the product of the people, a thing made by the people for the people.”<sup>94</sup>

With the end of the Korean War in 1953, the Eisenhower administration devoted more attention to highway matters. In a speech to the annual Governor’s



Conference at Lake George, New York, in July 1954, Vice President Nixon (Eisenhower was at his sister-in-law's funeral) stunned an audience expecting the administration's usual fiscal conservatism by announcing a \$50 billion highway plan. This speech provides a sense of the political gymnastics required for Eisenhower to undertake such a massive public-works project and still retain his credibility as a conservative. More illuminating for this analysis than the particulars of the plan itself, however, is the opening apologia with which Eisenhower, speaking through his proxy, Vice President Nixon, primed his audience for the uncharacteristic proposal. He began by asking the governors, "where is the United States going, and by what road?"

[T]he road we should take is outlined by the American philosophy of government . . . rooted in individual rights and obligations—expressed in maximum opportunity for every individual to use rights and to discharge obligations—maintained by keeping close to the individual his control over his government—it is sparked by local initiative, encouraged and furthered by the Federal government. Financed traditionally by demanding of visible, tangible and profitable return on every dollar spent. A tax economy of enterprises, directly or indirectly, which are self-liquidating. Now, that philosophy, applied to public affairs, is the middle road between chaos on the one side, and regimentation on the other. It is significant that in the United States we talk of individual rights, we talk of States' rights, but not of Federal rights, because the Federal Government is normally considered a depository of certain well-defined and limited obligations: for national security, for foreign affairs, for leadership within the community of 48 States. Now, in that light, what are the domestic jobs that must be done to further the purposes of America? What is the prospect before us?<sup>95</sup>

This initial articulation shows the edifice of legitimation Eisenhower and his allies in government and industry had constructed underneath their grand plan. It was characterized as fundamentally responsive to the existing reality of pervasive automobility and not as an inducement to further automobility.<sup>96</sup> The current highway system, Nixon said, "is obsolete because it just happened." In other words, the people had made clear their preference for automobility; now it was up to the state and industry to make more extensive and efficient that expression of public will.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, the battles over and passage of which are well documented by Mark Rose and Tom Lewis, ensured the triumph of automobility in the twentieth century.<sup>97</sup> Despite its protestations to the contrary,

the federal government under Eisenhower did more than “accelerate a shift that was already under way” and give “added impetus to the rising dominance of the auto,”<sup>98</sup> rather, the state adopted an activist role in promoting automobility. The economic windfall the Interstate program delivered was only part of the administration’s justification. At least as important was the so-ubiquitous-as-to-be-imperceptible affirmation of automobile driving as an eminently worthwhile practice, one constitutive of the type of American subjects the Cold-War state required for the ideological prosecution of the Cold War. It was highly significant that highways, as David Riesman noted, were, “aside from schools, the only collective product not to be condemned as creeping socialism.”<sup>99</sup>

### Automobility as Centripetal Force

Once on a superhighway, you are a kind of captive . . .  
—*Good Housekeeping*, 1955<sup>100</sup>

I ask here that we consider the highway and automobility not in terms of their practical utility but in terms of the performances they enable. Automobility, as I have argued, was the twentieth-century manifestation of the more ancient spectacular gesture of *moving* to represent oneself as an unfettered and self-directing agent.<sup>101</sup> More specifically, my focus here is how automobility might have figured as a palliative to the political and cultural anxieties effected by the Cold War. While the Cold War did not “cause” the Interstate Highway System, it did create the conditions under which automobility (which had been a powerful and transformative force in American culture before the Cold War) took on a redoubled signifiatory power. Viewed in this historical context, the act of driving becomes a sort of ideological exercise that was seen to reverse, or at least to arrest, the postwar “decline of the individual” and the deterioration of the “American character” of a heroic and expansionist past. The figure of the driver, moreover, embodied the ideological gulf separating the United States from its communist antagonists, and proved—to those antagonists, to allied nations, to those cultures the United States sought to sway ideologically, and, most important, to Americans themselves—the continuing vitality of the essential individual freedom enjoyed under liberalism and capitalism.

What happens when one drives? Recent inquiries into the significance of automobility suggest reasons for its appeal to partisans of a centrifugal individualism *and* to elites stressing the need for commitment to and consensus on capitalism and liberalism. For example, the libertarian philosopher Loren E. Lomasky has argued that

automobility complements autonomy: the distinctively human capacity to be self-directing. An autonomous being is not simply a locus at which forces collide and which then is moved by them. Rather, to be autonomous is, minimally, to be a valuer

with ends taken to be good as such and to have the capacity to direct oneself to the realization or furtherance of these ends through actions expressly chosen for that purpose. Motorists fit this description. Therefore, insofar as we have reason to regard self-directedness as a valuable human trait, we have reason to think well of driving automobiles. . . . Automobility has value because it extends the scope and magnitude of self-direction.<sup>102</sup>

I want to join Lomasky in affirming that an individual's operation of a car does, in fact, facilitate autonomy, though I remain more interested in naming exactly the species of human agency the term "autonomy" implies.

Not everyone in the postwar era looked favorably on automobility. George F. Kennan, for one, saw in the "motorization" of American life an infantilizing process that destroyed the virtues on which citizenship depended. The rambling modern motorist was a far cry from the pioneer who had "won the west," and would, by extension, win the Cold War. Once the force behind American dynamism and strength, mobility had, according to Kennan, degenerated into a practice of caprice, evasion and flight rather than mission.<sup>103</sup> His dim view of automobility was consonant with his and other Cold Warriors' disdain for the American *hoi polloi* more generally. Kennan's imperial remove notwithstanding, in his assertion that automobility encouraged an infantile and insubstantial way of moving through the world, Kennan presaged more recent critiques of the road and its subjects.

Jean Baudrillard, driving the colossal and tortuous Los Angeles freeways in the 1980s, observed that, despite automobility's much-hailed emancipatory sensations, "the freeway is a place of integration," its codes constantly organizing "a total collective act." One feels the rush of freedom (the "truly profound pleasure . . . of keeping on the move") amid the mandatory protocols and procedures of highway driving.<sup>104</sup> Joan Didion has noted that the highway offers "the only secular communion Los Angeles has," a pleasurable submission to the stream of traffic. For the protagonist of Didion's novel *Play It As It Lays*, driving the freeways is both a way to feel a small degree of agency and a singularly effective tranquilizer; elsewhere Didion describes the participation in the freeway community of motion as requiring "a total surrender, a concentration so intense as to seem a kind of narcosis, a rapture-of-the-freeway."<sup>105</sup> More recently, Margaret Morse has described the "virtual" practice of freeway driving as enabling the "derealisation" of the subject: the driver sits "in a realm of passage, both over the outside world and from inside an idyllic, intensely private, steel-enclosed world of relative safety."<sup>106</sup> I contend that, like Riesmanian autonomy, which struck a balance between a robust inner individualism and outward acquiescence to social norms, driving enables an affirmative performance of energy, speed, and motion as it diminishes other types of individual agency.

Christopher Newfield has recently examined the specific features of the American individualism deriving most directly from Emerson. Emersonian individualism, Newfield argues, has contributed to and normalized a subjectivity of *submission*, in which the individual, instead of expanding his personal autonomy and political agency, abdicates both. According to Newfield, the linguistic blandishments of individualism, self-reliance, and independence that surround the liberal subject disguise its actual status as a subjectivity of accommodation and obedience through which “nondemocratic modes of democratic governance continue to actualize themselves.” Newfield sees ample evidence of this “Emerson effect” in current liberal rhetoric about the global market, the federal government, and other seemingly unassailable institutional powers, under the thrall of which “[t]he autonomous individual has disappeared, but so has democratic sovereignty.” Genuine individualism has given way in middle-class culture to a make-believe autonomy, “the seeing of freedom as an uncontrollable system’s flexibility.”<sup>107</sup>

Newfield’s trenchant analysis of the kernel of submission at the center of Emersonian individualism echoes the nineteenth-century critique leveled by Tocqueville. As Tocqueville envisioned it, *individualisme*, with its emphasis on private gratification and spectacular or performative independence, was essentially a practice of withdrawal; it turns political nonparticipation and inefficacy into a sort of virtue, and leaves to an abstract “majority” the power to govern.<sup>108</sup> This withdrawal into privatism therefore had the potential to establish the conditions for the rise of an antidemocratic power. Tocqueville had no name for the regime he saw looming on the American horizon, though he did, at the conclusion of *Democracy in America*, sketch its features. This “immense and tutelary power” would preclude genuine freedom in citizens, instead functioning only

to secure their gratifications and watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, provident, and mild. . . . [I]t tries to keep them in perpetual childhood . . . [;] it daily makes the exercise of free choice less useful and rarer, restricts the activity of free will within a narrower compass, and little by little robs each citizen of the proper use of his own faculties. . . . I have always thought that this brand of orderly, gentle, peaceful slavery which I have just described could be combined, more easily than is generally supposed, with some of the external forms of freedom. . . .<sup>109</sup>

The irony is striking: the individualist ethos ultimately produces an apathetic and infantile citizenry that willingly abdicates its authority to a paternalistic power; in return that power maximizes the opportunities for the spectacular expression of freedom and autonomy so affirming to the individualist.<sup>110</sup> Tocqueville suggested that as real democratic freedom—participation in and

direct influence over the political, social, and economic forces that shape one's life—erodes, the range of opportunities for the performance of freedom may increase.<sup>111</sup> The individualist thus withdraws further from the political sphere, consoling himself with a life increasingly oriented toward “a display of energy”—circulation and consumption in lieu of democratic engagement.<sup>112</sup>

Tocqueville found no appropriate name for the type of regime he saw approaching on the American horizon (perhaps he had only one good neologism, *individualisme*, in him). “Our contemporaries,” he wrote, “will find no prototype of it in their memories. . . . The thing is new.”<sup>113</sup> Neither “tyranny” nor “despotism” represented accurately its form of control, which would masquerade as the proliferation of freedoms and choices. Tocqueville's “soft totalitarian” scenario finds affinity with the later analyses of modern power and consumer society advanced in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and in poststructuralist theories of subjectivity. It echoes in the descriptions of “totalitarian democracy” and “repressive tolerance” in the work of Herbert Marcuse; in Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's condemnation of the deception at the heart of mass-culture escapism and market choice; and in Michel Foucault's theory of the “productive” rather than repressive orientation of power in modernity.<sup>114</sup> Tocqueville presciently glimpsed the signal element of modern power—its deployment of seduction and consent rather than coercion as the central means of social control. Under this type of regime, power is understood less as the capacity to control subjects than as the ability to *create* them through discursive practice and ideological interpellation.

Newfield's thesis in *The Emerson Effect* descends more directly from the assertion of the *docility* of the liberal subject made by Foucault, who historicized the abstraction of the individual as a product of power. For Foucault, the individual is never primal or natural, but rather a product of various discourses—economic, theological, political, juridical, and medical—that affirm and perpetuate the very idea of the individualized “self.” As George Kateb has written,

Foucault alleges that modern individualism is, appearances notwithstanding, the result of techniques of discipline. The more each person regards himself or herself as distinct from others, as special, as acting spontaneously, as living in response to the deep promptings of one's unique inner life, the more one is being victimized by the disciplinary and docility-inducing techniques of modern power. . . . [Their result] is the creation or “fabrication” of an individual identity, an identity acquired by docile absorption of the habits and, above all, of the words and meanings implanted by technicians.<sup>115</sup>

Emerson's formulation of the individualist ethos provides a conceptual framework for imagining oneself an abstract and free individual.

Consider the structured freedom of highway driving through Foucault's understanding of subject-formation and reinforcement through practice and language and Tocqueville's related conception of "tutelary power."<sup>116</sup> Like Newfield, novelist John Updike has characterized Emerson's exhortations to individualism as "a curious counsel of fatalism couched in the accents of activism." The impress of Emerson's thought, Updike writes, is not only discernible in the inner lives of Americans and in the institutions of liberalism, but in the built environment as well:

His encouragements have their trace elements in the magnificent sprawl we see on all sides—the parking lots and skyscrapers, the voracious tracts of single-family homes, the heaped supermarket aisles and crowded ribbons of highway: the architectural manifestations of a nation of individuals, of wagons each hitched, in his famous phrase, to its own star.<sup>117</sup>

Those wagons, however, move in determined ways. Roadbuilders have continually sought to contain the potentially dissenting/destructive agency of the driver. One analyst commented that "The man at the wheel is in many ways the most complex and baffling element in the trafficway-driver-vehicle system."<sup>118</sup> Norman Bel Geddes noted in 1940 that the contemporary driver's car "has been entirely remodeled" and that "his highway is being remodeled." Looking ahead to the "magic motorways" of 1960, Bel Geddes mused, "How can the driver be remodeled?" Like 1950s Federal Highway Administration chief Bertram Tallamy, Bel Geddes proposed that this remodeling entail a structural diminution of human agency on the road, effected through automotive and highway design. While Bel Geddes's prescription predates the Cold War and the conception of freedom that prevailed during its early years, it speaks to the ever-present themes of discipline and regulation at the heart of automobility:

. . . these cars of 1960 and the highways on which they drive will have in them devices which will correct the faults of human beings as drivers. They will prevent the driver from committing errors. They will prevent him from turning out into traffic except when he should. They will aid him in passing through intersections without slowing down or causing anyone else to do so and without endangering himself or others. Many present beginnings give hints of the kind of over-all planning on which the near future could realize. Everything will be designed by engineering, not by legislation, not in piecemeal fashion, but as a complete job. The two, the car and the road, are both essential to the realization of automatic safety. . . . [I]n 1960 [all drivers] stay out of the ditch. It is not done by law, but through the very nature of the car and the highway.<sup>119</sup>

While Bel Geddes's dreams have not yet come to pass, there can be little doubt that the limited-access highways of the 1950s augmented the disciplinary effect on the driver—increasing the speeds at which and the distances over which one could travel, but also regulating access and egress, and standardizing the experience of travel.

While the expanded automobility of the postwar era increased white middle-class consumer and residential choice and provided the sensory experience of freedom, it simultaneously limited the possibilities for alternative spatial, economic, social and political configurations.<sup>120</sup> As a quotidian performance of both self-direction and acquiescence to systemic parameters, driving served as a metaphor for American citizenship during the early Cold War, a time in which certain beliefs, utterances, and practices would quickly, so to speak, wreck one in the ditch. The narrative of the automobile as a centrifugal entity, a bringer of wild and outlaw freedom, was precisely what enabled it to function as such an effective tool for the centripetal regulation of the subject. To drive was to live motion without change.

### Notes

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1. Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 123.

2. Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*, trans. George Lawrence, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 273.

3. Thomas L. Haskell and Richard F. Teichgraber, "Introduction: The Culture of the Market," in *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays*, ed. Thomas L. Haskell and Richard F. Teichgraber III (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 33. Striving for stark differentiation between two seemingly irreconcilable ideological regimes, American rhetoricians of the Cold War state focused on the degree to which the Enlightenment conception of the human individual figured into the political calculus of each: were individual rights sacralized, or were they sacrificed to the will of the collective? Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., for example, isolated the "essential dynamic" of totalitarianism in its "unlimited domination and degradation and eventual obliteration of the individual." Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 87. This harrowing Manichaean vision—in part a holdover from the wartime binary of the war against fascism—informed policy-template documents such as the National Security Council's 1950 "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" (NSC 68). That document's main author, Paul Nitze, portrayed the conflict as an apocalyptic choice "between the idea of freedom under a government of laws, and the idea of slavery under the grim oligarchy of the Kremlin." He and his collaborators emphasized that "[t]he free society values the individual as an end in himself," and extends to that individual "the opportunity to realize his creative powers." National Security Council, "NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," in *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68*, ed. Ernest R. May (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993), 27.

4. This concept, emerging from twentieth-century scholarship in literary studies, intellectual history, sociology, and the amalgamation of them called American studies, is as dubious as it is ineradicable. Generally, it describes a personality combining individualism, orientation toward achievement in a capitalist market, and egalitarianism. For a definition emerging out of the consensus scholarship of the postwar era, see Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

5. In their evaluations of the public these elites were generally paternalistic and contemptuous, fearful that postwar abundance had had debilitating and "feminizing" effects on

American martial resolve. John Foster Dulles, for example, saw in his fellow citizens "intellectual confusion, moral corrosion, a loss of the 'spiritual loyalties' that provided the basis for American individualism and its ethic of self-control, and a vulnerability to subversion by hostile forces that would eventually destroy the American way of life." Guy Oakes, *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 23.

6. In this quote T.J. Jackson Lears is describing the anxieties attending economic modernity and its reformulation of the yeoman self as proletarian and consumer. "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 9.

7. Kim McQuaid, *Uneasy Partners: Big Business in American Politics, 1945-1990* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1994), 77. Paul N. Edwards has also argued that the arena of the Cold War constituted a totalized space, what he calls "a closed world." Within this closed world, "the struggle between freedom and slavery, light and darkness, good and evil was being constantly joined in every location—within the American government, its society, and its armed forces as well as abroad. Each side of the struggle had, in effect, a national headquarters, but the struggle as a whole went on everywhere and perpetually." Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 11.

8. Robert Booth Fowler, *Believing Skeptics: American Political Intellectuals, 1945-1964* (Greenwood, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1978), 233. The era witnessed, in the words of Wilfred McClay, "an invigorated commitment to the protection of the endangered self against the depredations of society." *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994), 224. A commentator at the time, for example, called for "the reassertion of the individual against the mob." William A. Orton, "Everyman Amid the Stereotypes: Needed: 'a Revolution of the Spirit of Man,'" *Commentary* 1:7 (1946): 10. Orton's essay was part of a *Commentary* series, entitled "The Crisis of the Individual," for which the journal solicited responses from a number of prominent thinkers—among them Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Reinhold Niebuhr, Pearl Buck, and Martin Buber—to the assertion that "the physical and spiritual dignity of the human being has in this age been debased on a scale and in a measure unprecedented for centuries." In the pages of *The American Scholar*, social critic and poet Archibald MacLeish bemoaned "a massive, almost glacial, shift away from the passion for individual freedom and toward a desire for security of association, of belonging, of conformity." Archibald MacLeish, "Loyalty and Freedom," *The American Scholar* 22: 4 (1953): 395. See also, for example, Wallace Stegner, "Variations on a Theme by Conrad," *Yale Review* 39:3 (1950): 522; and Harold W. Dodds, "The Importance of Being an Individual: Conformity Versus Non-Conformity," *Vital Speeches*, August 1 1955, 1405.

9. Irving Louis Horowitz, *C. Wright Mills: An American Utopian* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 227. Other examples include Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950); Robert Lindner's *Must You Conform?* (New York: Rinehart, 1956); and Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers* (New York: D. McKay & Co., 1959). Generally, these scholars suggested that abundance had enabled the growth of a species of "soft" totalitarianism, the control mechanisms of which were consumerism and the ethos of "belongingness" encouraged by bureaucratic organizations.

10. William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 122. In literature, for example, the radical egoism of Ayn Rand's "Objectivist" novels was perhaps the most exaggerated expression of an unease about collectivities that permeated the work of writers as stylistically disparate as Sloan Wilson, Grace Metalious, and J.D. Salinger. Literary criticism, too, registered with trepidation the near-disappearance of the archetypal hero that critic R.W.B. Lewis called the "American Adam," a figure "going forth toward experience, the inventor of his own character and creator of his personal history." *The American Adam* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), 91. In the visual arts, abstract expressionism was hailed by critics as a celebration of individual will and agency over the formalistic—and therefore deterministic—rules of painting. Likewise, the most forceful and distinctive popular literature and culture of the 1950s—Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause*, for example, or Grace Metalious' novel *Peyton Place*, or the rock and roll of Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis—critically engaged conformity and standardization, and resonated with their audiences as endorsements of individual agency and rebellion. The rhetoric of freedom, Eric Foner has written, "suffused American politics, culture, and society" during the Cold War. *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: WW. Norton, 1998), 252. See also Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998).

11. See Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 247-8.

12. Reviewing Whyte's book for the *Partisan Review*, Phillip Rieff echoed the general lament that "the American character has been fatally damaged." "A Character Wrecked by Success," *Partisan Review* 24, no. 2 (1957): 305.



13. Robert Lindner, *Prescription for Rebellion* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1952), 22.
14. Shawn Perry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955*, Praeger Series in Presidential Studies, ed. Robert E. Denton (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 186.
15. Oakes, *The Imaginary War*, 31. Generally, fears of feminization undergirded two standard Cold War narratives. One characterized the nation as “weak, fragile, and feminine” in the face of the communist threat. The other directly condemned women and “Momism” for the erosion of the (male) autonomy that had allegedly distinguished American culture. These two characterizations were mutually nurturing: the decline of “hard” male traits such as individualism and the perceived transformation of the American society into a “matriarchy in fact if not in declaration” had rendered the nation susceptible to “penetration” by communism (which was, in turn, often depicted as a feminized and feminizing agent). Quote is from Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rinehart, 1942), xii. On the gendered rhetoric of the Cold War, see Robert L. Ivie, “Cold War Motives and Rhetorical Metaphor: A Framework of Criticism,” in *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst, et al. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 72. Wendy Kozol has similarly observed that the Cold War was represented in the pages of *Life* magazine “through gender-coded signs of power and weakness. . . . Depicting the enemy as male, and the United States as female, intensifie(d) Cold War dangers not only by conceding power to the enemy but by emasculating the signifier of the nation.” Wendy Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1994), 110-11. Elaine Tyler May and others have analyzed the postwar conflation of communism and emasculation, and the consequent “containment” of femininity. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). For a modifying view, see Jane Sherron DeHart, “Containment at Home: Gender, Sexuality, and National Identity in Cold-War America,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, ed. Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 124-55. My forthcoming manuscript, from which this essay is drawn, discusses more fully the gendered figure of the American automobile driver before and during the Cold War.
16. Adlai Stevenson, after returning from a visit to the Soviet Union, warned that “[o]uter tyranny with purpose may well triumph over the inner, purposeless tyranny of a confused and aimless way of life.” Stevenson quoted in Paul A. Carter, *Another Part of the Fifties* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983), 110.
17. Geroid Tanquary Robinson, “The Ideological Combat,” *Foreign Affairs* 27: 4 (1949): 538.
18. “NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” 42, 29.
19. W. Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1999), 93. For domestic propaganda efforts, the anti-statist Cold-War state sought a “proper atmosphere” in which “it could count on the ‘voluntary cooperation’ of private citizens to make the government’s case before the public.” One National Security Council member asserted the need for “a ‘group of paraphrasers’ who could turn what it is we have to say to the American people into understandable terms for the average man on the street.” “Record of the Meeting of the State-Defense Policy Review Group, Department of State,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979) 198. It was to this task of “paraphrasing” the language of national security and individual freedom that a great many American advertisers and cultural producers dedicated themselves.
20. It was the “very feeling that the hosts of Midian were on the prowl,” as Godfrey Hodgson has written, “that the United States was wrestling with the Evil One, and therefore needed to match the messianic beliefs of the adversary with an equivalent dogma, that made it so fashionable in the late 1950s to define the grand purposes of America.” Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) , 70.
21. William A. Glaser, “The Semantics of the Cold War,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 20: 4 (1957): 709-710. H.W. Brands has also noted that “The Cold War was a historical rarity: a geopolitical struggle in which both sides professed world-saving doctrines and insisted on sharing salvation with the rest of humanity.” H.W. Brands, *The Strange Death of American Liberalism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2001), 110. Noting the ideological plasticity of the term “freedom,” Sir Percy Spender, Australian Ambassador to the U.S., told an audience of Union College graduates that “Today Freedom—political, economic and individual freedom—lies destroyed or is in the course of being destroyed over great areas of the globe. And it has been destroyed and is being destroyed in the name of Freedom.” “Liberty and the Individual: ‘Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make You Free,’” *Vital Speeches* August 1955: 1407. Even during the most ideologically intense years of the early Cold War, however, American dissenters of various stripes inveighed against the ways in which the conflict had rendered fungible the concept of freedom. Some noted that the language of freedom had proliferated in proportion to its material disappearance in public and private life. The fear of and antipathy toward the Soviet Union, Archibald MacLeish asserted, had led to our chaining ourselves, “as a sort of vast sea anchor, to the purposes and policies of a

rival state.” Inveighing against the rabid conformity that he saw manifested in McCarthyism, MacLeish declared that “at the moment we tamper with the meaning of freedom to make it describe conformity instead of individuality—the moment we speak of the mutilation of individual freedom as a victory for freedom—the distinction [between the United States and the Soviet Union] begins to disappear.” MacLeish, “The Conquest of America,” *Atlantic Monthly* August 1949: 18; “To Make Men Free,” *Atlantic Monthly* November 1951: 29.

22. Lee, *Freedom and Culture* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 57.

23. Larson, *What We Are For* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 102. Italics are his. During Eisenhower’s two terms, Larson served as speechwriter, Undersecretary of Labor, USIA Director, and as Special Assistant and Consultant to the President.

24. *Red Nightmare*. Dir. George Waggner. Perfs. Jack Kelly, Jeanne Cooper, Peter Brown. Film. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1962.

25. Flink, “The Three Stages of American Automobile Consciousness,” *American Quarterly*, no. 24 (1972): 451. Modifying Flink, John Urry defines automobility as a dominant, multifaceted “social and technical system.” Urry, “Automobility, Car Culture and Weightless Travel” (published online by the Department of Sociology, Lancaster Univ. at <http://www.comp.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/soc008ju.html>), 3. Mark Rose identifies it as “the conviction of most that motor vehicles and fast-flowing expressways [are] good in their own right.” Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics 1939-1989*, Revised ed. (Knoxville: The Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1990), 93. The term is said to have been coined by John C. Burnham, in “The Gasoline Tax and the Automobile Revolution,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* vol. 48: 3 (December, 1961): 435-459.

26. Sudhir Chella Rajan has borrowed this phrase from Roberto Unger to describe the political attitude toward automobility in the late twentieth century. Rajan, *The Enigma of Automobility: Democratic Politics and Pollution Control* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 69.

27. *New Republic* September 20, 1948 : 7. Hence the *Saturday Review’s* assertion that the right of citizens to travel was the mark of a humane and peace-seeking nation, and that the State Department did a disservice to Cold War aims by restricting citizens’ passports and foreign nationals’ visas. “Any interference with the freedom to travel,” the author wrote, should concern the American people to no less an extent than interference with speech, press, religion, or assembly.” William D. Patterson, “The Freedom to Travel,” *Saturday Review*, January 10, 1959: 24. Of course, the freedom of U.S. citizens to travel abroad was restricted heavily during the Cold War. See Helen Nearing and Scott Nearing, *Our Right to Travel* (Harborside, Maine: Social Science Institute, 1959).

28. Philip Fisher, “Democratic Social Space: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency,” *Representations* 24 (1988): 64.

29. Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor: Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), 13. Subjects are produced through discursive practice and act within specific historical frames; as Judith Butler writes, “the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency.” Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Seyla Benhabib, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 46. “The subject,” writes Paul Smith, “is determined—the object of determinant forces; whereas ‘the individual’ is assumed to be determining.” *Discerning the Subject* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1988), xxxiv. See also Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2000).

30. A.B. Zalkind, quoted in Robert Conquest, ed., *The Politics of Ideas in the U.S.S.R., The Contemporary Soviet Union* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 28.

31. Raymond A. Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), 48.

32. As Bauer and Alex Inkeles observed of the Soviet system, “The official formulation of the relationship of the individual to the state has been given an appearance of spurious continuity by adroit verbal manipulation. Throughout the history of the Soviet Union the regime stressed the harmony, in a socialist society, between the needs of the individual and the needs of the state. In the early period, for approximately the first decade after the revolution, the meaning of this statement was that a social order would be developed to serve the needs and interests of the individual citizen. Since the inauguration of the First Five Year Plan, however, it has come to mean that a type of citizen will be developed who serves the needs and interests of the state.” Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959) 257.

33. Robinson, “The Ideological Combat,” 531-2.

34. James Oliver Robertson, *American Myth, American Reality* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 128.

35. Leslie Dale Feldman, *Freedom as Motion* (Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 2001).

36. Gerald L. Houseman, *The Right of Mobility* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1979), 9.

37. Leed also describes an English ritual, dating back to the time of Henry II, by which a manorial lord pronounced one of his serfs free. That lord, after publicly announcing the serf's status as a freeman and giving him a lance, brought the serf "to a crossroads to show him that 'all ways lie open to his feet.' These two features—arms and the right of free departure—long remained the distinguishing marks of the 'free' man. Their opposites—the forbidding of arms or of travel—were the marks of unfreedom." *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 13.

38. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997), 35-36. Contrast the free traveler with refugees and exiles and with "Nomads and pastoralists (such as Berbers and Bedouins), hunter-gatherers, Gypsies, vagrants, homeless people, itinerants, runaway slaves, and serfs[...], who] have always been a thorn in the side of states. Efforts to permanently settle these mobile peoples (sedentarization) seemed to be a perennial state project—perennial, in part, because it so seldom succeeded." James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998), 1.

39. *Changing Directions: The Report of the Independent Commission on Transport* (London: Coronet, 1974) 106, quoted in Houseman, *The Right of Mobility*, 19.

40. Thus the practice has historically been a male prerogative: men's autonomy-through-mobility depended on what Leed has called "the sessility of women." Many feminist scholars have pointed out that the road remains largely a space of masculine prerogative. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler*, 113. See also Bonnie Frederick and Susan H. MacLeod, eds., *Women and the Journey* (Pullman: Washington State Univ. Press, 1993); Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphors of Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1975); Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994); and Janet Wolff, "On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism," in Wolff, *Resident Alien: Feminist Cultural Criticism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 115-34.

41. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), 37.

42. Pierson, "A Restless Temper..." *American Historical Review* 69: 4 (1964): 989.

43. Pierson, *The Moving American* (New York: Knopf, 1973) 118. The quote above derived from an earlier work, "The M-Factor in American History," *American Quarterly* 14: 2, Part 2: Supplement (1962): 275-89. See also Everett Lee, "The Turner Thesis Re-Examined," *American Quarterly* 13: 1 (1961): 77-83.

44. Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951).

45. Mumford, *The Golden Day: A Study in American Literature and Culture* (New York: Dover Publications 1926/1968), 26. Decades later, Mumford would attack mobility run amok in highway policy and urban planning, *The Highway and the City* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1963).

46. Clark, *Cold Warriors: Manliness on Trial in the Rhetoric of the West* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 2000), 2.

47. David Riesman, in collaboration with Nathan Glazer, *Faces in the Crowd: Individual Studies in Character and Politics* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1952), 739.

48. See John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travels in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1985); and Ronald Primeau, *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State Univ. Popular Press, 1996).

49. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking, 1957), 133. Claims of the nobility of mobility echoed Romantic antecedents such as Emerson, who had proclaimed that "everything good is on the highway." *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Journals* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1968), 276. Walt Whitman professed a similar affection for the open road, gushing "You express me better than I can express myself." Whitman seemed particularly taken with the road's capacities to generate autonomy: "From this hour, freedom!/From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,/Going where I list, my own master, total and absolute,/Listening to others, and considering well what they say, Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,/Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me." "Song of the Open Road," *Leaves of Grass* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 150-51.

50. Riesman et al., *Faces in the Crowd*, 739-40.

51. Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965 [1950]), 260. See Chapter One for an overview of inner- and other-direction.

52. Everett Lee remarked that the "organization man," with his easy resourcefulness in adapting to new conditions, was a norm in the highly mobile American past. "The Turner Thesis Reconsidered."

53. Daniel Lerner, "Comfort and Fun: Morality in a Nice Society," *The American Scholar* 27: 2 (Spring 1958): 157-8.

54. Winthrop Scarrett, "The Horse of the Future and the Future of the Horse," quoted in Richard O. Davies, *The Age of Asphalt: The Automobile, the Freeway, and the Condition of Modern America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975), 8.

55. Feldman, *Freedom as Motion*, 58.

56. Lawrence M. Friedman, *The Republic of Choice: Law, Authority, and Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), 55.

57. Phil Patton, *Open Road: A Celebration of the American Highway* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 13.

58. Pierson, "The M-Factor in American History," 282. These narratives conflated journeys past and present, their authors pretending to and simulating the drama and tribulations of pioneer crossings of the continent. Emily Post, making the coast-to-coast trip in 1916, commented that "If we overlooked the fact of our own motor car, we could have supposed ourselves crossing the plains in the days of the caravans and stage coaches." Emily Post, *By Motor to the Golden Gate* (New York: D. Appleton, 1916), quoted in Kris Lackey, *Roadframes: The American Highway Narrative* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1997), 41-42. Edith Wharton enthused that "The motor-car has restored the romance of travel. . . . It has given us back the wonder, the adventure, and the novelty which enlivened the way of our posting grandparents." Wharton, *A Motor-Flight through France* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), 1. For other examples of the genre, see Vernon McGill, *Diary of a Motor Journey from Chicago to Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Grafton, 1922); Paul E. Vernon, *Coast to Coast by Motor* (London: Black, 1930); and Jeannie Lippitt Weedard, *Rhode Island to California by Motor* (Santa Barbara: Pacific Coast, 1917). See also the overviews by Curt McConnell, *Coast to Coast by Automobile: The Pioneering Trips, 1899-1908* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000); and T.R. Nicholson, *The Wild Roads: The Story of Transcontinental Motoring* (New York: Norton, 1969).

59. Recent studies of immigration and in-migration have noted, however, that migratory patterns in the U.S. have tended to be circular rather than point-to-point. See, for example, Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1987).

60. "Americans had 'gone somewhere' before—west across the country as pioneers," noted writer Elizabeth Janeway. By the early twentieth century, "'going somewhere' was becoming fun." Janeway, *The Early Days of Automobiles* (New York: Random House, 1956), 21. John Brinckerhoff Jackson writes that "The European metaphorical use of the words *road* or *way* or *path* emphasized the difficulties encountered by the average wayfarer in the course of his or her journey through life. . . . as long as the average person had to confront the indignities and complications of traveling on foot, the metaphorical message remained most important. But over the last century and a half, two developments have taken place: we have produced a new kind of road and a new metaphor, a vast network of smooth, efficient highways leading to every conceivable destination." These developments detract from the masculine vision of the journey as perilous and glorious. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), 204.

61. Pierson, *The Moving American*, 285-286.

62. Kerouac's *On the Road* bears witness to the attempt to reintroduce into the male road experience the elements of contingency and risk, the potentially transgressive pleasures of the journey.

63. James M. Jasper, *Restless Nation: Starting over in America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 248.

64. Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979), 8.

65. Theodore Dreiser, *A Hoosier Holiday* (New York: Lane, 1916), 93.

66. Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 265.

67. "Construction: March of the Monsters," *Time*, June 24, 1957: 92.

68. Patton, *Open Road*, 56. It is important to remember, however, the similar promises of free mobility made, and partially fulfilled, by nearly every new transportation invention throughout history, and how the "seeds for automobility were . . . deeply sown in the railroad and bicycle industries." Roger N. Casey, *Textual Vehicles: The Automobile in American Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 20. See also Stephen B. Goddard, *Getting There: The Epic Struggle between Road and Rail in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

69. James A. Dunn, *Driving Forces: The Automobile, Its Enemies, and the Politics of Mobility* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 2.

70. Henry Ford II was quick to point out to a group of businessmen that his industry, in championing new and continuing federal expenditures for highway construction, was merely trying to give the American people "what they so clearly want." Automobility's dominance was a settled issue: "Sometimes people vote with their dollars; sometimes with ballots. But the goal is always the same—providing what people want. As far as urban transportation is concerned, what people want is clear. They have voted overwhelmingly in favor of the automobile." "In Defense of the Automobile," Address to the Young Men's Business Club of New Orleans, July 1966,

quoted in Davies, *The Age of Asphalt: The Automobile, the Freeway, and the Condition of Modern America*, 70, 72.

71. Stan Luger, *Corporate Power, American Democracy, and the Automobile Industry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 182; McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path*, xi.

72. Bel Geddes, *Magic Motorways* (New York: Random House, 1940), 10. Christina Cogdell has recently discussed in greater detail the appeals to societal “evolution” and progress that undergirded Bel Geddes’s vision of “streamlined” movement through and between cities. “The Futurama Recontextualized: Norman Bel Geddes’s Eugenic ‘World of Tomorrow,’” *American Quarterly* 52: 2 (2000): 193-245.

73. Romney had been vice-president of the Nash-Kelvinator Corporation, and general manager of the Automobile Manufacturers Association. “The Motor Vehicle and the Highway: Some Historical Implications,” *Highways in Our National Life: A Symposium*, eds. Jean Labatut and Wheaton J. Lane (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950), 221, 226.

74. Quoted in Davies, *Age of Asphalt*, 4.

75. This pamphlet, entitled “The Freedom of the American Road,” was sent in January 1956 to President Eisenhower by Henry Ford II, who commended the President on his leadership in highway building measures. Eisenhower acknowledged the gift and wrote that he was “delighted to know of the initiative the Ford Motor Company is taking in helping solve the highway problem.” Cross Reference Sheet, January 26, 1956, Official Files 141-B, DDEL. Ford also produced a film with the same title.

76. Francis E. Merrill, “The Highway and Social Problems,” *Highways in Our National Life*, eds. Jean Labatut and Wheaton J. Lane (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950) 136.

77. The author of the editorial, Theodore H. White, further opined that “Each new overpass, each new split-lane seems to have added dimension to our power and imagination as individuals. . . . [I]t is the automobile, more than any single phenomenon, that sets our way of life apart from the rest of the world. Everywhere else, common people have always been separated from their betters by the simple distinction of whether they walked or rode. In times past, people who rode were “cavaliers,” hence aristocrats. In America today, every man is a cavalier.” White, “Where Are Those New Roads?,” *Collier's*, January 6, 1956: 46.

78. Bellamy Partridge, *Fill 'Er Up! The Story of Fifty Years of Motoring* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 217-18.

79. The voluminous body of literature on the automobile has generally affirmed the conveyance as a facilitator of freedom. Many of the more celebratory works were produced with automobile industry or motoring organization resources. For examples of automobile and highway boosterism from the past half-century, see Dunn, *Driving Forces*; Partridge, *Fill 'Er Up!*; and Patton, *Open Road*. The dissenting literature—also voluminous—tends to attack the social pathologies and environmental damage wrought by the automobile, or points out the ways in which automobility’s promise of freedom had been broken—by traffic jams or by unsafe roads and machines. Whatever the assessment, as contemporary film scholars have noted, “The road’s old, old age, its inherent suggestiveness, and its evocation of horizon and liberty seem to guarantee it as an effective symbolic container for American culture’s most cherished and volatile ideals.” Ian Leong, Mike Sell, and Kelly Thomas, “Mad Love, Mobile Homes, and Dysfunctional Dicks: On the Road with Bonnie and Clyde,” *The Road Movie Book*, eds. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 71-2.

80. Dunn, *Driving Forces*, 184.

81. This advertisement occasioned a letter from Peter D. Gellatly, Editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, to President Eisenhower, calling the chief executive’s attention to the “enlightened vision of such companies as Republic Steel” and informing him that identical reprints were being sent to various elected officials as a means of helping the Interstate project along. The White House responded by acknowledging that the Republic Steel ad “is certainly a good one” and that “such institutional advertising can give a life to the road program by increasing the public’s awareness of the need for better roads.” Peter D. Gellatly to Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 28, 1955, DDE Central Files, General File, Box 1230, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter DDEL); James C. Hagerty to Peter D. Gellatly, May 4, 1955, Box 1230, DDE Central Files, General File, Box 1230, DDEL.

82. Many scholars attribute Eisenhower’s strong interest in the Interstate project to his military experiences, not only his time as Allied Supreme Commander in Europe, but also with the 1919 transcontinental army convoy that traveled from Washington to San Francisco. Whatever the origin of Eisenhower’s interest in transcontinental highways, they were clearly the public-works priority of his administration. According to official biographer Stephen Ambrose, the Interstates were Eisenhower’s favorite project. See *Eisenhower: The President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984). I disagree with H.W. Brands’ assertion that an initially reluctant Eisenhower had been won over to the Interstate plan by “the argument that good roads would enhance national defense.” While this rationale was valid, it was not the determining factor. *The Strange Death of American Liberalism*, 77.

83. Davies, *The Age of Asphalt*, 138.

84. Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 74.

85. Lucas, *Freedom's War*, 3.

86. DDE Diaries, quoted in Robert Griffith, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Corporate Commonwealth," *The American Historical Review* 87: 1 (1982), 92. The focus on the private individual was prominent in the Eisenhower administration's strategy for ending the recessions of 1954 and 1958. Antagonistic to the Keynesian economic intervention of the New Deal, Eisenhower and his advisors articulated an alternative based on the individual: the government would not "prime the pump," but would encourage private consumers to engage in stimulus spending. "You Auto Buy," went the administration's slogan for fighting the 1958 recession. See Carter, *Another Part of the Fifties*, 27-40.

87. In addition to surveillance of citizens and abridgment of civil rights, this state would effect, according to Truman, "a system of centralized regimentation unlike anything we've ever known." *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S Truman, 1952-1953* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963) 189.

88. *Address by the President Delivered at the 11th Annual Dinner of the National Security Industrial Association, October 25, 1954*. Washington, D.C., Box 3, U.S. President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway System (Clay Committee): Records 1954-55, DDEL.

89. Alonzo L. Hamby, *Liberalism and Its Challengers: FDR to Reagan* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 120; William E. Robinson, quoted in Griffith, "Eisenhower and the Corporate Commonwealth," 91.

90. Hauge, *Is the Individual Obsolete?* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1964), 24.

91. Robinson, "The Ideological Combat," 534-5.

92. Quoted in Richard F. Weingroff, "Broader Ribbons Across the Land," *Public Roads* Special Edition (1996): 10.

93. By the early 1950s, the highway lobby had essentially neutralized potential challenges to automobility's growing policy monopoly and embarked upon a major new public relations offensive, the theme of which was "the highway crisis." Industrial propaganda of diverse media articulated a crisis of mobility brought on by the paucity and poor quality of American roads. In 1951, the trucking industry, complaining of revenue lost through delays and too-high tolls, launched "Project Adequate Roads," a lobbying initiative dedicated to making the interstate highway program politically visible. See Rose, *Interstate*, 41-54. "The crux of the problem," R.W. Litchfield of Goodyear Tire declared, "is not the number of cars or the size of trucks—it is *too few modern roads!*" The highway crisis became the justification for proposed roadbuilding projects by highway lobbyists or private citizens. The Litchfield quote is from the pamphlet "New Frontiers," authored by a group calling itself "The Avenue of Tomorrow." It proposed a system of "U.S. Monumental Highways," which advocated building the interstates, planned suburban communities, businesses, hospitals, churches, libraries, monorails, pneumatic mail tubes, and so on. The Avenue of Tomorrow envisioned a "fully engineered—expertly planned" United States, anchored by automobility. "New Frontiers," Avenue of Tomorrow, Ltd., Trustees of the American Dream, 1951, 2-3. U.S. President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway System (Clay Committee): Records, 1954-55, Box 4, DDEL. In 1953, General Motors sponsored an essay contest inviting proposals for "building better highways for America." Robert Moses won the \$25,000 prize for his dramatically pro-public works essay. See Clay Committee Records, Box 3, DDEL. Promotional films produced in the early 1950s by General Motors (*Anatomy of a Road* and *Give Yourself the Green Light*) and Ford, featured numerous scenes of drivers languishing in traffic jams, negotiating bottlenecks, dodging potholes, and crawling through ubiquitous construction zones. *Life* warned that "We are actually building cars faster than we are pouring the concrete on which to park them. Barring a world war or a five-year strike in the auto business, the United States in the next decade faces highway congestion and general traffic paralysis that will be simply incredible." Herbert Brea, "Dead End for the U.S. Highway," *Life* May 30, 1955 : 109. See also "How New Jersey Built Its Dream Road," *Saturday Evening Post* December 8, 1951 : 36; "Good Highways: When?," *U.S. News and World Report* March 28, 1952; "Modern Cars Ride Ancient Roads," *Nation's Business* July 1952, and "Roads We Could Have Bought," December 1952; "Gigantic Highway Program: Imperative and Costly," *Newsweek* December 15, 1952; and "Time to Clear the Road," *Collier's* January 12, 1952. In addition to explicit endorsements of new highway construction, middlebrow publications featured stories on the dangerously vexing, even maddening, effects of American driving under current conditions: *Reader's Digest* explained to its readers "Why Motorists Blow Their Tops;" *Time* profiled "Neurotics at the Wheel;" and *Collier's* caricatured the various types of "Highwaymen." "Why Motorists Blow Their Tops," *Reader's Digest* June 1952; "Neurotics at the Wheel," *Time* November 2, 1953; and "Highwaymen," *Collier's* January 26, 1952 : 35. Advertisements from Portland Cement, Caterpillar ("The World's no. 1 Road Building Equipment"), the Asphalt Institute ("Ribbons of Velvet Smoothness"), and other decidedly pro-highway concerns portrayed the intolerable and perilous conditions on the American highway,

and, like the Republic Steel campaign discussed above, encouraged drivers to lobby their elected officials on the highways' behalf.

94. While American roadbuilding had never been exactly private enterprise, analysts like Romney asserted, it had never been a component of an imperial social plan designed and implemented in a top-down manner. Consider the anti-collectivist polemic implicit in Romney's 1950 discussion of German automobility, which had "sedulously imitated" American roadbuilding and auto manufacturing models: "After careful study of American production and construction methods, the master-planners of Germany's National Socialist Government drew up elaborate plans both for production of the *Volkswagen*, or "People's Car," and for construction of the *Autobahnen*, an elaborate network of the most modern kind of motor-highways. Widely advertised in the late 1930s as means for motorizing the masses of Germany, these devices were the result of deliberate bureaucratic planning, rather than the end-products of that interplay of related forces which . . . govern the natural evolution of the vehicle and the road. The irony of such master-planning obtrudes from the fact that, when the real test came, the *Volkswagen*, though revealed to have been actually designed as a military vehicle, failed in contest with the military adaptations of automotive vehicles which the American people turned out; and the *Autobahnen*, though carefully built by *Organization Todt* as a device to implement the speedy conquest of neighboring nations, became the ideals means for the quick dismemberment of the German military machine in 1945." Romney, "The Motor Vehicle and the Highway," 220-221. Romney's distinction characterized the thought of many advocates of automobility who were also staunch anti-statists; these advocates, one of whom was Eisenhower, insisted on a fundamental ideological difference between planning that transformed society, and planning that resolved a crisis, and enabled society to continue along its already-chosen path. According to Romney and like-minded thinkers, the *autobahn*, however expertly built and perfectly ordered, remained a monument to the therapeutic vision of socialism. Like Melville's Ahab, the Reich's methods had been sound; but its mind, its belief that a perfect society could be planned into existence, had been mad. The American automobile and highway, by contrast, were seen to have earned their legitimate place on the landscape and in social practice in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion—which was to say, democratically. These supposedly fundamental differences did not prevent a *Science Monthly* writer from describing the Interstate plan as "*autobahn*, U.S.A." See P.E. Griffin, "Blueprint for *autobahn*, U.S.A.," *Science Monthly* June 1954 : 380-7.

95. Address of Vice President Richard Nixon to the Governors' Conference, Lake George, New York, July 12, 1954. Clay Committee Records, Box 4, DDEL.

96. Bertram D. Tallamy, Eisenhower's federal highway administrator appointee, was not so cagey about the increased use of the automobile. In its profile of him, *Life* wrote that "Though the interstate system is designed to relieve the worsening traffic jam, Tallamy predicts it will actually increase traffic by at least 50%." "New Vistas of the Road," *Life* November 19, 1956 : 76. Convincing citizens to spend more time behind the wheel was left to private industry: a series of 1950s advertising campaigns funded by the Ethyl Corporation, the American Petroleum Institute, and others, encouraged drivers to "Drive More . . . it gets cheaper by the mile!" and touted the low price of gasoline compared to other commodities.

97. See Rose, *Interstate*, and Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Penguin, 1997).

98. Dunn, *Driving Forces*, 190.

99. Riesman, *Abundance For What? and Other Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Inc., 1964), 288.

100. Charlotte Montgomery, "How to Drive on Express Highways," *Good Housekeeping*, April 1955: 118.

101. As Leed has observed, "The identity-defining travels of the medieval knight were . . . ostensibly voluntary and undertaken to no utilitarian purpose. The chivalric journey, and which is the pattern and model for significant modern travel, is essentially self-referential, undertaken to reveal the character of the knight as 'free' . . . . The celebration of travel as a demonstration of freedom and means to autonomy becomes the clearly modern *topos*." *The Mind of the Traveler*, 12-13. I want to emphasize the superfluity, in the protocols of this performance, of a destination; it is essential, in other words, that both Sir Gawain and Chuck Berry have "no particular place to go."

102. Loren E. Lomasky, "Autonomy and Automobility," *Independent Review* 2: 1 (1997): 8-9.

103. See Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963*, vol. II (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), 80-83.

104. Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), 53.

105. Didion, *Play It as It Lays* (New York: Farrar, 1970), 9-10; and *The White Album* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 83.

106. Morse, *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1998), 107. Other writers have linked highway driving to the passivity of television viewing, claiming that the windshield is simply another screen of images. Of course, there was an Interstate before there was an Internet: certainly the term "Information Superhighway" suggests

a conjunction of print culture and highway driving, and, if one accepts the recent rhetoric, unlimited mobility and endless opportunities to redefine oneself underpin the utopian promise of the Internet.

107. Newfield, *The Emerson Effect: Individualism and Submission in American Life* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), 218, 4, 217. Though Newfield does not stress the point, the correspondences between this type of autonomy and that of the private consumer strike me as profound.

108. As Richard Sennett writes, "Since supposedly the majority is making decisions in his interests, the individual enshrines himself in his private anxieties because political participation would seem to threaten the very value of 'self-directed' experience." "What Tocqueville Feared," *On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Riesman*, eds. Herbert J. Gans et al. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 124. Philip Slater has similarly noted that "Americans have an unfortunate tendency to assume that freedom means being left alone. We are surprised and outraged when we stumble across the mammoth bureaucracies we have created through our abdication of personal responsibility." Slater, *A Dream Deferred: America's Discontent and the Search for a New Democratic Ideal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 21.

109. In these quotations I have drawn from three different translations of *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Part IV, Chapter 6.

110. Assailing the empty performance of individualism, D.H. Lawrence wrote that "The most unfree souls go west, and shout of freedom. . . . The shout is a rattling of chains, always was." *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York: Viking, 1968).

111. Tocqueville's dystopian predictions of the subject's atomization and loss of social and political agency through individualism have been revisited and pronounced fulfilled by those thinkers loosely grouped under the banner of communitarianism. See Edward W. Lehman, ed., *Autonomy and Order: A Communitarian Anthology* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Robert M. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985); Amy Gutmann, "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism," *Communitarianism and Individualism*, eds. Shlomo Avineri and Avner De-Shalit (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 120-136; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984); and Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Communitarianism and Individualism*, 12-28.

112. John W. Draper, quoted in Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*, 326. Richard Poirier lauds Emerson's "predilection for what he calls 'abandonment;'" he suggests that the Emersonian genius is a "phenomenon of energy." Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature: Emersonian Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1987), 74-75.

113. *Democracy in America*, 691.

114. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983); Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) and "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1993); Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (New York: Pantheon, 1969); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977) and *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: Introduction (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); and Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional-Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

115. Kateb is here defending individualism from communitarian and Foucauldian critics; he concludes the chapter by asserting that "Admirers of Foucault should worry more about communitarianism than individualism. Indeed they should work to rehabilitate individualism." *The Inner Ocean: Individualism and Democratic Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press. 1992), 233, 239.

116. It is important to note that "especially in America, the poststructuralist critique of individuality has had only a feeble impact on the persistently individualist imagery of our institutions and popular culture." Thomas C. Heller and David E. Wellbery, "Introduction," *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986), 12.

117. Updike seems to be describing here the anomic suburban world of his fiction, the *Rabbit* novels in particular. "Emersonianism," *Odd Jobs: Essays and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 158, 160.

118. Quoted in Christy Borth, *Mankind on the Move: The Story of Highways* (Washington: Automotive Safety Foundation, 1985), 296. He identifies the source only as "a speaker at a national conference on driving simulation."

119. Bel Geddes, *Magic Motorways*, 47, 56-7.

120. "The road is the Möbius strip of American capitalism: despite the thrill of acceleration, escape is illusory, and the drive into the sunset takes you right back where you started." Ian Leong, Mike Sell, and Kelly Thomas, "Mad Love, Mobile Homes, and Dysfunctional Dicks: On the Road with Bonnie and Clyde," in *The Road Movie Book*, 72.