





UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI PADOVA

# Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Triennale Interclasse in  
Lingue, Letterature e Mediazione Culturale (LTLLM)

Classe LT-11

Tesina di Laurea

Relatore

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Anno Accademico 2021 / 2022

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*Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of  
Mass Industrialised Transportation on the  
world, and vice versa*

This work is dedicated to a handful of people, without whom it would have been impossible:

- RMS Titanic's chief baker Charles Joughin, and Second Officer Charles Lightoller, for sheer luck and stupendous courage in the face of almost certain death.
- Mr James May, whose documentary *Cars of the People* gave me the idea to pursue this topic.
- Professor Marco Bertilorenzi, my BA supervisor, for patience, understanding, and constructive criticism always at the correct moment.
- My parents, for their pride, curiosity and support.
- Finally Kati, for her insurmountable faith in me and my writing ability.

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## Introduction

In his essay *The Decay of Lying*, Oscar Wilde famously asserted that life imitates art far more than art imitates life (Wilde); a theory known as Anti-Mimesis. This can be taken to mean that art has a greater impact on life than vice versa. Aristotelian mimesis, on the other hand, is directly opposed to this; it states that art is an imitation of life. The aim of this paper is to engage in this debate not via art, the way Wilde did, but via vehicles. Should trains, automobiles, ships and even aircraft be defined as works of art, we need to know if Wilde's theory still holds the same water. This is possible, from a philosophical perspective, by comparing Wilde's Anti-mimesis with the opposite Aristotelian mimesis by measuring the impact a vehicle had on its cultural and social surroundings and, crucially, vice versa. The string of events between a group of engineers in Liverpool or Belfast creating bigger and better ships, and immigrant Italian culture weaving its way into everyday life in the USA is an excellent example of what must be put under the microscope here from the Aristotelian perspective. This is countered by Wilde asserting how life looks to art not only for inspiration, but as a point of reference from which to perceive life. We see something in life only in terms of its presence in art and rely on art to point it out to us.

It's a well-known fact that correlation does not imply causation, but the transformative changes to the world's economies that accompanied the arrival of mass mobility of the individual merit the hypothesis of there being a link. With the advent of industrial civilisation, travel lost much of its dangerous, fickle and unforgiving character and turned into a routine, indistinguishable from one's everyday life, or perhaps even a luxury of which few dared to dream. This transformation of travel itself, particularly the development of ocean liners gave way to a new kind of immigration to the United States, for example, and the consequences of this could therefore owe themselves to industrialised individual mobility, at least in part.

Alongside this manner of sea travel came the age of rail, allowing the UK's first industrialised tourist economies in resorts along the coast. The economic and cultural role of coastal cities such as Blackpool or Scarborough were arguably shaped by rail, as it formed a backbone for mass domestic tourism. This tourism then fuelled a thriving

seasonal economy in these cities, and became a cornerstone of British culture, up until the jet age when the industry was put in jeopardy. Some former resort towns have not recovered from this blow and remain some of the UK's most deprived areas, particularly Blackpool, Jaywick and the Northumbrian coastline<sup>1</sup>.

Rail also influenced the destiny of the Russian far east, especially when the Manchurian branch was seen as important enough, by some within the empire, to risk war with Japan, an emerging regional power. Alexander Gershenkon declared railways the most important factor in Russian industrialisation of this period<sup>2</sup>, and this can be seen in the development of the Urals as well as the far east. Outside of European Russia, the more developed part of the nation, the impact of a new technology such as rail transport is particularly visible, thanks to the backdrop of relatively weak development.

It is impossible to discuss individual mobility without touching upon the rise of the automobile. The topic is rich in culture and emotional impact, as demonstrated by the fond farewell of something as ordinary as the Ford line of family saloons on the popular car show *The Grand Tour*, but what interests us most are models which represented unprecedented value and accessibility. Examples would include the Model-T Ford, the original Fiat 500 and the produce of the Tolyatti auto plant in the USSR, to name a few. Aside from connections with spending power, accessibility of remote areas and employment in production, the cultural impact of automobiles is beyond measure. Unlike anything since a horse, an automobile was one's loyal companion, almost part of the family like a dog, ready to take everyone and their holiday bags to whichever destination.

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown. "Government Assets Publishing Service." 07 July 2015. Government Assets Publishing Service. Web PDF pp 2

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/442823/ERDF\\_OP\\_Annex\\_on\\_CLLD\\_FINAL\\_070715.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442823/ERDF_OP_Annex_on_CLLD_FINAL_070715.pdf). 27 June 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Blanchard, Ian. "Russian Railway Construction and the Urals Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry, 1851-1914." *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 53, no. 1 (2000): 107-126. pp 110



## Travel by sea

### In The Factories and the Dockyards of Belfast

In 1854, a Yorkshire-born engineer named Edward James Harland moved to Belfast to manage a shipyard owned by one Robert Hickson on Queen's Island. He then bought the shipyard 4 years on, and hired his former personal assistant, the German Gustav Wilhelm Wolff, as a business partner two years later. Thus, was born one of Ireland and Belfast's most iconic ever concerns, the Harland and Wolff shipyard.

The shipyards themselves, particularly Harland & Wolff, serve as a good metaphor for the phenomenon of sea travel itself and of its effect on the wider world. By the height of the Belle Epoque before WWI (1906-14), the Belfast region was responsible for approximately 6% of global ship production<sup>3</sup>, but in the wake of European de-industrialisation and the onset of the jet age, the importance and impact of individual sea travel declined. The company closed premises in Liverpool, Newcastle and Woolwich in London and restructured to the point where today there are only around 400 employees, despite the concern's enduring status.

With its 28,000 employees in 1916, the majority of which at the Belfast premises, The H&W yards formed a cornerstone of Belfast's identity as an industrial centre in a traditionally agricultural local economy. Along with this came H&W's role as a political metaphor for the question of workers' rights, which at the time was a fast-growing cutting-edge political discussion. Our protagonist the transport sector played its contemporary part in the engineering strike of early 1919, one of many strikes during the period. The primary aim being a 44-hour working week to guarantee work for former soldiers, thousands of workers downed their tools at noon on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1919 and marched through the city with banners to reject a proposal of 47 hours, sticking to their guns demanding their 44.

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<sup>3</sup> Geary, F. and W. Johnson. "Shipbuilding in Belfast, 1861-1986." *Irish Economic and Social History* Vol. 16 (1989): 42-64. Document. Pp 55

The shipbuilding sector not only mirrored Belfast and Northern Ireland's political journey, but with these strikes it formed a cornerstone of its historical, cultural and political identity. Both sides of Wilde's debate are present here, but the art that is transport and what makes it possible lead the line during these strikes, particularly as, when the strikers had to make do with the proposed 47 hours, the Irishmen were the last to surrender, showing what they thought was greater fervour than their mainland British colleagues. The Strike Bulletin wrote, 'we feel that if the same spirit had been

shown elsewhere as was exhibited in Belfast, the end would have been immediate victory. As it is, the 44 is only delayed'<sup>4</sup>.



**FIGURE 1, PROTESTANT SHIPYARD WORKERS DRIVE THEIR CATHOLIC COLLEAGUES AWAY ON YORK STREET, BELFAST 1920. SCENES LIKE THIS BECAME INCREASINGLY COMMON AS THE SECTARIAN VIOLENCE WORSENE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN THE COMING YEARS. IMAGE COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO**

Sectarian tension has been a tragic fact of Irish life for centuries, and this was mirrored unabashedly at the H&W yards, with the Catholic workers performing the lower-paid 'unskilled' labour. It particularly came to the fore when H&W workers, Catholics and a handful of Protestant socialists, were among 10,000 men and another thousand women violently driven from their work in July 1920 in Belfast, which was only home to around 93,000 Catholics at the time. Two years of untapped reprisals and violence followed. Harland and Wolff form a visible microcosm of Irish history with the abuse of Catholics within the ranks of workers, and with the rumours that the *Titanic* bore a curse from this, we can see transport playing its part in the development of the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Irish Newspaper Archives. Irish Newspaper Archives. 27 June 2022. Web PDF <https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/belfast-strike-bulletin>. 27 June 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Munck, Ronald. "Class and Religion in Belfast - A Historical Perspective." *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 20, no. 2 (1985): 241-259. Document. pp 247

## Olympic-class Leviathans

### *Titanic* - On Culture and History

Of all Harland and Wolff's splendid achievements, few would be topped by the construction of the trio of *Olympic* class liners for the White Star Line, which is a considerable irony given the tragic fate two of the three 'cursed sisters' had in store. The most famous of the three, the *Titanic*, and a contender for the most famous ship of all time, however, merits discussion by herself. The *Titanic*'s sinking makes the act of proving or disproving Anti-Mimesis more complex, because of the seismic impact of the loss of such an incredible ship.



**FIGURE 2 A STILL FROM JAMES CAMERON'S BLOCKBUSTER TITANIC (CAMERON). FICTIONAL STEERAGE PASSENGER JACK DAWSON (LEONARDO DICAPRIO) STANDS BESIDE THE FAMOUS CLOCK IN THE FIRST-CLASS STAIRWELL, WITH 'HONOUR AND GLORY CROWNING TIME'. ONE NEEDS TO SEPARATE TITANIC'S IMPACT FROM THE ENDLESS METAPHORS IT PROVIDES OF EDWARDIAN SOCIETY, BUT BOTH MERIT DISCUSSION. DOES ART**

### **IMITATE LIFE, OR DOES LIFE IMITATE ART?**

Anti-Mimesis is more tested, however, by the similarity between the way *Titanic* went down, and by the way the Belle Epoque followed suit before the first world war. Technology was very much ahead of human consciousness, in such a way that the ramifications of an 882-foot-long maritime behemoth were ill-studied. Much like during the first world war, when generals still used to 19<sup>th</sup> century strategy suddenly had to deal with widespread deployment of machine guns, aircraft and precise artillery. Despite Captain Smith being exonerated by history a lot more than the likes of Luigi Cadorna or Douglas Haig, the errors in judgement they made came from a similar place; the man was left far behind by machine, by what we are defining as art.

The *Titanic*, despite her sinking, was a modern marvel. At 882 feet long, she was the biggest moving man-made object to date, and was fitted according to the White Star Line's enduring penchant for luxury over speed, compared to the Cunard line's

*Mauretania*. Since the safety features of Brunel's S.S. *Great Eastern*, for example, were dropped one by one in favour of luxury and profitability, the *Titanic* needed something to set herself apart from her own sister ships, let alone competing liners. To service this ambition, the White Star Line adorned her with, among other things, an authentic Parisian pavement cafe; the 'Café Parisien'. The discerning luxury-seeking Atlantic traveller had already had their fill of panelled luxury, of staircases, staterooms, decks and suites. An authentic French 'sidewalk café' complete with genuine French waiters, as Walter Lord put it in *The Night Lives On*, rather raised the game. Especially on a British ship, burdened with British social and cultural stiffness.<sup>6</sup>

However, her grandeur was haunted by a spectre of complacency, arrogance and even racial prejudice typical of the time, and typical all the more of Britain and the USA. The 'unsinkable' trope and her wireless operators telling their peers to 'shut up' with their ice warnings as they were interfering with passenger messages are well-known. Despite the word 'unsinkable' never making an appearance on official White Star adverts or publicity, it was certainly bandied about by the press and was a handsome fit in a self-satisfied Edwardian society.

On racial prejudice, Lord writes in *A Night to Remember* that a passenger who displayed some kind of cowardly characteristic in the face of the disaster was off-handedly referred to as 'Italian' in interviews and even official records, even when their actual origins were completely unknown. The situation reached a climax when an infuriated Italian ambassador demanded, and got, an apology from Fifth Officer Lowe for 'using 'Italian' as some sort of synonym for 'coward'<sup>7</sup>. However, the real damage was yet to be done. It can be argued that the discrimination towards Italian immigrants both on their journey and at their destination, illustrated by the *Titanic* and her microcosm of Edwardian society, was part of the psychological groundwork for fascism, and generated sympathy for it among the emerging Italian diaspora. Even dedicated antifascists in the USA conceded that Mussolini 'enabled four million Italians in America to hold up their heads...if you had ever been branded as undesirable[,]...

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<sup>6</sup> Lord, Walter. *The Night Lives On*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1986 pp 34

<sup>7</sup> Lord, Walter. *A Night to Remember*. London: Penguin Books, 2012 pp 110

you'd know what that means'. A Sicilian living in New York, Paul Pisicano, was unreserved in his praise: 'Mussolini was a superhero, he made us feel special'.<sup>8</sup>

The view of Italy being some sort of backward, insignificant mess good only for burdening others with endless immigration left patriotic Italians itching to disprove this insult, ideally in a way brutally fast, visible, and memorable. When collective heads are down, when a country finds itself in its darkest hour, is when Fascism politically thrives, posing as an answer to all problems facing the listener, everyone like the listener, and nobody unlike the listener.

### *Olympic-class and the economy*

A loss of a ship such as Titanic was a blow from which any company would do well to recover, and the White Star Line's parent company, the International Mercantile Marine Company (IMM) was no exception, suffering a gross loss of \$7,500,000 in 1912 dollars (approximately \$210,000,000 in 2021)<sup>9</sup>. Despite Lloyd's insurance covering two thirds of this sum, the IMM was in dire straits.

The size of the stake the IMM had in the Olympic-class ships can't only be measured financially. In terms of economic effect, when White Star joined the syndicate in 1902, one of the clauses in the agreement was that H&W yards would be responsible for building and heavy repairs, provided it had to be in the UK, of all IMM vessels.<sup>10</sup> H&W may have nominally only been one company, but their workforce as a demographic represented entire districts of the city, and mirrored its sectarian divide. Not only this, but during Belfast's 'golden age' of shipbuilding in the 1880s, gross tonnage launched reached 228% of the previous year<sup>11</sup> during which time, Belfast's economy became intertwined with the shipbuilding industry, as well as the identity of the city. This goes to show the link between shipbuilding and Belfast, therefore the impact of industrial personal transport on Belfast.

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<sup>8</sup> Luconi, Stefano. "Contested Loyalties: World War II and Italian-Americans' Ethnic Identity." *Italian Americana* vol. 30, no. 2 (2012): 151-167. Document. pp 154

<sup>9</sup> Khanna, Arun. "The "Titanic": The Untold Economic Story." *Financial Analysts Journal* Vol. 54, No. 5 (1998): 16-17. pp16

<sup>10</sup> Geary, F. and W. Johnson. "Shipbuilding in Belfast, 1861-1986." pp 44

<sup>11</sup> Geary, F. and W. Johnson. "Shipbuilding in Belfast, 1861-1986." pp 46

## The economics of immigration

Aside from being an unprecedentedly seismic shift in demographics and cultural identity, transatlantic immigration was a booming business. In transporting 11 million Europeans to their new home across the Atlantic, the business generated approximately \$70 million in annual revenues towards the beginning of the First World War<sup>12</sup>. The effect on the economy was keenly felt on both sides of the Atlantic.

### 'Old Reliable'

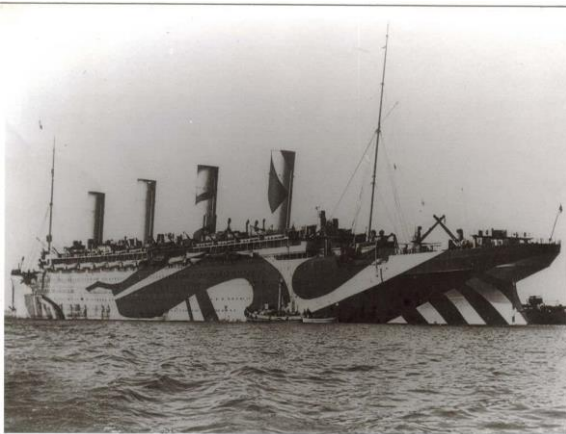
*Titanic* was one of three sister ships, the second of which, *Britannic*, struck a mine off the Greek archipelago and sank in 1916, having never performed her intended transatlantic service. The third, however, had a successful 24-year long career from 1911 to 1935. This was the RMS *Olympic*. The *Titanic*'s effect on history and social consciousness is very much distorted by her sinking, but *Olympic*, on the other hand, spares us this confounding variable and allows us to isolate travel and transport as an independent variable, and see how a ship's predicted service lifespan can have a more profound impact than anonymously sailing back and forth.

*Olympic* continued to cut a distinguished figure after the *Titanic* disaster. A particular example is her service through WWI, ferrying troops from Canada to the UK and back, in a dazzle camouflage rather than her usual White Star colours. In Halifax, Nova Scotia, where *Olympic* would land, she was a huge morale booster coming into port, as the residents were assured another boatload of their fathers, sons and brothers were coming in safely; Thus, she earned herself the nickname 'Old Reliable'. More importantly, however, it was her loyal service that rendered her the namesake of Olympic gardens in Halifax, and the Olympic Hall community centre among others. This is a blatant example of individual transport, or rather the means of individual transport, having an effect on our lives more profound than the simple act of moving us from A to B. For the inhabitants of Halifax, *Olympic* became a symbol of wartime

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<sup>12</sup> Keeling, Drew. "The Business of Transatlantic Migration Between Europe and the USA, 1900-1914." *Journal of Economic History* (2006): 476-480. pp 477

mentality and high morale. This was but one task, on one route, during four out of 24 years of her time at sea.



**FIGURE 3 RMS OLYMPIC IN DAZZLE CAMOUFLAGE, WHICH MADE IT HARDER FOR ENEMY RADAR TO PICK UP AN ACCURATE SIGNATURE. SHE WORE THIS PAINT THROUGHOUT THE FIRST WORLD WAR, CARRYING TROOPS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC AND EXCELLING IN THIS ROLE THANKS TO HER SIZE AND SPEED.**

### *Olympic-class, SS Great Britain, and progress*

To truly understand the social, technological and perhaps economic implications of liners like *Olympic* or *Titanic*, it's wise to look back at what counted as a technological marvel at the start of the trans-Atlantic shipping era rather than at its apex, in order for the White Star Leviathans to be put properly into context. The *SS Great Britain* is as good an example as any of what the 1850s were technologically capable of as a decade. She was among the first steamers equipped with a propeller rather than paddlewheels, in fact Isambard Kingdom Brunel and his team of engineers changed the intended engine design halfway through the project, setting completion back by 9 months, such was the significance of this change of technology. This time was the infant years of these shipbuilding techniques, when by the 1910s they were comfortably standard. Back in the 1850s however, neither of these choices were the ones made at the outset of the *SS Great Britain* project. She was conceptualised as a wooden paddle-steamer, and her completion as an 'ironclad' propeller-driven vessel was a technological marvel of the time.

*SS Great Britain* paid dearly for her foresight with difficulties of her position as a first mover. Delays and difficulties from the numerous changes of plan in her building meant she cost £117,295 to complete, instead of the projected £70,000, almost double what was envisaged. Once the switch to propellers from paddles was finalised, the indecision turned to what design of propeller to use, Brunel favouring his own six-bladed design over a proven four-bladed one, which he then tried to improve by riveting an extra two inches of length to each propeller blade. Her service life was no less dogged with issues, losing four propeller blades in adverse weather conditions,

while carrying over 100 passengers, before the four-bladed design made a return<sup>13</sup>. After a couple more transatlantic journeys, she was laid up for months to fix a rolling issue. This involved a return to the four-bladed propeller design, two bilge keels and conventional rigging instead of iron rigging<sup>14</sup>. These difficulties and revisions go to show the progress that was made from the 1850s to the Edwardian Olympic-class liners, how advancements at sea were at the forefront of contemporary innovation. We can see the very beginning of a metal body and propeller-drive combination that is being followed, broadly speaking, to this day. Over the span of 60 years, we can see what was a monumental undertaking in the 1850s had become a given in 1911 when *Olympic* was launched with approximately thirty times the *Great Britain's* GRT volume, and roughly twenty-four times the passenger capacity.

## Myths of Sea Travel

In bringing all manner of immigrants to the USA, the liners brought to light a great many debates on what immigration meant for the country, its merits and detractions, but what is not up for debate is the huge cultural weight that sailed into Ellis Island, day after day. After many initial tensions between the immigrants themselves, in addition to the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy deciding what were 'desirable immigrants' or otherwise, immigrant communities such as Italian-Americans became indistinguishable from American life, as if stirred into a stew; into the myth of the Melting Pot. With 'E Pluribus Unum' a sacred phrase within the USA's history, we need to evaluate the contribution to the melting pot made by travel becoming more accessible. Either that, or the US's position as a promised land creating a market for ocean liner tickets anyone could afford. We would do well to get to the bottom of the cause-and-effect spiral on display here.

In the *Journal of Consumer Research*, Steven Brown, Pierre McDonagh and Clifford J. Schulz II examined the *Titanic* and her fate as an 'ambiguous brand', and how, like many others, this disaster managed to creep into our cultural consciousness and stay there so powerfully even in the face of subsequent disasters far larger in terms of loss

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, Paul. *Britain's Historic Ships: A Complete Guide to the Ships that Shaped the Nation*. London: Anova Books, 2009. Document. pp 68

<sup>14</sup> Fox, Stephen. *Transatlantic: Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel, and the Great Atlantic Steamships*. New York, USA: Harper Collin, 2003. pp 153



of life. One reason quoted in their article is archetypes, how they can lend so much sticking power to a myth like that. Through four central pillars: romance, tragedy, irony and comedy, there tends to emerge a huge market for a myth depending on how well it fits into any one of these four pillars.

The Titanic in its own right has enough tragedy and irony, and when society's mindset becomes macabre enough to enjoy such disaster tourism, more than a few discerning souls would find something to laugh at, i.e., comedy. When it comes to the final facet, romance, it's a sad certainty that many loved ones were lost and families broken. But in such vague terms, this is unlikely to stick; it was Josef Stalin who said that 'the death of one man is a tragedy, the death of millions is a statistic.'<sup>15</sup>

A more poignant historical romance is found in *The Night Lives On*, when Mrs Helen Churchill Candee ran into her friend Edward Kent, and gave him a locket of her mother for safekeeping, that would be given back when they were inevitably reunited after the disaster was over. Tragically, Edward Kent died, but the locket was recovered from his body and reunited with Mrs. Candee, thus Kent was able to keep his word as a gentleman even from beyond the grave<sup>16</sup>. The blockbuster films *A Night to Remember* (1958) and *Titanic* (1997) add romance to the disaster's legacy in different ways. Regarding *A Night to Remember*, to be immortalised in film during the 'golden age of Hollywood' always serves to romanticise, but James Cameron took things a step further with the fictional romance between Jack Dawson and Rose in his 1997 blockbuster. This plotline drew attention to the *Titanic* among the younger generation and took it from a fairly niche historical interest to a pop-culture phenomenon to rival any romantic comedy.

Another way in which Brown defines the cultural weight of a myth is as a medicine. Describing the myth as 'palliative', he claims that a myth can be reached out to in a relatable fashion when one is under the stresses of the modern day.

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<sup>15</sup> Brown, Stephen. "Titanic: Consuming the Myths and Meanings of an Ambiguous Brand." *Journal of Consumer Research* vol. 40, no. 4 (2013): 595-614. pp 596

<sup>16</sup> Lord, Walter. *The Night Lives On* page 105

## Cultural references

A surprisingly rich vein for cultural nods to immigration is Rock music, from groups such as Primus, Led Zeppelin and Rush. Primus' 'American Life', for example, with the enigmatic singer-bassist Les Claypool leading the line, tells the story of several characters, including a Sicilian family emigrating to America, a refugee from Laos, and a homeless military veteran. The first two verses, however, are what concern us most.

The message in this song is of the myth of America being the promised land, as if the act of travelling can heal the trauma from losing the father in the family. We can see quite clearly the perceived power of travel, and how it can unlock changes in someone's life. The mention of the statue of liberty is a reference to the famous inscription 'Give me your tired, your hungry, your poor'. This is another important facet of American history that mechanised travel had a hand in facilitating. The idea of building a nation of people on the idea of mass immigration required a technological means to move these people on a big enough scale and economically enough that all one needed was the will to start a new life in the New World and £3 (approximately £360 in 2022) on the White Star line, for a third-class ticket.

The 1997 film *Titanic* served to 'repopularise' the tragedy of the good ship going down, thanks to its being a box office titan right from the beginning. This was not an unexpected case of a cult classic achieving unimaginable fame; director James Cameron and female lead Kate Winslet were already major names; the only relative unknown was her male counterpart, Leonardo DiCaprio. On the theme of anti-mimesis, this may seem like a blow to Wilde's theory, Cameron's film is an adaption of a historic tragedy.

## Travel by rail

### New-fangled contraptions

Far before the British people got their sea legs, they first had to reach the coast somehow. For the individual under scrutiny in this paper, rail was the first thing to make that widely possible. While White Star, Cunard and their contemporaries unlocked sea travel, railways first unlocked it by land. The industrial revolution made swift work of the initial exclusivity and high price of early trains such as the Dewitt Clinton not being

much more than a horse-and-carriage on rails, and what we now recognise as a train didn't take long to emerge.

In 1830, the first fully steam-operated public railway opened between Manchester and Liverpool, two of the British Empire's most important cities. In the decades that followed, the £40,000 investment of 1825 became £166 million only 25 years later<sup>17</sup>. (Kingsford xii) Britain only spent 4 years as the sole European country operating a fully steam-powered railway, however the biggest railway companies were British, with George Stephenson's company being the prime mover for railway construction not just in the UK but in Ireland, the USA and much of Europe. With steam rail coming in tandem with the height of the Industrial Revolution, one can straight away trace a link, however a half-mile steam-powered colliery shunt is not quite what is relevant here, despite the economic significance of the technology.

In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Leon Trotsky coined the phrase 'the privilege of historical backwardness'. He used this phrase to describe how a country aiming to progress quickly from a backward position can skip the awkward intermediate steps involved with a more linear progression. In his words, 'savages throw away their bows and arrows for rifles all at once'<sup>18</sup>. (Trotsky) Russia's development in general is a good illustration of this model, not only in terms of rail and other travel. Looking at Russia's development through this lens is Anti-Mimetic in itself, in so far as life only realises itself in our eyes in terms of Trotsky's literary hypothesis.

The link here between Trotsky and Wilde extends globally. It is possible to infer a measure of a nation or region's economic path by looking at how her railways developed. The North of England is a prime example of both the link between rail and economy, and of Trotsky's theory of development. During the Industrial Revolution, when the British Empire was the world's leading industrial power, this growth was fuelled by mines in the North-East of England which fuelled steel towns Edwardian such as Sheffield. Despite the blue-collar nature of the region, its vital role in the nation's industrial prowess meant there was wealth and fortune to be had. However, as bulk steel manufacturing moved to countries such as PR China, the region's

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<sup>17</sup> Kingsford, P.W. *Victorian Railwaymen*. London: Frank Cass And Company Ltd, 1970. pp xii

<sup>18</sup> Trotsky, Leon. *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky Internet Archive, Online. First published 1930. pp 16

economic importance tailed off, subsequently spiralling down out of control during Margaret Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister. This economic downturn was mirrored within the local rail travel situation. When other regions of the world such as Japan astounded the world with record-breaking rail travel, commuters in South and West Yorkshire looked on in dismay as many journeys began to be slower in the modern age than they were back in the Edwardian era. Bradford to Wakefield, for instance, is a 48-minute service as of June 2021, but in 1910 the quickest service was half an hour, according to a government report highlighted within a local news article. David Hoggarth of Transport for the North blamed ageing lines throttling locomotive speeds and an increase in stops<sup>19</sup>.

This first cause is a case in point of Trotsky's theory. A rail line designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century will remain a 19<sup>th</sup> century rail line without extensive and complicated modernisation work. For a nation which developed with a different pattern, such as Japan, it's possible to enjoy far more modern rail infrastructure, seeing as starting from nothing is easier than wrestling with decades-old infrastructure which can serve as a bottleneck to future development. Japan, for instance, was able to bypass any awkward redesign or modification and head straight to what was in technological vogue, as a late comer in the technology. There is a mimetic link here between the railway infrastructure and economic history of the Yorkshire area, as the UK's advantage as a first mover gave way to relative development problems as the rest of the world first closed the gap, then, in some cases, widened it in the other direction. The overall decline in economic importance of the Yorkshire area coincides with the strange phenomenon of regressing travel times.

British rail development, due to the country's position as a first mover, always followed a model more incremental than Japan or Russia. The failure of the Advanced Passenger Train (APT) project of the 1970s and 80s is a very neat proof of concept here; a technologically advanced electric high speed rail project capable of tilting that ultimately fell afoul of a system incapable of supporting it. Despite breaking British rail speed records twice, the project took too long to come to fruition, and prototype

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<sup>19</sup> Brooke, Sam. *The Yorkshire train journeys that take longer now than they did 100 years ago*. 1 July 2021. Web page. 25 December 2021. <<https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/local-news/yorkshire-train-journeys-take-longer-20940155>>.

locomotives were pressed into service before they were ready when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher posed a threat to cancel the project entirely. The resulting media frenzy over every issue great or small made the train politically unsustainable, and it was withdrawn from service to the sound of the press' laughter. APT had a second roll of the dice in 1984, but after a year or so was withdrawn in favour of the more conventional diesel High Speed Train, with no controversial tilt capabilities. The technological leap associated with such a project was ill-suited to Britain's incremental development style as a first mover, and therefore struggled to get far off the ground.

However, other European nations enjoyed more success with the electric tilting model. Fiat Ferrovia of Italy purchased the rights to ATP's tilting system and utilised them in the development of the Pendolino family of locomotives, first the ETR 450 then later the famously fast Frecciarossa and Frecciargento traction.

## Building a nation

The growing railway infrastructure in Britain throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave way to various towns and villages in the country undergoing development never before seen purely to be of service to the new industry, a part of the Industrial Revolution intrinsically bound to transport. The town of Shildon is a prime example of this, where the Stockton & Darlington Railway established its maintenance works in 1826, which a year later would be the first in-house company works to produce its own locomotive, the *Royal George*, followed by seven more before 1832<sup>20</sup>. By this time, a factory was becoming a town; the town of New Shildon. It was already endowed with a population of almost 900, and a church, on land controlled by the railway company. Despite uncertainty in 1863 upon the amalgamation with the North Eastern line, ten more locomotives were completed at the works in the next 4 years, and locomotive repair work continued on site until 1871 when production and maintenance was switched to rolling stock. By 1902, the uncertainty looked wholly pessimistic when the New Shildon had become the North Eastern line headquarters, with 1000 men on payroll out of a total population of 249<sup>21</sup>. The town of Wolverton in north Buckinghamshire experienced something similar. Wolverton found itself on the halfway point of the 112-

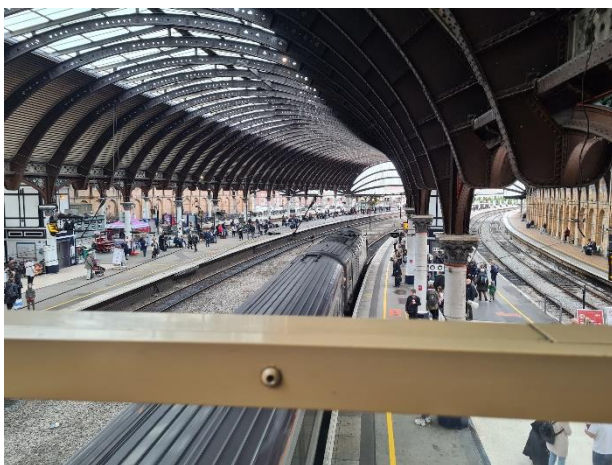
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<sup>20</sup> Simmons, Jack. *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles Publishers Plc, 1986. 172

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

mile London Birmingham line, and the works were judged to be better there than on one end or the other, in either of the existing big cities. The nearest market town, Stony Stratford, was judged to be too small to accommodate the quantity of workers envisaged, so by 1844 a 'very compactly and regularly built' town had emerged of 200 houses and a population of 1000<sup>22</sup>. In the next 18 years, 180 locomotives were built in what was described in 1851 as 'the first specimen of a railway town built on a plan to order'<sup>23</sup>. These are two of many more examples of settlements owing their entire existence to the railway, that existed on company land entirely within the rail concern's economic domain.

Other cities weren't necessarily spawned by the railway, but received a new lease of life from supporting rail infrastructure. These towns included Peterborough and Carlisle, but a particularly revealing example is the historic city of York. After activity rail increased from the opening of the York & North Midland Railway in 1839, it was clear the city was not yet capable of supporting this level of infrastructure. At this time there was only one bridge over the river Ouse, for example, so the Scarborough Railway Bridge was opened in 1845 to service the rail line between the two cities.



**FIGURE 4, YORK STATION'S GLAMOUROUS ARCADES. THE PRESENT-DAY STATION WAS BUILT AS A REPLACEMENT FOR A SMALLER ONE, FOR YORK TO PLAY ITS ROLE BETTER AS A LOGISTICAL CENTRE IN BRITISH RAILWAYS. THE RAIL INDUSTRY, TOGETHER WITH CHOCOLATE, IS A LEADING EMPLOYER IN THE CITY TO THIS DAY.**

Additionally, under the continued harmony between York's city council and the York & North Midland company, the proposal to replace the rope ferry on Lendal with a bridge was revived, and construction permission was granted in 1847, after a postponement in 1840. A new street to better service the station was built, and named Hudson Street after the York-born railway magnate and MP for Sunderland. However, the city's relationship with rail was due some upheaval in the twenty years to come. The under-construction Lendal

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid pp 173

bridge collapsed in 1860, killing five workmen<sup>24</sup>, and the man at the centre of York's development with railway, George Hudson, was deposed and denounced as a fraud. He was chased out of the country on pain of debt imprisonment, and had been found to have fraudulently sold shares at an inflated value, turning once-loyal shareholders and political allies against him, and his political rival, George Leeman, took over as chairman of the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railway. However, there was to be news better than a political downfall; the new railway station. Railways had been coming to York from all directions since 1851, and the existing station didn't have the capacity to serve them all. The result, opening in 1877, was one of the grandest stations in the country. A huge hotel was completed the following year, complete with gardens.

York was losing population until 1841 when railways initially came to the city, and much has been made of this correlation. Despite not having the same relationship as a light and a switch, there is merit to linking the two. By 1855, 1200 men were employed in the station and railway works, before the former had seen its expansion<sup>25</sup>. By the same time, traffic from London was up to 341,000 souls, and the station served as a terminus for many routes, boosting the local hospitality trade from people deciding to stay in York overnight<sup>26</sup>.

The Victorian link between rail and leisure was a peculiarity of British rail with respect to American and European railways of the time. In 1865, for instance, the rail contractor Samuel Morton Peto remarked that in the USA there were 'no such thing as excursions, or at any rate they are very rare'. 'Excursion tickets' were present in France, in the form of a return ticket valid for a fortnight at a reduced price. There were similar cameo appearances in most other European countries, but the UK embraced this kind of rail travel more readily, perhaps due to the would-be day trip destinations, coastal resorts such as Southport, Scarborough or Hastings, for example, typically being closer to population centres inland than potential destinations in Germany, France or Spain<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Brandon, Ed. *Curiosities of York*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2013. pp 17

<sup>25</sup> Tillott, P M. "Modern York: Economy, 1839-1900." Tillott, P M. *A History of the County of York: the City of York*. London: Victoria County History, 1961. 269-275. pp 272

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Simmons, Jack. *The Victorian Railway*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

However, this difference in lifestyle could also be attributed to the higher cost of labour in the UK which, at the time, meant higher wages, therefore free time and disposable income to realise the concept of a rail-powered day out. Imitation of art by life is difficult to define here, but we can see an incidental reflection of life in the medium of transport habits. In the difference in booking habits between two regions of the world, we can see the evidence of two entirely different ways of life.

## Labour - Man and machine

The speeds achievable by steam rail meant that human capacity was left behind, meaning while the machinery was an invention ready for the world, the human workforce lagged behind. While pioneering rail engineers knew their creations well, it was difficult for blue-collar workers to tame the beasts, and any blunder could have a catastrophic human cost. The novelty of this mode of transport, even after a few decades, made it a dangerous mode of transport, and an even more dangerous way to make a living. In 1871, risk of injury or death for a railwayman at the time was one in thirty-seven, making it one of the most perilous of the time<sup>28</sup>.

Contemporary poets such as Alexander Anderson and William Aitken gave a voice to the mortal dangers of a day's work on the railway. Aitken's 'Widow Morgan', for example, tells of a young signaller working to support his mother who is unjustly fined one day, and decides to work a night shift to pay it off. Tragically, however, his human limits catch up with him and he falls asleep on the job. He pulls the wrong lever in a panic when woken by the whistle, causing a major fatal accident. The fine that the signaller received was an unjust one, over a 'paltry trifle', which drove the young signaller to exceed his mortal limits. This poem shows how the power of what mankind had created for its own benefit outstrip the power of mankind itself, particularly through the use of long lines with a rhythm imitating that of a locomotive, to make the point that the relentless pace of contemporary railway work was impossible for human beings to sustain.

Alexander Anderson's rhythm emphasises this divide between man and machine, how accidents, according to Nicholas Daly, '..occur in 'machine time', not 'human

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<sup>28</sup> Kingsford, P.W. *Victorian Railwaymen*. London: Frank Cass And Company Ltd, 1970. pp 47



time'.<sup>29</sup> Anderson's verse demonstrates how 'mechanical regularity' proves more powerful than the human bodies that are supposed to shepherd it<sup>30</sup>, much like the case of Captain Smith's piloting of the *Olympic*-class vessels. In the case of the tragedy 'Jim's Whistle', there is a complex pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables to imitate a locomotive. Both Aitken and Anderson claim their work to be drawn from life, and while there is no evidence to suggest these individual protagonists are real, there's just as little reason to distrust the poets and dismiss their assurance. Aitken's protagonist suffering an unjustly heavy fine, for instance, was well-rooted in reality after unpopular labour reforms in the late 1840s<sup>31</sup>. This genre of railway poetry not be a case of life imitating art, but it is art becoming more powerful than what created it, of artificial creation outstripping nature.

*A cry from us all and a leap to the side  
As the train tore on with its terrible stride;  
But where was Jim? We had miss'd his cry—  
The whistle that warn'd when a train was nigh.  
Alas! in the six-feet, stiff of limb,  
With the blood on his face and lips lay—Jim.*

Very few strikes on the railways were recorded during the Victorian era; Kingsford mustered a list of eleven in his authoritative study on the matter<sup>32</sup>, but this is a weak reassurance for those concerned about working conditions, especially in the light of artistic evidence, even considering its anecdotal nature. The strikes took place during periods of financial difficulty for the railways when shareholders demanded economies to sure up poor investment returns. For example, in 1848, when share dividends fell 2% from 9 to 7, the economies instituted were a series of miserly wage cuts. For example, a driver prior to the cuts could see his pay increase from 5s 6d to 8s a day within 8 years. After the cuts, he'd have to wait twenty-five to thirty. The industrial action in question enjoyed only mixed success, often returning to work with nothing to

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<sup>29</sup> Kingsford, P.W. *Victorian Railwaymen*. London: Frank Cass And Company Ltd, 1970. pp 47

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid* pp 66

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* pp 65

show for the efforts due to threats of cheap labour from elsewhere if the job wasn't particularly specialised<sup>33</sup>.

## Rail Revolution

Few places on earth felt the influence of rail transport more than Russia. Not just in terms of economy and development, but as an ideological tool of Communism. Rail featured heavily on propaganda posters, in songs and poems, but the most original use, at the time, was the revolutionary Agit-train. In order to get the message out to rural areas, the Bolsheviks would outfit a train with communist murals on the outside, and on the inside offices, cinemas, propaganda presses, and more. Trains, especially in the eyes of a Russian peasant, were as new and exciting a thing as any, and therefore an ideal prop for the Bolsheviks to sell to them the idea of Communism. This broadening of a train's horizons, this alternate lease of life, is a perfect example of a train's impact on the world being larger than the sum of its parts.

During the USSR's infancy, the Bolsheviks' use of trains was typically creative, and it had to be. This was because, contrary to their own placards and posters, the October Revolution was not a nationwide uprising, but a coup d'état in an entirely different part of the country to many of the peasants whom the now-ruling party claimed to represent, localised entirely within a handful of offices in the Winter Palace. They were unable to see it or its effects unless the Bolsheviks were to find a way to exercise their power in the more remote parts of Russia<sup>34</sup>. The existing Tsarist infrastructure wasn't capable of supporting the level of change that the Communist government envisaged, so their subsequent ideological stake in trains, from Wilde's perspective, was art and life coming together.

Art got its own parallel definition earlier in this paper, but art even in the direct sense accompanied the then-cutting-edge locomotive in its journey through Russia in the form of cinema cars. These locomotives were an ideal way of bringing the Communist message to rural areas, and of creating an association between a forward-thinking,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, Richard. "A Medium for the Masses: Agitation in the Soviet Civil War." *Soviet Studies* 22 (1971): 1. pp 564

progressive, and modern economy with the budding Bolshevik government. The impact was heightened by the fact that agit-trains weren't necessarily a case of what was already in the privileged urban areas making its way into the backward provinces, as exhibitors would tour the country with a projector and a selection of films, moving from one place to another once the audience was well and truly bored with them. Cinema then met the Bolsheviks and their beloved locomotives when all Red troop trains were outfitted with a dedicated propaganda car, distributing pamphlets and papers to keep morale and loyalty at a satisfactory level. When this developed into the first agit-train, the *V.I Lenin*, a number of advantages of rail-based propaganda compared to the then-conventional methods materialised<sup>35</sup>. An example was the adaptability of a locomotive. Compared to a conventional 'people's house', for example, a locomotive could reach a targeted demographic for propaganda, quickly bringing with it any relevant specialists or experts to help tailor the content to its audience, as well as the locomotive itself being a demonstration of technical proficiency (Ibid 567) and implied that something that modern and expensive could be reserved specifically for the peasants, potentially endearing the Bolsheviks to them.

During the heavy politicisation of press and rail in the USSR's infancy, both were imperative within their own spheres. Rail transport was given by far the most priority out of all the possible transport mediums, and the printed press trumped radio as a source of information<sup>36</sup>. Passenger numbers, during the early 20s, however, were very low; 91 million in 1922 as opposed to 184.8 million in 1913, however picking up to 260 million in 1926 when the New Economic Policy was closer to full swing<sup>37</sup>. Here we can see the state of the local economy mimetically mirrored within the field of passenger transport. The early 1920s were the height of the fledgling Communist state's difficult childhood, not just with the Civil War raging, but the brutal economic system of War Communism to divert every last resource towards the war effort. Despite a lack of authority over much territory that it in theory controlled, the Bolshevik government's policy of quasi-martial law, and all resources above the subsistence level being diverted to the military, meant that private train travel numbers plummeted. Labour

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid pp 566

<sup>36</sup> Pethybridge, R.W. "Railways and Press Communications in Soviet Russia in the Early NEP Period." *Soviet Studies* vol. 38 (1986): 194-206. pp 194

<sup>37</sup> Ibid pp195

mobility was no longer a priority, nor a feasible aim in a time when an entire country needed to be socially and economically run like a purely military organisation in order to win a war it could ill-afford to fight. The collapse of the rouble meant a regression into an economy primarily based on bartering<sup>38</sup>, a situation incompatible with the relative modernity of rail travel. Only during the NEP era did the economy begin to be compatible with a demand for personal rail travel. The USSR emerged from the difficult war years with a compromised set of principles, having been forced to adopt a few free-market policies, but with a rapidly growing agricultural economy in compensation. However, NEP brought its own problems to the railway network as it did the rest of the nation. Petty bureaucratic squabbles and corruption meant that even when the country's economy was showing more promising signs, the railway system, still bearing many Civil War scars, still struggled.

## Into the Metro

To this day, walking into a metro station in any major city of the former USSR is a public transport experience unlike many others. This is chiefly because, particularly during the height of the Stalinist era, the Communist party recognised the Metro's potential as an ideological vehicle. Stations were often decorated to accent the identity of the area they served, and the architecture was in theme with contemporary ideological fashions. Not only did the metro serve to modernise Soviet urban transport, but it was used by the government to fashion political identity.

For example, the Mayakovskaya metro station in Moscow (figure 4) was designed by architect Alexei Dushkin in line with how fashionable aerospace engineering was becoming in the 1930s. The stainless-steel lining on the arches not only came from the same factory that supplied steel for military airships, but also served to create a light openness by reflecting the light sources in the building. This was known in the Stalinist lexicon as *svetlost'*<sup>39</sup>. The metro's ideological role, like any propaganda, was to have life imitate it. It formed the benchmark of what Soviet life was supposed to be, and this blueprint being followed meant that it succeeded, that it realised Anti-Mimesis.

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<sup>38</sup> Christian, David. *Imperial and Soviet Russia*. London: Macmillan Press, 1997. pp 239

<sup>39</sup> Friedman, Jane. "Soviet Mastery of the Skies at the Mayakovsky Metro Station." *Studies in the Decorative Arts* (2000): 48-64. pp 52

Through an action as everyday as taking the underground to work in the morning, an ordinary Soviet citizen bent the world to the will of Oscar Wilde.

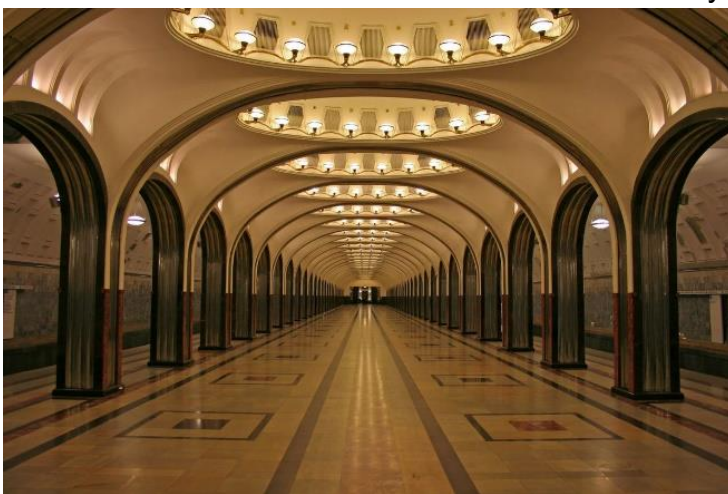
The Moscow metro's ideological link with life went beyond the design of one station.



**FIGURE 5 'THE WHOLE OF MOSCOW IS BUILDING THE METRO. FOR ITS 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY, WE SHALL GIVE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION THE FIRST LINE OF THE BEST METRO IN THE WORLD.' WITH THE ENTIRE CITY, AND BITS OF THE REST OF THE COUNTRY, PULLING TOGETHER TO ATTEMPT TO FINISH THE METRO BY THE 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION THE METRO, AS A PIECE OF ART AND CIVIL ENGINEERING, SET A PROPAGANDA BLUEPRINT FOR SOVIET LIFE TO FOLLOW IN ITS INCEPTION AND LATER IN ITS USE, IN MODERNISING THE THEN-GLOBAL CAPITAL OF SOCIALISM.**

The economics of its construction were a mirror into what a Communist building project was meant to be, ideologically. As

the capitalist world around them battled with the Great Depression, Soviet citizens developed a culture of working on the metro as a recreational honour. A Trotskyist principle, 'days of voluntary labour', became almost a public holiday as Moscow's fit and healthy were played down into the construction sites by bands<sup>40</sup>. Thousands of collective farm workers from all over the country and from all manners of cultural



background poured in to provide the necessary manpower. In **FIGURE 6 THE MAYAKOVSKAYA METRO STATION, WITH ITS STAINLESS-STEEL ARCHWAYS, SPACIOUS VAULTED CEILING, AND TILED FLOOR, SERVED AS AN HOMAGE TO SOVIET AEROSPACE ENGINEERING, A HUGE SIGNIFICANT CONTEMPORARY POINT OF PRIDE AND IDEOLOGICAL FASHION**

<sup>40</sup> Jenks, Andrew. "A Metro on the Mount: the Underground as a Church of Soviet Civilisation." *Technology and Culture* Vol. 41 (2000): 697-724. pp 702

particular, 4,000 collective farm workers from Bashkiria not only came to construct the metro but were given a taste of the apex of Soviet life having come from a more provincial background. They listened to Soviet music, read Russian poetry, attended political lessons and otherwise were familiarised with Socialist urban life. The USSR constantly changed her propaganda, but one constant running theme was a brotherhood of nations overcoming differences in language, culture, and religion to come together and create Socialism. Here it was mimetically mirrored in the story of the Metro's construction; a reality created by a piece of transport infrastructure. Throughout the early '30s the headlines sang from the rooftops of Communist ideals being mirrored in the metro's construction<sup>41</sup>, in particular Figure 5 above, a poster boasting the promise to finish the metro by the October Revolution, a deadline missed by a few months when it opened in May 1935. The Metro had not even opened when this poster first emerged, and already it was powering the propaganda that life was to imitate.

## The Trans-Siberian

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian imperial government stepped up railway construction, like many others in Europe and worldwide. However, Moscow was preparing to finally go through with a far more ambitious project, to connect the Pacific to European Russia by an uninterrupted rail service. When no kilometres of rail had been laid down anywhere in the region at least as far back as 1838, construction finally started in 1894. Despite being primarily military infrastructure<sup>42</sup> this railway has built a thriving passenger trade and has attained global cult status from being listed in the Guinness book of Records as the world's longest railway at 9,289 kilometres. When it was first opening in the 1910s, contemporary publications lauded its ambition and the seismic impact it was set to have. In 1898, *The Scientific American* reported of a huge colonisation scheme based on the railway, for example. One million Russians were to be transported from famine-stricken regions in the West to the fertile Siberian land around the Angara, Vitim, Upper

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid pp 703

<sup>42</sup> Ames, Edward. "A Century of Russian Railroad Construction: 1837-1936." *The American Slavic and East European Review* Vol. 6 (1947): 57-74. pp 65

Lena, and Lake Baikal in the 'greatest colonisation scheme the world has ever known'<sup>43</sup>.

The railway was a pioneering figure in the Urals, connecting Russia's iron reserves in 1878, then finally the Trans-Siberian programme connected these regional lines to the rest of the country in 1896<sup>44</sup>. This coincided with a quadrupling of pig iron production in the region, from around 200,000 tonnes in 1870 to a peak of over 800,000 in 1896 before a sharp decline<sup>45</sup> (Blanchard 110). The railway was the first step in a long road towards the industrialisation of Siberia; the biggest industrial centres are all situated along it. It was and is the lifeblood of the region. A single railway project remains, over 100 years after its inception, the most important piece of infrastructure in the entire region of any kind, not just transport.

By the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, the railway was reflecting the bleak condition of the Russian Imperial state. Even though it was lauded as an engineering success; 'the fairest jewel in the crown of the Tsars'<sup>46</sup>, the railway's only real calling card was its length and the difficulty of the terrain it had crossed. During the war its maximum transport capacity was thirteen trainloads of troops and supplies per day. Foreigners remarked that "The Russians had done a first-rate job in building a third-rate railway". With the calamitous war in the Far East, strikes in St Petersburg combining with political disasters such as Bloody Sunday, life had created the Trans-Siberian railway in its own image. Russia's rigid social system was also prevalent in the organisation of the railway's workforce. Of the 93,458 people employed on the line, 75% of them lived and worked in 'compact masses', away from towns and cities. Towns and cities such as Tomsk and Irkutsk, where the white-collar management workforce resided. This rigid separation was further enforced by the distance between the railway and any population centre, even ones which it served, with the station between one and fourteen miles away. Tomsk, the largest city in Siberia with 52430 inhabitants, according to the 1897 census and the Asiatic region's only university, was bypassed

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<sup>43</sup> "The Trans-Siberian Railway and Siberian Colonisation." *Scientific American* (1898): 74. pp 74

<sup>44</sup> Ames, Edward. "Russian Railroad Construction". pp 67

<sup>45</sup> Blanchard, Ian. "Russian Railway Construction and the Urals Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry, 1851-1914." *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 53, no. 1 (2000): 107-126. pp 110

<sup>46</sup> Reichman, Henry. "The 1905 Revolution on the Siberian Railroad." *The Russian Review* (1988): 25-48. pp 26

completely for political reasons, served only by a shunting line (Ibid 27). Although, the main objective of the line was not to connect the Russian cities along it together, but to reach the far-east and Pacific regions by rail. According to Russian government sources, this arrangement, typical of the time, was a contributing factor in the loss of authority during the Revolution<sup>47</sup>. Russia's social structure was one of the most conservative in Europe, with the abolition of serfdom in 1861 still in living memory, perhaps 100 years after most of the rest of the continent. The divide between white and blue collars wasn't so much a divide as a chasm, highlighted in satires such as Mikhail Shchedrin's 'How a Muzhik Fed Two Officials' (1869), and the structure of labour on the railway line mirrored this.

Shchedrin's story, being a contemporary satire, is mimetic in nature. It tells of two government officials completely detached from reality suddenly transported to a faraway island, going through the five stages of grief in the process. Through their adventures they encounter everything they could possibly need to quench their hunger or thirst but are completely incapable of taking advantage; 'if only we had all this fish in Podyacheskaya street!'. This is until they stumble on a 'muzhik', an ordinary working man who is easily able to attend to their lavish needs whilst under a torrent of insult and abuse. It is a case of art imitating life in terms of Russia in the 1870s. However, 40 years later on the Trans-Siberian, Russia's continuing insistence on conforming to Shchedrin's satirical vision has turned the tables, turning from commentary to blueprint over the course of four decades.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid pp 26



## Travel by car

### In the streets

There is an effect that automobiles had that is as profound as it is rather insidious. As automobiles quickly became more accessible, particularly in the United States, there quickly arose a conflict of interests between them and the previous inhabitants and users of the streets, that is people using them as a place to congregate. We now use the term 'pedestrian'. Through a series of lobbying campaigns, the automobile industry is alleged to have managed to co-opt the streets for their own creations.

The above is most prominently visible in the USA and Canada. The non-profit organisation Strong Towns asserts that a typical road or street in this part of the world is very often neither one thing nor the other. When a road is a high speed throughfare as uninterrupted as possible designed to link two productive places together, and a street is the logistical basis upon which urban wealth is created, the US and Canada are home to a curiously useless hybrid of the two, that serves neither to move traffic quickly and efficiently, or to create wealth in a populated area.

This, although a significant downside of automobiles and their prevalence, is a good metaphor for what must be found: the changes and developments in the economy, in society and in culture that can be traced back to widespread automobile use and recognition. This will be done by examining the life stories of important makes and models of car, automotive household names, as well as how the car as a concept and its production affected how we live our lives, and how it continues to do so.

### An American Love Affair

The sudden appearance of the car, particularly in the USA, is well documented in every sense. To quote *Shawshank Redemption's* Brooks Hatlen: 'I saw an automobile once when I was a kid, but now they're everywhere.' In the 1966 CBS feature documentary *The Great Love Affair*, reporter Harry Reasoner lends us more empirical data. 72 million cars in the country in 1966, and 9 million projected to be built in that year. Many cinemas, restaurants and churches emerged as 'drive-in' affairs, and 'nobody walks to the grocery across the street anymore'. In an interesting Anti-mimetic turn, the same documentary quips that 'the kids have pretty much given up toy

soldiers. In the average sandpile it's model cars over dolls two to one. The same ratio as adults are producing automobiles over babies.' The children create an artistic example of life in their sandpit followed by the adults in the factories. Through the happy wise cracks, however, the automobile's impact on the world receives criticism, and concerns are voiced. Reasoner worried that the projected doubling of cars' numbers by 1984 will destroy a city as big as Los Angeles and expresses further concern that people 'won't even slow down to look'.<sup>48</sup>

It is here that the love affair with the automobile begins to sour, particularly when cars are seen as the primary mode of transport, over public transport and even walking or cycling. After the end of the Second World War, the US government promoted home ownership through VA and FHA mortgage systems, offering federally subsidised loans at below the market interest rate to medium-income renters. The homes that would be bought were in pattern-built suburbs which were built in line with the automobile, at the time a hugely promising transport technology<sup>49</sup>. However, a lack of foresight in the planning of these new suburbs gave the United States many serious economic problems caused by car-centric city planning, notably poor patterns of low-density development and urban sprawl. Urban sprawl is defined by Webster's as "the spreading of urban developments (such as housing and shopping centres) on undeveloped land near a city". The following chapter is a case study of the effects of automobile-centred urban design when compared to a development pattern from before Harry Reasoner's automobile revolution.

## Strong Towns

### Case Study: Cars and Urban Development

A new suburban development like this in the US or Canada is subject to the following economic analysis by the non-profit organisation Strong Towns. In the small town of Brainerd, Minnesota USA, two development lots sit by side in starkly contrasting condition. One is a collection of decrepit-looking businesses that, as of 2012, comprised a liquor shop, a pawn shop, a barber's, a bankruptcy attorney, a campaign headquarters, a retail establishment, a café and one vacant spot. The other contains

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<sup>48</sup> *The Great Love Affair*. Dir. Harry Reasoner. Perf. Harry Reasoner. 1966.

<sup>49</sup> Huttman, John P. "Conflicts for Planning in Cars." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* (1977): 90-97. pp 92

a far newer chain taco restaurant, Taco John's, and a very generous complement of parking spaces. The taco restaurant complies to a myriad of modern regulations and includes side-street car access and even on-site stormwater management, a serious concern thanks to all the impermeable tarmac around the area. What we have here is a comparison skewed in favour of automobile-centred city design with a brand new modern establishment up against what has been labelled as 'blight' by the local authorities. Yet, the old and blighted properties had a combined tax base, in 2012, of \$1,136,500, compared to \$803,200 for the brand-new taco restaurant. Even at such a low ebb, the traditional-style development still outperforms a brand-new automobile-centred design in tax revenue by 41%<sup>50</sup>.

### 'STROADS'

A strange result of how cities are designed throughout North America is a peculiar kind of road connection far rarer in other parts of the world that some blame on infrastructure catering to automobiles in a perceived careless manner. A look at many suburban arterial roads in the USA will reveal that they are designed like a motorway, only with frequent junctions, sometimes featuring traffic lights, and traffic constantly turning and merging. Figure 7 is an example of this urban planning strategy. The problem is that these 'stroads' are straddling two definitions, a street and a road. A street is a destination, whereas a road is how you get there. These roads try to be both, in order to cater better, supposedly, to the automobile, and the result can be a lot of economic difficulty.



**FIGURE 5 A 'STROAD' IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE**

A wide street like this is often looked at from an engineer's perspective as an 'improvement' on a more traditional design, because of the higher projected speeds and traffic flows to be gained from the extra lane

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<sup>50</sup> Marohn, Charles. *Strong Towns: The Cost of auto orientation*. 02 January 2012. Web Site. 24 February 2022

space<sup>51</sup>. However, the economic and human aspects are not improved by this. To build a street like this one is far more resource-intensive, with the increased paved area and frequent and complex junctions and intersections. Maintenance costs increase in line with the size, and land use is hugely inefficient, with the adjacent businesses needing huge parking facilities and having to adhere to the relevant 'setback requirements' (how far a building must be from the edge of the lot/the road). In addition to construction and maintenance costs, the volume of traffic moved suffers due to the contradictory design. The many wide, sweeping lanes encourage faster driving, but average speeds cannot reach motorway speeds, for example, due to the frequent junctions, entrances and exits causing drivers to have to constantly stop or slow down in order to prevent dangerous collisions.

Unfortunately, however, this doesn't stop the accident rate in areas like these with low population density being relatively high compared to a higher-density area (Erick Guerra). To paint with a wider brush stroke, the USA as a national features poor road safety relative to the rest of the developed world, and this could, in part, be due to this road design which anywhere else in the world is significantly rarer.

These points aren't made to further an urbanist agenda, but to demonstrate the effects on communities from car-oriented design. Unfortunately, not all impacts and progress of mass transportation represent improvements.

## Detroit Muscle

The auto industry weaving itself into the USA's historical fabric is visible in Detroit. From Henry Ford's archetypal American dream, to Martin Luther King's first mention of his own dream of racial equality to a cautionary tale of how cities fall, Motor City and art in the form of industrialised transport are inseparable.

The first automobile enterprise native to Detroit was Henry Ford's Detroit Automobile Co., which produced two machines before folding three years later. Despite this

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<sup>51</sup> Marohn, Charles L. *Confessions of a Recovering Engineer: Transportation for a Strong Town*. Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2021. eBook. pp 38

difficult start, by 1915 Dodge, Ford, Cadillac, GM, and Oldsmobile were all established industrial figures, lending Detroit an identity of automobile production.

An important technological and economical footprint of the car industry on the world was Henry Ford's adoption of the production line. Having the product move through the factory to be incrementally added to completely changed the way labour interacted with production. At the Ford Motor Company, the new technique allowed production time per unit to drop from over twelve hours to 93 minutes. Production volumes went up seven times between 1912 and 1916, and prices went from \$600 to \$360<sup>52</sup>. This increase in accessibility of the car was only the fetal stage of America's aforementioned love affair. It was, for the time being, the USA's industrial might being visible through the quantity of automobiles, art imitating life. Industry was reflected in the art of mass mobility.

Ford's production techniques serve as the basis of modern production as reflected in the ideology of Fordism, as described by his essay 'Americanism and Fordism' from his 'Prison notebooks'. Going beyond the production line, Fordism describes how a mass production concern interacts with everyday life to feed an economic cycle. There are four stages of Fordism; First, a highly efficient production process designed to maximise output and worker utilisation. Then an Accumulation regime based on a 'virtuous cycle of growth'. By increasing productivity, wages would rise, resulting in higher demand, investment and efficacy. Thirdly, economic regulation through social means, by analysing the flow of capital, in terms of internal movement and external relations. Lastly, a generic socialisation to embed the company's role in everyday life and the everyday lives of its workers, in terms of their lifestyles, economic habits and regional impact. (Jessop) Fordism wasn't reserved for capitalist economy either, as Fordism and the 5-year plans adopted by Stalin are closely related through Taylorism, as the latter drew praise from the Soviet leader. He is quoted by Hughes: "The

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<sup>52</sup> Carney, Dan. *Ford Innovated the Production Line 100 years ago. Now, Ford has a Better Idea*. 30 September 2021. Web site. 16 March 2022. <<https://www.designnews.com/automotive-engineering/ford-innovated-assembly-line-100-years-ago-now-ford-has-better-idea>>.

combination of the Russian revolutionary sweep with American efficiency is the essence of Leninism."<sup>53</sup>.

The racial landscape of Detroit formed a microcosm of American society, particularly during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. With Martin Luther King's first use of his 'I have a dream' rhetoric, auto workers' class conflicts became intertwined with the USA's growing racial tensions. During the Korean War era, however, the Black population in Detroit had reason to be optimistic. Median earnings for Black workers approached 81% of a comparable White one, even if this progress was mitigated by the later recession, and the Walk to Freedom provided reason to hope and believe that Detroit would socially lead the US away from the Jim Crow zeitgeist. Later, in the early 1960s, King and automotive union leader Walter Reuther realised that the most promising way of achieving both their aims was a union of the labour and civil rights movements<sup>54</sup>. This combination, and Detroit's further history in the 1960s, reinforces the link between American history and the automobile, from a social and labour perspective.

As time went on, Detroit's city centre experienced an exodus of population to the suburbs, including many important employers such as Chrysler. The city centre became notorious for its crime and poverty, a reputation containing many racist undertones. The car-centric way in which many US cities are planned gives rise to this phenomenon, but it is most ironic that it should happen in Detroit, the home of the American auto manufacturing industry.

## Fiat and the 500

Fiat has long been a point of Italian patriotic pride as a company producing the *Frecciarossa* trains, military equipment, recently sponsoring *Juventus* and, most importantly, producing the archetypal Italian small cars.

Initially, during the 1920s, Italy's relatively poor economic development limited Fiat to reliance upon the export market. In 1922, export sales were double domestic, but in

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<sup>53</sup> Hughes, Thomas P. *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. pp 251

<sup>54</sup> Fishman, Robert. "Detroit and the Acceleration of History." *Log No. 37, The Architectural Imagination United States Pavilion* (2016): 32-48. pp 34.

the next decade more emphasis started to fall on more affordable models to stake a claim domestically<sup>55</sup>. By the time fascism took political hold, Fiat toed the party line of keeping foreign competition as far away from Italy's domestic markets as was possible<sup>56</sup>. Despite Alfa Romeo handling most of the military production in anticipation of Mussolini's foreign expansion, Fiat became the principal Italian economic mastodon during the fascist era and found itself intertwined with the regime and what contemporary Italian nationalism wanted the country to be.

Even though most of the company's hierarchy was politically indifferent, with head manager Paolo Ragazzi saying 'we could have been good fascists, Germans, Americans, anything to save Fiat'<sup>57</sup>. Fiat was already playing its role as a national symbol, but only to serve its own interests and to protect itself from political backlash. In the immediate post-war aftermath, however, the backlash came the other way. Talented CEO Vittorio Valletta and owner and founder Giovanni Agnelli were ousted by the CLN in November of 1944 on suspicion of collaborating with the German enemy, along with a significant number of other Fiat personnel.

At the end of the second world war, however, things weren't quite as dire as may have seemed for Fiat. Even in 1945 when the Italian state was in shock after the war, Fiat wasted no time in re-establishing pre-war technical links with the almighty US auto industry. In 1947, for example, then-president of Fiat Vittorio Valletta established an agreement with Chrysler export manager Philip Hills allowing the Italian company to access Chrysler's technological and project-planning data, allowing them to modernise their production techniques and perhaps close the gap between themselves and Detroit. This wasn't an enormous ask, as despite the sacking of personnel by the CLN, Fiat recovered from the war very quickly, boasting 80% of pre-war production capacity at Mirafiori by July 1945.<sup>58</sup>

Valletta's active contact with Chrysler and the US government was a microcosm of Italy's foreign policy at the time. Italy, and therefore Fiat, was one of the biggest

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<sup>55</sup> Fauri, Francesca "The Role of Fiat in the Development of the Italian Car Industry in the 1950s." *The Business History Review* Vol. 70, No. 2 (1996): 167-206. pp 169

<sup>56</sup> Ibid 174

<sup>57</sup> Ibid 176

<sup>58</sup> Fauri, Francesca. "Surviving the Global Market: 'Americanisation' and the Relaunch of Italy's Car Industry after the Second World War." *Contemporary European History* Vol. 21 (2012): 41-59. pp 46

beneficiaries of the Marshall Plan, as evidenced by Valletta's excellent industrial and personal relations with his American colleagues.

When, in 1957, Fiat released the 500 Nuova, it was the birth of a cultural phenomenon of utilitarian chic. Fiat had been focusing on small economy cars for decades by this point, leaving the sporty coupés and cultured saloons to Alfa Romeo and Lancia respectively. However, despite their previous commercial successes, they had yet to produce a car that would be such a cult figure in the automotive world for decades after production was over and it had been replaced. In other words, Dante Giacosa's Fiat 500 became one of the most famous classic cars in the world, and part of the reason why could be explained by Wilde and Aristotle.

The 500's appeal as a desirable and stylish small car was almost accidental. Fiat and Dante Giacosa's design had economy as a priority, and it was from there that the 500 in turn got its stylistic identity. In the documentary 'James May's Cars of the People', presenter James May pointed out that the endearing rounded shape was in fact to save material rather than to achieve an aesthetic. The fabric canopy roof was much the same, it wasn't to make the 500 a stylish convertible, it was because fabric was lighter and less costly than steel<sup>59</sup>. Not only did Fiat dominate the market for budget cars in Italy, but they themselves created it and, on this occasion, knew exactly what kind of car to produce to make sales skyrocket. The process of Fiat supplying the car for which there was demand is a mimetic process, at least materialistically, with the art responding to the world in which it finds itself, but there was an equal and opposite reaction of how the little 500 made its presence felt so keenly as a symbol of the era and cemented the legend of Italian auto engineering never failing to be stylish.

The era of *Il Boom* in Italy coincided with the Fiat 500's arrival, and kickstarted the modern style of industrial consumerism below the Alps. Along with highways and railways being completed all over the country in record time, car ownership went from 9 to 32 units per 1,000 people during the 50s<sup>60</sup>, and most households owned one by the mid-70s. The Fiat 500 came to be the most evocative symbol of the new Italian way of life, and its popular success demonstrates how, as a work of industrial art, it wove itself into life. The computer scientist Mark Weiser said "The most profound

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<sup>59</sup> *James May's Cars of the People*. Dir. Tom Whitter. Perf. James May. 2014. Television Broadcast.

<sup>60</sup> Fauri, Francesca, *The Role of Fiat*, pp 181



technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it." The mimetic power of the Fiat 500 allowed it to do just that and become synonymous with the time to a far greater extent than it had any right to.

### Fiat Workers – Economic Dream, Political Nightmare

Despite the economic resurgence of the time modernising Italy, there was cultural and political opposition. Artistic movements such as Arte Povera and Neorealist cinema examples of the former, and many Fiat workers examples of the latter. The founder of Arte Povera, Germano Celant, opened his manifesto 'Arte Povera: Appunti per una guerriglia' [Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerilla War]

With the US-backed Marshall Plan sourcing the credit for all the new investment in Italy, Communist organisations such as the *Brigate Rosse* saw it as an imperialistic attack on Italian sovereignty, some even going as far as to compare it to the Vietnam War and the associated American imperialist interventionism. Celant's Arte Povera highlighted the friction associated with industrial consumerism coming to Italy, a poorer



**FIGURE 6 MACHINE GUN BY PINO PASCALI, 1966, IMAGE COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK.**

**THIS PARTICULAR PIECE APPEARS TO FEATURE A DRUM BRAKE CASING AS A MAGAZINE. CARS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES, PERHAPS IN TERMS OF WASTE COMPONENTS, MAKE ART IN THE DIRECT SENSE HERE, COMMENTING ON THE POLITICAL REALITY OF 1960S ITALY FROM AN ARTE POVERA PERSPECTIVE.**

country recently ravished by the Second World War

and rejected 'consumer society'.

Critically, Celant disparaged the role of the artist as the

producer, particularly in

reference to pop-art.

He perceived the

notion of Italy's artistic image as a mass-produced Fiat 500 or Illy coffee cup as a political

threat. And judging by the 500's legacy and that of the Italian driving temperament being so intertwined, he was correct to do from a Marxist perspective (Cullinan 13). It wasn't just Arte Povera's ideological adversaries drawing art from vehicles, Pino

Pascali's *Le Armi* [The Weapons] of 1965 even featured a Fiat carburettor as a component.

### Tolyatti

Fiat's influence on cars and the world would not be limited to Italy. The strong communist presence in Italy and among the Fiat workforce politically paved the way to a contract with the USSR to build and equip a gargantuan automobile factory in the city of Stavropol, on the Volga. However, perhaps owing to the scale of the project, the city was renamed Tolyatti, after Italian Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti. Basing their design on the already excellent Fiat 124, the first *Zhiguli* rolled off the production line in 1967, and the three-millionth only 10 years later. The Russian product was made differently to its Italian cousin, with thicker steel, simpler drum brakes in the rear, increased ride height, and reinforced floor. This better allowed it to tackle some of the most unforgiving environments it would encounter during its long service life in the Communist bloc. The original design would stay in production in Tolyatti until 2012, although not because it never aged, but essentially because the central order never came to update it.

The contemporary image of a Lada is rather sad and insulting. The butt of countless jokes and endless derision, it sometimes suffered when being compared to other saloon offerings from elsewhere in the world. However, how precise the steering is compared to a Toyota Corolla has little significance when measuring the Lada's impact on the world and vice versa. What makes the Lada worth space in the pages of automotive history is that it achieved its aim of being an affordable car for everyday people, and the industrial strength this suggests. When the Stakhanovites bored the tunnels for the Moscow Metro in the 1930s, not only did they stake an ideological claim in collective transport rather than individual, but they benefitted from an economy of scale in that the number of people transported per vehicle was far higher. To create enough vehicles for each one to only need carry five people at most represents a monumental leap in industrial and technological power.

### British Leyland

As the British Empire faded into the distance, British heavy industry never got a chance to get its breath back before being put under pressure by many factors, particularly

foreign competition in terms of labour prices and finished consumer products. The troubled story of British Leyland personified this struggle. As workers of Britain's struggling nationalised heavy industry sector went to work in Austin Allegros or Morris Minors, the reputation of their cars degraded as their work became more and more precarious heading into the Thatcher years, and before long the writing was on the wall for BL and much of the rest of the heavy industry sector, and for similar reasons. To compare Wilde to Aristotle in the medium of British cars of the BL era, we can look at the extent to which Britain's struggles of the era were replicated within BL, and vice versa.

One link between BL's struggles and Britain's as a whole was constant poor labour relations and industrial action. This was such a factor in the downfall of the company because the production and distribution network was plagued with single points of failure, meaning a strike in one plant would severely hamper the operations of several others. Competing marques such as Ford or General Motors addressed this problem by merging their subsidiaries, for example Vauxhall's merger with Opel. BL's failure to follow suit began to create a cycle of downfall as they struggled to cope with first the volume of sales, then the quality of products from Ford, GM, and the new Datsuns and Toyotas imported from Japan. The company's contribution to the volatility of the UK's labour landscape could only increase in a vicious cycle with the company's struggle to satisfy customers with enough quality cars and shareholders with enough profit.

Even though their fates were broadly shared, industrial action elsewhere in Britain, particularly in the mines, was far more drastic than in the auto manufacturing sector, the miners' unions were far less docile. While layoffs down the mines were met with famously bitter strikes which dominated the 1970s and 80s, BL was able to cut their workforce even with union consent, when in 1979 the shop stewards at BL failed to gain the backing from national trade unions to oppose a 30% workforce cut<sup>61</sup>. This can be explained by an intricacy of Britain's notoriously complex class system. Despite both being members of the working class, the automotive workers were comparatively affluent and derived more comfort from the status quo of contemporary British capitalism. With the miners seen by some contemporary sociologists as being more

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<sup>61</sup> Golden, Miriam. "The Politics of Job Loss." *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 36, #2 (1992): 408-430. pp 411, 413

politically backward, with close-knit communities centered around their labour, the auto workers of the Midlands were the genesis of the Thatcherite middle class, with class consciousness less of an ideological force and communities more centred around family than labour in a more conservative political turn. However, this didn't stop the miners striking significant political blows in the late 1960s and early 1970s which contributed to the fall of the Tory government<sup>62</sup>.

However, in terms of historical legacy, the political outcome of the strikes is less relevant. Despite being more fractured and bureaucratically obfuscated than others in nature, the strikes at BL, and the downfall of that company in general, formed a key component of the British Zeitgeist and political landscape of the 1970s and 80s. Through their interactions with labour, we can see the British class system, therefore according to this paper's definitions, we can see life through art.

Over at one of BL's business rivals, cars once again exerted their influence on life through the medium of labour relations. At Ford's massive plant at Dagenham, the overwhelmingly female sewing machine operators expressed dissatisfaction at their lower pay, lower relative to both male colleagues and other workers doing equally or lower skilled work. What started as a matter localised entirely within the Dagenham plant escalated into strikes taking place over the course of decades, and a nationwide feminist legal discourse, one which would go down in history as a turning point in women's rights in the UK.

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<sup>62</sup> Rutledge, Ian. "Changes in the Mode of Production and the Growth of "Mass Militancy" in the British Mining Industry, 1954-1974." *Science & Society Vol. 41, No. 4* (1977): 410-419. pp 410, 411

## Conclusion

When all is said and done, it becomes clear that Wilde and Aristotle sometimes form a spiral, a continuous exchange throughout history that is both pointless and impossible to take apart. Transport defined as an art form and the time in which it takes place form a loop of positive feedback, like putting a microphone in front of a speaker, and if you take one away from the other, you will be left with silence.

If we look at a Fiat 500 in a 1960's Italian film, or the *Titanic's* opulent arrogance, we take those two modes of transport as images of their time, and in this sense Aristotle is correct. However, the time itself, the *Zeitgeist*, is made of art, the *Titanic* was the 1920's. When Wilde would say that we only see the beauty in nature because of what we've seen in art, what we identify as the 1920's, we only do so because we have the *Titanic* as a point of reference.

Concerning railways, the world had defined them as symbol of modernisation. There was no way of defining a modern state without a railway, which led to an abstract idea of railway as modernisation, that is, the presence or absence of a railway, of art, defined the nation around it and decided whether it was modern or not. We saw this idea in the Moscow metro, how the art of rail as propaganda exemplified a modern socialist state, how it set the example of modernity in the civilisation the USSR purported to be constructing. Any propaganda is anti-mimetic in the sense that it sets an artistic example for life to follow and imitate. When the USSR made the choice of politicising the achievement that was the metro, life imitated the art of personal transport.

On the flipside, the logistical practicalities of a well-developed rail system directly translated to modernisation, a modern state needed to exist around the railways to make them in any way meaningful. The Trans-Siberian, for instance, initially did relatively little to make Siberia into a modern region, it instead remained a wilderness intersected with a third-rate railway, until what a railway is supposed to represent appeared in the subsequent decades. The façade, however, slowly became a reality, as life imitated art.

Transport representing technological or economic advancement is the act of moving from one *Zeitgeist* to the next, which is in itself the formation of a new time and era,

for something else to imitate or be imitated. With any late-comer advantage, a rapid development of rail industry bringing modernisation at one point or other is transport leading the way in creating the new reality. In this sense, personal transport, as well as logistics, is a huge part of what moves civilisation forward and creates new realities.

When it comes to the difference between rail and automobiles, the car is an image of individual freedom and independence. Whether that's the practical outcome or not, this image is all that is needed to herald a new social reality. When Britain became a commercial battleground for Ford and British Leyland, the Thatcher political era appeared at the same time with a political message of capitalistic individualism, coinciding with privatisation of the railways.

Whether it's Wilde or Aristotle who come out more favourably from this comparison, the more profound and important conclusion is the fact that transport and the society, economy and culture surrounding it is such a good window into a given Zeitgeist. There is an archaeological mimesis taking place here; should transport be all we can see of a given historical time and place, we can see close to the full picture.

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## Riassunto in Italiano

Il testo sopra è un paragone tra due idee e due uomini. Il primo, Oscar Wilde, direbbe che la vita imita l'arte, una teoria che si chiama Anti-Mimesi. Il secondo, Aristotele, direbbe il contrario, che l'arte sia un'imitazione della vita, Mimesi. Però, ho definito l'arte come mezzi di trasporto industriali di massa, il trasporto marittimo, le ferrovie e le automobili.

Nella fine di tutto, diventa chiaro che Wilde e Aristotele a volte formano una spirale, uno scambio continuo attraverso il tempo che è allo stesso tempo inutile e impossibile da smembrare. Il trasporto, quando è definito come una forma d'arte, e il tempo in cui si svolge formano un ciclo di feedback positivi, come mettere un microfono davanti a un altoparlante, e se si ne toglie uno all'altro, rimarrà nel silenzio.

Se guardiamo una Fiat 500 in un film italiano degli anni '60, o l'opulenta arroganza del Titanic, prendiamo quei due mezzi di trasporto come immagini del loro tempo, e in questo senso Aristotele ha ragione. Tuttavia, il tempo stesso, detto lo Zeitgeist, è fatto di arte, il Titanic stesso fece parte degli anni 1920, una parte grande. Quando Wilde direbbe che vediamo la bellezza della natura solo a causa di ciò che abbiamo visto nell'arte, ciò che identifichiamo come gli anni '20, lo identifichiamo solo perché abbiamo il Titanic, l'arte, come punto di riferimento.

Per quanto riguarda le ferrovie, il mondo le aveva definite simbolo della modernizzazione. Non c'era modo di definire uno stato moderno senza una ferrovia, che ha portato a un'idea astratta di ferrovia come modernizzazione, cioè la presenza o l'assenza di una ferrovia, dell'arte, ha definito la nazione intorno e ha deciso se fosse moderna o no. Abbiamo visto questa idea nella metropolitana di Mosca, come l'arte della ferrovia come propaganda esemplificava uno stato socialista moderno, come ha dato l'esempio della modernità nella civiltà che l'URSS pretendeva di costruire. Qualsiasi propaganda è antimimetica nel senso che costituisce un esempio artistico da seguire e imitare nella vita. Quando l'URSS ha deciso di politicizzare il traguardo che era la metropolitana, la vita ha imitato l'arte del trasporto personale.

D'altra parte, le praticità logistiche di un sistema ferroviario ben sviluppato costituiscono la modernizzazione, uno stato moderno deve esistere attorno alle ferrovie per renderle in qualche modo significative. La Transiberiana, ad esempio,

inizialmente fece relativamente poco per trasformare la Siberia in una regione moderna, rimase invece un deserto intersecato con una ferrovia di terzo grado, fino a quando ciò che una ferrovia dovrebbe rappresentare apparve nei decenni successivi. La facciata, però, divenne lentamente una realtà, poiché la vita imitava l'arte.

Il trasporto che rappresenta il progresso tecnologico o economico è l'atto di passare da uno Zeitgeist all'altro, che è di per sé la formazione di un nuovo tempo ed era, per qualcos'altro da imitare o da imitare. Con qualsiasi vantaggio per i ritardatari, un rapido sviluppo dell'industria ferroviaria che porta la modernizzazione in un punto o nell'altro è il trasporto all'avanguardia nella creazione della nuova realtà. In questo senso, il trasporto personale, così come la logistica, è una parte enorme di ciò che fa avanzare la civiltà e crea nuove realtà.

Quando si tratta della differenza tra ferrovia e automobili, l'auto è un'immagine di libertà e indipendenza individuale. Che sia il risultato pratico o meno, questa immagine è tutto ciò che serve per annunciare una nuova realtà sociale. Quando la Gran Bretagna divenne un campo di battaglia commerciale per Ford e British Leyland, l'era politica della Thatcher apparve contemporaneamente con un messaggio politico di individualismo capitalista, in coincidenza con la privatizzazione delle ferrovie.

Che si tratti di Wilde o di Aristotele a uscire più favorevolmente da questo paragone, la conclusione più importante e profonda è il fatto che i trasporti e la società, l'economia e la cultura che in cui ha luogo sono una buona finestra su un Zeitgeist. C'è una mimesi archeologica che si svolge qui; se il trasporto è tutto ciò che possiamo vedere di qualsiasi tempo e luogo storico, possiamo quasi vedere il quadro completo.