Lipset, David and Richard Handler (eds.). 2014. *Vehicles. Cars, Canoes and Other Metaphors of Moral Imagination*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books. 214 pp. Hb.: $95.00/£60.00. ISBN: 9781782383758.

Vehicles have become so commonplace in our day-to-day lives that anthropology has, oddly enough, all but overlooked them. Some researchers (e.g. Miller 2001) have taken on this subject but focused mainly on the material image and meaning of vehicles. The symbolic role of vehicles, however, remains largely ignored. *Vehicles* attempts to fill that void. It focuses on the metaphorical meaning of ships, airplanes, cars, and other means of transport, as well as on their signifying values in different societies and communities around the world.

The chapters are judiciously divided into three parts. The first part deals with vehicles that have assumed people's societal roles; the second presents the role of vehicles in constructing gender identities; the third discusses the ambiguity or the multi-layered character of vehicles and their symbolism. The different chapters are substantively firmly fixed together in the introduction, written by David Lipset. The afterword by James W. Fernandez gives additional substance to this "an-*trope*-ological work" on vehicles by spotlighting tropes as figures of speech.

In the first of eight papers, David Lipset introduces cosmological and postcolonial canoe metaphors used by the Murik people of the Sepik Estuary in Papua New Guinea. His in-depth discussion explains how the *habitus* of the Murik is formed and embodied with vessels, which have numerous symbolic connotations, since they represent family and inheritance structures while also mirroring different parts of the body, from the stomach and the navel to the head and the nose. Lipset also illustrates how the role of the vessel changed in the Murik community during the postcolonial period and how it gained a 'double habitus' (p. 41). Canoes became material, bureaucratised, and technological objects. Among the people, however, they retained a symbolic value that interconnects and maintains the community.

In the next chapter, Richard Handler turns from vessels to vehicles, specifically to personal cars. In analysing driving, Handler leans on Erving Goffman's interpretations of human behaviour in public and private spaces, and analyses of vehicles as protective "shells" in which people travel (1959, 1963). The thickness of the shell affects the driver's sense of security and, consequently, the behaviors and habits that can be seen on the road, explains Handler, and elicits an image of drivers in the morning crowd: drivers behaving as if nobody can see them: they sing to music coming from their car radios, yawn widely, and pick their noses. Handler also describes the influence that cars, which conquered the roads in the 20th century, have had on the formation of formal and informal rules in traffic and of the city lifestyle. When the first cars came to cities at the start of the previous century, Handler explains, they caused a great deal of confusion among pedestrians, who had to learn where, when, and how they could cross roads that were now less safe. With the arrival of the car, the symbolism of the road that offers equal opportunity and route choice to everyone gave way to a hierarchical notion of traffic, where rank depended on, among other things, the thickness of the protective shell.

Kent Wayland sums up his paper in the title *It's not an airplane, it's my baby*. He explains why US pilots refer to their airplanes as female, give them affectionate nicknames such as "China Doll" and "Yellow Rose", and paint them with images of women in various states of undress. Such metaphors, says Wayland, are tied to how planes are flown, since only a "real man" can control a plane, according to stereotypes. The chapter aptly illustrates the male-female dichotomy and the relationship between the pilot and his plane, not only with words but also with photographs of airplanes and a picture of an imaginary control panel. Above, the panel has a system for controlling a man, consisting of a single on-off switch, whereas the lower half of the panel is for controlling a woman and it has dozens of switches, buttons, and lights. Presumably, only the most capable "pilots" can control a woman.

Joshua Hotaka Roth, who focuses on the situation in Japan, likewise addresses gender relations in the context of vehicles. To illustrate the relationship between men and women, he gives the example of "typically male" sports cars, which he juxtaposes with small, "female" K-cars. He explains that some properties characteristic of either gender in Japanese society are embodied in these two types of vehicles. Male sports cars express aggression, danger, strength, and speed. Female cars are more practical and manoeuvrable in crowds while also symbolising security, home, and understanding. As the author explains, relations between the two genders and the vehicles that represent them are not static. During the economic downturn at the turn of the century, the number of small and economical vehicles in Japan rapidly increased, from 17 percent in 1980 to 35 percent in 2010. During the same period, they got more powerful engines and became faster, "manlier", as men began to drive them. Vehicles, the author claims, came to reflect a gradual transition to greater gender equality in Japanese society.

Readers from the former Yugoslavia will be especially intrigued by the chapter on the famous *Fića*, a car that can still evoke nostalgia for "the good old days". Marko Živković wonders why and how a vehicle can draw forth such deep feelings. His explanation expertly embeds this vehicle in the system of familiarity or "ourness". Fića was manufactured in a Yugoslav factory owned by Zastava, which was headquartered in Kragujevac. That made Fića as domestic as it got, even more so than VW Golf, which was built from imported parts in Sarajevo, and Citroën and Renault, which were assembled in Slovenia. Fića was different, the "most ours" of all, explains Živković, because even its parts were manufactured in Yugoslavia. People had a special attitude towards Fića that was a mix of pride and resentment (p. 115). Although it was ours, it was not particularly reliable.

Cars also have special, symbolic value in China, where they symbolise not only modernity and progress but also social power and prestige. Beth E. Notar presents this topic on a long time span: from the Maoist period to the reforms that followed the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, and finally to the contemporary perception of vehicles. Particularly interesting is the relationship between past discourses and the current discourse, the latter of which has to do with public cars, used primarily by officials, and with private cars. Publicly owned cars used to have a positive connotation; in time, however, they began to denote corruption and the excesses committed by members of the ruling elite.

A central thought that vehicles are not merely means of transport keeps emerging

throughout the volume. They have a transcendent socio-cultural and aesthetic value as well. Ben Chappell focuses on the latter. He introduces *lowrider* cars, which are popular among Mexican-Americans. Paint jobs and remodelling, reminiscent of Živković's description of Fića jury-rigging, turn ordinary vehicles into extraordinary mobile assortments of collective memory and community vocabulary, embedded in a complex network of cultural phenomena.

Mark Auslander deals with aesthetics linked to vehicles. He presents a re-enactment of a lynching of black locals, a crime that took place in the US state of Georgia in the mid-40s of the 20th century. Locals have been re-enacting it annually since 2005 in a "passion play" of sorts. In every re-enactment, they try to use a quasi-authentic car: a 1977 Lincoln, for example. This vehicle has thus become such an essential component of the reconstruction of the event that the locals staunchly refuse to accept its replacement. They believe that only the Lincoln, made decades after the actual crime took place, is the real, true car. Auslander explains that they identify with this vehicle because it is just old enough but not antiquated. This way, they connect with the event that could happen even today and repeatedly at that.

This volume, *Vehicles*, is exceptionally important not only for anthropology but for other scientific fields as well. It addresses a core human activity, driving, which appears likely to become a relic of, primarily, the 20th century. The assemblage of driver and machine that Tim Dant (2004) encapsulates in the term *driver-car*, which he ties in with both the cyborgs of Donna Haraway (1991) and the *actor-network theory* (Law and Hassard 1999; Latour 2005), will have entirely different symbolic connotations in the next century. Vehicles have already begun to divest drivers of an increasing level of autonomy on the road, as they turn on direction indicators, maintain safe distances, and even park for the drivers. It is fair to assume that drivers will stop being active traffic participants within a decade or two and turn primarily into passengers. In a *post-car society* (Dennis and Urry 2009), autonomous vehicles will assume control and authority, which will improve road safety and transport efficiency but reduce the emotional and symbolic bond between vehicles and their owners, who will probably no longer pet their 'babies' as affectionately as before.

DAN PODJED
Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Slovenia)