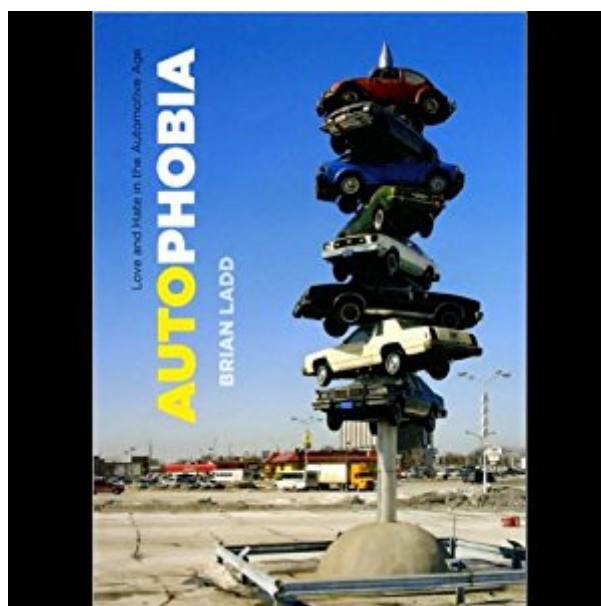


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Autophobia: Love And Hate In The Automotive Age



Synopsis

Cars are the scourge of civilization, responsible for everything from suburban sprawl and urban decay to environmental devastation and rampant climate change, not to mention our slavish dependence on foreign oil from dubious sources abroad. Add the astonishing price in human lives that we pay for our automobility, some 30 million people were killed in car accidents during the 20th century plus the countless number of hours we waste in gridlock traffic commuting to work, running errands, picking up our kids, and searching for parking, and one can't help but ask: Haven't we had enough already? After a century behind the wheel, could we be reaching the end of the automotive age? From the Model T to the SUV, *Autophobia* reveals that our vexed relationship with the automobile is nothing new. In fact, debates over whether cars are forces of good or evil in our world have raged for over a century now, ever since the automobile was invented. According to Brian Ladd, this love and hate relationship we share with our cars is the defining quality of the automotive age. And everyone has an opinion about them, from the industry shills, oil barons, and radical libertarians who offer cars blithe paeans and deny their ill effects, to the technophobes, treehuggers, and killjoys who curse cars, ignoring the very real freedoms and benefits they provide us. Focusing in particular on our world's cities, and spanning settings as varied as belle époque Paris, Nazi Germany, postwar London, Los Angeles, New York, and the smoggy Shanghai of today, Ladd explores this love and hate relationship throughout, acknowledging adherents and detractors of the automobile alike. Eisenhower, Hitler, Jan and Dean, J. G. Ballard, Ralph Nader, OPEC, and, of course, cars, all come into play in this wide-ranging but remarkably wry and pithy book. A dazzling display of erudition, *Autophobia* is cultural commentary at its most compelling, history at its most searching and a surprising page-turner.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Autophobia, according to MedicalNet.com, is an abnormal and persistent fear of loneliness, of being alone, and of solitude. This definition makes it quite an apropos turn of phrase as a title for a book about the history of opposition to the automobile – especially since the automobile is inherently a single person activity and the modern daily commute is often done in the solitude of the driver’s seat. In *Autophobia: Love and Hate in the Automotive Age*, Brian Ladd aimed to tell the history of automobility from the perspective of those who fought against the automobile and its subsequent side effects. He introduced the text with a section that defines both the pro-automobile attitude as well as that of the “car-hater,” reminding readers that the car not only “combines the promise of thrills with the sovereign assurance of mobility” but also that the “contrarians have never been silenced.” (1) He explained how the car became both savior and destroyer as it helped usher the United States and the rest of the world into modernity. Ladd stated that rational discussions about its benefits are no longer possible due to the way people inherently organize their lives around cars and transportation. Although the reader will easily find that Ladd has an agenda, the text tended toward a more even-handed and scholarly approach to the history of the anti-automobile factions. He placed both the transportation planners’ perspectives and the car haters’ viewpoints in context, often explaining each side’s logic. However, the underlying attitude present in the text displayed Ladd’s preference for the car haters.

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