

Material Culture

MUNI, FSS SANb 2032 Session 9, (Infrastructure / Consumption)

In honour of Bob Dylan's 70th birthday (in 2011), the 'Infrastructurist' (blog) compiled its own list of Dylan's top ten songs about infrastructure.

He's now 81 and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2016.

Highway 61 is on that list, one of his most performed songs in concert.

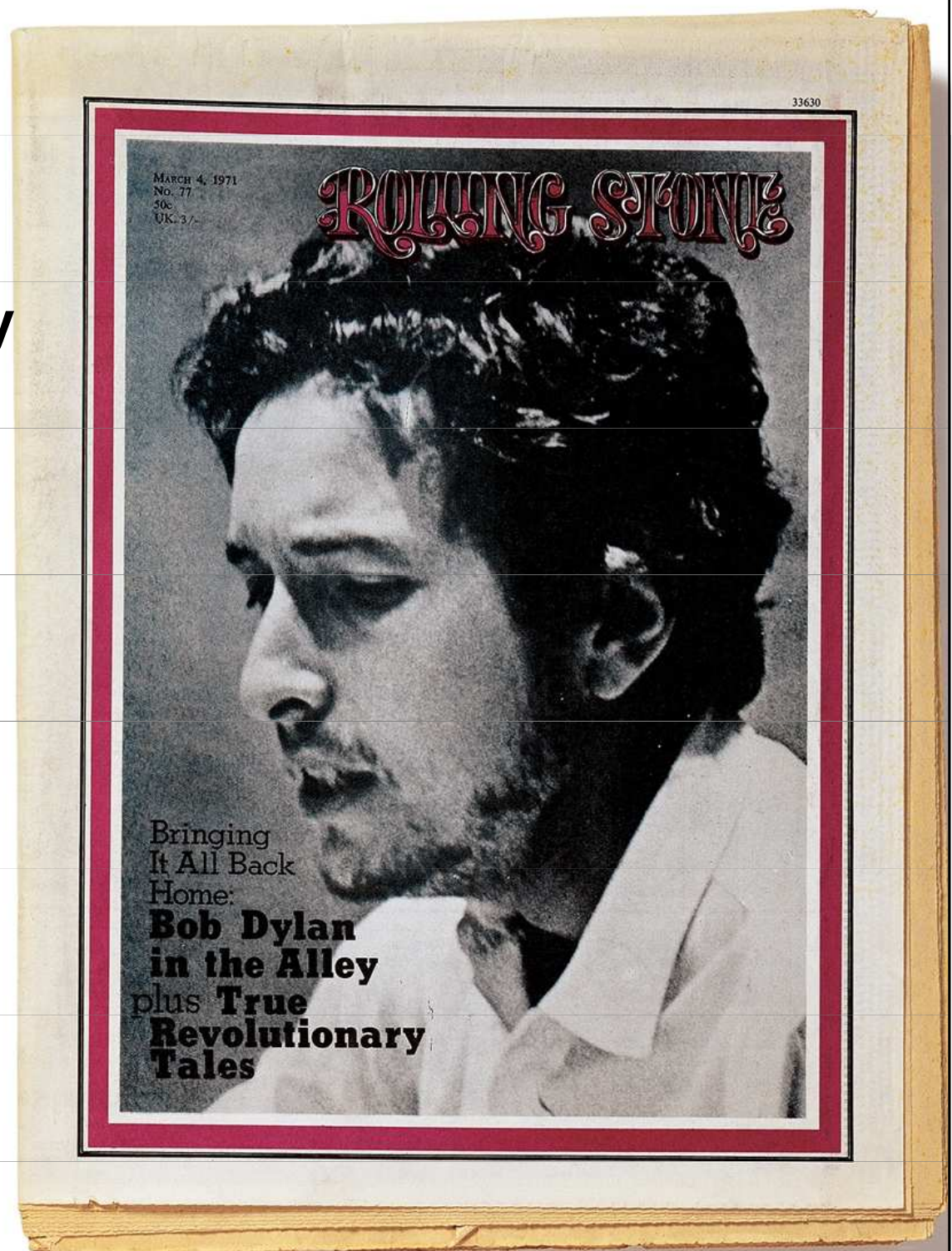
<https://511contracosta.org/bob-dylans-top-10-infrastructure-songs/>

Dylan in the Alley: The Alan J. Weberman Story

**Claudia Dreyfus 1971,
*Rolling Stone Magazine***

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/bob-dylan-in-the-alley-the-alan-j-weberman-story-189254/>

Bob Dylan [1941 --]
(81 y.o.)



Garbology

William Rathje



Now rubbish -- or rather, its removal, storage, destruction, recycling, etc. – is a huge and often ignored or tabooed infrastructural catalyst.

Berta, Peter (2019). *Materializing Difference: Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma*. Toronto: Univ. Press.

(Ana) Chap 11

Anthropologist Fred Meyers states: "Annette Weiner would have loved to see the politics of inalienable possessions carried so directly into a class of objects that are undeniably made what they are by human activity" (Myers in Berta 2019: xiii).

Meyers could also have said that these silver tankers and like Kula armshells and necklaces.

In giving us a brief historical overview on Gabor Roma trading across Europe, the author explains:

"What makes dealing with Gabor traders attractive is primarily their prices (which are usually lower than shop prices), the possibility of intense price bargaining, and, in the case of less mobile customers living in small settlements, the "home delivery" of commodities that are otherwise difficult to obtain" (Berta 2019:6).

He then goes on to show how several of his informants were rather 'middle-class' and several could even afford to hire servants, drivers, cooks etc, of both Roma and non-Roma sectors of Romania society. In his words: "The above livelihood strategies make it possible for many Gabor Roma families to achieve a living standard similar to or higher than the average one of their non-Roma neighbours (ibid: 7).

Multi-sited research across Romania and Hungary (as well as Western Europe, mainly London, Paris), including auction dealers and another group of Roma. And over a long term, from 1998 until now.

Intellectually inspired by groupness work in sociology (Brubaker). And communities of practice.

Prestige consumption (often connected to secrecy and identity values).

Book goes against stereotypes of Roma as marginalised and poor.

Later in the book (Chap 11), draws on Appadurai's *Social Life of Things* (1986), especially looking at significance of 'things in motion' and object fetishism.

"Methodological fetishism is a research perspective that includes the recognition of and conscious concentration on the significance of things. According to Pels (1998, 94), “methodological fetishism’ is a reversal of the commonly accepted hierarchy of facts and values in social and cultural theory, which says that things don’t talk back” (Berta 262).

This is thus a form of ‘animism’ or ‘agency’ where things can speak back. And this, rather than being purely negative, can be rather illuminating.

What are some other examples of infrastructures?



Source: Jiang Hongjing
Xinhua News Agency

Sichuan, China, Daxi Village roads

Lammer & Thiemann give us their typology.

Information (media), libraries, knowledge institutions.
governance inst. security structures, (internet as human right in Estonia). Containment (storage such as grain sylos),
'embodiment of standards' (i,e, pasteurisation of milk).

People esp. their labour but also their organisational foci,
interest groups.

Etc. etc

L&T start with 'road quality' for distribution of consumer goods (examples they refer to are: telegraph, rail, hydro electric power, energy grids, and so on)

They speak of ANT

" As material networks they combine technological, organisational and social components and emerge out of practices of infrastructuring that enlist multiple human and non-human actors" (nd: p2).

But they argue, awareness of infrastructures fades away, esp. when things are functioning well. So VALUE (chains versus webs, or other analogies) becomes a viable substitute. It brings old debates of production, consumption and exchange, into the equation, helping to maintain the relevance of the complexities of interactions.

Value esp. connected to shared sensorial experience of FOOD.

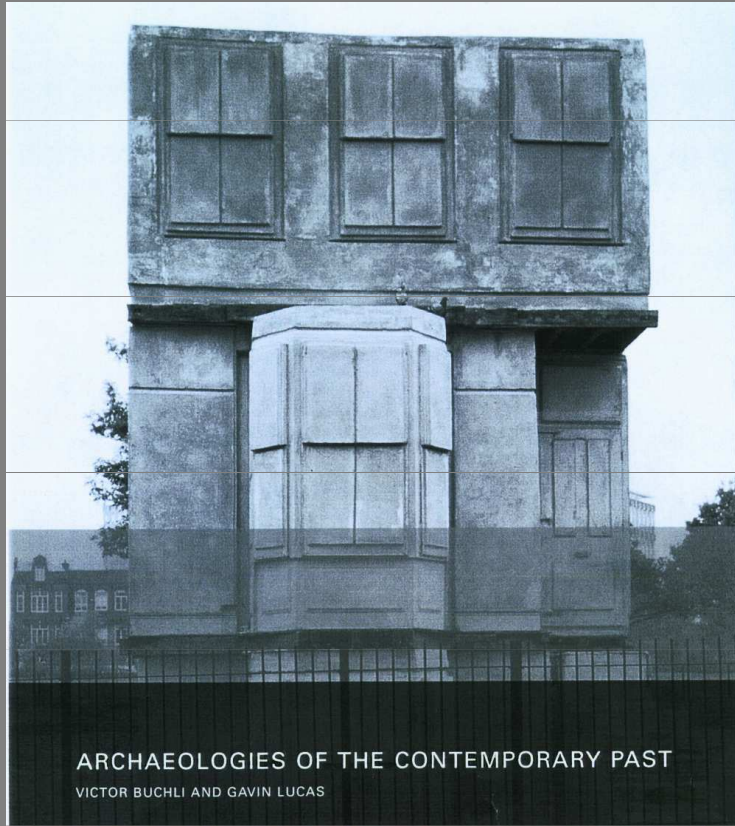
They draw on David Graeber to create the niche for their collection. For Graeber (2001: xii), value is:

‘the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality—even if in many cases the totality in question exists primarily in the actor’s imagination.’

They ask what is the diff between individual and social imagination?

New developments, which this Special Issue claim to be, tries to outline some of the new trends (infrastructure being one). One example is the 'econ market'. So finance / money as a place where value obviously resides.

In a rather structural way, infrastucture can produce inclusion or exclusion.



Buchli, Victor & Gavin Lucas
(2001). *Archaeologies of the
Contemporary Past*. London:
Routledge.



Vienna Judenplatz
Holocaust Memorial,
Rachael Whiteread, DBE
[1963 -]

Recap on Hitchhiking... as road culture phenomenon , linked to infrastructures, as well as many anthropological themes such as: gift reciprocity, trust, fear, danger.

Certainly features of human-technology interactions are present, as well as human-environment concerns. And of course commensality and sharing of the 'burden' of travel.

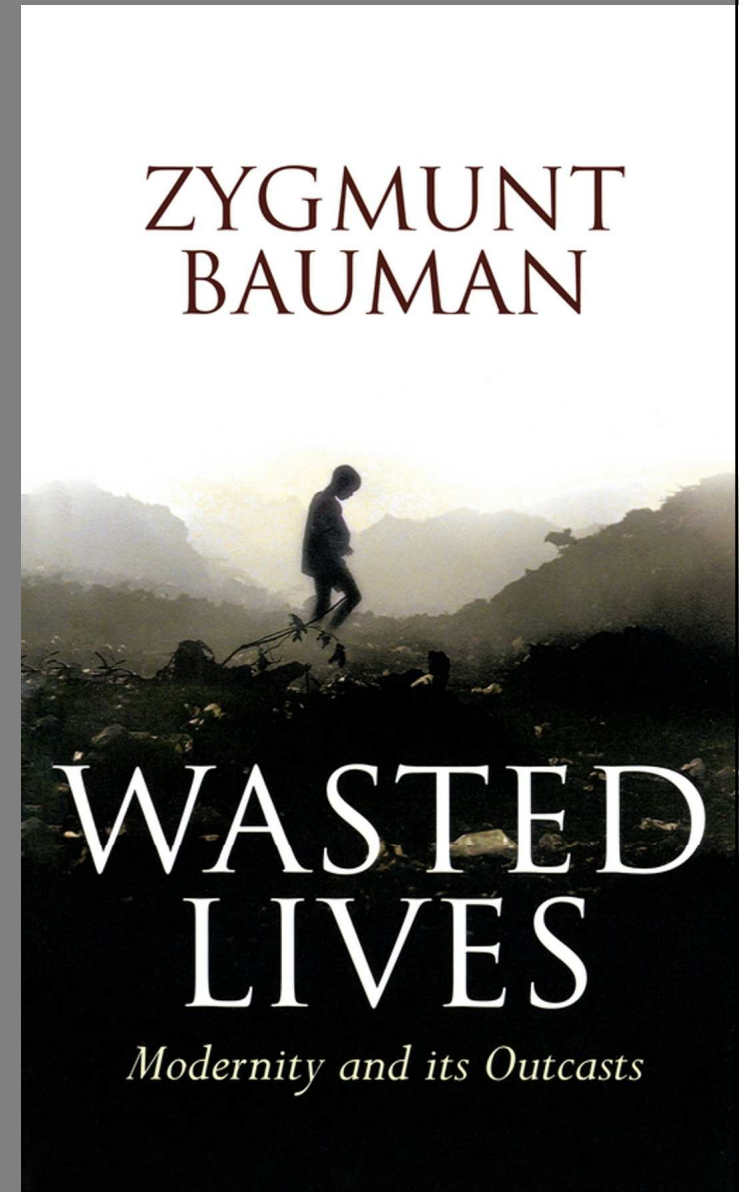
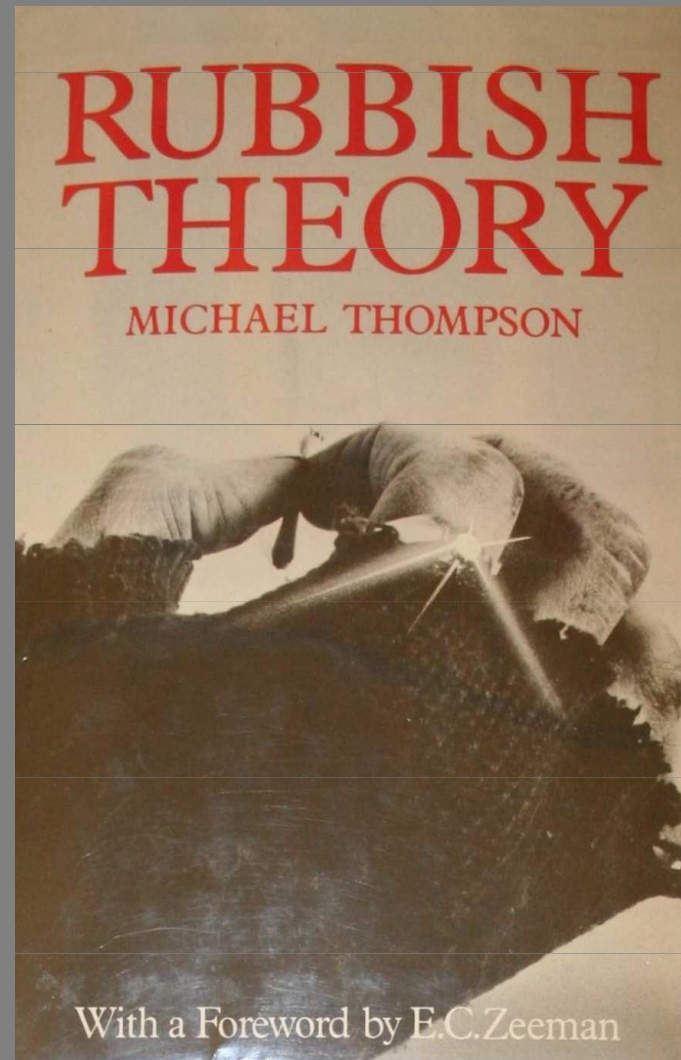
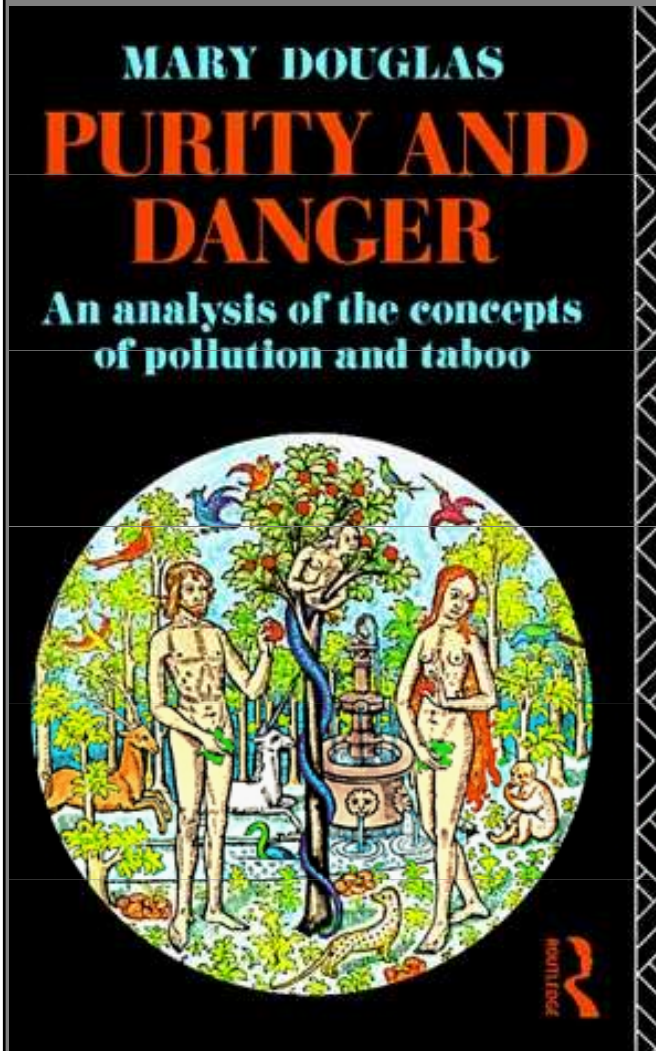
Total Social Fact (Mauss) but also, total social fiction since it is mediated through the news and the realms of the arts & literature.

Auto-stop is present in both high-brow culture as well as vernacular street-art.

Connected to the neo-liberalisation of global travel (increasingly cheap travel, with social structures that discourage the 'itinerancy' of student or vagabond

Material Culture

MUNI, FSS SANb 2032 Session 10,
(Repair and Up-cycling / Overheating and Waste)



Thomas Alan Waits [1949 -]

Broken Bicycles 1982

© Fifth Floor Music, Inc.

Broken bicycles

Old busted chains

Rusted handle bars

Out in the rain

Somebody must

Have an orphanage for

These things that nobody

Wants any more

September's reminding July

It's time to be saying ... good-bye

Summer is gone

But our love will remain

Like old broken bicycles

Left out in the rain

Broken Bicycles

Don't tell my folks

There's all those playing cards

Pinned to the spokes

Laid down like skeletons

Out on the lawn

One wheel won't turn

While the other has gone

The seasons can turn

on a dime

Somehow I forget every time

These things you've given me

They always will stay

They're broken... but I'll never

throw them away



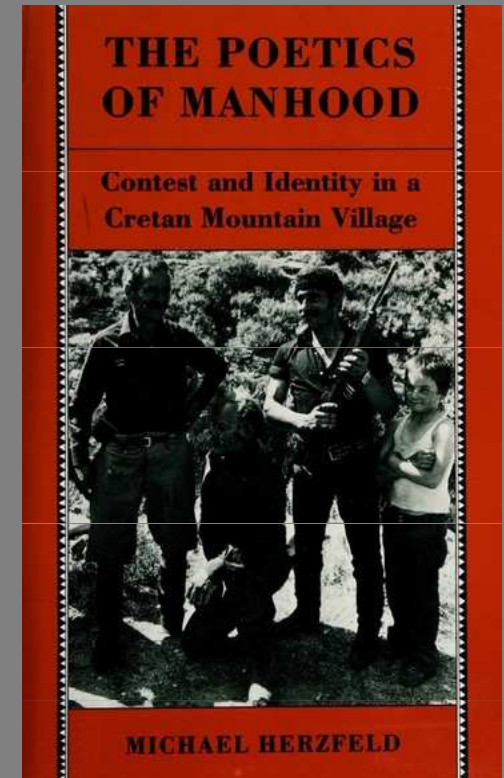
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2P4xo9kmPM>

In addressing 'Theft', this film could relate anthropologically to Michael Herzfeld's *The Poetics of Manhood* (1985).
Princeton: Univ. Press.

Wrangham, R.W.; J.H. Jones; G.Laden; D.Pilbeam and N.L.Conklin-Britt. 1999. The Raw and the Stolen: Cooking and the Ecology of Human Origins. *Current Anthropology*, 40(5): 567-94.

It also captures many elements that we haven't been able to cover explicitly in the course.

Such as:
??



Ownership;

Insurance;

'Repatriation';

Etc...



A CYCLIST
WAS KILLED
HERE.
6-23-18