

Jakle, John, and Keith Sculle. *Lots of Parking; Land Use in Car Culture*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004

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In their latest volume on the geography of car culture (a subject that previously took them into the history of gas stations, motels, and fast food), John Jakle and Keith Sculle trace the history of parking from curbside accommodation to permanent fixture on the urban landscape. In the process, they add important dimensions to the study of both car culture and urban space. Indeed, in their hands, parking becomes a central topic in the history of the city, affecting everything from small, mundane uses of particular lots, through ideas and uses of public streets, to grand visions for metropolitan futures.

From the perspective of the history of automobility, scholars have largely neglected parking. This fact is quite surprising, given its importance as a foundation of car culture, as a roadside business, and as one of the car's unique contributions to North American society. But as Jakle and Sculle point out, scholars have been more drawn to the car in motion than at rest. To correct this imbalance, they range widely into parking questions at the curbside, in retailing, in institutional building, in municipal planning, and other subjects, discussing everything from technical questions of stall size to more visionary ones of design and cityscape. Further, they trace the way parking came to sustain a range of activities and even became a modern necessity. Simply put, Jakle and Sculle remind us that cars could hardly move without a place to stop at the end of the journey.

From the perspective of urban history, parking is no less important. In many ways, *Lots of Parking* is a story of how a variety of social groups—entrepreneurs, planners, civic boosters, developers, and (in a much less direct way) drivers themselves—worked to transform urban space in the name of the automobile. The lots were usually meant to be temporary, transitional uses, but often became permanent additions to (or, perhaps, subtractions from) the cityscape. Jakle and Sculle portray this process as both awesome and incremental. In their text, they describe how parking evolved slowly and undramatically, moving forward in tiny increments that, at the time, must have seemed natural. At the same time, using maps of downtown Detroit (sure to shock even the most jaded critic of car culture), they illustrate how, in the aggregate, this incremental process dramatically fragmented city space. "Erosion by parking lot proceeded in a kind of nibbling fashion," they argue. "No one step in the process was, in itself, critical, but each step tended to accelerate the process overall, the cumulative effect being enormous" (171). According to Jakle and Sculle, this incremental process had a much more important affect on city cores than the more famous blockbusting of 1950s and 1960s mega-projects. Neither Indianapolis nor San Diego, they point out, received federal urban renewal funds, yet the fragmentation of their downtown cores went on unabated, following the same path as in other North American cities.

Jakle and Sculle present the evolution of parking as a social

process, but until the last chapter, this is not a book with many people in it, unless you count entrepreneurs, planners, architects, and others going about their institutional routines. At the end, however, they reflect on the more human elements of the parking question, moving from building and landscape to use. They even draw on a sort of Jane Jacobs framework to stress how parking lots became places of social interaction—amongst raucous youth at drive-in restaurants, for instance, and through more mundane daily interactions like random meetings, short conversations, and so on. "People actually use parking space as creatively as any other place-type," they argue, "humanizing it in many ways and affirming their agency" (238). There is something beautifully ironic about finding Jane Jacobs in parking lots (she would no doubt shudder), but after so much material on urban fragmentation, the point seems a bit added on at the end, set somewhat apart from the main thrust of their story. Difficult questions, moreover, are cloaked in the phrase "as creatively as any other place-type." It's an intriguing thought, but is a random meeting in a parking lot the same as a random meeting on a sidewalk? Is it enough to say that people try to humanize a parking lot when the space itself is (often by design) cut off from the web of institutions and interactions that sustain other kinds of urban places? To answer these questions, Jakle and Sculle would have had to draw the points about use through the whole narrative rather than tacking them on at the end, casting their eyes to the web of activities that transforms a chance encounter into a more fundamental way of experiencing a place. In the end, however, this is a minor complaint, since *Lots of Parking* is a comprehensive and highly readable study of a fundamental and understudied aspect of urban history, sure to be a hit with experts and non-specialists alike.

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Matt, Susan J. *Keeping Up with the Joneses: Envy in American Consumer Society, 1890–1930*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

For consumers in the twenty-first century, what could be more natural than the desire for a faster computer, a new car, a fashionable wardrobe, or the perfect house on a good street? How much of the desire for new things is motivated by genuine need or the perceived necessity of staying abreast of the latest consumer trends? And how is it that, even if consumers know better, they still fail to challenge the accepted capitalist wisdom that conspicuous consumption is an indication of social status and personal success? According to Susan J. Matt's study, "the envy and desire for material equality that besets modern Americans and causes them to seek more things has roots stretching back to the nineteenth century" (185). It is these roots of modern consumer behaviour, and their connection to the emotion of envy, that Matt seeks to identify and explain.

Given the current scholarly interest in the history of consumption and the world of goods, several social and cultural