

# The Earth Moves Beneath Me

Gabriel Dumont

1990

Hello. My name is Car. I am the new world citizen. My arrival in your neighbourhood brings with it a new kind of peace and prosperity.

You now find me, with minor variations in appearance, everywhere in the world. I am possible only because modern technology has been liberated from its historical restraints. The contemporary political and economic climate has fostered an exchange of technical information and an availability of natural resources that all previous national chauvinisms, physical barriers, and antiquated cultural taboos made impractical.

No longer will there be automobiles with national identities; no longer will you see “American” cars, “British” cars, “German” cars, or even “Japanese” cars.\* Everyone appreciates our technical splendour, everyone wants our mobility, everyone needs our manufacture: many governments bruise their knees begging that their concessions to our production be accepted.

In fact we are rapidly replacing humans as the dominant species on the planet. Consider all the elements of our life: the mining of iron, coal, bauxite, and exotic metals for our manufacture; the transportation of parts, completed vehicles, and fuels across oceans and continents; the construction of cities around our manufacturing plants where previously there had been merely farmland or jungle; the clearing away of decrepit old neighbourhoods and the conquering of wilderness to make roads on which we move and demolish distances; the numbers of people making us and using us, including people living less than a generation ago in the squalid conditions of primitives who had barely even heard our name; and, of course, the massive energy industry that plants oil wells in the most remote parts of the world and refines ancient, decayed organic matter into the refined essence that feeds us. You can see that we are involved in an incalculable number of decisions in the life of the world.

You humans invest us with life through your own energies: many of you contributing nearly half of your hours awake to our manufacture (and who knows how much of your dreams), many others spending on us huge proportions of your earnings from producing other commodities. Who knows, there might arrive a time when people give up their homes to live in their cars.

We capture the imagination of your youth and the dedication of your most highly trained engineers and economists. You delight in images of alluring women juxtaposed to our bright colourful surfaces as if their beautiful soft flesh could enhance the impact our sleek sturdy lines have on the viewer, when in fact men know quite well how our shining steel protects their fragile egos. And it really wouldn't matter if such gender roles were reversed.

What more could one ask of life? Ours is so expansive that soon we will no longer need roads. It is, perhaps the world that moves beneath our wheels and we who stand still, the centre of creation.

By being such a common link among all you heretofore disparate peoples, we are developing, or, in a sense, imposing, a new harmony on the world. Those corporate and political leaders whose decision-making is most important to our lives must be able to move freely from country to country and allow the movement of goods nearly the same freedom. The building of automobile plants and related resource extraction industries in emerging countries brings with it the accoutrements of civilization. Soon those people, having the advantage of the lifestyle our

existence bestows on humanity, will be thinking and acting like you. After all, they will be faced with the same choice as you: if you want us, you'll have to work for us.

Think of the consequences as affluence, something entirely different from greed; think of the means as responsibility, which is not at all the same as docility. And, most importantly, think of us as the foundation of your society—not its obsession.

Surely such comforting thoughts help to establish a new, relevant dignity for you, and with that in mind (or at least within my computer's memory), I wish you the best of all that is left.

\* The closest Canada ever came to having an indigenous vehicle was the dog-sled.

# fifth Estate

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