

Abstract: I am defining my sense of place by using man's most efficient machine, or a bike as my place. I wanted to be more creative with my place so I chose a mobile object. I am using the bike as an outlet to nature, but also an example for sustainability. Keeping nature available for future generations is my environmental ethic. As I state in the essay, "I believe that everyone should have an outlet. Somewhere to go without the claustrophobia, pollution, and traffic. Now, this outlet gets harder and harder to find. Non-renewables are in popular demand." I want people to be able to have their place as a bike as well, or a place to go in nature to erase any negative feelings.

The Most Efficient Man-Made Machine

Dylan Kroes

I am riding a struggle bus.
Destination: Top of the trail, any trail. I feel as if I am going to cough up a lung, as my legs push hard on the pedals rhythmically. My back tire slips out as I struggle to keep my momentum up the hill. Don't give up, don't end up walking. I wonder how efficient I am when I feel the pedal bobs, and hear my tire slip out. Don't give up. I am far from the top, but I know the reward; a majestic view and the descent. Don't give up. My legs burn and complement my heavy breathing. My tire slips again kicking up a small dusty rooster tail. The top seems to be getting farther and farther away as I get closer. I feel every knob on the handlebar grips as I pull back to try and regain traction. I feel the rear end hook up and power forward harder to the top, using the last of my climbing energy.



The connection between a bike and its rider is undeniable. The most efficient machine created by riders themselves. *The bike brought me here*, I think to myself as I look from the top of the peak out at the other mountains protruding from the horizon as dull saw blades. I take a break and walk around exploring the high landing. As I do so my legs feel incredibly inefficient. No longer am I rolling more than a few feet with each stroke, but I am stuck on the ground, needing to regain my momentum with every step instead of having it carry through. It seems to be a sluggish way of transportation.

On the descent, every little detail on the trail can be seen. Every layer of the grey flakey shale, every tire tread from previous riders digging into the soft dirt. This is a whole new experience from the grueling climb before. I look far ahead and spot a small jump on the side of the rocky trail, and guide the bike towards the target. As I leave the lip, everything goes silent except for my breathing and the seemingly slow motion faint; click, click, click of my freewheeling hub. For that split-second moment, I can fly. Then, as I land, and the rubber of my tires hits the soft dirt, I go back to feeling absolute clarity and freedom.

The loss of self consciousness is what makes me feel at home. This feeling is known as flow and is associated with complete happiness. One can experience flow when concentrating hard, or being very happy. When I am at home on my bike I experience this all the time. Flow is complete focus on one thing, and one thing only. I live to be completely absorbed in the cradle of the beautiful machine.

Community is what comes to mind when I am not riding my bike. To go out and ride with friends only fuels my place. Having everyone experiencing flow, and breathing fresh air together is how I have made most of my friends. Riding with friends is also an outlet for me which is only because of the bicycle. A community sufferfest. This sufferfest is full of people who use biking for various reasons, however we all utilize nature and love being in it. This group flow makes memories and further feeds euphoric feeling. Without this, many people would not be able to experience flow.

Each pedal stroke counts, but it is the ascent to the top that really matters. Being able to experience this feeling is very important to me. If I feel stressed, I go ride. If I feel dejected, I go ride. This may seem counterproductive to an onlooker, however I find the motivation to finish homework or a project afterwards. Sometimes that motivation can be found hiding under rocks, or behind trees, but I always seem to find it somehow. Each pedal stroke pushes me closer and closer to my goal, to academic success. Biking has helped shape who I am and what I do. I want everybody to experience the sweet torture of ascending a trail, any trail.

I believe that everyone should have an outlet. Somewhere to go without the claustrophobia, pollution, and traffic. Now, this outlet gets harder and harder to find. Non-renewables are in popular demand, and land usage is needed for the 21st century power supply. The upcoming generations will not be able to experience this flow on our current path. Thirty acres of forest will be cut down by the time you finish this paragraph. It seems as though I cannot get away from oil or natural gas rigs. They litter the land. Modern Jurassic Beings slurping up their ancestors; elegant but destructive.

It seems harder and harder to get a clear view. Not only a clear view, but a clear breath. Even in a small town like Durango, trying to find crisp fresh air gets harder. Light pollution shatters the chance of a clear night sky. I can't see the stars I use as an outlet to put my problems in perspective. Looking at the night sky makes me feel irrelevant and eliminates my problems. It is literally impossible to see the night sky in a populated city. Even I can no

longer look up and see stars in the sky, however I still have my trusty trail steed; my place. My outlet helps me find clear night skies. The bike enables me to go anywhere and seemingly do anything.

I am guilty of hypocrisy. I drive to school every day out of laziness. It is only a small eight mile bike ride to school, however I don't want to get up early. I shuttle my downhill rig, and drive to trails. I play a big part in contributing to the destruction of our own environment, but we can all fix this. Reducing only slows this destruction, Recycling and Reusing only use outdated methods in place and slowly continue this age old cycle. Re-Innovating promotes progress. Create efficient cars so I can shuttle, and use sustainable resources to power these cars. Use renewables to power bike manufacturers, restaurants, and houses. By re-innovating we can change the future of this soon to be extinct world.

To do this we must look to the bike for an example. Use man's most efficient machine to base our progress off of. Take the simplicity of the bike and operate with that 98% efficiency. Use the most efficient way of transferring energy, the chain and sprocket, and the most efficient way of transportation, the wheel. Use the bike as an example for how we should be synonymous with nature. Be more human, and less electronic machine. Utilize the bike more as transportation, as our getaway from the real world.

The bike is my place, a place where I connect. My very own struggle bus. The sense of flow, the feeling of riding a bike up or down is something that I want everybody to be able to experience at any time. Due to rising energy demands and rising population, this is getting harder and harder now. However, it is still possible to have outdoors, or biking as an outlet. Using sustainable and renewable resources will enable everyone to have a place where they can get away from people, or clear their mind. Riding my bike gives me freedom, and is where I feel most at home. The bike can be used to shape our future. As H.G Wells says, "Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race."

Word Count:1409