

## CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS: JOYRIDING

My horse he spurres with sharp desire my hart:  
 He sits me fast, how ever I do sturre;  
 And now hath made me his hand so right,  
 That in the Manage myselfe takes delight.

(Sir Philip Sydney 1554-1586, Sonnet 49 *Astrophil and Stella*)<sup>1</sup>

The quote above refers to the pleasure taken in riding a horse. This pleasure cannot be simply translated down the centuries or down the class structure to be applied directly to joyriding or any particular car use. However, it does indicate a psychic state which may be innate but its expression is socially constructed and constrained. Not everyone then could ride a horse, many more can now drive a car but can they (we) drive a car in the ways that will give them (us) pleasure?

Nearly thirty years ago Downes noted:

...although adept at borrowing cars, they apparently made no attempt to sell them, even though they knew of sources for purchase. But the rate of theft of car accessories in conjunction with take and drive away points to a limited form of delinquency.[...]It may be that the delinquent steals for imagined utilitarian ends but possession of the object stolen reveals the illusory nature of the original impulse; e.g. he steals a car because pressured by commercial-ideological forces into thinking he needs one, but soon realises the falsity of the need and discards it. While this would account for a single car-borrowing, it would not account for a car-borrowing career, for disenchantment with the object stolen would be final, and the delinquent would cease to pursue car-borrowing. (1966:204)

Downes raises but does not follow up the ‘commercial-ideological’ nor the psychic attractions.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and 3 will be combined with fieldwork observations to explore joyriding. However, those looking for an aetiology of joyriding will be disappointed. The literature reviewed and the fieldwork reveal no explanations beyond the common-sense one that it’s fun and easy to do. Otherwise, as has been shown, and Downes is an example, joyriding is treated as crime or delinquency and explained within the general explanation of crime. It is therefore proposed to explore joyriding in this section by brief reference to broad criminological paradigms derived from Young (1981 and 1994) to see what they do, or might, say about joyriding. However, to set this theoretical discussion in context some direct observations from fieldwork are set out below.

As has been said this thesis builds, but does not rely, upon observations amongst young men at motor projects, those that work with them, reflection on the author’s own car use - past and present - towards a consideration of wider issues of car culture, particularly gender and the environment. However, the original inspiration for the work, joyriding, did feature in some observations or conversations at the motor projects as these extracts from my fieldnotes show.

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Jean Gooding, English Department, St Mary’s University College, Strawberry Hill for this quote.

<sup>2</sup> His comments could have come from Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* (1958).

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J tells me that he has never been caught and never crashed. He is here voluntarily; frightened by other people's crashes and problems with the law. The media coverage and the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act may have contributed to his unease. He says that he got into car crime when, out of work, he started hanging around. Before then he had been working as a bicycle courier but had been hit by a Porsche jumping a red light. It wrecked the bike. He could not afford a new one so had no job. He makes no claim that being run down by a car lead him to start taking them. I don't know whether to believe him but it makes a neat ironic parable. (24 March 1993)

L tells me very quickly that he's broken the law. I ask him if he means 'the law' or the project's law. He has been joyriding and been caught by the police. They aren't going to prosecute but the project's Wednesday meeting gave him a rough time. Normally he'd expect to get his bus fare home (or BFH, their slang for being chucked out of the project) but they take pity on him and ban for five races. (10 May 1993)

It is ironic that some of the cars used by the projects are given to them by the police after they have been abandoned by joyriders. As the following observation suggests, joyriding can be used by local youth specifically to wind up the local police:

The car has been given to them by the police from the pound. It had been stolen and stripped but the thieves had also inscribed in the paint work a number of messages on the roof and bonnet: "SHIT CAR CHEERS FOR THE BITS SUCKER!! BLOBBY"; and; "HOTTERS GUESS WHO HURLEY BABY?". There is also scratched a picture of a person behind bars above it is enscribed "NOT ME", and below "TOO GOOD". (6 January 1994)

The claim to be 'too good' to be behind bars chimes in with the findings of both Briggs (1991) and Light *et al* (1993) of over confidence in driving but, probably also correctly appraises the chances of being caught. However, it should not be forgotten that 'joyriders' can own property and be victims of crime, for instance:

M told us of a run in he'd had with the traffic police ("Cunts!"). On his way to work one morning he had, again, to scout round the Estate to find his motor bike. He finds it but it is damaged. He is pulled over by the cop who demands that he repair the damage within 14 days. He is also done for failing to display an L plate. M is outraged at the cost of spares, the power of the police and the ignominy of having to display an L plate. "It shows you up doesn't it." (fieldnotes, 10 May 1993)

Later J tells me of an incident where someone attempted to steal his motor bike. His comments suggest he is more appalled by the incompetence of the attempt than being victimised by it. Indeed, ex-members of the project who now drive legally are very careful to secure their cars. (fieldnotes, 14 June 1993)

In addition to their experience of joyriding and vehicle-related victimisation those attending projects also cheerfully admitted to or obliquely referred to other law-breaking - theirs and others as these quotes from fieldnotes record:

It is still raining a bit as we go to leave L asks for a lift back. MA is made to give us a lift. I sit in the back. I am the only one to use my safety belt. (14 June 1993)

This minor infraction might be contrasted with the almost continual references to drugs and one to guns:

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I am asked if I have smoked dope, the question is immediately withdrawn as if it is too impertinent a question, but I answer in the affirmative anyway. (2 November 1993)

The conversation over the chips is vary varied, and for the most part incomprehensible to me. It ranges over drugs, cars, car parts, driving and the loss of N's hat and the suggestion that he is having an affair with a workmate of his wife. (2 November 1993)

Video games are discussed such as how to get past "the ghosts on Chocolate Island" and who was best out of SE and his brother on *Monaco*, a motor racing game. They also mention that they recently travelled to Abingdon to play a motor racing arcade game called either *RAC Rally* or *Super Celica* (I thought this was the name of a Toyota). It sounds very realistic they speak of it with relish. J says that the chip shop on the Cowley Road has it but SE says he can't go there; making gunshot gestures with his hands. (fieldnotes, 6 January 1994)

In an in-depth interview SE (1 February 1994) told me that over the last couple of years the scene in Oxford has become more violent, because of the drugs trade. Knives were now common and guns seen. During the course of that interview he arranged, over the 'phone, for the delivery of cannabis but also continued to care for his children - including nappy changing - whilst his wife went out to work.

A personal communication from Tim Chapman of Belfast's Turas Project alerted me to their concern that in turning young men away from joyriding they returned them to their homes with the obvious potential for domestic violence against mothers or partners. The following observations pick up on some of these issues:

The TV programme *Gladiators* is mentioned. Apparently one of the female Gladiator/Contestant's breasts fell out of the costume. Talking about where someone's girlfriend lives leads to a discussion about a tough family called ..... who live in that area. Particularly one of the women of that family is discussed in slightly awed terms. Apparently she laid one guy out with one punch. He got up after, N thought he wouldn't have been able to. It also became clear that a number of the partners of the group were not averse to hitting them or in N's case pushing him down the stairs (because of his infidelity? see 2/12/93). They don't seem worried about admitting to this. It is treated quite lightly but A's question as to whether they themselves commit domestic violence brings silence but I sense some discomfort. (fieldnotes, 6 January 1994)

So how might such observations and those of others reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 be fitted into criminological paradigms?

There are a number of ways of categorising theories of crime and deviance. Morrison (1995), for instance, set out eleven, based upon a Humean consideration of 'human nature'. Young's typology (1981 and 1994) is chosen because it is better known and offers a structure that helps organize the following discussion.<sup>3</sup> His whole argument could be taken as teleological - the history of criminology leading inevitably to left realism.<sup>4</sup> However, there are problems with

<sup>3</sup> Henry and Milovanovic (1996) use the dichotomies to organize their discussion of modernist theories of law and crime.

<sup>4</sup> There is an irony in Smart's (1990) rejection of criminology's claims: by default she implicitly accepts left realism's claims to superiority in the field of criminology. Otherwise she (1990:73) says in her attack on Jock Young that "he sees the influence of North American criminology in a positive light (for example, Cohen 1955; Cloward

Young's typology. He fails to discuss gender adequately, other than in his claim for left realism to have taken feminism seriously. However, for our purposes this failure can be used to interrogate the theories on this issue - in short, most fail at the asking of the question 'Does this apply to women too?'. Feminism will be discussed as a separate category along with those that Young discusses and the next section takes this as a starting point for working in gender and men. Postmodernism is also considered as a critique of left realism but more for what it might add - thus favouring reconstruction over deconstruction (Henry and Milovanovic 1996). Furthermore, his discussion of positivism does not always sufficiently distinguish between biological, psychological and sociological positivisms. This may be for the very good reason that it is the similarities that he wishes to present - as deficient. 'Strain theory' is left in the anomalous position of meriting a discussion in its own right much of which then overlaps with positivism.

The resulting typology then is:

- Conservatism
- Classicism
- Positivism - biological and psychological
- Positivism - Sociological including Strain Theory
- Social Reaction/New Deviancy/Labelling
- Marxism/Left Idealism
- Administrative Criminology
- Right Realism
- Left Realism
- Feminism
- Postmodernism

Conservatism is ignored as a criminological theory by many for the good reason that it is largely atheoretical and coincides at many points with common-sense and traditional/moral accounts of sin. Its major tenets, as drawn out by Young (1981) are: a) the priority of order over law - the 'rights' of society over those of the offender ; b) respect for tradition - as defined by the powerful; c) an emphasis on lack of morality as a cause of crime and the retrenching of morality as a cure for it; d) its atheoreticism, having no organised discourse or codified body of work and; e) its tendency to deploy metaphors from biology to describe crime and criminals. Where it considers gender differences in crime, or any other behaviour, it is likely to resort to a biological explanation or scriptural authority.

Since for conservatives the temptations of crime continuously surround us only the moral armour of self-control prevents everyone lapsing into crime. The cause of joyriding then is no different to the causes of other wickedness whether of whispering Trappists or mass murder. This blanket condemnation is not very satisfying criminologically but its potential relativism could be used to condemn the car as the work of the devil (Berger, 1979). As conservatism is a censorious moral discourse it is deployed in traditional ways and against traditional targets but in shifting to the moral ground invites opposing definitions of morality. Whilst 'New Age' spirituality might

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and Ohlin, 1961 and Matza, 1969)".

threaten the conservatism of organised religion its morality of conservation has both radical and conservative aspects. Its radicalism opposes - with criminalised direct action - the whole basis of car culture in order to conserve the Earth thereby ironically placing them - with conservatives - against joyriding. Similarly radical feminism shares deeply conservative views of men. Ironically this conservatism can be seen in the 'radical' criticisms of motor projects (Jackson, 1992 and Buckley and Young, 1996). For conservatives prevention comes from morality ('Good people don't joyride', 'Green people don't joyride' etc) or fear ('Joyriders kill, you're a joyrider, we'll treat you as if you are a killer.') Yet 74% of Light *et al's* (1993) respondents acknowledged that it was wrong to take vehicles.

Where conservatism emphasises immorality and offers non-rational punishments as a general deterrent, Classicism sees miscalculation and offers rational punishments as an individual deterrent. Clearly the potential joyrider has not calculated the benefits and disbenefits of his actions. The exceedingly short term thrill of joyriding sits uneasily with the delayed gratification of motoring and cannot admit other terms to the equation - such as the victim or their own future insurance premiums. Whilst the hedonism of joyriding fits with Classicist psychology its irrationality breaches Classicist norms. Yet many programmes for joyriders seek to add terms to the equation and the cognitive skills to calculate them. Primary crime prevention measures against car crime such as alarms and immobilisers assume a limited rationality sufficient to displace or 'deflect' (Pease, 1994). Yet the biggest factor in the calculations of joyriders is the prospect of detection and apprehension and 74% of Light *et al's* (1993) respondents thought that they would not be caught or put the idea out of their minds. For some, this was because of opinions about police priorities or their own capacity to drive sufficiently well not to arouse suspicion. The fact that only a fifth had avoided coming to the notice of the police puts this confidence in context. Light *et al* (1993) attempt a calculation of the risk of being caught for theft of or unauthorized taking of motor vehicles (from figures for recorded crime) and conclude that about six percent of offences committed (and their sample had taken 70 cars on average) lead to an offender being cautioned or convicted. The extent to which the joyriders they interviewed overestimated the likelihood of receiving a custodial sentence offers no comfort to conservatives or Classicists (see Light *et al*, 1993:61-65). Perhaps it is too much to expect rational explanations of and solutions to joyriding when cars are themselves sold through non-rational advertising (see Chapters 7 and 8). Further a utilitarian classicism might also calculate the balance of advantage in having opted for the car as the prime means of transport in a small and crowded island.

Inverting the voluntarism of Classicism, the determinism of Positivism is most marked in its biological and psychological varieties. The psychological literature on driving and road safety (for instance; AA, 1992; McKenna, 1991) does not discuss joyriding but its methods and conclusions could be applied. Arguing the case for a strong but not exclusive genetic component to the etiology of crime Mednick *et al* (1987) conclude that there is a strong relationship between the chronic offending of adopted children and that of their biological rather than adopted parents. Joyriding is often marked by chronic offending but the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 confines itself to occasionally noting that fathers or elder brothers often taught joyriders to drive or to steal but this would be true of non-joyriders and of offenders more generally. Indeed, Mednick *et al* (1987) found no relationship between the type of offending of parents and that of

children. They divided crimes into property, violence and sexual but it is not obvious which category joyriding would come into. Legally it is a property crime; and like all motoring offences it has a potential for violence and its gendered character likens it to sexual offending. Rowe, who otherwise emphasises the heritability of traits specifically notes, “Genes do not code themselves for jimmying a lock or stealing a car” and emphasises “the skilled car thief has to learn how to hot wire a car” (1996:285).

Laying a greater stress on the environment and its interaction with psychological dispositions - specifically the factors of extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism - that have a genetic basis Eynsenck (1987) concluded that different personality patterns could be linked to different types of crime and that even within types of crime differences could be seen between the introversion of those who kill family members and the extraversion of professional gunmen. Whilst none of the studies that Eynsenck considers specifically address joyriding, the findings of some on sensation-seeking as an aspect of the extraversion trait could clearly be relevant to joyriding - both the literature and field observation confirm the importance of the ‘buzz’ - but such sensation-seeking also applies to much driving behaviour and many male leisure activities. Recast as ‘risk’ there is a growing literature on this subject (Beck, 1992) which is already being applied to the car (Smerdon and South, forthcoming)

If it is accepted that genetics and psychological dispositions may have an influence on anti-social behaviour - and in this weak formulation it is not specifically rejected - it still fails to explain why one form of anti-social behaviour, like joyriding, is chosen over another *or* why some forms, like joyriding, are singled out from equally dangerous activities for condemnation. Obviously biological and psychological explanations have less difficulty in explaining sex differences in offending but these remain deeply problematic for sociologists and most feminists.<sup>5</sup>

Sharing a commitment to the modernist project of biological and psychological Positivism but emphasising nurture over nature sociological positivists, including Strain theorists, have had enormous influence within criminology and some of the material discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 comes from this tradition. It also makes a contribution to some of the earliest discussions of masculinity (see Chapter 7) so is mostly mentioned here for completeness. Though it is interesting to note that Lilly, Cullen and Ball’s (1995:66) discussion of Agnew’s ‘general strain theory’ cite the loss of the use the family car as potentially leading to auto-theft. Within such a theory joyriding would be a cure for the ‘Summertime Blues’. Picking up on this and considering other potential ‘strains’ a fuller consideration of the application of strain theory allied to left realism is set out later.

The revolt against positivism in the 60s and 70s lead to theories of Social Reaction, New Deviancy and Labelling. The extent to which these differ and whether they constitute a theory or a perspective is not addressed here. The significant factor in this paradigm is the symbolic interactionist emphasis on the meaning to the individual of acts rather than the ‘objective’ conditions that are seen to determine them. Allied to this is the significance agents of social or moral control give to those meaningful acts and how their actions can reinforce activities that are

<sup>5</sup> See Rose S (1996) ‘The Rise of Neurogenetic Determinism’ *Soundings* Issue 2 Spring 1996 pp 53-70.

seen to be anti-social. The literature and fieldwork observations are replete with examples of 'techniques of neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957) but give little support for the contention that petty and meaningful primary deviance has been amplified into more serious hardened delinquency by the process and self-fulfilling prophecy of labelling. Reasons for this include: a) the need to take even one incident of joyriding as potentially hazardous, however meaningful; b) the greater significance of the material constraints of driving bans and high insurance rather than the abstract label 'joyrider' and c) the evidence of resistance to the label, indeed its potentially positive attractions. However, the latter irony is fully in line with the contention of these theorists that social control leads to deviance - though, perhaps more in a Foucauldian sense of producing deviance rather than causing it.

New deviance theory, particularly its British sub-cultural version, placed great emphasis on resistance by labelled groups but the nearest to a study of joyriding is Willis (1978a) on motorbike culture. His descriptions of that culture's enthusiasm for the motor bike could easily be translated to that of joyriders and the symbolism of the car for them. However, much of that description is of legitimate behaviour and discussion with the 'club'. Willis' work most closely resembles my experience of fieldwork and even reminds me of my own youth club days (late 60s early 70s) when similar activities centred around motor scooters. Willis describes how the club was a centre for spares and 'expert' advice. Advice could be bought for drink or a cigarette. At the motor projects in my field work that mechanical advice and sometimes parts came free. The motor bike and such clubs could, when Willis was writing, be seen as the terrain of a sub-culture. Whilst motor projects might be subcultural and joyriding a minority interest car culture is not 'sub' but 'supra'.

Reviewing developments since the first publication of his classic *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* Stan Cohen notes the mundanity of much delinquency that lead to detention centres and Borstals and fears,

that the obvious fascination with these spectacular subcultures will draw attention away from those more enduring numbers as well as lead to quite inappropriate criticisms of other modes of explanation" (1987: xix).

Joyriding is interesting here because it does form a large part of the mundanity of crime yet historically has attracted so little attention in its own right. Now it has become spectacular it attracts the headline writers yet still attracts only mundane explanations. One reason for this may be that it does not attract the sociologist of deviance looking for resistance. It is a premise of this thesis that in many ways joyriding is a submission not a resistance. Chapter 8 offers readings of car advertising that have been deeply influenced by the semiologies of resistance, but related to uncovering the changing meanings of the car and anxieties around it.

Clearly joyriding could be taken as an example of a moral panic. Cohen predicted their continued generation and Hall *et al* (1978) their hegemonic utility. The media's interest in joyriding would appear to support this. The empirical material is not available to support the thesis that the panic around joyriding is not only indicative of a crisis of legitimacy around 'law and order' but also indicative of a crisis around the car. The discussion of car advertising in

chapter 8 does, however, follow traditions in film studies in assuming that societal anxieties are played out in popular media - fear of communism in 50s sci-fi movies (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), fear of sexually-active women (*Fatal Attraction*) and fear of AIDS in more recent vampire films - the empirical evidence, perhaps lies in the growth of direct action against car culture in the form of anti-road protests (also discussed in Chapter 8). Anti-road protestors rather than the rabidly pro-road joyrider are the current folk devil/hero (note the lionisation of Daniel Hooper aka 'Swampy').

Clearly the greatest difficulty comes in the use of Young's paradigms on the subject of Left Idealism. It is his polemical term, used against those who adhere to a Marxism he has long since given up and the anarchism of continental Abolitionist theorists. Given Young's pre-eminence as the theorist of criminological theories his term is used here to describe a broad theoretical strand that like labelling concentrates on criminalisation (often to the extent of being more a sociology of law than a criminology) but without necessarily subscribing to his critique. Indeed strands of abolitionism inform this work as much as Young's realism.<sup>6</sup> Clearly de Haan's contention that 'crime' is a myth which "serves to maintain political power relations" (1991:207) sits uneasily with Young's acceptance of the reality of crime against working class and minority communities and women which will be examined when discussing left realism.

Given the moral and political nature of this position there would be a reluctance to engage with the empirical reality of joyriding to concentrate on the sustenance of the myth and as the discussion of labelling and new deviance suggests there is scope for this. However, the myths about joyriding when separated out from those about crime more generally do not necessarily tell a single tale. At the height of the events of 1991 and the passing of the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act discussed in Chapter 1 myths were to be made and some young men wrote themselves into the script as its hero. Yet some years earlier the myth must have been somewhat different as section 37(1) of the Criminal Justice Act reduced the offence to a summary one and with it the maximum sentence from 3 years to six months. Such 'blips' in the extent, mode and targets of social control require, as de Haan puts it, "not explaining but rather understanding crime as a social event" (1991:208) yet too great a concentration on the mythic aspects or social construction of crime does underplay the 'reality' of crime. Indeed, it is the contention of this thesis that both joyriding and car culture are real problems.

Administrative Criminology is both more and less than the criminology done by the Home Office. It is more because some of its most pragmatic and atheoretical crime prevention elements have been taken up within broader local authority-based community safety projects and are indistinguishable from some left realist interventions in the same field. It is substantially less in that the Home Office itself - under Michael Howard, then Home Secretary - has moved away from its emphasis on primary prevention and reinstated punishment - general deterrence or

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, I would wholly subscribe to de Haan's (1991:203) description of abolitionism as "based on the moral conviction that social life should not and, in fact cannot, be regulated effectively by criminal law and that, therefore, the role of the criminal justice system should be drastically reduced while other ways of dealing with problematic situations, behaviours and events are being developed and put into practice. Abolitionists regard crime primarily as the result of the social order and are convinced that punishment is not the appropriate reaction."

incapacitation - as tertiary prevention (Brantingham and Faust,1976). The major attachment to administrative criminology within current policy is the 'techno fix' of CCTV (Groombridge and Murji,1994) which is presented as crime prevention but represents the incarceration of the whole of society (Groombridge,1995a).

Much of the effort expended to prevent car crime discussed in Chapter 1 falls within this paradigm as does much of the literature specifically excluded from Chapter 2. In brief the 'theory' is car crime is opportunist so if the perimetric security (as car adverts put it) is improved and owners reminded to lock their cars by the advertised threat of 'hyenas' (a conservative metaphor) then potential joyriders and stereo thieves are deflected. Within car parks and some high car theft areas CCTV is offered as a solution. In other areas 'police notices' remind motorists that "car thieves operate in this area".

It is not always easy to differentiate Right Realism from Conservatism in the penal rhetoric of the right but the emphasis on incapacitation and the unlikelihood of remoralising society or offenders are key elements of difference. For right realists their realism consists of recognising the extent of crime and the poor prospects of doing much about it short of widespread, ethically-suspect genetic engineering or politically undesirable social engineering. If larger numbers of the working class and ethnic minorities have to be imprisoned then so be it. The 'three- strikes-and-you're-out' policies of the United States have impacted particularly on street drug dealers and therefore young black men. As yet the turn to the right in UK penal policy appears to concentrate on burglary and sex offences. Any repeat of the events of 1991 might see joyriders added to the list.

Left Realism attempts to move beyond the concentration of the left on the State or the crimes of the powerful and that of the right on punishment by considering not only State, Society and Offender but also the Victim. Indeed it is often most noted for its victim surveys. These surveys suggest a policy-orientation closer to administrative criminology than the theoretical writings of Young would suggest but even so have a wider focus than the victim. Also included are questions on self-reported offending and the performance of police (and, indeed, the local council) as well as broader questions about the environment and its effects on the quality of life. The surveys indicate widespread victimisation and offending associated with cars and often police stops in cars. The theoretical breadth and concerns of left realism clearly offer the opportunity to go beyond the correctionalism or idealism of much criminology in considering joyriding. It remains to be seen whether the emphasis on car culture, masculinities and the environment within this thesis bursts the bounds of left realist criminology or transgresses criminology.

Feminism has been the most transgressive reading of criminology to date leading to radical feminists turning their back on it - for its male-orientation - to work for and with the survivors of male violence and postmodern feminists (Smart, 1990) turning their back on it for its modernism. As has been discussed in Chapter 4 Cain's (1990a) desire to transgress criminology has been influential upon this study. Indeed in the concluding chapter some thoughts on how the sociology of masculinities (and other disciplines) might prove better or, at least, other ways to

‘do criminology’. It is to some of these transgressive possibilities that we turn now.

Postmodernism in criminology is most notable for its arguments with the possibility of criminology - particularly left realism. Its playful deconstructions have proved entertaining (Ferrell and Sanders, 1995) but often unsatisfying. Stanley specifically discusses joyriding (and computer hacking and rave culture) as ‘Urban Excess’ or ‘narratives of dissent in the wild zone’ (Stanley, 1996:145). Whilst he cites Henry and Milovanovic his mixture of law, criminology, cultural studies and urban sociology and geography spends too much time celebrating excess. In part this has a gender dimension (see Chapter 7 for discussion). It is also deeply conventional - despite the radically disordered language of the book - in seeing joyriding as part of a syntactical opening up of “new possibilities in consumption” (1996:146). Car manufacturers are themselves engaged in the same activity. Stanley’s postmodernism is simply “the cultural logic of late capitalism” (Jameson, 1984). It is agreed that “the ‘problems’ of hacking, joyriding and raving have been constructed as deviant activities (and therefore available to social control mechanisms)” (1996:149) but this doesn’t mean that a choice has to be made simply between either deviance or social control. Both can be criticised. Herein lies the left realism of this text. Joyriding is a ‘real’ problem but not just because it is a crime or anti-social but because (with road rage - see Chapter 8) it forms part of a larger problem of car use and ownership on a small planet. For these sorts of reasons Henry and Milovanovic (1996) seek to move beyond deconstruction to reconstruction with their ‘Constitutive Criminology’. Whether this is post modern or late modern need not detain us here but this and the structured action theories of Giddens - taken up by Messerschmidt (1997) - have been very influential on the readings of car culture.

However, poised between the late modernism of left realism and postmodernism are transgressive spaces which take seriously the reality of crime but deploy non-realist methods or supplement realist methods. These may deploy the methods favoured by Stanley (1996) but require a critical engagement which cannot be provided by postmodernism. Indeed as Nelken (1995:17) notes only the most superficial reading of Baudrillard, Lyotard and Derrida “could take them to be celebrating nihilism. Nor is difficult to detect the transcendent concern for justice.”

“Without consent I begin by taking some words that were themselves taken without consent (long ago and far away)” This is how Hartley (1994) starts his article on ‘Twoccing and joyreading’. He goes on to argue reading is a low-grade form of theft in which mobility is more important than position. He therefore uses the metaphor of joyriding to argue that texts can be taken for a ride and that even ‘on the road’ metaphors- criticised within cultural studies as male and patriarchal - can therefore be taken by women.<sup>7</sup> He offers a “reading of actual twoccing - juvenile car crime as covered by the Western Australian press - shows that in the public domain ‘society’ can be equated with traffic lights, while (it follows) joyriding is subversive of society. I take this to be a suggestive metaphor for reading (1994:399). Interestingly Young, in her own ‘outlaw’ text, states: ‘As an event, crime is thus always already textual, as are the outlaws symbolically excluded from the community’ (1996:16).

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<sup>7</sup> Ferrell and Sanders suggest the work of their contributors is “less a finished project than an open road, and we invite you to join us along it” (1995:ix).

The full strength of Hartley's argument is contained in the following quotation.

Most familiarly, juveniles twooc cars. But I suggest, readers twooc writings. In both cases the offenders are mobile, travelling for the sake of it, in vehicles not belonging to them, without instrumental purpose. Twoccing requires a moral code at variance with that of possessive individualism; it's an offence to ownership, intellectual or vehicular, being in the end a kind of pure or total gesture of travel, wherein the vehicle, the streets, moving quickly, and being out of time and place are enjoyed for themselves, foregrounding the act and skill of driving (reading), not the possession of a car (text) or the promise of a destination (closure). (1994:400)

Other than recognising the joyreader's 'buzz' at taking a novel vehicle for a spin my comments are reserved for his arguments about joyriding. It is for others to assess the adequacy of his arguments in respect of reading. The critique must therefore start with his assumptions about joyriding.

It may be that, like Humpty Dumpty (in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*), he means a word to mean what he chooses. In this he is not alone. As the brief discussion in Chapter 1 should indicate the meaning of the word joyriding has changed over time and even today may represent different activities. It is the argument of this thesis that just as it is numerically less than the total figures for car theft or taking without consent it is also much more; how much more will be discussed in the conclusion to this chapter. Hartley sees joyriding as a 'kind of pure or total gesture of travel'. This is a simplification of the complex practice of joyriders as noted in the literature or observed in fieldwork. The motive for joyriding may start with the purity of travel (or the thrill of speed) but it usually ends with the reality of theft of something from the car - and sometimes destruction of it. Indeed most joyriders move from this initial thrill-seeking motive quite quickly to the 'impure' motive of profit. Applying this to Hartley's analogy: very few write for profit; fewer still read for it. Clearly joyriding has meaning - and this thesis seeks the widest possible ones - and therefore gestures may be significant but the gesture in joyriding may not be that of travel but the most fleeting one of ownership and where travel is involved it may be for the same mundane purposes (all red lights obeyed) that puts most motorists on the road, from A to B.

Whilst Hartley is keen to assert "Twoccing (of cars or writings) is not a glamorous crime of cultural politics or personal passion, not epic or heroic; it's a routine, low grade, show-off offence, and as such cannot be romanticised as a from of consumer resistance." (1994:400) his almost Futurist observations about time, place and speed and his disregard for traffic lights suggest that he does regard the joy(rider/reader) as subversive and hence resistant in the best traditions of romantic sub-cultural criminology. Indeed, inverting his contention, such disregard for the rules of the road is not evidence of a 'moral code at variance with possessive individualism' but evidence of being at one with it. The joyrider, like Toad, is singularly selfish - they think they own the road. But, and this is crucial, he fails to note the significance of his own metaphors.

Red-light jumping is a real problem but it is not solely the preserve of joyriders. It is such a problem in Britain that large numbers of junctions are now policed by fixed cameras dedicated

to catching the culprits. The method chosen - photographing and following up the licence number - suggests that the authorities believe it to be mostly a problem of traceable drivers, rather than untraceable ones like joyriders. Much of his argument could be made - and might be better made - not about joyriding but about driving more generally.<sup>8</sup>

It may be that Hartley's particular reading of joyriding derives from his own view of joyreading, it may also derive from the specificity of Australian car culture which offers him a different text on which to work rather than the palimpsest of UK car culture. In suggesting this it is necessary to bracket off discussion of the effects of globalization on local car cultures other than to suggest that the absolute size of country, numbers of cars, miles of road and road traffic and construction and use legislation must mediate global effects.

It is an antipodean synchronicity - that would require comparative work to comprehend - which found Western Australia in November 1991 in "the grip of an orchestrated media campaign" (1994:408) against joyriding and twoccing. It is an indicator of globalization that the same terms are used but of the specificity of the local that "while the campaign was directed against 'juvenile car crime', everyone knew that this meant Aboriginal children's car crimes" (1994:408). In the UK there has been no such understanding. Hartley notes the disproportionate rate of incarceration for Aboriginal juveniles and it may be an underdog identification that leads him to see Aboriginal joyriding in these terms:

...the weakness and dispossession of a few dozen Aboriginal minors and their mates was not seen as weak at all when they turned to twoccing and joyriding into class war; it was treated as a threat to law (and order), and it mobilised the full array of Repressive State Apparatuses, cheer-led by the local press, talk-back radio and TV news. (1994:410)

The history of the car and of joyriding set out in Chapter 1 and the literature in Chapter 2 does suggest not just that joyriding has got worse but that the tolerance that once called it joyriding is no longer exercised. A similar trajectory can be seen in connection with drunk driving over the past twenty years. Driving drunk was once seen to be socially acceptable but no longer is. It may be that other aspects of car use will become censured in this fashion. Indeed the car itself has come under increased critical gaze because of green pressure and the reality of car-induced respiratory problems and traffic congestion. Some of these issues are discussed more fully in Chapter 8. Here they are raised to indicate that joyriders - and joyriding - cannot be viewed as careering about a statically conceived town and countryside. Not only have numbers of cars on the roads increased but the use made of them has changed from that of upper-class leisure to essential mobility. The car's status as an economic positional good has changed to that of 'dispositional' good bordering on the disposable.

These changes in car use and the increased regulation of car use mean that not only is joyriding seen to be more dangerous and threatening than previously but all traffic violations are subject to greater scrutiny. It is less easy to imagine Ross (1968) being able to argue that such

<sup>8</sup> It is not relevant to the argument here that I enjoyed, and found persuasive, his 'reading' of Thor Heyerdahl's 'scientific' expeditions as travel punctuated with "wheelies in a balsa boat, and handbrake turns with a reed boat" (1994:403).

violations were a 'folk crime' though many offenders would see themselves in this way. His speculative propositions on folk crime are worth noting in full:

- (a) Major increments to the complexity of a society, of which the *automobile* is a technological example, create a need for regulation where none was previously necessary.
- (b) Legislation to regulate the conditions brought about by increasing complexity reclassifies certain prevalent non-criminal behaviour as crime.
- (c) Especially where the harmful effect of the proscribed behaviour is indirect or improbable in most instances, the novel legislation may not be related to previously existing norms.
- (d) Criminal behaviour in folk crime is rooted, not necessarily in lower-class culture, but in the culture of groups most affected by the social or technological changes that the legislation attempts to control. White-collar crime is the special case of folk crime resulting from legislation regulating business and finance. The *automobile*, with its impact on all social classes, generates more pervasive folk crime.
- (e) In particular instances, large numbers of people including those of high status, will be involved in law violations related to major social changes.
- (f) The lack of congruence between the new laws and established mores, the generally higher status of the violators, and the possibly larger size of the group of violators among the total population, will tend to be associated with preferential treatment of folk criminals in the public image and in the judicial process. (1968:171 emphasis added)

Ross was talking about legal attitudes to traffic violation and white-collar crime but much of what he says was true of wider attitudes to joyriding. Today many drivers still believe themselves to be illegitimate targets of police activity; young joyriders hold parallel views.

Joyriding is not just an ongoing problem associated with the car and driving but is integral to the transgressive project of the car. Modern joyriding is the unwanted echo, the 'evil twin' who is denied, of 'responsible' motoring. Compare these quotes: "In joy-rides, however, the Poplar boys never took girls along, because 'It'd be wrong to risk anybody except yourselves.'" with "I think I tend to be more risky when I'm on my own because I don't feel responsible for others". The first quote is that of a young joyrider - a respondent to Downes (1966:205) - whereas the second is from an AA study (1992:40) from a 'safe' 18 year old driver of his own car.<sup>9</sup>

*conclusion - what do I mean by joyriding?*

The brief discussion in Chapter 1 and the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 suggests that the term joyriding not only has no legal meaning but no fixed popular meaning. Its meaning has changed over time yet retains some of the old meanings too and is given new meanings in work such as Hartley's discussed above and in the conclusion to this chapter. The earlier discussion of theoretical paradigms at the beginning of this chapter and the empirical work

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<sup>9</sup> 'Safe' in as much as judged to be safe by a professional driving instructor after a 40 kilometre driving 'test'.

discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 illustrates the limited extent to which they can or have attempted to explain joyriding.

If joyriding is treated as purely criminal then most criminological theories can claim to get some purchase on the subject yet would each criticize the others deficiencies and feminism would rightly point out the failure of all to explain the overwhelming male involvement. Left realism would offer the best hope of explaining joyriding as crime: the interactions between offender, society and state and the impact on victims. However, in its ongoing concern for etiology left realism does owe a debt to sociological positivism. Yet the mid-range theory of Currie (1997) with its concentration on market society might encompass joyriding as deriving from (or at least, in Currie's pharmacological metaphor, 'potentiated' by) the marketing of violent technologies (though he has the gun in mind).

Building on Mertonian and Albert Cohen's ideas of strain it is possible to see that the twin demands of finding a place within masculinity and within car culture some will 'innovate' by stealing cars and others 'ritualise' by obsessive consumption of car magazines and facts - to become a 'carspotter', an 'anorak'. In considering the 'retreatist' and 'rebellious' adaptations to these strains it becomes clear that the innovative and ritualised adaptations are in practice flip-sides of car culture and often in the field cannot be distinguished. Moreover, together they represent an acceptance of and a deep psychic drive to assimilate to that culture. Merton saw the American Dream as the source of strain. Cohen's work (reviewed briefly in Chapter 2 and more extensively in Chapter 7) suggests masculinity as a source of strain for middle-class boys. Other structures, ideologies and questions of identity also provide sites of strain, not all of these will intersect with car culture. So, lodged within left realism a multi-causal strain theory could explain joyriding as a crime. Yet without denying the 'reality' of joyriding and car crime it seems clear that joyriding is more than a crime. It speaks also of car culture and of masculinities.

Such are the homologies between joyriding as described in the literature and conventional driving - including the gender issues - it has been necessary to take one point of the square of crime - that of society, recast here as car culture - and stretch it into areas that are not crime. This has involved a transgression of criminology and a dissolving of disciplinary boundaries between it and cultural studies and the sociology of masculinities. This represents my own academic joyriding - taking and driving away theories without consent. Wolff (1993:234) makes the point that "The already-gendered language of mobility marginalizes women who want to participate in cultural criticism" and that just as women enter 'town' men get 'on the road' taking their theory and identity with them. Thus my own academic joyriding may be indicative of my own subordinated masculinity rebelling against empirical method.

Before taking off to the wilder shores let us revisit the legal definition. The first thing to note is it is the Theft Act 1968 (and amendments to it) that is brought to bear on joyriding not a Road Traffic Act yet the statistics also appear in summaries of motoring offences. The earliest usages of the word joyriding concentrate on the fun and the earliest recorded practices suggest some of that or short-term transportation (either to get home or to experience driving). These usages and practices continue today.

Analysis of media and ministerial moralising suggest that the main elements are dangerous driving and confrontation with the police. Again the literature and fieldwork observation provide plenty of evidence that this too forms part of the current practice of joyriding. Moreover, necessarily involved in any of these forms of joyriding are the ‘paper’ offences concerning tax, insurance and licenses. The need for documents involves considerable financial outlay and increasing skills in comparison to which the cost of acquiring a car - even legally - can be small. These provide an effective deterrent to many from legally acquiring a car and gives no guarantee that those who succeed in this obstacle race will drive any better than joyriders (AA, 1992; ‘road rage’, ‘motorway madness’, drunk driving etc). A critical inversion would be to call all such anti-social expressive car use joyriding too.

It may also be useful to consider that just as the need for ‘papers’ tempts many to drive illegally so age limits on driving also presents a temptation to drive before the legal age. Even where the money for insurance, tax and the necessary skill to obtain a licence are present an unavoidable hurdle is that of age.<sup>10</sup> Whilst driving is not illegal it is hedged around by enormous and increasing numbers of regulations; ones status is important. Have you tax, insurance and license? Are you sober? Does the vehicle have an MOT and does it meet the use and construction regulations and exhaust emission standards. However, the crucial status for starting this paper chase is age. A major factor in taking cars without consent is age. As is the case with sex it is not possible to give or receive consent to drive under age. For both sex and car use, the age limit is absolute - though different - whereas that for pub-going more complex and dependent upon the situation.<sup>11</sup> These different age limits on otherwise legal practices - and others, for example, those on the age of criminal responsibility - invite offending by those unaware of them or antipathetic to them. It may seem tautologous to refer to joydrinking or joysex but these too are widely indulged in with many personal risks akin to joyriding. It may be that joyriding rankles so much with authority because of the youth of its practitioners.

To recap then. Joyriding is theft or taking of a car without consent. It is ‘borrowing’ a car for fun or to get home. It may involve dangerous, provocative or confrontational driving. Much of the same behaviour can be seen in car driving more generally but the term joyriding tends to be reserved for the young. So joyriding might usefully be compared to other status offences like sex and drink but also to other illegal driving behaviours - whether ‘paper’ or road - and all driving. In this I am with Ruggiero (1996), Taylor (1997) and Hobbs (1997). Hobbs’s discussion of the mythic status of the Underworld suggests to him that, “the organisation of criminal labour mirrors trends in the organisation of legitimate labour” (1997:66) and cites Ruggiero and South (forthcoming). Reviewing Hobbs book length treatment of the subject, Ruggiero says this of the chapter on hedonism and crime,

his analysis challenges aetiological approaches hinging on poverty, disadvantage and social inadequacy,

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<sup>10</sup>. See Smerdon (1994) for examples of drivers driving their own cars but without insurance often in breach of a disqualification. Their justifications sound similar to those given by joyriders. For them, it is mounting fines, periods of disqualification and prohibitive insurance cover rather than age which denies them the appropriate status.

<sup>11</sup>. Going into licensed premises accompanied, 14, yet 18 to buy own drink at bar with age 16 for drinking with a meal. 16 for heterosex; 17 for car driving and 18 for male homosex.

which seems to identify crime with practices exclusively adopted by powerless individuals. (1997:303)

Taylor notes Ruggiero's "strong challenge" (1997:299) to 'the aetiology of deficit'. Hobbs is talking of professional crime and Ruggiero of the criminality of conventional business and politics. Clearly joyriding is of a different order but Parker (1974b) noted the conventionality of the desire to joyride and the similarities noted between descriptions of joyriding and other risky driving (the daily experience of motorists) dissolve the under/over world or sub-culture/culture divisions of much correctional and appreciative criminology. Yes, the joyriders discussed in much of the literature and observed in the field suffer a deficit. They are multiply deprived. They have few jobs or prospects, lack cars, crucially lack sufficient age for legal driving and, once caught and processed, lack the 'paper' qualifications to drive. Yet these are not taken to be factors - that they may be is not denied - the point here is to make connections to concentrate on the conventionality, the mundanity of joyriding. Particularly the connections are made to hegemonic and other masculinities - including those of criminal justice personnel and criminologists - and to the nearly congruent car culture and society.

Just as Hartley (1994) suggests the act of reading (and, I would suggest, writing) is an act of theft so Hebdige (1979) reads the moment of punk with the help of Barthes as a symbolic repossession of everyday objects within a Gramscian framework of hegemonic struggle. He goes to extraordinary lengths to show that punk use of Nazi insignia is subversive and, possibly, even anti-racist. Punk appeared to challenge conventionality. Following Parker I see joyriding as conventional yet using some of the methods of Hebdige want to read the extent to which convention is subversive. If I were to follow Hebdige's methods totally (or even those of more marxist writers on sub-cultures like those included in *Resistance Through Rituals* ) then the emphasis might be on how joyriders use of cars gives a meaning to them that runs counter to conventionality. Indeed it is possible to imagine a green direct action campaign that removed cars from the road by taking them without consent. Such a political action could easily be called joyriding to criminalise it and the legal action would be exactly the same - except with conspiracy charges thrown in? However, there is no suggestion in the literature or fieldwork observations that there is a green motive. The nearest that joyriders come to such political action - and then only as "deconstructed, demystified by a 'mythologist' like Barthes" (Hebdige, 1979:16) - is in setting fire to cars once finished with. The explanation furnished by the police for that - and not denied by joyriders - is the removal of evidence. A mythologist might also suggest that it represents an ambivalence towards the car. As Downes said of the joyrider he "soon realises the falsity of the need and discards it" (1966:204). A simpler suggestion still is that (c)arson, like joyriding, is easy and fun to do.

This emphasis on reading, deconstructing and demythologising the conventional use of cars which is taken up in Chapters 7 and 8 is not intended to diminish the dangers of joyriding but to set it in the context of car culture which, though conventional, is highly contested but not by joyriders. Where joyriding is read and deconstructed it is to return it to its conventional garage; to emphasize similarity not difference. The stylish sub-cultural hero takes the culturally given without consent (car, swastika or text) and reassembles it through a process of *bricolage* but the car is resistant to being taken in this way because it has not been taken and driven away

by joyriders but has (always) already been stolen by other joyriders. The joyriders of both text and cars are the advertisers and film-makers who - possibly influenced in Art College by Hebdige - have taken the car, thrown handbrake turns and so far eluded capture. So to add to the definitions of joyriding discussed earlier must be added cinematic and advertising media joyriding - where cars (mundane industrial products with low use and exchange values) are taken and glamourised.

To conclude joyriding is mundane, joyriders are mundanely conventional car users, conventional car use is mundane - though enormously influential. Its banality is represented by joyriders; its spectacle maintained by textual joyriders.