

## Ambivalent Criminology – ‘Have you stopped driving your car?’<sup>i</sup>

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*This paper argues that some harms or crimes – and car crime and motoring offences are taken as examples here – are sources of ambivalence. Policing and public policy is often ambivalent as is media commentary on it. Moreover campaigning groups on both sides contest the right to be known as victims. It is argued that discussions of gender, economics and consciousness would assist stepping far enough back to see what has been so close and about which even criminologists are ambivalent. Whilst car, traffic and parking offences are seen to be mundane and trivial they offer the chance to reconsider criminology, including the new criminology of the information superhighway.*

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Nic is a former Home Office civil servant who has written on car crime (the subject of his PhD), CCTV, public criminology, gender and sexuality. In all this he relates his work to culture and makes cultural references.

It is a frequent complaint of some criminologists but more activists that certain crimes are not taken seriously or given adequate coverage within theoretical criminology, practical policing, the media or wider society. There are sometimes disputes between activists and criminologists over the extent to which they should be covered within the discipline, media and society. For example, car crime (theft of and theft from) and motoring offences (moving and stationary) are large volume crimes but given little coverage in criminology (Corbett, 2003 and Groombridge, 1998) and low priority by the police yet are the subject of intense activist and NGO debate; often played out in the media. Whilst there are differences within criminology and between policing, activism and media coverage all the academic and popular discourses about crime are largely aggregated here as ‘criminology’.

Moving on from the mundanity of car crime, pornography, domestic violence, rape and violence against women and children have been the subject of intense feminist campaigning that have been a cornerstone of women’s and gender studies whilst troubling criminology little (for instance, Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1990; Naffine 1987&1997; Smart, 1976 and Young, 1996). The media often revel in violence by

women and rarely portray violence against women well. Moreover the normalisation of drugs (Groombridge, 2006) and the ubiquity of drink offer plenty of scope for us all to commit crime.

This paper argues that such crimes are 'close'. That is there is a relationship between 'us' and our cars and between people which render close crimes intrinsically more difficult to study. The criminologist is implicated; the activist often has to take the standpoint of the victim. Neither achieves critical distance nor perhaps should they; but some reflexiveness is called for. In this paper the main examples will relate to car use and abuse but reference will be made to other close crimes or relationships as briefly above. Sometimes closeness leads to the subject not being studied at all and activists lead the way; sometimes closeness leads to hypocrisy where a very limited number of offenders are studied or discussed then condemned. The purpose here is recognise the ambivalence that some of these subjects raise and work through that.

One reason for these failures in criminology will be issues around 'masculinity'. Male academics, and female academics working along traditional or 'malestream' lines (see for instance the complaints of Menzies & Chunn 1991), tend to ignore the sex/gender of those they study; speaking, for instance, of 'criminals', 'offenders' or 'prisoners'. Even where gender is noted a universalising discourse swiftly obscures it. Corbett and Caramlau (2006) note the use of 'drivers' to obscure gendered differences between motorists. Where women offenders are found, their low numbers are seen to preclude statistical analysis. Thus Light et al (1993) discarded the two young women joyriders they found in their sample. This might be methodologically sound for their quantitative analysis but huge qualitative data would have been lost. Pink cars were safe from my young male respondents (Groombridge, 1998); it would have been nice to know what factors influenced young women and their car crimes.

Another reason why some crimes might be seen to be close - indeed so close as not to be called crime - is the prevailing economic system and ideologies deriving from it. Such, more widely defined, 'harms' can be seen as 'the social wreckage of neo-liberal

globalisation' (Hillyard et al, 2004:3). Thus the numbers of people killed 'by indifference' in the UK is estimated at over 23,000 (about 20,000 by pollution, 300 in workplace 'accidents' and over 3,000 on the roads) which far exceeds those murdered each year (about 800) (Pemberton, 2004:69).

Clearly there are arguments about the significance of, and interplay between, economic or class and gender issues and further qualifications need to be added in respect of other social structures such as ethnicity, race, religion, sexuality and age. A whole set of sociologies, and sometimes aligned activism, are based on these divisions. The issues of gender and economics have some claim to be the most studied – adding a further oppression to the less studied – but here, it is argued, they are the most relevant to the examples from criminology that will be examined.<sup>ii</sup>

Economic, political or social structures are seen to impact on individuals and groups studied by criminology and on criminologists too as would the associated ideologies. Individual consciousness and, more contentiously, sub-consciousness will also be examined. There are obvious overlaps too. Masculinity might, as part of the gender order, be seen as external to the lives of women. As such it might be manifested physically in an instance of domestic or sexual violence or ideologically in the form of stereotypes about women's ability to drive. That externality can apply to other men in respect of the quotidian violence between young men but also in terms of the shifting expectations of what it is, 'to be a man'. These material and ideological externalities interact with the individual's 'rational' consciousness and 'irrational' sub-conscious.

In short, theoretical criminology, practical policing, campaigning groups, media and society have difficulties with a number of 'crimes', 'harms', 'accidents' etc that are 'close'. Those difficulties are not necessarily the same but are related. Before we move onto examine examples, a very short discussion of the social issues of gender and class are required. Additionally the individual issues of conscious and sub-conscious in respect of criminology will be raised. Further discussion of these will be intertwined with

discussion of car use. Car use will include theft of cars and ‘poor’ driving by those taking them as well as those that own them.

The paper draws extensively on my doctoral and other research (Groombridge, 1997&1998) updated where necessary – particularly with cultural and media references – but also inspired by a joint concern with Corbett (2003) about the low visibility of car and driving related studies in sociology and criminology. That low visibility is bad enough but is made worse to see it stalled by the road whilst ‘virtual criminology’ (Brown, 2006), the criminology of the information superhighway screams off into the distance. A point of difference is the greater emphasis here on the personal, psychodynamic and consciously reflexive and on what it says about criminology more broadly.

## Gender

Many feminist critiques of criminology note the downplaying of violence against women and the inclination to study ‘cool’ subjects like football hooliganism or drugs by young, and not so young, male criminologists. That criticism is taken. However, it is argued that female academics, activists and media commentators are not immune to being so close to a subject that they fail to recognise it as a subject.

Cars are often dismissed as ‘boy’s toys’ but the numbers of women drivers and owners and the recuperation of the phrase in ‘lads mags’ and on the BBC’s motoring programme *Top Gear* indicates its declining power to censure. Cars offer a greater formal equality to both British and American women, whilst Saudi women are banned from driving. In 2005 in the UK 81% of men and 63% of women held a driving license though women travel slightly less than half as many miles a year (Social Trends, 2006). We know too that women use cars differently and have different attitudes to speed, and specifically to speed cameras (Corbett and Caramlau, 2006). So there is a clear difference between the formal and substantive positions.<sup>iii</sup> Even clearer class divisions can be seen in the allocation of life chances and harms as we briefly examine now.

## Economics

Hillyard et al (2004:9) could not be clearer: ‘criminal harm forms a very small and largely insignificant proportion of the vast bulk of harms’ As they see it these harms range over the damage done by capitalism, the State, its justice system, heterosexuality, men and to the environment and animals. None of the contributors to the book specifically examines car use – and there is no index entry for ‘auto’, ‘car’ or ‘motor’ - but as a major industrial and polluting product of international capitalism that is closely, if unevenly, formally regulated by the State and justice systems it might well have been given more space. In this it mirrors much of the criminology of which it is otherwise so critical.

However, car use is often deployed in their arguments or included in lists of harms. Thus in the second paragraph of their introduction the editors list a variety of harms from falling off a ladder to dying in a workplace accident or of a superbug contracted in hospital to losing all your money due to financial mis-selling that may or may not be captured by the criminal law. In this list we find that, ‘others will die in car crashes or be run over’ (Hillyard et al, 2004:1). In their final chapter another glancing mention is made, ‘the death of drivers or passengers are described as ‘accidents’, notwithstanding that one of the drivers may have been drunk or using their mobile phone’ (2004: 269).

However, their focus is on the harms wrought by capitalism and at the hands of the State (not denied here) so a more typical mention of cars is the discussion of Ford Motor’s Pinto and deaths caused by police drivers. Pemberton (2004), perhaps hyperbolically, illustrates Baumann’s discussion of the Holocaust by discussing Ford’s failure to recall the defective Pinto on cost benefit grounds.<sup>iv</sup> They reasoned that paying compensation for a few deaths would be cheaper than the recall and refits.

Sim (2004) shows how the State and its employees like prison and police officers are able to deploy the discourse of the victim even while victimising. He shows that

prison officers are at greater risk of dying from poor diet and exercise than at the hands of prisoners. He goes on to show prison officers were about five times more likely to die in traffic accidents themselves than be murdered and in the same period (1994-1998) 215 people died in police custody. Citing Police Complaints Authority research, he shows about seventy deaths of the public were due to police chases from 1990-1993 and 91 from 1998-2001, with about two thirds arising from traffic crimes. As he is using car crime broadly defined as a means to throw a light on the relative victimisation of state employees it is not clear what his view on car crime is. It may be he implicitly sees traffic offences in much the same way as police officers were wont to regard 'domestics' – i.e. 'rubbish work'.

The 'harm' perspective is not specifically inimical to issues of individual consciousness but its concentration on corporate and state offenders and large social structures leaves little scope for the individual let alone their cognitive or psychic state. Clearly Sim's (op cit) concern about police drivers or Hillyard et al's about the drunk driver ushers in the individual victim and 'harmer' (?) but, perhaps, come too close to the concerns of the traditional criminology they decry, to detain them long. One problem is that traditional criminology has not attended to these issues well itself. Both traditional criminology and the harm perspective have scarcely addressed issues of consciousness.

### Consciousness

Reflexive practice, or obeisance to the idea of, in teaching and research is now commonplace but extensive conscious reflection on our subject and our relationship to it are still rare. For instance, Urry (2000) helpfully but intriguingly discusses the extent of sociology's lacunae in respect of cars without reference to his own use of them. My own relationship to cars and to being a man are discussed extensively elsewhere (Groombridge, 1998).<sup>v</sup>

Jupp (2006: 344) has this to say about reflexivity in criminology:

The process of monitoring and reflecting on all aspects of a research project from the formulation of research ideas through to the publication of findings ... and their utilisation. Sometimes the product of such monitoring and reflection is a reflexive account...

The majority of Jupp's concerns are with the validity of research only turning to bigger issues – and then largely rhetorically and tentatively – in his (in)conclusion:

...could consider the role of criminological research in the production and dissemination of such 'truths' ... asking the questions what gets studied, when, by whom, what gets published, and with what effect?

Jupp might have mentioned feminism here since it, in its many forms, has most often and over extended periods challenged the status quo, particularly notions of the objectivity of the social 'sciences'.

Thus Smith (1974[1992]: 306) points out sociology:

takes for granted and subsumes without examination the conditions of its existence. It is not capable of analyzing its own relation to its conditions because the sociologist as actual person in an actual concrete setting has been cancelled in the procedures which objectify and separate him from his knowledge.

Specifically:

The relation between ourselves as practising sociologists and ourselves as working women is continually visible to us, a central feature of experience of the world, so that the bifurcation of consciousness becomes for us a daily chasm.

Clearly women and the women's movement had apprehended themselves to be 'othered' or, indeed, ignored, so had special reason to contest malestream objectivism.

However, men too may find looking for that 'chasm' useful in their research and start to provide answers to Jupp's questions.

Turning now from the conscious to the sub-conscious; Craib (1997), using Melanie Klein's developmental theory, playfully suggests that the extreme social constructionism of some sociology can be seen as a manic psychosis - a defence against entering the depressive position and that sociologists find it difficult to recognise the limitations of their discipline. They do not exercise power over anybody yet feel they do not have to take account of other disciplines or sciences, but can explain everything. Indeed he even suggests that his own arguments can be seen as a manic psychosis. A non-psychotic theory would be one which knows its own limitations.

I would argue that criminology sets itself narrower disciplinary boundaries but still misrecognises the psychic dimension in its subject matter. Valier (2006) argues for the significance of psychoanalytic criminology. She notes the early contributions of psychoanalysts to British criminology and their contention that the content of the law and penal discourse should be analysed. Here I am suggesting that criminology too should be put on the couch i.e. not just a psycho-analytic criminology but an analysis of criminology.

Much criminology and sociology is as afraid of the body as the mind. Clarke (2003:147) asks, 'why is sociology afraid of the body biological? The same question needs to be asked of sociological criminology. Clarke's arguments about the fear of falling into 'biological reductionism' or the sin of 'social darwinianism', particularly in respect of race, are relevant and cast some light on why some crimes are not studied or only partially.<sup>vi</sup>

Perhaps not a psy, more a sci-fi, intervention Urry contends that, 'the car-driver is a 'hybrid' assemblage, not simply of autonomous humans but simultaneously of machines, roads, buildings, signs and entire cultures of mobility' (2000:3). Whilst this is not a purely interior issue it not a clearly external issue and speaks of our relationship to

the car – not just of dependence/addiction to it as some metaphors have it. It is also contested. Virillio is critical of such cyborg notions, instead seeing a ‘loss of contact with the body’ the ‘speed machine’ and claims to ‘put on ones racing car leads to ‘cybernetic steering of disunited lovers’ (Virillio in Crabbe and Blackshaw 2004: 138)

Having briefly discussed social structural and individual cognitive and psychic issues in criminology we turn now to the example of the car which illustrate some of the arguments about close or ambivalent criminology.

### Cars

Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1985) note that general theories of delinquency have little to say about vehicle violations, yet disobeying traffic codes may be the most common offence among older adolescents. Bottomley and Pease note, ‘the motor car is arguably the most criminogenic device yet invented (1986:12) and Higgins and Albrecht also noted:

Since the symbolic value and use of the automobile is central to American adolescent life-styles, it seems surprising that juvenile use of cars has not received more sociological attention. (1982:39)

Corbett (2003) sought to remedy some of these issues yet O’Connell (2006) is able to restate the claim about the paucity of work in the area. Whilst criminology may not have had much to say about car crime and traffic offences the police and media have been more attentive, if still sporadically. As the following historical material shows the car and traffic have long presented a problem to the police which makes it yet more surprising that criminology has not seen fit to address the problem other than by looking at ‘offenders’.

As we shall see, the car and our relationship to it has been a problem for some time. Roughly twenty years after the invention of the car the Commissioner for Police of the Metropolis noted:

..larcenies of motor cars and vans have been frequent. These, again, are in a large measure due to the carelessness of owners. The best remedy in this case is an improvement in the system of registration which might be so arranged as to make the disposal of a stolen car extremely difficult. (Metropolitan Police 1919:12).

The Commissioner's exhortation to motorists could come from the Home Office's Car Crime Prevention publicity. The blame is put on the owner; no mention is made of joyriders though the term was known by then (Partridge, 1984).

In 1921 the Commissioner again returns to car crime, 'If insurance companies and underwriters would combine to put their assured on stricter terms much crime of this and other kinds would be avoided.', and, 'Thefts of motor cars are somewhat numerous', unfortunately, 'the new system of registration ...has not yet had the desired results..' Of the 624 cars and motor cycles reported stolen that year 394 had been left unattended. Clearly not everyone could afford a chauffeur. Parking was then a substantial problem and more space in each of the Commissioner's reports is given over to the problems of growing traffic.

Flower and Jones (1981:74) found owners complained that Chauffeurs took cars without their consent and took other servants on joyrides; and that in 1905 a magistrate blamed Chauffeurs for 75% of accidents. Yet at that time chauffeurs were certificated by manufacturers, unlike the owner/driver suggesting some class bias in the magistrates' views. Pettifer and Turner (1984:219-220) quote an article titled 'Get After the Chauffeurs' in *Life Magazine* 1906 which suggested the public hanging in Madison Sq of reckless drivers. The article concluded 'Is homicide by automobile so much less culpable than homicide with a gun?'<sup>vii</sup>

In 1926 (Metropolitan Police) 1,092 cars were stolen in England and Wales of which 941 were recovered. In London 809 cars were stolen of which 698 were recovered, again prompting the Commissioner to comment, 'In a very large proportion the motor car or cycle was left unattended in the street, and the larceny might have been prevented had some precaution been taken by the owner.', and:

If Insurance Companies would combine in measures to encourage persons who leave cars unattended in the streets to take reasonable precautions, such as securing some part which is vital to the movement of the car, they would substantially reduce the opportunities for theft at present so frequently offered by motor car owners." (Metropolitan Police 1926:16)

In 1928, when in Great Britain cars stolen numbered 2,213 of which 2,042 were recovered, the Commissioner was wrestling with the evidential problems of car theft:

Statistics regarding motor cars, etc, lost or stolen present peculiar difficulties. During the year as many as 1,844 cars and 276 motor cycles were reported to the Commissioner's Office as stolen in the MPD.

But of these 1709 cars and 124 cycles were subsequently found, generally within a few hours of their loss, and under circumstances which would make a charge of theft impossible, even if the culprits were discovered

In many cases the object is only a *pleasure jaunt*, but cases where the vehicle is used for the commission of a crime are by no means infrequent. (my emphasis) (Metropolitan Police 1928:16)

In the 1930 Report the continuing problem of taking and driving away and owner indifference is mentioned but section 28 of the Road Traffic Act 1930 is seen to hold out some hope. The car crime figures for London now outweighed those for the whole of Great Britain two years previously; 4,941 cars were stolen and 4,759 were recovered. In

1931, the first full year of the RTA 1930, there were 186 TDA convictions. But still in 1933 the Commissioner says, ‘...it cannot be too strongly impressed on motorists that if they leave their cars so they can be easily driven away they are offering facilities for the commission of crime.’ (Metropolitan Police 1933:33)

The Road Traffic Act 1934 introduced a 30 mph limit for cars in built up areas from 18 March 1935. The Commissioner complained of local benches that they seemed reluctant to convict, thinking a margin over the legal limit may well have been allowed. Under the headline ‘METHOD ON THE ROADS’ The Times (4 January 1935) reported:

Mr. Hore-Belisha, Minister of Transport, broadcasting in the National programme at 9.20 p.m. last night, said:- New drivers of mechanical vehicles will have to prove from April next, as engine drivers and pilots now do, their capacity and skill and their knowledge of the mechanism for which they assume responsibility. [...]To be able to travel at speed is a pleasant sensation and an advantage which this generation possesses. But surely no one can claim to enjoy this pleasure and profit by this advantage in circumstances which endanger other people. In a built-up area 30 miles an hour should be a maximum, and I propose to make it so. I am asking the local authorities to expedite their arrangements for marking their areas.

The Commissioner’s report for 1940 notes that black-out conditions and petrol rationing decreased car theft but increased bike theft. The 1946 report distinguishes theft from taking away (i.e. recovered within 2 days). That year in London 2,093 cars were recorded as stolen; though 1,315 were recovered but 9,984 were reported stolen of which 9,241 were recovered. The tables accompanying that year’s report records that 16.5% of those convicted of 'larceny of motor' were under 17 and 35.7% 17-21. The increased numbers of cars on the road lead to rising car crime figures even when recorded crime more generally fell. Recorded crime fell three years running in 1952, 53 and 54 - when it fell below the pre-War figure.

Car crime had continued to rise up to the war as did car ownership but the Commissioner did not return to the subject until 1957 when he complained that:

Many of these vehicles are used in the commission of crime: often, driven by uninsured drivers involving innocent people. The offence of stealing or 'taking and driving away' a motor vehicle is in my view an extremely serious one; the manner in which the offenders are often dealt with by the courts does not afford an effective deterrent. (Metropolitan Police 1957:9)

By 1965 the numbers of motor vehicles stolen in London was 7,284 and 39,553 were Taken and Driven Away (TDA). In 1974 'autocrime' (particularly taking away) was up 50% from 4 years previously with 58,025 thefts and TDAs.

Whilst autocrime continued to worsen it was not until 1986 that the Commissioner was again moved to note, contradicting the 1926 report: 'at one time, unattended vehicles in the street were a rare sight' (Metropolitan Police 1986:39). He reflects the thoughts of his predecessors when he goes on to say, 'A more thoughtful approach to the security of vehicles and contents by both the public and vehicle manufacturers is undoubtedly the most effective way of securing a substantive decrease in crime.' Nonetheless, 'Autocrime' was dropped that year from being a specific Force priority as he was not satisfied that 'the investment of police resources had resulted in sufficient public benefit.'

Today roads policing does not merit core objective status. ACPO (nd) try to put a positive spin on this, 'Road policing has in recent years been the poor relation of British policing. This trend is now being reversed.'

Historically we have seen that cars and motorists have been seen to be a bit of a nuisance. Toad's infatuation with cars (Grahame: 1992) is treated humorously but nonetheless condemned. Now, potentially as the owner of a Hummer, Toad would see again himself a victim.

‘War on Motorists’ – who is the victim?

Garland rightly argues that, ‘the sanctified persona of the suffering victim has become a valued commodity in the circuits of political and media exchange’ (2001:143). He was talking about the use made of the victim in promulgating a ‘populist’ and ‘politicized’ ‘penal segregation’ but the mantle of victimhood and the discourse on it is fiercely contested. Thus the campaigners of Fathers for Justice seek to portray themselves as victims of women and the divorce system – lawyers and judges.

We have side-taking (lanes?) on the roads too. On behalf of the ‘motorist’ are some in the media and specific campaigning groups such as The Association of British Drivers (ABD), whose website claims it is ‘the voice of the driver’ or Motorists Against Detection (MAD).<sup>viii</sup> On the other hand organisations like Brake and Roadpeace speak on behalf of ‘road victims’ and we find the very same media, as we shall see, fulminating on their behalf too.<sup>ix</sup>

Brake describe themselves as ‘the road safety charity’ and have a growing list of corporate sponsors – many from motoring and transport industry – but also provide victim support and host space for survivor poetry.<sup>x</sup> They point out the apparent disparities between sentences for motoring and non-motoring offences. Whilst seeing general driver education as important they subscribe to the othering of drunk drivers and joyriders. Roadpeace shares many of the same ideals but not Brake’s budget and sponsorship so appears more to memorialise road death victims and to have a more activist but also European focus. Material about reduced car use and safer car use is to be found on both sites but this is not an absolutist call for car crime and motoring offences to be ended by prohibition as drugs and alcohol are or have been. Indeed whilst both motorist/motoring and road safety/danger campaigners stand fairly far apart both use the same discursive highway.

Whilst the AA and RAC have a long history of campaigning on behalf of motorists – and the AA originally in helping them evade detection through signals from

their patrols – they are better known now as service organisations offering repairs, towing insurance etc. Heir to the campaigning element is the ABD. They have a manifesto running to 26 sub-heads but their website shows them to be mostly exercised by a desire to ‘reclaim the roads for those who pay for them’ – i.e. to improve roads, raise speed limits (within safety principles), fight ‘political correctness’, give the lie to ‘global warming’ and ‘end the abuse of speed cameras for extorting money’. In short they are ‘against the tide of anti-car hysteria and driver persecution sweeping Britain’. MAD is much more focussed on speed cameras and declares ‘zero tolerance’ against them; with the ironically named ‘Captain Gatso’ urging their destruction.<sup>xi</sup>

Some of the same attitudes are represented more ambivalently in the dedicated motoring media in its attempts to recognise some of the problems but without alienating their core readership and advertisers.

A typical mainstream motoring line can be found in *Autocar*.<sup>xii</sup> Its Editor’s Letter and ‘analysis’ (Vol 250:2 11 October 2006) trumpeted Department of Transport figures that showed only 5% of all road accidents and 10% of deaths were attributed by police to exceeding the speed limit. It went on to note the 325 deaths were too many but, ‘a digital camera is no substitute for an experienced traffic cop’. And that issue carries an anonymous letter from one officer decrying cut backs in their numbers. As it is the ‘letter of the week’ he receives a ‘Road Angel’ device, ‘safety alert system’ – in short, an audible warning of speed cameras ahead!<sup>xiii</sup>

The analysis of the DoT’s report runs to one page of graphic and does not cite the report but closer reading shows ‘careless, reckless or in a hurry’ was cited in 16%, ‘aggressive driving’ in 4%, ‘going too fast for conditions’ in 12% and the 66% that are aggregated as ‘driver error or reaction’ include ‘loss of control’ (14%), ‘failed to judge other person’s path/speed’ (18%) and a substantial 32% of accidents were adjudged to be due to failure to look properly. The analysis notes that up to six factors may be involved in one scene, so these are not discrete entities but it is clear that vehicle speed or driver haste may be involved in most accidents. Indeed, their anonymous copper’s letter

headlined 'WE NEED MORE TRAFFIC COPS' notes, 'let's not forget how excess speed in inappropriate conditions still claims the biggest amount of lives on our roads'. A cynic might think that this nostalgia for the good old days of traffic policing is related to the growth of cameras and Automatic Number Recognition Systems and those who complain about the cameras would have been amongst those who asked traffic officers, 'Have you no real villains to chase?'

*Autocar's* circulation figures for early 2006 are about 61,000 copies a week. Unlike some consumer magazines it offers no breakdown of its readerships by gender or class etc. For instance IPC's *Loaded*, which is aimed specifically at young men, boasts a 13% female readership, yet its, admittedly specialist titles, *4x4 Magazine* and *Land Rover World* have 7% and 4% respectively.<sup>xiv</sup> However, gender is at issue here. Of the seven signed letters in *Autocar* all bear a male name save one that only has initials.

Serendipitously an op-ed (opinion/editorial page) piece 'And another thing...' headed, 'Fighting for gender equality in motoring' argues speed culture is not purely 'a male phenomenon'.<sup>xv</sup> The male writer takes issue with a woman newspaper columnist's musings on the crash of *Top Gear's* Richard Hammond based on Diana Rigg's appearance in a sports car in *The Avenger's*, his sightings of women drivers in BMWs and a side swipe at feminism ('phallogentric', 'sisters' and 'struggle').

More of this ambivalence can be found in newspapers as these examples show. A search of LexisNexis on 5 January 2006 for all UK newspapers with 'motorist' in the headline in the last year revealed 32 and that of 'motorist' in the body of the story for all national newspapers revealed 142 stories.<sup>xvi</sup> Such stories are often markers for a variety of anxieties so it is no surprise to see the *Mail on Sunday* (October 22, 2006) declare (though only on page 49), 'Immigrant motorists 'unsafe on our roads''. These genderless immigrants and asylum seekers are portrayed as bad drivers and their home countries testing systems derided. Clearly globalisation and migration does pose problems here but the ideology of the paper suggests it is merely a convenient stick and that such motorists can safely be 'othered'; they are not 'us' or close to us.

Elsewhere I have argued (Groombridge, 1998) that concerns about joyriders and road rage incidents serve to comfort and confirm in the reader the sense that they are a normal 'good' driver. Men have, and continue, to comfort themselves with the alleged deficiencies of women's driving in the face of accident statistics and lower insurance premiums. Adverts for the car insurance firm Sheilas' Wheels play with this in imagining that even an Australian outback-dwelling man – a guarantor of manliness – would seek to impersonate a woman to secure their cheap rates.

More specifically on our topic we find that the *Daily Mail* (March 31, 2006) takes a martial tone in headlining, '13M FINES FOR DRIVERS; That's one for every two cars in the country, as the war on motorists gets more intense each month' yet days earlier (March 14, 2006) had complained, 'THE DEATHTRAP DRIVERS; Jamie died when he was hit by a driver who had drunk a bottle of whisky, had no licence and no insurance - just one more victim of a lethal epidemic of TWO MILLION illegal motorists who face only derisory punishments if they are caught...'

Clearly the police are meant to catch those two million illegal motorists without ruffling the feathers of the rest of us; and, ramping up the anxiety rating, they refer to nine million in a story on September 20, 2006

NEW analysis from the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) shows that some inner-city areas have six times more uninsured drivers on the road than the national average. Honest drivers can be left out of pocket if their property is damaged by an uninsured driver. With nine million illegal drivers at large, this is becoming more likely.

Yet report (September 11, 2006), 'Prosecutors told to get tough with motorists who kill'. Such ambivalence can be found in other publications than the *Mail* or *Autocar* but they are representative of 'the middle of the road'.

Some of the press and BBC's *Top Gear* have taken up the 'war on the motorist' discourse and it is tempting to say that if they drive within limits then they can avoid the fines. Fathers for Justice campaigners may be wrong about their own circumstances but their problems and protest point to an imbalance in the system that has not kept up with changes in the gender order. Similarly – and perhaps overlapping – driving campaigners see the environmental and safety discourse deployed by a punitive, tax-raising administration as threatening their mobility in which much of their gender and class identity may be involved. So they are right to see themselves as threatened. Whether cameras are called 'safety' or 'speed' they are widely seen as revenue raising which must raise legitimacy issues for the criminal justice system. Moreover, how does such a system deal with matters when the majority of its target population is about half the total population?

Closing in

Garland (2001: 137) notes a schizoid division in 'official criminology' between:

*a criminology of the self*, that characterises offenders as normal, rational consumers, just like us: and there is a *criminology of the other*, of the threatening outcast, the fearsome stranger, the excluded and the embittered. One is invoked to routinize crime, to allay disproportionate fears and to promote preventative action. The other functions to demonize the criminal, to act out popular fears and resentments, and to promote support for state punishment.

Garland describes these positions as poles of a continuum from which the middle ground of 'social democratic criminology' is excluded. This social democratic, 'welfarist' criminology, 'depicted the offender as disadvantaged or poorly socialized' (op cit) and requiring remedial assistance.<sup>xvii</sup>

Garland's typology is useful in many respects but obscures some similarity between the two criminological poles of self and other. He notes the contradictions

between the positions and rightly suggests bifurcation explains away some of the problem. So low end offenders are 'like us' but high end offenders can be properly demonised. The extreme 'othering' of terrorists enables the suspension of rights which have an impact on our selves and those of those like us and others. However, even the criminology of the self does not come close to recognising the full extent of the self or the extent to which elements of the self are to be found in the other.

This other might be seen, in Kleinian terms, as a splitting off of the bad elements of the self and their projection onto the other.<sup>xviii</sup> However, feminists, following De Beauvoir, have used the term 'the Other' in discussion of how women are related to men as the poorer relation in couplets such as culture/nature and production/reproduction. Elsewhere (Groombridge: 1997) I have suggested that in many ways crime, and criminological discourse with it, has been able to 'other' the criminal so successfully that women are not even needed for this position.

Broadly two attitudes have been taken by male criminologists to male criminals. First the positivist, empiricist, correctionalist attitude of the Father which sees the Criminal - like the Woman and the Homosexual - as Others in need of correction. Secondly, the appreciative attitude which sees the Father as oppressive and takes the side of the (rebellious or misguided) younger brother. Naffine is critical of both strands:

Criminologists of the empirical sort are, therefore, committed to a traditional ideal of objectivity. When they study an object, they must strive to get themselves out of the field of vision, out of the line of enquiry - and they believe it is feasible to do this. (1997:22)

Of appreciative studies, Naffine says:

It is, therefore, unlikely that these efforts of the new men of criminology to bridge the cultural gulf between themselves and the working class offender were ever entirely successful. Certainly, there was no real sense of the criminologist going

native, abandoning the privileges and cultural advantages of the academic male (and neither has this academic female). (1997:42)

Her parenthetical comment signals that she is not claiming a superior understanding to those who ‘were there’ or ‘got their hands dirty’. Perhaps she is suggesting that they should have ‘gone native’. My experience of fieldwork at motor projects (Groombridge, 1998) was not sufficient for me to speak about youthful working class joyriders, let alone for them. However, I recognised that I was already a native of the world of men, car users and consumer of cultural products such as car adverts and film.

Close up

Throughout this paper discussion of political, economic and other structural externalities have been combined with psychoanalytic reflection on sub-conscious ‘internalities’ as well as conscious self-reflection to explain why people do things that might be called crime and why some of that is studied and some not or only studied partially – in part and partisanly. The explanations of some partisan commentators and some ambivalent or even hypocritical ones have been considered too. It has been necessary to do all this, and to relate this to concrete instances within criminology, to shine a light of some its dirty little secrets.

*Roadrage* and *joyriding* are emotions as well as crimes/harms. They are also very close to the quieter satisfactions of the ‘Sunday motorist’ or ‘little old lady driving to Church’. They are only made possible on the scale they are on roads provided by the State in vehicles provided by large corporations. Their construction and use is polluting. Non-ownership or use is to be rendered a non-person. Whether phallic or womb-like our car use is part of our identity performance. Cars are materially, ideologically, cognitively and psychically relevant to society and individuals, both users and non-users. Video games like *Grand Theft Auto* are often condemned as causing or likely to cause bad driving (shooting and general disrespect of women too) but might just as well be seen as a mirror reflecting our own desires and bad conscience. Traditional criminology and

even radical critiques of it will not get a handle on legal or illegal car use without taking these issues into account.

So if we were to get close to ourselves and the other in our criminology what might it look like? Moreover what policy options might it favour? Doing something about rape and domestic violence for women clearly but not necessarily to men. Doing something for workers who are injured and about the circumstances in which they are injured but not necessarily to bosses. There are psychic satisfactions in committing some crime but that is no reason to demand the same satisfactions from punishment.

So moving to cars and motoring offences; they do need taking more seriously but to 'string up' a few offenders (even if they are guilty of the most serious of crimes) is a form of penal substitutionism where these few offenders stand in for us, many offenders. But the opposite is not helpful either where every infraction is recorded making official offenders of us all. Media and victim's movement attacks on joyriders, roadrage etc have a moral force but deflect from the fact that most car use is problematic and harmful. The current proposal for road pricing is a test case for some of these issues. Environmentalism would support it but criminological and civil liberties concerns might outweigh those but leave one siding with the 'motoring' organisations. The Environmental Transport Association seek to square this circle by supporting road charging but not privacy invading technology.<sup>xix</sup>

To criminalise more of it and to simply automate detection is a bit like legalising heroin but criminalising overdoses or, as we seem to have done with alcohol (like drugs another close subject) freeing up use of it whilst condemning binges. Moreover, automated policing by camera cannot (yet) catch drunk drivers and may be a perverse incentive to joyriders.

Media fears typically focus on the prospect of being the victim of crime getting closer all the time. The motoring groups discussed above overplay the victim card but are right in noting the criminalisation of more of 'their/our' activities. Pragmatically it is

easier to catch these new, easily detected criminals. This may have deleterious effects on the capacity of the police to catch the old less easily detected criminals and their relationship with 'motorists' who will always/already be criminal. It will be easier to turn the harms of individual motorists into crimes which are automatically punished than that of the car/roads complex. It is easier to focus on individual paedophiles than on our sex-saturated public discourse (Hudson, 2005). Indeed we eat all these 'folk devils' up and spew them out in Young's 'bulimia' metaphor (1999) but in doing so we increasingly gnaw on our own vitals. It us who drives; it is our children who wear 'hoodies'.<sup>xx</sup>

Blackshaw and Crabbe (2004) seek to give voice to those 'far off' (following Rorty); and challenge their readers to imagine themselves as the 'deviant' other' (2004: x). Car use (and they discuss car 'cruising') and online and video worlds offers all of us no need to imagine but to actually be deviant.

There is a growing interest in the criminology of virtual worlds (Williams: 2006 and Yar: 2006) but there is a danger that these too will be subject to an othering as they are perceived as marginal, esoteric, 'boy's stuff'. Some of Williams (op cit) respondents complained that their online communities were used as games by some. That is, instead of building online community and relating to other people in the virtual world they vandalised and disrespected people and properties.

Road use has a ludic quality too, in/on which some users – joyriders, little old ladies, mobile phone users, indeed pretty much all of us - gain some individual satisfaction from our use of communal road space. What we call private transport has very public consequences. A green perspective may help temper some car use as might brute economics but the communal issues of car use need emphasising too.

Behaviour on line and on road may be very close. One concern in the study of cyber crime is that essentially old crimes were repackaged by the media as new crimes when committed on line. There is some merit in this 'new-wine-in-old-bottles' argument but to use the same metaphor there is some vintage wine in the old bottles that has yet to

be sampled. Car crimes and motoring or traffic offences remain undervalued as topics in themselves, being seen perhaps as too mundane, yet I argue they need studying in their own right and can serve as a means to re-examine criminology's relationship to its subject and wider issues.

- <sup>i</sup> Traditionally the unanswerable question was, 'have you stopped beating your wife?' And the answer is no; I drive therefore I offend.
- <sup>ii</sup> See Groombridge (2006) on 'sexuality' and 'queer theory' to see the extent to which these are ignored in criminology.
- <sup>iii</sup> Guns offer a form of equality to American women (Homsher, 2000) but such women continue to represent only one tenth of known murder offenders (FBI, 2006).
- <sup>iv</sup> Fireball resulting from rear end shunts due to poor placement and inadequate protection of the fuel tank.
- <sup>v</sup> Here I might just say that I am a car owner and user but no 'petrolhead' yet might be defined as a 'manipulator' by Corbett and Caramlau (2006) in respect of my driving behaviour when faced by speed cameras.
- <sup>vi</sup> I have science A levels and my first, youthful exposure to 'sociology' was Tinbergen's (1965) work on the social behaviour of animals.
- <sup>vii</sup> Williams (1991) makes the same point in his epic anti-car poem which imagines an alien untutored in the ways of the car visiting Earth: The Visitor follows up on the court reports: Hit someone over the head with a discarded chrome fender And kill them: Life. Take the precaution of attaching the fender to a car And kill them: Six months, License to drive briefly suspended.
- <sup>viii</sup> ABD <http://www.abd.org.uk/index.htm> and MAD <http://www.speedcam.co.uk/welcome.htm> (accessed 10 January 2007)
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.brake.org.uk/> and <http://www.roadpeace.org/> (accessed 10 January 2007)
- <sup>x</sup> Others prefer the term road danger see <http://www.rdrf.org/> (accessed 18 January 2007)
- <sup>xi</sup> At the time of writing a series of letter bombs, the media confidently asserts, are being sent to 'anti-driver' organisations by an enraged motorist.
- <sup>xii</sup> the world's oldest car magazine having been founded in 1895.
- <sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.blackspot.com/> (accessed 11 January 2007)
- <sup>xiv</sup> <http://www.ipcmedia.com/mediainfo/loaded.pdf>  
<http://offline.hbpl.co.uk//HaymarketCorporate/downloads/AutocarABC.pdf>  
<http://www.ipcmedia.com/mediainfo/fourbyfour.pdf>  
<http://www.ipcmedia.com/mediainfo/landroverworld.pdf> all accessed 11 January 2007.
- <sup>xv</sup> A note on methodology: this magazine was 'picked up' on 11 January 2007 whilst the author waited at KwikFit, Borehamwood, for an MOT test.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Strangely no stories or headlines after late October 2006 appeared. This may be due to some error but it is the content of the stories found rather than their numbers that are at issue here.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ruggiero (1996) notes the 'aetiology of deficit' implicit in such accounts and those of other positivists.
- <sup>xviii</sup> I rely here on the work of Jefferson (1994) who has strongly argued for a psycho-social criminology (2002).
- <sup>xix</sup> 'Motorists welcome road user charging' <http://www.eta.co.uk/news/newsview.asp?n=406> (accessed 11 February 2007)
- <sup>xx</sup> I have one myself.

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