

Fast Knocks and Nags

The Stolen Car in the Urban Vernacular Culture of Cork¹

Stiofán Ó Cadhla

Ó Cadhla, Stiofán 2001: Fast Knocks and Nags. The Stolen Car in the Urban Vernacular Culture of Cork. – *Ethnologia Europaea* 31:2 77–94.

In spite of, or due to, its centrality to everyday life the car is a much neglected aspect of contemporary material and symbolic culture. Its presence has until very recently manifested itself largely in epic national industrial histories or in overtly critical environmentalist accounts and social histories. The phenomenon of joyriding has received even less academic attention. This may be due to its problematic positioning in the liminal zones of many disciplines, in an epistemological vacuum. This article foregrounds the cultural aspect of joyriding in a particular context. It questions the more obvious interpretative tendencies like “youth culture” or “subculture” as the result of an agist or sedentary hierarchy articulated from within an exclusionary and normative discourse. It is argued that this is better understood as a variant of a more general protean cultural process through which the very sign of modernity and consumerism (with all its assumptions of alienation and assimilation) becomes part of a forceful vernacular or lived-in urban culture.

Stiofán Ó Cadhla, Dr. Department of Béaloideas, Folklore and Ethnology, (1 Elderwood, College Road), National University of Ireland, Cork, Ireland. E-mail: S.cadhla@ucc.ie

“Joyriding has become a form of entertainment in Cork’s Northside,”
[*Evening Echo*, 17.6.87]

Introduction

The rhythms and routines of everyday life in the city do not always become noticeable as “culture” in the making. Every Friday evening the pulse of the city quickens, it becomes noisy and chaotic, drivers become aggressive, animated and hostile sitting in vehicles that are more than means of transport, they are signs of importance, of significance, statements in themselves, artifactual utterances. Black cars in funeral or state processions, white cars in wedding ceremonies, moving slowly in respect or quickly in disrespect. Some colours are lucky, others unlucky. The tyres of a new car are kicked to bring good fortune. The car recedes or camouflages itself in the general expressivity of contemporary materiality and symbolism, what Ross (1996:19) calls its “seamless integration into the fabric everyday life” and transforma-

tion into discourse. Cars are moralistic, respectable, executive or recreational, the second-hand car salesman is immoral, the new car salesman is respectable, he wears a collar and tie. Drivers themselves are ‘mannerly’ or ‘unmannerly’.

This research topic emerged partially from the research of the Northside Folklore Project, a community based urban folklore project of at least ten years standing established between urban community groups and the Department of Béaloideas, Folklore and Ethnology at University College, Cork (Hunter 1999 and Ó Cruaíoch et al. 1993). The NFP had begun life as an undergraduate urban ethnology research question of the late 1980s. The Northside of Cork city is more than a spatial orientation, it is an identity, an imagined space, a cultural boundary of some significance in the vernacular cosmography of the cityscape. It is a conception of community life immediately recognisable to all who live in or are familiar with the city. The Northside’s origins lie in the medieval settlement patterns of the population which spanned out on a north-south axis at the northern and

southern approaches to the town. The river Lee divides north from south. Clearances of the inner city in the 1920s and 1930s led to the outward development of housing-estates like Gurranabraher in the north west, Togher and Ballyphehane in the south. More recently in the 1960s and 1970s further public housing-estates were built on ‘green-field sites’ in Mayfield, Knocknaheeny and Mahon (McCárthaigh 1997 and Clarke 1995). The constant re-settlement into and out of the area from other areas of the inner-city and the burgeoning Northside of recent decades led to its conception in Hannerzian terms (1980: 287) as a “hothouse of cultural process” and a focus for the ethnographic exploration of ‘constantly recreated and re-articulated social and cultural identity’ (Ó Cruaíoch et al. 1993: 18). Wolf (1996: 153) argues that this reorganisation of the urban spatial environment itself – the spread to the suburbs and the centralisation of business – increased urban dependence on the car.

The specific focus of this research is ‘joyrid-

ing,’ initially defined as the theft or ‘unauthorised taking’ of an MPV (motor propelled vehicle), usually a car or motorbike, for the purpose of recreation. Generally speaking this involves driving conspicuously at high speeds. This is what it appears to be for society in general. The word joyride is now often replaced in the media with the term death-ride. The OED (Aitchison 1994: 23) offers the following examples of its use. The first dates from 1908, “joy-riders – light hearted Londoner folk concerned about nothing but their own pleasure” or “there are two million people in this country who wish for what is vulgarly called a *joyride* on an aeroplane ... *joyriders* will not be taken aloft one at a time but in half-dozens and dozens, in big flying boats and multiple engined machines” (ibid.). In the 1920s and 30s a joyride from Gatwick could be had for a guinea including stunt-flying. The term appears to have been applied around this time also to recreational driving.

The meaning of the word is still benign in the 1970s, in the local *Evening Echo* of April 1974



A view of the area of Cork's Northside featured in the fieldwork.

an unauthored column states that “joyriders are very active in Cork city at the present time...a Garda spokesman told the ‘Echo’ that vehicles did not seem to be taken for any particular purpose and seem to be taken by youths who planned on going for joyrides”. The emotive and pejorative nature of the term is a result of deaths and tragedies involving both drivers, passengers and the public in more recent years. The term has developed marked class links that are underlined by a notion of the violation of private property, high speeds, erratic or irregular driving in privately owned vehicles is seldom if ever called joyriding. It is not entirely satisfactory as a term to work with in research, certainly not as “joyrider” and it will alternate with participant (in both the research and the activity).

Ethics and Methodology

Ethnographic research moves offstage very quickly once begun, real people and real lives are encountered without props or supports. Moving through these lives – in this case through the community, prisons and crime diversion programmes – raises many political, ideological, personal and cultural questions. The ‘real’ world of the researcher recedes and is rendered anomalous and relative. On the street the canons of theory, methodology and sound practice count for little, there are no benchmarks, no bookish reference points beyond the questions, the talk and the stories. There is a simultaneous learning and unlearning of repertoires. There are other questions and other stories. The only control is the effort after methodological rigour and the hope that what is achieved is in some way a representation of the interactions of various individuals who for various reasons became involved in a particular behaviour at a particular time. This could be said of the culture of the judiciary as surely as that of joyriding. Neither is this their lives in their entirety but a small part of them that, if anything, may be overmagnified.

The ethical imperatives are personal, public, and professional in that order. The first question was whether to do it or not and this remained for a time. My continuing was largely

due to encouragement from contacts along the way and the co-operation of many individuals. The topic can be construed to be an emotive one, particularly in the communities coping with the effects of the activity. In this conception of community, however, I include the participants. Some other professionals wondered why a folklorist-ethnographer would be interested in the topic. This contrasted with an immediate recognition in participants that it made sense. This raises an interesting question which I try to address below. Ethnography has a vision of its own whether imagined, contrived or creative and one of the strengths of this vision is the foregrounding of vernacular or lived-in culture. In this case the topic appears to be in a ‘field’ that many other disciplines have defined, delimited and conventionalised as their own. The more or less established registration and elaboration of some elements of culture in the social sciences as marginal (classic social psychological issues of poverty, deprivation or social abnormality) to the exclusion of wider cultural processes raises interesting epistemological questions as well as some serious ethical ones. The psychological assessment of one participant as ‘backward’ on the basis that he was not familiar with “Mary had a little lamb” is blunt and unsettling in the 21st century.

The research was conducted with consideration of the sensitivity of the community (both the participants and the wider public). Although having disadvantages in terms of methodology I worked only through contacts who were familiar with the area and the people and did not enter the community inquiring about “joyriding” for example. Although I considered it I did not contact community activists, priests or local councillors as my aim was to present an “insider” account. The personal considerations were real and at one point I thought about stopping following a highly publicised tragedy. I did not interview individuals who had been involved in accidents, partly to avoid the upset involved but mainly to prevent the research moving into emotional areas and away from the ethnographic. It could, however, be argued that any of the participants could have been involved in accidents, some were and others consider themselves lucky that they were not. Early anxiety

concerning the participants was soon forgotten and the research was wholly dependant on their openness in sharing their experiences, without them the research would have been impossible. Professional considerations included the real clash between academic research and the public, the question of who the research is for is a real one as it can determine the results to a greater or lesser extent. This research was not directly funded or supported by any institution, rather it slipped between many institutions. All interviews were conducted personally, ethnography is the result of a personal engagement with theory, method and the street, nobody else can do your ethnography for you (as well as you can). Most participants had spent time in prison or were in prison for the activity and had paid the penalty formally imposed upon them by society already but the descretion used was more about protecting identities given the constructed sensitivity of the subject. One practical consequence of this was that participant observation was limited, it would have been possible to observe joyriding but this may have produced performances for my benefit. This was possible, however, in other situations, in the prisons and amongst the participants themselves in various locations. The idea of disguising the places in the research, almost a norm of ethnography, was also a possibility but was disgarded as this in itself disguises much of the actual value of the research. The maintenance of the ethnographic integrity of the research was a priority at all times, this was a central concern due to the dense sociologisation of the area.

The ethnographic interview was the dominant method used in the research with this ranging on an improvised scale from casual conversations, non-structured and structured interviews. Over twenty interviews were held in various locations, restaurants, prisons, the Northside Folklore Project base, the Cork Auto-Crime Diversion Project and even on the telephone on one occasion, they were both recorded and unrecorded. The questionnaire was worked out in the interviews themselves, being amended as the research progressed until it reached a point where it seemed to encompass the scope or range of the envisaged research boundary

(which I speak of below). The statistical conundrum which I treat below further illustrates the officially anomalous nature of the registration of the activity and the place itself.

Hot-Rodders-Turned-Juvenile-Delinquents

It appears reasonable to assume that cars and motorbikes were being stolen as soon as they became popular, Humphries (1995:185) for example says that cars and motorbikes were being stolen in Britain in the 1930s. Barnes (2000:63) says, “where there was cars there was joyriding. Stealing vehicles was easy. Drivers almost always left their keys in the ignition, doors were never locked and there were no alarms. Hot-wiring was in the future. As early as the 1920s, joyriding...was becoming common”. Cars were being stolen in Cork at least as far back as the 1960s. Cars, motorbikes and other vehicles, were likely to have been fair game as soon as they became widely distributed, accessible and (after a period of DIY experimentation and intense discussion of methods of theft) readily available. At one time the wipers of a particular sports Mini were found to open a BMW model in much the same way as a key, their constant disappearance mystified the owners of Minis in Cork for a time. One car thief was particularly in demand in Cork for a period having acquired a “barrel-popper” (a tool of the professional car thief) in London. It was around the turn of the nineteenth century (1899) that Henry Ford began the mass production of cars producing two million annually between 1917 and 1919. Mass motorisation was later coming to Western Europe (see Wolf). It is to America that we must look for the earliest instances of cruising, street racing, hot rods and drag racing or, as Witzel and Bash (1997:18) put it, “hot rodders-turned-juvenile-delinquents” that are depicted in films like *Devil on Wheels*, *Running Wild*, *Hod Rods to Hell* and are personified in *Rebel Without a Cause* by James Dean.

In the 1950s “the cult of the American teenager and the culture of the automobile were racing towards each other at high speed – head on. When they finally collided in the streets, motorists felt the impact nation-wide, and be-

fore all was said and done, the sounds of squealing tires and rumbling mufflers reverberated from coast to coast” (ibid:16). The car became an expression of youthfulness and rebelliousness, the street became an automotive stage, motorists, pedestrians and shoppers were harassed and mooned at, races were held, drivers played chicken, laying a ‘scratch’, or long patch of tire rubber on the road “by stomping on the brake pedal and pouring on the power until the car almost redlined...a smoky ‘burnout’ came in second” (ibid:50). In later years this car culture evolved into a fully-fledged sport. For now we are interested in how these ideas have drifted into local urban vernacular culture some twenty years later.

This phenomenon is often linked in the popular imagination with the newest area of the Northside, an area built in the nineteen seventies. While doing fieldwork I was told that a boy of nine years of age from the area in question was asked what he would like to be when he grew up, his answer was “a joyrider!”. The media have referred to Cork city as “the joyrid-

ing capital of Ireland”. One hundred years after the ‘horseless carriage’ made its first appearance in the city the Northside has gained a reputation for the dangerous popular tradition widely referred to as “joyriding”. The association of joyriding with the area features in the popular blazons (Bakhtin 1984:5) of the city, many jokes reflect this, what do you call a Northsider in a suit? The defendant! What do you call a Northsider in a BMW? A Joyrider! In the nineteen eighties there was a song which music groups sang in the bars of the Northside to the air of ‘Ghostriders in the Sky’, the chorus of this, however, was ‘Joyriders in the Night’. Although reflecting something that happens the journalistic media treatment may have raised the stakes and contributed to the negative image of the area. Drawing on a study by Armstrong and Wilson, Brake (1985: 39) outlines the creation of Glasgow’s Easterhouse estate as a “problem area” resulting from a number of factors (i) the visibility of youths on corners (ii) the politicisation of issues of vandalism (iii) media amplification of deviancy feed-



A view of ‘the Backroad’, the scene of many performances in stolen cars. Photo: Stiofán Ó Cadhla.

ing back into local youth and (iv) the class composition of the police and educators themselves. This moral panic evolved into a form of media cabalism concerning collective conspiratorial youths. The participants are often attributed with a secret argot, selling cars to “creeps²” and ‘gangs’ often being depicted as as having military style “commanders” or “ringleaders”. The media have coined some nicknames for the area in question themselves such as ‘Joyrider Circle’, ‘Circuit of Death’, ‘Joyrider Ally’. *My Home By the Lee* by Richard Cooke, a popular local history of Cork city published in 1999 does not even mention the area.

It is not confined to this area alone (or this country alone) but it is true to say that it has become a relatively persistent feature of life there over a number of years and is considered by participants to be more stylised there, in other areas of the city “they dont pull handbrakers”. There is ample evidence both in the media and in the public domain that it did not originate here, it existed before the area was built in the older housing estates adjoining it and moved with the people. The phenomenon has existed for many decades now but the group of people I have been working with have been involved for the most part in the late 1980s and early 90s. This research is intended as an exercise of ethnographic methodology in what seems, from a distance at least, to be a radically urban context or a characteristically urban phenomenon. The question posed is what does joyriding mean to the young males who *participate* in it. It is not the view of the media, the police, professionals or indeed the population at large (however legitimate these all are) that is being questioned but the view of the insider, this goal in relation to Irish ethnography in general has been expressed as a move ‘to elicit native, insider answers to scholarly questions regarding the creative construction, contested definition and partial transmission of...cultural traditions over time and space’ (Ó Cruaíoch et al 1993:18).

Joyriding is a cultural tradition. It is regular, recognisable and repeatable behaviour, it has the Hannerzian (1980: 307) quality of being one of the “highly observable forms of frequently repeated behaviour, frontstage to almost anybody much of the time, often linked to charac-

teristically built-up forms as well”. Fulfilling this useful if quick test of the three ‘r’s’ would suggest that it is amenable to ethnographic research. The research itself is not, as Jenkins (1993:224) points out, too dangerous (if confined within reasonable ethical boundaries), too extraordinary (sudden, bizarre, once off) and is localised (not inaccessible or is convened within a general locale). Notwithstanding the phenomenon’s spread transnationally throughout the urbanised world it becomes susceptible locally, like other contemporary cultural expressions, once the exclusionary and illusionary effects of private and public moralities, ideologies and routines are opened up. This exclusion or distancing may be the result of previous configurations of folkloristic discourse. Firstly, this distancing may be a salient factor in Irish folklore and ethnology in particular emerging as it is from a protracted process of valorisation of a homogenous ennobling national heritage. Secondly, there is the autohypnotic nature of everyday life, the spellbinding elusiveness of the present or the apparent self-evident and transparent nature of it all which seems not to need further elaboration.

Cultureless Statistics

The first available crime statistics in Ireland date from 1927, this is the year that the Folklore Society of Ireland, forerunner of the Irish Folklore Commission, was established. This was also the year that the last of the 15 million Model Ts came off the assembly line and Henry Ford was better known in parts of the Soviet Union than Stalin (Miller 2001: 6). The year before 2RN, the first Irish radio station, was opened and one early folklore collector recalls his Citroen 11.9 with affection. The denial of modern Irish popular culture is there from its emergence, from South Carolina to Northside Chicago or Northside Cork city. The ideologically undesirable aspects of both urban and rural popular culture remained officially invisible. During that year, however, there were up to two thousand young people charged with offences. The same year there were almost six and a half thousand offences in relation to “owners and drivers of carts” and twelve thousand “motor

car” offences (*Annual Report 1997:95*). More importantly there were not many cars in Ireland even in the 1950s but the number increases dramatically between 1955 and 1970 (Rottman 1980:57). The *Gárdaí*, the Irish police force, were not motorised until the 1950s. Prior to this the car was an elite product. It seems that it was towards the latter end of this time-frame that the car began to lend itself to the expression of newly acquired middle-class suburban status, this being more emphasised by the fact that most car travel was localised. These decades are attributed in empiricist historical discourse in Ireland with a rapid and epic Irish conversion from the traditional to the modern that saw the Irish step out of their pampooties and into black shoe leather. Statistical accounts seem to evince concurrent increases in crimes against property. Between 1961 and 1984, for example, larcenies of motor vehicles rose by 5,000 per cent (Boylan, Curtin and Laver 1989: 206).

There is a problem identifying “joyriding” statistically as it is a popular term and is classified officially as the unauthorised taking of an MPV. O’Mahony (1993:53) shows that the other category officially used, the larceny of vehicles, went from 580 in 1973 to 2,804 in 1991. On the other hand the unauthorised takings in 1973 were listed as standing at 1,685 and in 1991 as 1,843, apparently only a slight rise. Not all car theft amounts to joyriding and not all joyriding amounts to car theft (the official category recognises that the intention is not to steal the vehicle but to use it for amusement for a length of time). There are further points to be considered, however, sometimes cars are stolen for “jobs” but this may not rule out the possibility that the driver enjoys the excitement of using the car or “flashing it around”. At times offenders are caught taking cars to use for theft, burglary or smash-and-grabs and may be apprehended for attempted car theft (interfering with a vehicle’s mechanism) or unauthorised taking. A certain youth in a vehicle (conspicuous or culturally incongruent) may mean one thing to a certain *Gárda* and another thing to other youths. The assumption may be that the person is bent on joyriding while he (it is a masculine activity) may have other things in mind, this was the case for example in one highly publicised and tragic case. Both sta-

tistics are linked in ways that defy exact enumeration.

Other problems are posed by the separate classification of juvenile offenders and the registration of offenders in prisons. Prisons record offences according to the most recent or most serious and so on. This is not a ‘problem’, however, statistics are not an end in themselves, they are indicators. Just as useful, if not more so, are the working statistics thrown up in the local media, in 1984 the *Evening Echo* reported that 40 cars a night were being stolen in Cork. Given the demographics of the city it indicates a lively activity. It was in 1985 for example, following a moral panic in the media, that Fort Mitchell Prison, popularly called ‘Spike Island’ (an old island prison of the British colonial military regime in Ireland) was re-opened specifically for joyriders. Similar ‘outbreaks’ occurred in Belfast and Dublin at the time. With this in mind it is sufficient to glance over the overall statistics for stolen vehicles quoted in O’Mahony (*ibid*: 53). Between 1973 and 1991 it is possible to appreciate the fluctuations; from 10,439 in 1973 it peaks in 1981 at 22,932 and falls again to 11,570 in 1991. Oral testimony suggests that it rose again or was perceived locally to “kick off” again in the mid 1990s but this refers to local perceptions of street performances which is the specific interest of this research. The literature search and positivist fact finding mission sit uncomfortably and strained with the more urgent if illusive ethnographic exploration within cultural worlds that are already defined in vernacular theory and *not* awaiting definition, recognition, accommodation or validation from without.

Up Knocka! Scholarly and Vernacular Boundaries

There are relatively clear boundaries to the research as regards time and space. As already stated it begins with the actual physical construction of the area in 1974 (although officially designated as urban in 1965) to the waxing and waning of the culture of the stolen car within it in the interim years between the late 70s and the early 90s. Its relatively recent incorporation and transformation from images of rurality –

the cottages of the O'Dees, the O'Connells and the O'Dalys – into the intensely negative media inspired images of urbanity make it of interest. In a real sense the area is both urban and rural, the rural world of agriculture, hunting and fishing goes ahead beside it. Participants would spend a night 'lamping' rabbits with a powerful light fuelled by a car battery. Within the boundary of the wider Northside community there is the local vernacular boundary colloquially expressed as *Knocka*³. This is the most north-westerly public housing estate in the city, an area long associated in the local media and thus amongst the population in general with drugs, crime, high unemployment and joyriding. It is important to emphasise that this is a media generated image that is in no way universal or absolute but is one which seems to have currency now outside the area in popular discourse. People sometimes say that they are going 'in' there as though entering an urban island of some description. One community activist described it like this "Cork is a tale of two cities, the best of times on the southside and the worst of times on the northside" (Holmquist 1998). Community groups and organisations have struggled with these images and constructions of their community since the estate was built (see Mills and Walsh) and have recently tried to close off alleys, post "Children at Play" signs, remove graffiti from walls and houses and clean up different areas. It is perceived from the inside as a closely knit community with supportive and affectionate relations between residents, expressed as "we'd never be short of anything up here...we'd ask one another for an egg" (Oral History 1994: 45).

Boundary here, however, has a twofold meaning in terms of the limits or margins being drawn by the researcher as well as the sense of cultural boundedness within the research site. In relation to delimiting the research scope, this is a prerequisite of single researcher projects for practical and personal reasons as well as sound methodological ones. These boundaries are defined or worked out tentatively in project conceptualisations and subsequently in ethnographic interviews. Through informed, attentive and inquisitive interaction with participants this emerges in time. The internal cultur-

al boundedness of the research site while not itself the subject of the inquiry is also important in the sense that 'joyriding' here has come frontstage and undergone a certain patterning, consciousness of it has emerged as a symbol of a particular local or vernacular culture, it is part of a repertoire of behaviour that is used or abandoned sporadically – like the cars themselves – by local males; the area itself, like the participants, is often described by them as moving from being on a 'high' to a 'low'. It features the "intensive generation of shared meaning" that Hannerz (1980: 287–288) alludes to as a "cultural cluster". The limit imagined (an imagining of an imagining) in this project begins with the participants early knowledge or consciousness of joyriding through their initiation into it and eventual enactment of it and acquisition of a perceived cultural competence in relation to it. It ends more or less when the participants feel the experience is over, when they "jam up and bale out". The research is framed around this idea of the area being "on a high", when the local road became a stage for intensive and ecstatic performances in stolen cars involving interaction between the drivers and the local community. This interaction is evidenced by the exchange of money for petrol (to enable the performance to continue) or cigarettes and the shouting of support. This boundedness is related to Spradley and McCurdy's (1972: 24) cultural scene which they define as "the information shared by two or more people that defines some aspect of their experience". The area is a 'setting for action' or a 'recurrent social situation' and its definition by the insider is the task of the ethnographer. In this way the research is imaginatively circumscribed in a way that might sacrifice some tangential areas yet allows for the production of a focused sample of the particular scene.

Theory

Although the 'theory' is implicit throughout (and has already begun) it is necessary to treat of it in an explicit way. The approach adopted is ethnographic and discourse centred, it foregrounds urban vernacular expression and behaviour as externalisation of worldview. Any

actual instance of joyriding – the taking of a vehicle and its traversing of space in a disorderly or aberrant manner – is not in itself meaningful, in terms of writing it is just a scribble on a page. This scribble may or may not be interpreted as art. The rest is culture, the shared significance of a group or community, their particularised expressions, their emplaced meaningfulness. Comparison with similar scrawls or scribbles may yield patterns, repetitions, similar styles, twists or turns but this does not give the full depth or breadth of it either. A combination of discursive factors prior to and subsequent to the instance are also of interest. All previous instances, all previous participants, the shared cultural backdrop of participants is also involved. The car is there before it arrives and it remains after it has gone. There is always a possibility of a car. Joyriding is a re-creation, the car as product is re-contextualised, de-commodified, abused, or glorified in moments of intense performance that are public and private, individual and collective at the confluence of wills in time and space.

Much of what is really significant in contemporary culture is transmitted orally, informally or on an unofficial or mutually subjective or sub-objective level. It is in the heart, as Frykman & Löfgren (1996: 11) argues, or in Goffman's (1961: 56) hidden self that meanings are transacted. Young (1997:75) calls these subterranean values arguing that it is in leisure or in the "search for excitement" that identity is created, in the familiar, informal or, in our sense here, vernacular world of play. Much of the things we all know all the time in 'our hearts and souls' are often left out of academic theory, this is the ethnographic self, the culturally responsive or sensitive self that does not always carry over across role networks. Perhaps this results from the interplay of rival ideologies from the descendant modern metanarratives to ascendant contemporary meganarratives. The world has not dissolved in this interplay, however, its not exactly that nobody (somebody officially significant) noticed but that somebody (nobody we know) ignored it.

Research within roles may be ethnographic or folkloristic rather than anthropological. It can be difficult to overcome the restrictions of

roles but it is surely a methodological goal of ethnography. As a case in point, if I present myself as a researcher to someone who is presented to me as a criminal it does not make for good ethnography, I am not always a researcher and the participant is not always a criminal. This forces the research towards an empiricist rational stance of facts and opinions where everybody and everything is in their place. The aim becomes by-passing these roles; failing this the participant wonders if he should say anything and the ethnographer wonders what he or she is doing, the roles are secondary to the task on hand, talking, creating a space for interaction. In this sense the roles are instrumental constructs that serve to uphold social hierarchies and are prohibitive of ethnographic or folkloristic work.

To create this space urban (or perhaps simply contemporary) ethnography needs to problematise some old and some new concepts that inform and define the discipline. Tradition, or certain definitions of tradition, have been alternately valorised or stigmatised in accordance with ascendant hegemonic political and cultural discourses. One advantage of ethnography is its ability to leave view and re-emerge again here or there with evidence of people's varied and diverse expressive repertoires, survivals, adaptations, inventions, imaginings and creations; in short, with folklore, Danaher's (1983:3) sayings and doings of ordinary people. The ethnographer is not an expert injecting realism into fantasy but a creative interlocutor, a facilitator and a strategist. People's 'imaginings' here is not a condescension but a belief in the ethnographic tangibility of different realities. This is not sociology, psychology, history or criminology (although it has certain elements of interest to all of these disciplines), the result is intended as a sampling of stories or narratives presented as a means "by which humans organise and understand the world, and feel connected to each other" (Tannen 1989: 103). It is intended as a presentation of the verbal and behavioural externalisation of shared meaning in a particular situation, of a collective system of shared meaning expressed in Hannerz's words (1980: 284) as "talk, talk, talk".

Subculture or Vernacular Culture?

To return to a point made earlier joyriding is a 'tradition' in the sense that it has been occurring for many decades in its present form and there have been chains of communication between the different people that have become involved in it. Tradition here means "the creation of the future out of the past. A continuous process situated in the nothingness of the present, linking the vanished with the unknown" (Glassie 1995: 395–409) or a reformulation, a rejection, an 'energetic quest for novelty', a creation of something conceived as worthy of replication, it is "volitional, temporal action spanning from the routine to the inventive". It is vernacular in the sense that it is lived-in culture, it is familiar, homely or non-élite. Not every male in the area participates of course but a number significant enough to have created a significant event. The word vernacular was used in Rome for whatever was homebred, home-made, homespun or homegrown as opposed to what was obtained through formal exchange. It designated the activities of people when they were not driven by thoughts of exchange. In folklore and ethnology the term is widely used to designate the unofficial, informal, colloquial ways of doing things and saying things. Its use often results in combinations like vernacular architecture, vernacular furniture or vernacular religion. It is a useful term with which to inscribe the area of interest to folklorists and ethnologists and trace both continuities, breaks or innovations in cultural process. In the sense that there is modernisation of the vernacular or vernacularisation of the modern then there is a space, an imagined boundary within which the ethnographer can fruitfully spend time. Vernacular is not synonymous with authentic or natural or national it is grounded collective acts, artefacts and utterances. The taking of a car renders it vernacular in that it bypasses the private, hierarchical or earned quasi-official aspect of respectable motoring. It triggers off multiple moral, economic, social, political and cultural alarms. This is implicit in the act of joyriding itself for participants. The 'car thief' is as welcome as a rat in a gourmet restaurant. These alarms also sound through the formal

institutional discourses. One participant volunteered to speak at a sociological seminar in a University only to be vilified by the students of social science who were more concerned about their parent's cars.

It is from the first half of the nineteenth century (and earlier) that transgressive, challenging or ideologically odious elements of vernacular culture become visible through official or state techniques of "surveillance and display". Tolson (1997:303) points to the use of photography and interview in official governmental reports and select committees simultaneously registering, contextualising, constructing and introducing "sub-cultures" (unregistered or unrecognised cultural clusters invisible, behind or beyond familiar institutional discursive terrain) to professionals and amateurs in the social sciences in general. The contemporary terms used to describe much criminal activity reflect older middle-class anxiety over pollution and disease from the growing dumps, drains and sewers of the city (Humphries 1981/1995: 11), there are "outbreaks" and "epidemics" of joyriding for example. Certain forms of utterance or behaviour seem to fall somewhere between the romanticised rural poacher and the demonised urban thug. Any inversion or reversal of these comfortable images seems perverse. One is the rustic happy-go-lucky poacher and the other the pickpocket, 'hooligan', 'garotter' or 'street Arab' in the 'underworld' of the city. One contrast to this is Archer's (1999:25) picture of extremely violent professional urban poachers operating from the slums of Liverpool and serving a market in an organised way that is far from poaching 'for the pot'.

Davies and Pearson (1999: 2–3) argue that these images owe much to the writings of Dickens and nineteenth century journalism while academic accounts explored official state and philanthropic responses. O'Sullivan (1998: 78) significantly argues that the evolutionist patterns of the nineteenth century still prevail in state intervention into the lives and families of those designated as working-class with "technologies of normalisation, socialisation and prevention" linking assistance, education, the law, medicine and psychiatry. The metaphor of the

“jungle” carries over elements of colonial anthropological discourse into contemporary discussions of “home heathens” and “Hottentots”. The urban under class, the incorrigible poor or “residuum” are often linked to primitive peoples by journalists and social survey researchers and considered as being low on the scale of development. One modern Irish solution proffered included moving them back to the countryside, as urban orphans were (often to the Irish speaking rural areas).

Humphries (1995:17) notes that “during the past century horrified middle-class investigators have continually expressed concern at what they perceived as the coarse language, rough games, exuberant and extrovert behaviour and territorial conflicts between street gangs”. He argues that from the 1880s to the 1930s social Darwinism dominated. Philanthropist, educationalist and reformer’s responses in general vary from the apocalyptic visions of socialism, to the scientific language and methods of incumbent social psychology, the villains were ‘psychologically and intellectually deficient’ and ‘morally retarded’. The approach is largely unchanged today. Participants called a room where their world-view is hotly contested through verbal engagements with professionals “the head-wrecking room”, one participant said he had been evaluated by “a psychological bure⁴” as unstable, he laughingly dismissed the idea but its implications in the classification, registration or invidious foisting of ‘abnormality’ onto the non-middle classes are real. The participants have a strong sense of justice and justification which leads to hotly contested debates at times, despondency about ‘recidivism’ in crime may show a naive faith in the virtues of the professional’s own worldview. What concerns Humphries is that working class volition or ‘purpose’ is denied in theories based on the psychologisation of adolescence and class-prejudiced views. Such classifications directly impinge on the area of interest in this research as dense crossdisciplinary discourse allied to powerful influence that is premised on formal or official ideas concerning normality vs. abnormality, wrong vs. right and so on.

In spite of the long-standing salience of folklore in Ireland there are elements of popular

culture that exist only on the ‘margins’ of an imagined mainstream society, among them are elements interpreted and registered as being delinquent or anti-social. The definitional confusion entailed in shifting from the ‘field’ to the ‘street’, from an apparently given unproblematic culture to its contestation, rejection or testing in popular or vernacular culture results partly from the earlier formations of ethnological discourse which almost imperceptibly resist interference. It is not unusual for vernacular culture and law and order to be in opposition to each other, notably during some of the long-standing festivals, St. John’s Eve (Midsummer) or Halloween (known as the night of practical jokes or pranks in the Irish language) for example. These are nights associated with gangs of people wandering the streets making mischief.⁵ St. John’s Eve is known locally as “Bonnagh Night” (Bonfire Night) and all participants suggested that it was “always a night for a car!”. Newspapers at these times of the year carry warnings about elements of popular practices, fire-brigades and police are on stand-by. Popular or vernacular expression is often read as irrational sporadic lawlessness, dis-order or out-of-order even in the case of conventional traditional practices in which most urban people have participated at some point or other. It seems that it is only in retrospect that ‘non-culture’ can be registered. In enacting old or emergent expressions or behaviour citizens are rendered ‘delinquents’. A small report in the *Evening Echo* on the first of November 1984 remarks that the Dublin Fire Brigade had received 250 calls on Halloween night, mostly to bonfires but also to 20 stolen cars which had been set alight or driven onto bonfires.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the mainstream society is often a ‘subculture’ on the margins of the insider’s world. My early surprise at some descriptions mirrors that of one participant that I talk ‘in the big rooms’ of the university. This is partly a result of the distancing already mentioned. Many methodological and theoretical innovations or challenges have not yet filtered through to ethnographic praxis or to the wider related interests in terms of applied ethnography. This is one of the reasons that the question remains as to whether

this is more fruitfully considered 'subculture' or an element of vernacular cultural process in the generally accepted sense of the word.

Fast Knocks and Nags

The assumption of some early theorists on "joyriding" culture that youth were susceptible to advertising or enticed by the external qualities of car culture or using "illegitimate means to attain goals of consumer society" (Whitehead 1994: 26) was soon dispelled from my mind. One participant had a new car bought by his parents for him yet still choose to become involved in local performances in "robbed cars". Most of the participants had a good knowledge of the power and capability of cars and although choice is limited by accessibility and good looks are sometimes an additional factor they know in their own terms a "fast knock" or a "rog" from a "nag" or a "pudding", the car as product or commodity is appropriated and vernacularised in such a way that it resonates, echoes and creates alternative meanings in vernacular discourse.

Joyriding is not an individual or once off phenomenon but one that is 'widely and durably distributed in a social group' in Sperber's words (1994:179). It is shifting, changing and evolving but enduringly attached to the place. The content remains largely unchanged but is being constantly recreated and reinterpreted. Each new generation, or at least age-group, 'kicking off' in its turn and those who have moved on reflecting on the 'shocking' nature of younger participants' involvement, the increased intensity or danger which is thought to result from it; it moves from the taking of cars for transportation and safe recreational driving to the high-octane chases, races, challenges and highly stylised performance of the tricks of motor-sport (itself originating in street performance). Joyriding is a fruitful research topic for urban ethnography, as a Probation Officer puts it, a great majority of participants have numbers on their doors and although it occurs from time to time in country towns it does not have the same degree of what Sperber (1994) calls 'contagion', it is essentially an urban phenomenon. It is worth asking how it becomes so localised that it is referred to as 'a tradition' by

both participants and professionals working with them. There are many different reasons, some logistical from the suitability of the physical environment to the flexibility of the socio-political vernacular milieu – but there are also other factors, cultural process or logic at a local level.

Anthropologists like Gluckman and Norbeck have looked at rites and rituals which contain an element of protest. Gluckman has called these rituals of rebellion, Norbeck has called them rituals of conflict, these are rituals "containing episodes of ridicule, threat, assault, rivalry, or other conflicts" (Dirks 1988:857). Hall and Jefferson brought the idea into the field of popular culture with their *Resistance Through Rituals*. It is along these subdefinitional lines of enquiry between folklore/ethnography and vernacular culture/subculture that distinctions become fuzzy and intellectually uncomfortable. The distinctions may be largely academic yet somewhere between the 'simple' other of tradition and the 'complex' consumer of popular culture there must be both continuity and discontinuity. If joyriding is subculture, even momentarily, we can agree with Hebdige's (1979:3) statement that it begins 'with a crime against the natural order ... but it ends in the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer'. In Hall and Jefferson (1976:14) and the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham there are interesting discussions of "subculture" as sub-sets, smaller, more localised structures which must be related to the "parent" culture and the dominant culture. The logical opposite of this subculture would be the epi-culture of ethnology.

They Rowled in and 'Riz the Bobbery

There are at least three questions which could be asked of this approach. Firstly, the popular culture of the CCCS seems akin to mass culture, media culture or 'the culture industry' than to the popular/vernacular culture of folklore and ethnography. Secondly, the notions of "youth" and "class" prominent in this (as is the influence of Gramsci) are also problematic; if my sample ranges in age from 16 to 33, with some parents

among them is “youth” a suitable category to work with? Is the “parent” culture and the dominant culture the same thing or are they both too notional to be “real” at all, how much does this imagined “dominant” culture impinge on the participants’ consciousness? Are there also child sub-cultures, middle-age sub-cultures, old age sub-cultures, academic sub-cultures? May not “youth sub-culture” be simply an expression of worldview that ethnography should see as “culture” anyway, another protean package of meanings with its own dynamic and expressive repertoire. Thirdly, the sub-culture argument of the CCCS is also limited by being framed as “post-War Britain”, if so how do we accommodate the many robust expressions of popular culture outlined already, appearing in the early romantic Irish novels of Charles Kickham for example where the faction fighters “rowled in and riz the bobbery?” There is a sense whereby the popular or subcultural approach is a belated assignation for previously hidden vernacular culture. There is, however, in the early work of the CCCS (ibid:45), a consciousness of the urban vernacular or the ‘cultural scene’ that interests us here. The CCCS speak for example of “key occasions of social interaction: the weekend, the disco, the bank-holiday trip, the night out in the ‘centre,’ the ‘standing about doing nothing’ of the weekday evening, the Saturday match”. The idea of peoples’ sayings and doings configuring themselves into “rituals of relationships and occasion and movement” (ibid:47) is close to the idea of the regular, recognisable and repeatable patterns of behaviour.

Relating such issues to a ‘parent’ culture suggests a recourse to vernacular cultural process in general, or to what Canclini (1995:186) calls “the symbolic frameworks...evolving in which neither the media nor mass culture operate in isolation” which overrides (not completely) arguments of temporal effectuality, “youth” or “post-war Britain” etc. Such an understanding allows for creativity and “a recomposition of social meaning that transcends previous modes of classification (ibid:187)” and acknowledges continuity, precedent and hybridity. To throw out the vernacular is like throwing the baby out with the bath water. The perspective being developed here includes the interrogation of

previous classifications and typologies, this is not to show that one is particularly “new” or “modern” or “radical” for its own sake but to trace how they influence the ethnographer’s conception of what he or she is actually doing or could be doing. Hannerz (1980) has done such a tracing from the Chicago School of Sociology to British Social Anthropology and further needs to be done. The influence of the Irish Folklore Commission (contemporaneous with the Chicago School) is still strong in Irish folklore. Strangely Curtin, Donnan and Wilson (1993) do not mention it in their assessment of urban anthropology in Ireland. As in Swedish ethnology, the early folklore and folklife approach was questioned in the 1960s only to be reintegrated later in the study of everyday life when it was realised that ‘ritual and custom’ had not gone away. Although the Irish Folklore Commission ignored the urban centres in Ireland it is a benchmark for contemporary research when for example the banshee is heard in the city or in once far off America or a “fast knock” screeches into a handbrake turn on the Back Road on Bonfire Night. At times ethnography seems egocentric compared to such a wide and far reaching ethnographic endeavour. The ethnographer is out on his or her own but would be at a disadvantage without this sampling of vernacular cultural process in the past.

Coming On for a Car

The driver, his front seat partner (‘pilot’ and ‘co-pilot’) and the passengers are ‘on’ something, the word joyriding is not used by participants to refer to what they do. Joyriding is what others think they do. To them the car is ‘a salk⁶’, they ask each other ‘if there is a salk around’ or ‘are you coming on for a car?’ or simply ‘let’s go for a spin?’ Within the group it is not anti-social behaviour, the opposite is the case, it is a way of becoming socialised and a form of sociality, a way of spending time, establishing identity, opposing authority or having an ecstatic experience. The code of the streets is inscribed on the walls of the area and evidence of local or vernacular justice is seen on houses where occupants have been forced out, the graffiti reads *Fuck the Law, Rave On, Help the Garda Fight Crime, Kill*

Yourself! etc. The salk is connected with local urban temporality and spatiality, the cycle of everyday life, the interludes and breaks between day and night, weekends and weekdays, summer and winter, festival and everyday. It is poised between country and city, northside and southside, young and old, new and old, rich and poor. The passing of time, otherwise imperceptible, is ritualised, at times joyriding is openly linked to the established festivals like Bonfire Night, Halloween, Christmas, New Year's Eve or St. Patrick's Day.

Peter Burke (1994:187) has pointed to the link between protest and calendar customs. He mentions role-changing, exchange of insults, aggression, competition, destruction and fighting as 'violence...sublimated into ritual'. Joyriding is sometimes explained as 'getting the place kicking', an intentional act of provocation or stimulation in what is understood to be a boring or 'dead' place where nothing happens. A special time is created by the participants – sometimes (not always) intensified by drugs and drink – which equates with descriptions of festival or carnival time where the everyday is turned upside down. There are elements of carnivalesque humour involved in the inversions and reversals of normality and convention. Cars were driven very slowly in and out of housing estates, up and down lanes and alleys, while the horn is sounded in a joking fashion. This serves to announce the presence of the car also. Another element of this are the tricks done with the car which change or invert its usual role; it wobbles, twists and turns, mounts kerbs, does 180s (half circles) or 360s (full circles), handbrake and reverse handbrake turns and so on. There is a pronounced performative element in these displays. There is a creation of a style, as Hebdige (1979:102) says, 'by repositioning and recontextualizing commodities, by subverting their conventional uses and inventing new ones, the subcultural stylist ... opens up the world of objects to new covertly oppositional readings'. The commodity (the embodiment of contemporary materiality) is vernacularised (carried into an alternative field of meanings that are home-ly and familiar).

The Back Road

It was often the case in the past that there was a street, square or bridge which became a stage for such patterned performances or competition, an area in which tensions were released or diverse meanings expressed, tested and played out. This was certainly the case with faction fighting in nineteenth century Ireland and with the *pugni* in Italy where bridges became the stages. This space intermittently becomes a stage for carnival and ritual rivalry of all description. For the participants "the Back Road" is just such a place. This is a wide, long road which is in fact the boundary between the city and the surrounding countryside. In the eighteenth century the May Day custom of erecting the May Pole left its name on a road in the southern suburbs of the city, Maypole Road (Harris 1996:58). Bull-baiting in eighteenth century Cork city was intended to cause as much damage as possible and often led to provocation and incitement of police with chants of "Face the bulls!" or "Show us some play!" [ibid:74]. The South Gate Bridge in contemporary times became a stage where the rival brass marching bands of the southside and the northside 'battled' it out (Verdon 1993: 28).

To many the Back Road was also known as "Opel Road" due to its now long established association with the activity. The stolen cars are often 'brought back' here, a fact which is interesting in a number of ways. Firstly, the police have been aware for many years that this happens. Secondly, the joyriding has attracted large crowds of spectators from the immediate area who shouted encouragement like 'fuck the pigs'⁷, 'wreck the gaff'⁸, 'whip a handbraker'⁹! This illustrates the tacit agreement on all sides. As one participant put it, "its only when you hit the Back Road you go fast...handbrakers the whole lot...they'd be all out looking". It has a special significance for the participants, another says, "thats the whole reason I'd get in a car is a chase, giving everyone the excitement thats around the place, I often had eight or nine guards¹⁰ cars chasing me like...coming up the Back Road and your going in and out of them parked at each side of the road, bulbs flying all over the place, pull a handbraker and go back towards them

again...I gets a great craic out of it". This creates a "buzz for the night", as described by another participant, "the car will come up onto the Back Road, thats what we call it like, and it stays there for the night...if you get a chase then you'll take the chase then around wherever...bring the shades¹¹ out around...loose them, come back again, do the same thing, go down to the Garda station, shoot in, pull a handbraker inside in the Garda station, shoot out, tell them come on, chase you", or again, "drive in, pull a handbraker in there, beep the horn, tell them come on, they're looking out the window, ballyclavas on you, wave your hand at them, tell them come out like, when they come out then, shout at them, tell them 'come on, chase us!'...its a buzz like". In looking at similar behaviour in stolen cars in Newark, New Jersey, Greene [1994:87] says that it is possible to speak of protest joyriding. Far from being hidden the behaviour is, "done openly and conspicuously. It appears purposefully designed to attract and then defy the police...the youngsters drive noisily and make 360-degree skid marks on the street, called 'doughnuts', by driving in circles at high speeds. This highly stylised driving is done at locations known to the police". As in the past the crowds have sometimes prevented the police from intervening and created a theatre in which the drivers performed in front of a home crowd. At other times the drivers perform handbrake turns in front of the police and taunt them with slogans or jocose statements like "GTI Says Goodbye!" or "tell your wife and my children I was asking for them!"

In this ritualization of vernacular identity some of the tensions that exist between the participants and the police are worked out. Many participants explain the rivalry between the police and themselves as a "game" or "cops and robbers" but others insist that it is due to the excessive force used by police against them in early incidents where they thought their lives were endangered, rammings and general contempt are conceived of as revenge or retaliation. On the other hand many of the local police have affectionate nicknames like 'Whiskey Nose' or 'the Rally Driver'. Informally some Garda have conceded to occasionally enjoying their part in chasing vehicles. Further to the drama-

turgical or carnivalesque elements or the riotous nature of festivals in times of crisis Stallybrass and White (1997:297) point out that rituals do not always begin as resistance, "the dialectic of antagonism frequently turned rituals into resistance at the moment of intervention...even when no overt oppositional element had been present before". It is not idealistic or utopian either, peers from their own area or other areas of the city are also taunted or threatened from stolen cars. The crime-culture divide is another instance of the effect of class ethics and disciplinary boundary. McCullagh (1998:115) shows that areas designated as working-class perceive that the police treat them differently but does not explore the vernacular conceptions of justice which are well known and well illustrated in statements like "we never had police coming up, we dreaded them. They say until your seven years dead keep away from a policeman" (Verdon 1993: 51) or "the community had its own sanctions. There was no question of calling the guards" (ibid: 85). The early crime statistics of the Garda themselves acknowledge this, "it was not always easy to induce persons to come forward" or "there was almost a complete absence of co-operation" (*Annual Report* 1997: 92). These local conceptions are of interest to ethnography. In many instances participants in joyriding regulate the activity themselves, following a number of tragedies for example participants have told me that there were strong words, scuffles and arguments between older or past participants and "smallies" to prevent occurrences, there was a noticeable decrease in incidents at the time that is not due to the police "winning the war against crime" but to the insider's own volition and perception of the permissible.

Geertz's concept of deep-play is also interesting in this regard, the idea (originally economic) is that when the stakes become too high in a game it is no longer rational or reasonable to be involved, there is more to be lost than there is to be gained. Young (1997:75) says that play is an end in itself, it is voluntary, ego-expressive, cathartic and involves 'stepping out of real life'. He points out that not all crime is ritual or code but this instance is particularly interesting to explore this in so far as it creates mutuality or

communitas. Davies [1994:85] notes how the participants in the *pugni* created “a popular forum for the creation and allocation of honour” or “an ephemeral arena where deeper cultural agendas may be brought to the surface, contested and resolved”. Howe (2000: 67) further states that “most rituals are staged to achieve an end, so there is always something at stake in performances. Because the outcome cannot be known in advance, success and failure (however these may be measured: instrumentally, aesthetically, evocatively, morally, etc.) are contingent. Ritual is therefore inherently risky. Rituals are often dangerous because of unavoidable contact with powerful and unpredictable forces”. Joyriding may be considered an enactment or externalisation of thoughts, feelings and ideas that are distributed throughout the community but find expression in different forms, in different ways amongst different age-groups, sexes or classes. The more obvious physical dangers of joyriding need little elaboration and have created tragedies inside the community and outside it, yet this is perhaps also what periodically deepens joyriding as a game. One participant expressed his own opinion that ‘joyriders are lucky’. The spectators, peers and younger people deepen the game further through discussion and talk about the different drivers and different episodes known to them. The funerals of two individuals killed while joyriding were marked by their peers by doing handbrake turns outside the church during the requiem mass. One media commentator says, ‘I remember one individual being cheered into court by his peers after a period of weeks in which he had defied the *Gárdaí*’ [Colley 1999:38]. The alternative vernacular values of the participants are forced to centre stage in joyriding. They choose competitiveness over submission, visibility over invisibility, evocativeness over silence, the local over the law and order of the wider far flung community, it evidences what Springhall (1998:7) calls “the pioneering cultural position of the young”. The deep dangerous play of joyriding intensifies or dramatises local identity in the symbolic conflict that is worked out on the streets of the city or, as Hebdige [1979:37] says, ‘on the neglected surfaces of everyday life’.

If ethnography is to attend to Ireland’s towns and cities, or, in the words of Curtin (1993: 14) “to the contests over space, power, history and image in the urban area” then we must adjust our lens, dust off some of the old tools and acquire some new ones along the continuum of constructed ‘folk’ and urban vernacular culture. This particular topic appears to be well documented academically and popularly and the impression sometimes seems to be that the less said about it the better, it is a “disturbing fact” or a sociological conundrum. In reality it is largely occluded by narrow, shallow treatments across disciplines and discourses that sift the cultural chaff from it before handling it, confining it instead within the well oiled hegemonic institutions. It is heavily sociologised, psychologised and criminologised. Somewhere between the “past” (the real historical and the imagined folksy) and the “future” (the real historical or the imagined progressive) the present or contemporary seems to disappear. Here is a space or a time where contemporary urban ethnography should be at home, here it can play to its strengths. The discursive or epistemological nowhere of the present, what people actually say and do.

Notes

1. I would like to give warm thanks to Denis Fitzpatrick, Sheila, Fiona and Neil at the Cork Auto-Crime Diversion Project, thank you for accepting my intrusions and sharing the tea and toast with me on my many visits. Thanks to Ciaran McCullagh of the Department of Sociology, University College Cork. To Jim Thompson of the Cork Probation and Welfare Service, to Finbarr O’Leary, Governor of Fort Mitchell Prison on Spike Island, also Pam and all in the School in the same prison. Sincere thanks also to Frank McCarthy, Governor of Cork Prison on Rathmore Road, to Billy Coleman who facilitated my visits. Thanks to Jacqueline Morris and McFarlane of Belfast Outreach Programme. A very special word of thanks goes to “Kid” from Knocknaheeny who was always helpful, understanding and welcoming about the research. Likewise to everybody who spoke to me and helped the research in any way, it could not have progressed without you. This is intended as a longer monograph which will feature the voices of the participants more.
2. Sometimes called “fences,” the purchaser of sto-

- len goods, also used in sense of “creeping a car” from the front of a house, stealing it quietly.
3. This is an abbreviation of the longer Knocknaheeny with the characteristically Cork suffix of “à” added on.
 4. A bure is a girl or woman while a boy or a man is a feen.
 5. Egging or throwing eggs at windows or sometimes golf-balls has become popular for example.
 6. The word may be related to “sulkie” the horse drawn racing cart used by the travelling people. I have heard travellers shout “a salk, a salk, a salk!” before beginning a gallop on sulkies.
 7. A slang word for the *Gárdaí*.
 8. Suggests the place in general. Also used as “my gaff” or “your gaff” etc.
 9. A handbrake turn. Causing the vehicle to swing around by pulling the handbrake while moving at speed etc.
 10. The *Gárdaí* or Irish police are sometimes called simply the guards.
 11. A slang word for the *Gárdaí*, also “the shades.”

References

- Aitchison, Jean 1994: *Language Joyriding*. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 16 November 1993. London.
- Annual Report 1997: Annual Report of An Garda Síochána*. Dublin.
- Archer, John E. 1999: Poaching gangs and violence: the urban-rural divide in nineteenth century Lancashire. In: A. Davis & G. Pearson (eds) *Histories of Crime and Modernity*. A special issue of the British Journal of Criminology: 25–37.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail 1984: *Rabelais and his World*. Indiana.
- Barnes, Tony 2000. *Mean Streets*. Lancs.
- Boylan, T. & Chris Curtin & M.Laver 1989: A Changing Society: Ireland Since the 1960s. In: Thomas Bartlett, Chris Curtin, Riana O’Dwyer & Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (eds) *Irish Studies: A General Introduction*. Dublin:192–220.
- Burke, Peter 1994: *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. London.
- Canclini, Néstor García 1995: *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* Minnesota.
- Clarke, Howard B. 1995: *Irish Cities*. Cork.
- Colley, Declan 1999: Joyriding: a social reality. In: *Irish Car* April:38.
- Curtin, Chris, Hastings Donnan & Thomas M. Wilson (eds) 1993: *Irish Urban Studies*. Belfast.
- Danaher, Kevin 1983: The Progress of Irish Ethnology 1783–1982. In: *Ulster Folklife* 29:3–17.
- Davies, Andrew & Geoffrey Pearson (eds) 1999: Histories of Crime and Modernity. A Special Issue of the *British Journal of Criminology* 39:1. Oxford: 1–9.
- Davies, Robert C. 1994: *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice*. Oxford.
- Dirks, Robert 1988: Annual Rituals of Conflict. In: *American Anthropologist* 90: 856–870.
- Frykman, Jonas & Orvar Löfgren 1996: The Study of Swedish Customs and Habits. In: Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren (eds) *Force of Habit. Exploring Everyday Culture*. Lund: 5–19.
- Glassie, Henry 1995: Tradition. In: *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (430):395–412.
- Goffman, Erving 1961: *Asylums*. London.
- Greene, Dwight L. 1994: Naughty by Nurture: Black Male Joyriding—Is Everything Going to be Alright? In: *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 4:1:73–124.
- Hall, Stuart & Tony Jefferson (eds) 1976: *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London.
- Hannerz, Ulf 1980: *Exploring the City; Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York.
- Harris, Ita 1996: *Cultural Process in Eighteenth Century Cork City*. A thesis presented to the National University of Ireland for the degree of Master of Philosophy at Béaloidéas, Folklore & Ethnology, University College Cork, Ireland.
- Harrison, Simon 1999: Cultural Boundaries. In: *Anthropology Today* 15:5, 10–13.
- Hebdige, Dick 1979: *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London.
- Holmquist, Kathryn 1998: Voices From the Edge. In: *The Irish Times* 13.1.98.
- Howe, Leo 2000: Risk, Ritual and Performance. In: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, 63–79.
- Humphries, Stephen 1981/1995: *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889–1939*. Oxford.
- Hunter, Stephen (ed.) 1999: *Life Journeys: Living Folklore in Ireland Today*. Cork.
- Irish Folklore Commission 1937: *Irish Folklore and Tradition*. Dublin.
- Jenkins, Richard 1982: *Hightown Rules: Growing Up in a Belfast Housing Estate*. Leicester.
- Jenkins, Richard 1983: *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids: Working-Class Youth Life-Styles in Belfast*. London.
- Jenkins, Richard 1993: Beyond Ethnography: Primary Data Sources in the Urban Anthropology of Northern Ireland. In: Chris Curtin, Hastings Donnan & Thomas M. Wilson (eds) *Irish Urban Cultures*. Belfast: 243–262.
- McCárthaigh, David 1997: *The Gurranaברה Story: A History of the Place and it’s People*. Cork.
- McCullagh, Ciaran 1998: Crime in Cork City – Preliminary Report on a Local Crime Survey. In Barry Brunt & K. Hourihan (eds) *Perspectives on Cork*. Cork:101–120.
- Miller, Daniel (ed.) 2001: *Car Cultures*. Oxford.
- Mills, Kevin & Maurice Walsh 1979: Growing Pains of a Community. In: *The Evening Echo* 26.7.79.
- Ó Cruaíoch, G., D. Ó Giollaín & H.P. Huttunen 1993: Irish-Finnish Research Collaboration: The Cork Northside Project. In: *Nordic Institute of Folklore Newsletter* 2:17–18.

- O'Mahony, Paul 1993: *Crime and Punishment in Ireland*. Dublin.
- Oral History 1994: *Get a Life, Girl!* Cork.
- O'Sullivan, Eoin 1998: Juvenile Justice and the Regulation of the Poor: 'Restored to Virtue, to Society and to God'. In: Ivana Bacik & Michael O'Connell (eds) *Crime and Poverty in Ireland*. Dublin: 68–91.
- Rodger, Derek. 1994: *Fair Start: An Observation of the Possilpark Befriending Project*. Argyll: Scotland.
- Ross, Kristin 1996: *Fast Cars, Clean bodies: Decolonisation and the Reordering of French Culture*. Cambridge Massachusetts and London.
- Rottman, David B. 1980: *Crime in the Republic of Ireland: Statistical Trends and their Interpretation*. Dublin.
- Sperber, Dan 1994: Interpreting and Explaining Cultural Representations. In: Gísli Pálsson (ed.) *Beyond Boundaries*. Oxford: 162–183.
- Spradley, J.P. & D.W. McCurdy 1972: *The Cultural Experience*. Waveland USA.
- Springhall, John 1998: *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830–1996*. London.
- Stallybrass, Peter & Allon White 1997: From Carnival to Transgression. In: Ken Gelder & Sarah Thornton (eds). *The Subcultures Reader*. London and New York: 293–301.
- Tannen, Deborah 1989: *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge.
- Tolson, Andrew 1997: Social Surveillance and Subjectification: The Emergence of 'Subculture' in the Work of Henry Mayhew. In: *The Subcultures Reader*. Ken Gelder & Sarah Thornton (eds) London and New York: 320–311.
- Verdon, Michael 1993: *Shawlies, Echo Boys, the Marsh and the Lanes: Old Cork Remembered*. Dublin.
- Whitehead, Annette 1994: *Joyriding – Policy, Law and Probation Practice*. East Anglia: Norwich.
- Witzel, Michael K. & Kent Bash 1997: *Cruisin': Car Culture in America*. America.
- Wolf, Winifried 1996: *Car Mania: A Critical History of Transport*. London and Chicago.
- Young, Jock 1997: The Subterranean World of Play. In: *The Subcultures Reader*. Ken Gelder & Sarah Thornton (eds). London and New York: 71–80.

Contents

Vol. 31: 1 – 2001

Editorial	3
Mikkel Venborg Pedersen: Cultural Landscapes	5
Božidar Jezernik: Head-Hunting in Europe	21
Bjarne Rogan: Stamps and Postcards – Science or Play?	37
Åke Daun, Markku Verkasalo, Pauliina Tuomivaara: Stereotypes among Finns in Sweden	55
Don Kalb, Herman Tak: Polish Floods	63
Bo Lönnqvist: Fashion and Eroticism	75

Vol. 31: 2 – 2001

Editorial	3
Ulf Stahre: Rebuilding the City	5
Beate Binder: Capital under Construction	19
Cordula Gdaniec: Ostozhenka – a Moscow District in Transition	41
Margit Feischmidt: Symbole und Räume rivalisierender Nationalismen	59
Stiofán Ó Cadhla: Fast Knocks and Nags	77