

Cars & other dysfunctional relationships



by Germaine Greer

A man loves his car because it does as it's told when it's told. No yackety-yack. Cars don't talk back. (A car that reads maps and tells you when to turn is not what men want.)

Men's love of cars is the same as their love in general, that is, conditional; they love cars if they do as they're told when they're told.

The story of a man and his cars is usually a saga of serial monogamy. At first he's happy with any car whose ignition he can get his key into. He progresses through life, transporting his affections from

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old car to newer car, from fast car to faster car, from glamorous car to more glamorous car.

A sleek hot wife may be a status symbol; a sleek hot car is a better one – as long as it's not being driven by somebody else.

The joyriders who rape other men's cars are investing their insignificant junior selves with the insignia of the alpha males. They believe they're giving those high performance cars a seeing-to that is well beyond anything that their legitimate owners would be capable of.

The way the affair ends, in a splintering crash or a blaze, is the final ecstasy of white-hot passion.



If I can't have you, nobody shall have you!

A man's car can only be beloved if it is his alone. Man cannot love cars that have to be shared. No man is in love with the family car. For a man who loves his cars, joining a car pool is more traumatic than wife-swapping.

Being forced to let a son drive his car involves real mental torment. However snazzy and rocket-shaped, his car is also his cocoon, where he can keep himself at the temperature he chooses, listen to the sounds he wants, eat, drink, smoke, sleep if he wants. (The figures of how often men, especially married men, masturbate in cars were not available at time of writing.)

Women love cars too, but in a very different way. They love their cars for ever doing what they want, for starting and stopping more or less when and where they should, for being helpful, protecting the children and sharing the load.

Those typical women's cars, the unhot hatchbacks, are glorified shopping trolleys and/or baby buggies. And women are grateful to them just for being around. Women keep their cars longer and grieve when they have to go. If it were possible to put old cars out to pasture women would do it.

If women abuse cars, they do it unknowingly, by driving in the wrong gear, forgetting to let off the handbrake or the choke, stuff like that.

The men who abuse cars do it because they cannot separate the idea of abuse from the concept of love.



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The bullet-headed earring-wearer who brings his beaten-up GTX blasting down on my Mercedes, double-declutches, revs, flashes his lights and snarls obscenities because I am slowing up for the roundabout, and then guns the GTX through the closing gap between lorries, loves

his car as well as he will ever love anything.

Love gives him the right to bully her and push her beyond endurance and take stupid risks with her until she breaks on a bend, flies through a fence and lands upside-down in the field. Then, he will patch her up and treat her reasonably for a day or two.

The scars on her bodywork are his lovebites; when he has finished with her she will be good for nothing. Some men boast of totalling cars as others do of sexual conquests.

Pop psychology used to have a lot to say about men and cars. The received wisdom was that rapid acceleration feeds the fantasy of automatic erection, as if a man inside his car were to become his penis, boring into external reality at high speed. If this were so, you would expect men to be unwilling to open windows or in any way compromise the integrity of the penis-self-capsule.

You would also expect gay men who are interested in penises – to be fascinated by cars. Though I am a fag hag of many years standing I have yet to meet a gay man who is into cars.

Many of my gay friends can't drive, and those who can, won't and don't. There may be gay men who tune their own engines but I'd bet that they are as rare as girl joyriders. In hetero male fantasy the car is the ultimate playmate, a tigress with a purr like silk for his ears only. For the rest of us, it's a way to get about•

• Ms Greer was prosecuted for speeding shortly after this article was written

