

MOTORCYCLE MENACE:
FRAMING THE BIKER NOT-A-CITIZEN

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of news media reports concerning outlaw motorcycle clubs and bikers reveals how changes in definitions of deviance reflect changes in the media's perceptions of deviant behavior. The clubs have long been meaningful symbols of what is wrong with society. Their members have been the "not-a-citizen," symbols of sexual, social and criminal deviance. As uniquely qualified non-conformists, bikers were made to order for the media's penchant for addressing the various definitions of deviance and communicating at any given time just where the line is between obeying the law and stepping out of bounds. Likewise, as society's watchdogs, it was the media's duty to identify purveyors of crime and random violence. As moral entrepreneurs, they took the high ground, employing consensus definitions of right and wrong as the standards by which bikers would be measured and judged. Publications educated readers about the outlaw biker subculture and defined just how it was deviant and dangerous.

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*Nobody — except another cyclist — likes a man on a motorcycle.*¹

Bikers. The word inspires a welter of memories, sensory impressions, biases and, possibly, fear. Denim and leather. Tattoos, beards and lank, greasy hair. A throaty rumble on an otherwise empty street. The inspiration for our image of bikers and motorcycle culture can be traced to a sneering Marlon Brando and an even more feral Lee Marvin in 1954's *The Wild One*.² That Hollywood treatment of outlaw bikers was inspired by the short story "Cyclists' Raid,"³ which was itself prompted by a weekend of violence and revelry in Hollister, California, and *Life* magazine's photo of a beer-bellied thug slopped across a hog amid a gutter full of empty beer bottles.⁴

It is odd that the biker's cliché image, as well as the framework of perceptions surrounding one-percenter clubs, has changed little since Hollister in 1947 and Brando's portrayal of Johnny, the brooding leader of the pack. The attitude and the peaked hat, black leather jacket, heavy boots and denim jeans are staples of biker chic. Not even Japan's

¹Hal Burton, "Most Unpopular Men on the Road," *Saturday Evening Post*, 25 September 1954, 33.

²This article represents one part of a larger analysis of how various media genres — film, music, masculinist fiction, non-fiction and biker magazines — have endeavored to create and maintain particular images of motorcyclists, bikers and outlaw clubs that best suit their purposes.

³Frank Rooney, "Cyclists' Raid," *Harper's Magazine*, January 1951, 34–44.

⁴"Cyclist's Holiday," *Life*, 21 July 1947, 31.

domination of the recreational motorcycle market in the 1970s and 1980s, the “You meet the nicest people on a Honda” sloganeering of the 1960s, ten years of *Happy Days* and “the Fonz,” or the Harley–Davidson Motor Company’s economic renaissance and its wooing of rich urban bikers (rubbies) could completely dispel the bad biker image. Despite the many years this country has had to accustom itself to sharing the highway with motorcycles, the distinctive sound of American iron and the sight of tattooed hordes thundering down the interstate can still inspire dread just by appearing in the rearview mirror.

Yet motorcycles also inspire a longing for the open road and life without responsibility. Just as the Harley was for many years the only American–made motorcycle, a patriotic anachronism in a high–tech world of Japanese imports, bikers are among the last American individualists. Even if it could, the Harley–Davidson Motor Company would not completely erase its product’s outlaw image, for it is an integral and defining aspect of its heritage and, more importantly, part of Harley’s marketing strategy. Motorcycles, especially Harleys, are icons for independence and masculinity. Hero and anti–hero, attractive yet repellent, bikers are the unflinching symbol of a vagabond lifestyle, iconoclasm and non–conformity.

Thoughtful consideration of the evolution of outlaw motorcycle clubs and their presence in the media does not yet exist. The events of Hollister only began a process that transformed a handful of Southern California bikers and free spirits into a national scourge. How did newspapers and national magazines respond to the perceived threat of bikers and outlaw clubs? How did print media construct and use a framework of myth and outlaw imagery to ascribe meaning to the new phenomenon? An analysis of the construction of meaning in a “knowledge society” and the news media’s role as part of a “deviance–defining elite” can begin to answer those questions. Mainstream media, as arbiters of right and wrong, relied on a specific array of ritual, myth and metaphor, first to explain and define motorcycle culture, and then to assign bikers a place on the margins of society. Seizing the opportunity, the news media satisfied audience desire for sensation and information, defined the biker “not–a–citizen” and supported America’s middle–class norms for civility and propriety.

MEDIA AS MEANING MAKERS

This research takes a cultural studies approach to communication. The critical element, what guides its assumptions about what the media do, is that communication is “not the act of imparting information or influence, but the creation, representation, and celebration of shared beliefs.”⁵ Moreover, “a ritual view centers on the sacred ceremony which draws persons together in fellowship and commonality.”⁶ G. Stuart Adam describes journalism as an art form, as “an invention or a form of expression used to report and comment in the public media on the events and ideas of the here and now.”⁷ Extending that definition, the media become a way of “framing our experience and forming the public consciousness of the here and now.”⁸

All media, Adam believes, include criticism and a “conferral of judgment” on events and ideas and are created for public consumption. The media are our alternative to directly experiencing the present. Imagination comprises the center of that consciousness-forming process. All individuals spontaneously form images of events in order to recognize and place them in a meaningful context. The narrative, no matter what medium it is communicated through, is little more than a method of imparting knowledge and creating awareness of the seen and unseen world. As it applies here, it is through the media that the public’s perceptions of outlaws and deviance are created and maintained.

Communication research maintains that journalistic objectivity is an impossibility. Individual biases on the part of reporters and editors, time and space constraints, and conventional definitions of what constitutes news determine which stories are selected and how they are reported.⁹ Equally important to the news media is how well the event fits normalized

⁵James W. Carey, “Mass Communication Research and Cultural Studies: An American View,” in *The Mass Media in Germany and The United States*, ed. James Curran, Michael Gurevitch and Janet Woollacott (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979), 412.

⁶*Ibid.*, 412.

⁷G. Stuart Adam, “Notes Towards a Definition of Journalism: Understanding an Old Craft as an Art Form,” *The Poynter Papers: No. 2* (St. Petersburg, Florida: The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1993), 11.

⁸*Ibid.*, 45.

⁹On gatekeeping see David Manning White, “The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News,”

themes and frames for constructing the story.¹⁰ News sources may be chosen more for accessibility and stature than for insight. Those sources pre-digest events, select out what they think is important and what the public needs to know, then regurgitate what remains to reporters pressed by deadlines.¹¹ In the end, what hits the page and the television screen is a pre-selected daily digest of events and opinion legitimized by the existing political structure in order to manage potential political conflict and protect the status quo.

The news media employ specific strategies to cover every exigency of the newsroom and create the illusion of fair and adequate coverage.¹² To explain the similarity of news coverage across media, Stanley Cohen and Jock Young employ the consensual paradigm, which states that journalists share a particular view of the way the world must be.¹³ It assumes a preconceived definition of citizenship, social order and normal human nature. The conventions

Journalism Quarterly 27 (Fall 1950): 383–396; James Buckalew, “News Elements and Selection by Television News Editors,” *Journal of Broadcasting* 14 (Winter 1969–1970): 47–54; John Dimmick, “The Gatekeeper: An Uncertainty Theory,” *Journalism Monographs* 37 (1974); D. Charles Whitney and Lee Becker, “‘Keeping the Gates’ for Gatekeepers: The Effects of Wire News,” *Journalism Quarterly* 59 (Spring 1982): 60–65; Guido Stempel, “Gatekeeping: The Mix of Topics and the Selection of News,” *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (Winter 1985): 791–796; Dan Berkowitz, “Refining the Gatekeeper Metaphor for Local Television,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 34 (Winter 1990): 55–68. On periodicity and event orientation see Gaye Tuchman, “Making News By Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected,” *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (July 1973): 110–131; Mark Fishman, “Crime Waves as Ideology,” in *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media*, eds. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (Beverly Hills: Sage 1981), 98–117; and Paul Rock, “News as Eternal Recurrence,” in *The Manufacture of News*, 64–70.

¹⁰For further discussion of repetition of news themes and frames see Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, “Structuring and Selecting News,” in *The Manufacture of News*, 52–63; Robert Darnton, “Journalism: All the News That Fits We Print,” chap. in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990), 60–93; and Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 1–18.

¹¹See Steve Chibnall, “The Production of Knowledge by Crime Reporters,” in *The Manufacture of News*, 75–97.

¹²See Tuchman; Galtung and Ruge; Herbert J. Gans, “Objectivity, Values and Ideology,” in *Deciding What’s News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 182–213; Edward Epstein, “The Intelligence Function,” in *News From Nowhere: Television and the News* (New York: Random House, 1973), 133–151; Bernard Roshco, “‘News Judgment’ — The Effect of Social Values,” in *Newsmaking*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 104–119; David Altheide, “Organizing for News,” in *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973), 61–95.

¹³For discussions of how culture and psychology influence this paradigm, see Galtung and Ruge; Holly S. Stocking and Paget H. Gross, “How do Journalists Think? A Proposal for the Study of Cognitive Bias in Newsmaking” (Eric Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skill, 1989); Susan Fiske and S. E. Taylor, “Social Schemata,” in *Social Cognition* (New York: Random House, 1984), 139–169; Elizabeth Rice, “On Cultural Schemata,” in *American Ethnologist* 7 (February 1980), 152–171.

and practices which define the newsroom are socialized into reporters, editors and photographers from their first day on the job. In the end, the journalist's accepted paradigm of how and why things happen and of what the universe looks like conspire to homogenize the news, no matter how out of the ordinary it may be, into the typically atypical.¹⁴

Sociologist Howard Becker describes a process by which some events are understood to break the rules and are labeled deviant. There are the acts themselves, and the judgment of those acts. It is in the observance, discussion and description of alleged deviance, the drama as played out in "moral rhetoric," that definition takes place. Becker focuses on "those sufficiently powerful to make their imputations of deviance stick: police, courts, physicians, school officials, and parents."¹⁵ But the mass media are an obvious and necessary addition to this list of moral entrepreneurs, and to the system of moral judgment overall. Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan suggest the news media, through recognition of sources and experts, have a special responsibility as the public's "daily barometer" of how society works: "News is a representation of authority. In the contemporary knowledge society news represents who are the authorized knowers and what are their authoritative versions of reality."¹⁶

The media interpret and enforce social norms out of self-interest, and their ability to control deviance is a keystone in the construction of administered society and our understanding of what it means to be law-abiding citizens. How and why deviants and deviance are imagined as they are is as important as who is selected for recognition and public approbation. The selection of adjectives, narrative frames, metaphors and myths is one way an audience is prodded to perceive a story in one way rather than another. For example, describing bikers as highway pirates or freewheeling gypsies, and selecting the adjective "outlaw" rather than "criminal" to describe clubs like the Hell's Angels and Satan's Slaves, prompts a wistful

¹⁴See Richard C. Vincent, Bryan K. Crow and Dennis Davis, "When Technology Fails: The Drama of Airline Crashes in Network Television News," *Journalism Monographs* 117 (1989).

¹⁵Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 196.

¹⁶Richard V. Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan, *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 3.

or romantic image. “Big Daddy” Ed Roth, a voice for motorheads in the 1960s, called the Angels “the Wild Bill Hickocks, the Billy the Kids, the last American heroes we have,” but to others they were huns and hoodlums.¹⁷ Accurate or not, these images create certain meanings and place the phenomenon of outlaw bikers in a specific context.

Reporters draw from a multiplicity of story frames. What guides their choice is a belief that one will be most meaningful to the audience.¹⁸ Journalists also promote understanding through the use of metaphor. Based on a principle of similarity, metaphor produces in the reader a way of seeing: “Conceived of as an operation of mind, metaphor makes that which is unknown identifiable by locating it within cultural categories.”¹⁹ The same process can be seen in the invocation of myths to inscribe meaning on to experience. Richard Slotkin’s *Gunfighter Nation* describes how the myth of the American frontier shaped the United States. For Slotkin, ideology and myth are inseparable. A society’s myths symbolize and dramatize its ideology. Unquestioned as an accurate representation of a culture’s values and beliefs, a particular myth can be invoked again and again until it becomes such a compressed set of symbols and clichés that single images and phrases spark “a complex system of historical associations.”²⁰

David Eason notes that story structures, including myth, do not necessarily create meaning, but instead prompt readers to make certain mental connections and conclusions.²¹ For Elizabeth Bird and Robert Dardenne the value of a society’s myths is that they outline the boundaries of acceptable behavior. They also serve to reassure: “News creates order out of disorder, transforms knowing into telling, offers reassurance and familiarity in shared community experience, provides answers to baffling questions (even when none are available)

¹⁷William Murray, *Previews of Coming Attractions* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970), 79.

¹⁸David Eason, “Telling Stories and Making Sense,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 15 (Fall 1981): 125.

¹⁹Ibid., 125.

²⁰Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 5.

²¹David Eason, “New Journalism, Metaphor and Culture,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 15 (Spring 1982): 142–149.

and provides ready explanations for complex phenomena.”²² No matter what form news takes, the media legitimate the dominant paradigm by fitting new situations into old myths sanctified as accurate and safe, allowing the audience to process new information with little or no effort.²³

MOTORCYCLE MENACE

Outlaw clubs were initially a Southern California phenomenon. Between the Hollister riot of 1947 and the release of the Lynch Report in 1965,²⁴ bikers and outlaw clubs received little attention outside of the state. Because they generally invaded small towns with small police departments, the news media could for a time reassure California residents that “one-percenters” were not a real threat.²⁵ The hellraising delinquents could be handled by the police, even if the forces of law occasionally had to call for help. The state was finally inspired to a serious investigation of its homegrown outlaw motorcycle clubs when they ventured into major cities. Hunter Thompson suggests as well that the increased media interest in outcasts and non-conformists in the 1960s was a direct result of the fact that they had no place, no function, in the Great Society.²⁶

In writing about Students for a Democratic Society, Todd Gitlin alleges that the media’s excessive emphasis on conflict between SDS members was at least in part responsible for the organization’s failure.²⁷ A similar result can be seen in reporting on bikers’ activities as the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) doggedly attempted to distance itself from those who

²²S. Elizabeth Bird and Robert W. Dardenne, “News and Storytelling in American Culture: Reevaluating the Sensational Dimension,” *Journal of American Culture* 13 (Summer 1990): 34.

²³S. Elizabeth Bird and Robert W. Dardenne, “Myth Chronicle and Story: Exploring the Narrative Quality of News,” in *Media Myths and Narratives*, ed. James Carey (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1988), 67–86.

²⁴California Attorney General’s Report, “Hell’s Angels Motorcycle Club,” 1965.

²⁵The term “one-percenters” was the result of the American Motorcycle Association’s argument that 99 percent of motorcyclists were law-abiding citizens, and that it was the outlaw one percent who caused problems.

²⁶Hunter S. Thompson, *Hell’s Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang* (New York: Ballantine, 1967), 41.

²⁷Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (New York: Bantam, 1980).

tarnished the sports image. Because outlaw clubs and their members were not immediately distinguishable, all motorcycle riders were incriminated. Both sides were quick to disavow the other, and it is possible the outlaw few became ever more outrageous in their behavior in order to distance themselves from AMA members who they considered “citizens” and “squares.”

Conflicts between the AMA and the outlaws who aggravated motorcycling’s already poor reputation received most of the national news media’s attention between Hollister and the 1960s. It is curious that skirmishes surrounding AMA events would even be considered newsworthy let alone receive such attention. Bikers were a greater danger to themselves and to each other than to the general public, and the events themselves would only have been of interest to local readers or to a specific audience. Criminal activities were uncommon when the clubs first made their presence felt, so it was brazen and unseemly acts of drunkenness, irresponsibility and carelessness which defined bikers as deviant and outside the mainstream, put AMA-sanctioned events on the news pages and earned the outlaws public disfavor.

Hollister created a connection between bikes and criminal behavior. Continued reporting made the connection stronger, singling out motorcyclists as an identifiable example of out-of-control youthful rebelliousness. The headline beneath *Life*’s Hollister photo reads, “Cyclist’s Holiday. He and friends terrorize a town.” Without discriminating among the 4,000 bikers present at the meet, the caption notes that the bikers “quickly tired of ordinary motorcycle thrills,” but does not explain what those thrills were.²⁸ Turning to “more exciting stunts,” bikers brazenly raced their bikes on the streets, disobeyed traffic signs and damaged a restaurant; a few were arrested for drunkenness and indecent exposure. In the end, the cyclists were guilty of a lack of decorum, endangering others and disorderly conduct.²⁹

²⁸“Cyclist’s Holiday,” *Life*, 21 July 1947, 31.

²⁹Three weeks after it reported the Hollister riot, *Life* ran a letter from Paul Brokaw, editor of *Motorcyclist*, defending cyclists. He takes issue with *Life*’s suggestion that all 4,000 bikers present were members of a motorcycle club. Anticipating the “one-percenter” distinction, Brokaw corrects the error by noting that the disorder was caused by a “small percentage of that number, aided by a much larger group of non-motorcycling hell-raisers and mercenary-minded barkeepers.” He laments that the photo “seared a pitiful brand on the character of tens of thousands of innocent, clean-cut, respectable, law-abiding young men and women who are the true representatives of an admirable sport.” “Letters to the Editor,” *Life*, 11 August 1947, 7.

Defiance of authority, disregard for property and the necessity of calling other law enforcement agencies for assistance are consistent elements in the reporting of violence at AMA events. So too are military metaphors emphasizing the conflict. The Associated Press' story on Hollister noted that 32 officers augmented the town's seven-man police force, and that trouble started when cyclists raced down a "main thoroughfare, paying no heed to orders from police to stop."³⁰ A year later, during a similar riot in Riverside, California, the AP reported, "Every police and sheriff's officer this citrus-belt town could muster was called out tonight to defend the town against more than 1,000 cyclists."³¹ Besides racing through the town's business district, they "manhandled" an Air Force officer and trampled the hood of his car. At Angels Camp, California, in 1957 bikers "overwhelmed" the two-man police force and 48 lawmen were brought in to quell the disturbance. While the article notes "main street was not safe for the townsmen," the last paragraph admits that "except for hundreds of beer bottles and cans littering main street, no damage was done during the disturbance."³²

The *Los Angeles Times* includes many of the same details in its reporting of Hollister, Riverside and, in 1963, Porterville, California. It concluded its Hollister story with a quote from a rioter: "The attitude of the cyclists was expressed by one youth today in these words: 'It's a convention. We're just having a convention.'"³³ The *Times* describes "veterans" of Hollister invading Riverside in 1948, and when Sheriff Cal Rayburn took offense at his treatment he "blasted them as 'riff-raff and hoodlums.'"³⁴ Bikers stormed a Porterville hospital to effect revenge on a local resident, but they were forced out of town when faced with water hoses and attack dogs. The three-hour riot began when 200 motorcyclists and others visiting the town were asked to not block the streets.

³⁰"Motorcyclists Put Town in Uproar," *New York Times*, 7 July 1947, 19.

³¹"Cyclists Rule Town; 28 Held in Disorder," *New York Times*, 5 July 1948, 16.

³²"Outlaw Cyclists Alarm a Village," *New York Times*, 3 June 1957, 7.

³³"4,000 Touring Cyclists Wreak Havoc in Hollister," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 July 1947, 4.

³⁴"46 Jailed in Riverside Cycle Riots," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 July 1948, 1.

The editors of the *Los Angeles Times* warn of “mounted hoodlums” in a 1948 editorial. Though it likens the experience of Hollister and Riverside to “guerrilla warfare,” it allows that motorcycle events have “as respectable a following as most other sports.”³⁵ They require more police protection than other events, however, which is where promoters were deficient. The editorial suggests local police departments be forgiven for not being able to handle the riots, but that in the future they should know what to expect. Citing details from the news reports, it concludes, “The hoodlums come riding in with malice aforethought. . . . The intention in these convocations is clear.”³⁶ In other words, if a town invites motorcyclists, it must be prepared for the possibility of violence.

In 1957 *Time* used similar details in reporting events at Angels Camp. The town suffered an invasion of biker clubs that were by that time prominently sporting club names such as Vampires, Huns and Tartars on their leather jackets. The article begins to differentiate between AMA riders and the more dangerous “black–denim trouser set,” and a sense of sexual menace is added to the framework of outlaw biker lore. As they “took over the community” one group “trailed” a girl, others yelled obscenities and “the rest of the pack twirled waist chains menacingly to discourage interference.”³⁷ The article notes that bikers can be violent, but despite threatening gestures they still seemed more of a danger to each other. Officers harassed the hoodlums out of town by writing tickets for minor infractions and arresting those who were intoxicated.³⁸

Though it was in no way a mainstream news publication, *Ace*, “The complete man’s magazine,” provides another perspective on the events of Angels Camp and shows how the biker image was already in a downward spiral. The magazine treads a blurry line between fiction

³⁵“Swarming of the Mounted Hoodlums,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 July 1948, II 4.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷“The Wild Ones,” *Time*, 17 June 1957, 22.

³⁸In *Hell’s Angels*, Thompson writes that the events of Angels Camp were a “major goad to the development of the mutual–assistance concept, a police version of mobile warfare” (211). It was clear that bikers presented a major problem for small town peace officers, and that it was becoming increasingly difficult for law enforcement to handle the kind of violence which followed one–percenter clubs.

and journalism in its article “How Hell Hit Angels Camp.” The details of the riot are more or less correct, but John Malcombe throws in a heavy dose of melodrama by exaggerating the amount of violence the town incurred. But what is most interesting about *Ace*’s story is its description of bikers as “motorcycle mobsters” who invaded the peaceful mining town “on their machines of death and left a trail of blood in the streets.”³⁹ With references to Capone and Dillinger prominent in the first paragraph, every aspect of the story is designed to elicit maximum rage in the reader. With very little proof, the magazine concludes, “The shocking truth of Angels Camp’s days of death and destruction is that it will happen again and again as long as the motorcycle mobsters are allowed to ride unchecked.”⁴⁰

Discerning readers would know from reading the story, however, that only two people were killed at the rally when two groups of riders collided and that the races went on as scheduled. The magazine follows a course established by other publications by praising the get-tough action of law enforcement. Few bikers who were not AMA members were allowed into town, and police officers and sheriff’s deputies directed their efforts at outlaw bikers, issuing 300 citations for such criminal acts as “jaywalking, loose license plates, tilted headlamps, inadequate equipment and ‘talking back.’”⁴¹ The last eight paragraphs of the story endeavor to assure readers that AMA riders were not to blame for any of the events, that they were friendly and cooperative, but it was too late for damage control. One AMA member said, “We’re objects of suspicion One look at our bikes and leather jackets and everybody lumps us with the hoodlums.”⁴²

The ubiquity of the Hell’s Angels in the 1960s eroded the few positive elements which remained of the outlaw image. The drunkenness and childish antics which endangered the lives of others, the one-percenters’ disheveled and sloppy appearance, a general oafishness and a

³⁹John Malcombe, “How Hell Hit Angels Camp,” *Ace*, December 1957, 11.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 56.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 56.

suggestion of homosexuality finally betrayed them as undesirable, even among other bikers. Reporting the Big Bear Run in Victorville, California, in 1961, *Sports Illustrated* advances the idea of the AMA's separation from the "sideburned delinquents" who made the event a shambles. Opposing respectable motorcyclists were "bearded tough guys in top hats and young swaggerers in black leather jackets with 'Hell's Angels — Berdoo' painted on the back. . . . In short, enough certified kooks to show that the romance had not gone out of California motorcycling altogether."⁴³

What *Sports Illustrated* meant by "romance" is not immediately clear, but it is doubtful the adjective still applied at the end of the decade when the nation had seen all it needed — and more than it wanted — of the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club. The incidence and severity of violence at biker rallies and AMA-sponsored events escalated steadily, so much so that a 1963 Labor Day blowout in Porterville and the alleged rape of two underage girls during a 1964 Hell's Angels run in Monterey inspired California Attorney General Thomas Lynch to investigate the Angels and other outlaw clubs. His report's conclusions focused yet more attention on bikers and gave law enforcement greater authority to clamp down on outlaw clubs.

At some point the outlaws, now just criminals in the assessment of many, crossed another line. Their eccentricity and enthusiasm, especially in their sexual aggressiveness, became more difficult to tolerate. Their existence was a "mockery of public decency," and in Monterey they were linked to rape. In *Hell's Angels*, Thompson explains the difficulty in defining the club's pragmatic understanding and use of rape, but the Angels nevertheless fell victim to the country's "rape mania": "The appearance of the rape omen was a clear and present danger to property values; the block had to be purified."⁴⁴ Disturbances in tourist areas, and the accumulating evidence that the Hell's Angels MC was spreading its influence into middle-class communities inspired the Attorney General's investigation. More importantly, however, it further invoked the news media's role as finger-pointing moral barometer.

⁴³James Murray, "Debacle in the Desert," *Sports Illustrated*, 23 January 1961, 12.

⁴⁴Thompson, *Hell's Angels*, 67.

How much credence reporters and their publications gave the Lynch Report varied. Some accepted at face value reports of erratic and anti-social behavior. Others, like Thompson, noted discrepancies and attempted serious analysis. *Newsweek* used a few of the 16-page report's findings to introduce a barroom description of the Hell's Angels, complete with open-mouth kisses between Angels and the sharing of marijuana and women. Ralph "Sonny" Barger and Michael "Tiny" Walter do not deny the report's conclusions. Instead, they extol the pleasure in being Angels. "We're kiss-me-baby angels from hell, man," is one quote, followed by a description of the "thrill when you see that ground going by under your feet — when you get your knees locked on that gas tank with all that power 'twixt your legs, when the wind's hitting your face like a great big wave, when your chick's on your back digging her nails into your belly."⁴⁵

Time was much more accepting of Lynch's findings, freely citing facts and eschewing initiative reporting. Its conclusion that "no act is too degrading for the pack" is stated as fact, and is followed by descriptions of the Angels' deviant sexual practices and thievery, all performed between "drug-induced stupors."⁴⁶ New York City did not have a Hell's Angels chapter until 1969 so it is not surprising that the *New York Times* story depends on Lynch's facts and figures. The *Times* reassures its readers by mentioning the report's "intensive" investigation and the new surveillance and intelligence efforts to be implemented in California.⁴⁷ The Lynch Report gets the final word, predicting stronger measures will be taken to investigate and arrest bikers "who threaten the lives, peace and security of honest citizens."⁴⁸ Readers could assume that one could not be both a biker and an honest citizen.

The *Los Angeles Times* put that threat at the top of its story concerning the "long-awaited report," followed by a description of the "voluminous incidents for which club

⁴⁵"The Wild Ones," *Newsweek*, 29 March 1965, 25.

⁴⁶"The Wilder Ones," *Time*, 26 March 1965, 23B.

⁴⁷"California Takes Steps to Curb Terrorism of Ruffian Cyclists," *New York Times*, 16 March 1965, 15.

⁴⁸"The Wilder Ones," 23B.

members were responsible” and law enforcement’s proposed new tactics.⁴⁹ The import of Lynch’s findings is indicated not only by the weight of the Angels’ legal infractions, but by the amount of work that went into compiling the facts and statistics which paint an ugly picture of outlaw clubs. The “mass investigation” entailed “six months of work by the attorney general’s office, the California Highway Patrol, 22 district attorneys, 15 sheriffs and 67 police chiefs.”⁵⁰

In reporting a 1965 Laconia, New Hampshire, riot for *Life*, Michael Mok is less critical of the bikers believed to have instigated the violence. He points out that “crew-cut college kids whose immaculate chinos could only have been laundered by Mother” joined motorcyclists in the melee.⁵¹ Mok also notes that the town knew what it was in for when it hosted the racing event. One man reports he had spent \$400 to repair damage from the bikers’ previous visit, and a sign in front of the Baptist church welcomed the bikers and their money. A motel owner boasted turn-away business, and another was happy to sell the bikers beer. Mok’s story also describes how “brawlers and bystanders alike” were injured by National Guardsmen and how the soldiers left “the fuzz to mop up the laggards” somewhat indiscriminately.⁵²

Descriptions of outlaw bikers as less than human and outside the scope of social acceptability remained the rule, however. A focus on appearance and bizarre appetites made them easy to identify in a decade when riots and demonstrations were weekly occurrences. The Hell’s Angels gained singular notoriety as the instigators of rioting, and outlaw clubs in general represented something other organizations did not. They had no agenda other than lawlessness and self-gratification, it seemed, and their definition of fun was unsettling. Their use of random violence and casual intimidation was the nation’s worst fear realized. In Laconia rioters set fire

⁴⁹“Hell’s Angels Called Threat on Wheels,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 March 1965, 1.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 1.

⁵¹Michael Mok, “Come to the Riot. See Weirs Beach Burn,” *Life*, 2 July 1965, 88.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 88. Despite his tone, Mok is consistent in describing the bikers as insolent drunks and bullies. The *New York Times* ran the Weirs Beach story on page 1, leading with a description of the firepower used against the 10,000 young rioters. One paragraph notes that “police and National Guard units cleared out the town, even rousting persons registered at hotels,” but follows it with a description of the damage — mostly litter — left behind by the cyclists. “10,000 in Beach Riot in New Hampshire,” *New York Times*, 20 June 1965, 1.

to a car while a family of six was still in it, faced down National Guardsmen armed with bayonets, and “unfurled a Nazi flag and set up a chant of ‘Sieg Heil.’”⁵³ The Hell’s Angels, though they denied being anywhere near Laconia, were blamed for inciting the riot.⁵⁴

Thompson treats the Laconia reports as another example of the mainstream news media’s focus on outrage stories and their inability to divine the truth amid contradictory official accounts of events which involved outlaw motorcycle clubs. Thompson favors Mok’s suggestion that many of the rioters were acting in self–defense. The National Guard, he writes, expected violence in Laconia and had practiced riot control for 10 weeks. Though it was not stated in news reports, Thompson points out that damage from the riot was minimal, the races went on as scheduled the next day, and townspeople believed the event would be welcomed back the next year. Finally, of the Laconia mayor’s unfounded claim that the Hell’s Angels, in league with communists, were to blame for the violence, Thompson, with some derision, concludes that Mayor Peter Lassard “was a man who marched through life to the rhythms of some drum I would never hear.”⁵⁵ Unfortunately, by the time all of this information was available, no one cared.

William Murray makes a similar observation concerning the exploitation of the Hell’s Angels in his 1965 *Saturday Evening Post* article. He disputes the Lynch Report’s claim that there were 446 identified Hell’s Angels members in California, putting the actual number at fewer than 200 active Angels. The disparity can be explained, Murray contends, by the fact that part of the club’s “role” in California politics was to serve as fall guys: “They are in a perfect

⁵³“Bikies’ Fun,” *Newsweek*, 5 July 1965, 21.

⁵⁴In Mok’s story the Laconia police chief and the mayor blame the Angels based only on their reputation: “‘We knew they were around and that they had taken over a town out west, but they weren’t going to do it here’” (Mok, 88). *Newsweek*’s story on the same event notes that “some natives suggested, without proving it, that the trouble was started by cross–country visitors from the notorious California motorcycle gang known as Hell’s Angels” (“Bikies’ Fun,” 21). The *New York Times* printed the allegation without details (“10,000 in Beach Riot,” 1).

⁵⁵Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*, 287. To be fair, much of the information about the riot was not immediately available. Thompson notes that it was “at least a month before the initial, wild–eyed accounts of the Laconia riot were deflated by first–hand testimony from those without instant access to the media” (*Hell’s Angels*, 279).

position to be exploited by politicians anxious to impress the electorate, by policemen unable to put a stop to high-level crime, by hustlers looking for a new teen-age fad to launch, by reporters and commentators hungry for headlines.”⁵⁶ Everyone, even entertainers and filmmakers, wanted to exploit the Angels and the powerful emotions they inspired.

A low-angle photograph of a Hell’s Angel, lending him larger-than-life stature, graces the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* issue which includes Murray’s piece. The photographs of Angels and their “old ladies” do not necessarily verify a negative image of bikers, yet they are appropriate in that they illustrate the outlaw dichotomy — attractive yet repellent, hero and anti-hero — which is central to Murray’s article. Murray tries to make sense of what he sees and what he is told by Hell’s Angels and by San Bernadino police officer Larry Wallace. At one point Murray wonders if he should stay and speak to the seemingly friendly Angels alone, to which Wallace responds, ““Don’t ever make the mistake of underrating the Angels. They’re tough and they’re mean, and that’s the truth. I don’t think they’d be dumb enough to stomp on a journalist, but you can’t count on it.””⁵⁷

Murray, like Thompson, tries to give the Hell’s Angels Motorcycle Club a serious look in a prominent national publication. While far from a positive portrayal, he uses the relative freedom allowed by the *Post*, a popular general interest monthly, to look skeptically at the club and its reputation. He allows otherwise inarticulate men a bit of dignity when they are on their bikes, describing one Angel as handling his machine with “consummate ease.” They can reduce the machine to its “essence” in two hours, he notes, but they can also so completely destroy a house that nothing is in one piece. In the end, Murray’s Angels are illiterate and befuddled by their new-found celebrity, but they are survivors.

Murray links his skepticism of the Angels’ reputation to criticism of the way the media and law enforcement groups handle the club. In describing events surrounding the Monterey rape story, he points out that even though charges against the four bikers were dropped, “the

⁵⁶William Murray, “The Hell’s Angels,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 20 November 1965, 39.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 34.

impression lingered on that foul deeds had been committed and the authorities had been aroused.”⁵⁸ He also criticizes the Lynch Report’s finding that the club had been brought up on numerous criminal charges in the past even though none had resulted in a major conviction, and that a majority of the 1,023 misdemeanor convictions reported in the document were mainly for traffic violations. “This wouldn’t qualify the Angels for Good Conduct medals,” Murray writes, “but it did make for slightly less dramatic reading.”⁵⁹

The Angels in Murray’s piece accept the reputation for mechanical skill, toughness, and meanness that comes with being a member. They also accept — or at least do not deny — their physical repulsiveness and total lack of personal hygiene. They do deny being racist, however, and they adamantly deny being homosexual.⁶⁰ Indeed, the Angels are surrounded by women in the articles and photos. Murray writes that they “are followed by coveys of sad little girls, mostly in their early teens or early 20’s. There is one girl to every four or five Angels and the turnover is terrific.”⁶¹ But in attempting to subvert the image of homosexuality by describing their various sexual escapades, detailing the roles of “mamas,” “sheep” and “old ladies,” and by agreeing that women are often sold or auctioned off, the bikers merely compound the sense of sexual deviance which surrounded them.

Marginalized groups and outcasts who at one time might have supported or at least tolerated outlaw motorcycle clubs began to distance themselves in the late 1960s. In 1970 *Newsweek* suggested the existence of a long-running alliance between California hippies and war protesters, but the Angels’ disruption of a 1965 peace march and their offer to Lyndon

⁵⁸Ibid., 34. Many articles that immediately followed added gang rape to the offenses for which the Hell’s Angels and other clubs, as organizations, were guilty.

⁵⁹Ibid., 35.

⁶⁰As far as the Angels’ attitudes towards African-Americans, Murray quotes Wallace as saying that the club is not overtly racist, “but the main thing is that the Angels ain’t for anybody, and that makes them anti-Negro and just about anybody else” (“The Hell’s Angels,” 34). “Rebels on Wheels,” *Ebony*, December 1966, 64–65, and “Nazi Emblems of ‘Wayouts’ Are no Symbols of Hate,” *Ebony*, December 1966, 66–68, also attempt to dispel the image of outlaw bikers and the Hell’s Angels as racists.

⁶¹Murray, “The Hell’s Angels,” 37. Murray was letting the Angels off easy. That members of outlaw clubs lived off the wages of wives and girlfriends who worked as prostitutes had been acknowledged in other reports.

Johnson to fight in Vietnam as a “crack group of fighting gorillas (sic)” ended the possibility of a coalition. The debacle at the Altamont rock concert, where the Rolling Stones hired the club to act as security and they subsequently killed Meredith Hunter in their enthusiasm, signaled the end of any alliance. *Newsweek* refers to the pact as “bizarre and foolish” because all the groups had in common were “feelings of martyrdom and enthusiasm for drugs.” The Angels were bullies, plain and simple; the article confirms the label as the reporter quotes a resident of a Berkeley commune: “The Angels were more Fascist than the establishment pigs.”⁶²

Estranged from other bikers and from anti-establishment groups, outlaw clubs were even more alone. The news media used the two groups’ empathy to wedge them even farther apart. In 1971, increased crime and violence in an Atlanta area that was a home to hippies and vagrants led to *New York Times* stories by James T. Wooten which described a widening ideological gulf. His first piece casts biker gangs as “invaders,” displacing peace and love with death and fear. The area was a refuge for “young people disenchanted with more orthodox lifestyles,” and local police “tolerated” the drugs and narcotics, at least until the bikers moved in and established a parasitic existence.⁶³ The dichotomy is more obvious in Wooten’s *New York Times Magazine* article which apposes a photo of intimidating bikers on one page with one of a peaceful looking hippie on the other. Using only hippies and the police as sources, Wooten laments the death of the “gay, gaudy carnival, noisy and naughty, and with all the makings of a Greenwich Village South.”⁶⁴

Focusing on differences between bikers and hippies, a 1973 *Newsweek* story, ostensibly about the arrest and trial of four Angels for murder, begins with the bald assertion that the club had been “lionized by the counterculture” prior to Altamont. The five-paragraph article recounts testimony of how the bikers murdered their drug supplier in a deal gone bad, then

⁶²“Avenging Angels,” *Newsweek*, January 5 1970, 16.

⁶³James T. Wooten, “Motorcycle Gangs Terrorize Once-Calm Atlanta Hippie Area,” *New York Times*, 3 January 1971, 40.

⁶⁴James T. Wooten, “The Life and Death of Atlanta’s Hip Strip,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 14 March 1971, 34.

alleges that the Oakland Hell's Angels chapter had long worked for police by "diverting guns and explosives from political extremists and then handing the contraband to police."⁶⁵

Normally that is laudable behavior, but in this case it only proved the club could not be trusted. It is only in the story's final paragraph that the reader is told the jury found all four Angels not guilty of murder. To accentuate the inconsequence of the verdict, the article's closing sentence reports that the Angels stand accused in another California murder case in which "three bodies were found in a well on what police call a Hell's Angels burial ground."⁶⁶

Another *Newsweek* article casts doubt on the Angels' efforts to clean up their public image. In the aftermath of Altamont and the murder trials, the club hired a public relations agent and involved itself in charity events. As described in *Newsweek*, an anti-drug campaign, blood drives and toy runs seem successful. But in the story "The Risen Angels," the club is again likened to a Panzer battalion and some of the sources quoted are skeptical; one officer "speculates the new image may in fact be nothing more than a front for expanded narcotics trafficking."⁶⁷ *Newsweek's* lead confirms its own estimation that the "gang's image has hit rock-bottom — even by its own less-than-lofty standards," inspiring fear even while performing good deeds.⁶⁸ That they are carrying teddy bears instead of "switchblades and beer bottles" seems too bizarre to believe.

Thompson, Yves Lavigne⁶⁹ and others believed that if authorities and the media had ignored one-percenters and the Hell's Angels, especially during the 1960s when they were confined to California, they might have faded away with time. *Time*, somewhat hypocritically, calls the Angels' popularity undeserved: "Pop music and film romanticized such outlaws as tragic, misunderstood loners, giving the Angels a place that they scarcely deserve in American

⁶⁵"Fallen Angels," *Newsweek*, 8 January 1973, 25.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁷"The Risen Angels," *Newsweek*, 10 December 1973, 38.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁹Yves Lavigne, *Hell's Angels: Three Can Keep A Secret if Two are Dead* (New York: Carol Publishing, 1987).

folklore.”⁷⁰ But as America became aware of its growing drug problem, the Hell’s Angels’ involvement in drug trafficking assured the club continued front page play. Unsavory outlaws, easy to identify, they were examples of America’s violent drug culture and the deviance it spawned. A 1982 FBI bulletin linked motorcycle gangs to the manufacture and distribution of narcotics, prostitution, murder and a host of lesser felonies. Though it stopped short of calling outlaw clubs Public Enemy No. 1, “the amount of criminal activity is alarming. . . . Law enforcement officers conducting gang investigations see these groups as posing complex criminal problems.”⁷¹ The complex nature of those investigations, understandably, required more man–hours and funding.

Beginning in the 1970s motorcycle clubs were tried under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act as part of the nation’s attempt to shut down the drug trade. Ten Hell’s Angels, including Sonny Barger, now the club’s “godfather,” were arrested on conspiracy and drug charges in 1979.⁷² Articles in *Time* and *Newsweek* repeated past descriptions which went back 20 years, but described as well the new sophistication which belied the club’s reputation. *Time* instills an ominous tone by noting that officers seized drugs and “a small arsenal of firearms, including some 1,000 rounds of ammunition.”⁷³ And though they face up to 20 years, one source makes it clear the danger is not gone: “There will be more of them out of prison than in, and you can’t change years of a pattern over night.”⁷⁴

The trial, which lasted eight months, was newsworthy in part because of the extensive, possibly exaggerated, security measures and its cast of characters. *Newsweek* quotes a defense attorney’s complaint that courtroom searches and bulletproof shields made his clients appear

⁷⁰“Hell’s Angels 4, Breed 1,” *Time*, 22 March 1971, 18.

⁷¹Roger H. Davis, “Outlaw Motorcyclists: A Problem for Police (Part One),” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, October 1982,13.

⁷²“It May Be the End of a Cycle as Hell’s Angels ‘Godfather’ Sonny Barger Returns to Jail,” *People Weekly*, 3 July 1979, 63–64.

⁷³“Hell’s Angels: Some Wheelers May be Dealers,” *Time* 2 July 1979, 34.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

overly menacing, but few people involved in the case come across positively.⁷⁵ Eventually the system itself comes in for criticism. Defense attorneys question the constitutionality of RICO and argue that the club cannot be held responsible for the actions of every member and associate. Prosecution witnesses and informants, paid for their testimony, were criminals themselves. As a participant in the Witness Protection Program, one Angel testifying against the club was “enjoying,” at taxpayer expense, “immunity, a new name, a credit rating, about \$200 a month and a Government recommendation for a small-business loan.”⁷⁶

News magazines failed to report the trial’s outcome in July 1980. After 17 days the jury could not reach a verdict on 32 of the 44 counts. Barger, described as “cool and relaxed” as he confessed to selling drugs, was among those found not guilty of racketeering and conspiracy. In reporting that the attorney prosecuting the case would try again, *New York Times* reporter Wayne King notes, “No price tag has been placed on the trial, although estimates have run as high as \$5 million.”⁷⁷ This is a detail rarely noted in court reports. Including the cost of a complex trial suggests either that the Angels had yet to be recognized as a scourge worthy of such perseverance, or that the price of the state’s mistakes in trying the case was too high.

The trial foreshadowed a litany of stories in magazines and newspapers concerning drug dealing, violence, arrests, trials and mob connections which played throughout the 1980s.⁷⁸ The Hell’s Angels MC continued to establish new chapters across the country, however. Upstart clubs rose to challenge them and the gang wars that followed made up the balance of news

⁷⁵Melinda Beck, “Hell’s Angels on Trial,” *Newsweek*, 29 October 1979, 43.

⁷⁶Jane O’Reilly, “In California: A Trial of Angels,” *Time*, 26 May 1980, 10. In the *New York Times* Wallace Turner suggests skepticism of the state’s case: “The trial has so far consisted of a relentless presentation of bizarre testimony from a string of former associates of the Hell’s Angels and introduction of evidence to buttress their stories.” Wallace Turner, “Criminal Trial of Hell’s Angels Starting 4th Month,” *New York Times*, 20 January 1980, 21.

⁷⁷Wayne King, “Mistrial Declared in 8-Month Hell’s Angels Trial on Coast,” *New York Times*, 3 July 1980, 12.

⁷⁸See Lori Santos, “Gangs of Bikers Control Drugs, DEA Report Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 July 1980, 18; Mark Starr, “Do the Bandidos Fit their Name,” *Newsweek*, 23 November 1981, 49; Stanley Penn, “Rise in Crime Ventures by Motorcycle Gangs Worries U. S. Lawmen,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11 January 1984, 1; “Speed Demons,” *Time*, 2 April 1984, 21; Walter Shapiro, “Going After Hell’s Angels,” *Newsweek*, 13 May 1985, 41; “Busting Hell’s Angels,” *Time*, 13 May 1985, 28; “Gangs that Rival the Mob,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 3 February 1986, 29.

reports. The Angels also continued their low-key, circumspect metamorphosis. It and other clubs showed interest in volunteer projects and lobbying efforts, though law enforcement officials and the media were ever-skeptical. Sensing some anti-government opinion, Barger spoke out against attacks on the club in 1982: “DEA and ATF on their best days would make the Hell’s Angels look like a bunch of Boy Scouts on a Sunday picnic.”⁷⁹ The article ends, though, with praise for FBI risks in infiltrating outlaw clubs.

For four decades, Barger was the one constant in Hell’s Angels coverage, and his treatment in the media is indicative of the media’s changing perceptions of the club. *Newsweek* noted his odor and decadence in 1965 as he “spat out,” “We ain’t no homos.”⁸⁰ In 1970, commenting unrepentantly (and again ungrammatically) on Altamont, the malevolence of the “boss Angel” is a stronger undercurrent: “Ain’t nobody gonna kick my motorcycle.”⁸¹ Relying on the California Attorney General and former club members as sources, a 1973 *Los Angeles Times* article provides a more threatening picture of Barger, if only because he is revealed as intelligent and charismatic. Barger inspires “an almost hypnotic loyalty.” He created a “Mafia-style monolith, staking out territories and ruling through fear and intimidation,” succeeded in harnessing the club’s potential, directed its public relations, and “put a lid on the Angels’ more raucous entertainment.”⁸²

Barger turned down interviews for the *Los Angeles Times* article, so to balance law enforcement statements reporter William Endicott quotes Sonny’s lawyer, who says Barger’s a man’s man, but that he “is out of touch with the times. ‘He’s a physical man, a soldier of fortune, and that’s anachronistic in 1973.’”⁸³ The picture of Barger as the “Maximum

⁷⁹David A. Weissler, “Motorcycle Gangs go Gray Flannel,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 20 September 1982, 65.

⁸⁰“The Wild Ones,” *Newsweek*, 29 March 1965, 25.

⁸¹“Avenging Angels,” 16.

⁸²William Endicott, “Hell’s Angels: Some Say They’re in the Big Leagues,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 January 1973, 3.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 12.

Leader” of the Hell’s Angels MC conflicts with the *New York Times*’ image of the club in that same year as being ravaged by drugs and greed, and near collapse with Barger and others in jail. The *New York Times* describes in detail Barger’s role in drug trafficking and two murder trials but minimizes his leadership. He is summed up as a high school dropout, “famous tough guy,” and the “‘old man’ of a green-eyed blonde who once won a beauty contest.”⁸⁴

In 1994 the archetypal Angel was again profiled in a *Los Angeles Times* piece, this time as an entrepreneur, philanthropist and friend of Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, revealing how the image and reputation of the man and the club had changed in 30 years. The biker has his own line of salsa and sells T-shirts emblazoned, “Sonny Barger — American hero.” Relaxing in his home, Barger, now a jogger, is “almost patrician” and “the hard edges have softened.” He remains unapologetic, however, and his speaking ability has, amazingly, improved: “I just believe we have a right to do anything we want to do as long as we’re not hurting anyone else, and if anyone tries to stop us, we have a right to step on them.” He has “melted” into society, but continues to “avoid mainstream society. ‘It’s not something that appeals to me. . . . I am what I want to be.’”⁸⁵ In sum, Barger is a winner, and America loves a winner, even if his background may be a bit shady.

Most striking is the article’s admission that for many men Barger is a role model. Barger describes meeting a woman who tells him that all men would like to be him, to have the ability to handle every situation. With romantic comparisons of Angels to wild West figures, Sonny admits, “We are the type of people who handle situations, whatever they are.”⁸⁶ Law enforcement, consequently, is the bully and the article concludes with Barger suggesting he was always simply a target, a potential “feather in prosecutors’ caps.” That defense is nothing new for Barger or the Hell’s Angels, but in 1994 it rang true for those who felt oppressed by government bureaucracy and would respect those who managed to escape interference.

⁸⁴Wallace Turner, “Jail Terms Deplete Ranks of Hell’s Angels,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March 1973, 51.

⁸⁵Bob Sipchen, “The Rough Rider,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 December 1994, E 1.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 1.

Barger's image makeover parallels the mainstream news media's handling of changes in public perceptions of motorcycles and bikers. With the growing popularity of motorcycles and their diffusion into society, the news media changed their strategy, albeit slowly, and modified the biker formula. During the 1960s and 1970s, mainstream magazines and newspapers described the spread of responsible motorcycling and acceptable clubs. Acceptable, however, meant riding a lightweight European or Japanese motorcycle, not a Harley,⁸⁷ and responsible meant obeying traffic laws and wearing a helmet.⁸⁸ Throughout the period, motorcycling remained a masculine activity, something of a "forbidden fruit" for businessmen and citizens who wanted to escape the daily grind, and riders usually exhibited a recklessness for which the motorcycle was ideal. But the bad-biker image carried over to the reporting of motorcycling as a sport and as a leisure activity and riders contended with prejudice from police and motorists alike.⁸⁹ Even if the rider wore a Brooks Brother suit, "he's still a Hell's Angel to most of the populace."⁹⁰

"Law-abiding respectable men like George McCarty," profiled in a 1969 *New York Times* article on the "new breed" of enthusiast, provide a counterpoint to the "small minority of 'weirdos who spoil it for everyone else.'"⁹¹ McCarty, owner of a shoe pattern factory and a

⁸⁷See "How the 'Thunder Herd' Boss Brought a Honda Boom to the U.S.," *Newsweek*, 6 July 1964, 66–68; Eric Arctander, "Civilized Cycles," *Popular Science*, July 1965, 68–72; "An Uneasy Rider in the U.S. Market," *Business Week*, 20 June 1970, 44.

⁸⁸See "How to Avoid Killing Yourself," *Esquire*, November 1965, 140; "All About Owning a Cycle," *Better Homes and Gardens*, September 1970, 46+; "Can Cycling be Safe," *Better Homes and Gardens*, May 1972, 76; Lee Gutkind, "Two-Wheeled Intruders in a Four-Wheeled Culture," *New York Times*, 10 June 1973, section XX, 39; Joan Cook, "Motorcycles Move Up in the World," *New York Times*, 18 April 1976, section XI, 15.

⁸⁹See "Two-Wheeled Chic," *Time*, 11 September 1964, 78–80; Michael Sumner, "Varoom at the Top: The Madison Avenue Motorcycle Club," *Esquire*, November 1965, 141; Robert Levy, "Those 'Easy Rider' Executives," *Dun's*, January 1972, 44–46; David Shaw, "These Big Wheels Hit the Road," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March 1973, section II, 1; "Cyclists Rev Up Kindly Image," *New York Times*, 15 April 1973, p. 100; Georgia Dullea, "Heck's Angels, Sort Of," *New York Times*, 11 August 1974, 54; Ann Japenga, "Cycling: Sundays at the Rock Store," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 September 1979, section VII, 1.

⁹⁰"Plight of the Cyclists," *Newsweek*, 27 March 1967, 89.

⁹¹Robert Reinhold, "New Breed of Motorcycle Buff is Businessman 5 Days a Week," *New York Times*, 16 June 1969, 59.

weekend biker, rides his motorcycle as a hobby, as a “little bit of rebellion against society” and as an alternative to relaxing with three martinis after work. The “weirdos” are those “dressed in denim and leather vests emblazoned with Iron Crosses and painted skulls.” But because of the biker image, McCarty has to keep his hobby a secret: “‘It’s too bad the kooks get all the headlines,’ he said. ‘I don’t tell my customers I own a motorcycle — I wouldn’t dare.’”⁹²

In the 1970s and 1980s the combination of good public relations, Harley–Davidson’s resurgence, a new middle–class infatuation with heavyweight cycles and the media’s co–opting of some elements of the outlaw subculture showed signs of improving the biker image. With Harley–Davidson back on sound financial footing, or at least offering Japanese manufacturers steady competition, motorcycling became a viable, acceptable and even patriotic pastime.⁹³ “Between the saints and sinners, a whole new breed of biker is emerging,” proclaimed *Esquire* in 1989, evoking “classic” images of hogs and Sportsters as the great American freedom machines.⁹⁴ Malcolm Forbes, Liz Taylor, Lou Reed and Charles Russell (president of VISA) all owned and rode Harleys, and so did another new breed of riders — those over 50 years old — who enjoyed the freedom offered by motorcycles.⁹⁵

But the bad–biker image was far from dead, and not everyone who sat astride a hog and indulged in biker chic was treated warmly. *Fortune* reporter Andrew Serwer, relying on FBI sources and journalist Yves Lavigne’s screed on the Hell’s Angels, forsakes physical description of bikers for an analysis of the club’s “paramilitary” operations. If you meet up

⁹²Ibid., 59.

⁹³See Gloria Emerson, “Easy Riding in Daytona,” *Geo*, April 1980, 8–30; Irv Hamilton, “Bikers in Pinstripes,” *San Francisco Magazine*, October 1980, 88–90; Marilyn Wellemeier, “Running Free and Close to Nature,” *Fortune*, 13 July 1981, 133–140; John Costello, “Therapeutic Thrills on Wheels,” *Nation’s Business*, May 1982, 93–95; William E. Schmidt, “Resort Looks on Warily as Hell’s Angels Wheel In,” *New York Times*, 14 August 1982, 8; Stephen Braun, “Easy Rider Ritual,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 1986, 1; Michael Oneal, “Harley–Davidson: Ready to Hit the Road Again,” *Business Weekly*, 21 July 1986m 70; Jay Merritt, “Heck on Wheels,” *Esquire*, March 1987, 30–33; James Howard Kunstler, “My Motorcycle Years,” *GQ*, April 1988, 93+; Melvin Maddocks, “Motorcycle in Search of a Third Wheel, or Maybe a Fourth,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 August 1988, 17.

⁹⁴Mark Marvel, “The Gentrified Hog,” *Esquire*, July 1989, 22.

⁹⁵Chris Pfouts, “Easy Riders,” *New Choices*, June 1989, 64–68.

with bikers, Serwer begins, “you have reason to be nervous.”⁹⁶ Club members claim that law enforcement is using bikers to improve its own reputation and that clubs cannot be held responsible for all members’ activities, but Serwer reiterates the official line on the Angels’ penchant for drug trafficking and violence. All that has changed is their growing sophistication.

The Massachusetts Hell’s Angels members Mark Bastoni interviewed for a *Boston Magazine* article echo Serwer’s sentiments. Individually, they admit to being convicts and felons, but they argue that fact alone should not reflect on the club. Bouncin’ Bob argues that politicians and members of the Knights of Columbus have also been convicted of crimes, so “why aren’t they calling the Senate a criminal organization and harassing senators and politicians?”⁹⁷ A second biker claims police officers steal cocaine and marijuana from property rooms then re-sell it, but no one believes they are part of a criminal organization. It is the club’s age-old defense, but it gained a new resonance in an era of government corruption. The reading public was more likely to accept the idea all organizations, even the most upstanding, contain a criminal element.

Besides interviewing bikers, Bastoni talked to the club’s lawyer, the FBI and state police officers. With the information he gathers, Bastoni admits, “Not even the Angels’ high-octane blend of paranoia and denial can wipe out the violent record of the Massachusetts club during the last 10 years.”⁹⁸ Club members have been linked to murder and methamphetamine production, and, worse yet, they hire themselves out to the Mafia. Yet there is no real comparison between the two organizations. Compared to the Mafia, “the Hell’s Angels pale in significance,” the chief of the New England Organized Crime Strike Force says, because their influence is too narrow. Despite the rhetoric, Bastoni concludes, “some law-enforcement authorities are less convinced of the Angels’ importance in the world of crime.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶Andrew E. Serwer, “The Hell’s Angels’ Devilish Business,” *Fortune*, 30 November 1992, 118.

⁹⁷Mark Bastoni, “Chrome and Hot Leather,” *Boston Magazine*, July 1988, 101.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 131.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 135.

Which is not to suggest the Hell's Angels are not dangerous. Rather, in Bastoni's article organizations like the Hell's Angels MC are simply parts of the whole. At heart, the police force and the motorcycle club offer the same benefits — camaraderie, mutual defense and elitism — which Bastoni believes explains the grudging respect and hatred they hold for each other. "Cops represent the authority that the Angels despise," yet both view themselves as living by a strict code of conduct that sets them apart from the rest of society. In the end, Bastoni believes, "The biggest thing that separates them is the law."¹⁰⁰ So even though they stand at opposite ends of the legal spectrum, the existence of organizations such as the Hell's Angels is a necessity, because in order to recognize "good" there must also be "evil."

Other articles from the late 1980s and into the 1990s suggested outlaw bikers had lost some of their ability to intimidate. *The New Republic* even provided bikers a modicum of respect in a 1989 piece which described their successful, however inelegant, lobbying efforts.¹⁰¹ A *Los Angeles Times* article observed in a 1990 headline that "Hell's Angels make good neighbors in Ventura," if only because they do not bother anyone.¹⁰² And *GQ*'s Trish Deitch Rohrer paints a picture of rubbies who buy expensive Harleys in order "to lose themselves among the fugitive kind." It's an illusion, though, as Rohrer points out the weaknesses in the stereotype: some "real bikers" are outlaws, but most are just "working-class men who love nothing and nobody more than they do their motorcycles."¹⁰³ Rohrer succeeds in pointing up society's hypocrisy: after years of opprobrium, the bad-biker image is now sought after as a means of excitement, male bonding and vicarious thrills.

Jon Krakauer writes in *Smithsonian* that "the biker subculture has always amounted to considerably more — and less — than the public has imagined it to be."¹⁰⁴ Bikers indulge

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 133.

¹⁰¹Alex Heard, "Hogrolling," *The New Republic*, 20 November 1989, 11–12.

¹⁰²Hugo Martin, "Hell's Angels Make Good Neighbors in Ventura," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 April 1990, B1.

¹⁰³Trish Deitch Rohrer, "Hell's Yuppies," *GQ*, March 1990, 289–290.

¹⁰⁴Jon Krakauer, "A Hog is Still a Hog, But the 'Wild Ones' are Tamer," *Smithsonian*, November

themselves, are clearly eccentric, and as a group can be intimidating to the uninitiated, but they are no more dangerous than the local bridge club. In a decade of increasing complexity, Krakauer concludes, biking is simply a lifestyle which indulges in “turning the machine age back on itself.”¹⁰⁵ A Daytona, Florida, police officer can even crack a smile amid the leathered up bike week crowd. “Bikers are good folks, for the most part,” he tells Krakauer. “It’s not the bikers who make trouble for us, it’s the college kids who’ll be here for spring break. I’ll take bikers over students anytime.”¹⁰⁶

Deprived of some of the ominous overtones, bikers could even be used humorously, and occasionally with sarcasm, in mainstream publications. The advent of Christian motorcycle clubs allows *Newsweek* to contrast the old image with the new. Now, the article states, when a tattooed biker crosses your path on the highway “Mad Max style,” he may intend to save your soul rather than steal it.¹⁰⁷ *The New York Times Magazine* labels members of the Christian Motorcyclist Association “Heck’s Angels.” They are, the article concludes, more representative of today’s biker than the cartoonish “drug dealing long hairs depicted in ‘Easy Rider.’”¹⁰⁸ Bikers can even be used to lampoon a style of behavior. Slash and burn fly fishermen for whom catch and release is “a cheap excuse to spare pantywaists from cleaning fish” are, naturally, Hell’s Anglers.¹⁰⁹

From hoodlums, hooligans, rapists and terrorists this country’s outlaw bikers have come a long way from Hollister. *Los Angeles Times* reporter Lynn Simross likens the modern-day biker to Rodney Dangerfield — they both want a little respect.¹¹⁰ The

1993, 90.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 99.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 90.

¹⁰⁷Rebecca Crandall, “The Motorcycle Ministers,” *Newsweek*, 22 June 1992, 60.

¹⁰⁸David Handelman, “Heck’s Angels,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 18 November 1990, 70.

¹⁰⁹W. Hardback McLoughlin, “Hell’s Anglers,” *Field and Stream*, June 1994, 19.

¹¹⁰Lynn Simross, “Going Full Cycle,” *Los Angeles Times*, 31 October 1987, sec. 5, 1.

contemporary biker looming in the rearview mirror is more likely to be a banker or a dentist than a barroom brawler. Yet some people are not completely happy to see the stigma disappear. Older and grayer, some of the original hard-living outlaws are irritated that what was once theirs is now available to anyone — without the cost. Bikers like Mexican Steve who hold to the outlaw code call the newcomers posers, weekend warriors who have usurped the Harley “for reasons faddish and commercial.” Eyeing the clientele of a biker bar, a sneering Steve tells a reporter, “All the yuppies can ride a Harley now.”¹¹¹

DISCUSSION

Written at first blush, with city officials still indignant over anti-social bikers who incited violence in their towns, newspaper and magazine reports of the many riots blamed on outlaw bikers and motorcycle clubs inspired public fear and moral outrage. Too often, however, when the facts were discovered and the damage was shown to be far less extensive than originally reported, it was too late to undo the injury, even if the mainstream media had wanted to. Why change what effectively called attention to deviance and bad behavior? For decades being a biker was difficult, whether the cyclist was an outlaw or not. However, the consensus image of what it means to be deviant, standards of right and wrong, and public perceptions of corruption have changed just enough so that the would-be bikers of the 1990s no longer inspire instant anxiety in citizens. Though the “bad-biker” image is still employed, it has broadened and can indicate more than criminality, decadence and danger.

In 1997 the Hell’s Angels Motorcycle Club was once again the object of international media attention as it established new chapters in Sweden and Denmark. The move prompted a “turf war” between the Angels and the Bandidos MC over drug markets. Elements of a page one *New York Times* story reporting the incisive actions of a multinational police force sound familiar in the way they describe the club’s existence and the biker lifestyle. The Angels’ clubhouse is a “shack,” and they celebrate their newest chapter with “rivers of beer.” One

¹¹¹Jim Nesbitt, “Bikers Roar Back,” *The Houston Chronicle*, 25 June 1992, 1.

particularly surly biker, described as bearded, tattooed and abrupt, chafes under the “suffocating police surveillance.” Equally familiar is the reported success of law enforcement’s crackdown: “The normally liberal Swedish police made sure the 250 to 300 international members of the brotherhood, as the Angels refer to themselves, had a miserable time.”¹¹²

But new components have been added to the newspaper’s reporting of the 1997 version of Angel activities. The article suggests little of the furor and indignation of previous decades’ reports. Despite the “cycle of attacks and revenge” inflicted on the residents of Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm, the headline notes “Police Spoil Hell’s Angels Party.” The story does describe the escalation of violence, the array of weapons employed and the number of “civilians” injured in the war, but the club’s activities are related in such a way that they sound like the actions of a particularly aggressive multinational corporation. “The gangs’ trouble here this weekend might have been only a minor setback in their expansion into new territory,” the article states just before quoting Yves Lavigne, a journalist who has written two books on the Hell’s Angels: “‘Increasingly they are looking at Scandinavia, with its open seas and sparsely populated spaces, as good territory for drug smuggling and manufacturing.’”¹¹³

The *Times* reporter’s reserved response to the violence in Scandinavia can, in part, be ascribed to the events’ physical distance from the United States. But it is also a reflection of the fact the United States’ law enforcement community has had decades of experience with one–percenter clubs and, rightly or wrongly, treats them as a known commodity. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms offer their best advice to the Swedish police. “‘We exported the problem to them,’” a BATF agent says. “‘Containing it has to be a multinational effort.’”¹¹⁴ The article also suggests an admission that outlaw clubs should be treated like any other gang, and that they are a fact of life.

¹¹²Youssef M. Ibrahim, “Sweden’s Courteous Police Spoil a Hell’s Angels Party,” *New York Times*, 3 March 1997, A1.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, A1.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, A6

Rising unemployment and family problems, the *Times*' reporter concedes, lead young men into gangs and society's best response is to draw a line in the sand. A member of Sweden's Parliament says, "We have to show them we are strong and willing to use our force."¹¹⁵

The media's role is to impart knowledge and create an awareness in readers of the world they experience as well as those aspects of existence which remain unexperienced, unexplained and hidden. Despite the miles between Sweden and the United States, the *Times* reporter's framework of gangs, motorcycle clubs, police standoffs, and Hell's Angels will be reasonably well understood by American readers. The process of communication begins, as G. Stuart Adam has stated, with imagination, the spontaneous creation of a meaningful image. The outlaw biker myth is that image, an all-purpose, meaning-making device that allows, depending on the context, for fear, humor, drama, inspiration and heroism. The critical element of the process of communication, however, is not just the act of providing information. What must be remembered is that for communication to be successful there must exist a shared system for creating meaning from that information.

One objective of this investigation was to consider how newspapers and news magazines constructed and used the outlaw biker myth to successfully impart information. The answer is that motorcycle hooligans, one-percenters and outlaw clubs have from the beginning stood as effective examples of what is wrong — and only occasionally right — with society. They have been the not-a-citizen, regularly presented as symbols of sexual, social and criminal deviance. It seems only fitting that as a parting shot at the social mainstream one-percenters coined "citizen" as a derisive term for those who willingly recognized society's legal and moral boundaries. Hunter Thompson described the Hell's Angels as a "mockery of public decency," representatives of the lawlessness society should fear.¹¹⁶ He was quick to add that no one likes to be mocked.

¹¹⁵Ibid., A6.

¹¹⁶ Thompson, *Hell's Angels*, 149.

Initially, newspapers and national magazines designed similar frameworks for making sense of the new subculture. They were satisfied simply to identify the outlaw clubs' oafishness and general dishevelment. A biker's existence had to be inconsequential since they represented such a small segment of society — just one percent of the motorcycle-riding fraternity. The public could be sure outlaw bikers were unworthy of serious attention and that the police and FBI, ever attentive and responsive, had the situation well in hand. The news media also reaffirmed the value of citizenship by emphasizing the consequences of deviance and non-conformity. Newspapers and magazines not only praised the efforts of "good" bikers, they emphasized the outlaws' conflicts and disagreements in order to distance them from those who might have offered support. Reports downplayed the occasional positive attribute and instead created dissension and left them social pariahs.

The biker's marginal existence was an invitation for the news media, in their role as moral entrepreneurs and watchdogs of the public good, to exhibit a negative example. But what was it about motorcyclists and bikers that incited such a response? It might be easier to ask what it was about bikers that "did not" incite moral outrage. From the beginning one-percenters' manner of dress was provocative. So too was their lack of personal hygiene, their insobriety and the physical menace they cultivated with every swagger. Yet they were more of a threat to themselves than to society as a whole. The existence of such sharks, preying on society's bottom feeders, was not unique in America. Even the California Attorney General's report admitted in 1964 that outlaw motorcycle clubs were an aspect of "saloon society," more violent than other criminals maybe, but nothing new and hardly a threat to a secure civilization.

National self-confidence evaporated in the 1960s as young people dropped out and civil unrest grew to encompass racial, ethnic, gender and class dissatisfaction. Though others were more critical of the status quo, bikers were tagged by the media and law enforcement agencies alike as a dangerous force that needed to be dealt with quickly and effectively. Abhorred by just about everyone and unprotected by a nation's collective guilt, the loosely organized working-class loners were easy to single out and occasionally offered law enforcement

agencies the opportunity to publicize a hard-won victory over the forces of evil. Finally, though, their brand of violence and deviance went beyond the ability of law enforcement to contain. Monterey in 1964 was the final straw, but it was not so much that the Hell's Angels were accused of rape; it was that the accusation only seemed an inconvenience. The outlaws had outgrown their working-class neighborhoods and openly challenged the nation's moral fiber. Their disrespect for police officers, sheriffs, judges and the entire legal system, combined with an attitude of impunity, was a sure sign of anarchy and the full power of the media's power as moral entrepreneur came down upon them

In time, the media came to embrace some aspects of the biker lifestyle. The fact that bikers in the 1990s can be heroes and that they have a different sort of hold on the country's imagination exposes the evolution of what it now means to be a good citizen. What qualifies for media notice changes regularly depending on the synergy between national events, the public's concerns and fears and the media's ability to capture and record the news of the moment. In the 1950s a "shook-up" generation of adolescent street punks captured the public's imagination. Outlaw motorcycle clubs had their moment of fame in the 1960s and 1970s, but then inner-city gangs of Bloods and Crips, harbingers of a new brand of deviance, inspired immediate fear and outrage in the citizenry. In the 1990s militant anti-government groups, which are in reality not all that different from outlaw motorcycle clubs in their emphasis on individual rights and limited government interference, inspired citizen indignation and earned the media's full attention.

What remains consistent in the media's job description is that they must translate events in such a way that they make sense to readers and viewers. To accomplish this task the media, both those dedicated to news and those that furnish entertainment, rely on particular myths which provide audiences an applicable and hopefully accurate metaphor for understanding events outside their experience. Initially bikers and one-percenter clubs represented youthful rebels, but in time they took on a menacing aspect as they flouted an increasing number of social and moral boundaries. Instead of benign rebels and outlaws, the media drew upon other frameworks, remaking motorcycle clubs as gangs, crime syndicates and armies. At the same

time, however, motorcycles, especially Harley–Davidsons, grew in popularity. Discerning between true deviants and those who wanted to borrow the image to escape into an outlaw fantasy necessitated ever narrower definitions of exactly who qualified as an outlaw.

CONCLUSION

Which returns this discussion to the question of what can be concluded about the evolution of the biker myth. A critical aspect of this nation’s changing definition of citizenship has been the relative importance of conformity. The necessity of following rules, of adhering to strict legal, religious, moral and ethical codes, of “fitting in,” at present barely rates notice in discussions of what it means to be an a good citizen. Being “one of the guys,” of measuring up to a recognized standard, was for many years society’s basic demand. And since bikers were uniquely qualified non–conformists, they were made to order for the media’s penchant for addressing the various definitions of deviance, and for communicating at any given time just where the fine line was between obeying the law and stepping out of bounds.

America’s mainstream news media discovered early the utility of bikers and outlaw clubs. As society’s watchdogs, it was the media’s duty to identify purveyors of crime and random violence. As moral entrepreneurs, they took the high ground, employing consensus definitions of right and wrong as the standards by which bikers would be measured and judged. The publications educated readers about the outlaw biker subculture and defined just how it was deviant and dangerous. At the same time, America’s citizens could be certain that they were safe, that law enforcement was effectively dealing with the situation, and that they remained superior to the hoods and hooligans who pledged allegiance to their motorcycle club.

In their first 40 years, motorcycle clubs’ criminal deviance dovetailed with their social non–conformity to make them an attractive target for the nation’s moral entrepreneurs. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, society had swung around to the biker’s perspective. A newfound cynicism of the mainstream, combined with lack of respect for authority, had more to do with the country’s growing acceptance of bikers than did changes in bikers themselves.

Their success, strength and longevity offer clues as to why the biker myth enjoyed a popular renaissance. Motorcycle outlaws, who have long cultivated self-interest, independence and a healthy skepticism of bureaucracy and democracy, finally managed to meld with the demands of the age. Even “true” citizens began to accept the suggestion that society had too tight a hold on what we do with our lives. Similarly, the average citizen acknowledged that good could not exist without evil, and that even in the most benevolent and hardworking of organizations there were not-a-citizens, deviants and slackers, who allow us to appreciate true citizenship.