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TWO-CYLINDER ODYSSEY:

A STUDY OF MOTORCYCLE TRAVEL LITERATURE

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tässä pro gradu -työssä tutkitaan moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuuden tyypillisiä piirteitä sekä lajin sijoittumista matkakirjallisuuden traditioon. Työ esittelee moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuudelle ominaisia piirteitä, jotka toistuvat teoksesta toiseen aina ensimmäisistä esimerkeistä 1900-luvun alusta 2000-luvulla kirjoitettuihin teoksiin asti. Tutkimuksen kohteena on englanninkielinen moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuus.</p> <p>Työ esittelee ensin matkakirjallisuuden ja matkan käsitteen historiaa sijoittaen moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuuden osaksi tätä jatkumoa. Tämän jälkeen esitellään lyhyesti moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuuden historiaa, minkä jälkeen siirrytään tutkimaan lajille tyypillisiä elementtejä. Tyypillisten elementtien määrittelyä lähestytään John Caweltin formula-teorian pohjalta, jolloin moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuus näyttäytyy keskiaikaisen ritariromaanin modernina ilmentymänä. Lajin moderniuteen liittyvät vauhti, tai nopeus, sekä vaaran etsintä, joita käsitellään esimerkiksi Paul Virilion analyysien pohjalta. Ideologisena viitekehystenä näyttäytyy vaaran ja jännityksen etsiminen kaasuttamalla pois turvalliseksi koetusta länsimaisesta elinympäristöstä.</p> <p>Moottoripyörämatkakirjojen rakenne on jaettavissa kolmeen osaan: lähtöön, matkaan sekä paluuseen. Tutkimuksessa ilmeni, että moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuus esittää sankareiden matkaan lähdön kaavamaisesti. Tyypillisiksi elementeiksi paljastuivat esimerkiksi listat matkatavaroista. Itse matkan kohdalla tyypillisiä piirteitä ovat esteet, joita sankarit kohtaavat. Näistä tämä tutkimus nostaa esiin hankalat tulliviranomaiset sekä autiomaan.</p> <p>Tekstin tasolla työ tutkii sitä, kuinka moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuuden yksi tyypillisimmistä elementeistä, eli tie, vaikuttaa kerrontaan. Tutkimuksen tässä osassa nojataan sekä narratologiaan että Bakhtinin tien kronologian käsitteeseen. Tietä käsitellään tekstuaalisena elementtinä kerronnan rakentumisessa, eli tarkastellaan sitä, kuinka tie ulkomaailman fyysisenä ilmiönä helpottaa kertojaääntä konkretisoimaan sankarin sisäiset ajatukset, tunteet tai ennakkoavistukset lukijalle. Tässä tutkimuksen osassa tarjotaan tyypiesimerkki myös fiktiivisen moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuuden puolelta osoittamaan, kuinka kerronnan rakentaminen tietä avuksi käyttäen voi olla myös tietoinen ja taiteellinen tehokeino genressä.</p> <p>Lopuksi esitellään lyhyesti koneen ja mielen yhteyttä moottoripyörämatkakirjallisuudessa fenomenologian pohjalta ja pohditaan, kuinka kone inhimillistetään kerronnassa sekä kuinka matkustajan, eli kertojan, mielenliikkeet ilmenevät moottorin toiminnassa samaan tyyliin kuin tien havaittiin ulkoistavan matkalaisen sisäisiä toimintoja.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis at hand is a study of motorcycle travel literature. It will position motorcycle travel literature in the genre of travel literature and discover some of its prominent elements.

The theoretical background is threefold. First, some notions presented in the theory of formula literature are used. This part of the thesis is closely connected to the narratological survey, which will be presented in chapter five. Second, and also related to the first topic, the ideological aspects of the genre in question are surveyed with regard to speed, danger, and death. And third, the thesis will present motorcycle travel literature as a modern manifestation of chivalric quest motif in romance tradition. Since no academic work on the theory of motorcycle travel literature has been available, or known, for the writer, the thesis will be a general introduction to the subject suggesting some further areas of study as well.

The thesis starts with a brief history of travel and travel literature, which is followed by the history of motorcycle travel literature and its historical roots, that is, the medieval chivalric quest. In this part of the thesis I will see whether the same tools which are used to analyse travel literature are applicable to motorcycle travel literature as well. In this, Percy G. Adams's insights in *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* will be used.

When placing motorcycle travel literature as part of the romance tradition I will mostly rely on Northrop Frye's *The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance*, W.R.J. Barron's *English Medieval Romance in Longman Literature in English Series*, and Heidi Hansson's *Romance Revived. Postmodern Romances and*

the Tradition. Also, when discussing the similarities between the modern day protagonists in motorcycle travel literature and the medieval knights, I shall mostly rely on Richard Barber's *The Knight and Chivalry*.

But before analysing the historical roots of the genre in question, its prominent features will be presented in the light of formula literature. John G. Cawelti's theories about popular formula literature in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance. Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* will be applied in this section of the thesis. The initial assumption is that as any genre, also motorcycle travel literature has a set of implied rules to follow. In other words, the narration is 'formulaic': it contains some unchangeable elements from one decade to the next and from one writer to the other. One of these formulaic features in motorcycle travel literature is the ritualistic description of departure with lists of equipment needed for the journey.

As we shall see in chapter three, the ideological needs of the reading public change from one historic era to another, thus changing the demands literature has to fulfil in a society. Whereas the heroic quest of medieval knights offered, from their part, an answer to the questions risen from the crumbling social structures of Western European societies – and this will be the topic in chapter five –, the modern time motorcycle travel narratives offer an answer of their own for the readers who possibly belong to the most cushioned and pampered culture in the history of mankind. In this, more sociological and psychological survey in chapter four, I will mostly rely on Michael J. Apter's *Dangerous Edge. The Psychology of Excitement* which analyses the mankind's inherent and natural quest for excitement. Also Paul Virilio's theories of modern society are applied in this chapter.

Most of the narratological analysis will take place in chapter six which discusses one of the most prominent features in motorcycle travel literature: the road. The narratological analysis of the theme of road relies mostly on some basic reading on narratology, such as Gerald Prince's *Narratology. The Form and Functioning of Narrative* and Monika Fludernik's *An Introduction to Narratology*. Also Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope of road, which is introduced in his "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays* will be used as a theoretical tool.

I have separated motorcycle travel literature from motorcycle travel narratives. For, as Fludernik (2009: 1) states, narratives are 'all around us... [they are] to be found wherever someone tells us about something', and as Roland Barthes and Lionel Duisit (1975: 1) specify the list in "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative":

Among the vehicles of narrative are an articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics [...] stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation [...] it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies.

By Prince's (1982: 4-5) definition, narratology is '...the study of the form and the functioning of narrative': narratology answers questions such as what common features a set of narratives share, and what separates them from each other. Using narratology as a theoretical tool, the thesis will ask how motorcycle travel literature's prominent elements, such as the road, help forming its narration and constructing a genre which has a specific set of rules separating it from other modes

of travel writing. Thus the narratological analysis is also closely connected with the analysis of motorcycle travel literature's formulaic features and can also be coined with Bakhtin's (1981: 85) definition of the chronotope which 'defines genre and generic distinctions'.

In the last chapter, dealing with machine and mind, I will use some psychological and phenomenological sources, mainly relying on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. I will ask how the machine and the rider's mind are presented in the narration: what kind of relationship arises between the man and the machine during the journey, and also how it manifests in the narration? As the moving body is in a central scope of narration in the genre, a phenomenological approach is relevant although in the thesis this survey will only be a suggestion into which direction studying motorcycle travel literature could lead. A more profound research on this aspect is left for future studies: as the genre in question is so little studied, it is more essential at this point to offer the reader a more general study of motorcycle travel literature.

As Paul Fussell (1980: 63) states in his seminal study of travel literature *Abroad: British Literary Travel between the Wars*, life has been seen as a journey as long as history can remember. Also Eric J. Leed (1991: 3) demonstrates in *The Mind of the Traveler: from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* that 'travel is the most common source of metaphors used to explicate transformations and transitions of all sorts'. Human mobility defines experiences such as death, seen as a 'passing', and life, seen as a 'journey', and also helps us to 'articulate changes of social and existential conditions': using a familiar metaphor helps to understand the unfamiliar, and 'travel is as familiar as the experience of the body' (ibid. 3-4).

Although the metaphor of travel is a common feature in the history of human kind, there actually exists only a few works written about the history of travel literature as such. The body of works which could be included in the tradition is so vast that the researcher of travel literature rather sticks to a specific area. The areas can include, for example, ancient travel as in Lionel Cusson's *Travel in the Ancient World*, or tourism as in John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, or the connections between travel literature and the history of novel as in Percy G. Adams's *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*. Different modes of travel from tramping (Anderson 1923) to train journeys (Schivelbusch 1979) have been studied as well but motorcycle travel literature has yet been left as a quite un-researched territory. The thesis at hand positions itself in this continuum of surveys concentrating on specific type, time or location of travel literature, dealing specifically with motorcycle travel literature written in English.

Motorcycle culture itself can be studied from its technical or design history to all the way to the sociological surveys of biker clubs or woman riders. This thesis will focus on the literate side and does not offer analysis from, for example, post colonialist or feminist point of view.

Since there are no existing academic surveys on motorcycle travel literature as such available for the writer – although for example Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. An Inquiry into Values* (first published in Great Britain by Bodley Head in 1974) has gained some academic interest – all assumptions about the subject's historical roots, its prominent narratological elements, and the psychological, sociological and philosophical notions are drawn from the body of motorcycle travel literature that has been available for the writer.

There exists an Internet publication called *The International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* (IJMS) which has been a great road sign when getting familiarised with the genre, indicating the various ways to which studying motorcycle travel literature could lead. For example, in the IJMS's July 2006 issue Steven Alford and Katherine Sutherland write about teaching motorcycle travel literature. Alford's article 'Teaching Motorcycle Travel Literature' offers three different approaches: historical, geographical and technological. He continues that also 'theoretical concepts already in play in scholarly discussions of travel literature' could be applied when studying motorcycle travel literature. This thesis combines this suggestion of applying theories concerning literature in general to the historical approach Alford mentions.

In her article 'Reading the Ride, or Getting a Motorcycle Course Past the Administration', Katherine Sutherland offers a more philosophical point of view, naming for example Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) as background reading for her course on 'Motorcycles, Speed and Literature'. Sutherland separates 'the classic hero figure and the quest motif' from the more existential anti-hero. This thesis will treat the classic hero on a quest as a central figure in motorcycle travel literature, although it will be shown that the genre's most recent developments include the existential anti-hero as well.

But what makes motorcycle travel literature such an important genre to study? Motorcycles are often seen as juvenile – or midlife crisis – activity. Or motorbikes are seen dangerous: either for the riders themselves or for the others on the road, sometimes even for the whole civilised world. And then there are the women: posing half naked on the bikes – anything to please the male riders but never actually riding themselves. But – to skip these stereotypes and to side with Judith

Adler's article 'Travel as Performed Art' in the *American Journal of Sociology* – travel, be it on a motorcycle or on foot, can in itself be considered as art. That is, even before it is transformed into a specific kind of art for audience to look at. Citing N. Goodman, Adler asks: 'when does an object (or performance) function as a work of art?' (Goodman 1978: 66-67, as cited in Adler 1989: 1368), and continues that in travel movement must serve

as a medium for bestowing meaning on the self and the social, natural or metaphysical realities through which it moves. Performed as art, travel becomes one means of "worldmaking" (Goodman 1978) and of self-fashioning.

As will be shown, movement through space and 'bestowing meaning on the self and the social' (Adler 1989: 1368) are crucial elements in motorcycle travel literature. Adler also writes that the basic elements of travel performance are space, time and the design and pace of the traveller's movement through both (ibid. 1369). All these elements are prominent features in motorcycle travel literature but this thesis will only ponder upon the first and the third aspects: space and the design and pace of the movement.

The concept of time would also offer an interesting approach rising such questions as how the speed of movement affects the narration or how the meaning of time manifests itself in works such as Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days* and Samuel Beckett's (2000: 34) *Waiting for Godot*, where, as Estragon states: 'Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!'. In these two books movement and the meaning of time are depicted oppositional: the first book has a strict time limit for the action whereas in the latter work no limits at all seem to exist. In fact, movement is essentially linked with time and time would not exist if there would

not be any objects it would refer to, or, if the objects would not move at all. In a totally stationary world, where ‘nothing happens’, there would be no concept of time – quite opposite to motorcycle travel narratives, which are action packed and typically performed within a quite strict time frame.

Space – the landscape, roads, villages and countries visited – is a prominent element in travel literature in general, and in motorcycle travel literature the most prominent feature of space is the road: it rolls just under the rider’s toes and can be the hero’s best friend or the vilest foe. The road is used to construct narration as well and the description of road often anticipates what lies ahead for the protagonists, or, it can be used to describe and externalise the protagonist’s thoughts. After all, it is the traveller who gives the road significance. The following quotation shows how Dan Walsh’s (2009: 357) protagonist writes in *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You* about the Pan-American Highway:

A show of soft hands, a container full of signposts, an updated map and suddenly the continent was united. Genius. But until it’s used to cross borders it’s just a theory. The road stays still, it’s the travellers that move, and the actions of these travellers, commercial or recreational, on two wheel or ten, on donkeys or bicycles, that make this highway truly international. Praxis. And the poetry? Maybe that’s in these travellers, when they stare down into their futures, back into their pasts and almost, sort of, realise their role, kinda understand that until it’s travelled, this road is no more than ink on a map, notes on a score, words on a page, that need be felt, whistled, read into life.

Also the design and the pace of travel are important questions in motorcycle travel literature: it is always a premeditated decision to choose a vehicle which excludes

the rider from the others on the road. Dan Walsh's (2009: 357) narrator ponders upon the same question:

There's no obvious reason to pick two wheels over four. More comfort, more security, and no one ever fell off a Jeep, right? Maybe on paper. But we don't ride on paper. We ride in Mexico.

Motorcycling is conveyed as an individualistic mode of transport to which speed and danger are closely connected. At this point it must be noted that speed and danger form a distinct watershed inside the genre. Due to the technical improvements, and a general shift in the tone of travel writing to more introspective narration around mid twentieth century, the protagonists of the early motorcycle travel literature and the ones from the last fifty decades see their quests quite differently from each other. For the early riders the journey was an investigative adventure to be noted down in a detailed, matter-of-fact style, whereas for the later adventurers the journey is more of a fulfilment of a spiritual quest.

A quotation from Ted Simon's (1980: 28-29) *Jupiter's Travels: Four Years on One Motorbike* summarises the ideas presented in the introduction:

The movement has a complex rhythm with many pulses beating simultaneously. Underlying it is the engine with its subtle blend of sounds...Through all these pulses blending and blurring I seem to hear a slow and steady beat, moving up and down, up and down....As I listen it grows clearer, unmistakable. Is it there or am I inventing it? Is it the pulse of my own body intercepting the sound, modifying it with my bloodstream?...The lapel of the flying jacket licks against my shoulder...and undeniably there is a vibration too, a faint tingle spreading...on the autostrada the load has no apparent effect.

The citation above illustrates the main themes of the thesis: firstly, there is the question of the mode and speed of movement: '[t]he movement has a complex rhythm with many pulses beating simultaneously' (ibid. 29), secondly, there is the machine which is an inseparable part of motorcycle literature – '[u]nderlying it is the engine with its subtle blend of sounds' – alongside with the theme of road: 'on the autostrada the load has no apparent effect...' (ibid. 28), and, finally, there is the notion of the body which is situated in the core of all these various aspects: 'Is it there or am I inventing it? Is it the pulse of my own body intercepting the sound, modifying it with my bloodstream?' (ibid. 29). For it is the body which controls the movement and experiences it, gets infused with the machine, makes observations and, in general, is aware.

After briefly presenting the history of travel literature in chapter two, the thesis will position motorcycle travel literature as part of the genre. In chapter three I will offer a brief history of motorcycles and motorcycle travel literature in general. Chapter four will ponder in more detail upon the specifics of motorcycle travel literature and will offer its formula by dividing the narration in three parts: the departure, the journey, and the return. In this chapter the notion of danger will also be discussed as a central ideological impetus in the genre. Chapter five presents the heroic quest of romance tradition as motorcycle travel literature's historical ancestor.

The last two chapters six and seven will deal with the two most prominent aspects in motorcycle travel literature: the road and the machine. When dealing with the road, I will use narratology as a theoretical tool, and when discussing about the machine, some phenomenological questions will be raised. But as said, this phenomenological survey, being more specific and time consuming, will be

postponed till later research since for a start an introduction to the study of motorcycle travel literature is more needed.

2 TRAVEL IN HISTORY

Between 3000-1200 BC the first unified nation settled on the banks of Nile. The new mode of life brought with it new patterns of movement. During this period some vehicles were also invented: for example, man first mounted the horse in the Near East around 2300 BC, and the chariot was invented around 1600 BC. The travel of ancient times was travel on business, not for leisure. The early travellers were couriers shuttling between centres; they were traders, or people flooding to the holy sights on festival days (see e.g. Cusson 1994: 21-23.)

What it comes to the mode of travel, as well as to the roads travelled, this thesis aims to bring in focus the impact the chosen vehicle and the surface encountered have on the narration in motorcycle travel books. This is done in relation with the machine which speeds through space controlled by the body thus creating a special kind of relationship between the protagonist and the motorcycle. And then, when dealing with the notion of danger and death in modern Western societies in chapter four, focus will be drawn to the fact that in motorcycle travel literature the road functions almost like a character. Whereas the ancient travellers omit the qualities of the surface tramped, in motorcycle travel literature the road, or the absence of one, is in central part and described in detail. This theme of the road will have a closer examination in chapters 4.2, concerning the obstacles on the road, and in chapter six, concerning the special position the road has in motorcycle travel literature's narration.

There is a difference between the ancient and the modern conception in the meaning of travel as well. For the ancients, travel was endured out of necessity or fate, whereas for the moderns, travel is an expression of freedom and an escape from necessity (Leed 1991: 7). What in ancient journeys were considered as vicissitudes are for the modern traveller a prize for freedom (ibid. 10). But the perception of a traveller as a philosopher is common for both ancient and modern times:

The wisest heroes were those who visited many places and roamed over the world; for the poets regard it as a great achievement to have seen the cities and know the minds of men. (Strabo as cited in Leed 1991: 59)

The vicissitudes tackled in motorcycle travel literature will be dealt in more detail in chapter 4.2 but for now it should be pointed out that the obstacles and the rewards the rider gets after winning them are in a central role in the genre and will be discussed more in the light of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow state which he presents in his *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.

A traveller has typically been seen as the 'one who suffers travail', the word 'travail' deriving from Latin 'tripalium' (a torture instrument with three stakes to rack the body). Before the era of tourism travel was considered as studying. Fussell (1980: 37-39) tracks in *Abroad: British Literary Travel between the Wars* the first tourists to England because it was the first country to go through industrialisation: the tedium of industrial labour necessitated 'vacations'. Fussell places the traveller in between 'the explorer [who] moves towards the risks of the formless and the unknown, [and] the tourist [who] moves toward the security of pure cliché' (ibid. 37-39).

From the point of view of the thesis, there also exists an important shift in the concept of travel what it comes to the notion of freedom. According to Leed (1991: 12), the travels of the ‘ancient heroes were imposed upon them by an external “command”’, whereas the

identity-defining travel of the medieval knight were [...] ostensibly voluntary and undertaken to no utilitarian purpose. The chivalric journey, which is the pattern and model for significant modern travel, is essentially self-referential, undertaken to reveal the essential character of the knight as “free”. (ibid. 12)

Leed (1991: 12-13) notes that at this time, travel became a manifestation of freedom; a status symbol differentiating the free travellers from the ‘commons’. This shift means an alteration in travel: after the medieval period travel becomes a voyage of discovery, and then scientific travel. The original association of travel and freedom has medieval roots: it was written in law under the reign of Henry II that if a lord wanted to free his serf, he first had to declare his intention in a church, a market, or a country court, and then provide his former bondsman a sword or a lance. After this, the lord had to take the ex-serf to a crossroads to show that ‘all ways lie open to his feet,’ Leed (ibid. 12-13) writes.

Motorcycle travel literature shows the protagonists as advocates for personal freedom: the heroes want to leave their normal, duty-bound everyday lives behind – at least momentarily – and to experience life outside the safe frame of home and work, to travel ‘with no definite plan and see what should happen,’ as Lady Warren’s (2009: 306) narrator states in *Through Algeria & Tunisia on a Motorcycle* in *An Anthology of Early British Motorcycle Travel Literature*. The chosen vehicle enhances this aspect of freedom, as the protagonists normally ride alone,

which enables them to decide the routes on their own. The only humane obstacles to interrupt their roaming from a country to another are the customs officers who duly get described in farcical episodes with derogatory language, as will be shown in chapter 4.2.

2.1 TRAVEL WRITING

When put into action, travel is seen as ‘an out-of-the-ordinary experience and occasion for observations and encounters’, and ‘has provided stimulus and material for narrative since ancient times’ (Routledge: 619). Reading Barbara Korte’s article on travel narratives in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* it seems that travel narrative entails the whole history of literature:

travel forms the basic *plot of such types of literary narrative as the *epic, the quest *romance, the *picaresque novel, the *utopian novel and *science fiction, the adventure novel, the Robinsonade, and the *Bildungsroman”, as well as “...the travelogue or travel account (also travel writing), which claims [...] that the journey recorded actually took place and is presented [...] by the travellers themselves (*see* AUTOBIOGRAPHY; FICTION, THEORIES OF). (ibid. 619)

Also Fussell (1987: 15) stresses the importance of autobiography in travel literature: if the personality which the book reveals is not interesting, the book is not ‘very readable’. On the other hand, the authors of *Tourists with Typewriters. Critical reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* state (1998: 14) that travel writing is rather a memoir than autobiography. Also Adams (1983: 165) notes that there are opinions according to which travel literature is not even a branch of literature, but a ‘form of memoir writing or autobiography’ But this point of view excludes, for

example, Samuel Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) from the canon of travel literature and places the work as a historical autobiography. Adams rejects this because the advocates of the autobiographical view do not take any notice of travel journals. In fact, Adams states that it is travel literature that influenced the form and the content of autobiography (and novel), not the other way round (ibid. 165-166).

Motorcycle travel literature is part of the autobiographical genre of travel writing since there is an assumption that the events described took place in the actual world and that the protagonist, who can be identified as the author, has experienced the events described.

Travel is a commonly used device in constructing the plot of a novel as well. Travel can be used to produce alternative worlds, or, for providing a setting for the hero's spiritual, or 'inner' journey as in novels such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) or Virginia Woolf's *Voyage Out* (1915). Travelogue is a used form for example in the pilgrimage, early modern colonisation, the 18th century scientific travel, the Grand Tour, tourist trips, escapism and even writing about travel itself, which is notably used by modern self-reflective travel writers such as Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux. But, as fictional travel narrative, the travelogue is also a constructed narrative, rendering 'travel experience into a travel plot' (Routledge: 619-620).

Naturally, also motorcycle travel writers construct the narration after the completion of the actual journey: vast stretches of monotonous riding can be omitted from the text whereas the chance encounters and obstacles are dwelled upon in greater detail.

The terms describing travel writing can be confusing. As Fussell (1980: 202-203) reminds, even travel writers' use of the terms alter: what E.M. Forster called travelogues in 1941 were travel books by the year 1945. Also, David Lodge does not use the term travelogue but travel log (ibid. 203). *The Routledge* continues: '[w]ith respect to *narrative technique, there appears to be no watertight distinction between travel fiction and travelogues' (ibid. 620). This is especially the case with Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* where the narrator's journey has been done by several followers after the book's publication, although the book itself is considered a novel. The *Motorcycle Maintenance* is typical, 'spiritual' travel writing of the 1970s and the focus of the narration is mostly on the inner, or spiritual, journey of the protagonist. This is how the protagonist himself explains the issue in his 'disclaimer' in the very beginning of the book:

What follows is based on actual occurrences. Although much has been changed for rhetorical purposes, it must be regarded in its essence as fact. However, it should in no way be associated with that great body of factual information relating to orthodox Zen Buddhist practice. It's not very factual on motorcycles, either. (Pirsig 1974)

At this point, some crucial notions of travel writing in general must be done. Namely, that a travelogue is normally written in the first person and there exists an autobiographical contract by which the reader assumes that the narrator is identical with the author. Also, contrary to the novel with a travel plot, the travelogue is a more hybrid genre as it uses non-narrative modes of presentation. In travelogue it is common to find '...passages of prescription, suggestion, and advice related to travel and travelling'. Typically, there appear illustrations and photographs as well (Routledge: 620).

This catalogue of travelogue's prominent features suggests that motorcycle travel literature belongs more to the genre of travelogues than autobiographical travel writing, for there is often photos from the journey (e.g. Fulton Jr 1996), maps (e.g. Simon 2007), recommendations of lodgings, restaurants etc. (e.g. Bishop 2005), a catalogue of the things needed (e.g. Pirsig 1974) – and even how to organise them on the bike (e.g. Simon 1980) –, and references to the notebook the traveller was writing during the journey (e.g. Warren 1922). Also, both in motorcycle travel literature and in travelogue ‘...the essay, the *letter, reportage, the sketch, *anecdote, and treatise are frequent’ (Routledge: 620).

Nevertheless, this thesis positions motorcycle travel literature in between the travelogue and the autobiography since both are markedly used and mixed in the genre. In general, a motorcycle travel book consist catalogues, photos and maps (see e.g. Lady Warren 1922, Charley Boorman 2006, and Ted Simon 2007) which are typical elements for travelogues. But motorcycle travel literature is also written under the autobiographical contract: often there is a ‘disclaimer’ in the beginning of the book to explain, for example, under what kind of strain the writing had to be done and why it can be of poor quality at times. The reader assumes that the protagonist who experienced the events described is also the author of the book. The following is the ‘African Disclaimer’ from the beginning of *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You*:

These old words were written on the road, on the run, in Moroccan basement cyber caffs, in Senegalese flophouses, in Ghanaian Irish pubs, in South African beer gardens, by a younger version of me fighting deadline dread, and writing for beer and food. So some of them aren't very good. I never said I was hot stuff. The

opening's especially weak – clunky, naïve, and laddy. It picks up in Accra, when I first fuck the pooch – feel free to skip ahead. (Walsh 2009)

2.2 TRAVEL LITERATURE AND MOTORCYCLE TRAVEL LITERATURE

Mobility is the first human condition, sessility or an attachment to a place a later condition (Leed 1991: 4) – a notion that a well-travelled author Bruce Chatwin also advocates (see e.g. 'It's a Nomad *Nomad* World'). As Percy G. Adams states in *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, travel literature 'has existed since the beginnings of oral and written literature', and the same political and social factors which have affected other forms of literature have had their influence on travel literature as well (1983: 38). This is a noteworthy idea since the initial assumption of the thesis at hand is that as the medieval heroic quest stories were a response to the socio-political demands of the era, the modern motorcycle travel literature offers and answer of its own to the individualistic demands of our times.

Travel 'is the most common source of metaphors used to explicate transformations and transitions of all sorts' (Leed 1991: 3). *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, from 1900 BC, is often considered as the first work of Western travel literature. It is also an example of heroic journey with 'fatigue, hardship and danger' (ibid. 6) thus containing the elements prevalent in the ideas associated with travel and travel writing till our days (Cusson 1994: 95-96). These features, the 'fatigue, hardship and danger', are also dominant in motorcycle travel literature, as will be shown in chapter four.

Percy G. Adams (1988: xvii) gives some tools for mapping the area of travel literature in his anthology of travel literature *Travel Literature through the Ages*. He

divides the genre into categories by content and form. Starting from content, the history of travel literature starts from the early guidebooks, city plans, and itineraries for pilgrims, advices about inns, distances, transportation and so forth. On the other hand, travel literature can also be divided by its content to the different modes of travel that has been narrated. The main types then are journeys by land and journeys by water.

Quite often in motorcycle travel literature it is a question of combining journeys by land and journeys by water into one big epic journey across a continent or between different continents. Trains are used at times, when necessary to get the broken bike fixed, or in some other emergency, but in general train travel is avoided. Also air travel is avoided and only takes place when, for example, there has been a death at home (see e.g. Simon 1980 or Walsh 2009). Sea travelling is common to cross oceans between countries or continents and necessary in the around the world accounts such as Robert Fulton Jr's *One Man Caravan* or Ted Simon's *Jupiter's Travels* and *Dreaming of Jupiter*.

Adams (1988: xx) continues that when dividing travel literature according its form, one can start with the division between the letter, the diary or the journal, and the simple narrative. This category includes logs as well.

Letter form is a rare occasion in motorcycle travel literature but is used, for example, in Captain W.H.L. Watson's *The Adventures of a Dispatch Rider* first published in 1915 by William Blackwood and Sons and recently reprinted in *An Anthology of Early British Motorcycle Travel Literature* edited by Tim Fransen. In Watson's book the protagonist uses letters sent to his friend and to his mother in order to describe his days as a dispatch rider in the First World War. The narrator is aware of the liberties and the responsibilities of the chosen form:

I have filled in the gaps these letters leave with narrative, worked the whole into some sort of connected account, and added maps and an index.

This book is not a history, a military treatise, an essay or a scrap of autobiography. It has no more accuracy or literary merit than letters usually possess...

Because it is composed of letters, this book has many faults.

Firstly, I have written great deal about myself. That is inevitable in letters. My mother wanted to hear about me and not about those whom she had never met. So do not think my adventures are unique...

Secondly, I have dwelt at length upon little personal matters. It may not interest you to know when I had a pork-chop...

Thirdly, all letters are censored. This book contains nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. (2009: 18-19)

Often motorcycle travel books relay on diaries, notes or logs written during the journey. For example, Lady Warren has written her *Through Algeria & Tunisia on a Motor-Bicycle* based on her diary notes from the journey and notes scribbled while actually in the side car: 'My notes of the day are like the writings of an imbecile with a split stick' (2009: 313). More often than not the notes written on the road are artistically styled and expanded after the journey, which is the case with, for example, Lady Warren's book. Also Boorman's *Race to Dakar* is written as a diary: '12 AND 15 JANUARY. Bamako to Dakar' (Boorman 2006: 26). Dividing chapters as in journals according to the locale or time of the travel is a very typical feature in motorcycle travel literature gives structure to both the narration and the reading experience.

The third category when following Adams's (1988: xxii) definitions is the simple narrative, typically written in the first or the third person. Simple narrative can also

take the form of a dialogue, or be a part of a biography or an autobiography, as in Rousseau's *Confessions* from 1766. It can also be little jingles, poetry or verse and prose combined.

Narration in first person is the most typical case in motorcycle travel literature whereas none in the second person is known to the writer. Although, one can find brief examples of using second person narrative to indicate passive mode, as in *Race to Dakar* by Charlie Boorman, or to occasionally address the reader, as in Melissa Holbrook Pierson's *The Perfect Vehicle. What It Is About Motorcycles?* The rarity of directly addressing the reader might be explained by the solitary mode of travel: as an individualistic mode of travel, the literature it produces cannot be expected to be a communal experience either. Dialogue, or the second person narration, assumes 'another people', whereas motorcycle travel literature is more about the individual's solitary quest that is most suitably narrated by using the first person narration.

A motorcycle travel book which is written completely as a dialogue is hard to find because of the solitary mode of travel, although the examples do normally involve some dialogue between the protagonists and, for example, the people they meet on the road. There may also exist some pure dialogue for an artistic effect. For example, C. K. Sheperd has an epilogue written fully in dialogue in his *Across America by a Motor-cycle* which first appeared in 1922, published by Edward Arnold, and is now available in the *Anthology of Early British Motorcycle Travel Literature*. The dialogue is a play in eight acts and has six characters of which one is Lizzie, the motorcycle.

SCENE I

Scene. – *Outside the Post Office, San Francisco, Cal.*

TIME. – *August, 1919.*

CHARACTERS

LIZZIE.

MYSLEF.

AN ARMENIAN.

CROWD OF LOUNGERS, SMALL BOYS, AND WOMEN OF VARIOUS NATIONALITIES

(SELF emerges from portals of Post Office. Chorus of voices from the crowd.)

“Ere’ e is: look at his face; look at his chest. You’re one globe-trotter, I’ll reckon [...]”

MYSELF [...] “Well, and what are you all gaping at, like a lot of half-witted school-kids? Never seen a motorcycle before? [...]” (2009: 729)

Although several motorcycle journeys have been travelled in pairs, or even in groups, the journey is typically narrated by one protagonist and from that protagonist’s point of view. Making a journey on a motorbike is conceived as a personal, or even spiritual, act and the relationship the rider has with the journey as such is intimate. For example, in *Race to Dakar* Charley Boorman’s (2007: 207) narrator attempted to write an account of the last stages of Dakar rally from his team mates’ point of view after he himself had got injured and was forced to quit the race. He eventually decided against this:

From this point on, our routes took us in very different directions. It makes sense from here on for Simon, Matt and me to tell our own stories, rather than for me to attempt to explain their experiences, which were very different from mine.

These personal aspects between the rider, the machine and the road are further investigated in chapters four, six, and seven.

There also exists poetry and lyrics about riding motorcycles, a prime example being Thom Gunn's 'The Unsettled Motorcyclist's Vision of His Death' in his *The Sense of Movement*. But as the thesis concentrates on motorcycle travel literature written in prose, I will not provide a vaster study of the genre's poetics.

In conclusion, travel is a commonly used and an ancient metaphor for transitions of all kinds. It is thus well used device among writers – whether travel writers, novelists, poets or even scientists. There is a distinction that should be drawn, firstly, between travel books and guide books, and secondly, between travelogues and autobiographies among travel narratives. From all these, novel with a travel plot is a separate genre. In most cases motorcycle travel literature belongs to the category of autobiographical travel narrative narrated in first person, although examples or extracts from letters, travelogues, plays, essays and poems can be found and are, in fact, commonly used in the genre.

Also, it seems that the early examples of motorcycle travel books contain more artistic decisions made by the narrator. There exists more variation in the tone of the narrator as well as in the modes of narration that are used, as the letter form and the play examples above illustrate.

3 HISTORY OF MOTORCYCLE TRAVEL LITERATURE

As there are no introductions, articles, critical analyses or such available – or known – for the writer on the history of motorcycle travel literature, the thesis at hand will offer a brief history of the genre in question by relying on few Internet sources. One of these is a catalogue of 1305 motorcycle travel works collected by Bernd Tesch. The catalogue includes DVDs, Videos, CDs, web pages as well as books and they

are categorised under twenty-two different headings, such as the year, author, continent, country, publisher, language, used moto-type, ISBN and the price of the publication. Tesch states in the foreword of Fulton Jr's *One Man Caravan* to know 262 motorcycle touring books (Fulton Jr 1996). The thesis at hand will only concentrate on motorcycle travel literature written in English, and which have been reasonably attainable for the writer.

The early days of motorcycling were a woman's world as much as a man's. One of the first woman riders is Clare Sheridan, a sculptor, who accompanied her brother in a side car across Russia in 1925. Nine years later two women, Theresa Wallach and Florence Blenkiron, rode cross the African continent to Cape Town. Wallach was over 80 years of age when she finally wrote down the story in *The Rugged Road*, now published twice by Panther Publishing; the first edition in 2001 and second in 2011. Sheridan's *Across Europe with Satanella* appeared in 1925 and was published by Duckworth.

Before all of these women, Lady Warren whizzed from Alger to Tunis in a side-car of a motor-bicycle 'with no definite plan' (2009: 306). Lady Warren's *Through Algeria & Tunisia on a Motor-bicycle* was first published by Jonathan Cape in 1922.

And, as already noted, the early examples of the genre tend to be more artistically adventurous than the examples of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This might be explained by the fact that, unlike nowadays, motorcycles were not yet segregated from the main forms of travel and travel writing alike; thus the literature this mode of travel produced was more in the tone of general travel writing producing experimental forms of narration as for example Watson's short play embedded in the narration illustrates.

Motorcycle travel literature can be divided into fictional and factual and inside these categories there exist the variations and combinations normal to all literary types. For example, one of the earliest fictional motorcycle books is Bob Steele's *Motorcycle, or, True to His Friends* from 1909. Probably one of the most popular writers of fictional motorcycle adventure books for children is Ralph Marlow, who wrote seven stories between 1914 and 1916. His *The Big Five Motorcycle Boys* were staple reading for all American youth who wished to own a motorbike. *The Big Five Motorcycle Boys on the Battle Line* can nowadays be read, for example, via The Project Gutenberg.

The World Wars had their impact on both material and mental side of motorcycling: apart from increasing the production of motorcycles, it also affected the authors whether they took part in fighting on a motorcycle, or wanted to escape its memories by riding one. For example, from the First World War there is a fine example of motorcycle travel literature in letter form by Captain W.H.L. His *Adventures of a Despatch Rider* is a collection of letters he wrote from the trenches between August 1914 and February 1915. The book offers another perspective on the war and the part motorcycles played in it. It is also a classic example of autobiographical travel writing: 'My only object is to try and show as truthfully as I can the part played in this monstrous war by a despatch rider during the months from August 1914 to February 1915' (2009: 18). Also Theresa Wallach, the author of *The Rugged Road* and the first woman to cross the Sahara desert, served as the first British woman dispatch rider in the Second World War.

In relation to the Wars, T.E. Lawrence's *The Mint. A Day-Book of the R.A.F. Depot Between August and December 1922 with Later Notes by 352087 A/c ROSS* must also be mentioned. The book was first published by Jonathan Cape in 1955

since the author did not accept the publication before 1950 because of ‘the horror the fellows with me in force would feel at my giving them away, at their “off” moments’ (Lawrence 1962: 9). The Panther Edition from which the quotations in the thesis are from was first published in 1962, and reprinted in 1963 and 1969.

The Mint describes the daily routines of a harsh barrack life, which the author participates in under a false name. It is not until the end of the book that he walks to his motorbike, the pride which his fellow campers wore ‘like a flower in its cap’ (Lawrence 1962: 184). But this second last chapter of the book, ‘THE ROAD’, has all the prominent elements of motorcycle literature squeezed into three and a half pages. This chapter will be cited in more detail in chapter six but here the beginning which opens with a praise of the road:

The extravagance in which my surplus emotion expressed itself lay on the road. So long as roads were tarred blue and straight; not hedged; and empty and dry, so long I was rich.

Nightly I’d run up from the hangar, upon the last stroke of work, spurring my tired feet to be nimble. The very movement refreshed them, after the day-long restraint of service. (ibid. 184)

When studying the early examples of motorcycle travel literature one notices how much matter-of-fact like they are. For example in Watson, Wallach, Warren, and Fulton Jr, who all published their travel books between 1915 and 1937, the journey is depicted as an adventure from point A to point B. Geographical, sociological, ethnical and historical notions are made in great detail and also describing the subtleties of the landscape is in the centre of the narration.

A shift in the style can be placed around the 1970s when the more philosophical and self-reflective accounts of motorcycle journeys started to appear, such as

Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* in 1974 by The Bodley Head Ltd., and Ted Simon's *Jupiter's Travels* in 1979 by Hamish Hamilton. In fact, *Jupiter's Travels* has been one of the most inspirational motorcycle travel books in the genre and it has encouraged others to make a similar journey. Simon (2007: 7) writes about the impact his book has had in the beginning of his *Dreaming of Jupiter*:

In America, where it was out of print, I discovered almost by accident that people were taking to motorcycle travel in large numbers, and that my book had become a cult classic. [...] I learned that many had made similar journeys because of it.

In Finland motorcycle travel literature is a rather neglected area of travel literature although writers such as Keijo Virtanen (see e.g. *Tielle tuuleen*) do acknowledge its special position in the genre of travel writing. The authors around the world have home sites and they keep blogs specializing in overland motorcycle travelling. There exists motorcycling magazines with home sites and also the *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* is available in electrical form.

The genre has gained probably most attention during the first decade of the twenty-first century when the film actors Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman – with their group of assistants – made the television series accompanied by a book *Long Way Round*. The journey took them from London to New York which, as it happens, are the same starting point and destination which Robert Fulton Jr had used about eighty years earlier on his solo trip around the world.

But before analysing motorcycle travel books in more detail, one needs to define the minimal units the narration needs to be considered as motorcycle travel

literature. This task, as defining any generic properties, is a slippery road and I will use concrete examples to illustrate the ideas.

Firstly, there must be the vehicle, the motored bike on two wheels (or more if the motorcycle is attached to e.g. a sidecar as in Lady Warren's *Through Algeria and Tunisia on a Motor-bicycle*, or in Theresa Wallach's *The Rugged Road*). Lady Warren's book is a rare example of 'sidecar travel literature', which in this thesis is considered as part of the broader genre of motorcycle travel literature because it shares the distinctively characteristic features of the genre in question, such as the summary of equipment needed for the journey, and the obstacles on the road. *Through Algeria* literary starts with a 'Summary' and under this heading the mark of the bike and the tyres as well as a more detailed catalogue of the needed spare parts, covered distances, and the duration of actual time spent on the road follow (2009: 303). Similar types of lists are very typical in the genre at large.

Secondly, a feature which every motorcycle traveller (be it on the bike or in the sidecar) must encounter, are the obstacles on the journey. Although, as Lady Warren's protagonist remarks, her position in the sidecar is more accommodating than the poor driver's, who has the elements of the nature against him and needs to focus on the road and driving, whereas the lady can scribble on her note book simultaneously while moving. Thus, the obstacles that a modern day Ulysses on two wheels must encounter are, first, the forces of nature from all the way from a hefty wind to flooding rivers or a vast and dry desert, and second, the road itself – be it the others on it or a bad stretch under construction work. Obstacles can also be imposed by humans and are then such as un-cooperative customs officers or hostile car drivers.

Thirdly, another typical feature in motorcycle travel literature is the circularity of narration: the journey is rarely ‘uncompleted’, that is, the protagonist seldom decides not to return home. One exception of this is Dan Walsh’s *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You* where the protagonist decides to stay abroad. But this decision not to return must be voluntary, as freedom is a central element in the genre. Also, I have not come across any examples where the protagonist is so badly injured that the journey is left uncompleted and a forced return home is imposed on the protagonist. For example, Bealby begins his journey with a travelling companion who injures himself quite severely in the very beginning of the journey and thus has to return home. Bealby nevertheless carries on and his journey gets completed.

Even though there exists plenty of books where the journey does not make a full circle, but starts from point A and ends in point B, it is customary that either point B is the protagonist’s native home while A has been a temporary one, or the book can be, for example, a collection of stories from shorter trips between these points. The former is the case, for example, in Fulton Jr where the motorcyclist returns his native country United States from London and the latter in Watson’s account of his days as a dispatch rider. When the journey has not been a circular, but a destination oriented one, as in Wallach 2011 or Boorman 207, it is an implied rule that the protagonists have a safe journey home after the quest’s successful completion.

It should also be stated that in motorcycle travel literature the actual journey is not as crucial a feature as one might think. I take as an example a part from Dan Walsh’s *These Are the Days That Must Happen to You* where at one point – between his trips – the protagonist actually stays put in London to plan his future travels. But this chapter, ‘London 2002–2003’, would in itself fulfill the requirements of the

genre. The chapter, which runs for about fifty pages, contains the necessary elements to constitute a motorcycle travel narrative, that is: there exists a machine which is personified and treated as a character in the narration: “Mornin’, bike. ‘Mornin’, Dan’ Eh? ‘You talking to yourself again?’” (2009: 115). Also, the protagonist does not merely move from point A to point B, but notices the road he uses in detail: ‘Next. Bleak Woolwich High Road [...] then the tunnel under the Thames which never fails to freak me out...’ (ibid. 119). He makes notes of the obstacles as well: ‘...I’m getting it all wrong, overtaking cars that are indicating right, undertaking cabs that are turning left...’ (ibid. 118).

Thus, in conclusion, the protagonist could be lying in his or her bed, just thinking of the journey, the bike and the possible obstacles ahead; but those thoughts must contain firstly, a thought of a bike and, secondly, a thought of a journey of some distance. This definition includes, for example, *The Mint* in the tradition of motorcycle travel literature even though the bike is mentioned only in one chapter towards the very end of the book. But, as the chapter reveals the book in a completely new light, it is vital for understanding the book as a whole: the protagonist has been enjoying the speed and the freedom during evening times, which in turn has helped him to cope with the tedious and hard barrack life: “For months now have I been making my evening round a marketing, twice a week, riding a hundred miles for the joy of it...” (Lawrence 1962: 187)

The early days of motorcycle travel literature could be described as adventure tours. For the authors such as Wallach or Fulton Jr the journey was partly about being the first to do something or, as for Warren, an expedition to familiarise oneself with a foreign culture (see e.g. chapters 14 and 15 in *Through Algeria & Tunisia on a Motor-bicycle*).

More modern features in the genre are the extended journeys as, for example, in *Jupiter's Travels* where the protagonist journeys on his bike for over four years or in *These Are the Days That Must Happen to You* where the protagonist decides not to return home. One modern feature is also self-reflection. Especially during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many a rider has been starting to ask the question why? Whereas Simon's self-reflective protagonist in the 1970s *Jupiter's Travels* wondered why he was making the journey, the later travellers have started to ask why to make the journey specifically on a motorcycle. Why motorcycles, why to ride, and then, why to return home? The seminal authors concerning the more personal and philosophical aspects of riding are Melissa Holbrook Pierson who wrote the quite existential *The Perfect Vehicle. What It Is about Motorcycles?* in 1998 and *The Man Who Would Stop at Nothing* in 2011 and, for example, Steven L. Thompson who studies the psychobiological factors of riding in his *Bodies in Motion. Evolution and Experience in Motorcycling* (2008).

3.1 THE EARLY DAYS OF MOTORCYCLES

The Ultimate Motorcycle Book (1993: 7-8) defines the motorcycle as a 'perfect union of two wheels and an internal combustion engine.' It is an amalgamation of two elements, the motor and the bicycle, and the invention could not have taken place before these two reached a state which allowed them to be combined.

The first motorcycle, which according to Melissa Holbrook Pierson (1998: 60), 'looks like an instrument of torture', was built in Germany in 1885 by Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach. At this point a noteworthy aspect of travel is that the original English word *travail* entails connotations of travel as, if not 'torture',

but as suffering: the traveller is seen as someone who experiences, and travel as an act is 'the model of a direct and genuine experience, which transforms the person having it' (Leed 1991: 5-6). Thus the concept of travel as a punishment is as old as the journey of Adam and Eve, evicted from Eden (ibid. 10); or, as Fussell (1987: 15) puts it in his introduction to *The Norton Book of Travel*, *travail*, as an experience, is 'not entirely joyous'.

This connotation of travel, in this case motorcycle travel as suffering will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, where the notion of danger is represented as an unspoken feature prevalent in the genre, and in chapter 4.2, where the obstacles on the hero's journey are dealt in relation with the formula of motorcycle travel literature.

The first motorcycle was wood-framed and had iron-tired wooden wheels. In 1883 Daimler had already improved his creation by adding it an engine which carries its benzene fuel with it. But as with other inventions in history, also motorcycles were invented simultaneously all over Europe. There is an example of an early motorcycle which run with steam and had to be fed with coal while driving: the *Vélocipédraisivaporianna* dates from 1818. In 1875 a Parisian inventor got a patent for his *Cynophère* in the United States: it was sanctioned in France because of cruelty towards animals. The 'steam' it used was actually two dogs in treadmills (see Holbrook Pierson 1998: 60-61.)

In England a twenty-five-year-old Edward Butler made various improvements to his *Petrol-Cycle* (thus inventing the abbreviation 'petrol' as well) in 1887 but was confronted with an obstacle from the previous decades: the *Locomotive Acts* only allowed the maximum speed of 4 mph for the country roads. (Holbrook Pierson: 62-63).

Speed is thus closely connected to motorcycle travel from the early days on, and its significance is acknowledged whereas its consequences, i.e. the risks, are a suppressed feature in the genre. Slow motion would not produce the same impacts on the rider as moving fast and these psychological effects will be discussed in the last chapter in relation with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Also, speed's sociological impacts are looked at in closer detail in the next chapter.

In 1904 there were 21 521 motorcycles registered in England, whereas by the year 1927 the figure had risen up to 179 926: the wars and popularity of racing had a great impact on the demand (Tragatsch 1992: 15-19). During the First World War motorcycles were mainly used by infantry: for example, the US Army ordered 70 000 Harley-Davidsons. During the Second World War the function of motorcycles altered and they were mainly used by messengers. During the second war US Army ordered about 300 000 motorbikes (ibid 19, 28).

Holbrook Pierson (1998: 72-73) writes that Mussolini was a great motorcycle enthusiastic and advised his officials to '[t]ravel afoot as much as possible; otherwise use an automobile of the useful type; better yet, use a motorcycle.' The Italian press saw the Fascist Italy as a 'nation of motorized centaurs' (ibid. 73). This mental and physical infusion between the rider and the machine will be discussed in chapter seven.

After the wars, Holbrook Pierson (ibid. 66-67) continues, this poor man's automobile was popular amongst the working class, as it still is. Motorbikes were advertised to increase the rider's well-being: the rush of oxygen was beneficial for one's lungs and the wind good for women's complexion. But, naturally, there were the early opponents too, redeeming motorcycling as noisy, unnecessary, and dangerous activity. Also the clothing was criticised, although most of the riders in

the early days of motorcycling did wear a tie and tweeds – before the race riders' style became dominant, following the fashion of the Italian racers in the 1930s.

The history of motorcycle travel literature is closely connected to the actual machine's history: the speeds, the equipment and the necessary isolation (from the environment and sometimes the whole civilisation alike) that comes with riding a motorcycle. All these features have been a noteworthy aspect in the history of motorcycle riding, and will be discussed from the point of view of the literature it has produced in the following chapters.

The history of motorcycles has also been a subject of sociological, psychological, and historical research as well as a part of gender, fashion and film studies to mention a few. The most recent issues of *The International Journal of Motorcycle Studies* include articles, for example, about sustainable motorcycling, motorcycle design, and adventure motorcycling from a touristic point of view.

4 THE FORMULA OF MOTORCYCLE TRAVEL LITERATURE

For the purposes of the thesis it is vital to place motorcycle travel literature in its historical background. In chapter five the romance tradition of chivalric quest will be presented as motorcycle travel literature's ancestor. But this tradition of chivalric quest can also be seen as a part of a larger concept; as a manifestation of the formula of adventure.

John G. Cawelti (1977: 4) defends the literary formulas of less academic prestige in *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance. Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* and, along the lines with scholars such as Northrop Frye, emphasises the fact that literary formulas change in time: they 'adapt to the different needs and interests of

changing generations'. Frye's focus in *The Secular Scripture* is on the romance tradition, whereas Cawelti speaks of popular literature in general, analysing the formulas of adventure novel, romance, mystery, melodrama and alien beings, such as Dracula (ibid. 39-51).

Cawelti (ibid. 6) defines the literary formula as 'a structure of narrative or dramatic conventions employed in great number of individual works'. The concept of formula helps defining the typical elements of motorcycle travel literature as a genre, whereas narratology will be used in a more concrete way when discussing the elements of the text itself.

Also Heidi Hansson discusses formula literature in *Romance Revived. Postmodern Romances and the Tradition*. According to Hansson (1998: 165) the adventures in a popular formula 'may differ, but character-types, themes and plot structures remain the same and the reader is granted the comfort of recognition' Hansson (ibid. 166) writes that 'the action in a popular romance takes place outside the characters' ordinary lives', and continues that it is typical of formulaic literature to focus on action and plot.

The 'character types, themes and plot structures', which Hansson (ibid. 165) discusses, are surprisingly uniform in motorcycle travel literature and dictated by the choice of vehicle, the motorcycle. Several characteristic features are connected with this mode of travel: on the other hand, solitariness, speed and danger, and on the other, connectedness with the environment and the machine, and a greater awareness of the surroundings than when travelling, for example, by a car. Usually the protagonist, or the 'character type', is an individualistic spirit advocating for personal freedom and in search for adventure: he or she wants to be the first one to accomplish something (especially in many of the earlier examples of the genre) or

to discover something within him/herself, or about the world in general. In any case, the protagonist's initial impetus is quest, that is, a quest for freedom or adventure, a prize of being the first, or a quest for knowledge – or each aforementioned.

The themes and plot structures in the formula of motorcycle travel literature are straight forward from start to finish and can be illustrated with only a few main categories: the departure, the journey and overcoming the obstacles, and then, the return. Typically the plot runs from one episode to another or from one scenic view to the next, leaving little room for character development or a complicated plot construction. This is particularly the case in early motorcycle travel literature.

The journey in motorcycle travel books is typically conceived as a somewhat purifying experience: the hero returns home as a 'master of two worlds' (Hume as cited in Adams 1983: 150); a poorer but always the wiser than before the journey:

Was my journey a 'first'? I'd probably never know and it didn't really matter. I hadn't set out to break a record. Before I left, it had been one of my dreams to find myself in a situation where I could save a life, perhaps to make up for the utter helplessness I'd experienced at that time I could not [his wife's death]. I realised not that I had saved a life – I had saved my own. (Bealby 2004: 332)

The quote above illustrates two points already spoken of. Firstly, the journey in modern motorcycle travel literature is not typically done to gain an outer reward, such as being the first to do something, but it is rather a quest with a more individualistic motif. And secondly, the rewards of the modern journeys are likely to be spiritual. The narrator in Bealby's *Running with the Moon* had lost his wife when they were travelling in India: she had suddenly died in bed lying next to him.

Throughout the narrator's journey through Africa there are references, or flashbacks, to this episode and their life together. In the end the protagonist finally finds peace within when he realises that even though his wife died she has, in fact, been with him in spirit for the whole journey.

The concept of formula helps to designate the historical and cultural references about the 'collective fantasies shared by large groups of people' and also to form aesthetic judgements about the 'artistic limitations and possibilities of particular formulaic patterns' (Cawelti 1977: 7). Every formula has its own stereotypes and conventions and it is a question of how to work within the given frames: to be a work of any interest, according to Cawelti (ibid. 10), the work must have its unique characters which must fulfill the conventional form.

Using Cawelti's (1977: 39) notion about formula literature, this thesis will position motorcycle travel literature as part of the literary formula of adventure. This formula shares many characteristics with the romance tradition of chivalric quest: both formulas share the central fantasy of a hero who overcomes the obstacles and accomplishes an important moral mission.

In terms of chivalric romance, this mission is a quest; for example, a quest for the Holy Grail as in later medieval romance tradition. The Grail has its mythological and religious connotations of eternal life. When translated into more mundane terms of modern narratives, the quest of the Holy Grail can be seen as the man's eternal wish to fulfil his/her dreams as an independent individual. This is also Hansson's point of view. She writes in *Romance Revived* that 'the quest for an object usually translates into a quest for identity' (1998: 76). In both traditions, the modern motorcycle travel literature and the chivalric quest stories, the heroes must

encounter the obstacles thrown in front of them to accomplish the demands of the quest. For example, the protagonist in *Jupiter's Travels* sees this quest as following:

The goal was comprehension, and the only way to comprehend the world was by making myself vulnerable to it so that it could change me. The challenge was to lay myself open to everybody and everything that came my way. The prize was to change and grow big enough to feel one with the world. (Simon 1980: 404)

Cawelti (1977: 40) states that the adventure formula is the 'simplest and perhaps oldest and widest in appeal of all story types. [...] It presents a character, with whom the audience identifies, passing through the most frightening perils to achieve some triumph.' He continues that on the basis of this type of fantasy is victory over death (ibid. 40). Also Simon's (1980: 404) hero recognizes the dangers of achieving oneness with the world via travelling around it on a motorbike: 'The real danger was death by exposure.'

The closeness of death is, in fact, a prominent feature particularly in modern motorcycle travel books although the dangerousness of the vehicle is noted in the earlier works as well. For example, the narrator in Lady Warren's (2009: 307) *Through Algeria* is petrified over the possible speed of the chosen vehicle, that is, a motorbike with a side car: 'SAID I: "P., you'll terrify me, you'll go more than five miles an hour, you will take me down circular roads on mountains."'

For a motorcycle adventurer the possible perils on his or her way are such as a difficult road, a stamp missing from a visa or passport, flooding river, empty petrol tank or a difficult customs officer. The dragons that a modern hero riding on a two-wheeled iron horse must fight against are the monstrous trucks on the road:

The cars tend to be about two hundred meters behind you when it [the Sentinel system] goes off, so you've got a few seconds to look over your shoulder and work out where they are and find an escape route. Make sure you're always aware what's at the side of the piste, which side you can get off without hitting a boulder or ending up in a ditch when the cars come through. (Boorman 2007: 115)

And sometimes the modern cowboys have a chance to get back at the vicious cars on the road:

Long-distance buses roared by frequently at seventy miles an hour, sometimes closing in dangerously with their tail ends. One that had cut in on me ruthlessly stopped farther up the road. I was able to overtake it before it had picked up speed again, and I rode up alongside the driver's seat. He looked down at me with a contemptuous grin and I raised my hand to point it at his head like a pistol, and then I shot him. (Simon 1980: 314)

But, for technical reasons only, a line should be drawn between the earliest motorcycle travel books and the later ones: the first few decades of motorcycle riding were very different from what it is nowadays. Whereas Lady Warren is terrified of the prospect that the vehicle should go more than five miles per hour, downhill, the typical modern rider would consider that as a walking pace. And, naturally, when the speed is higher, so are the risks.

In fact, one of the formula's characteristic features is victory over death. Overcoming the obstacles and keeping death at distance requires a hero who can be, according to Cawelti (1977: 40), a superhero or figure like one of us. The superhero possesses 'exceptional strength', the common man has 'flawed abilities and attitudes presumably shared by the audience'.

The heroes in motorcycle travel literature normally point out that the journey could be done by anyone with the right set of mind: ‘Could anyone do it? Anyone who’s prepared to lose control to gain freedom [...]. Anyone can, but not everyone needs to. Maybe the potential is enough.’ (Walsh 2009: 5). But not everyone does a life altering trip on two wheels and normally the protagonists are well aware of their luck and courage, which have enabled them to live up to their dream and survive the obstacles. The protagonist in *One Man Caravan* quotes his friend:

“All of us,” he said, “have hopes of being a poet, artist, discoverer, philosopher, scientist; of possessing the attributes of all these simultaneously. Few are permitted to achieve any one of them in daily life. But in travel we attain them all. Then we have our day of glory, when all our dreams come true, when we can be anything we like, as long as we like, and, when we’re tired of it, pull up stakes and move on.” (Fulton Jr 1996: 22)

But as any travel, also motorcycle travel changes the man and after winning the obstacles that the protagonist was prepared for, alongside with the unpredicted ones, he becomes something of a superhero:

In a car, you’re watching a movie – on a bike, you’re starring in it,’ as some cowboy poet slurred. A starring role that’s maybe produced by the rider’s unique opportunity to be two things at once – sat still while swooping swift, heavily armoured but completely exposed, dagger-proof and always vulnerable, fully concentrated and miles away. (Walsh 2009: 357)

In this chapter, the thesis has outlined the formula of motorcycle literature using Cawelti’s ideas presented in *Adventure, Mystery and Romance. Formula Stories as*

Art and Popular Culture. In the next chapter, some ideological factors behind the genre will be presented.

4.1 THE DANGEROUS EDGE

The laws of physics, which are universal and indifferent to societal mores and beliefs, dictate that increases in speed result in exponential increases in the release of kinetic energy in motor vehicle crashes – energy that ends up killing and severely injuring millions of people a year around the globe. A moving vehicle generates kinetic energy at the square speed; a 20 percent increase in velocity will, for example, result in a 44 percent increase in the kinetic energy dissipated in a collision. (Kelley 2005: 417)

“Are you the two ladies intending to cross the desert on a motorcycle?” He urged us, “change your mind and don’t go – it is too dangerous.” (Wallach 2011: 21)

As stated in the previous chapter, literary formulas ‘adapt to the different needs and interests of changing generations’ (Cawelti 1977: 4). Also Monika Fludernik (2009: 112) states in *An Introduction to Narratology* that ‘a change of narrative models always results in changed horizons of expectations on the part of the addressee’. Every generation produces their typical literal formulas.

Richard Barber (1995: 26) presents the social and political factors behind the new social group of knights in *The Knight and Chivalry*: at the time when knighthood started to emerge in western European countries the society was in chaos, ‘haunted by memories of Viking raids’, wars and the famine. All this was followed by misery and destruction – yet the ideal vision of the era was a hierarchal society where each person had an appointed role to fulfill (ibid. 26).

Nowadays western societies have reached this 'ideal' state of hierarchy with its bureaucratic and tedious norms, laws and restrictions. There have been multiple ideological and religious changes since medieval times, which means that the needs and the interests of the reading public have altered as well. This is how Michael J. Apter (1992: 191) describes the situation in *Dangerous Edge. The Psychology of Excitement*:

First of all, modern Western society has developed in a manner which radically changes the situation by helping its members to become increasingly secure, and feel themselves to be increasingly safe. On the other hand, social welfare in most Western countries (the "welfare state" in Britain is a prime example) has removed some of the worst dangers of poverty, unemployment and sickness. On the other hand, technology has removed many of the sources of danger, and especially those that derive from ill health.

Thus, as the medieval heroic quests produced images of hierarchal societies with set rules to follow, today's world produces stories of individuals abandoning these rules in search for freedom and excitement. The protagonist of *Race to Dakar* is well aware of the dichotomy:

'Gladiators!' shouted one member of the crowd. It might have seemed that way to them, after all it's rare in today's age of excessive health and safety precautions for people to court extreme danger in quite such foolhardy and conspicuous way, but I felt more like one of the hapless Christians about to be fed to the lions for the amusement of the crowds. (Boorman 2007: 107)

Also Mihaili Csikszentmihalyi, in his *Flow. The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, notices the western societies' dichotomy what it comes to the inner and

outer standards of living. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 12), the roots of discontent in modern western societies are internal and each individual must entangle them personally:

we can't blame our problems on harsh environment, on widespread poverty, or on the oppression of a foreign occupying army [...]. The shields that have worked in the past – the order that religion, patriotism, ethnic traditions, and habits instilled by social classes used to provide – are no longer effective.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 16) continues that 'while humankind collectively has increased its material powers [...] it has not advanced very far in terms of improving the content of experience'. In Csikszentmihalyi's opinion there is no other way out of this than 'an individual to take things in hand personally'. The twentieth century was an age of individualism and the ancient proverb 'know thyself' from the oracle of Delphi was taken at the centre of human activity. But when the self was not defined by politics or the society as in antiquity, the man had to start looking his own boundaries by himself (ibid. 20).

Needless to say, this search for individualism is not solely a feature belonging to the twentieth century: man's struggle to define and control his consciousness has been a feature of human history even long before the ancient oracles. In ancient Greece and the Roman Empire the society set the norms for individuals: the worst punishment was to be sent to exile, that is, to be shun from the community. During the following centuries in Western European countries the norms for the individuals have been set by kinsmen, the church and close family ties. From the point of view of travel it was either a privilege of the rich populace to go and expand one's horizons by travelling, or, it was a necessity of the poor to wander from city to city

in search for food or a place to study, as was the case with less privileged medieval university students (see e.g. Leed 1991, Adams 1983, or Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

But when travel, in the spirit of the Grand Tour, became institutionalized with the invention of new technologies, such as the steam engine and the railways, and with the help of Thomas Cook and ‘his rubber-necks’, it was natural to start looking for new, more individualistic ways to go and search for the inmost self and new horizons for the consciousness.

Inventing the motorcycle could not have been timed better in this quest for more individualistic way to move around. Every era has had its appointed mode of travel, be it on a horse or on a steam boat, and for the twentieth century it was – alongside with the aeroplane – the motorcycle. The motorcycle allowed men to travel light, take a step away from the ‘beaten tracks’, and be free from timetables and group assembly points.

But even motorcycle travel does not differ from any other socio-economic activity: as any other way of travel, also motorcycling has started to be immersed in the existing social rules and norms, and package adventure touring trips are organised by various tourist offices around the world.

As motorcycling is closely connected to the spirit of individualism, speed and danger, it offers immense possibilities for the modern time knight on a steeled horseback. As Paul Virilio (1994: 103), a scholar of speed, states in *Katoamisen estetiikka*, with speed comes isolation, which is the end of the bourgeois culture, a reaction against the exoticism and lyricism of travel. In motorcycle travel this isolation is achieved by the choice of vehicle and the equipment and speed that comes with it. Speed highlights the connection between the machine and the mind when the whole body becomes interrelated with the machine and dependent on it to

function flawlessly, especially when riding fast. The equipment enhances this interrelatedness as it, while secluding the rider from the surrounding world, connects him or her more tightly to the machine.

Virilio's dromology, or science of speed, would offer an interesting point of view of the twentieth century's literature in general but for this thesis a more important aspect of Virilio's work are his notions about danger. According to Virilio (1994: 99), the speed of the vehicle lets man not to think anything, to feel anything or to care of anything. This, in my view, leads to a state of a subdued ecstasy: the traveller no longer is afraid of death, but quite the opposite, the traveller reaches a state of welcoming acceptance. In Virilio's (ibid. 66) words, 'every partaking is a small death'(my translation). He continues (ibid. 99) that what nowadays are sold with fast vehicles are not the mere incidents, but the surprises of an accident. This commercialisation of the holy trinity of speed, danger and death is also noticed in the road accident surveys: '...the allure of speed is regularly emphasized in new-car ads and television commercials,' writes Ben Kelley in his article 'It Is Speed that Kills' in the *Journal of Public Health Policy* (2005). All this goes hand in hand with what Apter writes about the modern society's condition: the welfare societies have removed the dangerous edges and people feel increasingly secure. But it is in human nature to seek for excitement, and one source for it is offered by fast vehicles. And the greater the speed, the greater the danger.

Danger, or overcoming death, is one of the prominent but little discussed features in motorcycle travel literature, and the mode of travel and the literature which it has produced has partly been born because it has been made possible by both the technical inventions and the desires of the twentieth century: free individuals ready to court danger and brake free from the chains of welfare society. As the office

environment in work life combined with segregated private life do not offer real threats or clashes between individuals, people turn to seek adrenaline rush from pastime activities. This shows, for example, in recreational motorcycling and, ultimately, in motorcycle travel literature. Although, for example, car travel can provide similar speeds as motorcycle travel, there is a difference in the ‘exposure’ to danger. Aeroplane or train travel would offer even higher speeds than motorcycle or car travel but sitting in a tube with hundreds of other travel consumers takes the responsibility of a possible accident – or the joy of overcoming an obstacle for that matter – from the individual: an accident would be a communal experience whereas motorcycle travel advocates for personal experiences. The following citation is from Jonny Bealby’s (2004: 37) *Running with the Moon. A Boy’s Own Adventure: Riding a Motorbike through Africa*:

Despite all the hardship and discomfort one inevitably suffers on a bike, it is, I’m sure, the most satisfying means of transport, at least on a trip like this. In a Landrover or truck you can simply wind up the windows and pour yourself a coffee, cocooned in Western comfort. Not so on a bike.

Also Simon’s narrator contemplates how the struggle and dangerousness of the chosen vehicle is spiritually rewarding. After calculating how many times (five) he has already fallen since beginning the desert crossing, he continues describing his mental state which could also be translated as Csikszentmihalyi’s flow experience:

I feel no hunger, no thirst. I am absolutely wrapped up in this extraordinary experience, in the unremitting effort, in the marvellous fact that I am succeeding, that it is at all possible, that my worst fears are not just unrealised but contradicted...

I seem to have, after all, the strength and stamina to get by, and my reserves seem to grow the more I draw upon them. (Simon 1980: 97-98)

This balance between the hardships on the road and the rewards when winning the obstacles stretches the traveller's strength to its limits. But on the other hand, winning the obstacles also reward the traveller with the overpowering feeling of capability and freedom. These hardships are a crucial feature in the genre and, in fact, make its ideological core: the protagonists want to do something out of the ordinary and push the limits of their powers and strength – something they cannot do in their everyday lives at home. This breaking of one's own boundaries and pushing the limits of one's skills – be it through travel, in monotonous work place or in brain surgery – is also a key element for achieving the flow state Csikszentmihalyi analyses in his work *Flow*.

It is also important to bear in mind that it is especially during the latter half of the twentieth century that deaths resulted from road accidents have become 'a serious epidemic in most developed societies,' as J. Whitelegg writes in his article 'Geography of Road Traffic Accidents' (1986: 161). Road accidents are a common feature in modern societies and have become an accepted, almost routine-like, fact of day to day living. Normally the road traffic accident reports include facts about the causes that were behind the crash, such as speeding or heavy rain, but the phenomenon as a whole, as an 'epidemic' condition of our society, is by passed.

Apter analyses in *Dangerous Edge* the different methods by which people seek arousal and the feeling of danger both in their day-to-day lives and in some more extreme cases, such as in rape or murder. In fact, each one of us – unless suffering some medical problem like anxiety – seek excitement in varying ways:

...society makes dangerous edges of its own by creating limits and taboos, and by assuring trauma of some kind (loss of respectability, ostracism, fines, imprisonment) if the limits are transgressed. Here the precarious edge consists of man-made barbed wire and searchlights, as it were, rather than the natural drop at the edge of the rock face. To enjoy playing on such a socially determined edge seems to require negativism as well as the quest for excitement. (1992: 183)

This 'quest for excitement', courting with danger and death, separates the protagonist of motorcycle travel narratives from everyday life. It is not just the speed and exposure to danger though, but also overcoming such mundane obstacles as having enough water, food and money, that would not cause any problems in the protagonists' normal lives.

The quest for excitement also brings in mind Mihail Bakhtin's (1981: 111) analysis of the 'adventure novel of everyday life' which includes, for example, Greek satires and early Christian literature. According to Bakhtin, the most characteristic element in adventure novel of everyday life is 'the way it fuses the course of individual's life (at its major turning points) with his actual spatial course of the road – that is, with his wanderings'. (ibid. 120)

About this element, the chronotope of road, more in chapter six. What is important to notice at this time is how in Bakhtin's analysis, and in the analysis of the thesis at hand, the hero is not part of this everyday life. The hero is always on the side tracks in life: she or he can be a rogue, a prostitute or a servant to mention a few examples from Bakhtin (1981: 125). The heroes in motorcycle travel literature are the rogues of modern times: they are jobless (at least temporarily) individuals, usually covered with dust, and with no permanent residence and no material goal in

sight. As Bakhtin (ibid. 125) writes, they have ‘no fixed place in life’, they seek ‘personal success’, and they ‘study personal life’.

All these adventurers experience a metamorphosis, or, a change of roles or masks (Bakhtin 1981: 127). In motorcycle travel literature this metamorphosis is effectuated by clothing: when riding, the protagonists normally wear motorcyclist’s gear and to be covered with dust is considered to be a prize for freedom. One example of this can be found at the end of Lady Warren’s *Through Algeria* when the protagonist sees her reflection in the window and decides she needs a new outfit to face the everyday life of the Tunis Palace Inn: her dirty and dragged traveller’s clothes (in those days separate riding boots, jackets and so on were not as customary as they are nowadays) have separated her from the normal, day-to-day life: ‘I thought I would like to buy a hat to face the Tunisia Palace in’ (2009: 443).

But at the same time she is aware of the ridiculousness of the unpronounced rules of social behaviour in which everyone has their role to play. The clothes she was wearing in the beginning of the journey have become covered with dust and she has lost the draperies of her social status, which she now, since the journey is over, has to purchase anew to fit again into the generally accepted norms.

This transference from the normal everyday-life to the ‘magical world’ of motorcycle travel is a noticeable feature in the genre’s narration. The transformation normally includes a transgression of some sort; whether it is an unexpectedly bad stretch of a road, which leaves the hero exposed to the transformation, or the protagonist’s newly acquired ragged appearance, as in Simon’s (1980: 76-77) *Jupiter’s Travels* when the protagonist has just arrived to Africa:

In the oval engraved mirror of a colonial dining car I actually take notice of my face for the first time in a long while. Action has freed me from self-consciousness, and I am becoming a stranger to my own appearance.

Also Ted Bishop's (2005: 124-125) narrator in *Riding with Rilke* makes notions of the impact the motorcycling gear has on the rider:

When I first put on a full-face helmet, I have a moment of claustrophobia. I can hear only my own breathing [...] (The boots, jacket, and gloves feel cumbersome too – they're shaped all wrong for walking, but once you are on the bike, the gloves curl round the handgrips [...]) When you hit the starter, your breath merges with the sound of the bike, and once you're on the highway, the sound moves behind you, becoming a dull roar that merges with the wind noise, finally disappearing from the consciousness altogether.

Especially in modern motorcycle travel literature the masking of oneself with the draperies of a traveller is a crucial part of the narration: the bike and the biker clothing separates the hero from everyday life and only in this miraculous world of machines, helmets and protective clothes can the protagonist preserve his or her identity:

Without the bike, I'm just another tourist squid in another tourist town. I play the game, wandering the pretty colonial streets, strolling past window boxes and balconied mansions [...] and just like every other tourist squid, I end up in the pavement cafés...(Walsh 2009: 260)

I put on my helmet, we moved off and at last I managed to shut out the world. The bull-shit stopped and freedom lay ahead. Just me and my thoughts. No one and nothing else intruding. (Boorman 2007: 100)

But the aspect which most separates the hero of motorcycle travel literature from the inhabitants of 'everyday life' is danger. Danger is always in the background in motorcycle travel literature, but seldom spoken of:

Sometimes motorcyclist themselves try to deny it...Or they claim never to have felt fear, only joy; they can certainly get testy, some of them, if you mention the word, as if saying it brings it on. But somewhere they all know it. And they know it is in part why they do it: the mastery of danger, or the feeling of it. (Holbrook Pierson 1998: 46-47)

Even though most narrators acknowledge the fact that what they are about to do is dangerous, they push the thought aside, and think crashing, or death, something happening to only a few, and always to someone they do not even know: 'a friend of a friend'. For example, the narrator in Mike Carter's *Uneasy Rider* ponders upon the question prior his departure. He has just heard – yet again – a story about a friend of a friend who got killed doing 'something similar' he is just about to do:

Always dead. Usually decapitated, the head still in the helmet found in a nearby field, the story told with such relish and in such gruesome detail that it would be easy to conclude they were enjoying the telling. I had no idea that every single person in the entire world had lost a good friend to a foreign motorcycle adventure. (2009: 12)

This is a common attitude towards the possibility of death in motorcycle travel literature but only few writes about the fear, or the feeling of danger, and then, the crash. Typically there are 'falls' (see e.g. Boorman 2007: 174, Bealby 2004: 53,

Simon 1980: 97) or frights, which are connected with the obstacles on the road, such as Sahara desert or a muddy road. But these differ from actual crashes or the more profound and prevailing feeling of fear in that there is no other vehicle involved and the falls are commonly seen as an elemental and even rewarding part of the journey. Sometimes they are even anticipated and practiced at home: that is, the protagonist takes a course on off-road riding while preparing him/herself for the trip, as in Boorman's *Race to Dakar*.

One of the very rare descriptions of a severe crash in motorcycle travel literature is found in Ted Bishop's (2005: 4) *Riding with Rilke. Reflections on Motorcycles & Books*:

I was beside the driver's door of the semi now, almost home but wobbling hard. And then the blast from the truck's front wheels caught my windshield. The wobble turned to a violent judder. The bars began to thrash from side to side. I had no fear, only the quick thought, "Maybe this is going down." I never felt the fall. My helmet clunked once the asphalt, and I was out.

Naturally, several close calls can be found: for example, in Bealby's *Riding With the Moon* the protagonist's travelling companion crashes with a car the protagonist himself passed just a few moments earlier (2004: 24-25). This close call is not nevertheless described because the protagonist does not actually see it, but he contemplates the issue in the next chapter:

We had always imagined danger would come from external sources such as bullets or knives, wild animals or deadly diseases, but I was now painfully aware that the most dangerous aspect of the journey would probably be holding a heavy, two-wheeled machine upright all the way to the Cape. (ibid. 25-27)

Sometimes there is a crash where the machine gets totally wrecked but nothing really damaging happens to the riders, as in Lady Warren's *Through Algeria* where the protagonist and her driver end up in a ditch upside down (2009: 436), which leaves the side-car un-usable, thus ending their trip just a day before its planned completion. Also, for example, Bealby's (2004: 237) protagonist has a quite severe accident with a pedestrian: a native walking on the road breaks his leg, the motorcycle gets damaged but not irreparably, and the journey can eventually continue. Bishop's (2005: 1) protagonist in *Riding with Rilke* was not that lucky:

I'm riding the crest of the last morphine shot, lying here in the trauma ward. Yesterday they let me eat ice chips and helped me sit up in my "clamshell", my new plastic body cast. "Don't be impatient," they tell me. "Tomorrow you get your last tube out." It's been only ten day since I laid the bike down. "You're making rapid progress."

Danger, the feeling of it, is a two-fold physiological event when we feel aroused, states Apter (1992: 13) in *Dangerous Edge*. Breathing gets faster bringing more oxygen into the body and expelling carbon dioxide more rapidly. Heart batters faster and enables the blood to carry more oxygen and sugar to the muscles. There is more adrenaline in one's body. Also the brain is aroused: it becomes more alert and active (ibid. 13). Thus, experiencing the excitement of possible danger ahead, the human brain becomes more receptive and aware. This affects the narration in motorcycle travel literature as well: while the riders cannot write down the impressions on roads and sceneries when actually riding, the experience itself has been so intense that the descriptions afterwards are vivid and, naturally, deal with issues which are relevant for motorcycling, such as the road. The roads, the curves

and the bends impress their images on human brain which has been highly perceptive during the experience.

Apter (1992: 88-90) presents three different kind of stimuli for aroused experience: first consists of basic sensory qualities, second represents stimuli as signs of an arousing sensory qualities, and the third are abstract properties of the situations that lie ahead of us. The first sources of excitement are the sensory qualities which we normally push in the background when operating in the world. But, as Apter points out, 'it is possible to experience very simple sensations with great intensity' (ibid. 88). If our sensitivity is high, the world opens up to us in various, rich and powerful sensations. Now we should bear in mind Apter's earlier statement about how the aroused state of mind enforces our awareness of the world around us: the brain gets more sensitive, active, and present.

Thus, when riding a motorbike the rider must observe his or her surroundings with utmost attention. The senses are open to the environment and the rider, apart from being present in the situation at hand, must also think ahead about the possible obstacles and dangers. They 'read the road' and this experience provides quite a natural outlet for the modern day hero's creativity:

Travelling in this way, day by day, hour by hour, trying always to be aware of what was present and to hand, was what made the experience so richly rewarding. To travel with one's mind in some future event is futile and debilitating. Where concentration is needed to stay alive it could also be disastrous.

I was aware of the danger. (Simon 1980: 305)

As Apter quite poetically puts it, 'the world breaks in on us like the sea and, whether we like it or not, inundates us with waves of stimulation. Thus bright colors

and loud rhythmic noises can each be highly arousing, and both are deliberately made use of'. One concrete example of this kind of stimuli Apter (1992: 89) mentions is the motorbike.

Motorcycles allow the human body to move with greater speed than it would without the assistance of the machine: 'the exhilaration comes not only from the intensity of the sensation, and the risks involved, but also from the feeling that one is doing something which is, as it were, physically impossible' (Apter 1992: 97). Also Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 97) speaks of 'the joy of surpassing the limits of the body'. This, combined with the self sufficiency of motorcycling, produces an ideal machinery to overcome the limitations cast by both the physical body and modern society:

Not only do we enjoy overcoming such inherent biological limitations of movement in vertical and horizontal space, but also our unaided limitations of contact with people and things which are far away from us. (Apter 1992: 97)

It is the sense of adventure and liberation of daily routines that the modern reader of heroic quests is looking for: "One day I'll jack it all in and fuck off on my bike,' slurs everyone at closing time" (Walsh 2009: 3).

As we have seen, danger and overcoming death are in the ideological core of motorcycle travel literature's narration. This aspect is related, on the other hand, to modern society's cushioned way of life and, and on the other, its quest for adventure. The literary mode in question responds to the ideological needs of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as did the medieval chivalric romance when the structures of the Western world were crumbling down and new patterns of life started to emerge.

Next the thesis will step to analyse in more detail how the formulaic structure of motorcycle travel literature manifests itself. This is done by dividing the narration in three parts: the departure, the journey and its obstacles, and the return of the hero.

4.2 THE DEPARTURE

A typical formulaic feature in motorcycle travel literature is to begin the narration with a description of departure. The decision for the journey might have been born on the spur of the moment, as in Fulton's (1996: 13) *The One Man Caravan* or Carter's (2009: 11) *Uneasy Rider*, or, it might have been a long contemplated dream, as for the protagonist in *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You*.

In this chapter, and chapters 4.3 and 4.4, the thesis will show how the formula of motorcycle travel literature manifests itself in the beginning (i.e. the departure) of the book, during the journey, and then, in the ending (i.e. the return of the hero). I shall take examples mainly from Robert Fulton Edison Jr's *One Man Caravan* first published in 1937, Ted Simon's *Jupiter's Travels* first published in 1979, and Dan Walsh's *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You* first published in 2008 to illustrate how the basic underlying formula has not changed during the hundred years of motorcycle travel writing.

In *One Man Caravan*, Fulton Jr's (1996: 13) protagonist begins the narration describing the circumstances where his decision of the journey took place: 'The unheeding tongue may lead to tortuous trails!' he exclaims in the beginning of the first chapter. He then continues narrating how his announcement to ride from London to New York on a motorbike took place and what kind of affect it had on him: 'Who was the more startled, the seven persons around me or myself, I really

can't say' (ibid. 14). But there it was, an oath had been given, and the journey must be done: 'And thus, within a few weeks, I found myself sitting astride two wheels, humming down the Dover road headed for what one of the motor-works heads had dubbed "a two-cylinder Odyssey"' (ibid. 14).

Ted Simon's *Jupiter's Travels* begins with a few pages long prologue titled "Jupiter" which offers a short glimpse from India, where he was given the epithet 'Jupiter'. After this flashback, the book – and the journey – officially starts: 'Officially the journey began at 6 p.m. on Saturday the sixth of October 1973. The announcement was to appear the following morning in the *Sunday Times*' (1980: 17). It is made clear that this is a journey made by a protagonist who believes in omens and fate as the route he has been planning for over six months has now suddenly turned into a war zone with the Yom Kippur War, strikes, assassinations and so forth: 'you can get the feeling that you are engaged in a trial of strength with the universe' (ibid. 17). But the promise was made and the journey had to begin: 'I stood alone in the gutter with my laden Triumph in the black and rainy night, fumbling with my parcels and wondering where to pack them' (ibid. 18).

Dan Walsh's narration of the journey begins with an introduction titled "This is a Manifesto, not a Mid Life Crisis." The protagonist describes the circumstances which led him to travel across continents with a motorbike: 'I've never really needed any contrived "first, fastest, daftest" reason to travel. Oddly, it's what I do for living – ride bikes, travel, write about it' (2009: 1). As for example Simon's and Carter's narrators, also Walsh's protagonist is a journalist. His hero is a classic hero advocating for freedom: 'Could anyone do it? Anyone who's prepared to lose control to gain freedom...Lose control, use patience and groove on the temporary nature of all things.' (ibid. 5).

Walsh's *Manifesto* shows the writer's position inside the genre of motorcycle travel literature. Firstly, the 'Manifesto' demonstrates how his book is not to be considered as a representative of the middle aged men written escapist narrations such as Mike Carter's *The Uneasy Rider: Travels Through a Mid-Life Crisis* whereas Walsh states 'This is a Manifesto, not a Mid Life Crisis'. Secondly, the narrator wishes to separate his journey from some of the earlier, more adventurous motorcycle travel books such as Fulton Jr's: 'The point is we weren't steely-eyed professional adventurers, just ordinary men and women taking a chance to do something extraordinary', says Dan Walsh's (2009: 26) narrator about crossing the Sahara desert. Also, the protagonist makes clear how badly he has prepared himself for the crossing: against the advice of adventure guidebooks, he has only taken with him 'a bottle of coke, a packet of biscuits and an orange', and no tent (ibid. 19). This also separates Walsh's narrator from the tradition of motorcycle travel writing in general where the narrators typically contemplate all the possible situations one might encounter during the journey and then pack accordingly.

All the samples above demonstrate the formula of a heroic departure in that the departure assumes a return (Leed 1991: 27): not necessarily a return to the same spot where the journey started, but, nevertheless, a return home, as in Fulton Jr's book where the protagonist rides from his temporary home London to his native home New York. Simon's journey is a classic departure-return, heroic, round the world trip, whereas Walsh's protagonist decides to stay abroad – but this is not stated until towards the end of the book, and also his narration starts with the assumption of a return.

'The circular form of the heroic journey is implicit in its purpose – the geographical and temporal extension of identity'. These journeys assume a public to

witness the heroes' fame and they are undertaken voluntarily. This element of freedom, or choice, is particularly relevant in the medieval tradition of chivalry, states Leed (1991: 27).

This circular form of the journey is adapted from the ancient travels to the modern time tourism and adventure travels. If the hero's departure is forced, his journey is a non-heroic Leed (1991: 27) continues, which is never the case in motorcycle travel literature. As in the medieval tradition of chivalry, also the journeys in motorcycle travel literature work their ways towards a return, the journeys are taken voluntarily, and, as the stories are written down, a public must have been assumed to witness the heroes' fame. Also, it is very typical that in the beginning of the book the hero makes an oath: often this is a promise to him/herself that the journey is going to be a once in a lifetime opportunity that must be completed, or sometimes the oath can be given to a second party, such as a work colleague.

In relation with the departure a distinct formulaic feature are the lists of equipment needed for the journey. The book can start with a separate summary in the beginning of the book, as Lady Warren's *Through Algeria*, or the list can be embedded in the narration when describing the procedures preceding the journey, as for example in Shepherd (2009: 474), Fulton Jr (1996: 19), or Simon (1980: 18–19), from whom the following citation is:

The major departments were Food, Clothing, Bed, Tools, First Aid, Documents, Cameras and Fuel. The Kitchen was pretty much established in one of the side boxes. [...] The Wardrobe was in the Bedroom, and that was in a red nylon rucksack which lay across the bike behind my saddle. [...] Behind the rucksack was a fiberglass box. This was Casualty and Photographic.

The list of equipment is a well-established feature in the tradition of motorcycle travel writing and can also be used to distinguish oneself from the tradition, as Walsh's (2009: 333) narrator in *These Are the Days that must Happen to You* does:

I've ridden this bike from Toronto to Buenos Aires, with no GPS, no maps, no internet packing lists. No camping gear, no spares, no puncture repair. One contact lens, no insurance, no license.

4.3 THE OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD

After deciding on the route, acquiring the documents needed, and getting everything in order, the hero sets for the journey.

From Fulton Jr, Simon and Walsh, Fulton Jr's journey is the most goal-orientated and performed within a time frame, whereas Simon's protagonist is a spiritual wanderer who gets side tracked, makes philosophical notions and travels in leisure. The journey lasts for four years, and even then is not actually completed: Ted Simon has published two more books of his round the world trip. First *Riding High* in 1998 and nine years later *Dreaming of Jupiter*. In the latter the narrator travels the same journey as in *Jupiter's Travels*, only thirty years later, and the former consists the untold tales excluded from *Jupiter's Travels*. Walsh's protagonist is an example of an existential anti-hero who aimlessly drifts in southern America bumming around and occasionally drinking himself to oblivion.

What it comes to the physical journey, a typical feature in the genre are the maps indicating the routes travelled. Maps covering the whole journey can be found in the beginning of the book, as in e.g. Lady Warren 1922, C. K. Shepherd 1922, Ted Simon 2007, Ted Bishop 2005 and Jonny Bealby 1995, or, a map can be found in

the beginning of each chapter, or within relevant chapters, as in Theresa Wallach 2001, Fulton Jr 1937, and Ted Simon 1980. Walsh's book includes maps as well but rather as a stylistic feature than for information. It is typical in motorcycle travel literature that maps of are provided for the reader, although, for example, Mike Carter's *Uneasy Rider* does not include maps at all.

As already stated in relation with the earliest motorcycles, which looked like 'instruments of torture', also the word 'travel' has its perilous connotations. In fact, the word 'peril' derives from an Indo-European root *per* via 'experience': a word reconstructed from living and dead languages and which means 'to try' or 'to risk'. The secondary connotations of *per* refer to motion: to crossing space, reaching a goal or going out. The perilous connotations of *per* are also implicit in its Gothic cognates, where *p* becomes *f*, and we have for example, *fear* and *ferry* (Leed 1991: 5).

The German word for experience, *Erfahrung*, comes from the Old High German form *infaran*, which means 'to travel', 'to go out', or 'to wander'. The assumption of travel as a refiner of the character, a perilous test for the traveller's personality and strength, is apparent also in the German adjective *bewandert*, which nowadays means 'skilled' or 'clever', but which originally meant simply 'well travelled' (Leed 1991: 5-6).

If not torture, the journey in motorcycle travel literature is not a leisurely affair, but full of obstacles: it is a part of motorcycle travel literature's formula to have certain amount of accidents and difficulties on the road. Naturally, since all the narrators ride in the same world, the same obstacles, such as Sahara desert, will appear, but it is interesting to see how from the earliest examples to the recent years the threats on the road are narrated quite similarly.

Two of these main obstacles will be presented in this chapter, namely, crossing borders and crossing Sahara. ‘What new monster must I wrestle with today?’ asks Ted Simon’s protagonist in *Jupiter’s Travels* (1980: 107).

Passports were already in use in the beginning of the twentieth century and various types of insurances and paper work was needed before the journey could start. For some protagonists the first obstacle before setting for the journey is the driving test: ‘I failed my first driving test and thought I might just as easily fail the second’ (Simon 1980: 22), and then, when the paperwork is in order, there always lies the threat of losing it: ‘The wallet contained driving licenses, vaccination certificates [...] how far could I get without a driving license?’ (ibid. 65).

After acquiring the driver’s license, the next step is to deal with the paperwork which must be at hand at every border:

So we hied us to London Town and got passports, to the A.A., for the Triptyches, by which you can guarantee the duty of your car or cycle in each country you take it to without actually having to put the money down and the ensuing correspondence. (2009: 307)

When there are difficulties in crossing a border, and there always is at some point, the customs officers tend to be depicted with a rather derogatory vocabulary and the whole scene is conveyed farcical. For example, in *Lady Warren* a customs officer in France is portrayed as a ‘somewhat portly gentleman in blue’ who is ‘firmly squeezed into the side-car’ and then shakes ‘like a jelly’ (ibid. 308). Or, as in *Fulton Jr* (1996: 22-25), the whole situation is rendered comical:

Material for an A-No. 1 nightmare, which I defy anyone to top, is the problem of explaining in a language you don't know, to an official who doesn't want to understand, that you are not a Communist. [...] In short, I was marooned in a no-man's land between the Bulgars and the Yugoslavs, the machine being permitted to proceed in one direction and I in the other...but no two in the same.

Walsh (2009: 92) uses the strangeness of foreign languages to create a comical situation at a road check in Mozambique: "Jabber jabber," says the grim-faced cop, stabbing at me with his trigger finger. Passport? "Jabber jabber?". In Bealby (2004: 91) a stressful situation in a customs office in the deepest Africa is narrated as following:

Watching the soldier's face contorted with concentration, it dawned on me that he was probably barely literate. He pondered over each visa and stamp, at one stage checking that he had the passport the right way up.

The quotes above would perhaps offer an interesting post-colonial point of view on motorcycle travel literature but, for now, I only wish to ponder upon the question why the somewhat sophisticated modern time knights use such a derogatory language and images to describe the proceedings in customs offices.

The explanation this thesis offers is that without borders and customs' offices the hero could proceed around the world on his or her motorcycle quite freely. Natural disasters or wars would not keep them from driving forward – even if they would cause the riders to use an alternative route to reach their goal. The only thing – apart from death which always happens to 'a friend of a friend' and thus is not a real threat – which could possibly impede their proceedings to foreign countries are borders with customs. This creates a tension between the heroes and their arch

enemies, the officers in blue, and one way to deal with the difficulty of the situation is to handle it with comical language to not to lose one's face when, actually, the hero's destiny is in the hands of a stranger. This is how Ted Simon's (1980: 198) protagonist describes the futile proceedings in a Brazilian harbour after arriving there from Africa:

It seemed pointless to object to frontier officials wasting one's time, since they are perfectly placed to waste as much of it as they wish. One just tried to make sure that patience was not seen as servility, a fine distinction.

The protagonist reflects why he becomes so 'cold and defensive' at borders and thinks that maybe it is because 'the idea of going round the world meant nothing to these men [...] I expected people to look at me and know that I was genuine' (ibid. 199).

It is this officials' identity defying attitude that disturbs the heroes' image of themselves as genuine individuals free to travel wherever their front wheel is pointing at. And if this freedom is at stake, one way to fight it is to belittle the imposing threat with a comical and derogatory language and attitude as shown above.

Another kind of obstacle, a force of nature, is crossing a desert. Apart from the European tours there normally exists a desert crossing of kind in motorcycle travel books. In fact, crossing a desert is some kind of a Holy Grail to the adventure oriented travellers. As Fulton Jr's (1996: 69) protagonist states: 'the desert had a strange lure; seeming to draw one like a lodestone – drawing men instead of metal,' before he starts crossing the Syrian Desert between Damascus and Baghdad.

Whereas a customs officer imposes a human threat to the traveller, and is often belittled in the narration, the desert as a force of nature is glorified. This in turn renders the crossing even a more heroic feature. The narrator in *Running with the Moon* writes:

Whether it be sandstorm, torrential rain, fierce wind or even a swarm of locusts, indeed anything God, nature or the devil can throw at you, you must take it. There is nowhere to hide. But when the challenge is over and you have succeeded, the feeling of satisfaction is unbeatable. (Bealby 2004: 37)

For the earlier motorcycle travellers there were barely any marked routes to get across the Sahara desert; at times there were only rocks here and there to indicate the way. The riders must have kept on this route not to get lost. When they reached an oasis in French colonial Sahara they had to report to the Captain. This was a pact in the Breakdown Contract, which ensured that if a traveller was stuck somewhere between the oases they could be found by the breakdown patrol, writes Wallach's (2011: 31) narrator in *The Rugged Road*. But if the traveller had lost their way, there would be no help. For the later motorcyclists it is more typical to get attached to a convoy and cross the desert in a group, as for example Walsh's (2009: 17) narrator does:

Heading south overland from Morocco involves joining the convoy from Dakhla, a dusty administrative town three days' ride south of the beach resorts of Agadir. The convoy leaves every Tuesday and Friday, and you have to register a day in advance. The registration is a potential nightmare, involving extended exposure to the worst of all possible human combinations, the uniformed bureaucrat.

Here two of the motorcycling hero's nightmares are combined: the 'uniformed bureaucrat' and the force of nature, the desert. 'There are no gentle introductions to the desert – all of a sudden, it's just there, you're in it, and you'd better deal with it,' Walsh's (2009: 23) protagonist begins his narration of the proper desert. But because of these difficulties, the satisfaction when overcoming the obstacle is even more intense:

Forget everything else I've ever done, from riding a Harley through Vegas to blasting Busa down the autobahns, this was the reason I learned to ride a bike. A real right-here-right-now moment. (ibid. 26)

Sometimes the customs officer turns the traveller away and he or she has to come up with an alternative route. But the desert is always an obstacle the hero wants to battle: it is an internal aspect of the journey requiring both mental and physical strength extraordinary in everyday life. But even if Africa is crossed without needing to drive across the width of Sahara, there lies different obstacles, such as rain forests with muddy roads and no petrol, or, flooding rivers (see e.g. Bealby: 124–125). But the hero always makes it, wins the obstacles, and comes out on the other side after successfully wrestling every monster the route had to offer.

Fulton Jr's (1996: 68) journey did not go through Sahara but 'six hundred miles of Syrian Desert'. The protagonist's adventure across the desert also offers an example of the infusion of the mind and the machine, which is the topic in chapter seven. But here the example illustrates the hardships deserts offer and how the heroes are prepared for them: 'Physically I was in good shape. So was the machine. But mentally – that was another story' (ibid. 68). The protagonist starts to notice skeletons and wrecks on his route and becomes distressed. He contemplates on the

vastness of the desert and the smallness of the bike and himself, and eventually his thoughts begin to get tangled with the machine and its performance:

As the day wore on the sound became more alarming. When I started that morning, the steady drone of the exhaust had been deep and chesty. But now, after half-a-dozen hours of desert driving, it seemed to fill with static, the machine began to wobble, the tires seemed flat, the whole engine seemed on the verge of falling apart, collapsing.

It wasn't the machine, it was nerves; strung tight, pulled tighter by the constant thought "what would happen if something happened?" (ibid. 85)

Wrestling with the obstacles is a test of the protagonists' mental and physical strength, as was already discussed in chapter 4.1 where Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theories of the flow state were presented. But this test can also be seen in a more social context: the desert functions as the opposite of modern civilisation's comforts and rules. And if the riders can conquer the desert, they become more aware of their value as free individuals who can survive outside the civilisation's artificial and arbitrary norm structures. This becomes apparent in, for example, Wallach's (2011: 36) *Rugged Road* when the narrator hears the Big Ben on a radio on New Year's Eve in Sahara:

The chimes of 'Big Ben' – the knell of the time-honoured London clock, struck a contrast between there and here, bringing home to me something more clearly than the period of time. In my mind I could picture the crowds, culture, cuisine, concrete and folk in their hum-drum jobs at home, secure in a challenging world, at a time in my life when the standard set for women were regulated by those who themselves did not live by them. I would rather grapple with the sands of Sahara than the sands of contemporary society.

4.4 THE HERO'S RETURN AS THE MASTER OF TWO WORLDS

So here I am, still looking for an explanation, acting out those childhood stories which, perhaps, were always the most satisfying after all; making myself the hero of my own myth? (Simon 1980: 99)

According to Aristotle, the natural beginning for a story is the birth of the protagonist. This idea is transmittable to travel literature where the act of leaving, or the beginning of the journey, can be conveyed as the protagonist's birth. And as the departure is the natural beginning in motorcycle travel literature, the return is its natural end: the protagonists finally reach a point where they cannot go any further, or, they return home and the narration comes to its end.

D.A. Miller discusses endings in novel in his article 'Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel' in *Narrative and Its Discontents*. Miller (1989: 272) states that in general 'traditional narrative is a quest after that which will end questing'. He then continues that typical ending, alongside with marriage, death and such, is the end of a quest (ibid. 272). This end of a quest is also a very typical, or formulaic, feature in motorcycle travel literature.

But whereas the earliest examples of the genre are quite adventure/goal-orientated narratives, the last fifty or so decades of motorcycle travel writing have been more self-reflective. The journey's goal is not anymore to be the first or the fastest but to discover something profound of the world and from within oneself: the quest has become a journey to self-discovery. And even though the hero may be left without definite answers he or she was looking for, a sense of fulfillment is achieved at the end of the journey. This is how Ted Simon's (1980: 436) protagonist writes about the journey and the reasons for it:

‘What are you doing this long journey for?’ the teacher asked me.

‘To find out,’ I answered, weary of my long-winded explanations.

‘But what is it you wish to find out?’ he persisted

‘Why I am doing it.’

It was a frivolous reply, but I was so free and easy about it then, with most of it still ahead of me.

Now, running for home across this bleak land, I had to face the same question.

Did I find out, after all, why I was doing it?

It seemed to me that there were times during those four years when I did know, and those were the times when the journey needed no justification.

Also Walsh’s narrator has been in a search for an inner enlightenment. Nevertheless, in the final paragraphs of the book it becomes clear to him that the one thing he is trying to leave behind is always going to be with him: ‘What am I running from this time? Easy. Same as always. The one thing I can never leave behind’ (2009: 358). The traveller always carries himself with him.

After spending a great amount of time bound – emotionally and physically – to the machine, there normally exists close ties between the traveller and the machine. The sentimentality over the motorbike, which is normally expressed towards the end of the journey, is one the genre’s formulaic features. For example, the narrator in *Life is a Road, Soul is a Motorbike* expresses the sentiment with a characteristic vocabulary:

I ride other machines, I become “The Dragon”. Smooth, fast, and powerful, with a mystique all her own, she both carries me and becomes a part of me. An expansion of my awareness. An extension of my blood, bone, and muscle. [...] The machine [...] become[s] a part of myself. (Meyer 2003: 67)

As the analysis in chapter seven will show, describing the machine as an expansion of oneself is a typical feature in the genre. Another typical feature in the end of the narration is to express a wish that maybe one day the protagonists will be reunited with the machine, with new adventures ahead of them, as in Fulton Jr (1996: 347): ‘The trip ‘round-the-world was not yet finished for the motorcycle...nor for me...’. Even Lady Warren’s protagonist, who was reluctant to travel with a ‘motor-bicycle’ when the idea was first introduced, gets sentimental over the vehicle which she has named the “bus”. And when the journey is over, this is what she writes:

wonderful to relate, renewed and rejuvenated, the whole “bus” is to all intents and purposes as it was before the start, waiting, and vainly I fear, for us to do it again in some other country. (2009: 448)

Simon’s Triumph 500-cc model T100-P ends up in a museum in Coventry and, sentimentally, ‘remains unwashed since Istanbul. Someday soon I plan to visit it’ (1980: 447). Also Fulton Jr’s narrator gets emotional and leaves his journey open-ended: he even imagines the bike having a will of its own as it starts leaning towards a ship when the protagonist takes it for one last ride to the harbour:

But my trip was all over. All finished. This was just a little jaunt where there would be traffic lights and gasoline fumes and crowds on the highways.

At her dock lay *Queen Mary*. Was it my imagination or did the front wheel twist toward the boat? It couldn’t be the bent forks acting up at this late date. No, the motorcycle was tugging at me. It wanted to ride abroad the *Queen Mary*, cross the

Atlantic to London and its home. Suddenly it all became clear to me. The trip 'round the world was not yet finished for the motorcycle...nor for me. (1996: 347)

The geographical endings in motorcycle travel books are typically closed: the point on the map is reached, and nothing much, if anything at all, is narrated about the way home. For the earliest examples of the genre it is typical that the journey begins from point A and ends at a definite, premeditated point B. For example, this is how Theresa Wallach (2011: 137-138) describes her and her travelling companion's arrival at the end of their road in *The Rugged Road*:

At long last, almost eight months since leaving London, the thrilling sight of the flat-topped Table Mountain, (3,570ft) the land mark of Cape Town, came into view. An Atlantic breeze blew over the travel stained and somewhat battered motorcycle which slowly made its way to the southern-most end of the continent [...].

Our safe and happy arrival in Cape Town was the end of a marvelous exploit and we had the satisfaction to know it was the first north-south crossing of the African continent...Our journey was at end. It was Monday 29th July, 1935.

The protagonist in the citation above never mentions anything of the journey back home and does not show any sentimentality over the machine. There has been an adventure-minded, goal-oriented drive from one point to another; to be the first ones to accomplish something which now is done.

An example of a very different sort of ending should be dealt separately. In *The Adventures of a Dispatch Rider* the journey has not been a well-planned movement from one point to another but rather a series of erratic dashes between the British army's various posts in the First World War. The end of the book does not coincide with an end of a quest or reaching a goal, such as winning the war, and neither does

it end after reaching a certain locale on a map. The journey ends because ‘dispatch-riding had lost its savour. We had become postmen’ (2009: 293). The sense of adventure, or the sense that the protagonist has returned to the everyday life, is gone and this brings a ‘natural’ ending for the book.

For the formula of the genre in general, it is a typical feature to convey the journey as an adventure, a once in a life-time trip. If the feeling of un-completeness haunts the narrator, it manifests itself in the narration – as was shown in the quotation from *One Man Caravan* above. Even Boorman’s (2007: 294) protagonist, after experiencing what must have been a painful injury, is left wondering that maybe one day he will participate in the Dakar rally again: ‘...there was something – I didn’t quite know what – that made us want to do it all again’. Also Simon’s (1980: 447) protagonist in *Jupiter’s Travels* is left dreaming:

Meanwhile I dream a lot. Often I dream of riding over the hard red floor of a great forest, beneath a high canopy of translucent green, spreading on and on. An enchanted forest, perhaps, where men still sometimes play at being gods.

Bealby’s (2004: 334) narrator finishes the account of the journey with a similar vocabulary:

‘Farewell to Shadowlands...the term is over; the holidays have begun.’ Fairytale be damned, I thought, if anyone’s going to write the ending to my story it’s going to be me. But then again, it’s probably already been written...Insh’ Allah.

This psychological open-endedness is quite a common feature even in the earliest examples of the genre. Wallach’s matter-of-fact statement of a definite ending is a rare example: ‘Our journey was at an end. It was Monday 29th July, 1935’ (2011:

138). The end of the journey is the end of the book, but the dreams of similar journeys in future are still often kept alive: 'I'm still not ready to give up the Road,' states Walsh's (2009: 364) narrator after deciding that after six years of riding it is not yet the time to stop:

Travel isn't about the told-tales, it's teleological, an end in itself. Good travel exists in those 'right here, right now' toasts on those best of all possible days, and never in the after-party anecdotes. Next time I won't make the same mistake. Next time I won't come home. (ibid. 114)

5 ROMANCE TRADITION AND MOTORCYCLE TRAVEL LITERATURE

Romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest. (Frye 1976: 15)

I'd be free, free to go where I liked, when I liked, self-sufficient on my iron horse, travelling on a wing and prayer. *Romantic fool!* (Bealby 2006: 19)

The literary term romance is not easily explained. For example, Heidi Hansson writes about the difficulties in determining romance's denotations. Hansson (1998: 11-12) notes that the word romance is used for both literary form and literary quality and that 'romance is indeed one of the most enduring popular forms in literature'. From the times of the ancient Greeks, the romance was highly valued during the Middle Ages, it was later deployed by such writers as William Shakespeare and has developed through 'gothic and the historical romance in the

eighteenth and twentieth centuries and has become one of the staples of twentieth-century pulp literature.’ But, as Hansson states, one of its characteristic features has throughout the ages been its concern with adventure. And apart from the formation of romantic relationships, romance’s key motif has been the course of a quest (ibid. 11-12).

My aim to connect the twentieth and twenty-first century motorcycle travel literature to the chivalric romance tradition is similar to Heidi Hansson’s study in *Romance Revived* where she surveys the relationship between postmodern and medieval romance. My use of the term ‘chivalric romance’ follows Hansson’s (1998: 68) definition of it ‘as a shorthand for the kinds of romance produced or written down by writers like Chrétien de Troyes, Geoffrey Chaucer, Sir Thomas Malory [...] between the twelfth century and the Elizabethan age’.

For the purposes of the thesis at hand, it is important to see the romance tradition as an ongoing process in Western literature. Although Hansson concentrates on the fictitious side of romance tradition, this thesis considers it applicable to autobiographical motorcycle travel writing as well since it emphasises the romantic traits, such as adventure and a hero figure, of the genre.

Before being understood as a genre of literature, the word ‘romanz’ was used to distinguish the vernacular from the classical Latin and then the secular Latin from learned Latin. It was a widely and loosely used term and it has its origins in ancient Greece (Barron 1987: 2). B. P. Freardon starts in *The Form of Greek Romance*, with an analysis of the *Odyssey*, an early example of both romance and travel literature. Freardon (1991: 15) sees romance’s nature ‘essentially imaginative, and narrative in mode [...]. Whatever the claims to truthfulness of romance [...] it is not *qua* true account that it attracts, but *qua* interesting account’. This point of view is

transferrable to motorcycle travel literature: it is not the dull hours sitting on the motorbike that are dwelled upon in the genre (i.e. the ‘true account’), but the accidents, adventures and meetings with strangers (i.e. the ‘interesting account’) that are in focus. This aspect is also related to the ‘and then structure’ which will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

Freardon continues his analysis of Greek romance by cataloguing some elements which are prominent for the literary type. These are, namely, the story of adventure, the resourceful hero, and the plot. The plot essentially means ‘a task to be carried out’. This, according to Freardon (1991: 15-16), for example Frye identifies as ‘the motor of romance’ and is included in Cawelti’s (1977) description of adventure formula as well, as shown in the previous chapter.

There are two levels in romance. Firstly, the surface level, which includes tests of the hero’s powers, a variety of experiences offered to the hero and, finally, the achievements which are symbolized by fantastic objects (Barron 1987: 4). In one of the poems written by Chrétien de Troyes, who wrote five poems between 1170 and 1190 (ibid. 31), the hero leaves Arthur’s court, which represents the conventional society, and enters another world, the world of adventures and tests (ibid. 38). This surface level of tests and adventures taking place outside the hero’s everyday life manifests itself in motorcycle travel literature as the obstacles on the hero’s journey presented in chapter 4.3.

Roman courtoise reflected the monarchy’s interests: feudalism was in decline and the landless knights were the lowest of the feudal orders and a threat to the status quo (Barron 1987: 39-40). The heroes’ position in today’s motorcycle travel literature can be seen quite the same as that of the wandering knights’ in the early days of the first millennium. In fact, the reasons to wander may be quite the same

for the heroes of chivalric romance and for the heroes of today's motorcycle travel books, as the landless knights were forced 'to seek their fortunes as knights errant' because of the domestic conflicts (ibid. 39). For the modern knights these conflicts are more internal than they were to the medieval counterparts: whereas the knights on horsebacks sought an outer reward, such as status or a lady's love, the modern knights on two-wheeled iron horses seek – apart from a lady's love – an inner reward, or a sense of meaning in the world in general, or in their private lives.

At home both types of knights feel an urge to make the journey. In motorcycle travel literature this urge is not rationally explained by alluding to any material reward, or, a 'fantastic object', but is rather seen either as an adventure (e.g. Fulton Jr 1996) or as a search for wisdom (e.g. Simon 1980). But the goal for both types of knights is the same: to find his or her way in a world which seems to get more and more chaotic (in medieval times) or restrictive (in modern times) around them. As discussed in relation with speed, danger and death in chapter 4.1, this is closely connected to the modern knights' willingness to test their courage and strength outside the norms and restrictions of Western societies.

As Simon's (1980: 436) protagonist in *Jupiter's Travels* ponders upon the question what his trip was about, so did a wandering knight thousand years earlier:

'What are you doing this long journey for?' the teacher asked me.

'To find out,' I answered, weary of my long-winded explanations.

'But what is it you wish to find out?' he persisted.

'Why I am doing it.'

I am a knight-errant who sets out each day in search of adventures and the sense of this world; but I can find neither (*Prose Tristan*, cited in Barber 1995: 127; trans. Renée Curtis, Oxford 1995)

Both medieval and modern knights are, so to speak, lost in the world: they want to make some sense of it even though it is not clear what exactly they are after. This search often takes the form of an adventure: the heroes face obstacles which in turn, after they have been overcome, might reveal something of the knights' inner strength and value as individuals. In a way, motorcycle travel literature enacts on the basis of the ancient belief that making a physical journey is also a journey to self-discovery. The routine existence at home has not offered the heroes of motorcycle travel literature many challenges and what they now seek are obstacles to overcome. These tests enable them to evaluate their inner strength and value as individuals capable of taking care of themselves outside the society's caring, but always controlling, eye: pushing their inner and outer strength to their limits brings them closer to self-discovery and a sense of meaningfulness. Also, an interesting feature is that this testing of one's boundaries never takes its place in a city – although a chaotic Indian traffic would supposedly offer characteristic obstacles of its own – which can be seen as an epitome of civilization. The tests are always carried out in, for example, vast landscapes (the Pan America in Walsh for example), mountain region (e.g. Lady Warren) or Sahara desert (e.g. Wallach): that is, out of the society's reach.

As already implicated, the protagonists in motorcycle travel literature are well aware of their predecessors of heroic travels and travel writing in general. Similarly, it is typical for the genre to have an intertextual relationship with the romance tradition. For example, Bealby's (2004: 28) narrator in *Running with the Moon*

compares himself to Sir Lancelot: ‘It was easy to over-romanticise the link between the journey and my grief – like Sir Lancelot, carrying my pain with my primus...’ Also the following citation shows how some of the romance tradition’s typical images of ‘a beautiful princess’ and ‘a fire-breathing dragon’ are made use of in motorcycle travel literature:

Fighting our way down those pot-holed streets, it occurred to me that this whole journey would be like a real life video game. How many lives we would have, how many levels and phases there would be and whether a beautiful princess would be waiting at the end to be saved from the jaws of a fire-breathing dragon, only time could tell. (ibid. 11)

Apart from the surface level there is always another, deeper, level in romance: a view of the world in which a golden age would be re-gained if only men were more truthful to their ideas. This conviction of reality challenges the reader’s mind. But in order to meet and re-establish this challenge, romance needs to alter its form and nature: it always presents ‘...life as it is and as it might be’ (Barron 1987: 4-6).

This deeper level of ideals manifests itself in motorcycle travel literature as a sort of kinship between the riders who form a brotherhood of their own. Although an individualistic way to travel, the help they provide to fellow motorcyclists, or in some cases fellow travellers in general, is something communal. Even Simon’s protagonist travels with a companion in South-America but always ready to take a different road if the ethos of the journey demands for it.

In the medieval romance and modern motorcycle travel literature alike, the heroes on horsebacks, whether two wheeled or four legged, are an embodiment of a resourceful polytropos and gallantry. Also, both groups are separated from the rest

of the world – the world that is less idealistic – because of their quest for adventure and the choice of vehicle. This separation is further enhanced by the equipment that goes with the vehicle: for the medieval knights, this equipment was their harnesses, and for the modern day motorcyclist it is the protective clothing and helmets.

Both types of heroes are also possessed with a particular mind-set which is adventurous and goal-orientated at the same time: they are determined to succeed in their quest. This determination is occasionally challenged by the obstacles on the road and, when the obstacles have been successfully wrestled with, the rider achieves a momentum (a state where everything – that is the mind, the body and the machine – works in harmony in order to achieve the set goal) or flow state, which gives them an empowering feeling and outlook of the world.

When positioning motorcycle travel literature in the continuum of romance tradition, it is crucial to notice that the common form of romance is, as Frye (1976: 186) states, the quest story, and continues that romance always has something nomadic in it. Also Barron (1987: 5) points out how romance's underlying structure is always the quest, whether on a horseback or with a space ship.

A. R. Hope Moncrieff (1994: 6) analyses chivalric romance's typical features in *Romance & Legend of Chivalry* where he states that the 'characters, plots and the machinery of these plots show little variety'. He continues that the hero, or 'bold knight errant [...] gets off scot free [...] our hero roams the world doing what he pleases, utterly released from the care of ordinary prosaic existence, and without any visible means of support' (ibid. 6-7). All these aspects – the courage, the obstacles and acting outside the norms of everyday life – are already dealt in the thesis and Moncrieff analysis here only further validates the similarities between the

two types of romance literature; the chivalric romance and motorcycle travel literature.

Although the romance story in its chivalric mode has lost its general appeal among the reading public, motorcycle travel literature can be seen as the latest development of this tradition of lonesome riders. As already stated in chapter four, according to Cawelti (1977: 6) every genre, or formula, ‘must be embodied in figures, settings, and situations that have appropriate meanings in the culture which produces them’. Thus the adventure story must have its hero: a character that the culture of its time can conceive in heroic terms (ibid. 6). Also Moncrieff (1994: 13) states that the romances of chivalry ‘may be compared with our own boys’ books, glorifying virtues that are especially dear to a robust age...’ and that there ‘is the bold honest lad he would himself willingly be, who goes through hazards without turning a hair’. This ‘lad’ for the twentieth and twenty first centuries is the motorcycle traveller. Walsh’s (2009) narrator warns the reader of this aspect in his disclaimer with similar vocabulary:

These words were written [...] by a younger version of me fighting deadline dread, and writing for beer and food. So some of them aren’t very good. [...] The opening’s especially weak – clunky, naïve, and laddy.

Northrop Frye (1976: 15) states in *The Secular Scripture* that ‘romance is the structural core of all fiction’, and more than any other literature, the romance brings us closer to the sense of fiction; ‘man’s vision of his own life as a quest’. Percy G. Adams (1983: 149) sees this position slightly problematic although he does not refuse it altogether. Adams states that Frye and his followers, when stating that

romance tradition underlies all fiction, are actually only replacing 'the old novel-myth with a romance-myth'. He continues:

Whether or not the attempt is successful, the journey structure is so important that a great mass of long fiction often called "Romance" is marvelously like the form of the *récit de voyage*. (ibid. 149)

Adams (ibid. 150) presents for example Kathryn Hume as one of the scholars who writes about the journey plot of "Romance". Hume lists three stages which are typical to romance and as already shown in chapter four, they are also applicable to motorcycle travel literature. The stages are: first, 'the Hero's Departure', second, 'the Initiation', and, third, 'the Return of the Hero as the Master of Two Worlds' (Adams 1983: 150). The first and the third categories are straightforwardly dealt already and the second, 'the Initiation', was dealt in relation with the obstacles on the road, i.e. the initiation of the motorcycle traveller into the world of motorcycle travel in its best and its worst.

Apart from the theme of quest, another aspect both romance and motorcycle travel books share is the binary opposition between heroes and villains. There exists moral polarizing and two levels of the world: the idyllic and the demonic, or night, world (Frye 1976: 50-52).

In motorcycle travel literature the hero is the protagonist and the villains are, for example, customs officers, bad roads, cars on the road, and forces of nature, such as flooding rivers and deserts. Normally the binary opposition between, for example, the customs officer and the traveller is emphasised via derogatory language, as shown in chapter 4.3. Also, as already discussed, the heroes separate themselves from the 'villains' and from everyday life with their choice of vehicle and the

equipment the vehicle requires: 'Without the bike, I'm just another tourist squid in just another tourist town,' states Dan Walsh's (2009: 260) protagonist in *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You*.

Another interesting aspect from the point of view of the thesis at hand is the theme of immortality, or, overcoming death, which is typical for both romance tradition and modern motorcycle travel literature. This aspect was already dealt in chapter 4.1 where Virilio's notions about danger and speed, Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow, and Apter's analysis of modern man's quest for excitement were in focus. Next the thesis will survey the theme of danger, or, immortality from the point of view of romance using Laura Ashe's ideas in her article 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Limits of Chivalry' in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*.

Ashe (2010: 162) studies the idea of heroic death and how the idea of it transformed in the Middle Ages when chivalry developed into an economic system which included 'both the symbolic capital of reputation, and the real cash held in ransoms, prizes and trophies.' This ethos of sparing a life had a strong impact on the idea of heroic death: instead of ruthlessness, chivalry started to courage a sense of brotherhood. And since there was not any symbolic capital to be gained from a death in battle anymore, the named knights in early Arthurian romances simply do not die (ibid. 162):

Thus the ideology of chivalry was not, at base, an ideology of bravery or heroism to the point of death. [...] In the Arthurian romance, the hero has nothing to defend but his own reputation, in a world structured for his success; his death cannot be anything but failure. (ibid. 163)

Ashe (2010: 163) concludes that ‘it is not possible to die for chivalry’, which is true for the motorcycling knights alike. The death of the hero would be the end of the journey, a non-heroic failure which does not occur in the genre. In chivalry, a death was ‘regarded by contemporaries as both tragedy and an embarrassment. And so the chivalric romance, chief literary exponent of this culture, simply does not depict the death of its protagonist,’ states Ashe (ibid. 164). As already shown, even bad injuries, not to mention deadly crashes, are rarely included in motorcycle travel narratives. One example of a severe crash can be found from Ted Bishop’s *Riding with Rilke*, cited in chapter 4.1. Otherwise, the person suffering from almost fatal or fatal injuries is always ‘a friend of a friend’, and typically the heroes encounter only multiple ‘close calls’ on the road.

In conclusion, binary opposition between the heroes and the villains, which is a common trend in romance tradition, is featured in motorcycle travel literature as an opposition between the stationary or touristy people and the active or independent motorcycle travellers. This is manifest in the binary oppositions between the hero and, for example, a customs officer or a force of nature, such as Sahara desert. On top of these examples, also a stationary lady can impose a threat to the hero’s progress. But this threat, in the tradition of romance literature, is ultimately overcome and the journey proceeds. The first quotation is from Ted Simon’s (1980: 334) *Jupiter’s Travels*, where the protagonist has decided to break up with a girl friend and carry on with his journey, and the second quotation is from Moncrieff’s (1994: 21) *Romance and Legend of Chivalry* :

As long as I did what I did wholeheartedly it could only go well, and if there was to be pain then that also must lead to better things. There would have to be pain. The journey had to be finished.

Fortunate in love as in war, one might think the hero had nothing to do but marry and live happy ever afterwards; but this is not the formula of this school of fiction. His appetite for adventures is by no means satiated; and he has a mysterious destiny still to accomplish.

Also, a typical feature for both chivalry and motorcycle travel literature is a strong sense of brotherhood and a state of mind, which prepares the heroes to overcome the challenges on their way. And, lastly, for the both genres a death of the hero is impossible.

As already stated, romance's structure is 'and then' structure: 'fast movement from scene to scene' (Frye 1976: 56). This is particularly the case in Walsh's *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You* where the paragraphs are very short and also have an empty space between them to emphasize the 'and then' structure, as for example one can note from the beginning of the first chapter, Morocco:

'I don't mean to take the piss,' chuckled Chris the Courier, lying through his gold teeth, 'but we've just been overtaken by a funeral procession. Again.'

Monday 4 December, stuck in a drizzly lay-by on the dismal A2, and D-Day is turning into dead-slow day. Or slower than dead-slow day, as that late fella in the stretched Austin Princess has just proved. Again.

Two forced stops in less than twenty miles. The first time because of fire [...]

And then, just as the acrid burning smell had finally cleared, I ran out of petrol.
(2009: 9)

This 'and then' structure contains highly ritualized action, which 'makes possible the technique of summarized narrative' (Frye 1976: 56), and also brings in mind Bakhtin's analysis of the 'suddenly' structure of Greek romance where the story is presented in series of short segments. This structure, which Bakhtin (1981: 91-92) also calls 'at just that moment structure' appears when something out of ordinary happens, when 'the normal, pragmatic and pre meditated course of events is interrupted'. This, also, helps to construct the 'interesting account' which Freardon (1991: 15) states to be a prominent element in romance.

The structure also draws into focus the fact that the narration in motorcycle travel literature is full of ellipses: the rider does not actually encounter a challenge after another, but rides hours or even weeks before any mishap or encounter worth mentioning takes place. But this routine and monotonous proceeding is typically left unmentioned in the narration: the protagonists state that they have ridden for hours in just few words but, on the other hand, crossing a deep puddle can be narrated for over several pages (see e.g. Bealby 2004: 124–125).

The 'suddenly' structure of the miraculous world where the hero's adventures are set becomes, according to Bakhtin (1981: 152), normalized in the chivalric romance and the whole world becomes miraculous in a way that miraculous becomes ordinary 'without ceasing to be miraculous at the same time': the whole world is transferred to 'suddenly', and even the unexpected becomes expected. This effect can be seen, for example, in *Jupiter's Travels*, where towards the end of his four-year-journey the protagonist states:

As I moved mechanically through the landscape, undeviating, incurious, hugging my last reserves of energy, I felt bereft and ignorant [...]. (Simon 1980: 436-437)

But later on, the miraculous aspect is brought into attention again with a chivalric vocabulary of enchanted forest:

Often I dream of riding over the hard red floor of a great forest, beneath a high canopy of translucent green, spreading on and on. An enchanted forest, perhaps, where men still sometimes play at being gods. (ibid. 447)

This tangle of miraculous and ordinary can be explained with the aid of Barber's (1995: 112) definition of knights: one of the knight's crucial features is that he has 'little duty to the everyday world'.

Thus, as the modern motorcycle riders plunge from one adventure to another, they are not duty-bound but act out of their own desires. The foreign landscapes and customs of the world are seen miraculous, the protagonists have a feeling they are doing something extraordinary and fulfilling their 'destiny', as Simon's protagonist expresses the situation in *Jupiter's Travels*. And this is what makes the action miraculous and ordinary at the same time: it is quite ordinary for the protagonists to be experiencing the obstacles and marvels of the world they are experiencing but at the same time, since not everyone is doing the same, it is something unordinary, even miraculous.

5.1 THE HERO AND THE QUEST

A hero, according to Frye (1976: 67), 'goes through a series of adventures and combats which he always wins'. It seems that the hero often wants to achieve liberation of some sort through physical strength which comes from him as well as from an outer source. The outer sources may be, for instance, 'unusual strength,

noble blood, or a destiny prophesied by an oracle'(ibid. 67). This, the 'destiny prophesied by and oracle', is particularly the case in Ted Simon's (1980: 14) *Jupiter's Travels*, which begins with a prologue of an incident which happened in India where the protagonist meets an older man who gives him a prophesy:

'Give me your hand.'

I held it out, and he grasped it as in a handshake, but held it in his grip for several moments. Then, releasing it, he gave my thumb a quick backward flip, and murmured: 'Achacha!

'You have a very determined soul. This also is reflected in your mind.

'You are Jupiter...'

The narration is brought to its end in a chapter titled 'The Prophecy Fulfilled', and thus the journey has been what Frye (1976: 67) defines as a 'destiny prophesied by an oracle'.

Noble blood can be seen running, for example, in Fulton Jr's veins as he is an heir to a great business empire of his father. Also Lady Warren's title implies to noble blood, whereas the 'unusual strength' is manifest in all the protagonists and the feature is emphasized by the obstacles they must encounter on the journey.

Also, what is always important is the hero's success (Frye 1976: 67). According to Cawelti (1977: 18), the protagonist of formula literature must be 'better or more fortunate in some ways than ourselves', they are, in fact, heroes. Also Bakhtin (1981: 121) makes notions about the character types of ancient Greek romance and states that the hero is someone who 'occupies no fixed place in everyday life, who plays with life and does not take it seriously'.

Especially the latter notion of playing with one's life is important from the point of view of the thesis and validates further the earlier statements of motorcycle travel

literature's connectedness with danger and death. Also, Bakhtin continues that everyday life 'is that lowest sphere of existence from which the hero tries to liberate himself', a point already illustrated in chapter four. This 'lowest sphere of existence' for the motorcycle protagonists is, at least temporarily, the day-to-day life with secure jobs, norms, and rules imposed upon them by the society. They set for a journey of adventures risking their lives, which, in contemporary societies, is seen heroic: to push through difficulties and even risking one's life in order to fulfill personal dreams and attain freedom. And this makes them, at least for the duration of the journey, 'better or more fortunate' in Frye's (1977: 18) words.

It is a very typical feature in motorcycle travel literature that the protagonists see themselves as heroes and compare their journeys to the travellers or travelling gods of ancient mythology: 'I feel as though I am approaching an enchanted land, and more and more often I feel that I am acting out some fairy tale or legend' (Simon 1980: 101).

Although, it must be noted, this is not done only to highlight the heroic aspect of the journey, but also to show that the protagonists are aware of their place in the tradition. Naturally, comparisons with Ulysses are frequent in the genre, for he was a polytropos who overcame all the obstacles thrown into his way with his unusual wit and courage. For example, this is how Fulton Jr's (1996: 26) hero describes his feelings in Greece in the beginning of his journey: 'I was in the land of the Parthenon, the classic myths, the land of Homer, bound on my own two-cylinder Odyssey'. There is great enthusiasm and euphoria in the beginning of the journey, when the yet unknown road lies ahead: 'Was not life worth striving for, fighting for and suffering for, so long as one achieved a destination' (ibid. 26).

Fulton Jr's protagonist is an example of a narrator from the genre's early days: he is a destination orientated upper class individual, overtaking the journey, not as a life altering spiritual experience, but as a personal achievement. He tries to explain the decision to ride around the world on a motorcycle:

There is an answer. There was the lure of travel; over a different road every day, at a different fireside every evening, beneath a different star every night. There was too, the excitement and adventure of being the first human being to go around the world on a motorcycle. That held a thrill in it, the *first* one to do a certain thing.
(1996: 16)

In Ted Simon's *Jupiter's Travels*, written in the 1970s, the hero has altered from this adventure-minded record braking rider into a self-conscious spiritual seeker of enlightenment. His is an around the world journey as well, but whereas Fulton Jr needed to return from London to his home in New York, Simon does not necessarily need to get from start to finish and his journey lasts for over four years. Even before the start the protagonist is dueling with the Universe:

Maybe you know how it is when you have decided to do something really enormous with your life, something that stretches your resources to the limit. You can get the feeling that you are engaged in a trial of strength with the universe.
(1980: 17)

Simon's (ibid. 23) protagonist is well aware of the travelling ancestors in literature and he makes frequent references to familiar names: 'I was aiming at self-sufficiency because I wanted to travel the way Livingstone did, or Columbus; as though anything could happen and all of it was unknown', and later:

Why you?

Why were you chosen to ride through the desert while other men are going home from the office?

Chosen? I thought I chose myself. Were Odysseus and Jason, Columbus and Magellan chosen? (ibid. 98)

In *These Are the Days that Must Happen to You* the literate references are the subtlest of all the works dealt in the thesis but nevertheless recognizable as part of travel literature's tradition. For example, when approaching the Atlas Mountains just before entering the desert, the narrator makes an allusion to one of Coleridge's most famous travel poems:

Sand and snow at the same time? That's not right, like seeing a cat's head on a dog's body, or some mystic poet's drug-induced ramblings about Kubla Khan's sunny domes with caves of ice. But there's no opium-pipe magic carpet or Frankenstein scientists here, just plain old me on a plain old XT. (Walsh 2009: 15)

Later the protagonist refers to one of the ancient travellers who is seldom referred to in relation with travel, although travel – of sorts – is his livelihood:

It's an awfully big river and this is an awful little boat. And it's leaking an awful lot of water. [...] Between the banks, this is his world. [...] Que sera. I can swim, and if the bike ends up at the bottom of the Zambezi, would that really be so bad? I ask him if his name's Charon. He says no, Nelson. I pay the ferryman and get off. (ibid. 96)

From all that is stated so far, a few typical features common to both motorcycle travel literature and the chivalric tradition of adventure and romance arise in

relation with the main protagonist, the knight. Firstly, and here I follow Barber's (1995: 112) definitions in *The Knight and Chivalry*, a certain amount of activity is implied, and this is strengthened by a binary opposition with sessility, as already discussed. Secondly, in both traditions the object of the search is glory (ibid. 112): be it the glory of being the first one to do something, as in Wallach and Fulton Jr, or a more subtle glory of finding one's own place in the world, as in Simon and Walsh. The glory can also be a rather mundane one of not losing one's face because of a promise given at a Christmas party, as in Carter's *Uneasy Rider*.

The third common feature following Barber's insights is the fact that the knights have little obligations to the everyday life (ibid. 112). This has already been dealt with in relation with, for example, Bakhtin's insights of Greek romance and the miraculous aspect of the tradition.

Another common feature is that the heroes are young and free (Barber 1995: 112). Normally the protagonists in motorcycle travel literature do not state their exact age but it is assumed that they are in their twenties or early thirties. If the protagonist is older, it is typically mentioned, as in Ted Simon's prologue (Simon 2007) in *Dreaming of Jupiter* where he reminisces over his earlier trip, narrated in *Jupiter's Travels*:

In march of 1973 I decided to travel around the world on a motorcycle. The idea came, you could say, out of the blue [...]. I was forty-two years old. Some people said, 'Surely you're not too old for this kind of thing!' But that didn't bother me either, and in fact it turned out to be a good age.

Also Carter's (200: 7-8) protagonist is pointedly middle-aged and the prologue in *Uneasy Rider* is titled '42':

From my completely unscientific analysis, it seemed to me that men might reach some kind of crossroads at aged 42. There were no signposts at this junction, no clues as where to go, just a terrible restlessness and a desire to be somewhere else.

Barber's (1995: 112) fourth feature is escapism which goes hand in hand with the fact that the hero's actions take place outside the everyday life both in the chivalric tradition and in motorcycle travel literature. By the end of twelfth century the 'ideals of the knightly class' started to be seen as an end in themselves and the descriptions of feudal duties fell into the background: chivalry becomes a 'distraction from those burdens' (ibid. 112). This is also the case for the protagonists in motorcycle travel literature: whether the journey is seen merely as a short rapture from the day to day life, or as a great escape from the tedious life of routines and divorces, the journey always takes place outside the narrators' ordinary lives. Quite often the protagonists are either writers or journalists (Simon, Carter, Walsh) who have their own offices and desks, or, they can be, for example, academics (Bishop), University students (Fulton Jr) or artists (Sheridan, Boorman) – each an occupation which requires a lot of time sitting still.

6 NARRATOLOGY OF THE ROAD

As Paul Fussell (1980: 57) states in *Abroad. British Literary Travel between the Wars*, '[t]he figure of the open road had of course been a staple of romanticism at least since Whitman'. A road is a well-used geographical locale in narrations through the history of written word. First, there were the descriptions of overland journeys when the soldiers of ancient times had to move by foot (e.g. Xenophon's

Anabasis), then came the horseback travels of, for example, Marco Polo, and then the successive methods of travel by chaise, on a bicycle, in an automobile, or, with a motorcycle. In all these modes of travel writing the road has been an elemental but a little studied feature. Even in works where travel is not in the central focus of narration, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* or Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the road is always a figure carrying meaning (see e.g. Bakhtin 1981 on *Madame Bovary*).

In relation with the road, dust has played its part in the lives and narrations of travellers through the ages. Jeffrey T. Schnapp (2007: 7) writes in his article 'Three Pieces of Asphalt' how dust separated the clean, wealthier travellers from the less privileged, dust covered foot passengers before the nineteenth century. In the evolution of roads, asphalt plays a significant part: 'asphalt erupts on the scene of modernity to redeem the world from the banes of friction and dust'.

Dust, although it might have been connected with poor man's travels earlier in history, is, in fact, the modern motorcycle traveller's highly valued prize: it is the prize of riding off-road, off the beaten track where the tourists dwell and, it must be remembered; the dust of Sahara desert is almost like fairy dust for the ones who have crossed it.

What it comes to the physical road itself, from the point of view of the thesis at hand, asphalt plays a significant role. As Schnapp (2003: 7) writes, the inventors such as McAdam, Trésaguet and Telford 'inaugurated the modern dream of smooth, frictionless travel,' and that they '...translated premodern bumps and jolts into a harsh new language of trauma and shock'.

Schnapp (2003: 12) also reminds that even though land travel is a common course of action in literature's history, the surface under the heroes' feet is seldom described:

From the epic of Gilgamesh to Virgil's *Aeneid* and beyond, travel narratives long highlighted the perils of sea voyages, but when describing travel on land they favoured descriptions of bandits, monsters, and prodigies over attention to the roadway's physical characteristics. The knights of medieval romance thus speed through forests atop their glistening steeds with no less indifference to what is underfoot than do the runners of ancient Greece across the plain of Marathon.

But, as Schnapp (ibid. 12-13) points out, this 'descriptive omission' starts to shift in the late eighteenth century by the invention of asphalt, and is in the centre of the twentieth and twenty-first century motorcycle travel literature as well.

There exist famous roads in the history of mankind from Via Appia to the Route 66, as well as famous writes of the paved surface from Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) to Jack Kerouac (1922-1969). In motorcycle travel literature, tarmac and asphalt enhance the central theme of speed, danger and death but they also have their impact on the actual narration. The thesis will now see how the road is penetrated into the narration of this specific type of travel literature.

In this chapter, apart from some narratological references, I shall also make use of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope of road. In his *Forms of Time and on the Chronotope in the Novel. Notes toward a Historical Poetics* Bakhtin (1981: 85) states that 'it is precisely that chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions'. Chronotope, literally 'time space', captures 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (ibid. 84). Some references to Bakhtin's thinking have already been made in the thesis when, for example, dealing with the 'suddenly', or 'and then', structure in motorcycle travel literature. In this chapter I will specifically study the road's frequent presentation in the narration of motorcycle travel books. Also Bakhtin

(ibid. 98) makes note of the special relationship between the motif of meeting and the chronotope of road in his study of the Greek adventure-romance:

The importance of the chronotope of road in literature is immense: it is a rare work that does not contain a version of this motif, and many words are directly constructed on the road chronotope, and on road meetings and adventures.

In this respect motorcycle travel literature shares many features Bakhtin (ibid. 120) informs to be the most prolific ones in Greek romances:

The most characteristic thing about this novel [adventure novel of everyday life] is the way it fuses the course of an individual's life (at its major turning points) with his actual spatial course of road – that is, with his wanderings.

Later on Bakhtin (ibid. 243) continues that the road also makes possible the chance encounters of 'people who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance'. This is made clear, for example, in Bealby's (2004: 166) *Running with the Moon*, where his preference to travel by road through the war-torn Angola, rather than taking a boat around it, makes him the second tourist to visit a local village:

'You are only the second tourist to Cabinda,' he said while studying my passport.
 'For how long?' I asked, a certain pride in my voice.
 'For how long?' he chuckled. 'For ever. We had a Brazilian here last year...he was on a bicycle.'

It is typical in motorcycle travel literature that the protagonists prefer the less travelled roads to meet native people rather than other tourists, or, in order to have more genuine or interesting chance encounters with other Westerners. The choice

of the vehicle, alongside with the genre's ethos to prefer roads off the beaten tracks, facilitates the protagonists to encounter 'people who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance,' as Bakhtin (1981: 243) states.

The chronotope of road is a tool already used in literature studies and it is, in fact, motorcycle travel literature's most important chronotope. The maps provided in the books have roads criss-crossing them as an indication of the travelled roads' actuality. The roads are described in detail throughout the narration and the obstacles, that is, the heroes' tests, occur on the road – be it the pot-holes, the rivers flooding on the roads, or the customs officers trying to block the road. The accidents take their place on the road, and so do the chance encounters. Also, the road is an element that provides a tangible outlet to put the protagonist's state of mind into words.

In *An Introduction to Narratology* Monika Fludernik (2009: 8) defines narratology, or the theory of narrative, as a 'study of narrative as a genre' and continues that 'its objective is to describe the constants, variables and combinations typical of narrative'. An earlier example of narratology's definition, from Gerard Prince's (1982: 4-5) *Narratology*, states that narratology is 'the study of the form and functioning of narrative', it studies what common features narratives share and what makes them different from each other.

In this chapter, I concentrate on studying how the road as one of the genre's typical 'constants' (Fludernik 2009: 8) manifests itself in the narration. Previously in the thesis it has been shown what kind of constants are typical to motorcycle travel literature in the story level: this chapter will concentrate on one specific element, the road, on the level of narration.

It is not relevant for this thesis to offer a more profound narratological survey of motorcycle travel literature and I shall not ponder upon the typical narratological questions concerning, for example, the reliability of the narrator or how the narrator manifests him/her/itself. Instead, the aim of this chapter is ‘to discover, describe and explain the mechanics of narrative’ (Prince 1982: 165). Some rules and factors are sought after since, according to Prince (ibid. 165), they assist when defining the specificity of the narration, which in turn helps to compare narratives ‘and institute narrative classes’. This chapter’s focus is thus closely connected to the formulaic study of motorcycle travel literature presented in chapter four.

As said, a major element in motorcycle travel literature is the description of road. In all of the books subjected to the thesis, the road enters the narration at a very early stage and is mentioned frequently ever since its first appearance.

In Robert Fulton Jr’s (1996: 16) *One Man Caravan* from the 1930s the first proper mentioning of the road appears on the third page of the first chapter: ‘There was the lure of travel; over a different road every day...’ and on the next page: ‘...maps criss-crossed with red road-lines, black trail-lines, dotted track-lines, often no lines at all’ (ibid. 17). In the first chapter, which spans over eleven pages of which two pages are photographs, the road is mentioned seven times (I have not counted the more metaphorical expressions of the road, such as the lure of the ‘unknown road’, which basically is not about any specific road, or a description of one). The point made by pure calculation is to underline the fact how prominent a feature the road is.

In Ted Simon’s (1980: 7) *Jupiter’s Travels* from 1980 the road is a prominent element from the first page on: ‘I let the bike roll off the asphalt...’, ‘...looking up and down the country road...’, ‘There were many men walking along the road...’,

‘Few motor vehicles were on the road.’, ‘The wheels flew up and down on the bumps, and the taxi slithered and juddered across the waves of tar...’. All these notions of the road are from the first page of the book.

The road can also have different roles in the narration. When comparing *One Man Caravan* with *Jupiter’s Travels* one notices how the road’s function has altered. *One Man Caravan* is still quite close to the more traditional travel literature: it can be compared with narrations such as Waugh’s *Ninety-Two Days*, written only few years earlier than Fulton’s book. Both narrations mention the road, Waugh’s protagonist going into reasons why it is preferred to travel by foot, horse etc. when possible, compared to ‘just’ taking an aeroplane. His narrator also explains how his choice of the mode of travel helps to identify ‘with the place one is visiting in a way that is impossible to the perhaps more courageous fliers’ (Waugh 1985: 151).

Fulton’s protagonist shows the same attitudes and describes the natives’ habits quite similarly as Waugh’s protagonist does. Fulton’s narration is more in the general vein of the nineteenth and early twentieth century travel writing: noticing the foreign habits and costumes and comparing them with his own background and expectations. Fulton’s protagonist is the ‘educated white man’ travelling – and travelling for the story’s sake, whereas nowadays motorcycle travel literature is more about the traveller, the machine he or she rides on, and also about the more philosophical aspects of travelling in general as in, for example, Simon’s *Jupiter’s Travels*.

The road can be used as a character in motorcycle travel writing: always shifting its attitude towards the protagonist from a pleasant surface on a sunny day to a dangerous pot-holed demon in a hail storm. The road can thus also be used as a

narratological tool to reflect the rider's state of mind: when the rider is tired, anxious or worried, the road becomes cracked, winding or muddy.

One classic example of the theme of road is a chapter from T.E. Lawrence's *The Mint*. The following quotation is the beginning of chapter 16, under the heading "The Road":

THE extravagance in which my surplus emotion expressed itself lay on the road. So long as the roads were tarred blue and straight; not hedged; and empty and dry, so long I was rich. (1969: 184)

Often the rider's mood gets mixed up with the road: an irritated mind rides on a cracked surface, or, a hasty mind makes mistakes. For example, when Simon's protagonist wants to rush to the next place across a hot desert he realises that he should have waited: 'I should have swallowed by bride [...], cooled off and left the following day, but I was rolling under the momentum of my own folly' (1980:82). And then, later on in the desert, the hasty mind gets punished by the road:

I steered a middle course and, gaining confidence, increased speed [...]. Then, quite unexpectedly, two sets of wheel tracks converged and intersected in front of me. I could not avoid them, nor could I stop. (ibid. 83)

But the road can function as the protagonist's magical helper as well: '[a]s the road leaves home farther and farther behind, it makes its own friendly advances to keep the rider happy' (Holbrook Pierson 1998: 12).

Another example of the interrelation between the traveller and the road in motorcycle travel literature can be found from Jonny Bealby's (2004: 149) *Running*

with the Moon. After a few bad stretches of road in Congo, the rider begins to get tired:

I felt weak now. Both mentally and physically. The rainforest had taken a lot of me and the thought of more mud and water, even in less excessive amounts, filled me with weary resentment.

The quotation above shows how the rider's mental strength is starting to crumble down: his set of mind is not as enthusiastic as it used to be and future prospects regarding the surface of the road seem dreary. One paragraph later, the same attitude in the narration manifests itself when describing the road:

The track was neither narrow nor pot-holed, and there was no vegetation marching across it, but the orche-red earth was sodden; it was like driving on porridge, heavy yet slippery. (ibid. 149)

'Heavy yet slippery' could be transformed to describe the narrator's own attitudes at the time: his mind is heavy with worry over the road and filled with anxiety over how to proceed through the rain forest.

Another similar example is from Ted Simon's (1980: 158) *Jupiter's Travels* where the protagonist has just driven through Tanzania in three days: he is amazed when he realises how quickly he drove across a country that is the size of Venezuela, or half of France, and how he has learned less about it than reading a newspaper article. First, he blames the equipment he had to wear because of the rain: 'Almost immediately came the first rain, and I packed myself into my rain gear, which restricted me and cut me off even more from the world around me' (ibid. 159). Then the scenery turns monotonous: 'The countryside became flat and unvarying' (ibid.

159). At first the narrator blames the rain and the rain gear about his failure to get a better intake of Tanzania but then he realises that the real reason for the lack of connection was, in fact, the road: 'In part I blamed the highway. It was too fast, too good and took me too far away from the slow-moving people' (ibid. 159).

The examples above illustrate how the road can be used as a narrational tool in motorcycle travel literature. The example from Simon offers a more concrete example of this aspect, whereas the example from Bealby offers a subtler view of how the road in motorcycle travel writing is interrelated with the scenery, the atmosphere, and the rider's mind thus producing a typical narrational feature in the genre.

In relation with all above mentioned, a special notion should be done about more fictional motorcycle travel literature and its more thorough use of the road as a narratological element. For, although travel writers do artistically construct the narration after the actual journey, a novelist has more liberties to use the tools that the genre in question has to offer. Chapter 6.1 will concentrate on investigating the road's functional elements in the narration of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. But, before this, some conclusive notions regarding the chronotope of road in motorcycle travel literature will be made.

As Bakhtin (1981: 250) writes, the most obvious significance of a chronotope is its meaning for narrative: it organizes 'the fundamental narrative events of the novel', and 'to them belongs the meaning that shapes the narrative'. This is particularly true in such cases as Simon, Walsh, and Bealby, where the whole meaning of, not only the journey but the protagonist's existence in general, is contemplated on the road and usually some kind of revelation, or epiphany, is reached in the end. Also, all the fundamental events take place on the road: road

works as a structural element as the events and thoughts are more easily organized, for both the author and the reader, along the lines of the protagonist's physical proceeding. That is, if the narration describes events taking place on an overland journey across Africa, the typical order of events proceeds from, for example, arriving in Africa, crossing the Sahara, then driving through rain forests and then reaching the destination, such as Cape Town. As Cape Town and Sahara are situated on the opposite ends of the road on the physical map as well, it is easier for the reader to visualize the journey while reading. Should the physical locations be randomly spread over the journey in illogical order, questions over the travel account's truthfulness would arise.

But the road also carries a more philosophical and psychological function: it helps the narrator to externalize his or her thoughts into a more concrete vocabulary, as, for example, Bealby's narrator did in the citation above when describing the road as porridge-like when, in fact, it was his mental state which felt muddy and like porridge. This is also Bakhtin's (1981: 250) conclusion about chronotopes in general:

All the novel's abstract elements – philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood.

This makes the chronotope of road a facilitating tool for motorcycle travel narrators: it helps to construct a concrete illustration of the more abstract and non-tangible mental procedures the protagonists go through while riding. The chronotope of road helps 'materializing time in space' (Bakhtin 1981: 250).

6.1 A CASE STUDY: ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE AND THE CHRONOTOPE OF ROAD

What comes after in a narrative is therefore conditioned (to some extent) by what comes before and the end is conditioned by the beginning (although the road to that end can be full of surprises). [...] Some events (inevitably) cause some other events and narrativity is a function of the possibility of viewing one event as dependent on a preceding one. (Prince 1982: 155)

Robert M. Pirsig's protagonist in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, first published in 1974, is travelling the first part of his journey with family friends, John and Sylvia, and his son Chris. Later the protagonist parts with John and Sylvia and continues the journey with Chris.

As the journey goes on, the narration moves back and forth between conversations the protagonist has with Chris and the scenery they pass. Also the protagonist's memories start to mix with his notions of the present. The book's atmosphere changes from being a family trip with friends to a philosophical investigation concerning the concept of Quality and little by little the protagonist's state of mind starts to crumble down when the memories from the days he was insane rush back into his consciousness. In all this, the road functions as a structural element which brings the narration back to the concrete reality from inside the protagonist's mind. The road is used as a narrational bridge from one topic or mood to another.

I will offer an example to illustrate the road's function as a narration constructing tool from a part where the narrator has been presenting his ghost's, named Phaedrus, ideas concerning 'classic' and 'romantic' thought: this is the intellectual starting point leading Phaedrus to his theory about Quality. On the surface level everything is still going on as planned but little by little the protagonist

starts to realise that all is not as it should be: the ghost from his past is making its way back to hunt the narrator's mind. In this atmosphere ends the sixth chapter of part one and the seventh chapter begins as following:

HEAT IS EVERYWHERE NOW. I CAN'T IGNORE IT ANYMORE. THE air is like a furnace blast...

On the road ahead a crow tugs on some carrion and flies up slowly as we approach. It looks like a lizard on the road, dry and stuck to the tar. (Pirsig: 80)

It is clear that the old device to use landscape, weather, or such as an indicator of the protagonist's state of mind is not a novelty. But using one of the key elements in motorcycle travel literature – the road – as a narrational tool cannot be dismissed. The road ahead, with a quite oppressive imagery of the crow, the carrion and the heat, symbolises the protagonist's thoughts: he begins to see that not all is well in his mind and this in turn makes him anxious about the future. The protagonist's thoughts are starting to get stuck to the memories like the lizard's corps on the road. Also, the vocabulary – air like a furnace blast, crow, carrion, flies and tar – is oppressive and further enhances the terrifying feeling in the protagonist's mind.

In somewhat middle part of the book the narrator has gone through quite an amount of Phaedrus's thinking, and is processing it in his own mind in order to make it clearer both to himself and the reader. This is what happens:

To arrive at *this* Quality requires a somewhat different procedure from the "Step 1, Step 2, Step3" instructions that accompany dualistic technology, and that's what I'll now try to go into.

After many turns in the canyon wall we stop for a break under a scrubby little patch of small trees [...].

[...] I go over and bump [water] for him so he can use both hands. Then I do the same. The water feels cold on my hands and face. When done we walk to the cycle again and climb on and pull back on to the canyon road.

Now that solution... (Pirsig: 292-293)

‘After many turns’: the phrase can be applied both to the mental procedures the narrator has gone through when thinking of Quality as well as to the physical and mental movements riding involves. Yet, the narrator knows that there is going to be more of those turns ahead in Phaedrus’s philosophical quest in defining Quality: they head back to the canyon road.

Later, when Phaedrus’s mind is getting more and more intertwined with the narrator’s thoughts, the mental procedures of the past reflect the narrational elements of the present:

The Quality is the track that directs the train. What is outside the train, to either side - that is the *terra incognita* of the insane. He knew that to understand Quality he would have to leave the mythos. That’s why he felt the slippage. He knew something was about to happen. (Pirsig: 251)

And then, a paragraph later:

After a few minutes the road reaches summit and then drops steeply into a valley that becomes more exquisite as we descend. I never thought I would call a valley that – exquisite – but there’s something about this coastal country so different from any other mountainous region in America. (ibid. 251)

The road reaching the summit, and then the ‘drop’, is a repetition of what is going on in the first citation about the two options offered: insanity, or, understanding the Quality without dropping into the slippage of mental illness. In both paragraphs there are powers of good and evil at work: the evil is the ‘*terra incognita*’ of the insane, or the road that reaches its ‘summit and then drops steeply’. The good, on the other hand, is something that comes after the drop: the exquisiteness of the valley where the drop leads, or for Phaedrus; the new paths of thought that would lead him further on his road to knowledge about Quality.

Chapters six and 6.1 have shown how the narrators in motorcycle travel literature –both fictional and factual – make use of the more metaphorical connotations of road. It has been shown that the road functions as a narratological tool when the narrator renders the protagonist’s mental and abstract thoughts into a more tangible and concrete vocabulary. Typically the protagonist’s thoughts are reflected on the surface he or she rides on. The road can be used as an indicator what lies in the future for the rider but also to cast light on his or her past, as the examples from Pirsig’s *Zen and the Motorcycle Maintenance* reveal. The road can also possess humanlike qualities in the genre: it can either be the protagonist’s magical helper or the vicious villain. The road is a crucial element from the first page on and the end of the road typically coincides with the end of the journey.

7 THE MACHINE AND THE MIND

So far the thesis at hand has mapped the typical features of motorcycle travel literature. It has placed motorcycle travel literature both in romance tradition and the tradition of travel literature at large. Also, its formula and typical elements, such as the obstacles on the road, or the use of road as a narratological element, have been investigated.

But one aspect which, literally and metaphorically, is in motorcycle travel literature's centre has yet been untouched: the relationship between the machine and the mind. This relationship is an important part of narration in motorcycle travel literature and offers an interesting point of view from a phenomenological perspective as well. In this chapter I will make some preliminary notes on how the machine is depicted in motorcycle travel literature. The point of view comes from Maurice Merleau-Ponty who places the body in the center of his phenomenology.

Body moving through space is in central role in motorcycle travel literature – as already discussed in relation with, for example, the psychological and physiological effects of riding in chapter 4.1. Also, the close connection between the rider and the machine has become obvious in the thesis when dealing with, on the other hand, the chosen vehicle's uniqueness what it comes to the exposure to environment and, on the other hand, how the equipment at the same time secludes the riders from the world around them. And as already showed in the quotations so far, in the previous chapters, this tie is not only physical but also mental.

In *The Primacy of Perception* Merleau-Ponty (1964: 5) discusses on how the body offers us a point of view to the world; we 'grasp external space through our bodily situation'. He also sees writer as a 'new idiom' who invents new ways of

expression (ibid. 9). In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty (2009: 262) emphasizes the fact that the ‘senses communicate with each other’ and that it is movement which ‘forms the basis for the unity of senses’ (ibid. 272). In motorcycle travel literature the protagonist’s perspective is affected by the way of movement, which also renders the senses more alert. The experience is intensified by the body’s central role in the action as it controls the machine while being simultaneously aware of the environment and processing data of it:

Motorcyclists are generally very alert to what is going on around them. They are sensitive to the road, the traffic, and the machine they have become a part of. [...] Just *being* has become an intimate experience. (Meyer 2003: 80)

As already shown in previous chapters the close relationship between the rider and the machine is manifest in the genre. My analysis here starts with Fulton Jr’s book where the relations between the machine and the mind are less prominent than in later motorcycle travel literature.

One Man Caravan begins with a statement that the choice of vehicle for the round-the-world trip took place by a mere chance. The idea for the journey was presented at a party and the vehicle was offered by a friend whose family happened to own a motorcycle factory. The protagonist had been advised to broaden his horizons via travelling but he had never found it luring enough – until now:

to arrive at the conclusion that there must be some better method of seeing the world than by standard processes. On foot and carrying a knapsack? That would be too slow. By motor car? Too expensive. A bicycle? Too much work. A motorcycle?.... (Fulton Jr 1996: 7)

In the preface of his book Fulton Jr (1996: 3) describes motorcycles being the ‘technology’s closest equivalent to being a cowboy’, and continues that ‘the great advantages of the motorcycle is its ability to bring its rider closer to the environment – winds, weather, roads, surroundings, nature.’. Even though the mental ties are not that tight in Fulton Jr as in many later, even his narrator binds the protagonist’s thoughts and the bike’s ‘mood’ together in the end of the book: ‘...it all became clear. The trip ‘round-the-world was not yet finished for the motorcycle...nor for me...’ (ibid. 347). His narrator nevertheless lacks the same mental bound with his machine as, for example, Simon’s (1980: 443) narrator who at the end of *Jupiter’s Travels* sees himself as: ‘[h]alf man, half bike’. Similar tendencies can be found in, for example, T.E. Lawrence’s (1969: 186-187) *The Mint*:

A skittish moto-bike with a touch of blood in it is better than all the riding animals on earth, because of its logical extension of our faculties...Because Boa loves me, he gives me five more miles of speed than a stranger would get from him.

It is interesting to notice how both Simon’s and Lawrence’s narrators use the same expressions to describe the motorcycles’ connectedness with the rider: in Lawrence (1969: 186) the bike is a ‘logical extension of our faculties’ and in Simon (1980: 312) the bike ‘has really become an extension of myself’. In *Life is a Road, the Soul is a Motorcycle* by Daniel Mayer (2003: 67) the motorcycle ‘becomes a part of me. An expansion of my awareness. An extension of my blood, bone and muscle’. Maybe stretching it a little, one might also mention Captain W.H.L. Watson’s protagonist in the *Dispatch Rider* when he complains how using motorbikes has

demoralized the dispatch riders as they did not use their legs anymore and the legs ‘shrunk away’ (2009: 264).

Merleau-Ponty (2009: 165) writes in *Phenomenology of Perception* about a blind man and his auxiliary stick which eventually ceases to be an object and ‘is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch...’. Merleau-Ponty continues that getting used to an object like the stick is to ‘incorporate them into the bulk of our own body’ (ibid. 166). Thus, as the stick becomes an extension of the blind man’s hand so does the motorcycle become an extension of the rider’s body.

Merleau-Ponty (2009: 108) also writes about how moving one’s body differs from moving objects: the objects are moved indirectly whereas the body is moved directly. That is, the mind works in a relationship with the body and there exists, as Merleau-Ponty writes, a magical relationship between the decisions made and the body which moves. This idea can be found in motorcycle travel literature when the protagonist reaches the state of ‘momentum’ which also reminds the flow state of which, for example, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has written about.

This state of flow, or momentum, can be found in motorcycle travel literature when the heroes tackle with the obstacles on the road and then successfully conquer them. Dan Walsh’s (2009: 39) narrator finds his momentum after wrestling with the Saharan dunes: ‘It’s just me, the XT and Africa, naked. Life sans intermediaries’. This state is reached when everything works in harmony, which in turn produces a sensation of accomplishment and immense satisfaction and, typically, it is the cooperation between the mind and the machine which produces the momentum. The rider’s mind is at ease when the machine runs smoothly: ‘The Triumph had stopped protesting and was running freely. All my equipment was in working order’, writes

Simon's protagonist in *Jupiter's Travels* and continues that '...my body functioned better than ever' (1980: 442).

The citation above is an example of a case where the protagonist's mood is reflected to the motorcycle in the same way as the road is used to externalize the protagonist's feelings and thoughts. But the transference works both ways, and sometimes the bike starts picking up clues that something is about to go wrong even before the protagonist does.

In *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty (2009: 248) describes this kind of interrelatedness as a 'transaction' where both participants are equal:

The sensor and the sensible do not stand in relation to each other as two mutually external terms, and sensation is not an invasion of the sensor by the sensible. [...] in this transaction between the subject of sensation and the sensible it cannot be held that one acts while the other suffers the action.

The relationship between the rider and the machine in motorcycle travel literature can be illustrated with an example Merleau-Ponty offers concerning sleep:

A certain rhythm of respiration, which a moment ago I voluntarily maintained now becomes my very being, and sleep, until now aimed at as a significance, suddenly becomes a situation. (ibid. 246)

This 'rhythm', or breathing, can be seen in motorcycle travel literature as the rhythm of riding and often this rhythm is also connected with the dangerousness of driving fast: 'That's when the rhythm of the road *really* takes you' (Holbrook Pierson 1998: 124). The 'rhythm' can also be conveyed in the light of the flow state,

or, momentum: it represents the harmony which exists between the rider, the machine and the road.

Also Holbrook Pierson (1998: 16) writes about how the body extends itself over the machine all the way to the road producing a holy trinity of the road, the machine and the body. First, along the already familiar lines, the motorcycle becomes ‘an extension of yourself’ but then, the extension goes even further:

Riding is something that hovers between you and the road. Or rather, it is about removing as much as possible between you and the road, about extending yourself past the very vehicle that enables you to feel the road in the first place. (ibid. 233)

Motorcycling protagonists ride without the limiting ‘protective frame’ and they are connected with the environment more directly than the ones travelling by e.g. a car. The riders process data from the surroundings as easily as they breathe. The body and the machine become almost like an automatic unity of which the road is a crucial part. The body and the machine are in a same kind of relationship with each other as the body and the world for Merleau-Ponty (2009: 210):

I do not need to visualize external space and my own body in order to move one within the other. It is enough that they exist for me, and that they form a certain field of action spread around me.

The relationship between the machine and the rider, the ‘field of action’, is perhaps the clearest in Ted Simon’s *Jupiter’s Travels*, where the protagonist spends four years sitting on the machine. It is typical for the genre that also the protagonists themselves acknowledge this special relationship between the machine and the mind. This is how it manifests itself in *Jupiter’s Travels*:

I know that all its idiosyncrasies, the things that make it quite different from any other motorcycle, are the result of what we have gone through together. The way I sit, my touch on the throttle, the speeds I travel at and the mistakes I make are what fashioned it into something uniquely connected with me. [...] my bike records the passage of time and events. [...] It has been moulded by me, and to a large extent it has really become an extension of myself. (Simon 1980: 311-312)

Towards the end of the book the rider's tiredness is projected to the machine as well: '...when I say it is tired, I mean that it reflects my own fatigue' (Simon 1980: 312) – both the machine and the rider are 'running down' (ibid. 312).

This interaction between the rider and the machine is enhanced by the equipment, as has already been stated, and it is often realized by the riders themselves. The following citation is from Ted Bishop's (2007: 124-125) *Riding with Rilke*:

(The boots, jacket, and gloves feel cumbersome too – they're shaped all wrong for walking, but once you are on the bike, the gloves curl round the handgrips; the arms of the jacket flare out and forward, the wristbands are at your wrists instead of your fingertips; and the boots are snug on to the footpegs [...].) When you hit the starter, your breath merges with the sound of the bike.

Phenomenological approach to motorcycle travel literature offers interesting tools for the reader but, as the thesis at hand is an introduction to the genre in general, a more profound analysis of the matter will be left for future research.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The thesis at hand has been an anatomy of motorcycle travel literature's most prominent features. The thesis has offered a brief history of travel literature then positioning motorcycle travel literature in the tradition. As mentioned in the introduction, I have acted on Steven Alford's suggestion and used some analytical tools already deployed in literary studies to study motorcycle travel literature: the same tools that have been used in analyzing other forms of popular literature proved to be applicable to the study of motorcycle travel literature as well. This was shown in chapter four, where John G. Cawelti's theories of formula literature were made use of when presenting the most formulaic features of the genre.

While positioning motorcycle travel literature in the vaster spectrum of romance tradition in chapter five some features in particular became apparent: firstly, how the genre in question shows itself as a modern manifestation of the chivalric romance and, secondly, how the genre at the same time is a reaction to our own times. Apart from the theme or chivalric quest, the thesis also analyzed the genre's most prominent narratological tool, the road, and phenomenological element, the machine.

Using narratology's insights and Bakhtin's (1981: 85) chronotope of the road, the thesis studied how the description of road is one of the constants which define 'genre and generic distinctions'. Chapter six presented how the genre in question externalizes the protagonists' inner thoughts via the descriptions of road. A more artistic use of the road was surveyed in relation with Robert M. Pirsig's philosophical motorcycle novel *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, which, even though it is not a travel book written under an autobiographical contract, could not be by passed in the thesis because of its prominent status in the genre.

The last chapter offered a more philosophical approach to studying motorcycle travel literature. Some examples were studied in the light of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which made the relationship between the machine and the mind apparent in the genre: it was shown how the two get more and more interrelated as the journey goes on. Also, the phenomenological effect riding has both to the rider-protagonist and the narration, were briefly investigated.

I hope that the thesis will enable the readers of motorcycle travel literature to recognize and appreciate the genre's characteristics and unique features, which make it a noticeable sub-genre of travel literature. The background reading has been varied including some staple reading from, not only literary studies, but also from psychology, sociology and philosophy. Maybe concentrating on one or two specific areas would have provided a more in-depth analysis of a specific feature in the genre, but as motorcycle travel literature is yet very little studied, I saw it vital at this point to offer a more general introduction to the matter. In future, especially Virilio's dromology and the socio-psychological demands for speed from the twentieth century onwards would provide a fruitful field of study, as well as the phenomenological approach offered in the previous chapter.

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