UNIVERSITY OF Hull

A Human Geographical Exploration of Adventure Motorcycling

Freedom to move, freedom to feel, freedom to choose

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Science in Geography

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by

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With the purr of the engine beneath me
And the warmth of the high sun above,
I'll go over the distant horizon
Along the country lanes that I love

Wild wood flowers and fruit will be growing,
Winding rivers flow down to the sea,
On my revered traveling companion,
I lay claim to my life of the free.

Theresa Wallach (2011, p.174)

Abstract

Freedom is a term that is used often when an adventure motorcyclist is asked what it is all about and when asked what it is what he or she experiences and why he or she engages in this activity. This thesis explores what adventure motorcycling is all about and how the sense of freedom that is experienced can be explained. Accepting that freedom is quite a broad, elusive and yet over-determined umbrella term, and focusing on several modalities of adventure motorcycling that all come with their own approach to what is dubbed as 'freedom', this thesis moves towards a more concrete understanding of what the adventure motorcyclist means when he refers to the simple term of 'freedom'. The core modalities that are discussed in this thesis are firstly the interaction or combination of human and machine (motorcycle), secondly, the experience of the landscape, and thirdly, the philosophy behind adventure and challenge itself, which is approached as a rite of passage. With the help of adventure travel narratives, artwork and films, all embedded in a theoretical framework that runs from Latour's idea of assemblages to Merleau-Ponty's *Primacy of Perception*, and from J.B. Jackson's 'Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder' to the Arnold van Gennep's schéma of the Rite of Passage, exploration of these core modalities of adventure motorcycling provide an insight into the world of the motorcyclist and what is meant when ideas of freedom are mentioned.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Up, Close and Personal – "How is my motorcycle? IS HE OK?"

For a couple of years, on my way to school, I cycled past an abandoned motorcycle just standing there, always, under a torn old blanket. I always felt a bit sorry for it, standing there all alone, corroding away slowly. "Maybe, one day, I could take that motorcycle out for a drive… let it live again", I thought. No one I knew owned a motorcycle license, let alone a motorcycle, so I did not have any other encouragement than that old rusty motorcycle that intrigued me. One day, years after I had left school and after obtaining my car driver's license and having saved up some money, I decided to just do it; I searched for a driving school, arranged for my first lesson, and got hooked. I remember it well, that first lesson on a Kawasaki ER-5 on chilly but beautiful day in February, but at that moment I did not realise how this first lesson would change the rest of my life. I did not tell my parents about this decision until after my third lesson, in which I experienced my first small crash. They were not happy and quite shocked by the massive bruising on my right thigh. They could not stop me from taking lessons, obtaining my license and buying my first motorcycle since I was an adult, but they were not happy about it either. 'Motorcycles kill' is a sentiment that a lot of people, and for some reason especially people who are also parents, consider being a straightforward fact.

When I passed my exams and bought my first motorcycle (I could not rescue the abandoned rusty motorcycle that inspired me anymore; that one had disappeared), my parents supported me half-heartedly and accompanied me when I went to pick it up. However, they preferred 'not to see me ride'; they were afraid I might fall off at some point and they preferred not to witness something like that.

Falling off was something I did more than just once – a couple of times, to be fair. Tumbled over and under, sliding, slipping and I even ended up in a ditch due to a miscalculation on the combination of 'curve and speed'. While lying in that ditch, covered in dry leaves and assisted by my fellow motorcyclists, asking me how I was, all I could say was "How is my motorcycle? Is my motorcycle OK? HOW IS MY MOTORCYCLE?" I refused to answer any questions about my own well-being until I had seen that my motorcycle was still 'alive' so that I could resume the trip. That is what motorcycling does to people, or at least, it does to me. I also know a lot of people who (would) act exactly like me; the motorcycle becomes a friend, or perhaps even a part of you and as soon as something happens to it, you feel incomplete.

One of the many ways in which motorcycling positively changed my life was that it got me surrounded by a group of fellow motorcyclists who, outside their role as 'riders', come from various different backgrounds and corners of society. As Steve Alford, editor of the International Journal for Motorcycle Studies, points out,

> motorcycles bring people together. Motorcycles are like being naked. Just as everyone exists on the same level naked, riding [a motorcycle] unites you with other riders, whether they be mechanics or stock brokers, professors or construction workers (Alford 2010).

Together with my fellow motorcyclists, I started undertaking short day ride-outs, and later, with my husband –whom I met through motorcycling–, I undertook longer trips and vacations. The motorcycle became not just a practical mode of transport, but a very intimate and special way to *experience* the world. My motorcycle(s) took me to Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria, France, Italy, England, Wales and Scotland. We did not go further, because of the limited budget a

student lives on, but there is more to do, more to see and more to discover. So, when deciding on my thesis subject, I elected to study motorcycling academically.

1.2 An MSc Thesis on Motorcycling?

How then could, and why *should*, we study motorcycling and motorcycle travel in particular? Why academically, and why within human geography? First of all, human geography encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects and –perhaps more than most areas of knowledge production– is truly multidisciplinary (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 358). As the *Dictionary of Human Geography* states, human geography is "that part of the discipline of geography concerned with the spatial differentiation and organization of human activity and its interrelationships with the physical environment" (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 353). Travelling, on foot, in a car or on a motorcycle does that explicitly: it actively and constantly changes the way that human beings come into contact and interact with the physical environment.

Travelling makes our engagement with the environment more concrete for it is something that happens deliberately and consciously. Also, to a lot of motorcyclist, following O'Reilly, an important characteristic of motorcycle travel is the idea that when travelling, the destination of the journey is inferior to the journey itself and that, therefore, travelling provides an individual with 'cultural and symbolic capital'; experiences that can be tapped into both during and after the journey (O'Reilly 2005, p.156). What, then, are these experiences created and lived during motorcycle travel that we can tap into as human geographers or as researchers in general? Or, in other words, what will this thesis be about? As Wendy Moon explains,

> [t]here are riders who believe that to study motorcycling is to violate the almost mystical experience it is. To them, I say legitimate study can only mark the boundaries between what can be understood and what cannot be and, far from reducing the mystery, points the way to what is the core, inexpressible truth of the experience. (Moon 2010)

Talking about the mystery of the experience, Moon pointed out *exactly* what is so important to realise when undertaking research such as this: acknowledging that aspects of motorcycling will always remain personal and unique. However, although it seems as if the motorcycling experience is not something that you *can* analyse, categorise and put a label on so easily, it *is* possible to approach it through legitimate study such as, for example, actor-network theory and non-representational theory (Thrift 2004b). This theory leaves intact and respects the experiences that are non-representational or more-than-representational. The experience is, as are experiences in general, personal and intimate and therefore difficult to measure. One rider loves the thrill of speed and curves on smooth tarmac, alone, with a Japanese sports motorcycle, another prefers cruising steadily down Route 66 on an American custom built chopper with fellow riders. My main goal, therefore, is to capture that non-representational experience: I want to show that motorcycling, and especially adventure motorcycling, is a unique and almost mystical experience. Thus, I have decided to focus mainly on one of the major categories of motorcyclists; one that appears to be perfect to analyse from a geographical point of view: the 'adventure motorcyclist'.

An adventure motorcyclist is a person who uses an adventure motorcycle to undertake extended journeys that take him to different countries and often continents and revolves around exploration and adventurous activities and hardship offered mainly by the landscape (Price-Davies 2011, p.1). An adventure motorcycle is:

> a motorcycle of varied engine displacement that is often used on long rides along paved and unpaved roads. These bikes are capable of carrying one or two passengers and their gear on overnight or multiple day trips miles from civilization. They have longer suspension of six or more inches, to absorb the imperfections of dirt roads, double track trails and perhaps single track trails. They often have increased fuel capacity of five to nine gallons. Typically, adventure bikes will also be fitted with side bags (panniers) and a top case behind the seat of the bike to carry the gear needed for motorcycle trips. … Adventure bikes are utilitarian bikes capable of covering great distances on less than perfect roads. They often have or can be outfitted with hard metal parts to protect the bike from rocks and other objects that could damage the bottom or sides of the bike. (McDermott 2011)

This bracketing of adventure motorcyclists (and motorcycles) does not mean that adventure motorcyclists form a homogenous group, nor does it mean that this group has completely different experiences to riders who never leave the tarmac and only cruise every now and then on a sunny Sunday. Like others, this category consists of an incoherent group of people who all have different dreams, expectations, different goals, and motives for undertaking their adventures; they all have their own motomobilities, a term coined by Pinch and Reimer (2012). Ultimately, what makes this group so interesting for a geographical thesis is that a major part of the adventure seems to be the act of travelling through landscapes that come with hardship, and into the so called freedom of the frontiers of (western) civilisation, such as the eastern outskirts of the Eurasian Continent and Africa which, with its vast deserts and dark rainforests, encompasses a wide range of landscape types. At the same time, however, this bracketing, does not keep us away from the more common themes and characteristics that motorcyclists of all shapes and sizes share, such as the relationship and intimate physical connection that a lot of motorcyclists feel with their motorcycle and the way the world around them is perceived and experienced through riding.

1.3 Motomobilities and Latourian Bodies

A person and their motorcycle, together as one, form what is commonly known and identified as the motorcyclist. His or her active engagement with the world can be identified, following Pinch and Reimer (2012), as a specific kind of motomobility. Both the literature and my personal experience let me identify corporeality, landscape, and adventure experience to be major variables that, together, construct the motorcycle adventure experience. All of those variables together, assembled in one instance, combine into something unique. In this process of assembling, the human being serves as a kind of mediator, as explained by Latour (1993). He argues that,

> [i]f the human does not possess a stable form, it is not formless for all that. If, instead of attaching it to one constitutional pole or the other, we move it closer to the middle, it becomes the mediator and even the intersection of the two. The human is not a constitutional pole to be opposed to that of the nonhuman. (Latour 1993, p.137)

Thus, Latour argues that humanity and non-humanity are inherently interconnected and cannot be seen as separate, for the one always informs the other (in Pyyhtinen & Tamminen 2011, p.140; Latour 1993). This would make the relationship, bond or connection that the motorcyclist has with their motorcycle a very easy one to accept, for, as Pyyhtinen and Tamminen continue, Latour's theory holds that humans are only enabled to do what they do because they are part of a bigger assemblage of elements, constituted of both human and non-human, both animate and inanimate and both concrete and abstract (in Pyyhtinen & Tamminen 2011, p.140).

Physical objects such as motorcycles, but also abstract modalities such as thoughts and images of adventure, risk, and landscape are all nonhumans, being attached to the human mediator who then becomes a specific individual in a specific

time; an adventure motorcyclist in action. Furthermore, the motorcycle, following Latour (1993), is not merely a machine made of matter; it is a philosophy. In an example, Latour explains how speed bumps are not (just) concrete objects; they are made of people and their intentions and goals, such as engineers and lawmakers (in Pyyhtinen & Tamminen 2011, pp.140–142). Such is the case with the motorcycle. It is not just meaningless rubber, plastic and steel. Its creators have embedded it with possibilities of speed and travel and its distributors and owners attribute adventure and freedom to it through branding and ultimate use and customization. Hence, the various brands, but certainly the various types of motorcycles available all have different possible intents and goals, and each type provides for a different prosthesis that makes the human attaching it to their body complete as a motorcyclist. Thus, if a person adds a sports motorcycle and uses it for riding at high speed, this person becomes a racer and, in our case, the person who adds an adventure motorcycle to their body with the idea of travelling the world, becomes a motorcyclist and an adventurer. The assemblage we are talking about here, as explained above, does not only consist of physical parts. Although these physical parts also come with a philosophy or embedded meaning, such as the motorcycle's image to be sporty or adventurous, the assemblage also consists of more abstract parts such as experience, goal, preference and other things of the mind. We will have a much more closer look at this in chapter three, where I will address the ideas of assemblages, but also cyborgs and hybrids in relation to the act of motorcycling, for there is much more to this notion than just a human rider and a pair of wheels.

1.4 Motorcyclists as Freedom-Seeking Frontier Travellers

The motorcyclist adding an adventure motorcycle to his or her body has the intention of becoming, or confirming, his or her identity as an adventurist and hence strives for certain goals in doing so. The term adventure and what constitutes one is not as straightforward as one might think, but John Swarbrooke et al. (2003) suggest it appears to be an activity that opens up new travel frontiers in a world that appears to be globally interconnected and almost completely discovered and where adventure tourists make destinations of the last places that are considered to be 'wilderness' (2003, p.xi). In their paper "Lone Wolves? Isolation and Solitude within the Frontier Travel Experience" (2009), Laing and Crouch sought out what motivates travellers who travel into the new and old frontiers. Frontiers are described by them as "[p]laces which currently lie at the fringes or extremes of our world or experiences, both geographically and socially/culturally, […] locations which lack a permanent resident population and/or existing tourist infrastructure" (Laing & Crouch 2009, p. 325). They studied and interviewed dozens of frontier travellers including mountaineers, cyclists, divers, sailors and even camel and horse riders. They identified a craving for adventure in their respondents that can be found in isolation and solitude, which are two of the main characteristics that adventure travellers look for.

Isolation and solitude are perceived to be crucial for the particular experiences the travellers are looking for, such as freedom (from the rules and restraints of modern life), authenticity ('unstaged' and 'real experiences'), spirituality, silence, opportunities for self-reflection, challenge, and self-actualization (Laing & Crouch 2009, pp. 332-337). The various modes of transport and

experiences of the respondents constructs quite a complete image of what a frontier traveller is looking for when their quest for isolation and solitude. Therefore, the outcomes of this study are, as Laing and Crouch suggest themselves, relevant for providers of frontier travel experiences by applying them to their marketing strategies and materials (Laing & Crouch 2009, p. 338). A gap in their research is, however, the adventure *motorcyclist*, setting out to seek the same frontiers as those who travel by foot, pedal bike or even camel. This is the gap I would like to fill with this thesis.

If motorcycle adventurers are to be included in this field of research, most of the characteristics as identified by Laing and Crouch (freedom, authenticity, spirituality, opportunities for self-reflection, challenge and self-actualization) hold for this specific group of travellers as much as for the divers and camel riders, except, then, for the aspect of silence, since riding a motorcycle inevitably involves mechanical sounds. Furthermore, like the case studies of Laing and Crouch, motorcycle adventures also involve "a high-degree of pre-preparation and planning, high-risk activities and situations and extraordinary experiences" (Laing & Crouch 2009, p. 325). Perhaps the presence of a fuelled engine and therefore continuous sounds during the actual act of motorcycling – leaving out the moments of rest – made them (either consciously or unconsciously) disregard motorcycles (and cars, for that matter) as part of their focus; their subjects travelled solely with the help of human power (bicycles, hiking, climbing), natural (wind) or animal (camel) powers; engines were absent.

Therefore, first of all, this thesis adds the motorcycle adventure traveller to this discussion. Its goal is not only to show why motorcyclists engage in the general act of motorcycling, but wants to explore why some of them go further than their

daily commutes and weekend trips on the tarmac and, instead, decide to dig into the sands and jungles of Africa. Motorcycling, and adventure motorcycling in particular, appears to be about more than just risk, which is why the adventure motorcyclist deserves its place in studies such as that of Laing and Crouch. Throughout chapters three, four and five, I will establish why motorcycling should be included in this debate. I first set out a deeper understanding of the motorcyclist as a subject in general and secondly, I discuss the motorcyclist's engagement with the landscape through movement.

Furthermore, as the title suggests, the overarching theme of this thesis is freedom. For decades now, the motorcycle has been considered to be a symbol of freedom and adventure in the West (Jackson 1977, p.144; Price-Davies 2011), for, as Steven Alford puts it, "the sensation of being on a motorcycle embodies what we're all seeking in life. Freedom" (Alford 2010). As explained by John Locke, the word 'freedom' is often seen as the "power to act in accordance with choice" in a context that speaks of society, rules and laws (in Dewey 1960, p.267). However, 'freedom' is also a term that is so often used by motorcyclists when asked to describe what they feel and experience both physically and mentally when they ride a motorcycle. It is used so often that it seems to have become an over determined term. For example, Jonny Bealby "particularly liked the idea of the freedom of a bike … especially after being stuck indoors for so many years" (Bealby 1995, prologue), although he had never ridden a motorcycle. The same is true for Sam Manicom. He states that "travelling on two wheels is the perfect way to explore a continent like this; it's all about freedom, and the ability to take advantage of opportunity" (Manicom 1995, back cover). Pinch and Reimer also relate the sensation of freedom to the comparison with car drivers, who are restricted in their movement in for example

queues, where motorcycles are able to filter slow-moving or even stationary traffic (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.4). Merleau-Ponty argues that concrete freedoms are found in the relationship between a subject and its context, mediated through action (Busch 2008, p.41). Freedom, then, "must have a field, which means that there must be for it [to occur] special possibilities, or realities which tend to cling to being" (Merleau-Ponty 1980, p.471). This means that freedom is always related to action which always happens in a certain context in relation to certain variables. These variables occur in "open situations requiring a certain completion and [which are] capable of constituting a background to either a confirmatory or transformatory decision" (Merleau-Ponty 1980, p.471). Still, when used in colloquial contexts, such as in the travel narratives used for this thesis, but also in motorcycle talk amongst friends, it appears to be an overarching term that at the same time gives us no specific information about what that freedom is exactly. Amongst themselves, motorcyclists will nod in consensus when someone states that motorcycling is about freedom, but when asked to explain it to others, non-motorcyclists, it either gets lost in translation, or the words to describe it cannot be found to begin with. Breaking down the idea of freedom through my three main modalities of the motorcycle experience aimed at providing the reader with a glimpse into the world of the motorcyclist.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Rationale for Subject

The relevance and importance of this study are twofold. Firstly, I have identified a gap in the existing literature on adventure travel and tourism, where many extreme sports and modes of transport are mentioned as perfect examples of adventure experiences, but where the motorcycle adventurer is omitted. There is not much scholarly literature on how motorcycling is experienced and why people engage in it (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.8). Thus, first and foremost, I believe that motorcycling itself provides an underestimated field of research. Secondly, the scholarly literature that *is* available on motorcycling mainly provides us with a very black and white – mostly black and more negative – overview of what motorcycling is about; most research deals with the risky side of motorcycling, how injuries occur and can be prevented, and how motorcyclists and other traffic participants can be made more aware of the dangers involved in motorcycling. Like Pinch and Reimer (2012) I seek to move beyond the discussions of road safety (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.2). What we are missing here are discussions of the motivations for engaging in motorcycling. The goal of this study then is to create an in-depth understanding of the motorcyclist's reasons for engaging in an activity that is widely known or accepted to be the most dangerous mode of transport. This thesis, therefore, will focus on motorcycling from the motorcyclist's point of view and will, furthermore, discuss the more positive side of the motorcycle experience (although the risk variable will be discussed in chapter five).

2.2 Rationale for Data Sources

Motorcycling culture as a whole is such a broad field of data sources that it would be tempting to construct a broad and general understanding of 'the motorcycle experience' without focusing on any of the specific modalities in more detail. Although chapters three and four will have an overall and general focus, chapter five, however, will fill the gap identified in the introduction, which will allow us to apply the more general characteristics of motorcycling to the particular case of adventure motorcycling.

The innumerable amounts and especially the different kinds of data sources, all demand different forms of analysis. There are, of course, written sources including travel narratives, magazines and newspapers and digital sources such as forum and blog posts on the internet. There is also a visual register, shaped by advertisements or photographs in magazines or on the internet. Furthermore there are more interactive ways to gather data, such as interviews, surveys and focus groups. After careful consideration of all the options in the light of the scope and time frame of this project, plus my academic experience gained in my BA in English Language and Literature so far, I decided that this thesis would mainly (but not solely) be based on literary analysis of both the academic canon *and* narrative sources available for case studies; travel accounts. Although there is much to say for incorporating other sources of information such as surveys, interviews and web content, some of which were utilised by Laing and Crouch for example, the type of data sources used here are more limited. As Silverman (2000) encourages,

> textual analyses depends upon very detailed data analysis. To make such analysis effective, it is imperative to have a limited body of data with which to work. ...

> [You] should establish the dataset with which you can most effectively work. (Silverman 2000, p.42)

Hence, given my experience in literature analysis during my BA and the limited timeframe of the project, a limited body of motorcycle narratives was the dataset with which I could work most effectively. Additionally, travel narratives can be considered as one-question and uninterrupted interviews that have become recorded without intervention of a researcher, as is supported by David Silverman (Silverman 2000, p.40).

Cutting down the types of data sources, however, still left me with a substantial dataset touching upon different aspects of motorcycling. The first idea that came to mind when looking for another way to narrow down the focus was (motorcycle) travel narratives as opposed to more general works such as Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974); the motorcycle is a first and foremost a mode of travel, a means of getting somewhere, so focusing on travel narratives appeared a logical focus. I will, however, discuss Melissa Holbrook Pierson's *The Perfect Vehicle* (1997), for it does clarify some of the more general aspects of motorcycling that are also part of adventure motorcycling. Also, as the Dictionary of Human Geography states, "one possible meaning of 'geography' is 'earth-writing', and so one might expect there to be a close association between geography and 'travel writing'" (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 857). Although geography as an academic discipline did not have a constant interest in 'travel writing', the current revival of interest in travel accounts (just look at the numerous blog websites targeting young travellers such as Horizons Unlimited (http://www.horizonsunlimited.com) and Adventure Rider (www.advrider.com) (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.13)) places this thesis in a wider context of the 'new

cultural geography' and the "expanded sense of geography as a science or formal discipline [in which] scholars have become much more attentive to the production of geographical knowledge in a variety of forms and from a variety of subject positions" (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 857). The study, then, of travel writing within geography is not a "narrow textualism [sic] in which the circle of interest is drawn tightly around the author and the text itself" (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 858) but rather a combination of multiple scholarly fields that deal with, for example, discovery, imperialism, post-colonialism, gender, cultural identities and so on.

It turned out that a large part of the available motorcycle travel literature appeared to be focused on adventure travel, rather than shorter day or weekend trips, or on the experience of motorcycling in general. This was not much of a surprise. Of course, the appeal of adventure stories is nothing new, as I will discuss in more detail in chapter five. Therefore, since the beginning of the twentieth century, when motorcycles entered the stage, most of the accounts that involved motorcycle experience were focused on travel, discovery and adventure.

My BA thesis on imaginative geographies in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Henry Morton Stanley's *In Darkest Africa* clearly showed that adventure and exploration are narrowly bound with the continent of Africa; certainly from a British point of view it has almost become a long lasting tradition in. This connection is also evident in the available motorcycle adventure narratives. This does not mean, however, that motorcycle adventure travel is only possible when the destination or stage is Africa; it does appeal to adventurists, but as Ted Simon (1980; 2008) and people such as Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman (through their *Long Way Round* (2005) trip) have shown, adventure can be found all over the globe. Eventually, I chose to analyse motorcycle travel literature describing journeys that

were undertaken between 1935 and 2007 written by both male and female and solo or team travellers. Beneath is a table that shows the titles and other characteristics of the travel narratives and their authors.

Table 1: Data Sources

Writer (s)	Book Title	Year of Travel	Gender	Nationality
Theresa Wallach	The Rugged Road	1935	Female	British
Ted Simon	Jupiter's Travels	1973	Male	British
Sam Manicom	Into Africa	1991	Male	British
Jonny Bealby	Running with the Moon	<1995 (1st publication)	Male	British
Lois Pryce	Red Tape and White Knuckles	2006	Female	British
Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman	The Long Way Down	2007	Male	British

The first motorcycle adventurer, Theresa Wallach, along with her travel companion Florence Blenkiron, was one of the pioneering figures that used the motorcycle as a way of engaging with the world. As early as 1934 she set out on a quest to discover Africa and to escape the gender-specific expectations of Britain. To her, "a motorcycle was the very embodiment of travel and adventure – after all, that was what life was all about" (Wallach 2011, p.10). Then there is quite a substantial gap in the data. The first half of this gap in my data was caused by a decline in (adventure) travel during the war and post-war years (Fransen 2013). In the 1950s and 1960s, people did set out on adventures and published some (but not a substantial amount of) literature, but their books were either unobtainable or fell outside the scope and focused solely on on-road motorcycling or day trips. It was not until 1973, when Ted Simon, "the godfather of motorcycle travel" (Moore 2012; Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.13), set off on his epic journey dubbed *Jupiter's Travels* (1980) around the world

that both the number of travellers and narratives started to increase. Simon's goal was not the adventure per se, but mainly the story that could be told about it afterwards and a gaining a "comprehension of the world" (Simon 1980, p.404). This story has fuelled several other motorcyclists' dreams and encouraged them to ride in his tracks and to see for themselves the things he described. Most of them focused their trip and narrative on travelling through Africa, albeit via different routes, varying from crossing straight through the Sahara Desert and into the Congo, taking the more eastern route via the Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia, and even a round trip combining those two major routes. Their motives for undertaking such a journey are various. Jonny Bealby (1995), for example, was searching for "meaning in his life" (Bealby 1995, back cover) after his fiancé had suddenly died and hoped adventure would be the answer. If anything, he did find peace, and inspiration, after his journey, to begin a travel agency. Others just had plain 'taste for adventure', such as Lois Pryce (2008), who aimed at having a 'one woman's motorcycle adventure through Africa', from North to South via the more war affected areas. Sam Manicom (1995) also travelled alone, mainly wanted to break free from everyday life and also tried to raise some money for charity. Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman (2007), on the other hand, approached it all rather differently. The original idea was similar to the others: 'just to travel through Africa', inspired by Ted Simon, whom they even invited to meet up with in Mongolia (Moore 2012). However, their context and means were completely different: being famous actors, they used their celebrity status to turn their journey into a sponsored film production and travelled with help of a support crew: something the other adventurers did not do.

What is notable about this list of narratives is that all of the travellers are of British origin. Although nationality was not a specific prerequisite for the ultimate

selection, it appears that the adventures that the British imperialists and adventurers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century dreamt of in Africa are still to be found there and chased after by their fellow countrymen and women up until the current day. In fact, Bealby explicitly refers to Burton and Livingstone when putting his own adventure in perspective; he, in his own way, is reliving the adventures of these prominent British explorers. Although it won't be a key theme for this thesis, this bit of information might be worth following up on in another research project that could help identify gaps in adventure travel specifically targeting the British adventure travel market, such as providing detailed routes that were used by these nineteenth-century explorers, highlighting significant places and informing travellers about the historical activities and moments that might have taken place there.

A second but significantly smaller set of data was added later and was gathered from the Third International Journal of Motorcycle Studies Conference in London in July 2013, where I met up with motorcyclists from all over the world in a scholarly but informal setting. The three-day conference was filled with a wide variety of approaches that engaged both academically and non-academically with motorcycle culture in the broadest sense imaginable. The conference presented me with several new insights to develop my thesis, both in the panel sessions and in the discussions with fellow academics and motorcyclists afterwards. These developments prompted me to include several non-literary sources that approach the topic from a more artistic and non- or more-than-representational angle. The artwork of Catrin Webster, a Welsh artist and scholar and a short film directed and produced by American producer Miguel Grunstein. Because of the visual nature of these works, both will be used in the section on the visual experience of landscapes, where they will complement the data from the literary sources. Here they will be able to do

what words cannot: depict an *active* impression of the landscape as experienced whilst riding a motorcycle.

2.3 Rationale for Qualitative Methods

Studying the *experience* of motorcycling, as opposed to the numerous statistical approaches to research the activity in relation to dangers and risk, calls for qualitative research methods. Since its academic development in the 1950s and 1960s as a counter reaction to the quantitative research approaches that accommodated 'proper scientific research' such as mathematics and physics, qualitative research methods have been emerging and changing in multiple and various forms because there was a need to focus more on context and real life (Mayring 2000; Hsieh & Shannon 2005; Cavanagh 1997; Connelly & Clandinin 2013). John Creswell (1998, p.15) explains qualitative research to be the perfect tool to explore social and human issues. To some, however, qualitative methods (still) embody all that is un-scientific about the field of social sciences and dealing with qualitative data. Critics of qualitative methods as a whole will argue, as Smith (2000) states, that "many [qualitative researchers] emphasize subjectivity and reject the "objective," "realist," "positivist-empiricist," and "mechanistic" assumptions of traditional science with its goal of "context-free" and value neutral laws" (Smith 2000, p.327). In short: 'real science' is objective and impartial; qualitative research is interpretative, thus leaves room for biased and subjective outcomes and is therefore not to be taken as 'real' or 'pure' science. Nonetheless it is primarily real life that we are dealing with here. Furthermore, as we have seen and shall see later when we discuss the work of Paul Bellaby and David Lawrenson (2001), the results of a quantitative analysis of motorcycling do not echo the experiences of motorcyclists themselves and certainly do not provide us with an explanation why

motorcyclists engage in a statistically dangerous activity; statistics merely show us the bare numbers.

Hence, for this thesis I use Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) guide to narrative inquiry as a guide line. Narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly argue, is always highly autobiographical (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.121), as are most qualitative research methods. However, as Smith argues, "narrative analysis permits a holistic approach to discourse that preserves context and particularity [and reveals information] that may not be available by other methods" (Smith 2000, pp. 327-8). Since life, is less about statistics and more about feelings, experiences and thoughts, and because these concepts are conveyed through language it would be more inconsiderate to try to treat those feelings, experiences and thoughts as statistics than to try to interpret them within their contexts and social paradigms; this would be a denial of the quality and validity of qualitative data sources. I believe that the power of written words, chosen carefully and propelled into the world for the bigger audiences without any room for nuancing statements allows for a more thorough interpretation than personal interviews and web content such as forums where both traveller and reader/spectator have the opportunity of questioning and answering, reconsidering statements and editing phrases along the way. This does not mean, however, that the data in written accounts such as narratives are more straightforward than the data enclosed in interviews and that there is just what the author wrote down at that point in time: content is never a fixed set of data. The output data is still subject to the input of the researcher, as is any text; authorial intent is not the only variable in creating meaning through text (Wimsatt Jr. & Beardsley 1946; Irvin 2006). As Mason explains, when using qualitative research methods it is "more accurate to speak of *generating* data than collecting data,

precisely because most qualitative perspectives would reject the idea that a researcher can be a completely neutral collector of information about the social world" (Mason 2009, p. 52). It is important, as she argues, to make a distinction between data sources and the *method* of generating useful data, since approaches that deal with biographical and life histories, such as the ones that are used for this thesis, are usually highly interpretive (Mason 2009, p.56). This means that the data extracted from the data sources is subject to the point of reference of the researcher; even more than in quantitative research (where even so a point of departure and filter are decided by the researcher), the point of reference, and, more importantly, the (unconsciously influencing) experiences of the researcher guide the way in which the outcomes are interpreted and presented.

Research interests, certainly when it comes to those choosing their own thesis topics, come, as Clandinin and Connelly argue, "out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (2000, p.121). For narrative inquirers then, they continue, "it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.122). In other words, when choosing a topic that is close to your heart, do not forget that you, as a researcher, have to serve a wider audience than just yourself and your own curiosity; this is a thesis and not just a (research) diary. Although a personal interest in the research topic is highly recommended, it can also cause some problems when for example the researcher is asked "why [he] is interested in a topic and why [he] has chosen to frame it in the way that they have" or when the researcher conveys the justification of the inquiry in personal terms; "we need to make sure that when we say "I", we know that "I" is connecting with "they" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000,

p.122). As I have experienced myself, defining the research's aims and starting points to others is not as easy as explaining them why the subject matters to you.

The practice of narrative inquiry, then, works best if we "begin with explorations of the phenomena of experience [(i.e. the narratives themselves)] rather than in the comparative analysis of various methodological frames" and work from there, for qualitative researchers studying their data sources will mostly discover that there is no single method or approach that; when incorporating your selected data into your research as research texts, they will automatically ask for different theoretical frameworks which we can identify by tapping into our own affiliation with the subject (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.128).

The selected data used for this research, then, are autobiographical narratives and some artistic projects portraying the experience of motorcycling in a visual form. Focusing on the autobiographies, as Molloy (1991) notes, they are always a representation or perhaps more accurately a retelling: "the life to which it supposedly refers is already a kind of narrative construct. Life [as a representation] is always, necessarily, a tale" (in Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.101). Or, as Bell puts it:

> narrative inquiry rests on the epistemological assumption that we as human beings make sense of random experience by the imposition of story structures. That is, we select those elements of experience to which we will attend, and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect the stories available to us. (Bell 2002, p.207)

Narrative inquirers always have to be aware of this; autobiographies and other non-fictional narratives are always just one of the possible representations that could have emerged; "they are not complete prior to their telling but are assembled to meet situated interpretive demand" (Gubrium & Holstein 1998, p.166). Pierre Bourdieu (1986) even argues that biographies are an illusion, for:

> The joint interest of the object (the person himself) and subject (the researcher getting the story) or the biography project is to construct a coherent story, with a purpose … is an illusion … [for] in reality a biography is almost always a discontinuous story which lacks coherence in itself. (Bourdieu 1986, translated from French in Denzin 1989, p.61)

However, when we realise that (auto)biographies on every kind of subject always tell us more than just the events that are described, considering them an illusion does not, in any way, give them enough credit; most of the time we also, or perhaps even rather, learn something about the author's personal life such as upbringing, religious conviction and political preferences (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.101; Denzin 1989, p.62), or, as Denzin puts it:

> Rather, what must be established is *how* individuals give coherence to their lives, when they write or talk self-autobiographies. The sources of this coherence, the narratives that lie behind them, and the larger ideologies that structure them must be uncovered. (Denzin 1989, p.62, my emphasis)

In our case, we learn more about the personal motives for people undertaking the adventurous journeys that are described in the narratives and this will help us to answer the overarching question of what it is when adventure motorcyclist talks about the experiencing of freedom.

It is important to realise, that when writing up the final research text, the thesis in this case, that we pay enough attention to the selected data that we used to gain our insights into the subject. As Clandinin and Connelly emphasise, there is a risk that the researcher fails to include enough examples from the data; this results in disconnecting the data from the thesis, which leaves the reader with a lot of question marks. The researcher is satisfied, having the overview of the argument with the relevance of the data in the back of his head, while the audience is left floundering in a pile of theory (2000, p.139). So what we do to avoid this disconnection of data and

theory is applying the theory actively and concretely to the data within the chapters instead of in a confined literature review. Furthermore, there are two massive dangers within writing up narrative inquiries, as I personally see it. The first danger is that one of the voices that make up the story gets lost along the way or is (seemingly) over- or misrepresented (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.147). There is the voice of the researcher, myself, but also the voice(s) of the providers of my data and, of course, the voice(s) of the scholars and other theorists that provided me with the a scholarly framework. Finding a balance between representing all the voices in the thesis is not easy. Making connections between a selection of texts from the data and some of the theory and the researchers own interpretation is an example of a triangular construction, where it is up to the researcher to create scholarly knowledge from non-scholarly data collected from two or various fields of knowledge. In this process, things might get lost that were important for the authors of the data sources.

The second danger or problem is that of signature of the researcher/writer (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, pp.147–148). Ultimately, everything that ends up in, or is excluded from the thesis, is the researcher's own choice and therefore reflects the researcher's own voice. For, as Alan Peshkin (1988) argues, not only should the constructed nature of the narratives used be noted in our research process, but also the unavoidable subjectivity of ourselves as a researcher: only with this acknowledgement can we 'tame' it and use it to our advantage:

> By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather, enable myself to manage it – to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome – as I progress through collecting, analyzing, and writing up my data. (Peshkin 1988, p.20)

The key problem or dilemma, then, is the writing down up of the thesis and *how* the researcher is present in their own writing. If the researcher's voice is too overly present, this may give the impression of the author abusing the right of subjectivity, whilst a rarely visible signature can make it look like that there is a lack of own ideas (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.148). I have chosen to use a partial narrative form in which my own signature and own voice are quite strongly represented whilst not neglecting my academic duty to build on and learn from the established literature and theories. Some parts of the dissertation narrate my own experiences with the subject in order to show the engagement between myself and my research, which hopefully eases the reader into a more scholarly approach in analyses. My own experiences, narrated through the thesis make my thesis what I want it to be: an inquiry into the world of adventure motorcycling, born out of my own curiosity and urge to share my findings with an academic world that appears to be flooded by accounts focusing on the more negative sides of the activity that gives my own life more fun and meaning. That is why, before I continue, I feel obliged to confirm my personal point of departure.

2.4 Personal point of departure

Because of the highly interpretative and narrative nature of this thesis, it seems appropriate to summarize and emphasise my personal experience in relation to the subject in order to avoid misconceptions about my intentions, trustworthiness and about the research carried out. Therefore, I want to declare that I am a motorcyclist. I own an adventure motorcycle, a BMW R1100GS to be precise, and I dream of undertaking one of the adventures as undertaken by the authors of the adventure literature used in this thesis myself. Yet I have no motorcycle experience other than mainly on-road riding and some minor off-road experience, including

gravel and deep sand. As an *insider* researcher, a term coined by Paul Hodkinson (2005), I can tap into resources of both sides of the spectrum in order to set up a research environment that makes sense. This, by no means, implies that this thesis will be autobiographical or will function as a diary which relates to my wishes and dreams when it comes to motorcycle adventure travel. Neither does it imply that I wish to evangelize the possibilities of (adventure) motorcycling and to portray it as something that is *better* than the other modes of transport available. It does imply that recognising significant themes that are emerging from the data is a much faster, easier and clearer process when you have this insider knowledge (Hodkinson 2005). However, as with the possible problems encountered when writing up narrative inquiry as discussed above, my personal connection with the subject may also cause some problems. Being passionate about a subject and having this insider knowledge you want to share with the (academic) world, tends to make you lose track of the (need for) focus of your research. Passion can easily take over and encourage you to tell everyone everything there is to know about the subject, with the risk of telling too little about too much. It is also important to realise that people who are passionate about something inherently try to defend its honour by avoiding critical remarks or ignoring certain aspects of the subject to make the subject more appealing or perhaps even more interesting. This is also something that can happen in research, which is, again, why I express my personal point of department this clearly.

2.5 Research Problem and Questions

The central research question of this thesis is what is adventure motorcycling all about? In order to answer this, sub-questions had to be developed in order to address the several different modes of experience that would help to create a more concrete

view of adventure motorcycling is all about, both as an action and as an idea or philosophy. The first question we have to ask, then, is what is understood when motorcyclists talk about the experience of freedom that a lot of motorcyclists refer to. Secondly, and relating to question one, I also ask:

1. How can we conceptualise the motorcyclist when looking at the combination of human and (nonhuman) technology?
2. How do adventure motorcyclists engage with their surroundings/the landscape?
3. How can we explain why the adventure motorcyclist seeks out the challenges that are inherent to adventure motorcycling?

Within each of these chapters, we see how the separate modes of experience all relate in one way or another to the concept of freedom and how the motorcyclist experiences this freedom and in essence shows why adventure motorcyclist engages in the activity.

2.6 Outline of Dissertation

The overall experience of motorcycle adventure travel is constructed of several smaller phenomena or modes of experience. I discuss these modes of experience in three different chapters, preceded by an introduction and this methodology section and followed by a conclusion. Chapter two, thus, focuses on the methodology of this thesis. I start by explaining how my subject and my choice for data sources came into being, followed by a clarification on what qualitative research methods I have considered and used. Furthermore it clarifies and pinpoints my personal relationship and point of reference for this thesis, which undoubtedly

contributes massively to the construction of both my research plan and eventually this end product.

Chapter three then dives into the core of motorcycling, which is the corporeal experience and the creation of the biker-body. It draws on Donna Haraway's (1991) uniform hybridity, where technology and human actually become one new form of being. It also works with Deleuze and Guattari's work (1994) on assemblages and continues with the work of Latour and focuses on his Actor-Network-Theory.

Chapter four focuses more on the experience of landscape. Building on the works of John Wylie (2007) I discuss how within the experience of adventure motorcycling the engagement with landscape goes much further than just the visual. The landscape is a stage for performance, the provider of hardship and romantic sensations, and the motorcyclist's gaze is developed not only through just looking at it, but experiencing and wanting to experience it with the entire body. Motorcycling enables a freedom to feel; to experience the surrounding world with the entire body. Through the works of, among others, Yi-Fu Tuan I discuss how this freedom comes to exist. The visual aspects of the landscape experience is discussed with the help of artwork by Dr. Catrin Webster and a short film produced by Miguel Grunstein (2012), accompanied by J.B. Jackson's essay "The Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder" (1977).

Chapter five concentrates on the experience of the actual adventure, dealing with challenge, endurance, hardship, narrative and expectations; on what is experienced whilst moving through the world and how this relates to our identities. The general theoretical framework of this chapter is provided by Arnold van Gennep's schéma for the Rites of Passage (1960), which will be combined with

Laing and Crouch's (2009) approach to identifying the frontier traveller's characteristics. Challenge and adventure, as we shall see, are tied closely together and this relationship is one of the things that make motorcycle adventure travel an interesting thing to study. The freedom aspect is discussed in two ways. Firstly it is explained as 'freedom through isolation' and separation from the restraints of everyday life. Then, secondly, we approach it in the light of a freedom to *choose*; a freedom to *assess* possible dangers and decide whether or not to proceed.

Together these chapters explore the different kinds of freedom that make motorcycling a unique combination of experiencing the world. I want to add to the small amount of studies of motorcycling that move beyond the concern of road-safety. The choice of modes of experience, the biker-body identity, landscape engagement and adventure experience, offer insight into the core of the motorcycle adventurist's existence, motivations and expectations. The three chapters and modes of experience collectively form an understanding of the freedom that is experienced when engaging in motorcycle adventure travel.

Chapter 3: The Biker-Body – The Birth of the Motorcyclist

I'm thinking of all the things our skin can do:
move in uncommon metre
explore foreign caves
feel the hollows where we keep the secrets
the ones we're never supposed to know
we know
...
I thought of a scalpel
to cut through the mystery
of our bodies moving
thought better of it
your spine curved around me this time
I moved to answer your chest
with a simple kissed caress
you opened a little more
a little less sadness in the space
where our eyes meet
(Cacrowe 2013)

Like car consumption, motorcycle consumption, or the choice of buying a motorcycle, is not about money and rational choices (Sheller 2004). It all begins with the specifications on paper and that first feel, that first touch of the motorcycle. Like Cacrowe's poem suggests, our bodies are able to feel in so many different ways, especially when engaged in movement. We move our hands and our entire bodies in order to discover the unknown and to explore our relationships and connections with the world around us in order to find out how to interact with it. When I am looking to buy a motorcycle it is not so much the aesthetic but even more the capabilities and kinaesthetic properties of the motorcycle that eventually will be most important when making a final decision. First I have a look at the specifications: I need to know how much it weighs, how big the fuel tank is and what its action radius is. I want to know how it is supposed to handle different terrains and speeds and whether or not I can fit some panniers on the motorcycle quite easily for a longer trip. Then I walk around the motorcycle, and before I have a test sit, I touch it with my hands at

some places such as the tank, the saddle and the exhaust, just to see whether it gives me some special feeling: does it feel right? Then I mount it when it is standing on its middle stand, which allows you to sit on the motorcycle as if you were riding it. I place myself in the saddle and wiggle a bit to see whether my body feels comfortable. Are my feet in the right position? How far do my arms have to stretch to reach the handlebars and does it involve leaning too much forward? How does the saddle feel? Can I imagine myself being on this motorcycle for an entire day or an entire vacation? If all of this initially feels good, it is time for a test drive, where more of the kinaesthetic relationship between motorcyclist and motorcycle is tested. Do I feel that there is a good relationship to be built? Can I (learn how to) handle it? Motorcycles come with different characters; some are very supple and smooth, others are more Spartan and require hard work when riding. To each their own (Sheller 2004, p.228). I prefer a combination of both. I do have to feel that I am riding a motorcycle, I need to hear the gear box make clear and mechanical noises when shifting gears, its weight needs to be in balance and fit for me to handle, and above all, it needs to feel active rather than passive; otherwise I would have bought a scooter or one of those three-wheel 'motorcycles' as made by Piaggio. So ultimately, my body decides whether I buy the motorcycle or not, my *body* has to feel comfortable in combination with roughly 230kgs of plastic, rubber and steel moving at different kinds of speeds on different surfaces in different circumstances.

So first we have the human body; presumably a neat and concrete physical object that clearly has its boundaries (the skin), its abilities (e.g. to walk or talk) and its limits (e.g. limits of speed and heat or cold endurance). And secondly, there is the motorcycle. But does it work like that? Can we divide those two entities? As I have specified earlier in the introduction, following Latour, we can see humans, their

bodies, and the things they use as assemblages. Humans are only enabled to do what they do because they are part of a bigger assemblage of elements, constituted of everything varying from the social to the physical world (Pyyhtinen & Tamminen 2011). In this context, the motorcycle is as much part of an assemblage as is for example an education, a walking stick and even other humans or animals. The motorcycle itself is also more than an assemblage of physical components such as wheels, a saddle, a motor and an exhaust. In fact, it is also made of the intentions and goals of its manufacturers. These same embedded intentions can be found in the Latour's example of the speed bump, which are not just objects, but deliver a message and are placed to uphold the laws in terms of speed restrictions and safety management as determined by the government (in Dant 2004, p.71). For some people, fast and stream lined motorcycles are built to embrace speed, whilst high seated and sturdy motorcycles are meant for rough roads and long journeys that enable adventure. What is fascinating is that the motorcycle has an image of being the perfect mode of transport for adventurers and globe travellers. Although people can choose from hundreds of other modes or transport, it appears that, to some people, there is something mystical and magical, something heroic and liberating about the motorcycle that makes it perfect for undertaking an adventure.

3.1 Freedom to Move: the Concept of Affordance

The creation of the vehicle-human combination is related to the affordance that vehicles such as cars and motorcycles bring with them for humans; the affordance of "locomotion and mobility … and motility (the capacity to move spontaneously and independently)" (Dant 2004, p.65; also see Sheller 2004). Or, as Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, p.53) puts it, "a tool or a machine enlarges a person's world when

he feels it to be a direct extension of his corporeal powers". The combination of human and machine then, complements or replaces the already present abilities of the human body; it enhances, for example, the radius of action, which means that with the help of a motorised vehicle a person can travel further away in the same amount of time than without it. With this, it affords the motorcyclist more destinations and possibilities. James J. Gibson's (1979) original description of the concept of affordance was related to animals (including humans) and the natural environment and stated that,

> the affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal [including humans], what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill… [The word affordance] implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment. (Gibson 1979, p.127)

In short, affordances are aspects of objects or environments that allow living beings certain possibilities in terms of action and in our case also experiences. Relating the concept of affordance to the affordances provided by technologies such as the motorcycle means shifting the focus from affordance as something that occurs accidentally or unconsciously created by nonhumans or nature, to deliberate human constructions that create affordances directly. Hence, strictly speaking, the affordances of the vehicle-human combination are an active choice and thus artificial affordances created by humans. This intention holds for the original ideas that led and still lead to developing them, but also for every time someone decides to use a vehicle. The concept of affordance might be best understood in terms of how it approaches the lived world, because

> it establishes the properties of material things in relation to a particular species [and because] it treats the world of objects and material forms as connected in ways that are enabled or constrained by their physical properties. (Dant 2004, p.65)

However, a bit further in the argument, Dant states that Gibson's concept of affordance "does not offer any account of the dynamics of relations between humans and objects; it overlooks the fact that [those relations] change over time and according to social context" (2004, p.69). In other words: Gibson's theory of affordance is one that focuses on an affect that only travels in one direction: the (human-made) vehicle affords the human participant certain abilities.

J.B. Jackson, in his essay "The Abstract World of the Hot-Rodder" (1977), argues that motorcycling enables an embodied way of looking at the world. We shall discuss this more in chapter four, but here I want to point out how he argues that, with the arrival of the motorcycle;

> [t]he motorcyclist went farthest afield from all of [the other modes of transport] and sought out rough terrain and paths impassable for four-wheeled vehicles. Each of these sportsmen saw aspects of the countryside that he had never seen before. … This topographical freedom was a revelation; to be able to desert the well-marked, well-travelled path, to leave rails and highways behind and to move swiftly at one's own free will across remote hills and valleys and rivers and lakes was a fundamental departure from the old Sunday walk. (Jackson 1977)

In short, the motorcycle appears to afford a person a form of topographical freedom, the capacity to move across and towards places by motor powered vehicle that were out of reach until now; his radius of action, as discussed earlier, is extended. For example, in a conversation with a woman who is unable (or unwilling) to see what is so special about travelling with a motorcycle instead of a four wheeled and caged (and thus safer) vehicle, Lois Pryce breaks the affordances of the motorcycle down to some of the most obvious key facts;

> Well, there are certainly places you can go on a dirt bike where you couldn't get to in a car. If you see a goat track going up a mountain, you can just nip down there and see where it goes. And a bike's portable, especially a small trail bike like mine;

> if it breaks down a couple of men can lift it into a truck or a train or something an I can pick it up, and haul it out of tricky situations. (Pryce 2008, p.253)

Pryce's explanation of a motorcyclist's advantages has a lot to do with motility and the freedom a lot of motorcyclists seek when undertaking such a journey; the possibility to act on impulses and go wherever. A car is much bigger in size and is heavier, which makes a lot of manoeuvrings impossible and in rough areas means having serious restrictions on freedom when it comes to determining routes and trying to follow the narrower but not necessarily impenetrable paths that are encountered along the way. This is where we can see that although other vehicles such as cars and trains certainly provide us with certain affordances in terms of speed and thus action radius, the motorcycle provides the rider with more options in terms of movement into for example narrower places. As Pinch and Reimer emphasise in their conclusion "relatively small vehicles enable greater freedom of movement" when it comes to overland travel (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.14). This does not mean that the possibilities of a motorcycle are endless and limitless. However, the manoeuvrability, size and weight of a motorcycle, and certainly the kind of motorcycle Pryce chose herself, opens a lot of routes that will stay closed for cars and other big vehicles. These advantages also hold for her second argument: if the motorcycle breaks down, or when you have to take a train for a part of your route, a motorcycle is far easier to transport than a car. The idea of freedom here coincides with concrete affordances such as radius of action and destinations; one can go to places that would otherwise be beyond limit. These affordances are a one-way process: they afford the motorcyclist certain freedoms; because of its non-human inanimate nature, the fact that a motorcycle is allowed to travel there too is not considered a valid affordance.

Ultimately, adding a (technological and inanimate) nonhuman to human physique as a creator of affordances might be considered a prosthetic. A prosthetic is described as "the replacement of a missing body part with an artificial substitute" (Black et al. 2009, p.602), and thus re-establishes the body as a whole with all or most of its former functionalities; it affords people the possibility of restoration and revalidation. With reference to the motorcycle, however, the body (in most cases) is not impaired and there are no limbs missing; here the prosthetic is an enhancement of the body, an extension on an already functioning body where the result is expansion of its possibilities rather than restoring them. The body in general is, as Juliet Corbin (2003) states following Maurice Merleau-Ponty,

> more than just an object to be decorated and enhanced. It is more than a physiologic organism functioning according to a prescribed genetic code. It is more than a container of the self. It is more than a mediator between the self and the world. It is … the embodiment of who we are. The self becomes what it is through body. The body is the self's representative in the world. (Corbin 2003, p.358)

Corbin, here, makes the body, the physical appearance and tangible object that is a human, the culmination of our being. Without the body we would not have– within our current understandings – a concrete presence and therefore would have no concrete and physical relationship with our environment. The mind is not exposed to cold or heat, our thoughts do not move us through vast deserts and deep jungles; ultimately it is the body that is the enabler of such sensations and understandings. That is why, as Corbin continues:

> [p]eople learn to trust their body's language—the sensations that it sends. They know that when they put their foot down on the ground the body will send back a message saying the pavement is even or uneven. Then, they can make adjustments, usually unconsciously, in where they place their feet. ... As human beings, we know that certain experiences are "real" because we've learned to trust the messages sent

> by our bodies. Meaning of life is also derived from body. It comes *from being able to do, to look, to experience life in ways that the self comes to expect.* (Corbin 2003, p.358)

As Corbin states, we think of what we – or rather our bodies – are *able to do*. When adding a motorcycle to the human body, these abilities extend from the soft and slow(er) body to the solid and fast(er) motorcycle. An able and healthy human being moves itself primarily through walking when moving from A to B. This is, compared to automated travel such as motorcycling and let alone flying, a slow process. So, what we do to get around faster is add a motor and a pair of wheels to our body and become something that is able to do more; if we imagine ourselves to be destined to be *able to do more*, we can simply do so.

One of the scholars who would argue in favour of such an extension of the definition is Arnold Gehlen (1984) who sees human-beings as incomplete to begin with. They do, however, as he argues , have the "advantage of not being confined to one environment alone, and they can in fact fit into many possible worlds [and] technologies can thus be considered in an anthropocentric way as kinds of orthopaedic prostheses" (Gehlen 1984, cited in Parrinello 2001, p.210). Maldonado (1989, 1997, also cited in Parrinello 2001) specifies these orthopaedic prostheses into three categories, locomotory, sensory and intellective, of which, obviously, the first is the one to our concern, since all vehicles, including the motorcycle, belong to this category. Locomotory prostheses, Parrinello argues following Gehlen's and Maldonado's hypotheses, "widen the range of human activities [by] making spaces accessible that would otherwise would be beyond reach" (Parrinello 2001, p.210). The motorcycle is a perfect example of such a prosthetic. Because it widens the radius of action because of its speed ability, it allows for access to places that would otherwise be beyond reach and, as Pryce explained, its size combined with this

action radius allows the motorcyclist to go to places that would be impossible to reach with a car that is too big for certain types of terrain.

This development, then, gave rise to an ever expanding leisurely mode of experience of the use of technologies through travel and tourism (Parrinello 2001). In our daily lives, most of us are restrained to (among others) jobs and family responsibilities that tend to focus more on the intellectual and psychological/social developments we might achieve. The motorcycle allows us to withdraw ourselves from all of that. As Sergio Fava explained in his paper presentation "Homebound: Motorcycle Touring and Transitional States" at the 3rd International Journal of Motorcycle Studies (IJMS) conference in London in 2013,

> The nature of bike riding is that you are forced to be in the moment, to live in the here and now. We are always living in the future, always anticipating what is coming next. On your motorcycle, the past and future collapse into the present; where all your focus is easily directed to keeping the bike upright and enjoying the sensations. (Fava 2013, compiled paraphrasing)

The present, the here and now, is clear. Of course, the extent to which one is able to forget about the past and the future also depends on the kind of riding (sporty or more casual), skill of motorcyclist (novice or seasoned) and goals (ride to think or ride to forget), but the motorcycle affords the motorcyclist the *opportunity* to engage in something that is 'true' and 'possible' to achieve for the motorcyclist at that moment in time. As Lisa Garber added, agreeing with Fava, once you put the helmet on and start that motorcycle, it is just you in the here and now, and you can decide what will occupy your mind protected by that helmet: from everything to nothing; you are in control (personal communications, 2013). More about the motorcycle and

its affordance in terms of psychological development will follow in chapter five when focusing on the idea behind motorcycle adventure travel.

The motorcycle affords the motorcyclist the freedom to expand our horizons in terms of speed and location and, at the same time, isolates us from certain aspects of our lives. Some people, on the other hand, have had to cope with more traumatic experiences that might take away our sense of or trust in our autonomy. J. Paul Rand's paper called "Leisurely Motorcycle Riding: A Phenomenological study of the psychology of leisurely motorcycle riding" (2011) focuses, amongst other things, on this connectedness, which is dubbed by him and his research subjects as 'the feeling' and which is supposed to help traumatized war veterans to get back to their old selves and to regain confidence. Rand wrote this paper for *Riding for Right*, an organisation that is, according to its website,

> dedicated to helping coach good men to become better men through healthy well-being and riding. The research is based on the most current trends of humanistic psychology - seeking to understand not only the performance of sport, but the motivation of experience in our efforts to help people overcome traumatic stress, [and] especially trauma brought on from overseas deployment. (Riding for Right n.d.)

The participants in Rand's study were all asked to talk about their experience of motorcycling and what they recognised to be its core qualities and benefits and how they thought motorcycling enriched their lives. He then coded the common themes amongst which were 'union of mechanized bike and rider' and 'the feeling' which is summarized by Rand as a culmination of all other coded themes such as, for example, the sound that is made by the exhaust pipes, sometimes also dubbed as "the songs of the motorcycle world" (Holbrook Pierson 1997, p.21). This 'feeling' is described by one of his respondents as something that "words can't describe"(Rand 2011, p. 14); a description that seems to confirm Moon's words. Rand's theme of the

'union of mechanized bike and rider' is something we will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, but focusing on 'the feeling', there is no easy way to go about feelings and what they are or how to measure them. What we have established, however, is that one of the most important aspects of motorcycling, one of the key experiences, is the notion of affordance, of possibilities and of choice. All three of these characteristics together combine or culminate into something described as a feeling of freedom; a freedom to move.

Auto- and motomobilities afford us to expand our horizons and allow us to look at the world from an entire different perspective and to engage with machines such as motorcycles at an intimate level as a vehicle-human assemblage. This, however, is where the affordance as negotiated by Gibson might fall short because of its one-way chain of affect: object to subject. As Dant argues, "the mobility and locomotion of [a vehicle] are [as much] dependent on the affordance of the driver [as vice versa;] it would be more precise to say that it is the *assemblage* of driver and car that affords mobility" (2004, p.67). In short: there is more to the combination of a vehicle and a human body than just the human body being afforded certain activities. Yet, mobility itself is also more than a human body just moving from A to B; the engagement involved here goes much deeper. The first level of intimate engagement to a lot of motorcyclists is to consider their vehicle to be a fully-fledged *travel companion* that does not hold the motorcyclist back in any way and affords him/her more than just speed and motility; it offers support and companionship and a mutual level of understanding.

3.2 Personifying of the Motorcycle: More than just friends

We might say that we choose our vehicles the way we choose our friends. They have to be reliable, you have to feel safe and comfortable with them, you must be able to be yourself and up to a certain point they challenge and support you in even your craziest ideas. At the same time, however, they are realistic and will let you know when something is off or too tricky or even dangerous. As Mimi Sheller states,

> different emotional registers are produced through the variations in the embodied driving experience … Some feel comfortable with a smooth and silent ride, other prefer an all-wheel drive that shakes the bones and fills the nostrils with diesel and engine oil. (Sheller 2004, p.228)

Each motorcycle brand, each motorcycle type within a brand and, like humans, each individual motorcycle has its own character and its own strengths and weaknesses and will work well with certain kinds of riders whilst being an absolute nightmare to others. In order to create a successful relationship, the motorcyclist must come to understand those traits and get to know the character and temperament of his/her motorcycle. For the motorcyclist, this 'knowing' sometimes evolves in considering the motorcycle as a person and thus a full travel companion. This is why motorcyclists often talk to or about their motorcycle as if they were real individuals, such as Lois Pryce shows here,

> Thank you, thank you, thank you bike! I thought, as it whisked me away from the scene without a fuss; you're the real hero around here! I considered what it would be like, making my trans-African journey on public transport, and I shuddered at the thought. Nope, you've got to have your own wheels, I concluded. Once again, the motorcycle had come through for me. (Pryce 2008, p.245)

Pryce talks about the motorcycle as if it is a real person and human travel companion and as if they are bonded in an equal partnership. The motorcycle had come through for her and had carried her through a difficult situation. Such relationships are certainly not uncommon amongst motorcyclists, but these implications suggest an even a tighter relationship between the motorcycle and its owner, because on a trip such as Pryce's, the motorcycle is all the motorcyclist has at that point; the motorcycle is friend, family, home and transport. When Pryce is forced to travel by train by government officials, she writes: "[The bike]'s all I've got, I wanted to shout, it's not just a bike, it's my home too, everything I have is on that bike. Without *him*, I'm lost. I'm stuck!" (Pryce 2008, p.281). Here she is not talking about a thing, in the end, but about 'him', as a real person, instead of referring to the motorcycle as an 'it' as she did in the first part of her 'cry'. Luckily, within the hour she is reunited with her companion and home, put on a train that will transport her safely through guerrilla controlled areas. This however did rob her of the freedom she aimed to seek in her travels:

> My autonomy was gone, now I was at the mercy of a semi-derelict public transport system and a platoon of drunk, armed Congolese soldiers. It all happened so quickly – within a matter of minutes the freedom of the road had been snatched away from me and I felt as if my bike and I had been taken prisoner. (Pryce 2008, p.287)

Again, the motorcycle is not just a vehicle, but a fellow traveller. Both of them had been robbed of their freedom and autonomy. This relationship can also get so deep, that the motorcycle and bond become more important than the motorcyclist on his or her own. When in the near dark making a nearly fatal mistake of riding straight into a mine field, Pryce's thought process, decision making and subsequent action shows us how strong this relationship can be:

> I was most definitely off the track. A drowned bike or a leg blown off? That was the decision, and the leg was going to win it over the bike every time. I steered back into the flooded trench, creeping along the edge of the water, trying to lean over to stop the bike sliding into the deep channel in the middle. (Pryce 2008, p.360)

That night it was raining so heavily that the whole area was at risk of flooding. After entering a (possible) mine field, what she *could* have done to get herself to safety was to leave the motorcycle where it was as soon as possible and walk back exactly the way she came in before her tracks were washed away, in order to minimize the risk of setting off a mine. However, Pryce would rather have her leg blown off than leaving her companion alone with the risk of 'drowning' in a flood. She could have used a phrase like 'washed away' or 'damaged beyond repair', instead she used the phrase 'drowning'. Hence, she didn't go for the safety option, but risked even more being hit by a mine by doubling the size of her path by taking the motorcycle by the hand and taking it back to a safer place, keeping it out of the channel whilst being too late to trace back her initial tracks. At the *3rd International Conference for Motorcycle Studies* in London, where Pryce was a keynote speaker, she also recounted this occasion: "So…verge of the road it was, with the risk of mines with the risk of my leg being blown off…" she laughed, and all those at the conference nodded in understanding: you do not leave a friend behind or risk that friend to drown. She did not leave her bike behind and go for the safer option; that is just how friendship and loyalty work.

If we recognise that for motorcyclists the motorcycle is a travel companion it is clearer why the choice of the vehicle becomes so important. Sam Manicom ends the account of his journey by stating that "Libby really was proving to be my ticket to the world. […] I'd wanted adventure and had found it" (Manicom 1995, pp.310–311). Like Ted Simon, Manicom was a novice motorcyclist when he set off on his

journey to travel through Africa. Both for him and Simon there was simply no other choice when it came to mode of transport: despite their lack of motorcycle experience, they claimed to just know or feel that a motorcycle would allow for adventure, freedom, experience and encounters like no other vehicle. This same motivation also holds for the more seasoned motorcyclists such as Pryce, McGregor, and Boorman.

By the end of his journey through Africa, was finally able to properly introduce his reader to his motorcycle,

> Yes, riding the bike was fun. […] I'd learned a lot more about the bike and was still learning every day. In fact, it even developed a personality. It was a girl, she just felt that way … Over the months the bike went from being 'it' to 'she' to 'Libby'. With her name, (short for Liberty because that was what she gave me every day) she developed even more personality. Fresh out of Jersey, I'd never have believed that two-thirds of the way down Africa, I'd be talking to her. (Manicom 1995, p.246)

Talking to a mechanical object might sound strange, even stranger than talking to a cat or even a plant. Being a motorcyclist myself, however, I can perfectly imagine the kinds of things Manicom would say to Libby on their travels, things such as "Good girl!" when reaching a summit after a strenuous ride filled with difficult hairpins, or a "Where shall we go next?", because to the motorcyclist she is a fully-fledged travel companion with a heart, soul and will of her own. Such sentiments can be found in *The Long Way Down* as well, when at the end of the journey, McGregor takes a minute to look at his motorcycle,

> I took a moment to consider my bike: she looked about as battered and beat up as the old bike had done by the time we rolled into New York three years ago. (McGregor & Boorman 2007, p.326)

Again, a male motorcyclist builds up a relationship with his female motorcycle. *She* looked battered and beat up, characteristics that rather describe a person than an object. Theresa Wallach also describes this relationship with the motorcycle as rather inter-human or inter-animates than man-machine,

> As we penetrated deeper into this unearthly place our motorcycle was more than something tangible made of metal and rubber but, having an empathy like a living soul possessed of feeling, it was also quite companionable. (Wallach 2011, p.49)

She as well considers her vehicle to be more of a travel companion, either human or at least to be alive; it provided good company. This psychological relationship, however, goes a level deeper when it comes to the more *physical* relationship that is developed between the rider and his motorcycle which I would describe, without thinking, as nearly symbiotic. This symbiotic relation is an engagement at multiple levels and results in the new entity called the biker-body, an assemblage created through all levels of engagement that come with the combination of a motorcycle and a human body. In the next section I will have a closer look at this more physical or perhaps even total level of engagement between human and motorcycle.

3.3 The Biker-Body: A Unique Assemblage

When the helmet and gear are put on and we mount our motorcycle, we become free of things such as race and ethnicity. We lose our face and voice and become free of everything except for our current existence as a motorcyclist (Miyake 2013); we become the biker-body. At first sight, combining a human and a motorcycle merely creates that what we know as the motorcyclist. Yet, there is much more to this combination than may appear at a first glance. Focusing on the physical engagement between humans and automobiles that translates itself into movement, Dant (2004, p.61) explored the assemblage he calls ‘the driver-car’ as “a form of

social being that produces a range of social actions that are associated with the car". The majority of what he argues to be true for the driver-car, also holds for rider-motorcycle assemblages. This new entity of a new social being formed by human and nonhuman components is something that can be viewed from several different angles. With regard to the driver-car, Dant argues that,

> [n]either the human driver nor the car acting apart could bring about the types of action that the assemblage can; it is the particular ways in which their capacities are brought together that bring about the impact of the automobile on modern societies. (2004, p.62)

Or, in other words, applying this theory to the motorcycle, this motorcycle only becomes a vehicle when the motorcyclist is introduced to it and vice versa; a person is only a motorcyclist in combination with a motorcycle. Here Dant shows us how the combination of human and machine creates opportunities of action that would otherwise be out of reach and thus impossible. This is where it becomes clear that merely using Gibson's concept of (a one way) affordance would not acknowledge its true potential because of its focus on a one-way communication. Rather, Dant argues that both human and nonhuman provide and receive properties through each other. For example, trying to theorise about the combination of humans and technology (as a form of prosthetics) from a more concrete and physical angle, Donna Haraway asks:

> Why should our bodies end at the skin? … For us, in imagination, and in other practices, machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves. We don't need organic holism to give unpermeable [sic] wholes… (1991, p.178)

Haraway is focusing on cyborg and hybridities in relation to feminisms and female bodies in the world, but her approach to the extension of the body through technology is useful for our topic.

Following Haraway, who advocates "overcoming the scientific separation of the natural and the cultural" (Holloway 2004, p.168), we can see the combination of the motorcycle and the human as a new holistic life form. With this recognition Haraway, as explained by Currier (2003), tries to circumvent the notion of hybrid creations as binary; to see them as one uniform new entity rather than as two components (animate and non-animate) that influence each other. Thus, "rather than technology being applied to human identity, technology actually becomes a part of human expression itself" (McPheeters 2010, p.34) and with this creates an entire new being; in this case, human and motorcycle form the new 'biker-body'.

However, as pointed out by several scholars (Dant 2004; Currier 2003; Kirby 1997) quite accurately, Haraway's description of the cyborg as physical hybrid, which seeks to focus on unity rather than binary, is problematic for it still considers the two elements of body and technology to be separate. She considers the technology part of the hybrid as prosthetic that is physically and permanently added to the human body, and "in the construction of a cyborg, technologies [or prosthetics] are added to *impact* upon, and at some point intersect with a discrete, non-technological 'body'" which "leaves largely intact those two categories … that preceded the conjunction" (Currier 2003, p.323). Thus, Haraway's unified hybrid is not so unified after all, for the two components are still discernible in the act and the "body pre-exists as a singular entity, to which a range of technological artefacts and/or processes are appended, which then formulate that body and its associated identity beyond the bounds of conventional categories of Human or Man" (Currier 2003, p.323; Holloway 2004). In short, Haraway's cyborg is an assemblage of two, rather than of multiplicities and leaves out those building blocks that are of interest when dissecting the 'how' and 'what' of human behaviour such as background,

current environment and other people. Dant argues congruently that considering the combination as a cyborg is flawed for cyborg refers to a combination where technology is permanently incorporated into the body and that is not what a car nor motorcycle and human are; they form a "temporary assemblage within which the human remains complete in his or her self" (Dant 2004, p.62). If the combination of human and vehicle then is not to be considered hybrid or cyborg, we have to find another way to describe their unity or collaboration at the moment of interaction and movement.

In 1995 Latour, together with Michel Serres, introduced the world to what they call Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which advocated to look at the world as heterogeneous, to look at it as being the result of multiple different connection-fields such as translations, associations and mediations (Thrift in Johnston et al. 2000, p.4; Laurier 2004, p.203). Furthermore, it can be seen as a reaction to the sociologism of social studies of technology (SST) that had begun to focus on the social construction of the material world. This lead to the so called social construction of technology (SCOT) approach which places technological development at the end of a chain of social actors, all influencing the creation and development of technology (Dant 2004, p.68). ANT supports this approach to technological development and its use, and is based on four main principles that essentially attempt to rewrite Western epistemology. These four principles function as a process themselves. First we must part with the Cartesian dualism (nature vs. culture, inside and outside) for this holds us back from discovering the heterogeneous connections at work. Secondly, once beyond this dualism we can accept that it is the diversity of actor-networks that are the source of agency in the world. Or, in other words, that it is the connecting and disconnecting of components that instigates movement, processes and practice; these

components are both human and non-human, the latter of which are dubbed ‘actants’ rather than actors. Thirdly, this movement depends on ‘immutable mobiles’, which are processes that will always be present and therefore will make networks durable. Technology and technological advancement, Latour argued, are the ingredients that made society (as a whole) durable. This does not mean that the networks are not prone to change (both evolving and devolving), but it does keep them moving, as a practice and a process. The fourth and last principle can be seen as the result of the previous three, being a call for focus on the “mediaries and intermediaries” of these networks: the connectors that keep networks together and functioning properly (Nigel Thrift in Johnston et al. 2000, p.5).

Treating nonhumans such as technology as being part of this category, as active participants (actants) in actor-networks opens doors to understanding the biker-body and its origins better (Dant 2004, p.68; Laurier 2004, p.203). These nonhumans are, with the words of Latour, “inert bodies, incapable of will and bias”, but at the same time they are able to show us things or help us achieve certain goals (Sheller 2004). There are also, however, other components that must be brought to the table in this expansion of what we consider actants, components that are not only related to the physical human body or motorcycle as a whole but to the larger social, political and natural contexts that are influenced by and influencing the creation and development of the biker-body. Following Dant (2004, p.69), the network that allows the moving biker-body to exist consists of the human motorcyclist and the motorcycle, but what about petrol and petrol companies, government legislated (road) rules, technicians and so on? Without these, the biker-body, with one of its core characteristics being ‘movement’, could not exist. In Latour’s view, the world has “no pure nature nor pure culture”, instead, “there are only fibrous webs gradually

extending and contracting, erasing one another, copying one another and producing the shape of space and time in doing so" (Laurier 2004, p.204). In short, everything is interconnected and nothing in this process is static. Agreeing with this mutual and multiple connection between human and nonhuman, Deleuze and Guattari argue that, although agreeing with Latour and supporting Dant, we should see humans and basically every aspect of our lives, –bodies and environment, humans and nonhumans, the social and the imaginable–, as parts of an *assemblage*, rather than several different unities coming into contact with each other. They too suggest that we should treat every element as something that affects the assemblage on its own, and which creates and receives meaning and/or coherence when it affects or is affected by other elements: for them, the outcome of this interaction is the assemblage (in Currier 2003, p.325). In this framework, the social is as much an element within the assemblage as all other components. It therefore does not precede or in any way contextualise the assemblage. This assemblage is the embodiment of our becoming-other, or in this context, becoming the *biker-body*. In Deleuzian philosophy, becoming is a process that guides us away from the dualisms that are imperative to Western philosophy and instead encourages us to focus on the fact that becoming is an ever present and ongoing process that helps us to understand the ever changing world around us; it is a constant process of knowledge building (Coleman 2008). In looking at the creation and distribution of knowledge from this angle, as Currier summarises, "nothing comes first and there is no originary moment or transcended structure" (2003, p.328). This, coined by Deleuze and Guattari as the 'rhizome', is:

> a new *image* of thought, one which thinks of the world as a network of multiple and branching roots 'with no central axis, no unified point or origin and no unified direction of growth' (Grosz, 1994, p. 199). (Thrift in Johnston et al. 2000, p.716)

Hence, this rhizome holds that networks are ever evolving, never static and the idea of rhizomatics is about "lines of flow and flight"; the things that happen in plain sight. Deleuze and Guattari, therefore, in line with ANT but also with Thrift's non-representation theory, "are interested in connections and interrelations that are never hidden" (Thrift in Johnston et al. 2000, p.716); they might not have a textual or photographical representation, but that does not mean that they are hidden or obscured. The purely theoretical approach, however, does not account for the physical *experience* of the biker-body; the physical lived experience.

Obviously, this embodied experience is, like the assemblage or network, not singular or one-sided. The experience consists as much of the connection between the motorcyclist and the motorcycle as of the biker-body and its surroundings. In this chapter that we deal with the experience of the former, the connection between human and vehicle we define as the biker-body. The latter, the connection between and experience of this biker-body and its surroundings, will be discussed later in chapter four, where we will also see more of Thrift's non-representational theory as an approach to the experience of the outside world of the biker-body. In their movement, the human-body and motorcycle-body act as one, they are combined into the biker-body in order to create the optimal assemblage to deal with whatever circumstances are encountered. For example, one of the first things that are taught to the novice motorcyclist is that when driving, one does not steer with the arms, but with the entire body, centred at the hips. The body as a steering method is explicitly evident in the paradoxical phenomenon of 'counter steering', where in a right-handed bend, the body leans into the bend, but the arms counter-steer the handle bars in order to keep the balanced vehicle upright (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.4). This means accepting the body to be an extension and function and an active part of the

motorcycle. This interaction between body and machine as one, in turn interacting with the surroundings is necessary, especially in off-road environments, to feel the motorcycle find its and therefore your way. As opposed to flat and neat tarmac roads, the irregularities of off-road surfaces will automatically guide the motorcycle into certain directions and paths, as is the case on, for example, a rough dirt track. Here you have to work closely *with* the motorcycle and only slightly guide it into a general direction without interfering too much in the way the motorcycle interacts with the surface: doing that will cause more instability than trusting the abilities of the motorcycle. This is an intimate relationship between the motorcyclist and both the motorcycle and the landscape, the latter of which we will discuss in chapter four (Berger 1992). You cannot do something like that if you are just "some brains-in-a vat" ; you have to be a "bod[y]-in-the-world" (Carolan 2008, p. 419).

Ultimately, it is within movement through both time and space that our bodies experience "a duration" or sequence, rather than separated states of being; "a dynamic continuation of movement and sensation" (McHugh 2008, p. 210) and it is, following Merleau-Ponty, through our *experienced* bodies that we are able to locate ourselves in the spaces and times we move through. Movement comes with memories of the past, ideas about what is about to come, sensations of change in, for example, temperature and sounds created by the movement itself or other phenomena encountered. A major part of perception lies, according to Merleau-Ponty, "situated [in and is] oriented to the kinaesthetic awareness of [the] body so that the body is 'geared' to the world, which is how it becomes available to the senses" (Dant 2004, p.71). For Merleau-Ponty, as Dant describes, "visual perception is an orientation of the whole body to the world through which it moves. What is perceived in the visual field is complemented by the kinaesthesia of the body and its

trajectory as a whole" (2004, p.72). In other words, movement on a motorcycle, the moving biker-body, creates a holistic experience; the rattling and thrusting of the engine and exhaust, the sound and touch of the wind, the way the motorcycle finds its way along the track and the movement that comes with that. The body learns to recognise both the safe and dangerous anomalies of movement and sound and learns how to react to those, how to prevent them and to cherish them.

The following passage from Ted Simon's *Jupiter's Travels* is one that comes close to capturing the essence of this engagement between human and nonhuman in a textual form:

> The movement has a complex rhythm with many pulses beating simultaneously. Underlying it is the engine with its subtle blend of sounds, eighty explosions a second, cams on push rods, push rods on tappets, rockers on valve stems, valves on seats, ball bearings revolving and racing, cogs meshing and thrashing in oil, oil pumps throbbing, gases hissing, chains whipping over sprockets, all this frenzy of metal in motion, amazing that it can last for even a minute, yet it will have to function for thousands of hours to take me round and home again. Through all these pulses blending and blurring I seem to hear a slow and steady beat, moving up and down, up and down, three semi-tones apart, a second up, a second 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? Try as I will I can hear no other pulse, no other pitch. There are other instruments in the orchestra, however. The lapel of the flying jacket flicks against my shoulder like a kettle drum, my overlong chin strap beats a more complicated tattoo on the helmet and undeniably there is vibration too, a faint tingle spreading from foot rests grips and saddle, comfortable at fifty, distinctly unpleasant at sixty-five and then flattening out again at seventy. (Simon 1980, pp. 28-9)

Here Simon describes the movement and merging of the human and mechanical body quite poetically: for him this relationship is nearly symbiotic, or in fact, perhaps, even *habitual* as Merleau-Ponty (2002) would suggest,

> To get used to a hat, a car or a stick is to be transplanted into them, or conversely, to incorporate them into the bulk of our own body. Habit expresses our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh instruments. … If habit is neither a form of knowledge nor an involuntary action, what then is it? It is knowledge in the hands, which is forthcoming only when bodily effort is made, and cannot be formulated in detachment from that effort. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, p.166)

As with the automobile, this engagement and knowledge of the vehicle "becomes a skill *embodied through* the vehicle" (Dant 2004, p.73). It becomes a habit, it becomes normal and intuitive. The mechanical drums of the engine are or become one with the beating of Simon's own heart and portray the bond a motorcyclist feels with his motorcycle; the bond that creates the entity of the biker-body. The sounds it hears, the vibrations it feels, all tell the biker-body something about the inevitable connection with the motorcycle, and about surroundings and his movement within these surroundings. As Thrift, inspired by research of Jack Katz on car drivers in Los Angeles writes, we should,

> understand driving (and passengering) as both profoundly embodied and sensuous experiences, though of a particular kind, which 'requires and occasions a metaphysical merger, an intertwining of the identities of the driver and car that generates a distinctive ontology in the form of a person-thing, a humanized car or, alternatively, an automobilized person' (Katz, 2000: 33) in which the identity of person and car kinaesthetically intertwine. (Thrift 2004a, pp.46–47, reference in original)

Thus, in other words, our bodies react to being in contact with the car. As Simon described, we become to know the motorcycle, as much as we know ourselves because it starts to become an actual part of ourselves during the time we form the biker-body; "we not only feel the [motorcycle], but we feel *through* the [motorcycle] and *with* the [motorcycle]" (Sheller 2004, p.228).

This assemblage is key to movement in order to function as well as possible when riding a motorcycle, and to move as smoothly as possible, it is important to feel, understand and get to know the motorcycle and the effects that its movement has on both the motorcycle and its rider and what kind of effects the physical environment has on the (path of) the motorcycle; not only in order to steer it through all sorts of terrain, but also to recognise the sounds that indicate trouble. For example, as Simon describes, he knows exactly what speeds both he and the motorcycle are most comfortable with. This is important knowledge, as certain speeds come with certain intensities of vibrations that can be calming, nerve-wrecking or even damaging. So, knowing your motorcycle is as important as knowing yourself, especially when undertaking a journey such as Simon and the other travellers do; you have to know what your vehicle can do, and how it tells you what it cannot do (anymore). One respondent in a paper by Carolan focusing on corporeal experiences of the countryside, Nick, experiences a similar connection to his tractor when working the land of his farm, he can tell by how the tractor handles what kind of ground he is passing through, for, as he states, "it's almost like the tractor is part of [him]" (Carolan 2008, p.413). It is through the creation of these kinds of action, of being-in-the-world, as John Russon (1994, p.295) phrases it, "that we make possible for ourselves more sophisticated forms of interaction, thereby allowing our world to become more determinate for ourselves". In other words, and of relevance for this thesis, it is through our ability to supplement and extend our ways of bodily movement that we extend our possible experiences and knowledges of the world; we get to know the world not only as a human body, but as a biker-body-being-in-the-world. As Sheller (2004, p.228) explains, our bodies "physically respond to the thrum of an engine, the gentle [or less gentle] glide through a gear box

and in some cases the driver becomes ‘one’ with the car”. The same holds for a motorcyclist and a motorcycle: the biker-body knows its own dimensions and knows just by looking in a split second where it will fit when queue jumping in between cars on the motorway. This also works when considering going up a goat track, as previously mentioned by Pryce, not only can an experienced motorcyclist see whether the assemblage will fit in terms of dimensions, but also whether the biker-body will be able to handle the type of terrain.

The biker-body is more than a physical merging, more than a hybrid, assemblage or an object. As Merleau-Ponty explains, the body is more than or at least different from an object. For an object, he argues:

> is an object only in so far as it can be moved away from me, and ultimately disappear from my field of vision. Its presence is such that it entails possible absence. Now the permanence of my own body is entirely different in kind: it is not at the extremity of some indefinite exploration; it defies exploration and is always presented to me from the same angle. Its permanence is not a presence in the world, but a presence on my part. (2002, pp.103–104)

In other words, the body *is* embodiment, it *is* life and experience, and it *is* perception and sensation. We cannot step out of the body. The same holds for the biker-body: as soon as we dismount and step away from the motorcycle, the biker-body ceases to exist. We can only feel and experience it as a whole. This results in our bodies being

> no longer conceived as an object *of* the world, but as our means of communication *with it*, to the world no longer conceived as a collection of determinate objects, but as the horizon latent in all our experience and itself ever-present and anterior to every determining thought. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, p.106, my emphasis)

In other words, our bodies are connected with the world and not an isolated senseless object merely controlled by our minds; “to be a consciousness or rather to be an experience is to hold inner communication with the world, the body and other

people, to be *with them* instead of being beside them" (Merleau-Ponty 2002, p.111, my emphasis). It is, as John Berger puts it, paramount that we acknowledge that other vehicles are not as closely connected, physically, to our bodies as the motorcycle, whilst at the same time there is no other vehicle that exposes our bodies as much to the outside world because of its speed and openness (Berger 1992, cited in Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.6); agility and dexterity in interaction with both environment and motorcycle are key in minimizing risks and riding with confidence (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.6). This acknowledgement allows for the connection between both human and machine and biker-body and surroundings to be an embodied one, a haptic one, as we shall see in chapter four.

3.4 Conclusions

The biker-body is an entity that is born out of various different variables and in its development undergoes several processes. At the cradle of its existence are the affordances that motorcycles offer to human beings. As we have seen, following the original theory of affordance as proposed by Gibson, adding a motorcycle to our body enhances our possibilities through movement. It gives us a kind of freedom: the freedom to move. This sense of freedom allows for a deep and almost personal bond between human and machine. The motorcycle, and the opportunities it offers, becomes valuable to the motorcyclist; it becomes a travel partner and intimate friend that helps a human being in becoming the person they want to be. The bond between motorcycle and motorcyclist is based on complementing each other: the perfect motorcycle offers common ground, mutual understanding and support. It is at that moment that everything falls into the right place and the bond between motorcycle and motorcyclist is at its best, that the biker-body is born; a productive collaboration between human and machine. The biker-body is one whole that moves through the

world and knows its dimensions, its possibilities and its limitations. The movement through the world is key in the experiences of the biker-body as a uniform entity, and will therefore be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Landscape – The Biker-Body as Being-in-the-World

Riding in the world,
I hear the meadowlark's song
I taste the dust coming off
The wheat field harvested
As I pass by
The sound of the wind
The sound of the wheels
The rumble of the engine
With these sounds,
Every moment I ride

In the distance a thunderstorm
Watch it grow, see the lightning.
Soon to feel the sting of drops
Cooling skin too long burned
By the high plains sun.
Long days in the wind

The fresh smell of falling rain
The sweet smell of freshly cut hay
The smells of asphalt, fuel, exhaust
Mingle with the odour of yesterday's road kill
The living and the dead,
All with me as I ride

I pass a car
In the back a small face
nose to glass, a wave
a smile, perhaps a dream.

I'm in the moment,
Living in the ride.
(Davis 2007)

As we have seen, the ability of the body to connect to material objects is imperative in creating the biker-body and thus in producing the relationship between human and the motorcycle. This is also the case when it comes to connecting with the outside world and its landscapes; the presence of the (biker-)body is the actor in the experiencing of this landscape. "Riding in the world ... Living in the ride", the first and last line of the Davis' poem, essentially and quite accurately summarise all the experiences that are mentioned; all experiences that are related to the sensations and smells that are encountered in the act of motorcycling. Everything is accessible, tangible and concrete when riding a motorcycle and when being the biker-body, for

being the biker-body *is* living the ride: experiencing both the connection with the machine and the environment. Hence, the landscape and the weather are part of the ride, part of the experience, as opposed to distant and detached. Focusing on this experience, John Wylie's *Landscape* (2007) shows how the concept of landscape offers different kinds of writing and different kinds of research. He guides us through the different ways of conceptualising landscape starting with Carl Sauer's cultural turn in landscape (2007, chap.2), and working his way up to the Marxist 'way of seeing' (2007, chap.3) and finally Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception (2007, chap.5). Wylie's own main argument is that we should consider landscape as,

> a series of *tensions*: tensions between distance and proximity, observing and inhabiting, eye and land, culture and nature; these tensions animate the landscape concept, make it cogent and productive" (2007, p.216, my emphasis).

In short, Wylie proposes an understanding of landscape as an active participant in creating experiences, rather than being a static and distant outside phenomenon, something as is advocated by Raymond Williams (1985) when he states that "the very idea of landscape implies separation and observation" (in Wylie 2007, p.3). Rather than this idea of a distant and separated non-influence of landscape, as Wylie argues:

> tensions between different understandings of the concept [of landscape] that are, nonetheless, creative and productive tensions, [sparks] renewed debates and continuing agendas for geographical research. (Wylie 2007, p.11)

In other words: tensions are a catalyst for producing a geographical understanding of landscape experience, for tensions *produce* knowledges, ideas and experiences.

Motorcycling, being the biker-body, is the complete opposite of the static and passive experience of landscape: it is *movement*, active and intertwined with

innumerable variables that are encountered along the way. Following Tim Cresswell (2011, p.166) an embodied practice such as motorcycling is experienced in ways that we cannot "wholly account for by either their objective dimensions or their social and cultural dimensions", which is where he suggests that phenomenological inquiry and Thrift's non-representational theory (NRT) come to be of use because embodied practices "have a physical reality … and are experienced through practice [itself]" (2011, p.166). Motorcycling and other practices, seen as "ongoing processes of relating and unrelating, that come *before* any separation of [e.g.] 'nature' and 'culture'" (Wylie 2007, p.11, my emphasis), are at the core of the processes that create us as *beings-in-the-world* and as non-static and thus moving bodies (Wylie 2007, p.140). As Dimitrij Mlekuž states:

> landscape is a vague and slippery thing, always evading definition. It is much messier than just sets of [physical] features and their natural contexts. We are always caught in these tensions when we are dealing with landscapes, whether we acknowledge it or not, and there is no simple, 'objective' way of resolving them. (Dimitrij Mlekuž 2013, p.91)

It is, then, in the subjective phenomenological approach to landscape and in NRT that we can find a proper basis for understanding how the adventurous biker-body engages with its surroundings. However, before we jump into the world of phenomenology and NRT, as both are part of Western philosophical discourse, it only feels right to start with the father of Western dualism: René Descartes, the philosopher who laid the foundation for a world where the (biker-)body is underestimated and underappreciated.

4.1 Conscious Bodies: Non-Representational Knowledge

Descartes argues there is a clear divide between *res cogitans* and *res extensia*, which led him to his famous three words "cogito ergo sum"; the certainty that self-consciousness should be considered to be the foundation of *all knowledge* (Başar 2011, p.9; Wylie 2007). This vision would find no space for the motorcycling I have described, for it underestimates or even rejects the influence of bodily experience on the psyche and rather prioritises the mind as the main instrument in creating meaning and knowledge. Cartesian theory or dualism does not leave room for bodily sensation *preceding* thought and something such as '*sensio ergo sum*' would probably not be considered an option for Descartes, since the body itself is not supposed to be capable of feeling (Robb & Heil 2009).

Landscape here becomes a distant object, observed from a distance by human eyes. Vision, although a sense, becomes the one confirmation of truth, for we experience the world or landscape with the mind, solely fed by vision; vision is clearly identified with Descartes' cogito (Wylie 2007, p.146). However, is it really 'truth' we are looking for when we talk about experience? Is there any 'truth' in experience to begin with? We must therefore find another starting point for exploring how people and their bodies interact with the world when motorcycling, and it is in phenomenology that we can find the answer. As Wylie (2007, p.147) suggests, phenomenology "seeks to show above all that the Cartesian perspective does *not,* in fact truthfully describe lived, human experience – the human experience of landscape, for instance".

As we have discussed earlier in chapter three with relation to the biker-body and the physical connection between human and motorcycle, Maurice Merleau-

Ponty approaches the body as being *with* all that the world encompasses, rather than it being alongside it (2002, p.111). In his work *The Primacy of Perception* (1969) Merleau-Ponty refers to incarnate cogito, "which places mind, body and world in a state of perceptual coproduction" (in Carolan 2008, p.410). In other words: the body is as capable of producing knowledge as the mind and it is in the combination of the both of them that we experience our surroundings. This acknowledgement of dualism allows our understanding of experience to grow drastically; knowledge is not only *thought*, something we do with language instigated by what we see (Wylie 2007, chap.5), but it is also *felt* through non-articulate, non-textual sensations. Carolan's research (2008) deals with the bodily experience of the countryside and how this experience differs between two different kinds of actors: farmers and non-farmers. His main argument, following Merleau-Ponty, is that we think with our bodies and that we "*cannot divorce mind from body* when talking about knowledge/s, understanding/s and perception/s of the world. Rather, mind *is* body, consciousness *is* corporeal; thinking *is* sensuous" (2008, pp.408–409, my emphasis). In other words: all that we relate to when we think of a particular experience is related to things we do or feel whilst experiencing it.

This understanding of landscape goes deeper than just relying on the visual. It involves a geographical understanding of the world which is far more complicated, since it involves the other senses, such as smell, touch and sound, but also experiences of movement and memories. As O'Neill argues, "bodily effort involved in movement across landscape, for example, provides internal corporeal knowledge of the slope or texture of the terrain" (O'Neill 2001, p.4). This supported by Martin Heidegger's approach in which he considers the act of dwelling, where dwelling represents what we *do* in this world as affected by how our bodies *are* in this world

(Carolan 2008, pp.412–413). Or, in other words, we experience the world through our bodies for all we *know* is in some kind of reference to our active and embodied position in this world. Corporeal knowledge is difficult to capture in words; it might even be deemed impossible. We move through a building or landscape, we smell or hear distinctive smells and sounds, we remember what it looked like the first time we were there or how we imagined the place to be, and although we cannot even try to find the exact words to describe that smell or that sound or even the way our bodies moved from point A to point B and how we kept our bodies upright whilst doing that, we still do that in order to make sense of those experiences that are in essence impossible to represent; we *do* find the words, whether or not they are enough to create a complete image of what is experienced through the body. When explaining the meaning of a particular phenomenon within their personal lives (in Carolan's case the countryside and in my case motorcycle travel) many people resort to narratives that tell *how* they experienced their physical presence in that place (countryside) or process of movement (motorcycling), similar to Ted Simon's description of hybridity or symbioses in the previous chapter. Trying to work with corporeal experiences that have no direct connection with language asks for an approach that acknowledges and respects the information and knowledge produced by the body. It is simply worded as being "fully engaged with and even vulnerable to their surroundings" by Holbrook Pierson, for example (Holbrook Pierson 1997, p.150). And, as she describes later on:

> When the sun is in the correct angle, your shadow races next to you as you fly along. The dark shape is your own hair streaming out, a mobile portrait in the medium of light on asphalt. It's a peculiar sight, but the start it gives is not like when you catch yourself in a mirror. This one is almost someone else, mysterious, featureless, perhaps even fearless. When everything is going just fine, you can raise your weight off the saddle by standing on the pegs and the air itself seems to carry you; the

> smells of the countryside or suburb or industrial fief are immediately upon you, then gone. (Holbrook Pierson 1997, p.232)

The shadow appears to show you a hint of your being as the biker-body; being a perfect culmination of human, machine, elements and environment. Standing on the pegs asks *and*, in the case of an adventure motorcycle, with its raised handle bars, provides more stability and even more feeling with the motorcycle. Leaning backwards reliefs the pressure from the front wheel, needed on softer tracks, but on the open tarmac roads, standing on the pegs can feel, as Holbrook Pierson phrases it, as if the air is carrying you, allowing you to submerge even more in all the sensations available. But the air carrying a body, let alone a biker-body, again this is not more than a metaphor.

It was not until 1996 that Nigel Thrift introduced non-representational theory (NRT) that helps us to acknowledge these non-representational forms of knowledge and experience. Thrift concludes his entry on NRT in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* by stating that "non-representational theory allows of no hiding place. You must be in it" (2000, p.556). This echoes the being-in-the-world of the biker-body perfectly. Having coined the term himself in 1996, Thrift aimed at answering one ostensibly simple question which asks "how the social sciences and humanities [would] go on if they were to take *practice* seriously?" (Thrift in Johnston et al. 2000, p.556, my emphasis). In other words, this approach allows for bodily actions and sensations to be incorporated into social-scientific scholarship. However, the importance and concepts of practice, as Lorimer (2005) clarifies, are perhaps better understood and more readily and openly included when we re-name NRT to more-than-representational (mtRT) since what NRT does is "[*expand*] our once

comfortable [representational] understanding of the social" (Lorimer 2005, p.84; Carolan 2008). Carolan explains it rather well,

> I find the term non-representational problematic, firstly, because it at least *suggests* that what is of analytic concern ultimately dies the moment we try to talk (and write) about it, and secondly, because I believe the world of embodied experience is better explained as being *more-than-representational*. It is not that we cannot represent sensuous, corporeal, lived experience but that the moment we do so we immediately lose something. Representations tell only part of the story, yet they still have a story to tell, however incomplete. So I admit: we cannot literally feel in these pages what respondents truly experienced in their lived experience. But it does not mean that we cannot at least get a taste of their world through their words. (Carolan 2008, p.412, my emphasis)

In other words, we have to find a way to talk about experiences that have no familiar representation such as image or text. That does not mean that experiences that are represented are inferior or useless, but rather do we have to accept that there are experiences that cannot be captured in words or image. For example, when John Berger describes how he experiences the interaction between his biker-body and the landscape, he finds it difficult to explain how and what his body undergoes. He states that "you are so much closer to the ground … By closer I mean more intimate with …" (Berger 1992, p.194). Both 'closer' and 'more intimate', but especially the latter is a rather abstract term. In his movement, he 'feels' himself 'more intimately' connected with his surroundings. However, how that exactly *feels* will probably remain inexpressible with the help of language.

Following Anderson (2012):

> in our world beyond words we *know* the importance and vitality of particular experiences, but wonder how we can effectively communicate them through our world of words. In short, for these projects we research to identify vocabularies

> which can translate our experiences, emotions and encounters into currencies that other can understand and relate to. (Anderson 2012, p.1)

But is this possible and, if so, is NRT the answer? In his paper on surf spaces, which is not that far removed from the central theme to this thesis, Anderson refers to Ford and Brown (2006), who pinpoint the problem of the indescribable feelings and emotions that surface when experiencing a passionate activity such as surfing by stating that,

> The desire produced through corporeality becomes impossible to convert, translate and represent in words – an embodied frustration that is always an absent presence in most probing accounts of human experience. (cited in Anderson 2012, p.2)

NRT then, might fall into a paradox, described by Bondi (2005) as the question that asks "how can our own texts ever honour that which lies beyond the scope of [this textual] discourse?" (Anderson 2012). This paradox, as Anderson poses critically:

> isolates us; a language represents, the original impulse or affect is lost in a sea of metaphor and simile. If taken seriously, no-one can ever fully know another's experiences, or another's thoughts, heart or soul. (Anderson 2012, p.7)

Therefore, he promotes an emphasis on personal understanding rather than finalizing an essential comprehension. He argues that NRT is concerned with the on-going effects rather than trying to create a complete and perfect representation of indescribable events. For example, in Paul Rand's study (2011) on the positive effects of motorcycling on traumatised veterans, a lot of his respondents mention the phrases 'free' and/or 'freedom' when trying to describe the feelings instigated by riding their motorcycle; but they also acknowledge that describing this feeling with exact words is too difficult. In chapter three we have established that part of this feeling comes from the concrete affordances of movement, going from A to B, provided by the motorcycle. However, as we shall discuss in the next section,

freedom not only means the concrete freedom to go to places and broaden the radius of action, but freedom is also associated with the affordances to feel, to sense and to connect with the world around one through these movements; to enjoy the sensations that are created by actual movement itself. This affordance of freedom, therefore, appears to find its core in the bodily experiences and connections with landscape.

4.2 Freedom to Feel: A Sensational Experience

Mobility and movement are at the core of the motorcyclist's existence. As Cresswell (2011, p.165) puts it: "[h]uman mobility is practiced mobility that is enacted and experienced through the body". The body then experiences, for example, "mobility as liberty [and] experience as progress" (2011, p.165). In other words, it experiences freedom and this is a positive process (need we remind ourselves of Manicom's motorcycle called Libby?) Cars and other motorized vehicles, according to Paul Gilroy, "have redefined movement and extended sensory experience" (in Sheller 2004, p.228), and, as Sheller herself states, "kinaesthetic [corporeal] investments [such as driving a car or motorcycle] orient us toward the material affordances of the world around us in particular ways and these orientations generate emotional geographies" (2004, p.228). In other words, as we have seen in chapter three, one of the ways to look at freedom is a more concrete one: it affords the human body to travel at certain speeds in certain parts of the world, depending on the kind of motorcycle. In this paragraph, however, I focus on the less concrete definition of the word freedom as used in combination with motorcycle experience. As Tuan (2011) explains, "spaciousness is closely associated with being free[;] freedom implies space [and] having the power and room in which to act" (p.52). It is in movement, Tuan continues, that we experience space and its characteristics directly. In other words, as our surroundings change we notice differences that evoke

different emotions and feelings, and being able to instigate these feelings and emotions ourselves through movement (such as walking, driving a car or motorcycling) gives us a sense of freedom (Cresswell 2011).

Even more than in a car, however, a moving motorcycle enables the driver to experience the changes around him and because of its size and manoeuvrability it opens more routes to different spaces (and places). Gernot Böhme (2011) recognises the importance of thinking about motion and perception as well. He clearly acknowledges the confinement that is inherent to travel by train and car; such modes of travel come with "the loss of a physical relationship to one's immediate surroundings" (Böhme 2011, p. 233). He also refers to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, who considered this loss of engagement to be even graver and uses the term 'alienation'. He argues that "the more comfortable the travel, the more it becomes a purely visual experience" (ctd. in Böhme 2011, p. 233). This is also recognised by Pinch and Reimer, when they say that in cars drivers are "wrapped up and cocooned" in their vehicles that emphasise multitasking through communication and entertainment systems and are therefore more and more disconnected from the sensory engagement with the outside world (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.5). In other words, the less you physically experience the things that are brought about by movement in the *outside world*, such as wind and temperature, the less you engage with the changes that this movement brings about. This argument is shared by Ted Simon, who states that he:

> enjoyed the train, but resented the onward rush of it that rationed me to so such fleeting glimpses of life outside. It was quite a different world, I realized, viewed through this thick screen of plate glass. (Simon 1980, p.74)

And also by J.B. Jackson who argues that in the late nineteen hundreds:

> the sensation of speed that a previous generation enjoyed when it travelled by fast train must have been strangely akin to its enjoyment of nature: it was passive, detached, and I daresay respectful, for when you sat inert in an upholstered railroad carriage and were swiftly borne along a pair of rails to an entirely predictable destination you could not flatter yourself that you were taking a very active part in the proceedings. (Jackson 1977)

For Tuan (1977), solely engaging with the world through the visual sense results in the creation of a distance between the self and the non-self; the things we can only see are always "out there" (Tuan 1977, p.146). Leaving experience solely to the sense of sight, then, would result in a Cartesian experience of motorcycling; a very distant one.

In her book *The Perfect Vehicle. What it is about* motorcycles, Melissa Holbrook Pierson writes,

> You may have to take my word for the fact that travelling by bike is superior to travelling by car. All right – I will allow that it's very, very different. … You can ride into imaginative space, which is real travelling, because you are not anchored by anything. Look around. There is nothing between you and the weather, the smells, the color [sic] of the sky. All impress themselves on your consciousness as if the ride had turned it to wet cement. And there they will stay, apparently forever, so you can recall those sensations with an almost frightening precision years later. (Holbrook Pierson 1997, p.151)

Reason might tell us that the experience of motorcycling is not hierarchical, but rather just very different, a view that Holbrook *allows* to be a valid one. She begins with stating that the motorcycle is superior, but soon realises that to a non-motorcyclist, this will not make any sense. Regardless of the phrasing, motorcycling does not allow for the alienation from the physical world by which Schivelbusch was so appalled, because the elements and the world are basically forced upon the biker-body. Unless seeking shelter, one will have to deal with rain, heat, sand, dust,

insects, and wind. One does not just see the tumble weeds roll by or the rain clatter on the windows of the car, one *feels* and *senses* them. The biker-body needs to adjust its position and trajectory to account for gusts of wind and has to accept getting soaking wet when the rain will not stop pouring, no matter how protective your clothes are. Motorcycling is far less comfortable as travelling by train or car in terms of travel position and for example climate regulation, especially when travelling off-road. It is the presence of a physical experience that is so important for its psychological impact on the rider; the experience of movement is total and not just visual. Again, it is Jackson who confirms this exceptional sensation when describing why the motorcycle offers a different kind of mobility:

> [motorcycling involves] a series of physical sensations without counterparts in the traditional contact with nature, [so] I think we are justified in calling this experience of the environment revolutionary. (Jackson 1977)

Since 1977, nothing has changed about this experience. Motorcycles have been under development, obviously, and are now faster, lighter and come in more shapes and sizes, but the key philosophy is still there: direct contact with the outside world.

Although Pryce proclaimed her journey to be a ‘one woman adventure’, she regularly met up with acquaintances and spent some time with other travellers she encountered. Those periods and encounters provide us with data which allows us to draw a comparison between travelling by car and riding motorcycles through the towns and deserts of Africa. Not far into Africa, she travels together with the Belgian Jacques, his girlfriend Josianne and his niece Angel. The three of them, sometimes accompanied by an obligatory guide, travel by Land Cruiser;

> [They] were safely behind the glass of the Land Cruiser rear windows, and it occurred to me that the exposure of travelling by motorcycle is both its appeal and

> its downfall. Here I was, laid bare to everyone and everything, to […] the persistent children and the burning sun. There was no door to lock between us, no button to press that would roll up a window and remove me from their world. I was sitting ducks. (Pryce 2008, pp. 69-70)

The difference between a car and a motorcycle is not just two wheels. The main difference is the way your body is exposed to the world and the way the world exposes itself to you. As she said, this exposure is both the strength and disadvantage of motorcycling. It not only *allows* for more intimate and easier contact with the people you encounter, it is also forced upon you when you are not in the mood for social contacts; you cannot hide your body as you can in a car. Jonny Bealby (1995) used exactly the same idea when explaining what makes a motorcycle so much more special than a car when undertaking an African adventure,

> 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. 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 1995, p. 37)

Like Pryce he mentions the impossibility of hiding from the elements, but focuses on the more severe natural circumstances one might encounter in Africa. This kind of physical exposure can thus be either pleasurable or testing.

Within geography a haptic approach to motorcycling that addresses the senses and the sensory as the most complete is advocated by Paul Rodaway (1994),

> Focusing on dimensions of touch in individual experience also reminds us that geography is always, ultimately, in reference to … our body, and each space and place discerned, or mapped, haptically is in this sense our space and because of the reciprocal nature of touch we become to belong to that space. In this sense the sense

> of place is grounded in the participatory quality of haptic geography. (Rodaway 1994, p.54)

What is most interesting about this statement is the notion of possession: *we become to belong to that space,* something that implies concrete or maybe even corporeal and physical connections or assimilations. In other words: the spaces we physically inhabit, even if it is for a short period of time, become *our* spaces. They are ours because that specific space only exists in that specific time connected to our physique. Nonetheless, what is key to this haptic approach is the acknowledgement of the importance of touch, of direct contact with the world and environment when creating these representations; it is through our bodies that we come to possess the spaces we come across, it is through our body that we can touch and physically feel our surroundings which makes our existence, our presence, and our experience of it more concrete and real. Tuan (2011) also agrees that the understanding/experience of spaces in which humans live is dependent on the bodily sensations, such as sight and touch that are classified as spatialising senses. According to him these are only secondarily supported by other senses such as hearing, and smelling. It is however in the combination of all of those senses, plus the mental capability to process the input they generate that for human being a place "achieves concrete reality" (Tuan 2011, 16-8).

It is on a motorcycle that these senses are encountered and appreciated most interestingly and directly. As one of Rand's respondents, John L., explains, as a motorcyclist you

> enjoy the weather and deal with the elements… scents, smells, the cold spots that you never realize exist when you're in a car, your [sic] just conscious of why and what's around you, but then other times the elements give you a shiver when you get back into the sun[,] you feel everything… I mean[,] you feel all of life through your

> senses, that's why you ride, especially a really long ride. (John L. in Rand 2011, p.11)

It is not just about the almost iconic contact with the elements, but rather more about acknowledging and interpreting the direct contact with your surroundings and your body reacting to changes such as giving you a shiver: this makes your *being* in that environment real and tangible. Charley Boorman confirms this feeling when explain that:

> you do get a sense of place on the bike, a sense of the people. … Riding through is riding through, you're exposed to the elements, you smell things, hear and see things that you just don't experience in a car. (McGregor & Boorman 2007, p.138)

Because you physically feel the changes in temperature and do not breathe filtered or air-conditioned air, you feel more in contact with nature and the things that happen and 'are' around you. Geographically, motorcycling teaches you more than travelling by car or train, if only just the simple things that a lot of people take for granted and/or do not even realise. For example, talking from my own personal experience now, when riding in mountainous areas, on a motorcycle you clearly notice the change in temperature when travelling from valley to valley over mountain passes and vice versa. Every few feet you ascend or descend, you directly feel the changes of climate and undergo this correlation between height and temperature. Charley Boorman emphasises this, stating that:

> [t]he higher we got the more clouds swamped us and it was damp now with the hint of rain in the wind. We'd climb and climb and then the land would plateau and it would be positively cold. (McGregor & Boorman 2007, p.195)

You will also notice how clouds bounce off mountain sides and how weather conditions in the next valley can be the complete opposite of those in the previous one. Or, with the words of Melissa Holbrook, a "coming rainstorm announces itself

first in the quick change of air, carrying you into the mounting thickness that only later comes out and reveals itself" (Holbrook Pierson 1997, p.233). This realisation of weather and temperature changes can be more important for motorcyclists than it initially appears. The simple fact that you feel it getting colder the more you ascend allows you to keep in mind the effects that the elements have on you as a motorcyclist. Still, one has to be attentive to this. As Ted Simon confirms, "hypothermia happens easily on a motorcycle. The body temperature sinks before you know it" (Simon 1980, p.440). The stages before, however, are also already dangerous. Cold cramps the body and increases reaction time and decreases flexibility. When, in case of sudden danger, the brakes need to be used or avoidance manoeuvres performed, reaction time is crucial. Heat on the other hand can also cause hazards, for it heightens the chance of dehydration and heat stroke. Therefore a lot of seasoned motorcyclists, on long journeys, make sure they have spare or multifunctional clothing to be able to adjust to the outside temperatures to make sure the body is as comfortable as possible and in the most optimal conditions to perform life-saving manoeuvres if necessary.

It is both the big and small things that are more directly influencing the motorcyclist's engagement with the outside world. Sam Manicom, for example, explains,

> The border marked a very obvious change in the vegetation. On the Kenyan side it had been mainly mustard and sage, bush or farmland. In Uganda the difference was dramatic. Everything was suddenly green; green grass, green bushes, green trees. After trundling on through he tidy lines of banana and tea plantations, I had to twist my neck to look up at the first trees I'd seen of any real size in Africa. The shade

> was so dense in some sections that it actually felt cold, and I could smell as well as feel the temperatures changing. (Manicom 1995, p.141)

It is not just the country's geographies that noticeably change along the way. As Manicom states, a mere change in vegetation can immediately influence your experience; he could not only feel, but also smell that the temperature was changing around him. A motorcycle does not shield the traveller behind windows and doors. Being in contact with the elements, according to Pryce, adds up to the experience of motorcycling. The elements have free play on the body and, in return, the motorcyclist has free access to the environment – which allows a freedom to feel: to experience the surroundings with eyes and with your entire body. Pryce's description(s) of sensory experience are similar to the description of John L. in Rand's study: it's not only a feeling that is instigated by visual input, but maybe even more by sensory input. Pryce confirms that, when recounting that:

> [a]s ever, the geography made a more gentle transition. There was still a dry sandy feel to the land as I set off from Maroua, but soon the semi-desert of the Sahel was behind me and as I continued ever southwards, towards the Equator, the scenery changed daily and it wasn't long before I was deep in the jungle of Central Africa. Now I was riding through dense, luscious greenery, along rust-red dirt roads lined with banana and mango trees, while exotic birds in Technicolor plumage darted past me and lizards scuttled in front of my wheels. (Pryce 2008, p.185)

The geography was changing, but Pryce did not only refer to the visual and physical aspects of it; the country, next to looking and *being* sandy, also had a dry and sandy *feel* to it. And furthermore, the proximity of animals and vegetation was marked – they *darted past her*, not the motorcycle or the car. And of course, she also mentions 'her wheels', but that's also *her* wheels, and not the motorcycle's wheels. Quite a lot of her descriptions of the surroundings have to do with the sensory aspect of

experiencing the journey. Pryce shows this on more than one occasion: ‘‘But there was also the smell of the spices that drifted out from the market, the occasional gentle breeze that brought such relief from the heat (Pryce 2008, pp. 69-70), and later on “You’re out in the elements, smelling everything, feeling the warmth and the air against your face” (Pryce 2008, p. 253). Here she mentions the place of the motorcyclist in the landscape and surroundings: she resides *in* it, ‘in the elements’ which provides for more intimate contact with these surroundings; it is a body-in-the-world and allows for a multiplicity of assemblages to be developed; a multiplicity of truths and bodies gaining knowledge and existence through corporeal inputs.

4.3 Practiced Visualities: In the Eye of the Beholder

John Wylie argues that landscape is generally thought of as something “quintessentially visual” (Wylie 2007, p.55). Hence, although it might seem as if I have been evading the importance of the visual in this thesis, this side of landscape is, as Wylie explained, as much part of the tensions that animate it as the tactile side. Whilst participating in a panel session, Wylie poses a couple of questions that make us think a bit deeper about what we mean when we talk about landscape;

> What is landscape? Why does it oscillate between subject and object? Is landscape the world out there? Is the landscape out here, is it outside of this room? Is it outdoors? Is it an objective, material entity? Or is it, as more latterly we have come to think, is it in the eye of the beholder, landscape as a particular way of seeing, a gaze, a set of shared values and attitudes? (in Merriman et al. 2008, p.202)

Landscape as a particular way of seeing, as a gaze, makes it something that is more abstract and not just something concrete and physical; the landscape as a gaze is not just there in the distance. Instead, landscape is everywhere around us and consists of

more than mountains, trees and sand; it is also imagination and expectation, of what we already know and what we want to get confirmed. It also makes it more active than passive. Nevertheless, this activity does not refer to action of the body, but rather action of the mind. Therefore, quite often the visual side of landscape is approached from a starting point where the subject, the gazer, is more or less static and perceives the landscape as something distant, as is done with for example landscape art, where the observer may consider the painting to be some kind of window, providing an view over an artificial landscape (Wylie 2007, p.56).

However, this active way of visual engagement is not active enough when talking about motomobility, movement and landscape in the same context. Engaging and experiencing might be considered processes of active tensions, but what about the actual physical activity and mobility, what kind of landscape conventions and experiences come from that? J.B. Jackson, as mentioned earlier, has thought about this in more detail when talking about the abstract world that is experienced whilst being on the move at higher speed. He deals with landscape that relies less on distancing and more even more so on embodiment. As he argues when talking about (then) newly developing outdoor sports such as mountaineering and motorcycling as leisure activities,

> [a]ir currents, shifts of wind and temperature, the texture of snow, the firmness of the track – these and many other previously unimportant aspects of the outdoors become once more part of his consciousness, and that is why mountaineering [and motorcycling], although [they entail] a very deliberate kind of progress, [have] to be included among these new sports. (Jackson 1977)

This is where the visual side of motorcycling gets more practical than aesthetic: it becomes practical, unavoidable and it can transform into a matter of life and death if not addressed as such. The visual side is both taught and constructed through

experience and mainly relates to the more factual side of motorcycling; (safely) riding a motorcycle without the sense of sight is impossible. Acknowledging that our gaze is framed by social and cultural rules and styles, Gillian Rose stated that mobile "visualities [of landscape] are practiced and performed through a whole frame of registers" (in Merriman et al. 2008, p.201), including the senses such as touch and hearing, which are all focused around the moving body. Using Rose's case study of moving through a shopping mall in Milton Keynes, identifying three ways of looking (the navigation look, shopping look and mothering look) (in Merriman et al. 2008, p.201) as a model, there are also at least three or perhaps even four ways of looking involved in constructing the adventure motorcycling gaze, all connecting the visual to another variable in the tension. First there is the overall navigation look, which encompasses a broad and more sweeping way of looking for directions, other vehicles and the bigger or clearer obstacles, dangers and the like. This look is probably something known to every other vehicle driver. Theresa Wallach, for example, writes,

> The sun rose from behind the sand dunes and revealed a 360º panorama of barrenness with such a feeling of space; we knew we were deep in the desert. Like the guides for the camel caravans who know their route, we tried to spot and avoid more treacherous places. When all the wheels sank into deep soft sand, we were in real trouble – at least for a while, though perhaps for hours or even days. (Wallach 2011, pp.39–40)

For some situations, it is best not to have to react in the last split second, since in that split second a lot still can go wrong. So whilst riding, the vehicle driver sweeps the surroundings in order to spot and avoid more treacherous places, which are visible at

first sight. This look kept Wallach out of the most trouble, for although it was no easy ride crossing the Sahara, they did manage to prevent getting into major trouble.

Secondly, there is the specific motorcyclist's gaze, focusing not only on the road or track in general, but focusing more on hazards that threaten the motorcyclist; because it is a balanced vehicle, certain elements on the route can be hazards for balanced speed vehicles such as motorcycles; yet, these hazards are sometimes only detected when close by. Examples of this on regular roads are wet manhole covers or road markings, for "painted surfaces are always more slippery" (Berger 1992, p.195). Off-road some examples of hazards are potholes and rugged roads or tracks. (Hazards and perception will be discussed in chapter five.) In some parts of the world, however, these hazards cannot be avoided and have to be approached with a third gaze: the adventurist's gaze. Sam Manicom, for example, encounters a track that he can only pass if he adjusts his regular driver's and regular motorcyclist's gaze to that of the adventurist:

> Out of the town, we hit the deepest gravel we'd been on and in spite of the cool air at this altitude, sweat was pouring off us again. Trucks had left dangerous ruts in the walnut sized stones that pushed and pulled two wheels in whichever direction the ruts chose to go. It was scary because speed was the only way to make it through the drag effect of the gravel. (Manicom 1995, p.99)

In a way, this third look is a combination of the former two; since speed is needed to avoid the drag effect of the surface, a widespread gaze focusing on the distance and the broader picture, things such as track curves and other objects need to be anticipated much sooner. At the same time, however, this widespread gaze does not account of sudden irregularities in the surface, especially when the colours of a surface are monotone; a deeper rut cannot be discerned from a regular one at a hundred feet distance. This gaze for Manicom involved getting over certain fears

whilst at the same time keeping track of reality and its dangers: keeping the speed up is often the only way to have the motorcycle find a proper way across the terrain for it will 'fly' over most of the holes and ruts, and, as Manicom says, "speed was the only way to make it through the drag effect of the gravel" (Manicom 1995, p.99). We will have a closer look at this balance in chapter five, dealing with the modality of adventure.

Finally, the fourth gaze is related to the third in terms of adventure but focuses more on the aspect of discovery. Again it is Manicom who stresses this, when stating that one should not travel "too fast to miss the scenery and not too fast to deal with the ever present risk of a dashing animal, but fast enough to feel that we were getting somewhere" (Manicom, 1995, p. 11). This fourth mode of visual engagement, in a way, shows us the difficulties of pinpointing what landscape means to a motorcycle adventurer. It can be the visual or the lived experience and if it is a combination, the question arises of how motorcyclists find the balance when they are more than occupied with maintaining the balance that keeps the biker-body upright. It is, no matter how you look at it, difficult. Jackson even states that motorcycling does not allow leisure time for observing the natural environment in much detail, the motorcyclist simply moves too fast (Jackson 1977).

One way of answering this question is accepting that there is no problem at all; there is no choice to be made when focusing on the visual experience of a moving motorcycle or the moving biker-body. As Jackson emphasises, the loss of eye for detail because of the speed can be considered a true loss, but, at the same time the motorcyclist is reinventing a way to engage with nature in a less tangible, more spaciously oriented manner, for:

> The new landscape, seen at rapid, sometimes even a terrifying pace, is composed of rushing air, shifting lights, clouds, waves, a constantly moving, changing horizon, a constantly changing surface beneath the wheels. … The view is no longer static, it is a revolving, uninterrupted panorama of 360 degrees. (Jackson 1977)

In most cases, riding motorcyclists are focused more on the road in front of them, their rear-view mirrors and hence only smaller sections of their surroundings as opposed to the 360 possible degrees of visuality when standing on two feet in one particular place. However, that fraction, that particular part of the landscape perceived by motorcyclists *is* the motorcyclist's landscape at the time of movement. That fraction is the complete whole they experience at that time and that, along with the sensory registers as described earlier, constitutes their entire world. In this movement there is no stepping back and broadening the gaze to include a sharper and more detailed imagery. It is that portion of the landscape passing by, being both focused when looking straightforward and blurry when looking sideways, both total and partial that constitutes the visual world of the motorcyclist.

In the panel discussion on 'Landscape, mobility and practice' Peter Merriman and George Revill stress that understanding how landscapes are animated by mobilities and how those landscapes themselves are practiced through mobilities is key in understanding a bigger picture about the relationship between landscape and mobilities. This bigger picture focuses on acknowledging and understanding that, firstly landscape is far from a static and distant object and, secondly, that mobilities are everything but ahistorical and therefore are not to be underestimated in terms of geographical research and importance (Merriman et al. 2008, p.192). The panel was encouraged "to work against conventional binaries such as stasis – movement, representation – practice, textual – non textual and immaterial – material" (Merriman et al. 2008, p.193). Bypassing these binaries is necessary in order to *animate* the way

we look at landscape, just as we animate ourselves when experiencing them with our senses when moving through them. However, as David Matless poses in this discussion, a focus on practice should not mean that approaching the idea of practicing and performing landscape automatically excludes books or other written sources about landscapes, for they are part of our social and cultural rules and styles that regulate our gaze and thus encourage and are a particular kind of engaging with and practicing landscape (Matless in Merriman et al. 2008, p.198). Perhaps even more so, engaging with landscape through the arts and/or other non-academic sources might just open up this critical area and provide us with a rendezvous where representing the non-representational, as an active tension, can meet academia.

Although, as argued by Dirksmeier and Helbrecht (2008), representations such as paintings and films filter out the unique one-time-only experience that a performance has to be in order to be meaningful and to be free of the frameworks of past and future, Dr Catrin Webster (scholar and artist) and Peter Merriman have, in a written exchange (2009), tried to get a bit closer to understanding the relationship between the visual, the landscape and movement through Webster's artwork. Both authors engage with landscape experience within two completely different fields; Merriman through academic writing and research (2009; 2008), Webster through her art (Webster 2008); combining these two worlds because they are both interested in what landscapes do and how humans in all kinds of modalities deal with them, whether it is through driving or travelling through them, through painting or through writing. When asked about her motivations to focus on movement and landscape, Webster argues, that:

> [t]he historical idea of a singular, framed landscape does not work well today, when it is more commonplace to observe the landscape from a car or train, or via media

> such as film and television, all of which are kinetic. … I am interested in what is seen [during movement] and in generating techniques for both refracting and articulating that experience; forming a visual language to describe and communicate that experience. (Merriman & Webster 2009, p.526)

When we talk about and research landscape and its visuality, we basically do the same what Webster is trying to do; trying to create a language that deals with what we perceive with our eyes. If we look at this image below for example (image 1), which is a mobile phone picture taken from a car window, what we see is the elements of the car static and sharp in the foreground whilst the surroundings, ostensibly trees, bushes or hedges are faded in a blur of movement.

Image 1: Mobile phone photograph taken while travelling through the Welsh landscape. Catrin Webster, 2005 (in Merriman & Webster 2009, p.526).

This image and similar photographs might be considered as the answer to our question; if this is a picture taken during movement, this must be what we *see* during movement. However, they are not; pictures such as these are still mere fragments and only ever showing a very small and very isolated aspect of a place (Merriman & Webster 2009, p.527), despite the fact that they suggest movement because of the blurriness of the surroundings. Despite the illusion of a visual perception of

movement, there is no real movement, no real engagement with one's speed and its broader implications on the visual experience. However, painting and sketching, as Webster argues, being embodied and active processes themselves, give us another way of engaging with our experiences of engagement through motorcycling. In this sketch (see Image 2), we see a Welsh landscape as experienced by a motorcyclist,

Image 2: Wilson's Land - Working off motorbike (Webster 2008).

This sketch has some resemblances with image 1, but is, due to its artistic nature and method, also fundamentally different: it conveys the visual effects instigated by movement much more actively. As opposed to the blur that is the outside and a few focused and static details in the foreground, this image conveys the balance between movement, partial focus and the organised chaos that pass by. You can see the silhouettes and shades of mountains or hills and contours of what might be clouds. The chaotic differences between thick and thin lines and white and dark spaces on the paper seem to differentiate between travelling at two different speeds, shifting between the first and the second picture. The speed of the first part seems to allow for more detail of slopes and overlap between the hills, whilst the second seems to turn the mountainsides into a stretched blurry dark field of rocks or moss. In this image, much more than in the snapshot (image 1), the actual movement through the landscape is translated. Furthermore, image 2 portrays solely 'the outside', whereas

image 1 contains parts of the car vehicle as well. Of course this could have been cropped out of the picture or the photographer could have zoomed in to avoid including the car into the picture, however, this *is* what you see from a car window; the window frames and the like are always present and always remind the driver or passenger of the caged construction they are in. In image 2 the visuality of the experience that is reconstructed, the biker-body's visual experience whilst being on the move, is unhindered and unobstructed; parts of the vehicle might still be visible, such as the rear-view mirrors and the wind shield, but they do in no way give the impression of a safe(r) and caged environment.

Another method of capturing movement might be quite obvious: motion picture. Miguel Grunstein's *Absolutely Nothing Next 22 Miles... A Fugue for Motorcycle* (2012), according to the director himself,

> dares to convey the living spirit of a motorcycle ride. It is a non-verbal composition where images, music and the voice of the engine merge as a Fugue for motorcycle; where the audience is the rider in a constantly unfolding landscape; a kinetic place in which inner and outer worlds become one. The style is at once surreal, expressionist, futurist and realist. Technology and nature, music, image, motor and motion create a fusion - both explosive and serene. (IMDB.com 2012)

Presented at the IJMS Conference in London by Grunstein himself, he showed how this short film was produced using a camera mount on his BMW K1100rs, microphones collecting sounds both during the ride and in studio, model gear boxes, normally hidden inside the motorcycle's belly operated by an electric screw driver and a good portion of computer edited imagery in combination with a 'fugue' separately composed by Donald Rubinstein to finish off the production. The film is a mixture of the real and the surreal where the viewer takes the position of the motorcyclist on a motorcycle and experiences a ride through the mountains. Sound

and visual registers are both emphasised and blurred and tell the story of what a ride can be like when experiencing an ‘ever unfolding landscape’. Things that can and cannot be seen but heard and felt were made visible at the same time, such as the landscape and the gear box details. The imagery presented in this film is a crossover between Webster’s blurry snapshot (image 1) and sketch of a Welsh landscape as experienced whilst riding a motorcycle (image 2). Visual effects caused by various speeds are emphasised and like in image 2, colours and stretches of land or forest become stretched and blurred,

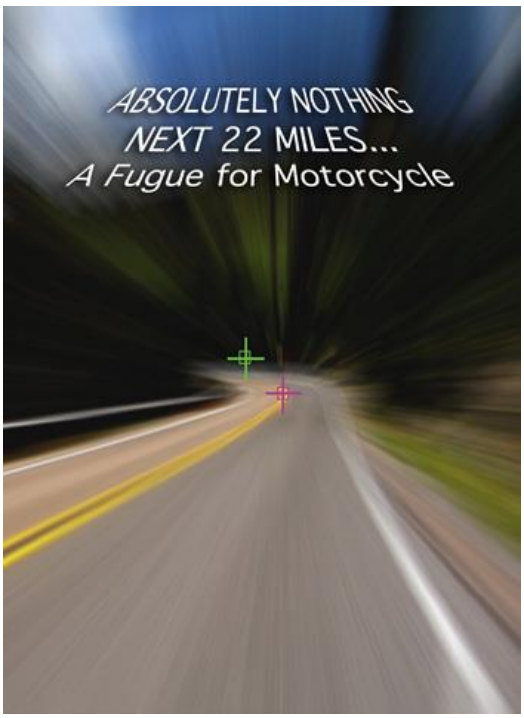

Image 3: Absolutely Nothing Next 22 Miles (IMDB.com 2012)

In the image the main focus is on the road, the trees and roadside are in a state of action, passing by, rather imprinting the motorcyclists with their colours and energy than with their true shapes and boundaries. Reinforced and exaggerated or not, this film and image show us what it *is* that the motorcyclist sees. Just this portion of the

world is, during a ride, the motorcyclist's entire world; ever changing and passing by, ever unfolding. Or, as Jackson managed to articulate it:

> [a] world of flowing movement, blurred light, rushing wind. … [H]e feels the surface beneath him, hears the sound of his progress, and has a tense rapport with his vehicle. With this comes a sensation of at last being part of the visible world, and its center [sic]. (Jackson 1977)

The visual is as active and performative as the entire act of motorcycling. Arguing that visual engagement creates distance and encourages a more static engagement with the world around us does not hold for the motorcyclist or the biker-body. Always on the move, always riding towards an ever unfolding landscape makes the visual experience one of action and of closeness. The biker-body is always closing in on that which it sees right in front; taking it in, smearing out the colours and energy of the surroundings in the corners of its eyes, already focusing on the next curve or turn. Meanwhile keeping in mind the shifting the gazes that are needed to survive the endeavour, the biker-body emerges itself into a landscape that offers an endless variety of impressions. For it is the biker-body navigating through the world, cruising highways, bending corners on mountain roads and struggling on the dirt tracks of its personal frontiers.

4.4 Conclusions

By continuing to focus on the biker-body (as introduced in chapter three), this chapter sought to elaborate on what this biker-body experiences when it moves through the world. Because of the corporeal existence and development of the biker-body, I wanted to move away from the Cartesian mind/body separation and move into a more haptic experience, to which the body and its abilities to sense are central. This haptic experience, in which the bodily senses are open to the world by more

direct contact than, for example, travel by car or train offers, is the essence of another kind of freedom that complements the freedom to move; the freedom to *feel*, to engage *directly* and *actively* with one's surroundings whilst moving. Combining movement and sensations is also important when focusing on the visual side of experiencing landscape. Because of its performative and active nature, capturing the visual experience is far from straight forward. That is why I have incorporated non-textual sources that are perhaps better at interpreting and conveying the visual experience of movement at higher speeds. Still, the landscapes are not only sensed and seen; they are also lived, imagined and expected. The next chapter, chapter five, will deal with this expectation by talking about the third modality addressed in this thesis: adventure. The biker-body chooses its destinations carefully. The landscape has to live up to certain expectations in order to be able to confirm its identity as a motorcycle adventurist. What these expectations are, how they are constructed and for what reason will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Adventure as a Rite of Passage – The Tale of the Biker-Body

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool,
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental
To reach out to another is to risk involvement,
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self
To place your ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their loss
To love is to risk not being loved in return,
To hope is to risk despair,
To try is to risk failure.

But risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.
He may avoid suffering and sorrow,
But he cannot learn, feel, change, grow or live.
Chained by his servitude he is a slave who has forfeited all freedom.
Only a person who risks is free.

The pessimist complains about the wind;
The optimist expects it to change;
And the realist adjusts the sails.

(Anonymous n.d.)[1]

As captured in the poem, every day of our lives we take risks; we make decisions that can turn out either good or bad, but we still have to make them, for otherwise we do not get anywhere. But for some people, these everyday decisions and the risks involved are not enough: they are too safe and predictable, or even restraining. They find that 'avoiding suffering and sorrow' will take away the ability to 'learn, feel, change and grow in life'. This chapter deals with this wish for retraction from everyday life into isolated frontiers and the quest for adventure and uncertainties. It shows how, as a rite of passage (Van Gennep 1960), adventurous journeys filled with risks and uncertainties can help someone to understand more

[1] The poem is often accredited to William Arthur Ward, but also to Leo Buscaglia, Janet Rand and Geraldine Linsebliger. I have therefore decided to go for referencing it as 'Anonymous'.

about their lives and helps them grow and re-develop their identities, for it is argued that such rites are "spiritual aids which supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward" (Aitken 1999, p.105).

Earlier in the thesis I have introduced Laing and Crouch's work (2009), exploring the niche market of frontier travel, a market for travellers attracted to the more remote and isolated areas of our world where both risk and uncertainty can be found. Their research goal was to seek out what characteristics of adventure travel into the frontiers are most important for travellers, in order for brands and travel organisations to develop better marketing strategies that would appeal to both current and future adventure travellers. Laing and Crouch's findings showed that the typical frontier traveller engages in this activity for three main reasons. Firstly, they aim to experience a sense of freedom by leaving the strain and care of everyday life behind and to making one's own choices, secondly, they enjoy relying solely on their own skills, experience and decision making, and, thirdly, they seek the challenges that come with putting oneself in situations of complete self-reliance. This is all part of a quest for 'authenticity' and self-knowledge. Unfortunately they have excluded the adventure motorcyclist from their research.

One of the most important conclusions of Laing and Crouch's work is that the experience for these kinds of travellers is twofold: it is a quest that seeks out both physical and mental challenges. Firstly, the uncertainty of getting injured or worse is what makes an activity physically challenging. Extending this to the biker-body, however, this also holds for the mechanical components taking part in the challenge. Motorcyclists are not always entirely sure about what their biker-body can cope with, or what will be thrown at them. Elspeth Probyn (cited in Cater & Cloke 2007, p.16) states that one of the big attractions to anything adventurous is the question of

how and whether our bodies will be able to deal with it or fix it, or, in other words, whether we will be able to succeed in completing our journey and goals. A lot of physical adventures come with preparation and training that are needed for this physical challenge (Laing & Crouch 2009, p.325). However, not all challenges are solely physical in nature, but they are often spiritual, moral and emotional as well. So, secondly, adventurers sometimes make conscious decisions to travel to places that are known to offer solitude and isolation, where they will be allowed to rely on themselves and make their own choices. This is enabled by the fact that, preferably, there is no-one to talk to, no one to share ideas, happiness or misery with. Also, most of the time (except for those using electronic communication equipment such as McGregor and Boorman (2007) do), motorcycling also adds to this the extra isolation that comes with wearing a helmet: in difficult situations, even when travelling with a partner or in a group, communication with words is impossible. This is self-reliance at its most extreme, and it is what a number of motorcycle adventurers pursue. It is therefore central to this chapter. I will deal with the motorcyclist's quest for adventure at frontiers and will try to keep close to Laing and Crouch's methodology and add the adventure motorcyclist to this research field. First, however, in the next section I focus on Arnold van Gennep's (1960) schema for the 'rites of passage', which is applicable to all forms of tourism and, hence, also to motorcycle adventure travel (Graburn 1983, p.13). This shows us that the isolation, hardship and narrative that are involved with and derive from adventure can be understood as a rite of passage.

5.1 Rites of passage: Isolation, Transition, Incorporation

Van Gennep's (1960) perspective on classical and historical rites of passage focuses on the process of life that he called a schéma – with stages defined as separation, transition and incorporation (Van Gennep 1960, p.11; Hockey 2002; Teather 1999). This provides us with a more anthropological approach to this modality of adventure motorcycling, for adventure can be considered a rite of passage and the geographies in which they take place as "spaces of transgression in which a heroic figure challenges all forms of boundaries – spatial and social" (Phillips 1997, p.121). These geographies can be considered to be what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has coined as 'contact zones':

> where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today. (Pratt 1992, p.4)

In this description of the contact zone we can recognise Africa: a continent formerly scrambled amongst colonial powers, where life and culture are considered to be the opposite of that of the Western world and where the wounds of the colonial era are healing or even still festering. It is to these places that adventurers accredit certain meaning. For example, as McGregor and Boorman, describe it, as a "continent filled with magic and wonder" (McGregor & Boorman 2007, cover), or as Pryce's book is promoted as a "grand trek through the Dark Continent of Africa", inspired by Joseph Conrad and Henry Morton Stanley, key figures in terms of African adventure literature, both fictional and non-fictional. In Van Gennep's (1960) schéma, firstly, the separation happens into a geographical sacred or meaningful area separate from the person's normal habitat (Van Gennep 1960, pp.10–11). This coincides with the pursuit of the adventure motorcyclist to travel to remote areas that are different from

their everyday environments in every aspect into a space that carries a specific meaning: to them, Africa *is* adventure.

The transition is the actual change that occurs within the identity of a person in this separate space; here the geographical travel between different sites is essential to this life transition. Finally, the incorporation is the ultimate return to a person's habitat where one implements one's new identity and uses one's new knowledge (Teather 1999, p.13). Van Gennep argues that,

> An individual is placed in various sections of society, synchronically and in succession; in order to pass from one category to another and to join individuals in other sections, he must submit, from the day of his birth to that of his death, to ceremonies whose forms often vary, but whose function is similar. (Van Gennep 1960, p.189)

This function is crossing the thresholds that will launch us into another part of our lives and a deeper understanding of our identities. This is something that still applies in modern day society, also when it comes to motorcycling. These processes or activities are often celebrated (Moss & Dyck 1999, p.157) as citizens undergo processes of personal transformation:

> sometimes revelatory, sometimes agonising, sometimes fun, sometimes requiring a prolonged period of preparation of endurance more like a campaign than a rite of passage, sometimes a lonely, personal experience, but sometimes one experienced in the company of another or others. (Teather 1999, p.14)

Our identities develop and even change over time because of the experiences we gather when encountering new places and spaces; this is why our identities and place/space are so intimately bound up and intertwined and are the key ingredient to personal (re)discovery (Teather 1999, pp.22–23). Motorcycle adventure echoes Teather's description: sometimes fun, sometimes agonising, sometimes experienced

alone, and sometimes shared with others, it also takes the motorcyclist to different geographical places, where one's identity has to be redeveloped in this new context affected by alien variables. When adventure is experienced with others, either at the same time or separately, a group identity might become important, and the adventure then becomes a rite of passage into another group identity. For example, competing in, and completing the Paris-Dakar Rally, known to motorcyclists the most arduous and notorious rally on the planet, creates a new kind of hero. According to Lawrence Hacking, a one-time competitor (and finisher) in the Rally, it reconfirms one's identity and capabilities and links these with like-minded people (Hacking 2008): it makes someone belong to a certain group of people who have achieved something exclusive, it is "the initiation into the unique and inner culture of a group" (Hopkins & Putnam 1993, p.21). The core motorcyclists I selected for this thesis, with the exception of Charley Boorman (2006), who did indeed compete (but did not finish) in the Paris-Dakar Rally, engaged in less crowded and speed oriented activities. Where the Paris-Dakar Rally has strict time limits, demanding of its competitors to finish each stage within a day, the journeys gathered here tell a different story. Not less exciting, but exciting and narratable in a completely different way, and initiate their authors into the inner culture of another group: rather the adventure *travellers* than that of the adventure *racers*. As Pinch and Reimer (2012) note, this need for identity-confirmation can, for example, also be seen in the branding of certain motorcycles. BMW, as one of the major players in the field of motorcycling, is catering for the 'round-the-world community'. Their market share in this identity-conforming business also massively boomed when they decided to supply the motorcycles and clothing needed for McGregor's and Boorman's *Long Way Round*

and *Long Way Down* (Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.14); buying a BMW GS motorcycle now, to some, means getting closer to *being* a motorcycle adventurer .

The previous chapters have shown that bodily movement and sensations are essential to the experience of motorcycling and in creating and experiencing the biker-body. This biker-body, then, is the actor in the rite of passage. After all, if it is only through movement that encounters between the self and the other (both human and non-human) are instigated, it is the biker-body that instigates and enables this specific kind of travel and engagement:

> [for] to travel is to make a journey, a movement through space. Possibly this journey is epic in scale, taking the traveller to the other side of the world or across the continent, or up to a mountain; possibly it is more modest in scope, and takes place within the limits of the traveller's own country or region, or even just their immediate locality. Either way, to begin any journey, or indeed, simply to set foot beyond one's own front door, is to quickly encounter difference and otherness. (Thompson 2011, p.9)

For some, a journey is about the movement out of their own personal space into places inhabited or dominated by 'the other'; where comparison, confirmation and construction of identities occur. Hence, narratives of these encounters with difference are not only reports of the world out there, but are also an account or guide into the minds of the author or traveller, for it is through their values and assumptions, expectations and imagined geographies that experiences are narrated and, from there, that narratives find their origins (Thompson 2011, p.10). In other words, it is travelling that helps the traveller to look inwards and become better acquainted with their identity.

In the literary account of *The Long Way Down*, Ewan McGregor reminisces that "this was the stuff of dreams, a boy's adventure…" (2007, p.150); an adventure

that was initiated by an intrinsic human desire to experience what is hidden and unknown to us (Weber 2001, p.363). Some people escape this world more passively, through fiction for example. Fisher (1986, p.15) defines adventure fiction as a "rearrangement of reality" where "disparate elements of human experience are selected and ordered in a structure which includes its own version of time, place and personality". In other words: in these moments, where we imagine ourselves to be living the lives we want to live and making the choices we want to make, we can be our own (imagined) selves without the perception of any outside or state-like interference. Considering the travel narrative as a literary genre, there are few things more thought- and aspiration-provoking than tales of adventures in distant countries; they have been capturing the minds of people over ages, varying from Homer's *Odyssey* to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Hopkins & Putnam 1993, p.4; Thompson 2011, p.140; Laing & Crouch 2009, p.327). As Ted Simon confirms, he "wanted to travel the way Livingstone did, or Columbus, as though anything could happen" (Simon 1980, p.23), he was making himself "the hero of his own myth", "acting out other peoples fantasies" (Simon 1980, p.99) in order to confirm his own identity as an adventurer shaped after images created by others. This is also confirmed by Laing and Crouch (2011) who in their study called '*Frontier Tourism. Retracing Mythic Journeys'* emphasise on a mythic dimension to frontier and adventure travel, with their participants referring to their "love of 'epics' and the 'heroes' of their childhood" (Laing & Crouch 2011, p.1524). Whether they are based on imagination or experience, adventure narratives take the reader away from "normal concerns by events of an exaggerated, heightened nature, often taking place in exotic, distant surroundings … they offer surprise rather than confirmation, strangeness other than familiarity" (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, p.8). This encourages the reader to embrace

this chance of an escape and set out on an adventure himself. The question, however, is how much the reader differs from those who turned imagination into action and produced non-fictional accounts within the motorcycle adventure context. Margery Fisher focuses on the readers of adventure fiction and their expectations that the adventure narratives will give them. For example, the reader expects to be captured by the unexpected, and to be forget his normal concerns by diving into a story that rises his adrenaline levels and often takes place in distant and exotic places (Fisher 1986). The key issues here seem to be 'forget normal concerns' and 'unexpected'; our normal lives with choices calculated around our safety are augmented by narratives with uncertain outcomes and unexpected (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, p.9). This observation bears a strong resemblance with what we observe when focusing on those people who want to do more than read.

After the era of European exploration of Africa closed in what Joseph Conrad dubbed the epoch of Geography Triumphant (Conrad 2010, pp.7–9; Driver 2001, p.4), when the entire world seemed to be mapped, indexed and known, people did not stop their adventurous pursuits. However, by now they did not always invoke for the science and knowledge of the world, but more often spoke of feeding pure human desires: "adventure became a legitimate quest for its own sake, or an end in itself rather than a means to an end" (Ewert in Weber 2001, p.363). For adventurers, exotic, distant and isolated surroundings then are both an expectation and a goal when deciding on a destination. Hence, self-styled 'adventurers' put themselves, voluntarily and consciously, into circumstances that are unknown to them to provide the challenge and the experience.

Paralleling Van Gennep's (1960) schéma with Laing and Crouch's (2009) key ingredients for adventure travel, we can identify the 'separation as solitude' and

the ‘transition phase’ with the challenges encountered. The ‘incorporation phase’ of the schéma can be seen as the narrativization of the transition, where we order our new knowledge and mould it into chronological, and sometimes published, identities. The selected motorcycle adventure travellers I am studying have emerged themselves in becoming the biker-body. They isolate themselves and use their biker bodies to engage in and cope with several kinds of hazardous situations in order to create their stories, initially intended to share or not – mind, Theresa Wallach, for example, as we shall discuss later in more detail, did not write down her stories until just before she died at the age of 90 (Wallach 2011, p.viii). In the next section I will discuss the first parallel of separation and solitude into more detail.

5.2 Isolation and Solitude: Alone in the World and inside the Helmet

The ancient philosopher Seneca already recognised this quest for separation in his fellow human beings, when stating that “men [sic] travel widely to different sorts of places seeking different distractions because they are fickle, tired of soft living, and always seek after something which eludes them” (Seneca in Urry 1990, p.4). For some people, solitude can provide the perfect conditions that enable intense, profound and spiritual experiences. A lot of these travellers focus on the psychological rewards that may come with undertaking an adventure; it offers an escape from any problems or (re)straints experienced within their normal, mundane lives (Graburn 1983, p.11). It is therefore not strange that motivations for isolated travel destinations include stress recovery, recuperation or regeneration and self-determination (Laing & Crouch 2009, p.326), for nature is seen as a “popular arena for getting in touch with the true and the pure” (Graburn (2001) in Laing & Crouch 2009, p.326), with the things that matter to one personally. Furthermore, isolation and experiences of solitude are undoubtedly personally constructed: although

modern communications allow people to visit almost every place on earth within a time-span of forty-eight hours, people can still feel a mental isolation from what is familiar to them, such as family, friends and their own home and comfort zones (Laing & Crouch 2009, p.331).

Whilst riding a motorcycle through desolate areas, this experience of isolation is twofold. First, one is geographically enabled to experience solitude. Pryce, when being alone, stated that she "relished the heightened sense of adventure [of being out there alone]" (Pryce 2008, p.184), and Manicom, for example, talks about 'phenomenal spaces', when he states that:

> the sense of phenomenal space was quite awesome and it was only after all these months in Africa that I was really beginning to feel inspired by them … I felt that I was in a place where I could yell at the top of my voice for as long as I wanted, and not a soul would hear. Totally alone and at peace with the world. (Manicom 1995, p.177)

And Simon, who, reminisces:

> That was the desert as I had imagined it since childhood, as I had wanted it to be, a place of awe-inspiring emptiness where only bleached bones could be at rest. (Simon 1980, p.86)

And later on:

> That night I lie out under the stars again. The Pleiades are there winking at me. I am no longer on my way from one place to another, I have changed lives. My life is now as black and white as night and day; a life of fierce struggles under the sun, and peaceful reflection under the night sky. (Simon 1980, p.108)

Both attribute almost therapeutic characteristics to the desolate and rough areas they travel through. Manicom is 'alone and at peace with the world', and Simon accredits the 'awe-inspiring emptiness' as a perfect enabler of 'peaceful reflection'. He, too,

mentions ‘peace’ as a characteristic of his isolation; troubles of everyday life seem to take no part in their thoughts which allows them to reflect and look inward.

Secondly, one finds oneself in a curious combination of isolation and interconnectedness with the surroundings. This isolation is what I would like to call the world inside the helmet; the place from where the motorcyclist gets the opportunity to be alone with their thoughts and where impressions can be processed in solitude. As Melissa Holbrook states:

> it is possible to feel more alone on a motorcycle than anywhere at rest … On a bike, there [may be] people all around, in a car in the next lane not five feet away, but they can’t get you. You may communicate with the friends who ride along by using signals, but you can’t talk. You are spared the burden of words. (Holbrook Pierson 1997, p.233)

So even when they are travelling with other people or when they are surrounded by other traffic, motorcyclists can always be isolated: just close the visor, start the engine and be alone. When it is basically just you inside your helmet and your thoughts that answer back when asking questions and making remarks, it is easy to accredit those answers at least partly to the motorcycle, to the travel companion. Indeed, as we have seen in chapter three, a personified mode of transport is for most motorcyclists the best chance of having a conversation whilst riding. Again, this is quite a lengthy selection, but Manicom here took some time to try and capture his experience of ‘helmet time’ and its advantages:

> When you spend hour upon hour astride a motorcycle, with a helmet on and a strong slipstream to snatch away any attempt at conversation, you have a lot of thinking time (in between the potholes anyway). […] This thinking time was one of the things I’d started to really love about being on the bike. It was my time when, mostly, I was in control, and as a rule interruptions were few. In a way the bike was making me remote from people, but this time to myself allowed me to keep my

> sanity and perspective in a world that I did not know, and was having to constantly re-learn. As soon as I got off the bike, I would automatically be back in the incredible vibrancy of African life. I almost always had the energy to deal with it, to experience it with a sort of freshness and to learn from it. Instead of the solitary hours making me into some sort of two-wheeled hermit, they actually made me want to go out and meet and talk to people. The bike was working well in more ways than one. (Manicom, 1995, pp.201-202)

For Manicom, the motorcycle seems to be both the perfect travel companion and the best mode of transport, especially for those seeking solitude and isolation, as well as for those seeking contact with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Of course this solitude and isolation are combined with the ever-lasting mechanical noises and flowing wind that come with riding a motorcycle. The motorcycle makes someone 'remote from people': just put on the helmet and drive, and what remains are just you and the world around you passing by.

Ted Simon confirms this world inside the helmet as a feature of motorcycling. As long as the vibrations and overall symbiotic nature of the relationship between man and machine are in balance, they are calming and allow for one of the great advantages that motorcycling offers; contemplation,

> A full tank takes me almost three hours without a stop, three hours of contemplation and speculation, contemplation of past mistakes, speculation on future dangers. Why does my mind dwell so much on the down side of life, when the present is so exhilarating and satisfying! (Simon 1980, p. 29)

And later,

> I decided I would have no more of it. […] I would no longer lend [my anxieties] the props of my imagination. […] I launched myself on a journey to circle the globe, but I seemed to be on another journey as well, a great voyage of discovery into my own subconscious. And I trembled a little at the thought of what monsters I might encounter there. (Simon 1980, p. 151)

Riding a motorcycle is a perfect way to isolate oneself from all but one's own thoughts. The movement of the motorcycle isolates the motorcyclist from any form of contact (without specialised communication sets such as the ones that Boorman and McGregor use) even when riding with a passenger as pillion or in a side-car because of the noise produced by both the wind and the engine. It leaves the rider alone with his or her thoughts which can lead to a journey into the subconscious, as Simon describes.

And this 'freedom' also extends to wider society and its rules and restraints. Although her adventure takes place in a completely different time, Theresa Wallach for example clearly mentions this escape from her own everyday reality. Listening to a BBC broadcast over the wire during one of their stops, she heard the bells of Big Ben:

> 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 was regulated by those who themselves did not live by them. I would rather grapple with the sands of the Sahara than the sands of contemporary society. (Wallach 2011, p. 36)

Here, their hardship in natural landscapes as modern travellers is seen as preferable to the political landscape of the United Kingdom during that time. Being modern travellers, independent and self-reliant, they were masters of their own fate and destiny, despite the hazards and risks they accepted willingly; they chose to conquer these frontiers for themselves. Their journey gave them the freedom to choose their own ways and their own struggles, instead of the struggles imposed on them by society.

5.3 Freedom to Choose: Challenge and Hardship as Transition Method

Riding a motorcycle through areas such as the Sahara desert does not involve smooth riding; it is about balance, endurance and stamina. It's not just the elements that you also encounter on a smooth tarmac surface, but even more so the elements combined with the perils that the landscape forces on the rider. Pryce refers to the car in front of her, carrying her fellow travellers when commenting on the challenges of, and the challenges that come with, crossing the Sahara on a motorcycle:

> What constitutes off-road fun to a motorcyclist equates to gruelling misery for a passenger in the back of a car […]. For me, this incredible ride across the heart of the desert was everything I had dreamed of back home as I had pored over my maps of Africa, marvelling at the sheer size and might of the Sahara. […] [A]lthough it was indeed blisteringly hot, and the riding was physically gruelling at times, it was still a magical experience to be riding a motorcycle across the sands to Tamanrasset, a place that had in my dreams for so long that it had taken on almost mythical status. The last day's ride that took us into the town was the grandest finale a motorcyclist could hope for, through the foothills of the Hoggar Mountains and along the most exhilarating rocky trails I had ever ridden. […] [T]he bike never failed on me. […] It was exactly what I had come here for. (Pryce 2008, pp.100–101)

But was it the imagined landscape that was appealing to Pryce, or the actual landscape she was crossing through at that moment. Was it about realising a dream and confirming an identity that existed on paper and in her mind, riding through that mighty desert that takes up so many squares on the map, or was it the landscape itself she was thoroughly excited about? Given her reference to the most exhilarating trails she had ever ridden, it appears to be mainly about the challenges incorporated in the landscape; it appears to be about thrill and danger-seeking activities.

Although some voices beg to differ, and some even call for a ban on this risky activity (Packer 2008, p.112; Constantine 1974), riding a motorcycle does not

automatically mean crashing, nor make a person reckless and irresponsible. It is just that the motorcycle will always be compared to the norm: the car, which is statistically less dangerous (Packer 2008, p.113; Bellaby & Lawrenson 2001; Berger 1992, cited in Pinch & Reimer 2012, p.7). In the context of adventure tourism, Walle (1997) argued, people have various reasons for undertaking journeys and adventures; the "adventure as risk"-model provides us with a partial explanation of why people undertake adventurous activities. The Risk Theory holds that people explicitly seek out risk for its own sake as a way to gain personal fulfilment and emotional rewards such as peak experience, where for example one exceeds his or her own expectations (Walle 1997, p.267). Therefore, Walle proposes the 'Insight Model', where insight instead of the risk for its own sake becomes the ultimate goal for adventure travellers and, risk is seen as a mere, but inevitable, side-effect (Walle 1997, p.268). This insight model can fit perfectly into our current rites of passage framework, where the challenge leads to a transition. In a table, he proposes the differences between the two models where the first focuses on risk and the second emphases the possibilities for knowledge gaining,

Table 2: Walle's Comparison of Risk Theory and Insight Theory (Walle 1997, p.271)

Issue	Risk Theory	Insight Theory
Status of theory	The standard, state-of-the-art theory of adventure	A proposed theory which is offered to supplement and/or replace "Risk Theory"
Activity which the Theory Investigates	Outdoor adventures involving risk	Adventure, broadly speaking
Adventure is Viewed primarily as	Risk Taking	A kind of learning experience which occurs in a new/strange environment
Status of Learning/Insight in the model	A possible side effect of risk taking	Insight is an end in itself: the goal and process of adventure
Significance of Risk	Adventure must be adjusted in terms of acquired skills so risk/danger continues	Danger/risk is a side effect of striving for insight, not the reason for adventuring
Theory Relevant to	Certain outdoor adventures as they have been investigated by contemporary researchers	Numerous, broadly defined adventurous activities

As we can see in Table 2, the Insight Theory is applicable to most adventure activities, whereas Risk Theory focuses more on those activities that *have to* come with a certain amount of risk. Insight theory does not exclude nor ignore risk to be an important aspect of the insight process, but does not consider it to be the main goal; it is not the risk that is key, but the experience that is potentially created by risky activities. However, as Weber (2001) quite rightly notes, Walle is in some way ignoring the sheer importance of risk *within* the insight experience. People engaging in certain adventurous activities build up certain skills, and in order to keep experiencing adventure, they need to scale up the activities to match (or exceed) their current capabilities. In this sense, gaining insight and risk are not to be approached as separately, but as integral parts of the adventure experience (Weber 2001, p.362). This also makes risk a multidimensional construct. Bealby, for example, not only

needed the isolation from everyday life to get his head around his own life and identity, but also sought out his own physical and mental limits:

> I needed answers and I wanted peace. With every mile I wouldn't automatically be granted these – sitting at border posts and avoiding pot-holes would not be enough. I would have to be pushed to new lengths, perhaps on the edge. (Bealby 1995, p.28)

It is this hardship then that a lot of adventure travellers pursue; otherwise, they would have chosen easier routes with tarmac roads littered with shelters and comfortable hotels after a long day of riding.

Firstly, as argued above, on an individual level, skill levels have an influence on the riskiness of certain activities and one person might need to adjust the risk input over the course of his life or even over the course of one single adventure because of increasing skill levels. For example, in their ride across Africa (2007) Boorman's skill level was higher than that of McGregor; the former had time to enjoy the ride and did not experience a high level of risk, whilst the latter was struggling and was experiencing higher levels of risk. McGregor and Boorman did have different levels of riding skills; Boorman already had off-road experience and even competed in the famous Dakar Rally two years earlier. McGregor on the other hand was more of a tarmac rider and although *The Long Way Round* (2005) did take them off road on some occasions during the journey through Russia, his skills did not come anywhere near those of Boorman. This provided some different views on the landscapes and hardship they harboured. Boorman for example, when talking about Ethiopia stated,

> I loved this country [Ethiopia red.], though it was a tough life for the people, it really was. But to ride through it was just incredible; it had sand, mud, gravel, rain… everything you could possibly want. It was just beautiful. (McGregor & Boorman, 2007, p. 207)

For him the sand, mud and gravel were less challenging than they were for McGregor and were approached with eagerness more than with fear. McGregor on the other hand struggled more intensely with what the landscape threw at him:

> I managed to make it beyond the buildings without hitting anyone, but back on the open road I had two or three falls. I just couldn't gauge the surface and the wheel would twist and shake me of the bike. […] I found myself stiffening up and as soon as that happened I was off. Picking up the bike in this heat was strength-sapping and I was becoming very tired very quickly. We rode on and I was OK for a while, my confidence slowly returning and gradually picking up speed. Then I just lost the front and the bike slapped down on its side. (McGregor & Boorman, 2007, p. 177)

McGregor's skill-level did not allow him to relax too much. The *Long Way Down* mission was fuelled by personal dreams and identity quests, but also by the investments of TV producers and sponsors, and the expectations of fans; it was more than just about two guys travelling down Africa, it was about an image and expectations. They did not only 'have to' deal with it because they wanted to, but also because it was expected of them by others. Not only books, but also media productions such as these create and uphold certain images about for example the innate connection between adventure and a masculine identity (Mosse 1996).This, essentially, suggests that they, and perhaps even the other adventurers, are *buying* themselves a *taste* of free space and open road. It also poses the question of whether they are ever really 'free', which are very valid points to make. Nonetheless, the intent of a journey and its outcome for the adventurist are perhaps more important than the means by which those are accomplished; ultimately all of the motorcyclists in this thesis had to pay for their journey to become reality. Although it could easily be part of a marketing campaign, McGregor and Boorman do speak, in retrospect, of an epic journey where they faced their "hardest challenges yet" and talk of "the sheer exhilaration of riding together again, through a continent filled with magic and

wonder" (McGregor & Boorman 2007, cover). Or, as Swarbrooke et al. emphasise, challenge and hardship have no universal rules, for what is adventurous for one, can be considered easy for another (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, pp.3–5). Price-Davies, who is in some way slightly reluctant to the emergence of the 'adventure tourist' by stating that "it does chime oddly with many of the (pre)dominant mythologies of "biking": the lone rider, braving the elements, coping with danger, exploring and discovering alone" (Price-Davies 2011), also has to acknowledge that

> After all, the participants are getting the "experience of a lifetime," and complaining about the packaged and cocooned nature of this experience may not only be churlish but actually irrelevant to those taking the journey. (Price-Davies 2011)

Thus, secondly, and perhaps more significantly, individual frames of reference concerning risk are important as well. To some a first time abroad or travel by airplane is seen as an adventure incorporating certain psychological risks, whilst others have to engage in hazardous *physical* activities in order to experience a sense of risk (Weber 2001, pp.370–371). Like Walle (1997) and Weber (2001), Swarbrooke et al. (2003, p.71) emphasise that risk can be translated to the risk of losing something valuable, and that, above all, too many people view risk as a negative concept, whilst it is the positive side of risk that drives adventurers (and thus motorcycle adventurers). The main difference between negative and positive risk is, as Swarbrooke et al. (2003) argue, that negative risk is uncontrollable and also known as *danger*, and it is focused on *loss*, whilst positive risk is something that can be controlled and is therefore considered to be a *challenge* and focused on *gain*. This is where, the importance of skill and perseverance come in which will ultimately construct the adventure that people are looking for. Adventure motorcyclists investigate and calculate the risks of activities that appeal to them and then make a decision based on their own perception of their skills and priorities

(Swarbrooke et al. 2003, pp.71–74). Theresa Wallach, for example, was informed about the risks involved in her chosen path:

> The wireless operator gave an accurate description of conditions for the next three hundred or so miles, almost the longest hop. He explained that coming away from the Hoggar Massif and descending to lower altitude deep sand and huge dunes formed the southern desert. The ascent to another plateau, the Air Massif, to Agadez, would be difficult, if not impossible for a motorcycle. Water could be found at the Well of In-Abangarar, about one hundred and twenty-five miles due south – if we could find it – but the water, though sweet, would have to be boiled first. (Wallach 2011, p.68)

They calculated the risks, and still decided to go through with their plan, despite the operator's warning that it would not be possible. They were perseverant, and, eventually, they reached their goal a manner they probably would not have expected after the warnings of the impassable Air Massif: they got towed by a horse:

> The trek to Agadez left on the 25th January. The Chief's son, robed in a flowing indigo cloth like a Tuareg, mounted his four-legged horse to tow our iron horse, on which I sat steering. … Where there was good footing, climbing a thousand feet up the Air Massif increased the pace to only three miles an hour. … Desert sunset had faded to dusk when one of the boys pointed languidly ahead to the tall obelisk of the Mosque of Agadez, etched like a symbol of triumph on the evening sky. The eighteen hundred miles of the Saharan drama now lay behind us. (Wallach 2011, pp.71–72)

Their priorities were making it to Agadez and their goal was to see Africa, they did not doubt their skills and resourcefulness, and although eventually it was only one horse-power that saw them through the toughest part of this section, their calculations were right: they reached Agadez.

Frontier travel is often seen as a modern pilgrimage that guides adventurers into the footsteps of those mythical and historical figures who went before them, and whose personal transformations in both a literary and reality contexts are recounted as valuable and invigorating (Laing & Crouch 2009, p.327). Of course it is not strange if one should ask why McGregor and Boorman's ventures, then, are part of

the data. One might say the ventures of McGregor and Boorman have no right to be treated at the same level as those of Theresa Wallach and Ted Simon, for they did not travel all by themselves.

As Swarbrooke et al. argue, real-life adventures come with challenges and risks that instil the traveller with levels of fear and discomfort; "feeling scared, exhausted and thoroughly tested is sometimes part of the deal" (2003, p.8), but it is a conscious and often carefully considered choice/decision. Giddens underwrites these characteristics of adventure by stating that adventure travellers especially are part of a community that celebrates the "calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action" (1991, p.28) because they deliberately and consciously take part in a discourse where the outcomes of the future are uncertain, but where the uncertainty is calculated into the final decision. This is also supported by Ewert and Hollenhorst, who state that in the context of adventure,

> [a] related factor is the concept of "uncertainty of outcome." In contrast to the chance probabilities inherent in gambling, this uncertainty can be influenced by skills and actions of the participant. Chance occurrences such as bad weather and falling rock are attenuated by the decisions of the recreationist. Competent response to this uncertainty requires appropriate actions and intense concentration, both of which contain the potential of leading to extraordinary experiences. (Ewert & Hollenhorst 1997, p.22)

In other words, this calculating of the risks and possible outcomes leads to making a final decision and making a choice. It is the freedom to choose that gives the adventurist power, confidence and satisfaction; "a latent, not entirely unpleasant sense of danger or at least uncertainty, producing a heightened alertness to surrounding conditions" (Jackson 1977) .

But then one has made the choice to engage in certain activities, to rely on one's capabilities and judge of character, what happens next? In most cases, a lot of travellers, including McGregor and Boorman (2007), choose to travel via routes that will get them through rougher and more natural and uncultivated landscapes and will provide for *more* hardship. This hardship is actively sought out and, in this case, the production is all about image creating, both for the actors and the motorcycle brand they are using. For example, early in their journey, on one of the first hard days when riding in a sand storm, fighting a tight schedule to get from border to border, emotions reach a boiling point within the production crew. The support crew did not seem to understand the riders' position of having to deal with hardship, being on a tight schedule and wanting to see the places they ride through in a bit more detail at the same time. Boorman said that all he "wanted [was] some sympathy for being on the bike all the time. […] Endurance is as big a part of this as anything else!" (McGregor & Boorman 2007, p.127). The production team travelled by car and was, obviously, travelling more comfortably than the men on the motorcycles. This difference in levels of hardship and endurance seems to be something McGregor and Boorman wanted to use as being a major selling point: it was a yardstick for adventure; the more hardship, the bigger the adventure and the credits gained. They wanted credit for 'putting themselves out there', enduring the ruthless perils of landscape and weather when they were conquering "a baking wilderness" (McGregor & Boorman, 2007, p. 166). They wanted their (developing) identities as adventurers to be recognised and appreciated.

When asked about coping with hardship by producer David Alexanian, after taking over the motorcycle of Ewan's wife Eve for a section of the trip because the roads would be too severe for her, there is a casual but tough answer,

> 'Now I [David] know about sand. Jesus Christ, how the hell have you guys managed to cope with so much of it?'
> 'A case of having to, Dave,' I told him. 'You get used to it.' (McGregor & Boorman, 2007, p. 281)

Once set off on a journey like this, riding a motorcycle through Africa via specific (adventurous) routes, one *has* to physically be able to deal with the risks in order to succeed.

Pryce had simple reasons for undertaking a quest like this. This becomes clear when talking about an encounter at a border post, where Pryce explains to the border official what she is doing out there,

> "I'm going to South Africa, to Cape Town".
>
> He stared at me aghast.
>
> "But why?" His voice bounced off the corrugated iron walls of the hut as it increased in volume. "Why do you do this? Why do you ride a motorcycle all the way through Africa?"
>
> "Um.. for fun, for an adventure, I suppose," I replied.
> (Pryce 2008, p. 162)

The answer to the key question that asks 'why?' is answered by the sole ideas of fun and adventure; nothing more, and nothing less. This makes it sound quite easy and straightforward. Although to the border official it might have been ridiculous and stupid, to Pryce it was just simple fun and adventure. However, as stated at the beginning of this section, it is neither that simple, nor that black or white, for the definition of an adventure is multidimensional; there is not just one original recipe for mixing events into 'adventure' that will apply to everyone.

Sticking to the more approved method, solo traveller Jonny Bealby (1995) was also looking for fun and adventure. Whilst driving in convoy with trucks and cars, overall he finds his motorcycle to be the most suitable engine powered vehicle

when encountering a gully that already claimed some victims; it was, as he described "a vehicle graveyard" (Bealby 1995, p.54); as opposed to the other four-wheel vehicles in his convoy, he could easily navigate around the more troubled areas. It appears he chose his vehicle wisely. However, he has to admit that at the same time the hardship that comes with travelling by motorcycle can madden someone, especially when confronted with the luxury of travelling by car or truck, in plain sight. On one of the toughest routes, riding in convoy with a French truck, he keeps falling over in the sand, finding it harder and harder to focus and keep the motorcycle upright. The Frenchmen in the car clearly think him mad for undertaking such a journey and laugh at his apparent struggle and (to them) impending failure; they invite him to join them in the truck. They did not understand the beauty and positive experience that Bealby would eventually see in this mental and physical test, because of course, at the time, he was cursing and shouting and had endured more than he had. Later on, however, it would be the challenge of putting is body and psyche to the test that would make this journey a success (Bealby 1995, pp.65–66). He chose this vehicle and this route, whilst knowing its advantages and disadvantages. He made a conscious choice to endure these events. He could have been in a truck or a car, he could have been on one of the better roads that lead through Africa, or he could have decided to join the Frenchmen in their truck. However, none of these other options would have tested his physique and mental perseverance the way that this motorcycling over these tracks did. It tested and confirmed his skills, taught him what his strong and weak points were and showed him what skills needed more attention and what was already properly developed.

Wallach's account shows that the hardships that come with motorcycle travel, especially when travelling through Africa, are mainly to be found in the

landscape. Here, we are not only speaking about hazards that make a motorcycle crash, but getting stuck in sand, in an isolated area, or in torrid circumstances can be as dangerous as crashing on tarmac,

> The sun rose from behind the sand dunes and revealed a 360º panorama of barrenness with such a feeling of space; we knew we were deep in the desert. Like the guides for the camel caravans who know their route, we tried to spot and avoid the more treacherous places. When all the wheels sank into deep soft sand, we were in real trouble – at least for a while, though perhaps for hours or even days. (Wallach 2011, p.40)

Riding through the desolate landscape, whilst keeping in mind the risks and hazards that one should try to avoid at all times, is an enervating task. It is a task that involves constant engagement with one's surroundings, an engagement that from time to time can be almost overpowering. As Wallach writes, she experienced 'such a feeling of space' that she knew that they had to be at their best. Again she uses the analogy of the camels, comparing themselves to nomad guides, who *have* to know and understand the landscape in order for them and their caravans to survive their trek. They had been warned by both people at home and officers they met at half way stations, that their journey plans might have been too optimistic; the landscape would not be suitable for a motorcycle; a message the African landscape seemed to whisper into their ears at some occasions,

> We soon began to realise the magnitude and severity of the Sahara desert. We were a thousand miles from Algiers, barely half way across, but were not yet licked. Perhaps there was a reason why everyone had said us we would not succeed in getting across. (Wallach 2011, pp. 41-2)

Although they had crossed quite a substantial distance by that time, they were not yet 'licked', not yet skilled enough to make as few mistakes as possible and hazards kept

showing. For example, they had to load and unload the motorcycle and sidecar several times to be able to proceed:

> I don't remember how many times we did like this along the desolate stretch of more than 250 miles between In-Salah and Arak, on the way to Tamanrhasset [sic], but in spite of hardship, we were free to put our civil liberty into practice in a most adventurous way. (Wallach 2011, p. 48)

A motorcycle alone can easily weigh over two hundred and fifty kilograms. Add to this the weight of the sidecar, their trailer and the equipment they had to carry to both survive themselves and to repair any damage, and moving through landscapes made out of soft sand and rocky surfaces becomes an undertaking that probably even 'licked' (male) adventurers would have to sit out without being able to anticipate or prevent every mistake or mechanical malfunction. This landscape also despaired them from time to time:

> Hour after hour of sheer monotony, thumping over grooves in the track, the only compensation we had was the edifying experience of having endured riding across the Tademait Plateau. This plateau surely must be the bleakest place on earth to find one's soul, if nothing else. (Wallach 2011, p. 41)

Travelling the 'big landscapes', and adventurous frontiers is not all about beauty and enjoyment. African landscapes also provide rough, rocky terrains with wind swept grooves that make for everything but a smooth and pleasant ride. Where sand requires a rider to just keep the throttle open, rocks and grooves ask for more careful navigation and speed handling. This type of riding leaves less time to consider the surroundings and requires more focusing on the surface than the horizon. Therefore, the only reward they had after crossing this plateau was having crossed the plateau, the endurance of hardship and proof of their abilities to handle such a landscape.

Wallach and her companion are not the only ones acknowledging that adventure is not as romantic as a lot of tales and stories have us believe. However, where Wallach and Blenkiron seem to find their silver lining in dealing with the hardship itself, Manicom argues quite the opposite,

> My broken bones had been a high price to pay for all of this exploring, but every cloud does have silver lining and mine had been not the wonderful geography, but all of the amazingly kind people that I'd met. (Manicom, 1995, p. 275)

Of course Africa has more to offer than landscapes and physical adventure, but if it were all about the people and the culture and less about the geography and the dangers the terrain offers motorcyclists, why, then, do they not choose a different mode of transport? Where Theresa Wallach and her travel companion (2001) seem to find the silver lining in the act of conquering and experience the landscape, the hardship endured by Manicom seems to be more of a hassle and a more negative by-product of undertaking such a journey. On one of his more challenging days,

> [t]he only choice was to ride through the chest high scrubby bush and hope that we could cut across the right track, and miss picking up any thorns. We were already feeling tired and weren't even half way through the planned day's ride (Manicom, 1995, p. 80).

Clearly Manicom and his travel companion underestimated both their abilities and the terrain. The unpredictable terrain in Africa asked for a different focus, an undivided one.

> The battle for us was with a combination of deep ruts still left from the last rains, and with the soft thick pockets of dust that would instantly suck power. They were rather like riding into baths full of talcum powder. Mike's motocross experience paid off, but we both fell. The track was so soft that on one occasion, the only way to get the bike upright again had been to scoop holes under the wheels and then push it into them. (Manicom, 1995, p. 79)

In such circumstances it is key to keep all your focus to the riding, the 'road' ahead and that is draining away all energy. Overall, a big part of the adventure of travelling through Africa must be the challenge of the landscapes. To some, this challenge is the main reason for travelling, for others it is a necessary challenge to overcome. Manicom seems to be of the latter kind. As he explains so himself,

> [t]he bike kept on getting me into funny, oddball situations that I'd never have got into without it. But, it caused me problems too. Sometimes I could well do without the hassles but at other times the bike lead adventure was a gem. (Manicom, 1995, p. 183).

These differences in approaches to challenge and hardship, as portrayed by Manicom and Wallach are at the core of Van Gennep's (1960) schéma: the transition, but also belong to the key characteristics of adventure as identified by Laing and Crouch: the risk that is brought about by the quest for isolation and challenge to both psychological and physical aspects of identity.

Years before Bealby, Simon also encountered people who tried to save him from his ordeal, when his travel companions tried to convince him to load his motorcycle onto their Land Rover. He would not have it that way; "that was the beginning of the hardest and most rewarding physical experience of [his] entire journey" (Simon 1980, p.94). Or, as he recounts later in the narrative:

> People who thought of my journey as a physical ordeal or an act of courage, like single-handed yachting, missed the point. Courage and physical endurance were no more than useful items of equipment for me, like facility with languages or immunity to hepatitis. The goal as 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 in my way. The prize was to change and grow big enough to feel one with the whole world. The

> real danger was death by exposure. … The vital instrument of change is detachment, and travelling alone was an immense advantage. At a time of change, the two aspects of a person exist simultaneously; as with a caterpillar turning into a butterfly there is the image of what you were and the image of what you are about to be. (Simon 1980, pp.404–405)

He explains that although endurance and hardship are unavoidable, essentially they are the key to the experiences in the transition phase. Poetically, again, he captures the transition and transformation in the metaphor of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, a person taking in all that they learn about themselves and the world around them. It is, as he remembers, a matter of 'laying oneself open' to everything that crosses their path:

> The concept of the Self seemed to connect with my own in South Africa, of being made of the stuff of the universe, all-pervading and imperishable. The Truth was the stuff itself, revealed in the natural order of things. You have only to merge with the world to know the Truth and find your Self. (Simon 1980, p.407)

The transitional phase, aimed at self-discovery and transformation, Simon argues, is best lived in complete surrender and emergence into the world. It is there where someone can find answers, especially to questions concerning one's own identity, an identity that needs to be re-discovered and re-confirmed.

5.4 Narrating the Adventure: Incorporation of the Heroic Biker-Body

Adventure, or the transitional phase, is, following Torun Elsrud, key in the construction of a narrative that narrates our (changing) identity; we can consider adventure, and the hardship involved, to be a "device used to construct a story" (Elsrud 2001, p.598). Hence, adventure is also about the stories that can be told afterwards. These stories can be understood as the concluding parts of a rite of passage: incorporation back into the profane world where identities need to be re-

confirmed. After we have completed the transition, and are entering or have entered the incorporation phase of the rite of passage, stories are told so that, in an orderly fashion, we can (re)construct and translate our identities (Elsrud 2001, p.598). All elements that are associated with adventure, such as intents and goals, dangers, risks and the stories that will be developed are often imagined even before one yard of the life-changing journey has been covered, like Ted Simon, who already "imagined it since childhood" (Simon 1980, p.86). Even stronger, they are not only imagined, they might even be pre-constructed within the frameworks of the grand narratives of travelling, which, as Elsrud explains, provide a "system of beliefs which unite people in some sort of common understanding about reality" (2001, p.600). In other words, the act of travelling and its implied narrativization occur within a framework that creates expectations and meanings from the first moment that the journey is imagined until the twelfth time that the traveller re-tells his story to friends and family.

Of course, the stories and the things we gain from undertaking or undergoing adventures can be material, such as a book we publish for telling our stories to the great public; after all, most of the data here comes from travel literature. But also and perhaps even more enduring, these gains can be less concrete and tangible, such as memories, but also life lessons and, for example, a feeling of accomplishment and (re)discovered self-confidence (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, pp.10–14). In other words, the most important gain is the passage that guides us into a different understanding of our identity, whether we write that down or not. For example, neither Theresa Wallach nor Florence Blenkiron had the intention to share their adventure with anyone; she had to be encouraged by Barry M. Jones and others to publish memoires

of this journey. In fact, she did not even live to see it published (Wallach 2011, p.viii). As she recounts,

> [o]ur exploit was not intended to be a geographical expedition, nor did we pretend to be geologists, photographers or journalists, nor under the circumstances, did we have time to write many notations about people and places. Blenk and I, with a bit of true-life reality, *were simply going to see Africa*. (Wallach 2011, p.49, my emphasis)

They "were simply going to *see* Africa", and experience it the way it was, with all the hardship and difficulties included.

Still, most of our travellers have produced their accounts right after their return. They were either undertaking the journey in order to write a book (Ted Simon (1980)), hoped that selling a television series would pay the trip for them (McGregor and Boorman (2007)), or only felt the need to share their journeys in narrative form with others afterwards (Manicom (1995), Bealby (1995), Wallach (2011) and Pryce (2008)). Adventure is often romanticised through these travel narratives, and we presume the narrator does not dwell on the more mundane sections of a journey. This exclusion of the mundane tells us more about the expectations that are created and maintained: adventure is a time for heightened sensations and not for everyday issues.

From the late medieval period onwards, instead of solely factual descriptions of faraway places, the autobiographical mode of travel writing evolved and descriptions of activities and opinions of the writers infused the reports (Thompson 2011, p.98). Most modern narratives aim at finding a balance between the descriptions of places and peoples and more subjective insights into the traveller's own experiences, opinions and feelings. However, despite the combination of the

objective and subjective, what we encounter within our modern travel writing is what is also called 'life writing', meaning that,

> travel writing has frequently provided a medium in which writers can conduct an autobiographical project, exploring questions of identity and selfhood whilst simultaneously presenting to others a self-authored and as it were 'authorised' account of themselves. (Thompson 2011, p.99)

The accounts at hand here did exactly that, even if, as in Wallach's case, this was not intended. The authors set off on an imagined adventure, lived the adventure and narrated them accordingly, confirming their identities as adventurers to both themselves and their audience, as they did so. In writing down their stories, their identity is constructed in relation to the difference they encounter (Thompson 2011, p.119).

Because of these key characteristics, before one sets of on their journey, an image of what our kind of adventure is supposed to be and what kind of adventurers they want to be is created; the 'adventurers' construct themselves not as tourists, but as travellers. The former, described by Cohen (2004) as tourists of the 'recreational mode', are tourists who "altogether identif[y] with the mundane ... Western society ... [and are] not much concerned with genuine authenticity , and may well thrive on 'pseudo-events'" (Cohen 2004, p.89). This, to travellers, appears to be the source of all evil when it comes to experiencing other parts of the word. Ted Simon, for example, argues that "the absence of tourism allows people to take a natural and generous interest in travellers" (Simon 1980, p.54). In other words, the more tourists of the recreational sort set out into the world, the more staged authenticity becomes and the less genuine the contact with what is foreign. He is not the only one. Pryce and her companions, for example, on some occasions "put aside their aversion to

sightseeing" (Pryce 2008, p.133), often associated with tourism and McGregor states that he "hates touristy things" (McGregor & Boorman 2007, p.89). Confirming Laing and Crouch's characteristics, Elsrud (2001, p.601) also confirms it is mainly the presence of risk and adventure separates the 'traveller' from the 'tourist'. Price-Davies also makes a distinction between tourists and travellers, in which "tourists expect toilet paper; travellers carry their own" (Price-Davies 2011). This is why a lot of traveller suffer from what is called 'tourist angst', which is the "unsettling realisation that one is oneself merely engaged in a form of tourism" (Thompson 2011, p.123). Some travellers, Thompson argues, therefore emphasise the fact that they have travelled 'off the beaten tracks', which they think allows them to experience places and cultures more 'authentically', instead of flocking together at approved and organised cultural displays (Thompson 2011, p.124). This going off the beaten track, however, as we have seen, also has another intent:

> [for] this way [of travelling] often requires self-styled travellers to endure discomfort and danger as they move beyond the security of established tourist itineraries. … A journey may be presented as a genuine challenge, and so as a genuine [proof of] a learning experience, for the travelling self. This in turn allows the journey to be presented as a form of pilgrimage or exploration rather than some sort of self-indulgent jaunt. (Thompson 2011, p.124)

In other words, people do not want to be seen as tourists solely having had fun doing what they love; there has to be more to it. The back cover of Jonny Bealby's *Running with the Moon* (1995) confirms this, by stating that Bealby "set off with only his motorbike for company, [beginning] a daring and dangerous journey around the African continent in a desperate attempt to unearth some meaning in his life" (1995, back cover). The same goes for Pryce's "feisty independent woman's grand trek through the Dark Continent of Africa" (2008, back cover), Theresa Wallach's

journey with “no roads, no back up, just straight across the Sahara” (2011, back cover), and Ted Simon’s “journey to the centre of his soul” (1980, back cover). The ventures made and journeys unfolded had to confirm their own (or others’, in the case of Wallach’s publication) imagined and lived identities as ‘adventurous’, and cover texts as those above do exactly that: they promise the reader an account of someone who encountered faraway countries and inner challenges, instead of someone only having a bit of fun. Narratives such as these conclude and confirm one’s rite of passage. One has separated him or herself from her old or regular life, battled personal and physical battles and with the narrative confirms the transition through incorporating the experiences into ones identity and hereby creating a newer or better version of it, having more insight into their beings than before.

5.5 Conclusions

An adventure is more than just a journey from A to B and an entertaining story. This chapter has explored the adventure from a more anthropological point of view, mainly guided by the schéma of the rite of passage as proposed by Arnold van Gennep (1960). Separation, transition and incorporation are the three parts of this schéma that translates into the process undergone by the adventure travellers discussed here and largely identified by Laing and Crouch as well. The schéma’s separation and (transition through) challenge phases help us in (re)building our identities. Subsequently, the writing down and narrative aspect of the adventures connect perfectly with the final phase of the schéma: incorporation. Finding a way to take what is discovered, experienced and learned back into everyday life. The notion of freedom, again, returned in this chapter, and this time was experienced on a more psychological level. Being free from the constraints of everyday life was a psychological reward for adventure motorcycle travellers like Theresa Wallach and

Florence Blenkiron, but also the way the adventurers made their own choices in hazardous situations can be argued to be some kind of freedom. This allowed them to learn more about their own capabilities and priorities. All of these goals, experiences and transformations, are then the building blocks of a new or elaborated identity, narrated as stories of becoming, both orally and in textual forms. The adventure experience, being the challenges and hardship endured, imagined at first and confirmed in the end, is a rite of passage into the family of the adventure motorcyclist. It is through the becoming of the biker-body that someone can experience adventure in this intimate way and it is through this experience that someone can identify oneself with the group of adventure motorcyclists.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

One morning, when I was on my way to the department on my motorcycle, the sun was in this correct angle which Melissa Holbrook Pierson described. When I looked to my left, I could see my biker-body. I never realized that there was a way I could actually get close to *seeing* it move without having to watch it on tape, but rather in the act of motorcycling itself, within the experience. And indeed, it moved, so fluently and constantly. Of course there is the occasional shop window in which I can see my reflection when passing by, but this was different. It was a dark entity, with just its contours to distinguish it from the dark grey fleeting tarmac. I looked at it regularly, interchanged with my reflection in the rear view mirror. In this reflection, I was just me, wearing a helmet. I could see my eyes and the protection pads of the helmet pressing into my cheeks: I always look like a hamster with that helmet on. However, when I looked to my left again, I saw something completely different. I was no longer 'just me with a helmet on my head', but an indivisible unity of human and machine, gliding smoothly over the tarmac, emanating confidence, sturdiness and action. Here I saw myself as a biker-body, ready to challenge the world.

This thesis aimed to provide an insight into the experience that is adventure motorcycling and to introduce the world to the biker-body. The main questions the thesis tried to answer were what motorcycle adventure travel is all about and what it tells us about human-nature relations. The main problem, however, was that there is nothing straightforward about motorcycling, and choosing what to discuss will always leave out elements that to others might have been crucial in creating an understanding of this difficult and almost mystic subject. The three modalities

discussed here, being the biker-body, the experience of landscape and, of course, how motorcycle adventure travel is experienced, are academic choices to address the question above. They are not the complete truth about adventure motorcycling. Over the course of the three main chapters, I have gradually built up a framework that shows us how the adventure motorcyclist begins with the biker-body, something that can also be found in motorcyclists that do not consider themselves adventure motorcyclists (yet). Subsequently I have shown how this biker-body experiences the world through moving through it. Here, the adventure setting already became more apparent, for one of the key aspects of adventure motorcycling is the engagement with an open and adventurous environment. Finally, I added key ingredients that render the kind of motorcycling discussed here distinctive, in this case adventure and adventure travel. Thus, what we do know, by now, is that motorcyclists have an intimate and close relationship with their motorcycle; it is seen as both a travel companion that offers support and trust, but also as an extension of the body. It is important to optimize these relationships, for the motorcycle is a balanced vehicle, and therefore requires balanced handling through corporeal connectedness. This corporeality extends into the world when it comes to how its movement through the world is experienced. Although we can argue that landscape has an overwhelming visual aspect, for motorcyclists this engagement is also very much corporeal. The elements contribute to the experience, but so do the ways in which the terrains are known and understood. All these elements contribute to how the body engages in the act of motorcycling. Furthermore, this biker-body faces physical dangers and challenges. It is the mind, here, that must negotiate between skill and perseverance and between goals and means; choices must be made with relation to both mind and body and isolation, making the circle complete, is the perfect way to make these

choices solely based on one's own terms and expertise. This is where the biker-body as an adventure traveller is completed, when feeling, experience, knowledge and skill are combined into one assemblage.

Hence, ultimately, if there is anything that this thesis has shown, it is that motorcycling, and especially adventure motorcycling, is explicitly a corporeal activity, and even one that combines several modes of corporeality into one activity. Motorcycling combines the direct contact with the elements and landscape of a hiker and the speed abilities of a car. It also offers a hybridity or assemblage as is the driver-car assemblage, but comes, because of the balanced nature of the motorcycle, with much more skill and feeling for the terrain than one would need whilst driving a four-wheeled vehicle. This combination is also what makes motorcycling even more of a corporeal experience; the biker-body, a balanced entity, easily weighs more than three times as much as a free-standing human body, and it comes with a completely different set of skills in order to engage with and, conquer, the tougher terrains where tarmac is not the standard surface.

Another important conclusion is the abstract omnipresent notion of freedom, a term that is widely used by motorcyclists to describe why they engage in the activity. Each chapter has identified a kind of freedom that finds its roots in the main subject of that chapter. First, transforming into a biker-body provides a freedom to move. Second, travelling as this biker-body, lacking the protection of a closed construction provides a freedom to feel. Third, the processes of 'adventuring' on a motorcycle provide for freedoms that the biker-body can choose. This last interpretation of freedom holds together with another conclusion: this thesis has also shown that adventure motorcycling can be seen as an identity confirming activity, as seen in the final chapter, because of its relationship to the rite of passage. Once being

able to choose to act and choose to be free of everyday life's constraints, one is able to compare his known life and identity to that of others, in order to establish a deeper understanding of it.

Epilogue

I walk into our garage and have a look at my motorcycle. It has stood there for about two weeks now without riding. I have been too busy writing this thesis, preferably from home where I have most of my books and notes at this time and, of course, I do not have loads of money to pay for petrol and maintenance costs. These are the excuses I come up with as I tell my motorcycle that we will not be going out for a proper trip in the near future, "but our time will come again! I promise you!" I tell him when I put myself in the saddle, take hold of the handlebars and imagine myself riding through parts of the world which are unknown to me at the moment. A couple of years ago, my husband and I decided that we wanted to do a trip around the world on our motorcycles. Not just visiting Asia or South America, but bigger, further, and longer; we want to do Asia and South America, and North America, and Africa, and Europe. This, obviously, is not something you plan overnight. Routes and countries need to be decided on, visas need to be applied for, certain skill levels need to be upgraded and, of course, not a minor detail, you also need some money to pay for petrol and other expenses. That is where we are at now: saving up money so we can leave our home for a year and a half or maybe even two years. But in the meantime, I dream. I imagine feeling the wind flowing through my summer gear with air-flow openings. I imagine smelling the fresh air after a summery rain storm, or the smells of the spices and fruits sold at roadside market stalls as I have seen on the TV when watching travel programs or documentaries. I imagine myself and the motorcycle being one when conquering the tough tracks and roads that we will encounter; complementing and thoroughly knowing each other. I imagine seeing sights that I have never seen before, both through movement and standing silently in

a place that to me appears to be the middle of nowhere. At the same time, however, I imagine myself struggling to keep the heavy motorcycle upright. I imagine myself coping with cold and extreme weather. I imagine myself falling over and over again, bruising and perhaps even breaking limbs, and picking the motorcycle up over and over again. I imagine myself being scared or uncomfortable in situations that I have never encountered before.

Of course, doing the research for and writing up this thesis was also one of my ways of imagining. Not only imagining myself as an adventure motorcyclist, but also imagining myself as a researcher. Turning a passion into research and turning research towards passion was my personal goal. The way I have approached this research project has taught me a lot about who I am and want to be as both a researcher and as an adventure motorcyclist. Like motorcycling, writing a thesis is not always fun and easy. Sometimes it is scary, because of fog and pouring rain, which can be metaphors for unclear structures and paths, and feeling flooded by the vastness of your project and drowning in the literature and choices to make. But in the end, when you are back from a difficult or perhaps even hazardous ride, drinking a nice warm cup of tea or a proper pint of ale, it is not difficult to point out the positive as well as the more negative aspects of the ride. Whilst riding, I have made many mistakes, some of them led to accidents and others were just adrenaline kicks. You learn from them and try to avoid those mistakes, because they can ruin the fun and perhaps even worse.

Over the last year, I have made many mistakes, mistakes that set me back quite a bit in the process, and also mistakes that I could have easily avoided. I have learned that ending or preventing procrastination is all about having a back bone. I also had to deal with the illness and death of my mother in law, which took up a lot

of time and commitment. This loss occurred right at the time when I had decided to alter my course in terms of this thesis. When I started in September, my thesis was about the historical geography of Favell Lee Mortimer. This change of course was, substantial, but at the same time well founded: a recently published book on my original subject took away all the originality I wanted for my project, and when a workshop on research skills and philosophy pointed out to me that the most important thing about your research should be the passion you have for your subject, I could do nothing else than to abandon 'Mrs. Mortimer and her geography primers', and combine my passion with motorcycles with my passion for research. This turn, which occurred in October, meant starting over, switching around my first and second supervisor and entering the stage with new confidence. Doing something new and exciting is, for me, the biggest part of the passion I have for research.

However, the most important parallel between motorcycling and writing a thesis is that fear will paralyse you. But, fear to dive into that curve or fear to just start writing are not so different from each other; they both hold you back from experiencing that feeling of the perfect flow, the feeling that you are getting somewhere and just enjoying the ride. When, for a postgraduate module, I read an article called "Ecological Anxiety Disorder: Diagnosing the Politics of the Anthropocene" by Paul Robbins and Sarah A. Moore (2013), I learned something about phobias and anxieties. The article itself has nothing to do with my research area, but it did show me what research or maybe even life is supposed to be all about: use your anxieties and don't let them turn into fears or even phobias. Anxieties stimulate, phobias paralyse. It is not unnatural to encounter or have anxieties, even about the things you love. J. Lacan's theories, as explained in Robbins and Moore, observe that

> Anxiety is part and parcel of scientific enterprise, the haunting absence that directs research to the unknown. While anxiety revolves around an absence, it is commonly replaced with fear, in the form of a phobia, which allows the sufferer to focus on a particular object and so symbolically target an external problem or object. (Robbins & Moore 2013, pp.9–10)

I have a future anxiety and I cannot wait for it to be here, but uncertainties have a way to turn it into a phobia: I do want my future to be fun, well-spent and also in some way financially secure. I want to do what I love, I want to contribute to the world (even if it is just in the tiniest ways) but how can I do that if I cannot do what I love because I chose the wrong option, because I walked the wrong path or because I was just too scared to take leap of faith and trust my instincts and abilities? So this is what I will take from this project, into both my motorcycling career and into my PhD project at Loughborough University: be anxious, but never fear.

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