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Esperanza Miyake is Lecturer in Digital Media and Communications at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research involves the critical analysis of gender, race and queerness in relation to a wide range of subjects in cultural and media studies, especially surrounding technologies and everyday life.

PROOF

‘Esperanza Miyake’s *The Gendered Motorcycle: Representations in Society, Media and Popular Culture* marks a significant contribution to the areas of gender and cultural studies. Miyake’s comprehensive erudition and broad swath of referenced sources in popular culture, cultural theory and motorcycle studies make this work both novel and impressive.’

**Steven Alford, Professor Emeritus and Suzanne Ferriss,
Professor Emeritus, Department of Literature and Modern
Languages, Nova Southeastern University, Florida**

‘This highly original and groundbreaking book is destined to become a classic within the area of motorcycle studies in the way that it cleverly combines theoretical awareness with some very articulate and gifted close reading, providing a rich tapestry and a set of profound reflections on an impressive range of cultures, practices and phenomena.’

**David Walton, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies,
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The Gendered Motorcycle

Representations in Society, Media and
Popular Culture

Esperanza Miyake

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LONDON · NEW YORK

To my father

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PROOF

Series Editors' Foreword

Esperanza Miyake's book draws on a wide range of cultural texts, from film and television to Japanese anime, advertising and the author's own personal experiences. She argues that the motorbike has a place in various subcultures that reflects its long association with youth, independence and freedom. This has led to the motorcycle's symbolic presence in rebellion and subculture.

The first motorcycles appeared in the early years of the twentieth century. The pedal bike had already been seen as a technology that afforded unusual freedom and empowerment for women. For the first time, respectable Edwardian women could break free from their chaperones and have 'adventures'. The fact that only one person could ride a bike at a time is a feature that Miyake explores in various contexts in this book. One of the most iconic images of women during World War I is of the mud-splattered but beaming female despatch rider, straddling her motorbike in readiness to dash off on her next mission. This positioning of the body on the motorbike is a recurring theme in Miyake's exploration here, with the juxtaposition of power and sex never far from the many representations of the bike. The independence afforded by the bike (its size and ease of manoeuvrability making it more liberating than the car) is emphasised by the capacity to take only one passenger pillion and perhaps a second in a side car. Yet even here, as Miyake explores, there is a gendering of the riders' positions: to ride pillion is assumed to be female. Where the roles are reversed, and there is a female rider with male pillion, popular culture often exploits this for comic effect. However, as Miyake argues, the gender of a rider is often masked, although with a default position of masculinity. This allows for a less constrained performance of gender, linking with the freedom and independence associated with the bike itself. The more recent media representations of women on motorcycles reflects post-feminist sensibilities as women seek independence, empowerment and agency, enacted through motorcycles.

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Cultural representations of motorcycles are at the centre of this book. Whether buying an actual motorcycle or watching a film, TV show or an advert with a woman on a motorcycle, motorcycles enable the consumption of meaning and lifestyle and are thus of direct concern to questions of identity. Furthermore, different brands produce different meanings and their consumption produces different gendered, classed, raced and sexualised meanings.

Through its exploration of a wide range of genres and texts, this book has links with many others in this series, and its discussion of subcultures and their intersection with mainstream culture is one that is picked up elsewhere too.

– Angela Smith and Claire Nally

PROOF

Introduction

Why the Motorcycle?

Right next to the entrance of my local supermarket, there sits a large industrial floor-cleaner, the ones that are pushed across the ground using a set of horizontal handle bars across the top. Parked next to a scattering of cigarette butts and a throng of guilty-looking smokers awaiting taxis or spouses, there is nothing glamorous about it. Yet on more than one occasion, it has been the source of intrigue for me; sometimes I will find a small boy (never a girl) sitting on this machine, just able to reach the handle bars on either side. One particular day, I noticed an exceptionally excited small 'rider' on this floor-cleaner, 'revving' the 'throttle', blowing a motor-raspberry with all his might – 'Vrrooom vrrrrroooooom!' – while leaning wildly into an imaginary corner that would befit the TT races at the Isle of Man. For that moment, he was riding the world's fastest motorcycle, transported across a land of adventure and imagination.

This mundane encounter with a boy and his floor-cleaner-motorcycle provoked a series of thoughts and questions that led me to writing this book. I wondered at how easily the motorcycle has embedded itself into reveries of everyday life; so much so that even a child had picked up its mechanical lingo, making all the appropriate biker noises and gestures. In many ways, this is unsurprising as the motorcycle has always captured the popular imagination, its technomnipresence evident across a vast mediascape: from films, songs, literature, television programmes, advertisements, to fine art. Far from being a niche consumer product, the motorcycle is a versatile vehicle of meaning carrying a variety of significations within popular culture and beyond. At the same time, as a specific piece of technology, the motorcycle has come to represent a distinct set of associated identities,

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experiences and values. What does the motorcycle mean in popular culture? How is it different to other forms of mediated technology?

Such questions have political implications that need to be addressed, especially in relation to gender. Statistically speaking, men are more likely than women to own or have owned a motorcycle or scooter (I have yet to encounter a girl on the floor-cleaner-motorcycle).¹ Why is there such a gender bias in the world of motorcycles? Understanding the existing meanings of the motorcycle which circulate in popular culture becomes an imperative task if we are to confront what Hebdige (1988) describes as 'mechanical sexism'. Popular representations of motorcycles construct gender in ideological ways, which in turn, have material implications – hence, for example, the gender imbalance of motorcycle ownership – as well as political ones, because such gendered ideologies become embodied and naturalised through practices in everyday life. How do representations of the motorcycle engender identities, relations and practices?

This book is thus critical of the motorcycle, placing it at the heart of a theoretical enquiry into gender, technology and popular culture. As such, I propose a critical term, 'a mobile technology of gender': a concept which approaches the motorcycle both as a material and ideological subject in need of critical and theoretical attention, and as a theoretical tool to analyse how technology can engender identities, relations and practices in visual space and time. Such a rigorous approach is necessary, for present scholarship on motorcycles has paid very little theoretical attention to the vehicle itself as a visual subject in its own right, especially in considering meanings beyond subcultural significations of technological identities, relations and practices. There is even less work which examines the motorcycle critically in relation to gender and gender theories. Here I agree with Pinch and Reimer (2012: 448) who argue that 'more work is needed to understand the gendering of motorcycle mobilities' that go 'beyond simply the recuperation of women motorcyclists'.

This book fills this theoretical and analytical lacuna through the close examination, problematisation and politicisation of motorcycle representations across media. I argue that motorcycle imagery and narratives construct identities, relations and practices in ways that can challenge but most often propagate dominant and normative ideologies of gender and other related issues such as class, race and sexuality. Most troubling of all is how such mediated processes of (re)producing conventional gender roles

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are masked by the ideological illusion of the motorcycle as representing freedom, independence, empowerment, mobility, agency and alternative lifestyles. Through the critical analyses of various media texts and contexts from the UK, the USA and Japan, this book interrogates what lies behind the veneer of motorcycle imagery, to unmask and expose what kind of disciplinary mechanisms – what technologies of gender – are in operation.

Therefore, inasmuch as this book offers new and challenging ways to conceptualise representations of motorcycles in popular culture that move beyond subcultural meanings and modes of visual signification, it is also about using the motorcycle as a distinct piece of technology to think about gender. What happens to gender at 120 mph? What happens when men are pillions? Are there differences between female car drivers and female motorcycle riders? Just as studies of the television or the computer (Ferguson 1990; Silverstone and Hirsch 1992; Silverstone 1994; Ang 1996; Couldry and McCarthy 2004; Berker et al. 2006; Chambers 2016) revealed the material and ideological role played by technology in constructing new forms of gendered identities, relations and practices, we can also learn different articulations of gender by considering the socio-cultural, historical, aesthetic and economical specificity of the motorcycle as a distinct form of technology.

Book Outline

Chapter 1 surveys the scholarly field by mapping out the existing debates surrounding the motorcycle, mainly within Subcultural Studies, Youth Studies, Consumer and Leisure Studies, Criminology and Sociology. I also refer to the growing sub-field of Motorcycle Studies, within which there are specific works which focus on gender. Having identified some of the theoretical limitations within the field, I draw predominantly from feminist theories and Mobility Studies to offer the term, 'mobile technology of gender': a useful way to think about the relationship between the motorcycle and gender in material and ideological ways; this will provide the main theoretical underpinning and framework for the following chapters.

Thereafter, this book is divided into four main sections – visual terrains – each corresponding to broad thematic concerns which I outline below. Throughout all chapters, I critique the ways in which the motorcycle is used by the producers of a given film, advertisement, television

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programme or manga/anime text and reveal how such imagery can challenge but more often uphold dominant ideologies surrounding gender and related issues like class, race and sexuality.

Part I focuses on cinematic representations of the motorcycle, probably the most popular – or at least most noticeable – and easily encountered of the four visualities. Broadly speaking, I am interested in how mainstream Hollywood films use the motorcycle as a cinematic tool to stylise and spectacularise gender identities, relations and practices on screen. Chapter 2 thus examines the ways in which the motorcycle articulates gendered narratives of speed; here I turn to iconic films *Easy Rider* (1969) (slowness) and *Tron* (1982) (fastness) in order to think about masculinity, mobility and the capitalistic regulation of time and space. Chapter 3 continues to think about issues relating to space by exploring the different ways in which gendered relations and bodies are physically set up and positioned upon the motorcycle in mainstream cinema. Paying particular attention to the relationship between pillion passenger and rider across a variety of films, this chapter highlights the material, embodied and technological ways in which the motorcycle replicates heteronormative corporealities.

Part II turns its attention towards the world of advertising, examining the relationship between motorcycle imagery, gender and consumer culture. Both chapters investigate the motorcycle's role in presenting the consumer with the promise of embodying certain idealised, gendered lifestyles and identities through the acquisition of the given advertised product. Chapter 4 thinks about the motorcycle through issues surrounding youth/girlhood, subcultural aesthetics and geographies; here I focus on the figure of 'the girl on the motorbike' – as represented by Kate Moss in Rimmel's *Bikerchick* (2005) – to understand what kind of pressures relating to age and bodies are applied to women by media and consumer culture. Chapter 5 looks at the 'other end' of the market by providing a much needed examination of the motorcycle in relation to luxury. Through a comparative analysis of two luxury brands' (Chanel and Davidoff) differing uses of the motorcycle in their respective fragrance adverts, I reveal how luxury is a form of gendered advertising discourse that ultimately reproduces problematic patriarchal and colonialist values within consumer culture.

Part III moves away from the more glamorous and spectacular representations of the motorcycle found in Parts I and II, and instead

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examines gender and the motorcycle in the context of everyday life as a televisual construction. Given that motorcycles and motorcyclists are predominantly defined in relatively narrow terms – as glamorously subcultural – it becomes necessary to examine not just how the motorcycle operates within the ‘mundane’ but also what other kinds of masculinities and femininities are at stake. Chapter 6 examines the intriguing and even normalised connection between motorcycles and cookery shows, which I describe as ‘gastro-motorcyclism’. Through an analysis of mainly British celebrity chefs Hairy Bikers’ cookery shows, I examine the role of the motorcycle in constructing hierarchical and often problematic culinary class and gender positions through practices relating to food, travel and domesticity. Chapter 7 continues to explore the motorcycle and intersections of gender and class within the ‘mundane’ through the hybrid figure I describe as the ‘techno-metrosexual’. Here, I focus on the British motorcycle racer, Guy Martin, and ex-Formula 1 racer, David Coulthard, in *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special*, to reveal how their respective vehicles enable them to navigate through moments when their differing masculine and class identities are destabilised or otherwise challenged.

Part IV is dedicated to the visual realm of anime and manga. The choice to include what some might consider a ‘niche’ visuality is driven by two important factors. First, given that Japan is the country responsible for the ‘Big Four’ of motorcycle brands (Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha), not only do Japanese motorcycles comprise a dominant and thus influential part of the global motorcycle industry, but are also a very significant for the Japanese economy, transport, popular culture and society. It would thus be an oversight not to incorporate analyses of some Japanese representations of the motorcycle and how they might articulate gendered identities, relations and practices differently to, for example, American cinematic ones. What better than anime and manga, which are specifically Japanese visualities? Second, I want to critique some of the predominantly Westernised conceptualisations surrounding gender, technology and motorcycles by re-thinking through them within the context of Japanese culture and national identity. Such a process further politicises technology by approaching the motorcycle not just as a globalised product, but also by considering how it emerges from and is situated locally within nationalised discourses on technology and gender.

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As such, Chapter 8 examines the dystopian imagery of gendered bodies, motorcycles and other technologies in crises in *Akira* (a classic anime which has found longstanding success outside of Japan). The aim here is to challenge and revisit some key cybertheoretical conceptualisations of the human/machine by recontextualising them within Japanese culture, especially in relation to the trauma of the atomic bomb in World War II. Chapter 9 similarly pushes against the predominantly Westernised concept and image of ‘the outlaw’ as a subcultural biker identity. Through an analyses of *Bad Boys* (both manga, 1988–96, and anime, 1993–8, texts), I explore the various ways in which motorcycles are used to construct Japanese *bosozoku* (‘violent speed tribe’) masculinities, which in turn have their own distinct subcultural articulations of gender, class and nationality.

Having travelled across the four visual terrains and explored the various ways in which the motorcycle carries different meanings of gender, in the Conclusion I offer a ‘Typology of Motorcycle Meanings’ which outlines the main, recurring themes running across most motorcycle-based narratives in popular culture and beyond. Not only does the typology pin down specificities of the motorcycle as a distinct piece of technology with its own systems of mobility and modes of signification, it also highlights the ways in which these motorcyclic meanings both challenge and/or reinforce dominant and normative ideologies surrounding gendered identities, relations and practices.

Ultimately, I argue that almost all contemporary representations of the motorcycle and active women seem to reflect post-feminist sensibilities – hence my use of the term, ‘post-feminist motorcycle’ – which encourage female independence, empowerment and agency but inevitably re-establish traditional patriarchal values. These values, I argue, often subjugate, contain and discipline women further back into their conventional gender roles as sexualised, domesticated and/or reproductive beings. This, in turn, is not too dissimilar to traditional representations of the motorcycle, where women were and still are represented as passive pillions or as highly sexualised figures posing in semi-nudity alongside a latest motorcycle model. I describe this dual movement of the post-feminist motorcycle as a form of ‘static mobility’. Similarly, while this book explores different representations of motorcycle masculinities that move beyond the subcultural, all the texts analysed reveal that at the core of each motorcycle narrative lies traditional gender values. These permeate across

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different areas in life as represented in media – whether cooking, racing, travelling or smelling good – that also discipline men; a process which strengthens, maintains and ensures the continuation of male dominance and hegemonic masculine supremacy.

As a whole, *The Gendered Motorcycle: Representations in Society, Media and Popular Culture* offers new and challenging ways to conceptualise gender and technology through in-depth and critical analyses of motorcycles as represented in media and popular culture. Inasmuch as this book is about exploring the meaning of motorcycles that move beyond subcultural modes of signification, it also uses the motorcycle as a theoretical and analytical tool to understand, critique and challenge some of the distinct, material and ideological ways in which one piece of technology can construct different forms of gendered identities, relations and practices.

PROOF

1

A Mobile Technology of Gender

The motorcycle lies at the heart of this book's theoretical enquiry into gender or, to put it another way, gender is the central concern of my critical approach to motorcycles. Either way, there is a need to theorise the motorcycle critically as a material and ideological subject in media and popular culture. Once we understand that the motorcycle is a specific vehicle and a piece of technology that comes with a set of shared cultural meanings and social assumptions in popular culture, then we can begin to unpack how its representations construct gender, class, sexuality, race and other markers of identity which serve to propagate dominant ideals of normativity. I thus offer the term, 'mobile technology of gender': a concept which approaches the motorcycle as both a material and mobile subject in need of critical feminist attention, and as a theoretical tool to analyse how a specific piece of technology can engender identities, relations and practices in visual space and time. Ultimately, both concerns are about examining different gendered narratives of motorcyclic mobility, which in turn, as a combined discourse, produces normative identities, relations and practices through visual representations in popular culture.

In the first section of this chapter, I map out the scholarly terrain of motorcycles in order to understand and problematise some of the ways in which the two-wheeled vehicle has been approached and studied thus far: mainly, how gender has been a peripheral consideration and/or has not

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been the subject of any substantial and sustained discussion. Reflecting on some of the issues arising from this literature, in the latter half of my discussion I will define the idea of the motorcycle as a 'mobile technology of gender', a material and ideological figure drawn from two main approaches to technology: *material*, because the motorcycle is a physical object which has the ability to transport people, provide specific experiences (accidents, death, adrenalin rush and vibrations off engines) and is a consumable product; and *ideological*, because owing to its material characteristics and conditions of existence, the motorcycle inevitably becomes a symbolic tool in media and popular culture. As such, the motorcycle provides a visual shorthand for the representation, movement and organization of gender in particular ways which ultimately perpetuate dominant and normative gender ideologies. Emerging from these ideas is also my emphasis on the need to consider the specificity of the motorcycle as a distinct material object and ideological subject, one that might relate to but is at once different to other forms of mobile technologies, such as the car.

Surveying the Terrain: Tracking the Field

Apart from the expansive number of glossy coffee table books and photographic collections of motorcycles, a significant body of scholarly work has also turned its attention towards the motorcycle over the years. There are two main approaches to the motorcycle: as an object demarcating (sub)cultural group identities and/or lifestyles; and as a subject, usually in relation to historical and technological concerns of motorcycle industry, design and mechanics. Although overlapping, broadly speaking, the former area – which forms the bulk of the academic literature – emerges predominantly from Subcultural Studies, Youth Studies, Criminology, Consumer and Leisure Studies, mostly all based on sociological and empirically based work. The latter area is a growing field, particularly emerging from Motorcycle Studies, Cultural History and Transport Studies.

The motorcycle as a biker's supportive object

A number of seminal works on subcultures – especially from the Birmingham CCCS – have considered the styles and socio-(sub)cultural

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practices surrounding the motorcycle. Here, the central focus is more on the members of the subculture who form the subject of the study, where the motorcycle is regarded as a symbolic and supportive subcultural object demarcating their spectacular difference and enabling their cultural resistance. Cohen's (1972) work on folk devils and moral panics explores the Mods and Rockers, where each group's respective vehicles (scooter/motorcycle) are described as being 'visible symbols that mark their life-style differences' (Cohen 1972: 188–9), relating to their 'particular fads, fashions, crazes, styles' (Cohen 1972: 2). Cohen's emphasis on the motorcycle as a visible symbol and as an element of style is picked up a little later by scholars like Hebdige (1974) and Willis (1978). Hebdige's (1979) work on the Mods argues that the iconic scooter is a stylistic symbol, which he also discusses in relation to *bricolage*: 'the motor-scooter, originally an ultra-respectable means of transport was appropriated and converted into a weapon and a symbol of solidarity' (Hebdige 1979: 104). Similarly, Willis's *Profane Culture* (1978), which explores hippies and biker-boys, approaches the motorcycle as a homologous object of profanity and difference, part of a 'stylistic make-up' (Willis 1978: 52) which consists of other items such as the 'studded leather jackets and greasy denim jeans (...) large motor-cycle boots' and 'greasy hair' (Willis 1978: 11). More recently, scholars like Katz (2011) and Thompson (2009) have revisited such ideas within a more contemporary context, looking at, for example, 'pseudo-deviance' and symbols (again, such as tattoos, facial hair, earrings, leather chaps and bandanas) as shared by both traditional and new biker subcultures. In other words, for this body of work, the motorcycle is part of subcultural style, playing a role in the reading, production and practice of difference and resistance.

While this literature focuses on motorcycle-centric social groups and their 'deviant' behaviours, the motorcycle itself remains largely under-theorised, especially in relation to gender. Apart from Alford's and Ferriss's (2016) work – which I shall discuss later – there is an overall lack of investigation into how the motorcycle itself plays a role in the construction of gender identities, even within the small body of work which considers gender as part of the rider's visibility and visibility (Phillips 2005; Willett 2009; North 2013). However, these studies are very useful to us as they very quickly establish some key issues. First, motorcycles are of visual, visible and symbolic concern. Or at least, they are instrumental to the visibility,

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visibility and symbolic style of a given group or individual. For example, Osgerby's *Biker – Truth and Myth: How the Original Cowboy of the Road became the Easy Rider of the Silver Screen* (2005) chronicles the visual development of the what he calls the 'biker brotherhood' – a gendered term I find problematic – through popular imagery, revealing how motorcyclic aesthetics go hand in hand with practices, identity and culture. Second, motorcyclic visual style is associated with ideas of difference, rebellion, resistance and deviance. The question here which must be asked though is, why is the motorcycle – out of all kinds of vehicles and modes of transport which could have been re-signified by the *bricoleurs* – such a stylistic marker of deviance? Third, in considering questions of gender and identity, this body of work centralises questions of class where masculinity operates as a status quo – hence 'the brotherhood' – something which theorists such as McRobbie and Garber (1975) have contested. Such issues of gender take us back to my starting point: why is the motorcycle such a visible and visual shorthand for 'masculine' and/or masculinised deviant styles?

Related, studies in consumer culture have also examined the practices and cultures surrounding motorcycles, where the two-wheeled vehicle is regarded as a lifestyle product – not always related to deviance – tying consumption to questions of identity, culture and everyday life. For example, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) examine subcultures of consumption through an ethnography of Harley-Davidson owners. Such work has prompted other studies which examine motorcycles and related products as commodities subject to commercialisation (Crowther 2007; Austin et al. 2010), with the Harley-Davidson brand gaining particular attention for scholars dealing with branding and marketing (Milligan and Smith 2002; Atkin 2004; Holt 2004; Richardson 2013). Because these studies are concerned with motorcyclists as a consumer group where brands construct a communal and shared identity, little attention is given to considering questions of gender beyond it being a demographic category. However, this body of work teaches us an important lesson: whether one buys an actual motorcycle or is watching an advert with a motorcycle, motorcycles enable the consumption of meaning and lifestyle and are thus of direct concern to questions of identity. Furthermore, like cars (more on this later), different brands produce different meanings and their consumption produce different gendered, classed, raced and

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sexualised meanings. For example, why is a Harley-Davidson so closely tied to Americanised forms of masculinity? Why are speedy sports bikes associated more with Japanese brands (Suzuki, Honda, Yamaha and Kawasaki) while aesthetically pleasing ones with Italian brands (Ducati and Aprilia)?

Relating to questions of group identity and practices surrounding motorcycles, there is a small body of work which examines motorcyclists as a social movement outside the realms of deviance and crime. Such work often tends to politicise motorcycling as a social practice. Here, issues relating to gender *are* considered. For example, McBee's (2015) *Born to be Wild: The Rise of the American Motorcyclist*, which traces the cultural history of biker culture, dedicates a whole chapter to 'the struggle over gender', while McDonald-Walker's (2000) ethnographic work looks at the motorcycling community and riders' rights organisations (RRO) as social and activist movements, considering the role of 'women riders'. Similarly empirical, Gagne and Austin (2010) study female riders within the context of leisure and touring motorcyclists, while Ilyasova (2006) writes about the political nature of 'Dykes on Bikes', as does Conner (2009) who examines the subjugation of women in Black motorcycle clubs: such works bring to light the importance of motorcycle cultures in shaping collective identity politics. While the primary objective of this literature is to understand motorcyclists and motorcycling as a social practice and movement – rather than the motorcycle itself – it also draws attention to the importance of gender politics in relation to motorcycles.

One of the key theoretical concerns of this book is to bring together these different approaches – motorcycles as part of visible, visual and symbolic style; the material consumption of motorcycles; and the potential of motorcyclic gender protest – and to think about how and why the motorcycle becomes the vehicle of choice to demarcate difference through the signalling of deviance, styles, lifestyles and other modes of resistance and rebellion. In other words, *why motorcycles?*

The subject of motorcycles

In comparison to the literature exploring the (sub)cultures that incorporate the use and consumption of motorcycles, the body of work examining the motorcycle as a subject at the centre of these (sub)cultures is

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relatively small. There are, of course, countless motorcycle-based (usually by brand or even model) compendia, but studies which place the motorcycle as a subject under critical analysis remain low. Studies relating to the cultural history of motorcycles have shed light on the socio-cultural, economic, political and other material conditions that produce and materialise motorcycles at a given moment in space and time. For example, Alexander (2008) presents us with an historical insight into the changing culture within and surrounding the motorcycle industry in Japan. Alford's and Ferriss's (2007) *Motorcycle* deserves particular attention here because, to my knowledge, it is one of the first extended pieces of work on motorcycles which offers a cultural history of motorcycles, while also connecting these to some of the issues surrounding subcultures and identity to which I referred earlier: they *do* think about the question of 'why motorcycles?' For example, amongst the many subcultures mentioned, Alford and Ferriss refer to the Mods and Rockers, but do so from the perspective of the motorcycle itself, thinking about how the specific materiality of the motorcycle enables certain subcultural practices to occur:

Unlike the Mods, the Rockers gave the appearance of 'true' bikers. They were devoted to the mechanical improvement of their bikes, unlike the cosmetic changes wrought on the Mods' scooters. The emphasis was on speed and the aerodynamic appearance of speed. The most memorable of these alterations was the Triton, a combination of a Triumph and a Norton. This bike, along with the café racers, such as BSA Gold Star, Triumph Thunderbird and Velocette Venom, demonstrated the seriousness of the Rockers' commitment to developing a machine devoted to speed.

Alford and Ferriss 2007: 81

As the above quotation indicates, Alford and Ferriss provide us with a socio-cultural context for understanding subcultural style and practice but, most importantly, are doing so *through* the motorcycle, by reflecting upon the motorcycle's design, specifications, mechanics and brand. It is thus that, in their work, the authors define the motorcycle as 'a design object' with three functions: its practical function, aesthetic function and symbolic function. The motorcycle is therefore 'infused with cultural significance, tied up with complex issues of history, technology, engineering, consumerism, psychology, aesthetics, gender and sexuality' (Alford and

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Ferriss 2007: 8). In this way, Alford and Ferriss explore issues relating to the construction of individual and collective identity *through* the motorcycle as a material object – or subject – and I would like to continue with this approach by thinking about gender critically *through* the motorcycle as a visual subject in popular culture, paying particular attention to the specificity of the motorcycle itself.

This socio-historical, economical and cultural approach to the motorcycle continues in Alford and Ferriss's (2016) latest work, *An Alternative History of Bicycles and Motorcycles* which includes a chapter on gender and class. Here, Alford and Ferriss (2016: 141) argue that in seeking to understand gender identification surrounding a technological device, 'we cannot assume the device itself is gendered', but instead, 'the device manifests itself in a particular economy and culture, and we have to look outside the device for the sources of whatever gendered orientation it might have': for Alford and Ferriss, possibly more than popular culture, it is the material conditions and socio-economic structures that engender motorcycles and our understanding of them as gendered objects.

Alford's and Ferriss's approach resonates with Hebdige's chapter, 'Object as Image: the Italian Scooter' in *Hiding in the Light* (1988), one of the first scholarly pieces of work that attempted to interrelate motorcycle ideology/semiotics with its materiality. Referring to Barthian ideas on texts and images – especially Barthes's analyses of Citroen in *Mythologies* (1957) – Hebdige examines the various meanings assigned to scooters owing to their design, physical features and specifications. Most importantly, he considers how these meanings are engendered and how certain 'misogynist values' are relayed mechanically through scooters, machines and other objects. These cultural and ideological codes in turn engender attitudes towards the material objects and machines: for example, 'feminine' scooters are 'sleek' and 'stylish', while 'masculine' motorcycles are 'powerful' and 'loud'. However, in considering the 'gender of machinery', Hebdige (1988: 86) approaches the scooter as a 'sexed object', arguing that 'once a machine has been sexed, it functions as a material sign of gender differences', which he terms as, 'mechanical sexism'. Such a configuration inevitably reinforces a problematic sex/gender system (Rubin 1975) which assumes a connection between biological sex with gender identity, tied together and inevitably located upon the body.

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It is furthermore problematic to reduce machines as being either 'masculine' or 'feminine' as it does not consider the myriad of masculinities, femininities and otherwise queer genders that are articulated through motorcycles. Thus, the whole concept of the 'gender of machinery' needs very careful examination and critical feminist attention. Having said this, Hebdige's (1988) ideas on the 'gender of machinery' is invaluable to my work as it considers identity and difference as marked through the cultural and ideological codes ascribed to two-wheeled machines. How can an un-biological and mechanical object be gendered and in turn be engendering? Such questions not only destabilise notions of sexual and gender difference, but also the very sex-gender system situated upon the body. Understanding the gender of machines – the gender of motorcycles – is to understand the very technologies which construct, materialise and produce gendered identities, relations and practices in visual culture and beyond. It is thus that I now offer the term, 'mobile technology of gender'.

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By referring to the motorcycle as a 'mobile technology of gender', I am signalling my simultaneous engagement with two interrelated approaches to technology: as a disciplinary technique which regulates ideological and discursive systems; and as a machine of transport within a larger automobile system which organizes and regulates space, time and people. Therefore, on the one hand, I regard the motorcycle as a technology of gender, where the discourse of motorcycles produces gendered identities, relations and practices through their various representations. On the other hand, I also approach the motorcycle as a material, mobile technology of gender which is situated within a normative matrix of regulatory practices and systems which organizes gendered practices, bodies and occupations in space, time and everyday life. I thus turn to two areas of interest, respectively: Teresa De Lauretis's (1978) Foucauldian ideas on 'technology of gender' and Mobilities Studies.

In *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987), feminist scholar Teresa de Lauretis draws from Michel Foucault's (1995) ideas on 'technology of sex' to suggest that gender should also be understood as an ideological product of various social technologies, discourses, epistemologies, critical practices and practices of daily life: for

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De Lauretis, cinema (or the 'cinematic apparatus') is an example of a social technology of gender.¹ Here, 'technology' is related to the idea of institutionalised and bourgeois techniques used to support and maintain dominant and normative discourses on sexuality, gender, race and class. I would like to extend de Lauretis's Foucauldian approach to gender and social technologies by also taking 'technology' in a very material and literal sense. By material and literal I mean not only how motorcycles are tied to material contexts of production (as is cinema, for example) and consequences (as is gendered spectatorship and female subjectivity), but also how the motorcycle itself is a piece of technology, an actual machine used in transport, leisure and lifestyle. Of course, the above areas form social systems of regulation and discipline – technologies of gender – and so my interest lies in how the motorcycle, over any other technological machine, can potentially situate and navigate gender in very material and ideological ways across different spaces, times and narratives: what happens to gender at 120 mph? Is gender public or private on a motorcycle?

Such questions begin to point towards the importance of considering motorcycles as a very specific piece of *vehicular* technology. This is why I have also included the term, 'mobility' as it indicates my engagement with Mobility Studies, an area which explores the socio-cultural, political and economical aspects of systems and materialities concerning vehicular culture. A large body of work (Wollen and Joekerr 2002; Sheller 2004; Featherstone et al. 2005; Urry 2012, 2007) and related theorists like Michel de Certeau (1984) have all examined questions of space, time and movement in relation to transport, especially the car and questions of 'automobility'. Similarly, scholars have placed an importance on studying mobility and mediation more generally (Morley 2000; Moores 2012), to specific popular representations of travel and automobile culture, especially through film and the 'road movie' (Lewis 1992; Cohan and Hark 1997; Thoms et al. 1998, Sargeant and Watson 1999; Mills 2006; Borden 2013). While this body of work may seem at odds with Foucauldian concepts of technology, on the contrary, mobilities approaches to transport and technology resonate with the concept of institutionalised and discursive techniques of social discipline.

Urry's (2005) work on 'automobility' is defined through the idea of a 'system' consisting of a complex machinic matrix of various actors

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including roads, drivers, signs, businesses, regulatory institutions and other infrastructures that maintain and regulate space, time, leisure, labour, economy and bodies. 'Automobility' is thus remarkably close to the idea of the Foucauldian discourse. Another way of putting this is that 'automobility' itself is a social technology which 'forces people to orchestrate in complex and heterogeneous ways their mobilities and socialities' (Urry 2005: 28). I thus find it useful to think about motorcycles as an aspect of 'automobility', a mobile piece of technology which is both ideologically and materially grounded within a system which regulates gender through its social, economic and political technologies.

While motorcycles are a part of the system of automobility, they also cannot be collapsed fully into the same theoretical framework as cars. For example, Featherstone (2005: 1–2) describes one of the factors defining automobility as being 'encapsulated in vehicles which afford not only speed and mobility, but act as comforting, protected and enclosed private spaces'. While the concept of speed and mobility might be shared by cars and motorcycles, the motorcycle's specific design and technology – there is no 'roof' or 'doors', for example – means that unlike the car, it does not provide 'comforting, protected and enclosed private spaces'; even speed and mobility are experienced and represented differently between cars and motorcycles. In other words, it is important to understand that motorcycles are related but different to cars in that they will produce different materialities and ideologies of mobility. How does a motorcycle road trip differ to car road trip? Is a motorcycle more masculine than a car? Most literature on (auto)mobilities is dedicated to understanding car/automobile cultures, drivers and driving, with very little or indeed any extended work considering mobility theories in relation to motorcycles. More work needs to be done to identify the specificity of motorcycles in relation to cars and their system of automobility.

One piece of work which recognises the need to consider the specificity of the motorcycle in relation to automobility is Pinch's and Reimer's *Moto-mobilities: Geographies of the Motorcycle and Motorcyclists* (2012). Here, the authors challenge the car-centricity of Mobility Studies by counteracting the concept of 'automobility' with the term, 'moto-mobility': the idea that motorcycles exist within their own alternative and distinct economical, socio-cultural systems of mobility. Pinch and Reimer discuss the importance of considering representations and images of motorcycling

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and motorcyclists, arguing that such analyses are not only crucial to understanding moto-mobility, but that dominant representations of motorcycles and motorcyclists can have significant material effects, such as impacting upon the content of government law and regulations (Pinch and Reimer 2012: 445). Urging for a move beyond the conceptualisation of motorcycles and motorcyclists as merely subcultural and relating to male heterosexuality, the authors instead reframe the motorcycle within wider consumer and material culture, linking the system of moto-mobility to the idea of consumer networks.

Pinch's and Reimer's article is significant in that it identifies how existing literature on representational narratives of mobility is 'highly limited in its relatively one-dimensional presentation of motorcycle riders', and as such they recognise the need for further explorations into the 'socio-spatial variations in systems of auto- and moto-mobility' (2012: 453). Driven by the same desire to approach the motorcycle as a distinct mobile technology, this book will go on to provide a critical and extended analyses of how the motorcycle in media and popular culture can produce specific narratives of mobility. Most importantly, my discussions will reveal how as a specific piece of technology – 'a mobile technology of gender' – representations of the motorcycle are gendered and can engender identities, relations and practices in visual space and time.

PROOF

PART I

Film

PROOF

PROOF

2

Too Fast or Too Slow: Ideological Constructions of Speed and Gender

Ever since it was pointed out to me by a few car drivers that it is usually very difficult to tell the gender of a person riding a motorcycle ('you all look the same anyway'), I have been fascinated by the effects of speed upon the body. Speed can somehow trick the human eye and ear, making the sight and sound of gender obsolete: why else could hairy and chunky stuntmen in movies get away with wearing a wig and a dress to be a 'girl on a motorbike'? Usual audio-visual markers of gender – appropriate lumps and bumps in the 'right' places of the body, a voice that can be registered according to the 'right' pitch – are lost in a distortion of sound and vision, the signals jumbled and confused in transportation. Hard and rough edges of the body are smoothed out, while soft lines of the fleshy body parts become hardened and robust. High-pitched pipes and deep engine rumbles are all just part of a mechanism. In fact, the body on the motorcycle is – ironically for such a socio-culturally masculinised object and practice – rather queer indeed in the sense that riders seem to become homogenous, if not androgynous moving question marks wrapped in protective clothing: is that a boy or a girl on that bike? Referring to Deleuze's and Guattari's (1986, 2004a, 2004b) ideas of becoming and machines, I have explored the giddiness and liberation surrounding the

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destabilisation of identity and the motorcyclic body elsewhere.¹ Now I have a flip question to ask: if speed can temporarily shuffle gendered significations of the body, is speed itself gendered? Can gender affect the way we understand speed?

From the proverbial invention of the wheel to the moment the Sphinx taunted us about the human mechanics of life – a riddle which for me has always been about the different speeds of human travel (crawling, walking and hobbling) – humans have experienced and learnt how to read various types of motion in physical and socio-cultural ways. We have been and are increasingly obsessed with measuring, documenting, controlling and regulating speed – legally, competitively, scientifically and so on – so much so that we must now face numerous technological mediators of speed in everyday life: fitbits, speedometers, speed cameras, satellite navigation systems, smart cars, digital technologies and mobile phone apps that measure broadband and digital (hyper)speed. In the context of automobile cultures, the measuring, analysis and regulation of speed is a highly controlled and systematic practice, with transport analysts using speed limit schemes to regulate and measure the effectiveness of enhancing safety, reducing emissions and/or saving energy consumption (Yang et al. 2015: 260). Yet keeping an eye on our speedometer is not just a way of being more safe, environmental and/or economic with our fuel consumption, it is also a form of self-regulation and self-discipline.

Abiding to road regulations – adhering to speed limits being one – is to become a responsible automobile citizen – ‘a good driver’ – productive of a normal (and normative) automobile body that travels at an appropriate speed.² Similarly, if we see a motorcycle travelling at the same speed as other cars – moving with the ‘normal’ flow of traffic – the motorcycle is most likely understood as just another vehicle, a mode of transport for the commuter or traveller: a motorcyclist as an automobile citizen. But going faster or slower than ‘normal’ can change the reading of both the vehicle and its steerer completely. Subcultural *bricoleurs* (Hebdige 1979; Clarke 2006) like the Mods or Rockers scrambled and reassigned the meaning of adult transport, using techniques like speed to convert scooters and motorcycles into signs of youthful rebellion. Going faster than traffic, for example, turned a respectable vehicle into something menacing, noticeable, dangerous and/or a nuisance to road users.

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Like the motorcycle, we must thus understand that speed itself is also a social and disciplinary technology, part of regimented and regimental systems of automobility – both discursive and material – that produce normative identities which are gendered, sexualised, racialised, classed and generational. How fast or slow a person is travelling physically can signal a myriad of meanings connected to their identity (e.g. age, gender, sexuality, race, class and/or ability), personality (e.g. reckless, cautious and/or confident) or their emotional status (e.g. stressed, relaxed, nervous and/or happy). More often than not, the discourse of speed produces pathologised bodies and identities because speed usually signals a transgression from the automobile norm: terms like ‘boy racer’ or ‘speed junkie’ point toward the connection between speed and normative questions of identity. Therefore, beyond the numeric value of miles/kilometres/bytes per hour, speed comes with a set of ideological readings, ones which engender bodies, practices and places in question: speed matters because it is ideological, and can produce normative discourses that regulate gendered configurations of socio-cultural, economic, geographic and ideological space-time. By the same token, speed itself is engendered by the very techno-practices of the body that generates it, such as motorcycling.

While there is a significant body of work which examines speed as socio-cultural and ideological (Hartmut 2003; Virilio 2006; Tomlinson 2007; Bonde 2009; Re 2009), even when gender is a theoretical consideration, these studies are usually connected to questions of Modernity and industrialisation, especially in relation to Futurism, a movement in itself that celebrated speed and technology through the arts, architecture and other aesthetic articulations. What about speed as a disciplinary and regulatory system, a social technology of gender in our contemporary society? How can we understand speed through gender? I want to explore speed and gender as a form of ideological regulation, as represented through the motorcycle in the context of contemporary mainstream cinema. I am particularly interested in understanding how the motorcycle is used to represent different types of speed, presenting us with gendered and engendering bodies, practices and spaces that both challenge and reinforce normative and dominant gender ideologies. If we examine the motorcycle as a ‘cinematic apparatus’ (De Lauretis 1987) – a technology of gender – pushing against and within an institutionalised system of visual automobilities, then speed is one of the ways in which we

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can understand *how* the motorcycle participates within a disciplinary and visual system of gendered signification: if the motorcycle is the mobile technology of gender, speed calibrates the reading of gender.

In films, no one usually cares about a 'motorcyclist' travelling at the legal speed limit, just another road prop, part of the background traffic to represent urban mundanity: cinematically speaking, such a scene is very un-spectacular. Whether as a hero/ine or villain, mainstream cinema usually prefers a 'rider' or 'biker', someone who is travelling at speeds that represent a departure from 'the norm', a rule-breaker challenging the system of automobility. How is gender configured at such different speeds? I want to examine two films in order to explore the concept of two non-normative speeds: *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Tron* (1982). In both of these cases, the motorcycle *does* stand out because it is a vehicle that is deliberately going slower or faster than 'normal'; in analysing the role and significance of the motorcycle in these films, I want to understand how different speeds produce different discourses surrounding gender according to location, practice and bodies and also how these in turn shape our understanding of technological speed.

Slow and Steady: *Easy Rider* and the Male 'Time Out'

You do your own thing in your own time.

Wyatt/Fonda, *Easy Rider*

One of the most iconic motorcycle 'road movie' films to have emerged out of the American film industry, *Easy Rider* follows the road antics of Wyatt 'Captain America' (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper) as they travel across America on customised Harley-Davidson Panheads, within the context of a drug-fuelled, 1960s youth/hippie counterculture. Almost half of the *Easy Rider* film is dedicated to the interlacing of landscape and soundtrack, with shots of the characters 'on the road' set against beautiful horizons, expansive scenery with animals, people and buildings dotted across the moving countryside. These are punctuated occasionally with dialogue when the travellers stop to sleep for the night, for fuel and sustenance and/or a diversion (e.g. visiting a brothel and drug dealing).

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Along the way, the pair meet a host of characters who join, help or hinder them in their journey. At one point, a rancher provides Wyatt and Billy with a temporary retreat. Commenting on the rancher's ability to 'live off the land' (the pair later on encounter a hippie commune with failing crops, less successful in 'living off the land'), Wyatt says approvingly to him, 'you do your own thing in your own time'. I want to dwell on this statement as it represents some key issues relating to slow-riding as a mode of speed represented in film.

Because of the popularity of the action/thriller genre, especially in relation to big blockbuster movies like *Speed* (1994) or the *Fast and Furious* franchise (2001–17), vehicular speed in cinema usually relates to fastness. In other words, like the Futurists at the turn of the twentieth century, there is still a contemporary fascination with the spectacularisation of technology and speed. The idea of technology as being slow, on the other hand, is less common (not to mention less theorised), especially in relation to motorcycles in film. I want to analyse *Easy Rider* in order to conceptualise vehicular slowness in relation to gender, paying particular attention to the motorcycle within the context of the usually car-centric 'road movie'. Here, slowness and travel are pivoted upon questions of time and labour, as well as mobility and homosociality, where the 'easy rider' embodies a form of 'slow' masculinity representing the male 'time out' from social constraints and ideological forms of oppression.

Time and labour

Speed involves a relationship between distance and time. Usually, in the case of deliberate slow-riding, it is less about using speed to decrease distance (reaching point A to B in the shortest time possible), and more about using speed to enjoy distance, to stretch it out as much as possible so time can be felt through the distance. In other words, more time equals more of a sense of distance and equally, more distance means more sense of time passing. This spatio-temporal elongation is captured cinematographically in *Easy Rider* which spends much reel time presenting us with images of different American landscapes as a way of representing 'distances covered': from urban streets, leafy suburban avenues, dusty time-lagged small towns, the dryness of the Grand Canyon to verdant forests with streams running through. Like the characters in the film, we as

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spectators are invited to savour the scenery in both first and third person perspective, where scenery is no longer a background but the very object of our scopic pleasure. We do this encouraged by the cinematography, and by the characters represented travelling at a slow/cruising speed: slow enough for them to talk to one another and point at landmarks and into the distance (many shots of Billy pointing at things as they ride).

Of course, slowness and slowing down is comparative. Slower than what? The dominant capitalist regime dictates that people should be on the road at certain times and in certain places for the purposes of labour and production (e.g. commuting to and from work and/or picking children up or for other domestic duties) and travelling at the appropriate speeds for maximum social efficiency, safety and profit. In fact, fast speed equates to high production and profitability, aligned to power, economic success and progress, as opposed to the slowness of being 'behind the times'. Thus, faster forms of transport suggest a sense of being 'ahead of the game', relating to social and economic success. Hark (1997: 205) argues that flying embodies capitalistic success while 'the road is for losers'. Sure enough, in *Easy Rider*, a successful businessman called Connection (Phil Spector), arrives in a Rolls Royce, buys and snorts fast-living cocaine while planes fly overhead, marking a stark contrast to the protagonists who smoke time-dragging weed around campfires in desolate areas and take longer to reach their destination on the road. In other words, time equals money: money to make and/or spend.

Moving at a different speed within a capitalist system of automobility – particularly at slower speeds that equate to lower production rates – means resisting and even disrupting its flow by a refusal to participate in organized time-space. It is indeed about doing 'your own thing in your own time', where the individual decides how fast or slow they wish to move. At the beginning of the film, Wyatt 'Captain America' throws his watch away, tossing it onto the ground (watches and clocks represent a recurring theme throughout the film): a temporal gauntlet being thrown, a statement expressing his disregard for regulated time, a refusal to be led and marked by the same pace as everyone else. Like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), part of *Easy Rider*'s lasting appeal lies in its (American) romanticisation of freedom, individualism and being the outsider. If the 'road movie' uses plot and setting to 'set the liberation of the road against the oppression of hegemonic norms' (Hark 1997: 1), then motorcycles – especially

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customised Harley-Davidsons – have come to represent freedom and the active fight against ‘the system’ of oppression: ‘we believe *in going our own way*, no matter which way the rest of the world is going; we believe in *bucking the system* that’s built to smash individuals like bugs on a windshield’ and a solitary sentence designed for maximum impact, ‘We believe in Freedom’ (Harley-Davidson’s 2013 campaign, ‘Live by It’, emphasis added).³

For women, it is mostly the car which has come to represent motorised liberation – enabling them to leave the home – but predominantly as part of family life, usually only as an extension of domesticity: ‘the family car’ to be used for doing shopping and picking up the kids. In this sense, the car has, to some extent, become ‘feminised’ and domesticated (more on this later). Yet there is rarely a ‘family motorcycle’ and in the context of ‘Westernised’ societies affluent enough to afford cars *and* motorcycles,⁴ motorcycles are increasingly tied less to labour and more to leisure (one uses a car to commute, but a motorcycle to have fun), or labour directed for the purposes of leisure (for example, customising a motorcycle). Where motorcycles *can* be part of leisure and not solely tied to labour and survival, they have increasingly come to represent a masculinised form of taking ‘time out’: one where there can be no wife, no kids and no work. For example, four middle-aged men Doug Madsen (Tim Allen), Woody Stevens (John Travolta), Bobby Davis (Martin Lawrence) and Dudley Frank (William H. Macey) take ‘time out’ to ‘find themselves’ in *Wild Hogs* (2007); or in the world of documentary, think of Ewan McGregor or David Beckham who framed their motorcycle road trips as taking ‘time out’:

After 22 years playing for the world’s greatest football teams, David Beckham has retired. For the first time in his adult life he has the freedom to do whatever he wants and to mark the occasion he’s going on an adventure.

BBC website⁵

Such male figures are typically represented as having reached a certain point in life where they do not have to work hard to buy the house, the car, pay for the children’s education: they have done their bit for the capitalist regime, and now it’s their moment to ‘do their own thing in their own time’.

Interesting to note that in many cases – perhaps even because of *Easy Rider* – the motorcycle of choice for a man to take ‘time out’ is usually a

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custom bike, explaining the popularity of Harley-Davidsons as romanticised vehicles ‘on the road’ to escape ‘mass society’. Ironically, customising a motorcycle requires enormous amounts of money and time:⁶ the process of individualisation/customisation costs, feeding directly back into the very capitalist system which the individual may well be trying to escape from. The results are often very performative and spectacular, where emphasis is usually placed less on the technical but more on cosmetic alterations: the popularity of TV programmes like *American Chopper* franchise (2003–10), *Biker Build-Off* (2002–7), *Biker Battleground Phoenix* (2014) demonstrate this particular masculine obsession with mechanical cosmetic beauty. In *Easy Rider*, the motorcycles are visually loud and fetishised objects, often presented in slow-motion thereby encouraging the eye to stroke through the close-up shots: comparable to the way women’s bodies are often highly stylised and fragmented in cinema for the pleasurable scopic consumption of the audience (Mulvey 1989). The visual fetishisation and aestheticisation of motorcycles enables the cinematic presentation of *men* ‘looking good’ and ‘being looked at’ on the road as much as women: after all, slow-riding means one can be *seen* by pedestrians.

But Wyatt’s symbolic discarding of his watch at the start of the film can also be read in another way: as temporal payment, buying his ‘time out’ of the system which he never can leave entirely anyway as he still relies on material objects like fuel and food. In the context of the travel narrative, slowness is valuable as it is equated to the enjoyment of places and people – like a tourist – a luxury which can only be afforded by those who can pay not only with money but also with time. Slowing down enough to be able to point at scenery is indeed a luxury, and it comes at a cost because time is tied to labour. Leaving the dominant spatio-temporal system – taking ‘time out’ – requires having expendable temporal currency which has economic (no need to work) and/or social exchange value (leaving someone else to do the work). Who can afford this double-payment?

Mobility and homosociality

As is usually the case in many ‘road movies’ and travel narratives, there are the invisible Others who do not have access to temporal currency. Or rather, they are the very reason why certain figures (usually men) can afford to travel and buy the ‘time out’: labour is delegated onto the

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Others, whether it is tied to the home- or work- place. Scholars like Massey (1994) and Skeggs (2004) have argued how travel narratives and accounts about the home come from those who have left it – usually males who can afford to ‘discover and change the world’ (Massey 1994: 148) – and seldom from those who must stay behind, ‘in a fixed place on the itinerary of the male journey’ (Skeggs 2004: 51–2), usually women and/or Others.⁷ In *Easy Rider*, there are characters existing in places where time has not just slowed down, but seems to have stopped altogether, as if living in a bygone age: the group of Mexicans the protagonists encounter at the start of the film; the women and children of the rancher’s family; people from ethnic minorities living in shacks. All these Others do not have the means to buy ‘time out’ because they are tied to labour, representing not just a spatial but temporal ‘pit stop’ where travellers can ‘go native’ for a short while.

All this points to what has been debated at length within discussions of gender and mobility where ‘the road’ represents freedom from gendered constraints (Sargeant and Watson 1999; Cohan and Hark 1997; Lewis 1992). For example, *Thelma and Louise* (1991) popularised the idea of aimless mobility and the car on the road as a visual symbol of female liberation; no longer just an extension of the family home, such female ‘road movies’ attempt to challenge dominant norms which oppress women by tying them to a fixed place as wives and mothers with little mobility. *Thelma and Louise* ‘feminised’ the road narrative, which opened up the way for others seeking to challenge the predominantly masculinised road narratives: *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) or *To Wong Foo Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar* (1995) are examples of the queering of ‘road movies’ which also use the road as a way of challenging dominant norms, in this case of gender and sexuality. Having said this, in *Easy Rider*, the dissatisfied characters are also challenging aspects of American ideological oppression (Cummings 2005; Klinger 1997) by adopting alternative masculine, biker identities on the road. That is, Wyatt and Billy are not part of a stereotypically violent biker gang expressing masculinity through aggression, but instead, are two peaceful men who are vulnerable to outside attack. Not only do they represent how ‘the face of motorcycling was changing’ (Semack 2005) but also its gendered articulation: Wyatt and Billy push against a macho, capitalist, war-faring America represented, for example, by the hostile characters in

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an eatery who call the protagonists 'Yankee queers'. Therefore, being on the road represents an (usually temporary) escape from normativity.

What does not get examined in depth within discussions surrounding mobility, gender and the road is the idea of speed. The road itself does not necessarily represent an 'escape': the road can also become a trap, a place of danger and high pursuit: think of the *Mad Max* franchise, for example, or the idea of the 'highway man' on the road. What marks the difference between a road that represents danger or a road that represents liberation is how leisurely – how 'easy' – one decides to travel down it. Slow enough to have a conversation. Slow enough to stop and have food. Slow enough to take in the scenery and point to one's surroundings. And most pertinently in this context, slow enough to enjoy each other's company. Slow riding usually involves an element of sociality on the road, whether with fellow travelling companions, or with those encountered along the way (petrol stations, cafés, villages and by the road). The majority of 'road movies' tend to be 'buddy movies' that develop relationships between two men or, in the case of *Thelma and Louise*, between two women (Buchbinder 1998: 157): films where relationships 'take time' to develop, where characters learn about life and each other through the act of travel. Slow-riding within this context can set an ideal cinematic pace to centralise the narrative development of friendship in motion.

If the capitalist system of production relies on heteronormative reproductivity and encourages difference through competition, then the road represents a time and place where homonormative productivity and sameness can be explored and articulated 'safely' through homosocial mobility. While I shall explore homosocial mobility in the context of cooking shows in Chapter 6 and techno-metrosexuality in Chapter 7, suffice to say here that in *Easy Rider* sameness and masculinity are explored 'safely' through a homosocial system (Sedgwick 1985) that involves the exchange of women between men: in most of the stops that the protagonists make, the (immobile) female characters provide an opportunity of consumption – drugs, sex, alcohol, food and sleep – a re-affirming safety valve to enable and normalise the homosocial interaction between the two protagonists. For example, a fellow traveller they pick up en route, George Hanson (Jack Nicholson), rides as a pillion,⁸ where two men are in very close proximity to each other: the slippage between homosociality and homosexuality is avoided through scenes of them

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engaged in road banter (making fun of each other, weaving around on the road playfully) – enabled by the slowness and leisurely speed – and made ‘safe’ through his desire to go to a brothel.

In other words, it is not just the road or even the vehicles on it that represent the geopolitical construction and discipline of gender and identity within systems of automobility. The speed of travel is equally significant in this regard. Speed can change the meaning of how we interpret the road, a vehicle and its travellers. In the context of slow-riding, as explored through *Easy Rider*, the cinematic motorcycle’s ability to set a slow and steady pace in terms of locations and plot represents the idea of freedom from society’s enslavement to the dominant, capitalistic system of automobility which dictates spatio-temporal existence: ‘doing your own thing in your own time’. Cinematic slow-riding on a motorcycle also articulates a masculinised way of taking ‘time out’, separate from the car which over time has increasingly become linked to female adventure and liberation on the road. Slow-riding is thus not only a spatio-temporal luxury that most often only mobile and dominant men can buy, but is so often bought to claim a particular male-centred cinematic space.

Fast and Furious: Beating just about Everything and Anything

Inasmuch as there is a cultural image of the ‘easy rider’ taking it slowly on a Harley-Davidson, equally, there is a persistent and prevalent image of the motorcycle as being a *fast* vehicle. But, as with the idea of slowness and going ‘slower’, we must ask what ‘fastness’ and going ‘faster’ means. Faster than . . . what? I want to now turn my attention the other way, to explore the ideological signification of the speeding motorcycle in films (as opposed to the car), and how this relates to questions of gender. In films, characters go faster mainly for one or more of these following interrelated reasons: to beat the present space-time; to beat a competitor and/or ‘the system’; the need for an adrenalin rush; and, most commonly, to catch up or evade (usually) an enemy. As a contrast to *Easy Rider*, I shall focus on *Tron* as one of the early examples of films to use a high-tech/concept sports bike – the ‘Light Cycle’ – rather than the more cinematically common chopper (Harley-Davidson) or street bike (e.g. Triumph). *Tron* is also an example of a film where the

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motorcycle does not get dispensed with easily as ‘a get-away vehicle’ and, instead, remains an important and highly stylised prop for a substantial part of the film.

The Future is here and now: beating human time-space

The idea of high speed is almost always connected to technology and/or a heightened sense of progress. From bullet trains, broadband to constant ‘upgrades’ in everyday consumer technologies (think of Apple or Samsung fans awaiting the ‘next generation’ of new and improved smartphones), in the name of techno-social progress, civic and corporate culture rushes citizens and consumers into the future as quickly as possible. The UK government’s ‘Digital by Default’ in 2014 is an example of around-the-clock,⁹ systematic and regulated pressure on citizens to cross ‘the digital divide’ through technology. How fast can we progress? The Future should be here and now! Technology not only poses as material evidence of human achievement and progress, but it also becomes the *means* to progress: the motorcycle, as a piece of technology, is no different.

Released in 1982, a decade marked by the increasing availability of both games and computers in consumer culture, *Tron* was remarkable in that it presented its audience with digitised and digital motorcycles on screen.¹⁰ Software engineers Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges) and Alan Bradley (Bruce Boxleitner) enter the ‘Grid’, a cyberspace where they become embodied programmes – Clu and Tron – who must somehow challenge the Master Control Programme’s (David Warner) despotic regime over its ‘Users’. Part of their cyber-ordeals involve having to play a series of existence-threatening games, one of which is ‘the Light Cycle’: handlebars materialise at first into the player’s/rider’s hands, which quickly grow out into a motorcycle (Figure 2.1); players must then ride around a designated area without crashing into the outer walls of the game, each other or the ‘jet walls’ which are the solid streams they leave behind themselves. The Light Cycles themselves are conceptual, neon-coloured and move at hyper-speeds; in the sequel, *Tron: Legacy* (2010), the Light Cycles were actually built in ‘real-life’ for the film, later available for consumers to buy as custom electric motorcycles for \$40,000 (2015, *Forbes*).¹¹

The Light Cycle in *Tron* was one of the first mainstream cinematic representations of a sports bike which *futurised* the technological

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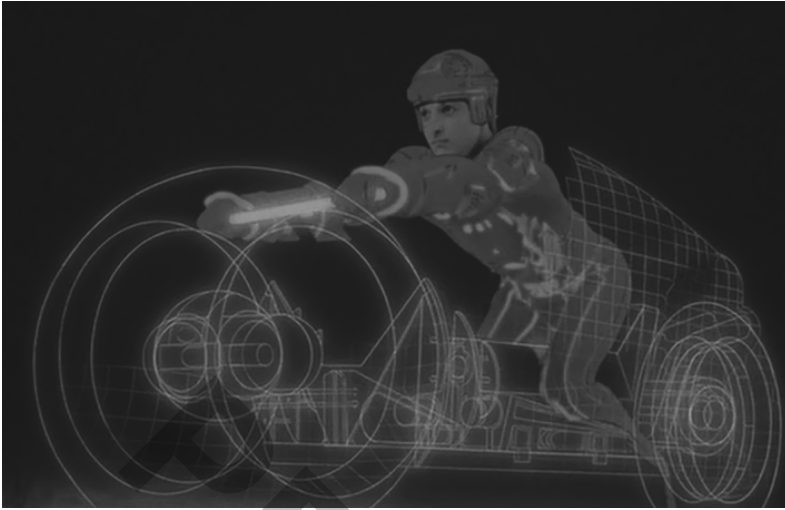


Figure 2.1 Light Cycles in *Tron* (1982) materialise from the handlebars and eventually engulf the rider.

connection between the motorcycle and high speed. While brands like Harley-Davidson, Honda and Triumph ensure they retain their heritage value through the continuation of certain models that remain close to (at least in design) their original prototypes ('the classics'), even these brands promote the creation of new and futuristic models that imply high-tech progress.¹² If slow-riding is about representing riders taking it 'easy' in order to enjoy the romanticised scenery symbolising bygone times untouched by fast-paced corporatism and urbanisation, then high-speed riding in cinema is the opposite. Savouring time and distance are just a hindrance to progress: fast-riding is about transcending time and distance, being able to handle – literally and figuratively – the speed of post-humanism careering towards a digital futurism where flesh is obsolete.¹³

As the near all-male cast (mostly software engineers and computer gamers) of *Tron* would suggest, speed has historically and discursively been defined through a masculinist geo- and bio-political imperative, where women serve an instrumental part – like the machines and technology themselves – in its material and ideological actualisation. In turn, the relationship between technology and progress has nearly always been

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about men: a masculinised desire of taming nature (usually feminised discursively), where technological progress is about 'light and flight, the struggle for enlightenment, a dream of escaping from meat' (Plant 2000: 334). In other words, as Virilio (2006: 115) argues, dromological progress might coincide but not necessarily converge with social progress; despite the cyberfeminist dream of disrupting and perverting the course of gender through technology and cyberspace (Haraway 1991), in *Tron* it is the men who ultimately have the means to 'escape' by going faster – 'light and flight' – in cyberspace. For example, the only female character in *Tron*, Lora (Cindy Morgan), might be a software engineer who also ends up in the Grid (as Yori), but never once does she touch the throttle of the Light Cycle. The very act of going faster is gendered – men must go faster than and thus be ahead of women – where speed is about dominance and control over technology. Men look back at women (pillions?), and look forward into the unconquered future: Clu and Tron are no different in that way to the mobile Wyatt and Billy in *Easy Rider* who leave the women and Others behind in fixed locations.

Game on: beating the competition and just about everything else

Released in the context of a bursting Yuppie culture of the 1980s, *Tron* represents the gamification (in all senses of the word) of American corporatism within an increasingly fast-paced, globalised world.¹⁴ The entire film is about Flynn's fight to 'win' his rightful place as CEO of ENCOM, a multi-national computer technology corporation. One could even state that the film itself is part of a capitalist and neo-liberalist discourse which encourages strategic and ruthless competition, progress, improvement and the maximisation of the entrepreneurial self: the gaming theme (Flynn writes gaming programmes, owns a video games arcade, is a high-scoring gamer in 'real life', and is made to compete in a series of survival games in 'The Grid') acts as its visual metaphor. The overriding message seems to be: going fast is not enough, go *faster*. Faster than everyone else by whatever resourceful means possible, to beat the competition, and to gain an advantage by staying ahead of 'the game'. In other words, no one cares about 100 mph *per se*, it is about how much faster than everyone else you can go between 0 to 100 mph.

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Such ideas of corporate competitiveness and capitalist speed link directly to issues surrounding gender and masculinity. In *Tron*, different men are literally pitted against one another – an arena for competing masculinities (Connell 1995) – for the winner victorious to be the embodiment of a capitalist, hegemonic masculinity. What is interesting is that rather than competitions being based on numbers and business acumen, ‘the Grid’ seems to measure the protagonists’ masculinity in more traditional ways, testing out their gladiatorial skills: speed, dexterity, stamina, strength and so on. Clu/Flynn quickly establishes himself as the prime competitor alongside Tron/Bradley (others do not survive), not only because he is able to master the Light Cycle quickly, but also because he finds an alternative use: as a vehicle for escape, thereby ‘cheating’ and by-passing not only the rules of the game but ‘The Grid’ itself. As Clu/Flynn finds an escape route through a hole in the wall large enough for the Light Cycles to speed through, a mechanical female voice repeats: ‘This is an illegal exit. You must return to game grid. Repeat, this is an illegal exit. You must return to the grid.’

In this sense, the Light Cycles are not that dissimilar to the Harley-Davidsons in *Easy Rider* in that they also represent a subversion of rules and regulations, the desire to be a technological renegade on two wheels. However, if slow-riding is about challenging the dominant system of automobility that produces and organizes gendered bodies by resisting its capitalist orientations of space and time (‘taking time out’, as explored in *Easy Rider*), fast-riding is about embracing it while beating it from within. Clu/Flynn represents what Panayiotou (2010) describes in her discussion of ‘macho’ masculinities in cinematic workplaces as the ‘organizational hero’: a type of masculinity which embodies the need to both ‘sell our souls (selves)’ in order to belong to an organization while simultaneously, to ‘fight against this urge in order to maintain our authenticity’ (Panayiotou 2010: 671). In other words, Clu/Flynn finds a way of both opposing and propagating patriarchal discourses embedded in a capitalist regime of competitive production by escaping the system/ the ‘Grid’: not in a bid for freedom as is the case of Hiltz ‘The Cooler King’ (Steve McQueen) on his famous Triumph TR-6 Trophy in *The Great Escape* (1963), but instead, in a bid to come out first and on top. Fastness represents the race for male dominance.

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Speed Junkie: pleasure and defiance

Despite or, more aptly, because of the potentially existence-threatening nature of the Light Cycle game, we are presented with Clu's/Flynn's beaming face behind the visor, laughing with pure excitement and exhilaration as he speeds around the 'Grid'. In this moment, Clu/Flynn represents fastness for the sake of going faster, where competition is less about others but more about the self, a joyous daring of one's nerves and courage to push that needle further along the speedometer. Such issues surrounding pleasure, risk-taking and fastness have been explored mostly in relation to extreme sports and adventure tourism (Simon 2002; Hudson 2003; Brymer and Schweitzer 2012), but I find it useful here to refer to the technology-focused Futurists:

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath – a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.

Marinetti 2009: 51

While we cannot ignore Futurism's radical and often fascistic inclinations, the above quotation from the movement's manifesto in 1909 demonstrates society's historical and continuing fascination with vehicular speed, and the desire to aestheticise and represent it through literature, art, architecture or film.

Part of Futurism's fascination with velocity centred on courage – albeit linked to war – and the idea that 'risking one's life could become a need and a habit, which the experience of racing could satisfy' (Poggi 2009: 11). From the TT races, café racers, Moto GP, to Suzuki's pre-2001 Hayabusa boasting a top seed of over 190 mph (dropping to 186 mph thereafter),¹⁵ the motorcycle embodies the cultural and technological glorification of high speed, a machine capable of providing that exact habit-forming, sublime thrill of risking one's life. Speeding becomes a performative and performance-based technological practice, demonstrating a rider's courageous defiance of death that takes 'pleasure in their close physical contact with their impetuous vehicles' (Poggi 2009: 33). High speed increases risk, which in turn synthesises pleasure, addiction and technology

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pivoted upon the life/death binary that can never be destabilised: the thrill comes from the balancing act of being able to ride just 'on the edge'. It is about cheating (laughing at?) death, like motorcycle stunt rider Johnny Blaze (Nicholas Cage) in *Ghost Rider* (2007) who makes a pact with the Devil/Mephistopheles (appropriately played by none other than Peter Fonda) rendering him immune to motorcycle death and accidents.

The bravado that accompanies the technological and pleasurable production of high speed has been culturally constructed as predominantly 'masculine', especially in its connection to discourses surrounding war, industry and technological progress (Virilio 2006). In discussing the meaning of adventure, Cater (2013: 9) argues that it is 'an underlying masculinist imperative', usually representing 'the only means of escape for the ordinary man from a more traditional life, and the opportunity to travel, and then return with tales of glory and heroism'. In this context, Clu/Flynn is an 'organizational hero', driven by a masculinist imperative that seeks socio-economic mobility embellished by the glory and heroism of having conquered both the real and the virtual world (evidenced by the 'happy ending' of *Tron*). In this context, speeding provides both a temporary relief – a reverse 'time out' – resulting from moving faster than the dominant systems of social regulation while simultaneously propagating and reinforcing it by 'returning' back victorious from the experience.

In *Tron: Legacy*, Flynn's son Sam (Garrett Hedlund) rides a Ducati Sport 1000, and in one scene gets caught by a police officer's speed gun. Sam manages to evade capture by the police motorcycle and, when he eventually gets off his Ducati, the audience is treated to a big smirk. Sam's smile points toward another reading of cinematic speeding, also defined by a 'masculinist imperative'. The figure of the 'boy racer' embodies the image of 'young motorists who are seen to contest the normative practices of car culture' through counteractive and deviant practices such as speeding, illegal street racing and the risks and dangers associated with their driving (Lumsden 2013:2). Boy racers, especially on motorcycles which are already more likely to be labelled as 'deviant', become the ideal nexus for representing the pleasures of speed, masculinity and deviance coming together in subcultural darkness and smoke: *Torque* (2004) is a good example of this. Here, unlike the 'organizational hero' who only speeds to escape, the motorcycling boy racer speeds to participate further within a

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subcultural system that places value in the ‘conceived symbolic power of automobiles and the perception that performance makes one ‘more of a man’ (Falconer and Kingham 2007: 183). Speeding in this case is about the pleasure and even leisure of performing subcultural masculinity, the rush of adrenaline felt from transgressing normativity – never being the ‘ordinary man’ – and in being able to control a precarious machine which, at any moment, could throw the rider towards death.

The Chase: the thrill of ‘the ride’

Throughout *Tron*, the protagonists are either chasing one another, or being chased by the Grid’s various pursuit and attack vehicles (Recognisers, tanks and ships). Romao (2004) traces back pursuit sequences in cinema right back to *The Great Train Robbery* (1904) and argues that, since the 1970s, the ‘chase scene’ has become the favoured way of presenting action in films. The trend for speedy chases continues, especially within the context of contemporary mainstream films which are predominantly about the spectacular (Bukatman 1998; Langford 2010), and the aestheticisation of speed’s children: danger, risk and performative technological dexterity.

From *Speed* to the *Fast and Furious* franchise, fastness is now increasingly an expected part of the cinematic experience for a lot of thrill-seeking popcorn-eaters. It always amuses me to watch motorcycles in countless number of films suddenly materialise during a fast-paced scene (usually a chase scene), magically wrenched off a road by the hero/ine, only to be discarded when the action stops, never to be seen again for the rest of the film. It is as though the appearance of the motorcycle itself has become a visual shorthand for speed, pursuit and action. I want to now pay closer attention to the cinematic uses of the motorcycle as a visual apparatus to create tension and deliver experiential thrills for the spectator. In the course of the discussion, I will also problematise some of these techniques in relation to sports bikes and the construction of spectacular, gendered bodies through high speed.

In discussing chronotopes and spatio-temporality in action films, Flanagan (2004: 115, emphasis in the original) argues that ‘the pace of the narrative and the nature of its contents (speeding buses and subway trains) combine to give the impression that the experience of the text *itself* is fast’.

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In other words, vehicular fastness speeds up the cinematic experience where the movie itself becomes in Flanagan's (2004: 114) words, 'the ride'. The motorcycle is indeed a literal 'cinematic apparatus' (De Lauretis 1987) for quickening the pace audio-visually, to provide the experience of high speed for the audience to go on a 'ride'. Even when, paradoxically, high speed is cinematographically manipulated through slow-motion shots (e.g. a motorcycle crashing spectacularly, or a motorcycle leaping across the air performing an impossible stunt), techniques used to 'slow down' fast scenes merely serve to highlight how fast events are supposedly unfolding. So fast that the human eye cannot take the speed in visually unless 'helped' by the camera which highlights the spectacular *effects* of speed on the rider (being crushed, or using incredible leaping skills). Ultimately, even slow-motion is about enhancing the sense of fastness.

If slow-riding choppers and cruisers emit menacing growls from rumbling engines while territorially taking as much space on the road by their width, then sports/trials/motocross bikes used in high-speed chase scenes provide the opposite effect. Like a mechanical Hitchcockian violin, such motorcycles emit high-pitched and urgent sounds, nervously shrieking out from sharp twists of the throttle. Furthermore, the fact that they are usually narrower means they can weave through traffic or go 'off-road' thereby increasing the ability to go faster but also the possibility of having a (fatal) accident, in itself a cause of cinematic tension for the thrill-seeking cinema-goer.

In a car you're always in a compartment, and because you're used to it you don't realize that through that car window everything you see is just more TV. You're a passive observer and it is all moving by you boringly in a frame. On a cycle the frame is gone. You're completely in contact with it all. You're *in* the scene, not just watching it anymore, and the sense of presence is overwhelming.

Pirsig 1999: 12

As the above quotation from *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* (1974) suggests, one of the main experiential differences between the car and the motorcycle is the latter's lack of a frame that has a bearing on a person's sense of perception. In cinematic terms, this has two interrelated implications. Firstly, the motorcycle becomes a point-of-view (POV) shifter, providing a means for 'direct spectatorial

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address that characterize spectacles' which can produce strong phenomenological effects (Romao 2004: 146–7). That is to say, audiences can become highly immersed within the scenes unfolding before their eyes. In *Tron*, the film does indeed become 'the ride' because first-person shots of the Light Cycle Grid space place spectators 'in the scene, not just watching it anymore' (Pirsig 1999: 12). Such questions relating to being 'a passive observer' (passive rider?) or active visual participant become inevitably intertwined with issues surrounding gender, cinematic gazing and spectatorship (Mulvey 1989), especially when it comes to speeding motorcycles. This leads onto my second point concerning the use of the motorcycle as a 'cinematic apparatus'.

The lack of framing around the motorcycle means that, visually, it can display the cinematic body more fully than a car which only grants limited visual access. The car allows for fragmented sections of the body to be shown at any given time: heads and shoulders, hands upon the steering wheel, a close-up of a foot hitting the accelerator, or perhaps an elbow out the window; of course these 'hidden' cinematic spaces in themselves are often used to effect, for example, characters hiding weapons or drugs out of sight. But with the motorcycle, the body has nowhere to hide, exhibited in its full glory for the spectator's eyes to feast upon. Inasmuch as the motorcycle aestheticises speed, the speeding motorcycle can stylise riders for scopophilic consumption: speed forces the rider to adopt certain postures that can lead to a technological fetishism of the gendered body. In this context, the thrill of the cinematic 'ride' comes not from immersion 'in the scene, not just watching it anymore' (Pirsig 1999: 12) but precisely from being *out* of the scene to cast our cinematic gaze (Mulvey 1989) upon the stylised bodies on display, like the sexual thrill of the voyeur. This is probably why images of women leaning exaggeratedly forwards on sports/street bikes are more prevalent in film (and visual culture in general) than any other kind of motorcycle, as shall be explained in a moment.

The sheer shape of the body riding a sports bike marks its visual difference with both slow-riding motorcycles and fast-speeding cars. The very riding position of a cruiser/chopper motorcycle is designed so one can take it 'easy' (or at least look like it!): leaning backwards into a level saddle seat; arms upward (very high depending on handlebar customisation); feet and legs stretched out in front because the foot pegs (brake/gears) are located at the front of the motorcycle; and head held high

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and upright to watch the scenery, without being whipped backwards from high speed. Similarly, my experiences in sports cars has taught me that physically, at least for me, the positioning of the body is similar to that of being on a chopper: the sheer lowness and seating means the whole body leans backwards, as if one should go to sleep. The 'easy riding' position looks like and feels like a mobile 'manspreading' of sorts.

By contrast, the riding position on a sports bike forces the body in the completely opposite direction: forwards onto the tank, on a saddle seat that is usually at an angle (rear end higher than front); elbows drawn in because of the very short handlebars that twist inwards; head hunched inwards and forwards towards the front; legs forced backwards as the foot pegs are located at the back. In short, the rider becomes a compact human ball, where mechanical design streamlines the human body. In cinematic and visual terms, this position is ideal for representing not only forward-facing, speeding futuristic urgency, but most pertinently, it is also ripe ground for the 'action babe heroine' (Tasker 1998; Inness 1999, 2004; King and McCaughey 2001; O'Day 2004; Waites 2008; Purse 2011). Visually, the sports bike accentuates all the 'right' parts of the female body: leaning forward and squeezing elbows in, breasts on tank while the sloping saddle takes care of the view from behind. These corporeal placements become even more exaggerated when the design of a sports bike is so linear that the body must trace its contours: see Anne Hathaway as Catwoman on the batpod in *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), a similar shape to the Light Cycles in *Tron* (Figure 2.2).

Tron's speeding male riders are shot from the front, their faces filling the screen; or through POV shots which establish a first-person perspective and encourage a cinematic immersion of embodied male subjectivity. However, 'action babe heroines' on sports bikes are usually shot from behind or from the side, maximising the visual effect of an aerodynamic eroticism. In discussing the motorcycle-riding Pamela Anderson in *Barb Wire* (1996), Brown (2004: 52) argues that the tough action heroine is 'a transgressive character not because she operates outside of gender restrictions but because she straddles both sides of the psychoanalytic gender divide. She is both subject and object, looker and looked at, ass-kicker and sex object.' But I would argue that at least for the duration of an action sequence or chase scene – 'the ride' – speeding heroines on sports bikes remain as such, mobile but statically so,¹⁶ still trapped within a

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Figure 2.2 Anne Hathaway as Catwoman riding the batpod in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012).

cinematic and motorcyclic frame that contains her as an object for the scopophilic gaze. She may be joining the race, but can never truly escape the eyes of the spectator.

Conclusion: Gearing Up and Slowing Down ... to Average Speed?

Having ridden on many different roads, met a diverse range of characters, and experienced a myriad of events – in short, having just about done everything ‘in their own time’ – towards the end of *Easy Rider*, Wyatt gives the uncomprehending Billy an enigmatic throw-away line: ‘we blew it’. Sure enough, the poignant ending of the film presents us with the meaningless and futile deaths of Wyatt and Billy (not to mention George Hanson’s too, after being attacked in his sleep) while Wyatt’s motorcycle literally blows up, smoke billowing out as the credits roll on. Wyatt’s ‘we blew it’ can be interpreted in a number of ways; most poignantly perhaps, as the disillusioned loss of the American dream, especially in the context of American involvement with Vietnam and the ‘failure of the flag’ (Chappell 2005). However, in the context of issues surrounding normativity and the challenging of dominant orientations of space and time through speed, I would suggest that the nihilistic ending – ‘we blew it’ – is a disciplinary and punitive one that

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attempts to restore order. Wyatt and Billy pay the ultimate price of disobeying the capitalist regime of labour by their (failed) attempts to operate within an alternative spatio-temporality outside of it. It would seem that even the male 'time out' cannot be so, unless it is temporary and/or practised by those who subscribe to dominant masculinist ideologies: ironically, it is the trigger-happy, redneck 'macho' American male on four wheels who reigns supreme.

On the other hand, Flynn from *Tron* represents a character who does escape the system of oppression but only on a temporary basis and, even then, to simply compete and defeat all others around him. Like Wyatt and Billy, Flynn challenges the system; but unlike the slow-riders, Flynn only does so to possess and control it, for in the end, he 'returns' back to reality and normality. The 'happy ending' sees Flynn rewarded with a helicopter, symbolising social and economic status that is far from punitive, but instead encourages the value of competition amongst males for the sake of material success. Flynn thus represents the ultimate capitalist man-ager, the 'organizational hero', who by speeding up production and productivity, uses fastness of the self as a way of emerging triumphant over other males who are subordinate and complicit in his dominant and hegemonic form of masculinity. In this context, the sports bike represents this ruthless drive to defeat the competition as fast as possible, proving useful as a post-feminist metaphor in relation to women: the subversion of the masculinist imperative to speed ahead, the embracing of female mobility through participation within the capitalist regime.¹⁷ However, in a spectacular cinematic space involving action/chase sequences, such a metaphor simply becomes shuffled into a patriarchal pile of gendered meanings. No matter how 'active' or competitive, female characters are never really participating on equal terms: almost always draped onto sports bikes, female characters must lie on moving mechanical beds while displaying their bodies for the spectator's visual pleasure.

In the above manner, speed *is* gendered because the reasons behind going slower or faster are nearly always informed by dominant ideologies surrounding technology, mobility, progress and competition, all of which are driven by a masculinist imperative. Voluntarily going slower or faster than everyone else usually represents some form of spatio-temporal disruption to normative systems of regulation, and the consequent destabilisation – albeit temporary – of dominant constructions of

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gender. From choppers to sports bikes, different types of motorcycles provide the material and visual means for not only representing these rebellions against ordered space-time, but also, for opening up possibilities for alternative articulations of masculinity and femininity (e.g. the 'soft' easy rider, or the 'hard' biker chick). However, as explored through both *Easy Rider* and *Tron*, order is ultimately restored thereby rendering such acts of speed defiance either futile and/or as reinforcing the very structures the rider seeks to bring down. Therefore, the motorcycle is a technology capable of generating speed, in itself a technology of gender, reproducing normative discourses that regulate gendered configurations of socio-cultural, economic, geographic and ideological space-time.

PROOF

3

Tribute to the Pillion: Seating Bodies upon the Heterosexual Matrix

pillion, n.

- a. A type of saddle, spec. a light saddle used by women.
- b. A seat or flat pad located behind the saddle of a motorcycle (occas. a bicycle) on which a second person may ride, or luggage may be carried.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2016

I have lost count of the number of times that people have assumed I am a pillion passenger. Inasmuch as 'biker' is a masculinised term (one must specify 'female biker' in the same way one does 'female doctor' or 'male prostitute'), the term 'pillion' seems to have become synonymous with 'female' or in some cases, 'child'. Somehow, being a 'feminine' female means that I am only capable of clinging onto a male biker, presumably because I need my fragile hands to apply make-up while travelling (I kid you not, a biker once thought that I was serious when I told him very facetiously that I regularly apply lipstick while riding). I find this highly irritating. But then I check my own reaction: what's wrong with being a pillion passenger? Nothing at all, in terms of the actual riding experience.

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Compared to being the rider upfront, it's just different and, if anything, requires more effort: you mostly see the back of someone's helmet (try not to hit it with your own), you have to anticipate the rider's moves and synchronise your own sense of momentum and weight and, in general, leave your life in someone else's hands while trying desperately not to get whiplash. I have nothing against pillions and pillionage. But what *does* bother me truly – and thus wish to problematise – is the ideology surrounding the pillion: practical riding positionalities begin to matter when they are gendered and sexualised.

In response to an enquiry about passenger handles on one of the many biker discussion forums, a poster places a diagram of a busty woman in 'correct' and 'incorrect' riding positions (Figure 3.1). Needless to say, the 'correct' riding position involves a whole lot of 'pushed-up' contact against the male rider: it is no wonder that the pillion seat is sometimes (charmingly) referred to as 'the bitch seat'. At the other end of the spectrum, we have the pillion who poses as the 'unbearable weight' (Bordo 2003) dragging down the freedom of the rider. For example, an advert for passenger grips which includes an image of a male rider and female pillion states: the motorcyclist can feel 'free and easy (...) without being *suffocated by the desperate grip of the passenger*. Also, *he will no longer feel the passenger's weight leaning against him*' (emphasis added).¹ The pillion – often the female subject – is thus reduced to being, at best, a companionable/titillating accessory (light, sexualised weight); and, at worst, something that must be managed and controlled like an obtrusive piece of luggage (heavy, domestic weight). Where one sits physically on a motorcycle therefore becomes a symbolic manifestation of one's ideological position and physical role within a heteronormative, patriarchal system of gender regulation and sexual signification. Media discourses and visual representations of riders and pillions on motorcycles reproduce and reinforce these dominant ideologies: men are dominant riders, women are submissive pillions.

So it is that I dedicate this chapter to the pillion, the forgotten figure who is always defined, overlooked and overshadowed by the sexier subject, the rider. I want to theorise the pillion – largely untouched by scholars – by problematising the ways in which representations of the pillion are just as gendered and sexualised as the rider and need to be subjected to critical enquiry. I suggest that the motorcycle's very design encourages an

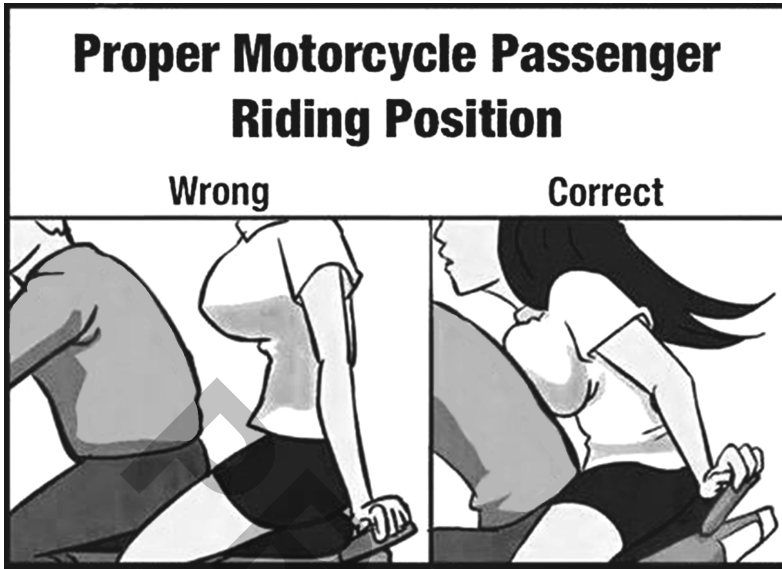


Figure 3.1 Accompanying forum post states: 'Whichever facilitates proper passenger body position: D'.²

intimate dualism arising from the physical proximity and positioning of the rider and pillion, creating a vehicular social dynamic marked by ideological differences and mutual dependency. I want to analyse how the motorcycle is often used as a visual tool in films to position riders and pillions both physically and ideologically upon a heterosexual matrix (Butler 2006), which produces heteronormative gender identities and relations defined by patriarchal ideologies. Having said this, the cinematic motorcycle is also used to present a temporary relief, where the duration of the motorcycle ride represents a carnivalesque and liminal time-space where transgressive acts of freedom can subvert heteronormative systems of gender and sexual signification. However, I argue that cinematic re-containment strategies ultimately revert such moments of gender and sexual liberation back to 'normal', reinforcing dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality in the process.

One of the ways in which Goffman (1979: 8) analyses advertisements is through the idea of 'pairings', where gender relations are staged interactions – 'gender displays' – realised through carefully choreo-

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graphed bodies within a given frame. His analyses of different 'symmetrical and asymmetrical pairings' reveal how the physical positioning of gendered bodies 'can iconically reflect fundamental features of the social structure'. Drawing from Goffman's ideas on the social staging and interaction of bodies, let us explore the different kinds of pillion-rider pairings – usually asymmetrical – and how they are situated physically and ideologically upon the motorcycle. How does gender and sexual difference define the pillion – rider relationship? How does the motorcycle physically position riders and pillions in ways which reinforce heteronormative identities and relations?

Male Rider and Female Pillion: Seating Gender upon the Heterosexual Matrix

The motorcycle is designed to carry only one or two people, usually no more, unless an auxiliary space is created by attaching a side-car, or the ride involves a specialist stunt. This design feature means that mechanically, the motorcycle lends itself to a material binarism which organizes bodies, almost always through questions of difference. Referring to motorcycles and scooters as meaningful objects, Hebdige (1988: 86) argues that the 'machine functions as a material sign of imagined gender differences'. I want to extend this point and argue that not only does the motorcycle as a whole engender and become engendered by its user, it can also be broken down further into different component parts, separated by ideological demarcations of gender and sexuality. 'Saddle' and 'handle-bars' become sites for masculinised dominance and control, whereas 'pillion seat' ('bitch seat') and 'sissy bars' become sites for feminised submission and dependence. In occupying these different parts of the motorcycle, both rider and pillion embody their (unequal) positions upon a heteronormative matrix which regulates not just their docile bodies, but their relationship with one another. The motorcycle thus becomes a machine which not only functions as a material sign of 'imagined gender differences' but as an organizational technology of a heteronormativity which regulates gendered and sexual bodies, roles and relations. How does this translate visually on screen?

In his discussion surrounding the various visual mechanisms used in advertising for ranking social function according to gender, Goffman (1979: 32) argues that when men and women are displayed undertaking

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the same task,³ the ‘man is likely to perform the executive role’. Clearly, a motorcycle ride by nature must have one person performing the executive role, the controlling of the vehicle. This rule can of course apply to any mode of transport – car, boat, bus and so on – and, furthermore, the steerer’s role may not always be ‘executive’ if payment is involved: for example, a male professional chauffeur steering a car for his executive female employer.⁴ However, the difference between the motorcycle and other vehicles is that motorcycles are more vulnerable, with no protective barriers acting as capsules of safety, the risks are higher. Thus, the ability to ride a motorcycle while carrying a pillion can demonstrate not just control over a physically and mentally demanding task, but control – and thus usually dominance – over the pillion passenger: after all, the rider decides the direction, speed and fate of the vulnerable pillion passenger. Within this socio-technological configuration, the most common motorcyclic pairing in cinema (and beyond) involves the rider as male, and the pillion a female. Representations of male-rider and female-pillion not only mimic heteronormative relationships, they also present us with idealised forms of cinematic masculinity and femininity which assert male dominance and ensure female subjugation. This is especially the case for capable and strong female characters, who must be regulated and contained within weaker positions on the heterosexual matrix.

The cinematic motorcycle is thus an ideal tool to: signal the rider-hero’s invincible and incontestable masculine prowess; ensure the pillion-heroine remains as a secondary, subservient and ‘lesser’ character and establish the heterosexual relationship between the rider and pillion. Let us look at these aspects in closer depth by examining, amongst many, a few films involving a male–female motorcycle pairing: Ben Shockley (Clint Eastwood) carries his partner in crime Gus Mally (Sondra Locke) on a Harley-Davidson Knucklehead in *The Gauntlet* (1977); while Lieutenant Marion ‘Cobra’ Cobretti (Sylvester Stallone) rides a Harley-Davidson FXRS with his love-interest, Ingrid Knudsen (Brigitte Nielson) in *Cobra* (1986); more recently, Aaron Cross (Jeremy Renner) is involved in a motorcycle chase with Dr Marta Shearing (Rachel Weisz) on a Honda CRF 450X in *The Bourne Legacy* (2012). Actors like Stallone and Eastwood are known for their hyperbolic masculinity (Jeffords 1994; Tasker 2002) – note they are both on Harley-Davidsons, a symbol of hard American masculinity – where the cinematic motorcycle serves as a vehicle for their gendered and

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technological performance. The hero is so strong and agile, he can carry everyone's weight while remaining in control without crashing.

In all these cases, the heroes represent what Connell (2006: 77) refers to as 'exemplars' of hegemonic masculinity. It is their gendered practices – in this case, the double-act of controlling a motorcycle while also being responsible for the female pillion – which legitimate patriarchy while guaranteeing the dominant position of men and the subjugation of women. In other words, inasmuch as the cinematic motorcycle can highlight the superiority of men, it can also reinforce the subjugation and submission of women – especially 'strong' women who pose a threat to masculinity – by keeping the female body 'in position' at the back, rendered physically and otherwise dependent as a pillion under the care – or control – of the male rider. In discussing the ritualisation of gender subordination, Goffman (1979) argues that one corporeal strategy used involves 'the arm lock', where 'the woman shows herself to be receiving support, and both the man's hands are free for whatever instrumental tasks may arise': the 'arm lock' is thus a basic tie-sign for 'marking that a woman is under the protective custody of the accompanying man' (Goffman 1979: 54). Because of the exposed nature of the motorcycle, not to mention the force of gravity and momentum, the pillion usually has no choice but to support herself by holding onto the rider through a motorcyclic 'arm-lock', most commonly, by embracing the rider's torso. The motorcycle's design and social practice thus enables the visual ritualisation of gendered subordination by the positioning of bodies and body parts upon a patriarchal system of signification.

The cinematic motorcycle can also hint at heteronormative intimacies because, again, of the very way in which the pillion must ride by holding onto the rider through the motorcycle 'arm-lock'. Here, the motorcycle acts as an adrenalin-fuelled symbol of sexual consummation and union (more on this later) and/or as a matrimonial vehicle carrying the cinematic pair towards the safety of the proverbial sunset. In both *Cobra* and *The Gauntlet*, the couple ride off smiling: in the case of the former, the departure happens just before and as the end credits roll in with uplifting music; in the case of the latter, the pair literally ride towards the horizon of a vast landscape. In other words, the motorcycle becomes a narrative tool for the realisation of heterosexual relationships, where women embody the role of the sexualised 'damsel in distress' ready for the hero's and the viewer's (scopic) consumption and/or the role of the wife, regurgitating

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heterosexist and patriarchal fairy-tale narratives of 'happily ever after'. Therefore, the motorcycle's socio-technological design – rider at front, pillion at the back – makes it a perfect cinematic vehicle to present 'appropriate', normative masculine and feminine bodies, roles and relationships. Ultimately, the cinematic motorcycle positions bodies upon a normative heterosexual matrix, a discursive regulation of gender and sexuality based on patriarchal systems of binary signification.

The Female Rider with the Male Pillion: Carnival, Freedom and Containment

Occasionally, the motorcycle is used as a way of playfully reversing gender and sexual roles while remaining contained very securely, and relying entirely on the structures imposed by the normative heterosexual matrix, as discussed above. That is, instead of presenting the 'correct' positioning of the dominant male rider with his submissive female pillion, in some cases, these roles are reversed with scenes involving a female rider and a male pillion. There are two main resulting femininities and masculinities which are constructed by with this rider-pillion gender (re)configuration. In the first instance, the female rider is presented as a childish rider – a girl – who is free and usually oblivious of how comical and/or out of control she is. Here, the male pillion acts as the worried 'parent' who might be in danger but is still protectively behind the female rider, ready to take control if needs be (Figure 3.2). The alternative representation of the female rider–male pillion is when the female rider is presented as being more 'masculine' than the male pillion, but still taking on the role of the 'feminine' and maternal vessel that delivers the male 'child' to the father. In both of these cases, there is an implicit visual reliance on reading the motorcycle 'correctly' – male as rider, female as pillion – in order to understand reversal of gender roles itself and, most importantly, that the reversal is temporary thereby ultimately restoring the heteronormative *status quo*. Let us explore the two types of reversal in more depth.

Girl outta control

One of the most famous scenes in *Roman Holiday* (1953) involves Princess Ann (Audrey Hepburn) riding a Piaggio Vespa 125 with American

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Figure 3.2 UK Natwest TV advertisement (2016),⁵ a contemporary example of the child-like female rider with worried male ‘parent’ pillion.

news-reporter Joe Bradley (Gregory Peck) riding as her pillion.⁶ The whole sequence of comedic events begins with Princess Ann, who sits with curiosity on a Vespa parked up on the road. Much to her child-like delight, the Princess accidentally starts the engine, shooting off into the road in fits of giggles, leaving Bradley with no choice but to run after the Vespa. Having managed to hop onto the pillion seat behind her, Bradley tries to regain control of the erratic Vespa but the Princess bats him away squealing, ‘No, no, let go! I can do it!’. What follows is road chaos: she mounts pavements, nearly runs over pedestrians several times, whizzes between two people in a market, shoots through an outdoor café scene while upsetting a table and a street stall, speeds ahead against the oncoming traffic in the wrong lane. Throughout the sequence, the Princess is oblivious to the hazards and life-threatening dangers she is creating for herself and others: in true Hepburn style, her eyes are wide open and alight with playful glee. The sequence ends with the Italian Polizia chasing after the pair and then apprehending them.

Given that Princess Ann is introduced at the beginning of *Roman Holiday* as a lonely figure, trapped indoors, stifled, oppressed and

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burdened by her royal status and duties, there is a sense of satisfaction to watch her finally having fun as a civilian on a Vespa, cutting her regal ties (and hair) and breaking all the (road) rules. Indeed, becoming a female rider forms part of a carnivalesque 'rejection of social decorum entailing a release from oppressive etiquette, politeness, and good manners' (Stam 1989: 94). In true carnival style (Bakhtin 1984), this scene involves not just travesty (*both* Princess Ann and Bradley are disguising their true identities and social status), but also the reversal of hierarchical levels: the King (or Princess in this case) becomes the clown and pauper for the day and, by the same token, the woman becomes Master of the ceremony at the 'top' of the scooter, while the man is reduced to sit at the 'bottom' as pillion. Furthermore, the comedic framing of the scene represents the Princess's 'liberation from authority' (Rowe 1995: 44), and by extension, the liberation of a woman's authority over the domestic sphere which ultimately consigns her to subservience: she can now consume what was previously the 'masculine' territory of the road, carefree and laughing.

Goffman (1979: 36) argues, however, that when men are positioned within traditionally female domains like the kitchen, the nursery or rooms which are being cleaned, one of the ways in which men's 'subordination or contamination' of femininity is avoided is by presenting 'the man as ludicrous or childlike, unrealistically so, as if perhaps in making him candidly unreal the competency image of real males could be preserved'. In other words, humour renders gender contamination and reversal impossible, ridiculing the very thought of men doing women's tasks and women performing men's task. In the context of *Roman Holiday*, the same comedic logic applies: the very incompetency of Princess Ann's scooter riding, the 'unreal' ways in which everyone on the road escapes unscathed from her chaotic antics, not to mention the girly giggling, squealing and ludicrous childish facial expressions all signal not just the temporary nature of gender reversal but also render any female control as ridiculous, unreal and laughable. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the vehicle of choice here is a scooter, not a motorcycle (which the authoritative Polizia use to chase them). In being already the subject of ridicule because of its visible resemblance to a child's toy scooter, the scooter was still firmly linked to women and children (Hebdige 1979: 84), despite the growing consumer tastes in the 1950s which valued the 'soft' design of the scooter. Therefore, not only is Princess Ann riding childishly,

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she is further engendered by what is already regarded as a highly feminised and infantilised vehicle.

Goffman (1979: 37) specifies that 'when females are pictured engaged in a traditionally male task, a male may (as it were) parenthesize the activity, looking on appraisingly, condescendingly, or with wonder'. In the case of *Roman Holiday*, the expression on Bradley's face riding pillion to Princess Ann – 'engaged in a traditionally male task' of controlling a vehicle – can only be described as that of anxiety and concern, like a parent over a child: throughout the whole film, Bradley's role is that of the wiser patriarch who must keep an eye on – while indulging – a child-like Princess. Thus, while the motorcycle enables the carnivalesque reconfiguration of patriarchal hierarchies of gender, these apparently subversive and transgressive moments of freedom are ultimately both temporary and can only occur in a liminal space-time of riding. Once the riding stops, social order is restored: the Polizia catch up with both Princess Ann and Bradley and arrest them and, ultimately, the film ends poignantly with Princess Ann returning to her royal duties while she faces the revelation that Bradley was a news reporter. In other words, masks must come off, the King is King (or rather, the Princess is Princess), the clown is a clown, where these reversals and changes are 'placed into an essential relation with time' against the 'immovable and extra-temporal stability' of patriarchal hierarchy (Bakhtin 1984: 81–2). Comedy serves to bracket off the subversive incident as temporary and 'unreal'. Patriarchal gender hierarchy is restored and protected through humour and by the sheer temporality of being on a motorcycle (or scooter).

Action heroine and the male dependent

While I critique contemporary representations of independent women riding solo on motorcycles in the context of advertising in Part II, I want to briefly discuss the female rider here in relation to film, and as part of an asymmetrical pairing with a male pillion. In the previous section I explored the way in which the female rider is infantilised in contrast to the 'adult' male pillion, where the idea of a woman in control of a motorcycle is presented as a temporary, 'unreal' and even laughable situation thereby restoring normative ideologies of gender. A second common way – especially in contemporary action films – is by masculinising the female

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rider and, by doing so, feminising the male pillion. By 'masculinising' the female, I do not necessarily mean a form of female masculinity (Halberstam 1998) associated with 'butch' body styles and 'musculinity' (Tasker 1998: 70). Instead, I mean 'masculinised' in the sense that they are positioned in the saddle seat, taking over what is traditionally the 'male task' of controlling a motorcycle, and responsible for a male pillion's life. For example, Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) rides a Ducati 998 with The Keymaker (Randall Duk Kim) – an elderly East Asian man – as pillion passenger in *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) while Mikaela Bane (Meghan Fox), a competent car mechanic, rides an Aprilia RS 125 with Sam Witwicky (Shia LeBeouf) in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009). Both Moss's and Fox's roles can be read as a post-feminist celebration of female sexuality, agency, control and dominance. After all, the male pillion does *not* have control over the vehicle and is dependent on a woman: she, on the other hand, is independent while looking fabulous.

However, there are a couple of issues here that redress the potentially transgressive gender (im)balance, part of what a containment strategy that 'sets the potentially culturally disturbing possibility of female agency and physical power at a distance from our everyday contemporary reality' (Purse 2011: 81). First, while film representations of female riders – with or without the male pillion – tend to be presented as 'action babes', they are ultimately overtly sexualised and fetishised (Tasker 1998; Inness 1999, 2004; King and McCaughey 2001; O'Day 2004; Waites 2008; Purse 2011), and conform to dominant ideals of femininity through skin-tight catsuits which accentuate the 'feminine shape'. So iconic is Trinity's PVC catsuit in the said motorcycle chase scene that *Matrix* fans can even buy a figurine of her on the Ducati 998; similarly, scenes involving Mikaela handling machines in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* borrow so heavily from soft pornography aesthetics that any attempt to present her as a strong character – a car mechanic – become cancelled out by the sheer emphasis on her flesh. In this sense, women can be dominant but only within the dominant structures of gender ideology which regulate not just women's role, but how they embody the roles: dominant, but ultimately for the consumption of the heterosexual male eye.

Second, using a female rider with a male pillion does have the visual effect of presenting the woman as strong, but also, the male as weak(er), signalling the male pillion as a subordinate variant to the dominant

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hegemonic masculinity. In the case of the Keymaker in *The Matrix Reloaded*, East Asian raciality and age are subordinate to the white, young masculinity in the shape of Neo. In the case of *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, it is Sam's teenage boyhood which is subordinate to the dominance of manhood, which he will inevitably shed by the end of the film. However, in both cases, while the female rider is in control of the motorcycle and of their male pillion's' fates, the very nature of this control is temporary. Ultimately, the male pillion is released and moves onto achieve greater things: not only is the Keymaker responsible for giving Trinity the keys to the motorcycle, he is also the only person who can help the protagonists escape due to his specialist knowledge of the Matrix. Similarly, Sam is the 'chosen one' to be able to connect with Transformers and save humanity. In this sense, the female rider acts as a maternal vessel, one who carries and ultimately 'delivers' the hero, usually the father, the patriarch, to his destination. In the case of the Keymaker, Trinity rides through two lorries and 'delivers' him to Morpheus who scoops him up like a mid-wife from atop the lorries' roofs. Similarly, Mikaela – in all her fleshiness – acts as a symbolic vessel that carries Sam through his rite of passage from teenage boy to adult man.

While scenes involving a female rider and a male pillion on a motorcycle may seem progressive and reflective of post-feminist sensibilities (Gill 2011, 2007), they ultimately act as technologies of heteronormative gender regulation. They are less about the display of strong femininity, or even the weakness of subordinate masculinities. Instead, these scenes are more about the representation of women as supportive of men ('behind every strong man there is a strong woman'), all the while reinforcing the relationship between femininity, body and sexuality: both in terms the stylised female body as an eroticised site for scopical consumption through the 'male gaze' (Mulvey 1989), and also, in terms of the maternal body, a 'carrier' of a male child who must be nurtured, protected and finally delivered and released to the exterior world beyond the motorcycle ride.

Third 'Seat': Petrol Tank as a Bed

A large number of motorcycle magazines (*Outlaw Biker*, *Biker*, *Streetfighters*) can be situated within the long-standing genre of 'men's

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interest' or 'men's lifestyle magazines', not just because motorcycles are part of a traditionally masculinised interest in motoring, but because of its generous inclusion of female models who are so clearly not dressed (quite literally) to ride a motorcycle. Such biker mags are very similar in content and style to 1990s' New Lad mags like *loaded*, *FHM*, *Maxim*, and later on, *Zoo* or *Nuts*. As Edwards (2003: 138, emphasis in the original) argues, these magazines 'often reduce not only the representation, rather the very *incorporation*, of women to the sexual', where soft-core pornographic supplements like calendars reinforce this process: many a bike shop or garage will have calendars and women on display above the cash registers. The motorcycle is of course an ideally shaped vehicle for the display of the female body, especially in accentuating the 'femininity' through the eroticisation of certain body parts. In the same way that the tilting angle of the pillion seat conveniently enables the physical accentuation of the female bottom, there is also another 'seat' which gets used often in not just motorcycle mags but in films: the petrol tank.

The petrol tank is usually a whale-like semi-tear shape, sloping downwards into the saddle where the rider sits. Many biker mags, not to mention female celebrities (Beyoncé, Britney Spears), capitalise on this serendipitous visual form by placing the female body lying *across* the motorcycle with her back against the petrol tank, facing towards the rear of the motorcycle. Unlike the pillion seat which accentuates the female bottom, the petrol tank has the effect of pushing the female bust outwards, as if tracing the very contours of the tank while drawing the eye towards the 'peak'. More often than not, she will be in this position while her legs are conveniently set apart by the motorcycle's body. In using the petrol-tank as a back support to lie on, clearly the invitation is there for the rider to sit on the saddle. In his discussion of the ritualisation of subordination, Goffman (1979: 41) states that the recumbent position does not only signal the social lowering of the subject lying down, but can also be part of the 'conventionalized expression of sexual availability'. While not a bouncy bed or the dirty floor, the motorcycle acts as a similar prop to not only represent the subjugation of the female body, but also to signal sexual availability through a stylised corporeal form. This point also applies to the very common positioning of women lying on the floor *in front* of motorcycles: here, the motorcycle stands in lieu of the male body which dominates the subjugated and sexualised female body.

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I am, however, referring thus far to static, magazine images of women alone with a motorcycle. What happens when we think about the recumbent ritualisation of gendered and sexual subordination in relation to the on-screen pillion-rider pairing? Surprisingly, quite a few action-based films like *Knight and Day* (2010) or *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) include a chase scene involving a choreographed moment where the male rider sits on the saddle – their ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ position – in control of the motorcycle while the female pillion is not behind him, but *in front* of him. Just like the magazine equivalent discussed above, in both of these films, the female pillion (Cameron Diaz and Michelle Yeoh, respectively) has her back against the petrol tank, facing the rear of the motorcycle (hence the male rider too). Because the rider’s legs are in the way, what is particularly remarkable about this position is that the pillion has nowhere to place her own legs other than wrapping them around the rider’s torso (Figure 3.3). Visually, this placement of pillion-rider mimics the missionary position, where the saddle represents the all-important, genitally based (hetero)sexual contact point between man and woman. Directionally, because the male rider is facing the ‘right way’ and moving forwards, by charging ahead on his motorcycle, the rider is also charging into the receptive female pillion who is facing the other way.⁷

The ‘third’ seat of the petrol tank therefore becomes a mobile bed which stages heteronormative relations, a material and even marital site which produces gendered and sexualised bodies, thereby enabling the dominant male to take on the ‘executive role’ (Goffman 1979: 32): an ‘asymmetrical’ pairing indeed. No matter how much gun-wielding (Diaz) or crow-bar raising (Yeoh) these female heroines are doing on the motorcycle, their actions are inevitably undercut by the coital emulation which the very shape of the motorcycle, petrol tank and rider force their female bodies to take on. In this sense, the motorcycle re-establishes the heteronormative equilibrium by ‘re-containing the active heroine within the terms of heteronormative sexualised display’ (Purse 2011: 79). Furthermore, by sitting ‘up front’ like a child on a car driver’s lap, there is a sense in which female pillions are also infantilised. Referring back to Goffman’s ideas on the ritualisation of subordination, he states that ‘women and children are pictured lying down on beds or floors more often than men, rendering them physically less able to defend themselves and thus dependent on the benignness of those around

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Figure 3.3 Cameron Diaz on the ‘third seat’ with Tom Cruise in *Knight and Day* (2010).

them’ (Goffman 1979: 41). Indeed, by being placed upon the ‘third’ seat of the motorcycle, the female pillion is represented as being incapable of defending herself, and thus in childish need of the heroic male rider’s protection.

We behold such an instance of the infantilisation of the ‘third’ seat in one of the most iconic motorcycle chase scenes in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), where teenager John Connor (Edward Furlong) tries to escape from the T-1000 on his high-pitched Honda XR100, while the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) catches up with him easily on a deep and rumbling Harley-Davidson ‘Fat Boy’ FLSTF (1337cc). The Terminator picks the boy up with one hand while still controlling his motorcycle, and proceeds to drop him down unceremoniously but protectively in front of him on the ‘third’ seat between petrol-tank and saddle. Seconds later, we watch John’s pubescent XR100 get crushed underneath the T-1000’s mighty truck. The effect is that the boy pillion appears fragile, light and vulnerable in comparison to the sheer size, speed and power of both ‘adult’ men and their matching ‘adult’ vehicles. Because both arms stretch out to hold the handlebars, the visual result is that the child (or female pillion in other cases) becomes like a baby being cradled, physically under the male rider’s care: the ultimate patriarch, the male rider dominates over his

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subordinate women and children through corporeal relationality and difference enabled by the 'third' seat of the petrol-tank.

Queer Riders: Same-Sex Rider and the Pillion

One way to read same-sex rider and pillion pairings is through the idea of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities, where the latter is complicit and supports the former (Connell 2006). Together, these variants of masculinity work towards the propagation and continuation of patriarchal and heteronormative supremacy. For example, sometimes in films, same-sex male riders and pillions are presented together – usually with comedic effect – to articulate a sense of competing masculinities: for example, George Hanson (Jack Nicholson) is pillion passenger to Wyatt (Peter Fonda) in *Easy Rider* (1969), representing divergent (complicit?) masculinities which in themselves challenged the dominant hegemonic war-faring male figure of 1960s USA. However, Connell also argues that gay masculinities are positioned at the bottom of the gender hierarchy for men, where 'gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 2006: 78–9). In other words, another way in which we can understand same-sex pairings configured through the rider–pillion binarism is through the idea of 'queerness'.

Part of the idea of 'queerness' is about the transgressive destabilisation – the 'queering' – of heteronormative texts and contexts, a politics of carnival going against the cultural grain (Seidman 1996, 1997; Sinfield 2005). In terms of mainstream Hollywood cinema, queer audiences have historically adopted a subcultural reception strategy (Benshoff and Griffin 2004), where overtly heterosexual (often male-dominated) films can be re-interpreted and re-encoded through a queer sexual semiotics. Representations of intimate homosocial pairings, therefore, can be interpreted as articulating queer sensibilities and queer meanings. Here, the slippage between homosociality and homosexuality (Sedgwick 1985) is crucial,⁸ where the idea of 'bromance' can be pushed further into the queer realms of homosexuality. As already discussed, the motorcycle's socio-mechanical design positions bodies both physically and ideologically upon the normative heterosexual matrix which in turn regulates gender and sexuality according to binary systems of signification: hence, the dominant

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male rider at the front; and the submissive female pillion at the back. But in true queer style, the very heteronormative system of signification – in this case, the represented materially and visually through the motorcycle – can be subverted to enable the queer displacement of gender and sex. In other words, the motorcycle can queer, and be queered, by the rider–pillion relationship.

In *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* (1981), brutish gang member Wez sports a mohawk, rooster feathers on large shoulder pads, leather chaps and a cod-piece. Riding on a modified Kawasaki KZ900, his pillion passenger is the Golden Youth, who wears a dog collar with chain, chest-exposing leather bodice and long fly-away blond hair. As if to further signal an ambiguous and queer relationship between Wez and the Golden Youth, Wez is struck by an arrow: one of the symbols of Saint Sebastian, the patron saint of homosexuality who was repeatedly struck by arrows (Figure 3.4). Not only are Wez and the Golden Youth stylised aesthetically and ideologically according to gay BDSM gender roles (Master/slave or Dominant/submissive), their physical positions as rider and pillion further mark their dichotomous relationship to one another through the denaturalisation of gender and sexuality. That is, by representing sameness upon what



Figure 3.4 Rider Wez gets struck by an arrow as his pillion, the Golden Youth, looks on in *Mad Max: The Road Warrior* (1981).

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is usually a motorcyclic technology of heteronormative difference, the motorcycle enables the queer transgression and subversion of the heteronormative gender–sex binary system. Such ‘perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualisation’, a process which can challenge the hegemonic naturalisation and essentialisation of gender identities (Butler 2006: 188). In this way, not only does the motorcycle reveal the ‘unnatural’ and performative connection between gender and sexuality, it also lubricates the queer passage of interpretation between the homosocial to homosexual.

Furthermore, if queerness on screen is used to ‘delineate the depravity of the villain’ (Benshoff 2004: 67), then in being associated with subcultural expressions of rebellion, the motorcycle is also an ideal vehicle for the queer articulation of sexual depravity, dissonance and perverse transgression. For example, *Angels’ Wild Women* (1972) involves a motorcycle-centred female gang out for revenge – almost as Amazonian sexual predators – described in the trailer as ‘girls with men’s desires, who like a little action any time they are in the mood’. On the surface, such a description is very queer (‘girls with men’s desires’), hinting at female homosociality or even lesbian desires in a style reminiscent of lesbian pulp fiction. But as Inness (1997) argues in relation to the idea of the ‘lesbian menace’ in popular culture, such potential moments of contestation surrounding gender and sexual norms are quickly negated by presenting the women in revealing outfits (hot pants and shirts tied under bursting cleavages). Such female characters are clearly geared for the viewer’s titillation: their physical strength and capabilities become subsumed into *sexual* strength and capabilities. In this way, the motorcycle is reverted back to being a frame for the display of the female body, a machine that contrasts and highlights the fleshiness of women’s corporeal sexuality: as such, queerness not only delineates the depravity of the villain, it also serves to ‘bolster the equally constructed idea of normative heterosexuality’ (Benshoff 2004: 67). In the case of female–female motorcyclic pairings, unlike the male–male version, the rider–pillion become a means for subjugating female bodies which act as a site for the entertaining containment of sexual taboos.

Pielichaty (2015) argues in relation to festivals and liminal spaces that, ‘carnival can only exist as an “authorized transgression” where status is

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thought to be inverted, but is actually hiding under a façade of social order and discipline' (Pielichaty 2015: 238). Just like Princess Ann in *Roman Holiday* as discussed earlier, subversions must therefore always be 'reverted back' to (hetero)normal, where dominant and hegemonic order is restored. In the case of Wez and the Golden Youth in *Mad Max 2*, the latter is inevitably killed by a sharpened boomerang thrown by the Feral Kid: Wez screams in agony as he looks down at his bloodied companion lying dead on the dusty ground. The female bikers in *Angels' Wild Women* suffer similar fates, either raped or sacrificed and dead. In the words of Waugh (1993: 145): 'we don't establish families – we just wander off looking horny, solitary, sad, or dead'. Indeed, the subversive and queer transgression must only be temporary, to be realised only through the motorcycle ride. Once feet are back on the ground, transgression must be punished. Homosexual bodies must be disciplined and regulated to maintain social order. The motorcycle is thus a useful visual tool in films (and beyond) to represent potentially subversive acts of transgression, but at the same time, because the duration of a ride must be inevitably finite, it can also signal the sheer temporary nature of transgression. Heteronormative social order will always prevail.

Conclusion: The Burden of the Pillion

With the overall aim of highlighting the pillion as an important figure in motorcycle discourses – and thus worthy of theoretical discussion – this chapter has examined and problematised the different gendered and sexualised ways in which motorcyclic pairings are represented in cinema. I have revealed how the motorcycle's very design and technological form creates an intimate dualism enabled through the essentialisation and naturalisation of gender and sexual difference: that which leads to a binary system promoting 'mechanical sexism'. As such, I have argued that the motorcycle is often used as an ideal visual tool in cinema to position pillions and riders both physically and ideologically. This is founded upon a normative heterosexual matrix which produces hegemonic gender and sexual identities and patriarchal relationships which subjugate the Other: women, subordinate males and children.

I also hope to have demonstrated how it is that the cinematic motorcycle is at times used to challenge these dominant systems of

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signification. Here, the duration of a motorcycle ride presents a carnivalesque and liminal time-space, where transgressive acts of freedom can subvert and de-centralise heteronormative systems of gender and sexual signification. Ultimately, as we have seen with each subversion – whether it is the female rider–male pillion pairing or the same-sex rider and pillion pairing – the moment is always temporary and part of a liminal process of ‘authorized transgression’ (Pielichaty 2015: 238). In other words, cinematic containment strategies mean gender and sexual subversions are inevitably reverted back to ‘normal’ and, where necessary, transgressive bodies are regulated and disciplined according to moral, civic and/or physical law. No wonder the pillion ends up with a ‘desperate grip’: they have a tremendous ideological burden to bear.

PROOF

PART II

Advertising

PROOF

PROOF

4

Girl on a Motorbike: Technology of Youth, Subculture and Rebellion

In my early 30s, I still didn't know how to drive a car. I didn't need to, I had a motorcycle. One day, I was putting my helmet on to go to work in the middle of a winter blizzard (I still shudder at my own foolhardiness). My neighbour – an ex-biker – was getting into his car, and shaking his head with a slight look of pity commented, 'I used to be like you. Out no matter what the weather. But then I grew up and got a car!' At 30-something, I was suddenly caught off guard. Am I refusing to learn how to drive a car because I am refusing to grow up? Am I stuck in a teenage motorcycle daydream? Am I a case study in arrested development? Until then, I had thought of motorcycles as a means of transport, a pleasurable one to get me from point A to point B. I had never really thought about motorcycles in relation to my own life trajectory or personal development. Once I began to dwell on this matter which was very quickly sending me into some kind of personal crisis, I noticed that, out of my friends and family, so many had indeed 'grown out of their motorcycles once they had passed through their early to mid-30s. Children and family seemed to be a common reason amongst my friends and family to stop riding: fear of death or injury while being responsible for young children; or the fact that a motorcycle is not a family-friendly vehicle, both in terms of carrying

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more than one passenger safely, and being able to carry significant amounts of luggage/shopping. Other friends 'upgraded' by buying a 'more comfortable' car that could take them to places without getting wet or without having to bother with restrictive motorcycle gear.¹ Market figures reflect these casual observations, with Mintel (2013) reporting that young adults (25–34s) are the most important group in terms of motorcycle ownership (13 per cent), after which motorcycle ownership drops off significantly. Why do people 'grow out' of motorcycles?

When motorcycles became a postwar consumer product (mostly in Europe, America and Japan), they were considered to be a cheaper alternative to the more expensive automobile, the latter being available to a select few. Cost is clearly still an issue today, with Mintel (2013) reporting that the motorcycle's comparative cheapness to cars (cost of purchase, fuel economy and insurance) is the most important reason behind motorcycle/scooter ownership in the UK. In developing countries, motorcycles are still often the cheapest and thus most common mode of personal transport. Therefore, the motorcycle functions as a junior predecessor to the more senior and successful automobile, where owning a car represents a person's progression up the socio-economic and cultural ladder: acquiring a 'better' automobile commodity goes hand in hand with other material achievements such as buying a house, getting a promotion, growing a nuclear family. In other words, a car symbolises full adulthood, where one must be economically stable, 'mature' and socially acceptable: one tends to 'grow up' and 'grow out of' youth and motorcycles.

But then I thought of the number of people I know who acquired a motorcycle *after* significant life events and achievements such as marriage, children and/or promotion – when they had already 'grown up' – something to supplement their household as an additional, unnecessary but desired commodity: because their kids had grown up, they could afford to take more risks on the road; they wanted to take up a hobby; they finally had the money to afford both car and motorcycle; or to buy a very expensive motorcycle as a mark of success. Hence the stereotype and existence of the motorcycle-owning yuppie whose 'custom motorcycle serves as a powerful signifier of rebellion and individuality for the middle-class consumer while also connoting economic success' (Carroll 2008: 266–7). Similarly, Schouten and McAlexander (1995: 49) describe some Harley-Davidson owners they studied as: "RUBs" (rich urban bikers), richly costumed in leather and riding highly

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customised Harleys down the backroads of midlife crises'. In the context of 'Western' societies affluent enough to afford more than one or a succession of vehicles for different purposes, the motorcycle becomes not a predecessor but a *successor* of the car: the individual is so successful, accomplished and grown up that they can now buy a motorcycle *as well*, especially an expensive motorcycle. One look at the price of popular contemporary motorcycles certainly debunks the idea of them being a 'cheap' commodity.²

There is clearly a tension between the motorcycle as a financial and socio-cultural symbol of youth and adulthood. But despite the difference in price tags and appearances at two separate points in life, the motorcycle still represents a basic principle no matter what age and life-stage: individualism and freedom. In the case of youth, the motorcycle represents a first, cheap and motorised 'adult' vehicle, one to break away physically and symbolically from childhood, seeking freedom and independence without parental restraints, to become a self-defined individual, a responsible citizen who must pay road tax and register for a licence (or actively flaunt such authoritative regulations). In the case of adulthood, the motorcycle often represents a return – or at least a desire to return – to youth, to break away physically and symbolically from the responsibilities of adulthood, the constraints of work, family and society; to be individualistic and materialistic amongst a generally car-owning and conformist society; to 'stand out from the crowd'. Too old to be 'young' (grow up!) but too young and not rich enough to be travelling 'down the backroads of midlife crises', I found myself in-between the two life-stages where motorcycle ownership is generally acceptable. What I *should* own at this life-stage was a car. A vehicle – my *choice* of vehicle – had become a visible means for my neighbour to assess how 'successful' my life was, whether I was leading the appropriate lifestyle according to my life-stage, and whether my biographical narrative was progressing 'normally'.

In his discussion surrounding modernity and self-trajectories, Giddens (2004: 81) argues that lifestyle choices constitute part of an individual's

Table 4.1 Prices for motorcycles newly advertised on respective websites, July 2016.

Price	Motorcycle
£13,845	Harley-Davidson V-Rod Muscle
£14,299	Triumph Trophy 1200
£14,499	Honda ST1300 Pan European
£15,595	Ducati Multistrada 1200s

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'life-planning', which are not only part of an individual's everyday life but are embedded in institutional settings which encourage certain actions and choices over others: hence, 'we have no choice but to choose'. In the context of Western society, cars are not only forms of transport, they are part of a lifestyle choice that binds the individual to certain regimes of everyday life through practices of consumption. But, unlike the car, the motorcycle presents consumers with the idea of a choice to resist being coerced into the 'intense flexibility' of the system of automobility which orchestrates not just routes and modes of transportation, but the range of 'socialities of commuting, family life, community, leisure, the pleasures of movement' (Urry 2005: 28). Choosing a motorcycle over a car supposedly leads to a different set of lifestyles, socialities and mobilities, which, in turn, produce different narratives of the self. For women, the car is often represented as an extension of the domestic sphere (picking up kids, doing the shopping). The motorcycle – specifically with its limited capacities of carrying people and objects – can thus come to represent an alternative mode of transport which evades the domestic sphere and, by extension, being a wife and mother. In other words, the motorcycle is precisely about *not* 'growing up', refusing to participate in adult citizenship and normative automobilities of everyday life:

The orientation towards the control of time (...) generates refusals and temporal dislocations as well as the attempt reflexively to drag the future into the present. A teenager who 'drifts around', who refuses to think about a possible future career, and 'gives no thought to the future', rejects this orientation, but does so specifically in opposition to an increasingly dominant temporal outlook.

Giddens 2004: 87

Can the motorcycle represent a symbolic and practical vehicle of disruption for women, one that 'generates refusals and temporal dislocations' and one which enables them to oppose the 'dominant temporal outlook'? In discussing media and neo-feminist culture, Radner (2011) argues that women are instructed by their environment 'in how to "become" a woman – a task that is never completed and is subject to constant revision' (Radner 2011: 6). In this context, the idea of a 'girl' and displays of 'girliness' represent the constant work-in-progress to 'become' a woman, part of a capitalist imperative and commodity feminist

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culture which rely on the existence of the 'girl'. Here, the 'girl' is a figure of femininity forever caught in a consumerist cycle of trying to 'grow up' by working on the self to stay young, mostly through the discipline of the body (and the buying of expensive products). In this manner, women's 'life-planning' in neo-feminist consumer culture involves choosing lifestyles which are impossibly situated between the cusp of 'growing up' to 'become a woman' – successfully becoming a wife and mother (possibly in a car) – but also having to work their bodies to remain youthful and retain an element of the 'girly'. What does the presence of the motorcycle at this life-stage mean?

I suggest the term 'post-feminist motorcycle' as a useful way to think about the motorcycle in relation to the paradox of post-feminist media discourses which place women in such impossible positions. The paradox being, how consumers are presented with desirable ideas of female mobility, agency and empowerment which can be achieved through participation in consumer culture (ride the motorcycle!); yet paradoxically, the very process of consumption can re-contain women back into the patriarchal economic system which subjugates, objectifies and commodifies them. While I shall return to the concept of the post-feminist motorcycle in more depth in the next chapter and conclusion of this book, I want to now understand this double-bind in relation to the figure of the 'girl on the motorbike' in media culture. She represents the very paradox of female temporality found in post-feminist media discourses whereby women are encouraged to 'grow up' while simultaneously remain youthful like a girl. On the one hand, the 'girl on the motorbike' rebels against 'growing up' and against the dominant orientations of space and time imposed on her by patriarchy: by being on a motorcycle which travels at different speeds and to different places, the girl on a motorbike represents not just temporal but also spatial dislocations. She is thus 'empowered'.³ But on the other hand, as McRobbie and Garber (1975) argued decades ago, the 'girl on a motorbike' is also an object of consumption. She therefore also represents the process whereby engagement with neo-feminist consumer culture is ultimately part of the 'work in progress' which orients women towards 'growing up' to be wives and mothers: it is no coincidence that the 'girl on the motorbike' appears most regularly in adverts and areas of popular culture where the female image is highly stylised and commodified.

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The following discussion will involve an analysis of Rimmel's advert for mascara, *Bikerchick* (2005), in which Kate Moss appears as the 'girl on the motorbike' (on a red BSA Firebird Scrambler). The advert is an example of how media and consumer culture encourage women to 'empower' themselves through the idea of rebellion and girlhood, especially in the city. Here, youthful rebellion against 'growing up' and becoming a woman – a wife and mother – runs concurrently with rebellion against 'high' and cosmopolitan culture which brands like Chanel represent (as shall be discussed in the next chapter). Far from offering a get-out clause from 'growing up', I argue that representations of the 'girl on a motorbike' are in themselves part of the dominant capitalist discourse. This discourse leads to the material containment of gender through consumption, a process which ties girls and women back to their bodies by encouraging the discipline of the self and the constant work in progress to 'become women'. During the course of my discussion, I shall also suggest there might be other ways of reading the 'girl on the motorbike', her motorcycle and her rebellion in a post-subcultural and post-modern context: namely in relation to artifice, simulation and the aestheticisation of apathy.

Bikerchick: Enter Kate

As if to kick-start a rock concert, the advert begins with a single, heavy electric guitar strum from the song, 'Another Cold Beer' by Steven Crayn.

Brrrrnnngg!

Matching the loud and raucous note, a close-up of a well-manicured female hand grabs and twists the throttle of a motorcycle.

Brrrrnnngg!

Another close-up: a leather-booted foot changing gear, a motion mimicking the tapping of feet to the beat of music.

Brrrrnnngg!

As the third strum plays out, the camera pulls away to reveal Kate Moss, on a red motorcycle – a BSA – against a projection screen. We realise this is a fashion shoot, the scene has been set, the cameras are now rolling, and Kate is ready to rock 'n' roll. As Big Ben appears

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behind her, her hair blows freely away from her face, and the male voice-over cuts through the music.

'Now from London, Rimmel's new Volume Flash Mascara!'

The said Volume Flash Mascara dutifully appears in front of our eyes like a red bullet, and while we observe Kate's eyelashes being appropriately volumised as promised, the voice-over lists the mascara's special features, not unlike a set of vehicle specs:

'Unique lock and load formula. Five times bigger lashes. Instantly.'

We cut back to Kate, this time lying side-ways on the motorcycle she is clearly not steering. Yet the background projection keeps moving, a cinematic mobility as we continue to catch scenes of London passing by: Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden, the London Eye, the Thames, London Bridge and Union flag-aligned streets. At one point, a male pillion hops on the back (on this supposedly moving vehicle). He looks at her with adoration. She smiles and moves onto the next pose. Now she is not even sitting on the bike, she is lying across it in the opposite way to the direction she is 'travelling' (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Static mobility: Kate Moss on the BSA Firebird Scrambler as a studio prop in *Bikerchick* (2005).

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'Nought to sexy in seconds'

As the voice-over announces the speed of make-up, we see Kate daintily and easily hop off the motorcycle and walk away. The projected images at the back stop simultaneously. A woman appears with a clapperboard to signal the end of the scene. The advert ends with the now familiar 'the London Look'.

Directed by British advertising and music-video makers Rankin and Chris, *Bikerchick* was released in 2005. While the advert might be more than a decade old, it is part of Rimmel's longstanding London-centred advertising campaign pivoted upon the one notion: 'the London Look'. At the time of writing, Rimmel are running a fifteenth anniversary campaign featuring Kate (Rimmel and Kate are on first-name terms): their promotional campaign site incorporates the story behind the partnership – 'The Two London icons' – describing the 'instinctive understanding between Kate Moss and Rimmel' which has 'evolved into one of beauty's most potent partnerships (Rimmel website).⁴ In other words, Kate Moss embodies Rimmel's brand personality. Often aligned to a rebellious fashion style ('biker chick' or 'rocker' fashion) and its associated lifestyle (drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll) Moss's media persona is less 'woman' or 'lady', and more 'girl': she is the quintessential on- and off-camera 'girl on the motorbike'. To understand this figure then, it becomes necessary to understand brand Moss.

When it came to finding a face to project the image of Rimmel London, there was really only one possible choice. So, in September 2001, for the first time in its history, Rimmel signed an exclusive, global contract with Britain's own homegrown supermodel, Kate Moss.

Born and bred in London, Kate is, despite her international lifestyle, in many ways the quintessential London girl. Inspirational yet accessible, her highly individual style and quirky glamour are rooted in the London street scene, and epitomise Rimmel's experimental, no-set-rules beauty philosophy.

Rimmel website

Between her modelling for global luxury brands like Burberry and Chanel, and her well-known partying in London with the 'Primrose set', Moss acts as a cross-over agent, linking globalised haute couture ('exclusive, global

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contract', 'international lifestyle') and the more localised street fashion ('homegrown', 'accessible'). One could argue that Rimmel's use of Moss is part of a now common 'strategic alliance' between haute couture and the high street (Turngate 2008: 40): moving away from being a system for class distinction and class differentiation where the 'upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower' (Simmel 1957: 543), Rimmel's 'London look' campaign emerges out of a post-modern era of fashion which purposely blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture, where consumers are no longer 'content to stay in their allotted sectors' and are now instead 'wearing a Topshop T-shirt and Gap jeans under a coat from Chanel' (Turngate 2008: 40).

However, to argue that fashion is no longer about difference would, of course, be ludicrous. Digital platforms and services have certainly created more opportunities for the visual and material consumption of fashion, resulting in brands having to double their efforts in differentiating themselves within such a technological mediascape: from SNS advertising campaigns, hashtags to online freebies ('join the social quest to be different!'). 'Standing out' and mar(et)king difference through the promise of sociable individualism is key, not just for the consumer but for the brand. Furthermore, as Miles (2016: 123) argues in his discussion surrounding online retail spaces, even such 'new' consumption opportunities are still bound by and 'operate in conjunction with pre-existing models and cultural norms'. The idea of difference in itself is a constituent part of a pre-existing social and business model and cultural norm, one which forms the very foundations of the fashion industry and system (Veblen 1994, 2003). In other words, while individuals might be presented with more opportunities to be 'creative consumers searching for identity' (Elliot and Davies 2006: 167), mixing 'n' matching between luxury and street fashion brands – think about cross-over brands like TK Maxx which specialise in such accessible overlaps – ultimately, the need to mix 'n' match arises from the desire to customise, individualise and hence, differentiate ourselves from others. Difference is crucial.

Such difference cannot, however, be of any kind. It has to be a socio-culturally acceptable and thus a fashionable kind of difference. It is, as Simmel (1957: 550) states, a case where 'it becomes fashionable in whole bodies of a large class to depart altogether from the standards set by

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fashion': precisely what Rimmel does, it offers not just socially acceptable and practised but also *fashionable* difference through consumption, one which promises a departure from 'the norm'. Rimmel acts as a teenage tear-away brand, offering women – or, more pertinently, 'girls' – freedom and rebellion ('experimental, no-set-rules'), away from the standards set by the more 'grown up' and clean Contin(par)ental luxury brands. By the same token, Rimmel's advertising suggests that in rebelling through fashion and beauty, consumers can supposedly challenge the normative standards set by social mores, ones which, for example, dictate women should become mothers and wives once they arrive at a particular stage in their lives. In other words, the brand offers a promise of unchecked girlhood, prior to the point where sexuality becomes about reproduction, and while it is still about pleasure and liberation. Thus, as McRobbie (2000) argues, that consumption offers young girls a degree of freedom, 'prior to marriage and settling down, after which they become dual labourers in the home and in production' (2000: 74).

Rimmel thus sells difference to women in the promise of youth and girliness, which, in turn, enables female consumers to feel they are not just an individual, but a *rebellious* individual who can somehow 'escape' the confines of aesthetic and gendered age conformity. The reason why motorcycles are so important in 'biker chick' adverts – they are used, for example, in consequent Rimmel adverts, including one with Georgia Jagger, daughter of Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall – is because, visually, it enables consumers to read the 'right kind' of difference, one that is pivoted upon ideas of youth, rebellion and subcultural style. Rimmel relies on and further reinforces pre-existing ideas relating to motorcycles – what Willis (1978) explored through ideas of *homology*: that motorcycle subculture is necessarily composed through affiliations with speed and danger, machines and rock 'n' roll music. In *Bikerchick*, the featured motorcycle takes such pre-existing homologous ideas surrounding motorcycles and repackages them to offer female consumers strategies of *not* 'growing up'. The motorcycle thus promises a lifestyle consisting of being: in the city, specifically London as part of a British youth subculture; rebellion and deviance. These interrelated ideas offer female consumers the promise of rebellion through subcultural individualism – by embodying the 'girl on the motorbike' – free from the constraints of not just gender ideology but the idea of growing up altogether.

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The city of London

The start of Rimmel's partnership with Kate Moss in early 2000s emerges out of a specific period in contemporary British history, when New Labour PM Tony Blair's 'Cool Britannia' campaign embraced pop culture (Young British Artists, Blur and Oasis) and soft power, to simultaneously localise and globalise Great Britain as a forward-looking international country, but with solid traditions rooted in rich cultural history. Thus, the use of Moss as a 'cross-over' model is pertinent as she is internationally renowned as a British supermodel and London girl (or at least partying hard in London). Such a preoccupation with brand Britain can be clearly seen in Rimmel's overall brand identity, from its regular use of the Union Flag, the use of British models, and ultimately, the centralisation of London in all its advertising discourse: after all, they are in the business of selling 'the London look'. In discussing London as represented in cinema, Brunson (2007: 21) refers to 'landmark London', a complex and imagined capital city constructed out of a landmark montage, usually of: Big Ben, Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge, Trafalgar Square, St Paul's Cathedral, Piccadilly Circus, red buses and black taxis. As if on cue, Brunson's words seem to describe the landmark montage of London we see projected onto the screen in the *Bikerchick* advert. What is the significance of a 'girl on a motorbike' riding through the city, and specifically through London?

The use of a street bike in *Bikerchick* – as opposed to a sports bike (racing) or tourer (long-distance travel) – immediately sets a quintessentially urban scene. There are a number of reasons why this is important in relation to female consumption and the 'girl on a motorbike'. First, a street bike immediately suggests the idea of a city, an urban environment, a lifestyle that is busy, fast-paced and constant through day and night. As I shall explore in the next chapter, from the *flaneuses* and the figure of the New Woman in Modernity, to the more contemporary 'chick lit' (e.g. Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic* series, 2000–15) and 'chick flicks' (e.g. *Bridget Jones* series, 2005–16), such discourses surrounding women and the metropolis have repeatedly demonstrated that the city is central to the idea of female identity, consumption and self-discovery, and not least for the single, young female (SYF) (Akass and McCabe 2004; Radner and Stringer 2011) consuming her way to Mr Right.⁵ In the context of *Bikerchick*, various street scenes are projected behind a laughing Moss –

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the 'girl on the motorbike' – whose excited urban navigation presents us with a transformational narrative of a girl 'becoming a woman', a journey of self-discovery and self-improvement which emerges out of a city lifestyle: eye-lashes that receive a make-over so they 'are five times bigger', to become 'more' feminine, 'more' sexy and 'more' womanly while moving through city and, by extension, through life. As if to prove the heteronormative fruits of this casual labour of the self, Moss is awarded with a male pillion – Mr Right? – half-way through the journey.

Second, in *Bikerchick*, it is the moving images of London which pass through the motorcycle, not vice versa, where the BSA is a static prop being used in the middle of a fashion shoot set. But rather than suggesting ideas of immobility, the unmoving motorcycle acts as a symbolic anchor situating London as a stable, longstanding and specific geo-cultural locality. London is thus presented as being unique and at the heart of the fashion world with its 'continuing status as a significant centre of fashion innovation' (Gilbert 2006: 26). The specific use of the BSA as an old British motorcycle brand also signals longevity and historicity, establishing London as distinctly 'local' and unique against the homogeneity of the globalised fashion world. The motorcycle thus not only localises and nationalises fashion – Rimmel London – it also situates London at a specific time in the history of fashion. The BSA Firebird Scrambler that appears in *Bikerchick* was produced between 1968 to 1971, precisely during the latter part of the Swinging London era, when Britain was at the epicentre of youth and fashion industry, especially for young women.

As Breward (2004) discusses in relation to 'Dolly birds' in Chelsea and Kensington in the period between 1960 to 1970, London was as an important site for not only youth and consumption generally but for girls, with the emergence of 'Chelsea girls' who frequented the likes of Mary Quant's Bazaar whose leather boots 'presented a robust challenge to the sexual social status quo' (Breward 2004: 156). Indeed, such brands and shops promoted an ethos and aesthetic 'rooted in a childlike abandonment to ephemerality, novelty and pleasure' (Breward 2004: 153): an ideal style for the girl rebelling against 'growing up' and maturity. In other words, placing Moss on a BSA Firebird Scrambler in London is as much a narrative about the celebration of young girls with economic power, sexual liberation and rebellion against patriarchal gender and sexual ideologies, as it is about the celebration of brand London and Britain as a sartorial force.

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Related, and thirdly, as has been explored in literature surrounding fashion and geographies of consumption (Breward and Gilbert 2006; Rocamora 2009; Hancock et al. 2014), while fashion cities work together as a network and in competition to create a globalised fashion industry, each fashion city produces its own distinct style and aesthetic. Popular culture, fashion history and media have constructed London as a city not just of youth and consumption but of street-style, subcultural individualism and affordable consumption: hence, 'individual style and quirky glamour are rooted in the London street scene' (Rimmel website). Compared to Manhattan, Paris or Milan – usually associated with more expensive, luxury and designer brands emerging from the lofty heights of haute couture – the unmarked, plain red street bike (unlike a heavily customised cruiser) in Rimmel's *Bikerchick* advert presents us with fashion that comes from a 'lower' place, from the masses. Here, 'street' in fashion terms suggests not only ideas of authenticity and the 'real' (Polhemus 1997) but also of counter-cultural ethos, even when it moves into the mainstream (Finkelstein 1996): an anti-luxury subcultural style, further situating Moss – 'the girl on the motorbike' – at the centre of such symbolic resistance (Hall and Jefferson 2006; Hebdige 1979).

Being able to afford luxury products also suggests, usually, a successful individual with disposable income. By the same token, in rebelling against luxury, an individual can be rebelling simultaneously and symbolically against a number of ideological issues including class elitism, consumerism and/or the very notion of 'growing up' and what that represents. The 'girl on a motorbike' thus represents not only the 'street' and street-style as a counter-cultural aesthetic of 'authenticity', but also a girl who rejects the idea of participating fully in a neo-liberal system which encourages girls to aspire and 'grow up' to 'become (successful) women' through consumption and eventually (re)production. Ironically, this rebellion in itself is also encouraged through consumption, mainly of products which have continuously been packaged (mainly by the fashion industry) as antithetical signs: a street-bike, or the biker's jacket as 'a classic, anti-fashion garment' (Polhemus 1997: 11).⁶ Referring to the commodification of rebellion, Heath and Potter (2006: 130) argue that 'in a society that prizes individualism and despises conformity, being "a rebel" becomes a new aspirational category'. For the female consumer, this presents the notion

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of rebelling against aesthetic and social conformity *through* youth: the girl on a motorbike aspires to have fun and to remain forever young.

Rebellion and deviance

The year *Bikerchick* was released, Moss was caught taking cocaine with her then boyfriend, British musician Pete Doherty. The press had a field-day with Moss losing contracts with H&M, Burberry and Chanel in the space of a week, but despite all the negative media attention Moss garnered at the time and ever since, Rimmel have always stood by her, ultimately refusing to terminate her contract. For Rimmel, Moss's 'plummeting off the rails thanks to a new boyfriend, rock star (and junkie) Pete Doherty' (*Daily Mail* 2011) provides the perfect glamorous toxin for the 'London look'.⁷ In other words, the clean 'landmark London' projected onto the screen – for the 'tourist gaze' (Urry and Larsen 2011) – is indeed just a projection, a façade, a souvenir for the eye. Beneath the projected visual make-believe, we see the 'girl on a motorbike': here the suggestion is – especially in using Moss – of the subterranean London, the London that is related to deviant urbanity, one belonging not to tourists and commuters, but to youth and the deviant. This is the very kind of urbanity which forms the foundational subject matter of traditional American Subcultural Studies emerging from the Chicago School of thinking which linked youth to deviance, consumption and the city (Park 1915; Thrasher 1927; Cressey 1932). Within this context, how can we read the 'deviant' Moss as the 'girl on a motorbike'?

In her ethnography of boy racers (car) boy racers in Birmingham, Lumsden (2013: 2) refers to how 'youth and deviance are intertwined with the car, which in turn, are intertwined with questions of streets and the physical occupation of urban spaces'. Needless to say, more than cars, motorcycles have had a history of being associated with deviance and crime: from organized gangs with criminal associations (e.g. Hells Angels or Outlaws) on the one end of the spectrum, to the Ton-up girls and boys in London's Ace Café breaking speed limits and road regulations.⁸ As shall be explored in Chapter 9, in popular culture, the idea of being a deviant 'outlaw' or 'criminal' is often represented through the presence of motorcycles: *The Wild One* (1953); the violent road tribes in *Mad Max* (1979); *Sons of Anarchy* (2008–14). Rimmel plays with these visual

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associations between motorcycles and deviancy, further reinforcing the idea of youth and deviant behaviour through the choice of song: 'Another Cold Beer' by Steven Crayn. The use of a rock-based soundtrack in the advert encourages and idealises perpetual participation in youth culture and delinquency – 'not growing up' – so she can remain not just a girl, but a 'bad girl' (on a motorbike) who stands as a 'feminist outlaw' and rejects patriarchal ideologies. In this manner, the homologic assemblage – the BSA Scrambler, music, leather, London and the use of Moss as a teenage delinquent figure – presents the female consumer with the idea that she can delay societal (gender) conformity inherent in becoming a wife and mother. She can do this by rejecting dominant orientations of time, in effect by being a teenager for as long as possible.

In discussing the figure of the Single Girl in popular culture, Radner (1999: 10) states how the Single Girl remains:

a utopian fantasy of a woman freed from the social and sexual constraints that appeared to have limited her mother. Her girlishness also responded to, and contained, the anxieties that a woman no longer under the yoke of patriarchy (if still subject to the whims of capital) might evoke. She was girl in a state of perpetual immaturity.

As the word 'utopian' might suggest, Radner is critical of the Single Girl, arguing that ultimately, she can never 'challenge an order grounded in the primacy of masculinity' (*ibid*). Known for her lithe figure and girlishness, Moss might be Rimmel's sassy 'girl in a state of perpetual immaturity' who can keep patriarchal values at bay but, ironically, she can only do this while wearing mascara.

In this manner, Rimmel's 'girl on a motorbike' presents us with what is a paradoxical figure of femininity. On the one hand, rebellion against society is encouraged through the consumption of subcultural symbols (e.g. biker jackets, rock 'n' roll music and leather boots) and the adoption of subcultural behaviour, such as drinking and speeding: remain youthful, stay as a girl (girl power?). But on the other hand, such subcultural symbols and behaviour that are enabling the consumer to signal rebellion emerge from the very 'order grounded in the primacy of masculinity' (Radner 1999: 10) which the girl is supposedly trying to challenge. In other words, Rimmel's advert reveals once again how women are encouraged to be

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'gutsy' and even 'masculine' or, as Whelehan (2000) explored, as being 'laddish' in the name of faux female empowerment; as ways of staying young and as an individual, a girl who doesn't grow up. But this is apparently only possible through the consumption of 'feminine' products that form part of the female project, that of 'becoming a woman' through discipline of the body and self.

To add further insult to feminist injury, while 'girl power' and rebellion in girls has become increasingly popular in the last two decades – from the Spice Girls to *Orange is the New Black* – it is also one that is measured, regulated and oriented temporally according to dominant ideologies of gender and age. Temporary 'masculinised' rebellion is cute in girls – as an imitation of the 'real' male – a 'tomboyishness', where the expectation is she will 'grow out of it'. However, permanent 'masculinised' rebellion risks leading to what Butler (2006: 191) conceptualises as a 'stylized repetition of acts', becoming naturalised as an adult Other. In this case, there are only a few readings available to her such as 'butch', 'monster' or 'unfeminine'. Society expects the 'bad girl' to eventually 'grow up', becoming a woman and eventually taking on her 'natural' role as wife and mother. If she stays a 'bad girl' for too long, then her 'masculinised' rebellion is punished: think of Rebecca (Marianne Faithful) in *The Girl on a Motorcycle* (1968), one of the earliest, most iconic and mainstream examples of a 'biker chick'. She is young, rebellious, leather-clad and sexually liberated but ultimately pays the price of her moral and sexual 'deviance' with her life. As Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2008: 2–3) argue, images of bad girls 'warn all girls and women of the negative consequences of seeking political and societal equality with men while also justifying harsh new controls on certain girls'. In this context, Moss is the archetypal 'bad girl' who is expected to glamorise bad behaviour through her rebellious youthfulness, a model with high subcultural value. But she is also punished for *not* growing up and 'becoming a woman'.

While Moss's 'bad girl' behaviour and aesthetic is lauded and idolised within the context of the enclosed world of an advert for a beauty product, when this same behaviour moved out of its temporary setting and extended into her real life, she was indeed chastitised by the media:

Eyes blurred, and a cigarette dangling from her mouth, the model emerges from another night on the town (...) Nine months later,

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the model gives birth to Lila Grace. Whether Kate is mature enough to look after herself, let alone a newborn, is another matter.

*Daily Mail*⁹

Motherhood is clearly valued above all else, a marker of successful femininity. In ‘failing’ to grow up (‘whether Kate is mature enough’), Moss is thus punished for her rebellious behaviour and for deviating away from her ‘correct’ life path as a mother to Lila Grace. Interestingly, now that Moss has become a successful businesswoman, launching her own modelling agency, the perfect neo-liberal and post-feminist project, the media wants her to stop growing up and remain as an eternal, partying teenager as exemplified by Moss acting as a parody of her former self in a recent film, *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie* (2016).

Conclusion: Static Mobility and the Stylistation of Apathy?

Writing decades ago about the role (or lack thereof) of girls in subcultures, McRobbie and Garber (2005) described media representations of the ‘motorbike girl’, critiquing how while their wild and powerful look might be a manifestation of a ‘new and threatening female sexuality’, ultimately, they not only reproduce the sexualisation of advertising which subjugates women between the modern fashion trade and pornography trade (2005: 108), but also reflect the actual position of women in motorcycle subcultures: as ‘mamas’ or molls/prostitutes. McRobbie’s and Garber’s (2005: 109) description of the ‘motorbike girl’ might as well be about Moss in Rimmel’s *Bikerchick*: ‘letter-clad, a sort of subcultural pin-up heralding – as it appeared in the press, certainly – a new and threatening sort of aggressive sexuality’, with ‘pan stick lips, the blackened eyes, the numb expressionless look and slightly unzipped leather jacket’. With almost half a century separating Moss in *Bikerchick* and the original media appearances of the ‘motorbike girl’ which McRobbie and Garber are referring to, has the visual role of the motorcycle, not to mention the girl on the motorbike herself, changed in meaning?

We can approach Moss ‘riding’ the BSA in Rimmel’s *Bikerchick* as part of a larger post-feminist media discourse which occasionally represents female strength and freedom through representations of a ‘girl on a

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motorbike' (hence, the 'post-feminist motorcycle'). She is at once youthful, gusty, temporarily rebellious, but on her way to growing up and working on becoming a woman by consuming whatever product the representation might be attached to. For example, Moss is presented not only on a motorcycle, she is even shown giving a ride to a male companion. As explored in Chapter 3, such a visual positioning of female rider and male pillion immediately sets up a gendered power dynamic, a visual hierarchy marking the female as dominant and in control. Meanwhile the male is presented as being submissive and as not being in control. Here, we can understand the BSA in *Bikerchick* as a mechanical instrument which enables the female subject to visually take control of herself and the objects – including the male companion – around her, signalling an era where women have penetrated through the toughened shell of 'mechanical sexism' (Hebdige 1988) surrounding machines and motorcycles.

Clearly, such an interpretation would be too simplistic and idealistically naïve. While Rimmel might be providing women with the opportunity to not to care, to embrace teenage apathy and its lack of responsibilities, ultimately this is an advert for mascara and a beauty product. No matter how much Moss bats her uncaring eye-lashes, she is still indeed exactly the same 'motorbike girl' described by McRobbie and Garber back in 1975. Not only is Moss still an objectified female model for our visual consumption; what is more, consumers and users of mascara – mostly women – are being offered the chance to sexualise themselves ('from nought to sexy in 60 seconds!'). And all this becomes part of a discipline of the self, 'interpolating women back into the sexual and economic hierarchies of consumer capitalism' (Purse 2011: 83). In this sense, the BSA acts as a symbolic prop that offers the illusion of female sexual and gender liberation through rebellion and youthfulness, while simultaneously ensuring that women stay in their unchanging roles as consumers of fashion and beauty. This is a process that predominantly defines femininity through the promotion, maintenance and self-disciplining of the forever young body as a constant work-in-progress.

In other words, just like the BSA is simply a static prop on stilts, so too is the promise of 'girl power': it ain't going nowhere, it is what I describe as *static mobility*. While the BSA might be a post-feminist motorcycle communicating ideas of female mobility, agency and empowerment, it is also *static*. As a moving entity of inertia, it is contained within a patriarchal

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economic system, which subjugates, objectifies and even commodifies women. Furthermore, the twenty-first century 'girl on a motorbike' is a figure who must stay young (static temporality) and display power through rebellion (political mobility). Yet, at the same time, she is pushed through her various life-stages – teenage girl, working young woman, wife and mother – and must 'grow up' to 'become a woman' via constant labour as mapped out for her through consumer culture (static domesticity and economic mobility).

Even the above approach may still be overly simplistic. What complicates issues in *Bikerchick* is that fact that Rimmel seem not to be concerned with the 'authenticity' of the motorcycle or Moss's riding capabilities. In fact, the advert makes it pointedly obvious that Moss is *not* riding the BSA. Viewers can clearly see the motorcycle attached firmly to the ground. Moss's hands are nowhere near the handlebars (she is actually using the BSA to lounge on) and, hey, this is a photoshoot so of course it's not real, keep up! The pure artifice of this advert – including the projected images of London – can be understood as a post-subcultural (Maffesoli 1996; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003; Bennett 2011), indeed, a post-modern, representation of consumable rebellion. In this context, the motorcycle is part of an 'aesthetics of simulation' (Baudrillard 1998: 111), where artifice is an aesthetic lifestyle in itself. Together, these elements construct a certain defiant femininity which Moss seems to embody both in the advert and in real life: I don't care if I am not in control; yes, this is artificial but who cares? I *am* artifice, I am *that* cool.

Here, the motorcycle not only becomes but is actively being represented as a mere prop, a simulation, 'a pseudo-object' (Baudrillard 1998: 110). It has no mobility or function, thereby emptying out its mechanical and subcultural meanings relating to agency, mobility, rebellion and freedom. It cannot move, and it doesn't even work so there is no issue of control, there is no need to challenge mechanical sexism because it is no longer even mechanical. In other words, the motorcycle is now a 'technological parody, an excrescence of useless functions, a continual *simulation* of function without any real, practical referent' (Baudrillard 1998: 110). McRobbie's and Garber's (2005: 183) concerns over girls' lack of access to the 'motorbike itself, a technical knowledge of the machines, their limitations and capacities' becomes inverted, its original political contents evacuated, where not even the motorcycle has

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enough meaning to warrant critique. Devoid of subcultural and mechanical meaning, the motorcycle – and the ‘girl on the motorbike’ – can be read as recycled, simulated products of a mediated culture that is ‘not so much consumed but consummated’ (Baudrillard 1998: 99). Artifice can be read as part of simulation and as an aesthetic style in itself, a mass-produced stylisation of ‘teenage apathy’ for the ‘woteva’ generation.

Finally, as Davis (2012) argues in her discussion on older punks and ageing, there is a difference between ‘growing up’ and ‘growing out of a scene’. Davis states that while the former remains a fact that all punks must accept to an extent, the latter provides certain opportunities for (re)defining normative concepts of adulthood (2012: 109). Perhaps this is what Rimmel’s choice to link mascara to motorcycles, the London ‘scene’ and ‘biker chick’ is all about. In a post-feminist culture which pushes women to embrace ‘girl power’ in style, fashion and make up are hailed as part of female weaponry. In such a world, connecting femininity to motorbikes, the London ‘scene’ and rebellion, gives female consumers permission to be ‘grown up’ through their ability to participate in a globalised market without necessarily growing out of the local, ‘authentic’ scene: a form of teenage rebellion that only adults can afford, where age is indeed a price tag which comes at a cost. In this context, the motorcycle becomes a mechanical link that sutures two life-stages and lifestyles through the world of consumption, enabling the ‘girl on the motorbike’ to seemingly offer a way in which to inhabit both worlds and be able to undertake the impossible task of being both girl and woman. If she can be bothered, that is.

5

Luxury as a Gendered Discourse: Chanel's Ducati and Davidoff's Triumph

Every now and again, the motorcycle makes its appearance in various adverts selling an eclectic range of consumer products. From cold sore medication (Zovirax), food (Bovril, Walkers' crisps, Halls), services (T-Mobile package, McDonald's drive-thru, VISA credit card), fashion and beauty (BooHoo, Pretty Green, TK Maxx, Omega and Kiehl's, to name just a few), to placing motorcycles physically in the middle of retail spaces. In all these cases, while the motorcycle itself is not the consumer product being promoted, deciphering its meaning becomes part of the consumption process. In functioning as a vehicle of meaning, the motorcycle carries the marketing story of the product, providing the consumer with the desired narrativisation of the product's (and by extension, the brand's) identity. What exactly the motorcycle signals each time will vary according to the advert, but generally, across the board, the two-wheeled 'accessory' usually functions to articulate: the humorous everyday; subcultural chic; and/or luxurious escapism.

The most common use of the motorcycle in adverts for non-fashion or non-transport-related products is to frame the rider as a quirky, eccentric and/or endearingly comical individual who likes to think or do things their own way, often with humorous results. Such adverts tend to be

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related to everyday products (crisps, sweets, medicine) and are often light-hearted, where the motorcycle and the rider are 'the joke': they are either acting in a comical manner (Halls, Zovirax) and/or they are at the receiving end of a comical misfortune (Bovril). Another very common use of the motorcycle is in adverts for fashion-based products where the motorcycle tends to signify youthful, subcultural chic (as explored in Chapter 4 through Rimmel's *Bikerchick* advert with Kate Moss on the BSA Firebird Scrambler). Here, the motorcycle and rider are presented as edgy, hip and 'street'. While these two categories might differ in their tone of delivery – the former being more light-hearted and humorous while the latter more dark and urban – what they have in common is the use of the motorcycle to suggest a sense of daring individualism, symbolic of being able to 'stand out from the crowd', whether as clown or rockster hipster.

In this chapter, I want to focus on the third articulation identified: the idea of luxurious escapism. Academic and popular discourses tend to dwell on the subcultural value of motorcycles – as characterising youth and working-class identities, rebellion and/or dirty roughness – so much so that the idea of motorcycles as representing luxury, almost the antitheses of those same qualities, has tended to be overlooked. Despite the costliness of the motorcycle,¹ essential personal items (helmet, gloves, jacket, trousers and boots) and additional motorcycle parts (panniers and top-box), motorcycles are rarely conceptualised as a product selling luxury and/or a product of luxury in itself. Granted, expensiveness does not necessarily equate to luxury, but there is a significant range of luxury brands and products that use the motorcycle in their promotional materials to establish its status as being exclusive, expensive and beautifully rare. This applies to both specifically motorcycle-related luxury brands like Belstaff or Matchless, as well as non-motorcycle-related luxury brands like Omega and Hugo Boss.

In his examination of the changing attitudes, moralities and philosophies surrounding the idea of luxury, Berry (1994) refers to luxury as being an 'inducement to consumption', part of a paradoxical process whereby 'luxury products' are presented as being desirable due to their exclusive rarity, yet at the same time need to become *widely* desirable and thus consumed by many (1994: 3–5). I want to explore how we might conceptualise the motorcycle in relation to luxury as an 'inducement to consumption'. How does the motorcycle communicate the idea of luxury,

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and, in turn, how is luxury defined by the motorcycle? I suggest that the answer to these questions depend very much on whether a given product is targeted towards men or women (or both, in some cases). Luxury itself is thus a gendered discourse that reveals how desirability (of a brand and/or product) is constructed and offered in different ways to men and women, while ultimately binding them both to the dominant and normative ideologies surrounding gender. My discussion will centre on two motorcycle-based fragrance adverts from different luxury brands: Coco Chanel's second instalment of *Coco Mademoiselle – Le Film* featuring Keira Knightley, released in 2011 (women's fragrance);² and Davidoff's *Cool Water Adventure* featuring Ewan McGregor, released in 2008 (men's fragrance).³

To the soundtrack of 'It's a Man's World' sung by female artist Joss Stone, Chanel's advert opens with a scene involving a female character (Knightley) waking up in bed, the suggestion is that she is naked underneath the sheets. The bedside has a picture of her own self, next to which rests a bottle of Coco Mademoiselle and an ornamental bird, suggesting an imminent flight of fancy: she dabs some on looking at herself in the mirror, possibly contemplating her next move. The viewers are then presented with her dressed in a beige biker full-body suit, heels, keys dangling from her fingers, strutting towards a same-coloured slim Ducati Supersport 750. After a journey through the streets of Paris (with an exaggerated riding position to emphasise her assets, of course), she arrives at her destination: a photographer's studio for a fashion shoot. The studio setting is, again, a bedroom in which she slowly undresses and is undressed by the photographer who proceeds to take pictures of her, his camera pointing and dripping with phallic symbolism. The scene moves towards sexual intimacy but the female character stops the photographer and asks him to lock the doors. He does so and, as he turns around, discovers she has gone. The only trace of her escape lies in the billowing curtains leading to an open window. He rushes and sees her back on her motorcycle, looking back at him with an expression of self-satisfaction as she rides away.

By contrast, Davidoff's advert opens with the words 'Ewan McGregor' in white font against black, with the instrumental track – 'Run Along Uncharted Space' (The Rumor Mill / J. Ralph) – running in the background, while we hear McGregor's own voice narrating the following words:

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I find myself in an exhilarating journey [sic.]. The scent of adventure in the air, leading me further and further into the realms of the extraordinary. Every smell, every sight, every step pushes me forwards until I find myself in a place where I saw something magnificent. I saw my life in a whole new light.

While we listen to McGregor's narration throughout the duration of the advert, we are presented with him riding a Triumph Bonneville through various different outdoor scenes (river, sea, deserted tarmacked road, jungle, fields, verdant mountain), often struggling through his epic journey. To coincide with the narrative resolution, the advert ends with McGregor walking to the edge of a cliff, gazing across a precipitous landscape where even clouds are beneath his feet as the sunrays shine beautifully behind and upon him.

Despite both brands promoting their luxury fragrances using celebrity ambassadors on motorcycles, the visual narrative and the consumer promises being offered in each case are very different and contrast with one another. There are three main differences I want to explore through the featured motorcycles in the two adverts because they reveal how luxury is a form of gendered discourse that essentialises certain aspects of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' in contrasting ways: mind/body; subject/object; and wilderness/urbanity. Through their analyses, we can begin to understand how the motorcycle is configured as an 'inducement to (the) consumption' of luxury within this context; how the motorcycle becomes a technology of engendering consumption and luxury and, by the same token, how the gendered discourse of luxury offers alternative ways to think about the motorcycle outside the context of subcultural identities, aesthetics and consumer cultures.

I argue that for women, luxury is ultimately tied to post-feminist sensibilities surrounding the body, urban indulgence and empowerment through consumption; for men, luxury resonates with colonialist ideals surrounding the mind, exploration and territorialism through consumption. But I also want to problematise the use of the motorcycle in these adverts precisely because the vehicle is popularly associated with the idea of freedom and independence. It can thus 'mask' how these differing and gendered articulations of luxury are based upon ideological structures that subjugate women within a patriarchal and economical system that

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supposedly offers a state of empowerment through consumption while reinforcing its (masculinist) dominance.

Mind/Body

Berry (1994: 8) argues that historically, luxury has been closely associated with physical or sensory enjoyment. Fragrances, something strictly 'unnecessary' in the sense of human survival, is very much a luxury product; after all, is it a product to be physically dabbed/sprayed/splashed onto the skin solely for the purposes of enjoying scent and, in turn, being sensuously smelt by others. Fragrances are thus about consuming a sensory experience. But despite the corporeality involved in fragrance, the manner in which its experience as a luxury is presented to the viewer differs between Chanel and Davidoff, revealed by the contrasting role of the motorcycle in the two respective adverts. Broadly speaking, the motorcycles lead both characters in the adverts to a moment of self-fulfilment – what is also being sold to the consumer – but both the journey to and nature of that moment of satisfaction are presented in very gendered terms.

For the female character in the Chanel advert, self-fulfilment comes from both the indulgence and control over her own body (suggesting female 'empowerment'), whereas for McGregor in Davidoff, self-fulfilment is obtained through a cathartic spiritual awakening, which ironically, happens after a *lack of* luxury and indulgence of the body. Such gendered differences can be understood as arising from the age-old binary logic that has informed the majority of Western philosophical thinking. Feminist scholars have been discussing, problematising and grappling with gendered configurations of Cartesian dualism throughout the years (de Beauvoir 2011; Cixous 1976; Irigaray 1985, 1994; Butler 1993; Chodorow 1994; Zalewski 2000). Within this context, fragrance adverts in general are often discursive instances where gendered differences become naturalised through the idea of luxury. In other words, luxurious experiences are often represented in gendered ways which reinforce difference, where women's consumption of luxury is tied to the *sensual* matters of the body/flesh, while men's to the *sensuous* matters of the mind/state of being. The motorcycles in the Chanel and Davidoff adverts bring these embodied differences into sharp relief because they reveal the differing route, nature and destination of the journey to fulfilment.

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Kapferer and Bastien (2012: 19–20) argue that the idea of luxury is about ‘access to pleasure and should have a strong personal and hedonistic component’ and, echoing Berry’s (1994) philosophical approach to luxury, should be a multisensory experience that is qualitative (rather than quantitative). Indeed, Knightley’s character is presented as enjoying corporeal access to pleasure that is personal and hedonistic, almost auto-erotic (a common feature in many female perfume adverts) as her own self-portrait on her bedside table suggests: waking up slowly, naked amongst satin sheets, she has the time to dab perfume onto herself, surrounded in a golden room complete with a gilded birdcage in the background (Figure 5.1). These surroundings are echoed once again later when she is rolling around on a bed in a photographer’s studio. Being on the motorcycle is presented as an equally pleasurable experience: there is no traffic (in the middle of Paris?) other than the men who temporarily appear by her side on motorcycles at the traffic lights, the roads are hazard free, and her urban route both scenic and smooth. In other words, inasmuch as Knightley’s body is on stylised display for the pleasurable viewing consumption of the viewer, so too is the character who links the idea of luxury with ‘feminine’ self-indulgence and the pleasing of the female body.

By contrast, Davidoff’s advert seems to lack everything relating to pleasure, hedonism and indulgence; as something unnecessary for ‘survival’ and ‘adventure’, the very idea of luxury seems to be antithetical.



Figure 5.1 Keira Knightley in the opening scenes of *Coco Mademoiselle – Le Film* (2011).

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Figure 5.2 Ewan McGregor struggling in Davidoff's *Cool Water Adventure* (2008).

Instead, viewers are presented with images of physical strain and hardship, as expressed through McGregor's contorted face as he struggles to read a map in the dark using his motorcycle's headlight (Figure 5.2). From withstanding inclement weather conditions, negotiating hazardous roads, to pushing his Triumph Bonneville across water, the narrative evolves around the idea of depriving the body of physical comfort and even deliberately putting it through strenuous conditions. As an exposed and not necessarily the most comfortable form of motorised vehicle, the motorcycle in this context is not just a mode of transport, but also a piece of technology that increases risks and harm to the body. How is this related to luxury?

Tracing luxury to its Classical origins, Berry (1994: 59) states that issues relating to morality lead to the perception that 'men who live a life of luxury thus become emasculated'. Even within a contemporary context, the idea of the 'idle' man living in luxury is undesirable: from the fictional James Bond jumping off helicopters, to real-life Richard Branson launching rockets, men living in luxury often avoid emasculation through an over-compensation of challenging and often technological ventures. Similarly, Davidoff masculinises the very idea of luxury in selling its fragrance to its target male audience through the re-shifting of pleasure from the body – potentially 'feminising' and thus emasculating – to the Mind. One of the most effective ways of representing this shift is through

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the idea of adventure, a journey that involves transition and transcendence: the motorcycle is an ideal vehicle to symbolise these ideas.

Cater (2013: 8) suggests in his discussion on cultural understandings and practices of adventure that the idea of adventure is tied both conceptually and biologically to the human quest for challenge. The connection between adventure and challenge is crucial for Davidoff's *Cool Water Adventure* because here the idea of luxury is paradoxically not about indulging the body through hedonism, but by challenging it so it moves beyond its own materiality: hence its tagline, 'The excitement of the challenge. Find your limits, and *push beyond them*' (Davidoff website, emphasis added). Here, pleasure is located not upon or within the body as a corporeal experience, but as a spiritual/mental experience that lies transcendently outside of the body: hence the climactic and cathartic moment at the end when McGregor strikes a moment of realisation, the Enlightenment and the discovery of the Truth ('I saw my life in a whole new light'). Furthermore, if the degree of challenge affects the intensity of the adventure experience (Swarbrooke et al. 2003: 11), then equally, the more intense the adventure experience the more 'masculine' the adventurer is deemed to be in being able to withstand such discomfort and pain. Therefore, while the advert still focuses on the body as a site for sensory experiences ('Every smell, every sight, every step pushes me forwards') it is not the experiences *per se* that are idealised, but how these phenomenological experiences lead to the 'awakening' of the Mind. The body is a means for gaining access to the Mind, thereby masculinising the discourse of luxury.

Knightley's character seeks luxury as a means of experiencing 'physical or sensory enjoyment' (Berry 1994: 8) of her body, through her body; McGregor seeks unenjoyable physical experiences of the body in order to 'push forward' until he reaches a moment of epiphany, where luxury is the *resulting* mental state achieved through physical duress but also transcending the body. In contrast to Knightley's character whose body is a site of pleasure and sensuality, McGregor's body is not the site of pleasure, but a perceptive sensory tool to experience the pleasure of the Mind. In both cases, the idea of luxury is therefore about experience – whether immediately pleasurable and sensual or unpleasurable and sensuous – and its potential for providing a means of liberation from the ordinary, just like adventure does.

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As is a common vehicular metaphor, the motorcycles in both adverts represent the idea of an 'escape': both in the physical sense of being pursued, like McQueen's character on his Triumph TR-6 Trophy in the aptly titled *The Great Escape* (1963); or as a transcendental escape from the body, like Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: an inquiry into values* (1999). Hence, Knightley's character uses her Ducati to escape the photographer's supposed male dominance over her body, enabling her to (re)gain 'control' over of her own body and sexuality. McGregor, meanwhile, uses his Triumph to escape the body and reach a 'higher' plain of existence which finds Truth in the Mind and spirit, like the post-humanistic and/or semi-religious quest to move beyond the matter of the flesh.⁴ The motorcycle is thus the ideal visual metaphor to represent notions relating to escapism and the differentiation of the self from the masses through the consumption of a luxury product.

While both Chanel and Davidoff present us with tales of pleasurable freedom, the critical question remains: where are they escaping *to*? Knightley's character might escape male dominance over her body but, ultimately, the suggestion is that she will get off her motorcycle, go back up to her gilded flat (cage?), strip naked and dab more perfume on herself. In that sense, her character might replace male dominance with female self-dominance over the body – a typical post-feminist media representation of female empowerment – but the idea of pleasure is still situated upon the body. Therefore, female luxury is very much part of a corporeal discourse that confines women and femininity to matters of the body, where 'patriarchal oppression (...) justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body, and through this identification, restricting women's social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms' (Grosz 1994: 14). Here, the motorcycle presents the *illusion* of female liberation, agency and empowerment but ultimately rides upon a circuitous route that steers women back to the pleasures of the body. The consumption of luxury ensures this circuit remains closed as sensual experiences remain at the level of corporeality.

Subject/Object

As aforementioned, critical feminist theories have engaged with the various social, cultural, political, biological, historical, psychoanalytical and

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economic issues in relation to women and dichotomous Western thinking. One of the most important considerations within such longstanding feminist debates has been the question of female subjectivity.⁵ This itself has been the subject of critique on account of essentialism, Western-centricism and reductionism, leading to more deconstructive approaches by post-structuralist, post-modern and/or post-colonial scholars (Anzaldúa 1987; Spivak 1987; Mohanty 1988, 2003; Butler 1993).

Fraught and complex as such debates are, in the context of the two adverts I am examining, I find it useful to turn to de Beauvoir's ideas on female subjectivity (or lack thereof):

She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other.

de Beauvoir 2011: 26

The gendered discourse of luxury constructs man as the Absolute while she, despite the appearance of being 'empowered', remains as Other. We can identify this very configuration at work in these adverts. There are four main areas I want to look at in this respect: the presence/absence of other people in the advert; the role of the characters; the celebrities' meta-narratives; and the stylisation of bodies.

First, despite the female-sung song lyrics flowing through the Chanel advert giving the illusion of progressive and feminist sensibilities ('This is a man's world/But it wouldn't be nothing, nothing without a woman or a girl'), indeed the opposite is true and, as de Beauvoir states, 'she is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her' (de Beauvoir 2011: 26). Knightley's character appears almost always in relation with other men: whether it is *en route*, when three male motorcyclists, all wearing contrasting black outfits (Knightley's character is in pinkish beige), appear at the traffic lights with her; or the key male protagonist photographer who wishes to seduce and be seduced by her as a model (in itself already setting up a hierarchical work-related relationship of difference). In other words, Knightley's character exists and is defined through her relational differentiation to men: she needs to rebuff them in order to empower herself. Whereas, McGregor's character is alone throughout the advert and needs no others to appear alongside his journey: the lone adventurer, he embodies the myth of the male explorer, the Absolute.

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Second, for feminist, race and/or queer politics and theories, the question of 'having a voice' has been crucial for the right to self-representation and the fight against erasure by those in dominant positions of power (Weeks 1977; Hooks 1984; Lott 1999). In other words, the act of speaking out as a subject (rather than an object spoken about by others), the ever-important 'I', has been crucial in the politics of representation and positionality. In this light, if we turn back once again to the Chanel and Davidoff adverts, despite both narratives representing the idea of liberation and escape, we are presented with the male as a speaking subject (I), while the female remains a silent object (other). Not only does Ewan McGregor appear in person (mediated, but nonetheless has his name even appear on the screen), his voice is responsible for narrating the entire script which is a homage to the multiple 'I', 'myself' and 'me'. As Butler discusses in relation to performative speech acts, 'the name performs *itself* and in the course of that performing becomes a thing done; the pronouncement is the act of speech at the same time it is the speaking of an act' (Butler 1997: 44): McGregor's name performs itself, and the very act of his speech both performs and naturalises the male as a speaking subject. By contrast, even though Knightley herself is an equally successful British actress, her role is to play the character of a nameless model – she does not appear as 'herself' – with no significant speaking part, save the end where she announces the name of the fragrance as the bottle hovers into view: she is defined through an(other) object of consumption.

Third, and relatedly, there is nothing new about brands using celebrities to act as their ambassadors, harnessing celebrity capital to endorse and promote their products (Spry et al. 2011; Gibson 2012; Rojek 2012; Gunter 2014). In discussing strategies employed through 'brand anthropomorphy', Pringle (2004: 79) suggests that brands should choose celebrities that are able to 'personify inanimate objects in human terms and to ascribe attitudes and values and even behaviours to brands. Many consumers would have been aware of the fact that the same year Davidoff released *Cool Water Adventure* in 2007, Ewan McGregor had just completed his second global journey on a motorcycle with friend Charley Boorman as documented in *Long Way Down* (2007), following *Long Way Round* (2004).

McGregor's ability to actually ride a motorcycle in 'real life' provides an intertextual basis from which Davidoff can offer a sense of authenticity,

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where the male subject is pure, essential and true. McGregor appears as both celebrity, but also an 'authentic' motorcyclist, further reinforced by the fact that he appears as 'himself'. Knightley, on the other hand, comes with no such motorcycle-related meta-narrative and her inability to ride the motorcycle itself became the subject of media discourse: from location shots documenting how they filmed Knightley to look like she was riding a motorcycle, to online motorcycle forums and bloggers commenting on her inability to ride ('I guess the "faux pas" is, that Keira is not a rider but is staged as a rider via techniques').⁶ Knightley is thus presented in her capacity as an actress in *le film*, directed by Joe Wright, with whom she had worked in many films including *Atonement* in 2007. The pre-release media discourse that 'takes a peek back-stage' and some of the stunt techniques used for her riding scenes cancels out any idea of 'authenticity'. Without its rider, the motorcycle itself loses authenticity and becomes a mere prop for Knightley/her character in the advert: no different to the BSA Kate Moss 'rides' in the Rimmel advert, raising once again the question of static mobility as discussed in the previous chapter. All are thus fictitious: a rider impure, inessential, pretending and playing make-believe.

Last, as with almost every contemporary perfume advertisement, women's fragrances are often promoted through imagery of a naked or semi-naked female body indulging in what Goffman (1979: 31) refers to as the use of the 'feminine touch' in advertising. Goffman suggests that women are often shown in adverts as 'barely touching' not just objects but themselves – a ritualised self-touching – which is 'readable as conveying a sense of one's body being a delicate and precious thing'. The opening scene when Knightley's character wakes up in bed provides fertile ground for much ritualised self-touching, immediately turning her body into a 'delicate and precious thing', a luxury item herself: for what is luxury than the promise of something delicate, fine, rare and precious? In fact, one of the common aspects of luxury relates to the manual relationship between an object and handcrafting for, 'to be unique, an object sometimes has to go through a process of manipulation' (Calefato 2014: 22). Knightley's self-touching goes beyond the (self-)eroticisation of the female body, but also means there is 'no consequential distinction to be made between star personalities and products', where both are commodities (Rojek 2012: 29).

Such ideas lead us directly to questions Mulvey (1989) raised in her seminal work on cinema and its scopophilic pleasures, where she argues

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that in their traditionally exhibitionist role, women are displayed and stylised as sexual objects to enable men, as controlling subjects, to project their voyeuristic fantasies through their gaze. For Mulvey (1989: 19), the relationship between subject/object correlate directly and dichotomously to gendered and sexual constructions of male/active and female/passive. In this light, the role of the motorcycles in the stylisation of the male and female body in the two adverts differ significantly.

When Knightley's character is seen sashaying towards her Ducati, the viewers are presented with fetishistic close-up shots of her bottom, fingers, heel, toe and face: as an object, Knightley's character becomes 'a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look' (Mulvey 1989: 22). As explored in other chapters throughout this book, the motorcycle again acts as a prop to display the female body, to draw the eye (gaze) towards the eroticised and fetishised zones. As such, despite the advert's premise that Knightley's character is sassy enough to reject the male photographer's sexual advances by choosing the independence offered by the motorcycle, such a vision of 'female empowerment' is indeed 'offset by the compensatory exaggerated feminine form' (Brown 2004: 63–4) as she rides her slimline Ducati. By contrast, not only is McGregor dressed in suitably protective 'outdoor' clothing that displays very little of his body,⁷ his Triumph Bonneville is most of the time obscuring his figure (Figure 5.3). The Triumph in this case does not display the body, but becomes a means of displaying its abilities and skill, to be the active subject who can push, pull, fix and ride.

Furthermore, the choice of a Ducati Supersport 750, promoted as 'the result of uncompromising design and superior craftsmanship' (Ducati website) seems significant.⁸ Such words reflect the perception that 'Italian luxury brands, whether jewellery or cars, take the national virtues to the extreme: the art of the beautiful, the Latin sensibility and the ever-renewed, ever-surprising creative talent' (Kapferer and Bastien 2012: 61). Compared to the Triumph Bonneville in Davidoff's advert which resembles a utilitarian workhorse, loaded with panniers and delivering practicality, the Ducati itself is a stylised entity emphasising design and beauty, not to mention the luxurious connection to 'craftmanship': the Ducati and Knightley's character are at one, reflected by the same colouring of their paintwork/suit.

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Figure 5.3 The utilitarian body and the work-horse. Davidoff's *Cool Water Adventure* (2008).

How can we understand luxury in relation to gendered constructions of subject/object as discussed through ideas of relationality, positionality, celebrity anthropomorphy and the stylisation of bodies? Luxury itself is founded upon dualisms and is subject to its own internal tensions – conspicuous/inconspicuous; exclusive/accessible; individual/societal and so on – but one of the most pertinent is the idea that luxury is that which is ‘unnecessary’ and ‘nonessential’. Of course, what is considered as ‘necessary’ is not only subjective and personal, but shaped by societal mores and specific cultural contexts. Having said this, in classifying the values associated with luxury, Chevalier and Mazzalovo (2012) argue that luxury is based on a logic of desire and pleasure as opposed to a logic of needs and interests. While the former is founded upon values relating to the utopian/mythical, aestheticism, existentialism and non-utilitarianism, the latter is founded upon practical, utilitarian and non-existential values. Hence luxury brands must ensure they ‘make customers dream of possible worlds, and provide experiences intense in emotions and pleasure (Chevalier and Mazzalovo 2012: 14).

The values of luxury – stemming from the logic of desire and pleasure – as identified by Chevalier and Mazzalovo – seem to correspond

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with similar historical values associated with femininity within Western thinking: women as mythical, beautiful, relating to pleasure and desire, non-utilitarian and as non-essential. Within such a discourse of luxury, women become both the consuming subjects seeking material pleasure and desires of the body (as discussed earlier), as well as becoming the very objects of pleasure and desire themselves. Here, the luxury commodity and female body become sites of further pleasurable consumption. This double-bind of being the subject and object of hedonism mean that the discourse of luxury ties women and femininity to questions of sensuous corporeality, ensuring that, even if pleasure is part of an empowering discourse ('I am worth it'), it still always remains at the level of the body: just like the beautiful Ducati, which provides the illusion of an escape and independence, but ultimately stays within the realms of the aesthetic, hedonistic, non-utilitarian and non-essential.

By the same token, this does not mean that men have no access to luxury. However, the idea of pleasure and desire must be packaged differently for men. Brands must offer the promise of subjectivity, a positionality that claims dominance over the self, others and the world around them. Davidoff's advert provides that dream: McGregor is the male subject who has been given control over narrative and imagery, where luxury is represented as the ultimate acquisition of the loftiest ideal, that of an existential experience proceeding a utilitarian journey. Pleasure that moves beyond the material and the object, a desire relating to subjectivity and self-realisation. Here, the Triumph Bonneville represents a technology that becomes instrumental to the experience of subjectivity and 'existential authenticity' (Laing and Crouch 2011: 1528) as a form of enjoying 'outdoor' masculine luxury.

Wilderness/Urbanity

One of the main reasons people seek out luxury products and experiences is part of a desire to differentiate and distanciate. This can take on more social dimensions where the consumption of luxury products and brands are related to issues surrounding class stratification and status (Veblen 1994; Bourdieu 2010; Baudrillard 1981), but can also take on more individualistic motivations which might not relate to social elitism but are more to do with the pleasurable seeking of hedonism. I want to suggest that luxury also consists of a spatio-temporal differentiation that is equally

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important: to consume in order to escape not just the ‘general masses’ or even ‘the self’, but also the ordinary orientations of both time and space that regulate everyday life. It is a luxury to be able to enjoy time, as it is a luxury to enjoy a place. Such a process in itself can become a mechanism for social and individual differentiation: ladies who can lunch; men who can play golf on a weekday. Therefore, questions of luxury are almost always tied to labour and gendered divisions of time-space, which I want to now examine in relation to wilderness/urbanity.

Facing himself, man encounters Nature; he has a hold on it, he tries to appropriate it for himself. But it cannot satisfy him. Either it realizes itself as a purely abstract opposition—it is an obstacle and remains foreign—or it passively submits to man’s desire and allows itself to be assimilated by him; he possesses it only in consuming it, that is, in destroying it. In both cases, he remains alone; he is alone when touching a stone, alone when digesting a piece of fruit.

de Beauvoir 2011: 193

It has been a Classical and consequently common binary opposition to align women with Nature and men with culture and civilisation, as something that is both ‘an obstacle and remains foreign’. Despite and because of the challenges that woman/Nature poses as an entity that must be overcome and exoticised, ‘she is destined to be subordinated, possessed, and exploited, as is also Nature’ (de Beauvoir 2011: 107). The passage from de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* seems to almost be a description of Davidoff’s *Cool Water Adventure* advert, one which narrativises man’s struggle but ultimate consumption and victory over Nature as he stands atop a mountain and even literally ‘touching a stone, alone’, the image of masculine Triumph (pun intended!).

Luxury brands and goods aimed for men often present Man as ‘encountering Nature’ (e.g. Christian Dior used Johnny Depp in the wilderness of a desert for its fragrance, *Sauvage*, in 2015), usually as part of a lone adventure. This is not to say women do not appear in Nature. However, luxury adverts tend to merge Nature and woman as one: for example, Christian Dior’s *J’adore* has Charleze Theron (and other female models over the years) emerge slowly out of a body of water, lying in the sea or walking along golden dunes indistinguishable from her own tawny gown. In discourses of luxury, masculinity is therefore usually about the

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penetrative adventure and conquest of woman/Nature, preferably across 'untouched' and virginal territories where no other man has been (i.e. not cities).

As Cater (2013) argues in his discussion on the engendering of adventure, 'culturally and historically the dominant Western meaning of adventure has been shaped by the European exploration and colonialisation of the world', underpinned by a masculinist imperative (Cater 2013: 8). Such colonialist and masculinist ideals are reflected not just in the choice of the soundtrack used in the Davidoff advert – entitled, 'Run Along Uncharted Space' (The Rumor Mill/ J. Ralph) – but also in the general brand ethos:

Turning the world into his playground, Zino Davidoff boundlessly embraced life, venturing cross continents and cultures in a life-affirming, never-ending quest for the best and the conviction that true luxury is experiencing beauty and the ultimate pleasure in every moment.

Davidoff website

By linking male luxury to adventure, suddenly rather than emasculating the male consumer as being a seeker of corporeal pleasure, it reinforces masculine dominance through the presentation of female/Nature's subordination and submission and the male's seeking of discovery, inevitably tied to what McClintock (1995: 29) defines as the 'imperial scene of discovery' by White men.

But clearly, as I explored in Chapter 2 when discussing notions of speed, in order to gain access to 'unchartered space' while 'turning the world into his playground', one must have the means to buy the time to do this: in the words of Kapferer and Bastien (2012: 22), 'to enjoy luxury you have to devote time to it and conversely, luxury is an opportunity to enjoy some free time'. And it is here that social differentiation and distanciation become temporal practices of the consumption of luxury, for not all men can afford this time. 'Free time' is being away from the everyday spatio-temporal constraints of work and civilisation, in this context usually cities and urban environments traditionally tied to male production and mass consumption. Here, luxury is to seek Nature as 'untouched' and unregulated by capitalistic time-space of consumption/production and thus posing as an anti-consumerist place to experience non-materialistic

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sensations of the land. Such an idea in itself is a strategy used by many luxury brands that rely on nature and 'natural materials' such as cashmere or precious metals, insofar as they imply simplicity and scarcity (Chevalier and Mazzalovo 2012: 23).

The motorcycle becomes the perfect symbolic vehicle for adventure, to represent a man living in simplicity, ironically because he has the capital means to buy the luxury of time. A perfect example of this paradoxical relationship between luxury, simplicity, 'free time' and its consumption/non-consumption is when David Beckham, like Ewan McGregor, decided to go on a motorcycle adventure which was documented in *Into the Unknown* (2014). On the BBC website, the description for the documentary film has colonialist undertones, including its invocation of land and 'uncivilised' people: 'Starting with beach footvolley in Rio, the friends travel deep into the Amazon, ending up with the remote Yanonami tribe, with David desperately trying to explain the beautiful game.'⁹ Words like 'travel deep into the Amazon' are part of racialised cartographical metaphors of colonialism in the style of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2007).

What about women's relationship to luxury and its spatio-temporality? Traditionally, women's social status has been regulated by the reproductive time-space of domesticity, thus tying their bodies and sexuality to Nature, fertility and reproduction. This is why the figure of the 'New Woman' was such a significant social phenomenon of 1880s and 1890s, when middle-class women began to be 'freer' by gaining entry into universities and workplaces; for the New Woman, the city streets represented a form of social liberation 'as the commercialized metropolis opened up to them as consumers and workers' (Parsons 2003: 82). Such a relationship between women, consumption and city informs present-day post-feminist media discourse – in the spirit of *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) – where the metropolis still represents a form of female liberation through social and economic participation of the city; or as Greven (2006: 39) describes it, 'the brazen *Sex in the City* women are new versions of the turn-of-the-century New Woman, still headily wielding, as if for the first time, their right to consume what their scopophilic eyes crave'.

Within this context, the city of Paris in Chanel's advert represents the endless opportunities for consumption – and thus supposed liberation –

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for Knightley's character,¹⁰ for whom luxury is not about Nature (which would mark a return to her 'natural' status as fertile reproductive body) but about consuming the city, where her body and sexuality can now be tied to erotic possibilities of self-fulfilment: her spatio-temporality is marked by the luxury to *not* be a mother or wife; and it is thus significant the advert targets young women ('mademoiselle'). But paradoxically, as with most post-feminist discourses of female liberation grounded in consumer culture, the very ability to consume becomes the same mechanism to re-incorporate women back into a patriarchal and economic system of subjugation. As such, the discourse of luxury and its consumption in the city – as appealing as they may seem – re-captures women; for 'the iconography of affluence provides aspirational visions that integrate the action woman into wider consumer culture and post-feminist discourse' (Purse 2011: 83).

Thus, the Ducati represents a post-feminist vehicle, one that *appears* to offer female mobility, agency and empowerment – after all, it is Knightley's character's 'getaway vehicle' – but, in its consumption and practice, re-contains women back into a patriarchal economic system that subjugates, objectifies and commodifies women as themselves, luxury products to be enjoyed. In the Chanel advert, this 're-containment' of female power happens quite visually and literally: in the closing scene, as is customary with most fragrance adverts, the perfume bottle begins to appear slowly on the screen; at first superimposing the image of Knightley's character riding away from the photographer, but ultimately dominating the full frame to a point where Knightley's character now appears within it, like a trapped female genie (see Figure 5.4). This ending is symbolic of how for women, having the capital to buy time and access to spaces of freedom (in this case the urban environment) is merely an illusion that embeds them further into a patriarchal system. This system ultimately commodifies the female body as a luxury product to be maintained and handled with care.

Conclusion: 'Escaping' on a Post-Feminist Motorcycle

Referring to Berry's (1994) ideas surrounding luxury, the purpose of this chapter has been to examine how we might conceptualise the motorcycle

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within the context of luxury, as an 'inducement to consumption'. For a vehicle which usually represents dirt, rebellion and even (pseudo) anti-consumerist ideologies of subculture and class, it is particularly important to reframe the motorcycle as a vehicle that can communicate almost contrary values relating to luxury. As such, this chapter has approached luxury as a gendered discourse, and suggested how we might conceptualise the motorcycle within the context of luxury, as an 'inducement to consumption'. Here, the motorcycle becomes a mobile technology of engendering consumption and luxury, and by the same token, the gendered discourse of luxury presents us with alternative ways to think about the motorcycle outside of the context of subcultural identities and aesthetics.

The motorcycles in both Chanel's and Davidoff's adverts enable 'feminine' and 'masculine' luxury to be articulated in different ways that ultimately bind both men and women to dominant and normative ideologies surrounding gender. As my analyses of the three key dualisms of luxury – mind/body, subject/object, wilderness/urbanity – has revealed, the gendered, visual and narrative differences between the two adverts point towards broader ideological structures that produce socio-culturally acceptable forms of 'feminine' and 'masculine' luxury. Furthermore, such discourses of luxury – and the consumption of the luxury goods promoted – ultimately reinforce and propagate dominant and normative ideologies surrounding gender that bind both men and women to very traditional roles. And this despite the promises of 'escapism', which the motorcycle itself represents.

For women, the concept of luxury is predominantly about experiencing the body and the self through *sensual* indulgence. Here, the post-feminist motorcycle – a motorcycle reflecting post-feminist sensibilities, as discussed in the previous chapter – represents desirable ideas of female mobility, agency and empowerment through consumption of the city and the self. But paradoxically, through the very act of representation and consequent consumption, such narratives and practices of re-containment coerce women back into the patriarchal economic system which subjugates, objectifies and even commodifies them. For men, luxury represents the experience beyond the self and the Cartesian counterpart, the liberation of the Mind, a near spiritual experience brought on by a *sensuous* process of self-realisation. Here, the motorcycle represents desirable ideas of male adventure, challenge and a

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Figure 5.4 Recontainment as commodity? Keira Knightley in the final scene of *Coco Mademoiselle – Le Film* (2011).

sense of ‘existential authenticity’, that which enables the seeking of a space in which to construct a sense of ‘self-identity and be their true selves’ (Laing and Crouch 2011: 1528). However, once again, behind such promises of liberation and self-improvement hides a more problematic discourse of masculinist imperialism and colonialism; for adventures, challenges and conquests rely on constructing men as gaining mastery and authority over the land, time and space, leading to the ideological subjugation and objectification of women.

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In both cases, this chapter has critiqued the use of the motorcycle in these adverts precisely because the vehicle is popularly associated with the idea of freedom and independence. In being a shorthand for the idea of 'escape' and liberation, the motorcycle is an ideal visual tool in the marketing of luxury products which in themselves capitalise on the idea of 'escaping' the masses and other social constraints. But because of this, the motorcycle ironically can also 'mask' and hide the more problematic issues surrounding women and consumption as a form of liberation and empowerment, echoing imperialist and colonialist ideologies surrounding male conquest and dominance in the process.

PROOF

PART III

Television

PROOF

PROOF

6

Gastro-Motorcyclism: Culinary Gender and Class

The Rise of Gastro-Motorcyclism

I knew a young male biker from Leeds who wanted to impress his new girlfriend with some home cooking (or ‘dining’, as he called it). The only problem was he didn’t know how to cook. In a mad rush of panic, he rang me in confusion reading out ‘The Hairy Bikers’ recipes for approval. Now it was *my* turn to sound perplexed. Who? What ‘hairy bikers’? I consider cooking as one of the greatest pleasures in life but, until then, I had purposely avoided and even taken pride in knowing very little about cooking shows and celebrity chefs (now, I am addicted). And so it was that the situation was reversed, he had to explain ‘The Hairy Bikers’ (Si King and David Myers) to me as he banged pots and pans: ‘they’re two blokes who ride around the country on their bikes and cook’, he shouted in between measuring ingredients. I was amused by the idea of a biker following biker guidance on cooking, and most importantly, by the very existence and concept of ‘The Hairy Bikers’: two chefs on two wheels . . . and they are not alone!

Ever since, I have been intrigued by what appears to be a fascinatingly common connection between celebrity chefs, cooking shows and

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motorcycles; a phenomenon I describe as 'gastro-motorcyclism.' For within the ever-increasing brigade of celebrity chefs populating the British and US mediascape – 'foodtainment' (Finkelstein 1999) – surprisingly, the Hairy Bikers are *not* a culinary celebrity brand with a unique motorcyclic selling point. Other chef-cum-riders on television include: the Two Fat Ladies – Clarissa Dickson Wright and Jennifer Paterson (1996–9) – a British female pairing who cannot be divorced from their Triumph Thunderbird and side-car; British 'Naked Chef' Jamie Oliver and his iconic scooters (circa 1990s–early 2000s); American Food Network chef, Alton Brown, who rides his BMWs for *Feasting on Asphalt* (2006–present); a new web/TV series, *Food Biker* and its complementary *Restaurant Racer* with American chef Seth Diamond on his BMW 1200c;¹ British food critic Matthew Fort documents his two-wheeled gastronomic antics in, *Eating Up Italy: Voyages on a Vespa* (2005) and *Sweet Honey, Bitter Lemons: Travels in Sicily on a Vespa* (2008); not to mention chefs off-screen, 'spotted' riding motorcycles, such as Gordon Ramsay on a Ducati,² or Tyler Florence on his beloved Triumph Bonneville.³ These chefs' motorcyclic pursuits both on- and off-camera often run as articles in both popular and motorcycle-based magazines, websites and blogs. The gastronomical world of recipes, chefs and food somehow overlaps with the unlikely world of engines, bikers and motorcycles.

Why motorcycles and food? At first, the thought of gastro-motorcyclism revolving around the chef-rider seems like an odd televisual constellation. After all, motorcycles are about being outdoors in public, in transit and traditionally, and are usually considered to be a 'masculinised' activity in terms of division of labour (as transport for going to work on public roads) and/or leisure (tourism/adventurism and consumption). Cooking seems like its polar opposite, about being indoors in private, focused on a fixed point (such as the sink, oven, grill or the hobs), and traditionally, very much a 'feminised' activity in terms of division of labour (domestic labour) and/or leisure (cooking classes, baking with kids).⁴ In other words, motorcycles and food seem mutually exclusive, technologies which organize separated gendered practices, spaces and bodies. However, as a televisual phenomenon, this gastro-motorcyclic mix is clearly compatible, bringing cooking and riding – food and motorcycles – together within a singular televisual narrative. So what happens to gender and class configurations when the two worlds meet?

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Gastronomy Studies scholar Scarpato (2002) refers to the need for ‘giving a “cultural voice” to identities and discourses oppressed by dominant narratives’ (Scarpato 2000 cited in Scarpato 2002: 56–7). I want to approach television cooking shows as one such form of a ‘dominant culinary narrative’, part of a normative discourse which regulates and organizes gender and class hierarchies, especially in the context of everyday life. In particular, I shall focus on the chef-rider figure who becomes a nexus between gender and class configurations surrounding food and motorcycles. What happens to culinary masculinity when presented through a domestic medium (television), involving domestic practices (home cooking)? Through an analysis of various celebrity chefs, but mainly focusing on British cookery television duo the Hairy Bikers, I examine how the culinary motorcycle both challenges and reinforces dominant gender and class ideologies surrounding cooking shows. Ultimately, I argue that the culinary motorcycle enables the chef-rider to negotiate tensions surrounding culinary gender and class by providing what appears to be a counter-narrative against – but nonetheless supportive of – the more traditional and normative television cooking shows.

Normative Discourses of Culinary Gender and Class: Chef or Home Cook?

British TV celebrity Nigella Lawson was one of the hosts and mentors on a cooking competition called *The Taste*, broadcast in both the UK (2014) and US (2013–15). Similar to other contest format programmes like *The X Factor* (2004–present) or *The Voice* (2012–present), *The Taste* involves celebrity chef hosts mentoring a group of amateur cooks through various challenges and elimination rounds. The winning contestant represents their mentor: hence the contest is between the mentors as well as their charges. In both the UK and US version of *The Taste*, Lawson is the only female mentor amongst her male counterparts (Anthony Bourdain and Ludo Lefebvre in the UK and US, Marcus Samuelsson and Brian Malarkey in the US). The gendered interplay between the mentors is rather predictable: Lawson often ends up rolling her eyes (‘boys will be boys!’ ‘oh the testosterone’) while the men banter competitively, flexing their mock machismo at each other.

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This homosociality serves as a mechanism for gender performativity in that Lawson becomes even more curvy, more sensuous and, oddly, more maternal standing between the puerile, carefree and bickering ‘boys’. But what is striking is that this performative homosociality organizes gender hierarchy through demarcations of professionalism and amateurism: that is, gender difference is marked through culinary class. While the male mentors are introduced with references to the restaurants they own and/or the culinary awards they have won – as ‘chefs’ or ‘restauranteurs’ – Lawson is presented as a media journalist who can cook. In this way, Lawson is part of a long line of female cooking show hosts who are ‘professional amateurs’ (e.g. Fanny Craddock, Delia Smith and Ina Garten),⁵ nearly always presented as a home cook in close proximity to the supposedly female viewers at home. In *The Taste*, Lawson embodies the feminisation of amateur cooking and domesticity which produces ‘comforting food’, while chefs like Ludo Lefebvre embody the masculinisation of the professional cooking world which produces ‘elegant, fine dining experiences’. Cooking shows like *The Taste* thus reveal how the highly polarised and hierarchical nature of the culinary world produces dominant discourses which organize and regulate gendered, classed bodies and practices according to knowledge (training, recipes and techniques), taste (in all senses of the term as according to Bourdieu 2010) and the value of culinary capital (Michelin stars, critics’ reviews and Tripadvisor ratings).

But while Lawson might lack culinary capital, her culinary class mobility is enabled by her conversion of social and cultural capital into culinary worth.⁶ Lawson is thus a ‘professional amateur’ with the socio-cultural means to become an advocate for amateur cooking: when a contestant refers to themselves as ‘just a home cook’, Lawson will always interrupt and admonish them, urging them not to diminish their roles as home cooks.⁷ By championing the home cook against the professional (male) chef, Lawson is thus able to challenge the dominant hegemony of culinary class, providing a point of critique against the notoriously exclusive, ruthlessly competitive and masculinised world of professional chefs.⁸ But ironically, Lawson also reinforces and further engenders culinary class through her very corporeal culinary femininity and her somewhat parodic gender performativity. The same of course can be said about professional male chefs like Gordon Ramsay in shows like *Hell’s*

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Kitchen (2005–present), where ‘masculinity and hierarchy are exercised through violence in the restaurant environment’ (Nilsson 2012: 647): as his fist punches through a plateful of unsuccessfully cooked fish, Ramsay’s culinary corporeal style and gender performativity (Butler 2006) serve to masculinise professional chefs and their culinary class.⁹ In this way, cooking shows represent and reproduce dominant ideologies surrounding gender and class, through what Cruz (2013) describes as being ‘food performances’ which integrate performances of gender, race and sexuality. Even attempts like Lawson’s, to challenge culinary class elitism inevitably become in themselves mechanisms for female subjugation.

So what happens to culinary gender and culinary class when men present themselves as home cooks? In occupying a more traditionally feminised sphere of home cooking and home viewing, male television celebrity chefs and cooks have always had to adopt different techniques to negotiate their culinary masculinity in order to avoid effemination, homosexualisation and, ultimately, to establish their dominant position as the figure of authority. Traditionally, one of the most common ways of ‘protecting’ culinary masculinity in home cookery is by having a female assistant or voice-over (although there are exceptions here; think about Fanny Cradock and her ‘assistant’ and husband, Johnnie). A male–female dynamic immediately visualises heteronormativity and creates a visual genderism through the dramatisation of gendered social interactions (Goffman 1979). Graham Kerr in *Gallopig Gourmet* (1968–72) not only uses humour to make light of his presence in the kitchen, but also was popularly known to be working with his wife, Treena, who wrote, produced and even appeared in his programmes, thus establishing them as a ‘safe’ heterosexual culinary couple. Culinary gender groupings still continue today: think of American chef Bobby Flay with his two female sous-chefs – Stephanie Banyas and Miriam Garron – in *Throwdown! With Bobby Flay* (2006–11).

Graham Kerr – laughing, galloping and joking his way through his cooking shows – may be one of the first male television chefs to have embodied a more easy-going style of domestic culinary masculinity, as a man who is at ease in the domestic kitchen, albeit with the presence of his wife in the background. Others, like Keith Floyd (1985–2009), followed; however, it took the ‘laddish’ and ‘New Man’ sensibilities of the late 1990s and early 2000s (Beynon 2002; Benwell 2003) to produce a particular

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group of television chefs in the UK – figures like Jamie Oliver, Ainsley Harriott and the Hairy Bikers – who established a certain ‘type’ of televisual culinary masculinity. This is a form of culinary masculinity that is comfortable with the domestic environment and role of the home cook (in jeans), while also capable of ‘having a laugh’, so that banter is just as an important part of the viewing experience as close-ups of frying pancetta.

In many ways, this new style of culinary gender reflected a broader change in British cooking/eating habits and cookery shows around the turn of the century, making room for more programmes that challenged traditional culinary elitism. Increasingly, cookery shows presented a more relaxed attitude towards both cooking and eating (rustic, tear and share, communal tables), which in turn framed and engendered television chefs in different ways to what had previously been allowed. In Oliver’s case, his culinary masculinity has been defined through British Southern metrosexuality – laddish at times – while the Hairy Bikers have been defined more through their British northern working-class identifications. However, both of these styles of culinary masculinity as situated within the realms of home cookery ultimately reinforce dominant ideologies of gender and class. In order to explore some of these tensions surrounding the new male television home cook, let us first examine how Oliver’s and the Hairy Bikers’ culinary masculinities are constructed and negotiated through their respective two-wheeled vehicles.

New Culinary Masculinities

In his discussion of metrosexuals as ‘feminized males’, Miller (2005: 112) lists some of the metrosexual’s ‘softness’ which involves the consumption of ‘wine bars, gyms, designer fashion, wealth, the culture industries, finance, cities’. At the beginning of his career, Oliver was often pictured riding scooters, from Aprilias to Vespas: what better vehicle than the scooter to signal his social mobility and metrosexual masculinity? Scooters are vehicles with high subcultural (youthful Mod) and cultural (cosmopolitan European) exchange value, both of which Oliver converts into culinary capital. This double-valued culinary worth enables him to not only construct his mediated metrosexualised persona, but also enables him to sit between the boundaries of ‘chef’ and ‘home cook’. That is, Oliver can appear to challenge culinary elitism by democratising cooking with casual

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and trendy recipes,¹⁰ but he retains membership in order to give his cooking authority and credibility (it is always made clear that he has received 'formal training' in acclaimed restaurants).

Because scooters are designed more for commuting and short-distance travel, using a scooter to navigate through an urban locality ('popping down to my local butchers') immediately situates Oliver within the context of casual, safe city dwelling: nothing too dangerous, threatening or too fast; a trendy helmet is the only necessary means of protection, where fashionable clothes need not be hidden in heavy-duty motorcycle gear.¹¹ The scooter's leisurely pace also resonates with Oliver's anti-fast food campaign which favours slow-food: one needs economic, social and cultural capital to buy leisurely time. Here, the scooter's potential connection to deviance, youth and resistance (Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson, 2006; Cohen 1972) is avoided through its pairing with food: by domesticating the scooter as a culinary tool and using it as a means of transport as originally intended – for example to fetch groceries – Oliver thus undoes the original Mods' subversive act of *bricolage* and engages in what Hebdige describes as a 'process of recuperation' (Hebdige 1979: 94). That is, Oliver returns the scooter to its dominant system of signification while benefiting from the re-conversion of signs since the scooter has subcultural value: ideal for his mainstream, televisual culinary persona as a cheeky, youthful, fashionable and slightly rebellious 'working-class' male.

The scooter also has cultural capital, its worth valued through ideas of refined taste, cosmopolitanism and leisure. Hebdige discusses the scooter's close links to tourism where Vespa and Lambretta made an effort in the 1950s to internationalise its image (Hebdige 1988: 100–2). This legacy continues on today where the image of a scooter in advertising usually signals Europe (most often France or Italy) and cosmopolitan lifestyle consumption: beers, perfume, coffee and so on. The fact that Oliver uses Vespas and Aprilias reinforces his European aspirations and his 'Italianness' (Barthes 1977), evidenced through his 'Jamie's Italian' restaurant chains, Italian recipes and books, travels to Italy and the involvement of his Italian mentor Gennaro Contaldo. Vespa and Aprilia are thus brand Jamie Oliver's co-promoters in producing the culinary myth of Italy, as well as evoking a nostalgic sense of retro-traditionalism ('classic recipes with a twist'). Oliver's scooters thus provide him with not

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just subcultural but also cultural capital, one which also enables him to maintain his connections to the world of cultured, well-travelled leisurely dining and the high culinary classes: mobile but purposely slow-paced, cosmopolitan, refined, fashionable, young and retro-traditionalist. Ultimately, Oliver's new culinary masculinity is still very much a part of a dominant discourse of gender and class. Culinary metrosexuality is available to only those who have the social and (sub)cultural capital to buy such culinary worth.

If the demarcation between motorcycle and motorscooter coincides with and reproduces the boundary between masculine and the feminine (Hebdige 1988: 84), then Oliver's scooter marks a purposeful 'feminisation' (and metrosexualisation) of his culinary masculinity, while the Hairy Bikers' motorcycles 'masculinise' not only their culinary gender but also their culinary class. By contrast to Oliver, the Hairy Bikers are unshaven, ride big motorcycles that are meant to travel long distances, wear heavy protective motorcycle clothing and refer constantly to their northern, working-class backgrounds. For example, in *Hairy Bikers' Cookbook* (2006, S1E3), Myers laughs at King for mispronouncing 'jalapenos' (with 'ja' for 'jam'), while King defends his pronunciation in a thick Geordie accent. Such exchanges and self-directed 'failures' in meeting the standards of a dominant culinary class system – lacking the appropriate pronunciation, training, knowledge or behaviour – are part of the Hairy Bikers' working-class performativity, setting them socially and geographically apart from Oliver's 'refined' metrosexual culinary masculinity and culinary class. But unlike working-class women for whom 'failures' are a reason for shame, immobility and disgust (Skeggs 2002), the Hairy Bikers use their 'lack' of high culinary class to both harden their home-cooking masculinity and turn it into televisual culinary worth: promoting their brand as 'two big lads from up North'.

But as male home-cooks who travel around the world on motorcycles, the Hairy Bikers also face several issues which challenge both their working-class and male brand identities. In the Christmas Day episode of *The Royle Family: the New Sofa* (2008), Jim Royle, another televisual representation of hirsute, northern working-class masculinity – albeit fictional – watches Jamie Oliver scathingly on television and shouts, 'olive oil, my arse!' Jim Royle's cry reveals some of the tensions in being a northern working-class male home cook. Certain culinary practices and

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foods are classed according to taste (Bourdieu 2010: 135) and can become a means of classifying and engendering consumers accordingly. For example, most of the Hairy Bikers' recipes and ingredients are as metrosexually appealing as Oliver's: 'Fiery octopus (Ojingeo bokkeum)'; 'Tofu, aubergine and lotus root stew'; 'Shashlik kebab with sour cream dip and plum sauce' ('Hairy Bikers Latest recipes').¹² Working with octopus, tofu and lotus root – not exactly everyday life ingredients – could potentially metrosexualise and even 'feminise' culinary masculinity, as well as un-classify working-class identities. Unlike Oliver's metrosexuality which accommodates the 'feminisation' and 'middle-classification' of masculinity, the Hairy Bikers must negotiate their culinary class affiliations carefully as it has a direct impact on their northern working-class male identifications and credibility.

One of the more recent Hairy Bikers' *Everyday Gourmet* (2013) series reveals a self-conscious attempt to resolve the tensions of presenting themselves as belonging to the social and culinary working-class ('everyday'), while also using 'posh' ingredients associated with the higher echelons of culinary and social class ('gourmet'). The introduction to the series begins with stylised imagery of fine dining dishes while Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 flows in the background. In purposely clipped BBC English accents, the Hairy Bikers state, 'gourmet food (...) the sort of thing that you find in the very best restaurants across the country': a televisual representation of Bourdieu's (2010) ideas on class distinction and habitus, linking certain aesthetic sensibilities (Bach's Suite, accent, gourmet food) in 'high culture' with 'higher' social class positions. But the scene is cut abruptly, shifting to shots of the Hairy Bikers riding their motorcycles loudly, drowning out the classical music while Myers announces: 'but these ones are dead cheap and, guess what, they are made by us! The Hairy Bikers are going posh!' In this manner, the motorcycles are a masculinised, audio-visual class barrier between 'us' (home cooks, working-class, budget) and 'them' (posh, fine, middle-class gourmand, chef).

The motorcycles thus enable the Hairy Bikers to maintain their gruff, northern masculinity while being part of a problematic feminised world of home cooking and, in addition, using equally problematic 'posh' ingredients. Let us now examine in greater depth the several functions of the culinary motorcycle in both engendering and classing the televisual culinary persona: it can authenticate class; it can convert cultural capital

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into motorcyclic capital; it can become a safe object of homosocial exchange; and it can masculinise culinary spaces.

Authentication

As studies on food, tourism and globalisation have already explored (Urry 1995; Hall and Mitchell 2002; Boniface 2003; Ashley et al. 2004; Hall 2004), the question of gastronomic authenticity becomes particularly important within an increasingly McDonaldised world (Ritzer 2015). Seeking 'authentic' experiences away from the masses forms part of what Urry (1995) argues as being the romantic gaze of tourism. This discourse has extended beyond tourism and has proliferated into the everyday, where popular media is full of discussions about 'food miles' and how far ingredients travel to reach the supermarket or your plate (you can even calculate your own food miles online).¹³ Consuming and producing 'authentic' food becomes a contemporary preoccupation (especially to those who can afford it), a backlash against the impersonal, clinical 'fast-foods' which rose to prominence in the late twentieth century and early 2000s. *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001), *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World* (2001) and *Super Size Me* (2004) are examples of an emerging popular discourse that reflected some of the anxieties surrounding globalisation and food.

Within this context, the offer of 'authenticity' in cookery programmes must also extend to the hosts themselves. In other words, television chefs must be as 'authentic' as the food they consume and produce. This would account for why 'the relationship between (celebrity chefs') cooking and the destination is synergetic' (Richards 2002: 10). As such, Gino D'Acampo's *Gino's Italian Escape* (2013–present) is more 'authentic' than Jamie Oliver's *Jamie's Great Italian Escape* (2005) while Ken Hom and Ching-He Huang convert their racialised capital into authenticated culinary capital in *Exploring China: a culinary adventure* (2012). In being tied to ideas of kitchens, labour and a lack of formal qualifications, working-class identities also have high televisual culinary exchange value here: home cooking becomes a technology of class or, to put it another way, class becomes a culinary technology for televisual credibility. The culinary motorcycle therefore becomes an important televisual vehicle for the expression of class authenticity and, thus, culinary authenticity.

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In their joint autobiography, *The Hairy Bikers: Blood, Sweat and Tyres* (2015), there are constant references to the duo's working-class backgrounds made through motorcycles and food. Recalling his childhood and his father, Myers writes, 'I can also remember him wrapping himself in cabbage leaves to stay warm in the winter when he rode his BSA Bantam motorcycle to work' (2015: 8). While the idea of a man 'wearing' one of the most cheap staples associated with poverty (alongside potatoes) might be an amusing anecdote, both cabbage and the BSA Bantam serve to signal Myer's class. Owning a BSA now in the 2000s would be perceived as a niche and expensive pursuit – even appealing to the retro-traditionalist metrosexual – but back in the 1950s and 1960s, the Bantam was by no means 'a classic'. Instead, the BSA Bantam was a cheaper alternative to the car, a mechanical part of the national labour force. Manufactured cheaply by the Birmingham Small Arms Company to keep production costs low, the Bantam was undoubtedly a 'work-horse'; even the British General Post Office had a fleet of them for their postal workers (Carroll 2004: 36–7). Myers (King and Myers 2015: 44) even explains this point, 'before I came along, Dad rode a Bantam with a side-car, which was what a lot of working-class men had in those days'.

If we can assume that traditionally, mothers and grandmothers are supposed to pass their recipes on to their daughters, then fathers must pass on their love for motorcycles to their sons. In this way, it is significant that Myers refers to his father's BSA Bantam, not just in his autobiography but throughout his other media outputs (interviews, website, a photo framed and hanging up in his boat (2006, S1E3)), because it positions him as a child and an adult within the working-class community. The motorcycle becomes a connective point of class inheritance upon a patriarchal continuum, between past and present, father and son, boy and man, man to man: both the Bantam and his father anchor Myer's masculinity (in crisis) firmly to a working-class identity and authenticate his class background, unlike Oliver's 'mockney' pseudo-working-class identity. From cabbages to olive oil, suddenly the Hairy Bikers' narrative moves away from the problematic presentation of metrosexual lifestyle production and consumption and, instead, becomes a story about working-class male social mobility. In this context, both food and motorcycles become a means of labour – after all, both are part of their

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television *work* – to move away from poverty while simultaneously enabling them to articulate working-class sensibilities.

Matwick and Matwick (2014) argue that the ability to convey authenticity not only increases the popularity of a cookery show, but an authentic and relatable personality is more important than professional credits or culinary degrees (Matwick and Matwick 2014: 156). The ability to ride a motorcycle can also become a means of signalling another type of authenticity: the idea of unmediated televisual ‘reality’ (Hill 2005; Escoffery 2006), bringing chef-riders closer to the viewers back home. To present a sense of genuine realness, gastro-motorcyclic programmes often leave scenes in where chef-riders have accidents: S1E4 of *Feasting on Asphalt* includes footage of Alton Brown’s on-scene crash (he breaks his arm); S1E1 of *Hairy Bikers’ Cookbook* also includes a scene where Myers comes off his motorcycle in the Namibian desert (they must ride quads thereafter). Such scenes authenticate the chef-riders by framing them as ‘real’ people risking their lives in the adventures of everyday life. Having said this, the motorcycle can also have the opposite effect: it can glamourise television chefs through ‘subcultural authenticity’ (Thornton 1995). The culinary motorcycle signals rebelliousness within an orderly and even clinical world of high-end cooking, as well as within the ordinary world of domestic television viewing. Culinary motorcycles act as a visual antidote: not the ‘real’ that intentionally rubs glamour off David Beckham and Ewan McGregor, but rather the kind that rubs *on* Gordon Ramsay on his Ducati.

Travel and motorcyclic capital

The relationship between food and travel has longstanding historical, economic and cultural connections, whether it relates to tourism, trade (e.g. ‘spice trail’), food production and globalisation. But travel itself functions as a technology of gender (Morley 2000: 68) and class, where traditionally, the working classes were characterised by their (im)mobility (Skeggs 2004). Thus, we must not overlook the fact that the very notion of travel itself is gendered and classed: who has the means to travel, who is mobile? Who has the cultural and economic capital to access ‘slow food’ daily? Travelling itself – whether relating to food or the motorcycle – is therefore also part of a dominant system which organizes and regulates gender and class.

If tourism uses ‘gastronomy as a promotional vehicle’ (Fields 2002: 45), then it stands to reason that a vehicle can be used to promote gastronomy:

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hence, gastro-motorcyclism. In being part of the ‘Tour-Educative’ cookery genre (Strange 1998), the Hairy Bikers tour across cities, countries and continents: *Hairy Bikers’ Northern Exposure* (2015) sees them in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Russia, Finland, Sweden; *Hairy Bikers’ Asian Adventure* (2014) Hong Kong, Bangkok, Thailand, Japan, South Korea; *Hairy Bikers’ Mississippi Adventure* (2012). Ironically, their globalised outreach make the Hairy Bikers even more well-travelled on television than other television celebrity cooks and chefs like Oliver, who presents himself as a British culinary ambassador embracing internationalism and multicultural cosmopolitanism. In this way, the Hairy Bikers are actually very mobile figures of ‘culinary masculinity associated with the cosmopolitan traveller’ (Bell and Hollows 2007: 31), similar to more traditional travelling male television chefs like Keith Floyd or Rick Stein. This in itself can pose a threat to their culinary gender and working-class identities.

The potential metrosexualisation and/or feminisation of the Hairy Bikers’ culinary masculinity resulting from cosmopolitan travel are nonetheless avoided by the constant inclusion of motorcycle commentary alongside their culinary story-telling. For example, asked in an interview appearing on their official website about their different motorcycles in *The Hairy Bikers’ Cookbook*, Myers responds:

The big BMW’s [sic.] are great all round tools and can cope with anything. The Triumphs are full of character and you get to fall in love with them but they’re not as well built as the BMWs. In Vietnam we were on Russian 125 Minsks, little two stroke trials bikes; we had to have small bikes because of the Vietnamese laws. The little bikes were such a laugh and very reliable. In Mexico I was on a Harley Davidson Road King [sic.]. It could be a bit of a tart’s handbag in the UK, but in Mexico with the colours and the sunshine it was wonderful; all your childhood biking dreams rolled into one. Awesome fun. There is no such thing as a bad bike, they’re all great. We are immensely lucky to have access to tons of different bikes.

Hairy Bikers’ website¹⁴

Myers refers to four different motorcycle brands (BMW, Triumph, Minsk, Harley-Davidson) and, at first glance, his response seems like a discussion about the merits of different motorcycles. References to the different brands’ performances (‘very reliable’), quality (‘well built’), user experience

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(‘fall in love with them’, ‘such a laugh’) make his response seem like an automobile review.

However, behind the motorcyclic commentary is another ‘hidden’ narrative of mobility and global travel: just like that of the travelling metropolitan who seeks cultural knowledge and capital through distinctive lifestyle consumption. The problematic issue here for the Hairy Bikers is that traditionally, travel – especially travel and food – has been a classifying practice belonging to the dominant middle-class culinary elite. In discussing consumption, food and taste, Warde (1997) argues that ‘the very habit of talking about food, evaluating it in aesthetic terms is predominantly a trait of the professional and managerial middle-class fractions’ (1997: 107). The Hairy Bikers side-step the potential difficulties of a middle-class discussion by talking about food and travel by evaluating *motorcycles*, using contradistinctive colloquialisms with sexist undertones (‘It could be a bit of a tart’s handbag in the UK’), to obscure what could be perceived as middle-class ‘globe-trotting’ and highlighting their staunch masculinity in the process. The internationalised content of their lifestyles thus turns into a discussion about their knowledge and experiences of different motorcycles – not food – from around the world (German, British, Russian, American), a more acceptable topic for a pair of ‘working-class lads from up North’.

The interview’s subtitle runs as follows: ‘Si and Dave answer your questions on their favourite subject . . . motorbikes of course!’. By centralising the motorcycles and presenting them as their main product of consumption, food and travel become a necessary but secondary by-product of their ‘favourite subject’. Even when specifically discussing a location and its cuisine, the motorcycle re-centres and re-calibrates their working-class culinary masculinities. In the same interview, Myers talks about ‘a great Hindu shrine in the middle of Karnatika State. Wonderful vegetarian food and great people. The bikes cost £5 per day and would run on anything; no brakes though . . . kept wearing out my flipflops.’ Here, ‘Hindu Shrine’, ‘Karnatika’ and ‘vegetarian food’ seem to be at odds with the stereotypical image of a meat-eating, red-blooded working-class Northerner. However, the reference to the cheapness of the bikes and the dare-devil hardiness and carefree attitude of riding brake-less motorcycles wearing flip-flops somehow restores their working-class masculinity, thereby pushing against both the culinary elite while consuming the same kind of lifestyle products.

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Referring to motorcycle travelogues, Alford and Ferriss (2009) describe the traveller as one who 'embarks on a journey to gain knowledge – about the world and the self as an adventurer' (Alford and Ferriss 2009: 7). By converting a culinary narrative into a motorcycle narrative, the Hairy Bikers obscure their cosmopolitan lifestyle – which involves them travelling around the world consuming and (re)producing local cuisines, products, people and culture – and, instead, present a travelogue about gaining and sharing culinary *and* motorcyclic knowledge. In other words, rather than seeming to join the middle-class culinary elite whose socio-cultural capital and culinary capital are mutually inter- and exchangeable, the Hairy Bikers introduce a different currency: motorcyclic capital. Here, the display of motorcyclic knowledge and riding skills is used to both de-value (or at least hide) their cultural capital and masculinise their culinary practices while simultaneously enabling them to convert their travelling know-how into culinary worth and authentic appeal. In this manner, while the Hairy Bikers do everything to differentiate themselves from dominant culinary elitism, they are still very much a part of the same culinary class system which classes and engenders practices surrounding food and travel. The difference is that their motorcyclic discourse becomes part of a process of hidden currency conversion which turns metrosexual culinary femininity into working-class culinary masculinity.

Object of male homosociality

A third problematic issue the Hairy Bikers must carefully address is the fact that they are a pair of men cooking together. Throughout most of their various programmes, careful comments are often made to clarify and reaffirm their heterosexuality ('we even sleep together ... but not in that way!'). One of the ways in which the potential slippage between male homosociality and homosexuality is avoided in the Hairy Bikers' shows is through the inclusion of scenes where they are not just cooking together, but eating and riding together (not to mention other mundane practices like bathing, sleeping and shopping together). In his seminal, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), de Certeau argues that, 'every story is a travel story – a spatial practice. For this reason, spatial practices concern everyday tactics' (de Certeau 1984: 115). Food travelogues are stories about places told through everyday tactics including 'doing-cooking'

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(Giard 1998: 153), from preparing, cooking and eating food, visiting food establishments, buying and selling ingredients. In gastro-motorcyclism, 'doing-motorcycling' is equally centralised, including everyday practices such as motorcycle maintenance, fuelling, breaking down, accidents and riding itself.

By bringing all these practices into a single narrative of everyday life, rather than domesticating and thus potentially feminising and/or homosexualising the Hairy Bikers, their gastro-motorcyclic narrative instead turns their cooking into masculinised acts of homosocial interaction. Sedgwick (1985) defines male homosocial desire as consisting of a whole spectrum of bonds between men, enabled through the traffic in women. In this light, it is food and motorcycles – not women – which become the means of homosocial exchange between the Hairy Bikers. In other words, both food and motorcycles become (feminised) objects that need handling, working with, fixing, coaxing and consuming: these gastro-motorcyclic processes enable the Hairy Bikers to navigate safely between heterosexuality and homosociality while avoiding their homosexualisation. In 'mastering' their culinary and motorcyclic skills, gastro-motorcyclic scenes of everyday life also reaffirm the Hairy Bikers' male dominance and culinary masculinity within the realms of television home cookery. Food and motorcycles are their 'female assistants'.

In their discussion of Jamie Oliver-related imagery, Brownlie and Hewer (2007: 239–49) argue that food becomes a facilitator of social communication with other men, especially in relation to traditional workplace-related notions of masculinity: a 'pair of scruffily dressed plumbers, electricians or joiners enjoying a well-earned break from the labour of typical male work within the kitchen—decorating, plumbing, construction, wiring, joinery etc.' Similarly, the motorcycle also becomes a facilitator of male companionship, where talking together while riding constitutes a form of masculinised camaraderie and homosocial intimacy. In this context, cooking and eating food together become acceptable again as they become necessary 'everyday tactics' (de Certeau 1984: 115) of survival on the road: part of a 'pit-stop break', something to punctuate travel and sustain them through tiring long-distance journeys. Ironically, the quotidian aspects of home cooking enable the Hairy Bikers to present their culinary homosociality as masculine, practical, necessary joint practices of everyday life on the road. The culinary motorcycle thus

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equalises cooking and riding, turning them into parts of an everyday adventure narrative of the road, which nearly always has been a masculine form of discourse (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Masculine culinary spaces

In her discussion of different cookery programmes, Strange (1998: 305) argues that male hosts like Keith Floyd are framed by their 'role as *male* adventurer, as traditionally masculine it its dynamic journey through the public sphere as [Delia] Smith's private sphere is traditionally feminine'. This legacy continues. In almost all her cooking shows, Lawson is presented as a 'domestic Goddess',¹⁵ alone in her kitchen as viewers are invited to indulge in the 'vicarious consumption' (Adema 2000) of her not-so-guilty pleasures of cooking and eating (not to mention of Lawson herself too). Ironically, Lawson's post-feminist return to the domestic as a form of female empowerment can only be realised through spatial entrapment and immobility. Even the Two Fat Ladies who are mobile and ride around the country on their Triumph Thunderbird and side car in



Figure 6.1 The Two Fat Ladies cooking indoors during their Christmas Episode (1997).

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trousers and goggles always eventually end up cooking indoors wearing dresses in what is usually a home kitchen and a traditionally domestic scene (Figure 6.1). Female chefs are only allowed temporary mobility, they can only play at being adventurous: a woman's place seems to indeed be in the kitchen after all. The exception to this is when 'ethnic' female chefs travel to 're-connect with their roots' and/or explore their culinary lineage: for example, think of British television chef Ching-He Huang in *Exploring China: A Culinary Adventure* (2012); but even then she was still accompanied by American television (male) chef Ken Hom.

Male cooking hosts, on the other hand, are free to roam as adventurers or, if shown indoors, in their professional environment as chefs or judges with paying customers in mind (Michel Roux, Marcus Waring and Marco Pierre White, to name a few). Should a male chef appear in a home kitchen setting, then he is usually accompanied by other family members or friends ('day off from work with the family') or references to other family members ('my mother's recipe' 'my kids love this') which ultimately establishes their dominant and patriarchal role within a domestic sphere. Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver in particular make ample use of their various family members 'at home'. In discussing the Jamie Oliver brand, Brownlie and Hewer (2007: 229) argue that Oliver appropriates the domestic space of the kitchen in a very masculine style of cooking which emphasises a 'naively roughish "laddishness" or "blokishness", rendering it in domesticated form'. In other words, male chefs at home must also covert the domestic space into a masculinised playground, adopting presentational techniques which are 'ludicrous or childlike' ensuring the preservation of 'real males' (Goffman 1979: 36); telling jokes, banter, throwing food, pranks, mock punches and so on.

As scholars dealing with concepts relating to space have taught us (Massey 2005; Bell and Valentine 1997, 1995; Lefebvre 1991), spaces are by no means empty locales devoid of meaning. Spaces actively shape and are shaped by engendered, classed, raced, sexualised practices: culinary spaces are no different, they regulate, organize and produce gendered and classed bodies, practices and identities surrounding food. For example, in S1E8 of *The Hairy Bikers' Bakeation* (2012), we find the Hairy Bikers uncharacteristically in a professional kitchen by themselves. They explain to the viewers how they were supposed to film in a 'lovely orchard overlooking Bilbao' but had to borrow the local catering college as 'it was

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wazzing it down'. They then proceed to put on the same mock 'posh' accents: 'Now I am going to talk about *pan rustica* [pause] I feel quite official now. Do you?' By physically occupying an 'official' culinary space (local catering college), the Hairy Bikers thus embody its expected classed practices but, at the same time, differentiate themselves through parody and colloquialism.

King begins to knead the dough manually while Myers laughs at the fact that there are food mixers lined up behind him ('if you have a food mixer with a dough hook it's dead easy; if you got a Geordie with an attitude, it's even easier . . . sucker!' says Myers between giggles). They both agree that they are 'only kneading this because we're outside normally'. As already established earlier, culinary elitism often poses a challenge to the Hairy Bikers' working-class culinary identity and so they must negotiate the indoor, official space they occupy through culinary counter-practices occurring within. By kneading the dough by hand and refusing technology, the Hairy Bikers turn the act of baking and its related educational instruction into a display of manual labour and traditionalism linked to domesticity and home cooking (the average viewer will not have a professional food mixer with a dough hook). If home cooking and the kitchen become a 'comforting resolution to late modernity's challenge to tradition' (Duruz 2004: 64), by doing things in the 'authentic' and 'old-fashioned way', the Hairy Bikers find a comforting resolution to their work-class identities in crisis within an 'official' kitchen. Similarly, by referring to how they are kneading dough because they are 'outside normally', the Hairy Bikers also turn a feminised, domestic and traditional activity into a more masculinised, outdoor challenge. These are the kind of men that are so resourceful that they can bake outdoors (in the same episode, the Hairy Bikers proof yeast in their motorcycle top-boxes).

Televisually (and generally speaking), bringing motorcycles indoors – especially into a kitchen – is not a very practical feat. However, removing a kitchen out of the home and taking it to the motorcycle is: this process becomes a spatialising technique of gender and class. Throughout most of their cooking shows, the Hairy Bikers always set up an outdoor kitchen: usually, a set of tables with basic kitchen equipment needed for chopping, cooking and even baking. By externalising the culinary space, the kitchen loses both its institutionalised (and thus classed) affiliations while transposing a domesticated 'female' interiority into the realms of

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'masculine' exteriority. In fact, the spatialisation of 'mobile domestic masculinity' (Bell and Hollows 2007: 27) is quite a common televisual technique. Oliver is often presented cooking outdoors – even in the middle of winter – apparently using the garden/field as his kitchen because his 'missus' complains about the mess he leaves in their indoor home kitchen. Here, culinary space demarcates gender difference; gender difference is produced spatially through culinary practice. However, what is so unique about the Hairy Bikers' external kitchen is the presence of their motorcycles in the background. Often in gastro-motorcyclism, the motorcycle is presented as a means of transport for the chef-rider to move between food destination A and food destination B. Once arrived, there are shots of the motorcycle parked outside a place as part of a localisation shot. But in the Hairy Bikers' case, the motorcycle is part of the kitchen and is present throughout subsequent shots.

By contrast to other motorised vehicles used in cookery shows (trains, trucks, cars, camper vans), the motorcycle's size and ability to reach off-road locations enables the Hairy Bikers to further authenticate their culinary persona: chef-riders who can go 'off the beaten track' and away from the masses. For example, in *Hairy Bikers' Cookbook* (2006, S1E3), the Hairy Bikers ride on the main road – another dominant system of regulation – along with all the other bikers visiting the TT races on the Isle of Man. However, when cooking, they go off the main road and claim a site on the beach where even the pedestrianised road dissolves (Figure 6.2). Not only does the motorcycle enable literal and symbolic distancing from the 'mainstream' by demarcating difference (the Hairy Bikers' motorcycles almost form a boundary, the 'back wall'), it simultaneously creates a liminal space between the private and the public. That is, a culinary space that belongs both to the interior world of the domestic kitchen and the exterior world of public roads and transport. In occupying such a liminal space, the Hairy Bikers are able to negotiate their own culinary gender and class identities through the blurring of boundaries between mobility/immobility, private/public, consumption/production and so on.

Conclusion: The Paradox of Meals on Two-Wheels

The culinary motorcycle enables the Hairy Bikers to articulate and protect their working-class, heterosexual and masculine identities within the

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Figure 6.2 The Hairy Bikers at the TT races on the Isle of Man (2006), their motorbikes visibly demarcating a liminal cooking space.

feminised world of home cooking. By the same token, their very status as home cooks also enables the Hairy Bikers to push against the traditional patriarchal elitism of a normative culinary class system, a process which reasserts their working-class identities. Part of gastro-motorcyclism is therefore about the use of the culinary motorcycle as a technology of gender and class: it can authenticate class identities; enable the exchange of (sub)cultural and motorcyclic capital; be a safe object of male homosocial exchange; and create acceptable male culinary spaces of resistance. Paradoxically, such gastro-motorcyclic processes also reinforce dominant discourses of heteronormative gender and class by re-establishing the culinary hegemonic status quo: the white, male, middle-class chef remains the dominant force against which the culinary Other (working-class, home cook, women) is always measured.

But perhaps it is this paradox which makes the gastro-motorcyclic genre so successful as a televisual format. If ‘cooking and eating (and watching cookery TV) provide different opportunities for and experiences of “virtual mobility”’ (Bell and Hollows 2007: 24), then ‘virtual’ cooking *and* riding as a viewing exercise in mobility provides a very specific kind of televisual experience. On the one hand, food and cooking – especially home-cooking – become ‘hardened’ by the presence of motorcycles which provide the adventurous and thrilling edge lacking from a more

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domesticated and gentle format. On the other hand, motorcycles and bikers become 'softened' and more accessible to the average viewer through the everyday mundanity and domesticity of cooking and preparing food. In addition, gastro-motorcyclism emerges out of an increasingly mobile British society (cheap flights and holiday packages) and an overall change in British food culture over the last couple of decades. Within such a socio-cultural and economic context, and in being a culinary and motorcyclic cross-over, chef-riders like the Hairy Bikers present multiple points of identification. In doing so they reach a broad audience: from an octopus-steaming urban gastronome or, indeed, a young biker from Leeds in a panic over cooking a meal for a new girlfriend.

PROOF

7

The Techno-Metrosexual: Guy Martin and the Motorised Discourse of Hybrid Masculinity

As far as Guy's concerned, the big picture's not a career in TV or race team management but a life elbows deep in the guts of a Scania engine. The son of a truck mechanic remains a truck mechanic and will do for a long time yet. But Guy isn't obsessed with only heavy-duty spanner work. He also possesses the expertise and finesse to meticulously assemble and tune cutting-edge racing bikes. Guy might be the only TT rider ever to set a lap record with an engine he tuned and built himself.

Guy Martin's website¹

David Coulthard: It's a pity there isn't a smell-vision on the television, 'cause you smell incredible [*shy smile from Guy Martin*]
Is that your own brand of aftershave?

Speed with Guy Martin: Formula 1 Special, 2016

A couple of years ago, I was in a bookshop browsing for Christmas gifts and came across Guy Martin's 'cracking No.1 Bestseller' autobiography, *When You Dead, You Dead* (2015). I realised that I could buy this for my slick cocktails-and-lipstick female, heterosexual non-biker friend who

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would ‘fancy’ him (‘TT racing? Who cares, he’s hot!’), but equally gift it to my wrenches-and-wenches male, heterosexual biker friend who would ‘relate’ to him (and anyone else in between). Like Beckham and other sports celebrities before him, Martin presents an accessible masculinity that is both the object of desire and the embodiment of an idealised male subjectivity. But unlike many other sports celebrities – including Beckham – Guy Martin is a true cross-over celebrity in the sense that he sits across various gender, class and fame dichotomies. On the one hand, he is presented as the quintessential British northern working-class male who reluctantly rose to fame, a truck mechanic providing a service with his ‘elbows deep in the guts of a Scania engine’. On the other hand, he is also presented as a high performance TT racer, a global contender (he has, for example, broken a few world records)² and a charismatic television presenter with famously stylised side-burns whose aftershave ‘smells incredible’.

I want to explore this hybrid form of mediated British masculinity, one which has emerged in the last decade and is embodied by television-based celebrities like Martin or Edd China from *Wheeler Dealers* (2003–present). I refer to this hybrid figure as the ‘techno-metrosexual.’ The techno-metrosexual adopts traditionally masculinist and often working-class practices and sensibilities surrounding technology and automobile culture; but, despite and perhaps because of this, he simultaneously contests and subscribes to aspects of traditional metrosexualism with its emphasis on urban lifestyle, consumption and personal grooming (Simpson 1994; Miller 2005; Coad 2008). In other words, the techno-metrosexual represents a form of ‘hybrid masculinity’ (Demetriou 2001; Arxer 2011; Bridges 2014; Bridges and Pascoe 2014) that is neither/both embedded in the world of metrosexual consumer culture nor/and fully a part of traditional working-class culture of manual labour. The techno-metrosexual is thus simultaneously ‘dirty but clean’: too practical, greased up and consciously working-class to represent the image- and status- conscious traditional metrosexual (like Beckham) or the Belstaff-wearing luxury hobbyist as explored through Ewan McGregor and Davidoff’s *Cool Water Adventure* in Chapter 5;³ but too ‘clean’ and fashionably style-conscious to be part of a traditionalist and masculinist world of cars and auto-mechanics working in a garage. As shall become clear, the merging of such different socio-cultural spheres can present potential moments of crisis that result in the temporary destabilisation of

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techno-metrosexual gender and class. I argue that technology (in this context the motorcycle) becomes the discursive and material means by which the techno-metrosexual can safely negotiate and articulate his multiplicitous masculinity.

Part of the reason why I want to understand the techno-metrosexual is because we need to re-think and reframe the figure of the metrosexual in the context of contemporary media and popular culture. The original metrosexual of the 1990s has been understood as a classed, sexualised and gendered subject, whose masculinity is very much constructed through questions of (self-)consumption, social mobility and the aestheticisation of the body. Fleming and Sturm (2011: x) conceptualise the metrosexual as representing the ‘feminisation’ of men, a figure who destabilises underpinning symbolic oppositions of identity. Such a dichotomous approach to gender is, of course, problematic in itself, as it binds masculinity and femininity down to a set of essentialised binary oppositions: for example, equating the wearing of aftershave/fragrances to ‘femininity’; as explored in Chapter 5, this is clearly not the case and the gendered process involved are more nuanced. Furthermore, in the context of an increasingly socially networked and selfe-driven ‘Westernised’ culture which values the continuous aestheticisation of the self in *both* men and women, one must ask: is smelling or looking good really still about the ‘feminisation’ of men?

Qualities previously deemed as exclusive to the metrosexual have perhaps become more normalised and commonplace. Rather than marking his death (Simpson 2014), the metrosexual has become absorbed and subsumed more generally into everyday popular culture and practices. No longer does the metrosexual belong to just the urban, white-collar worker who has expendable income, but he is also now a figure who, increasingly, can be found anywhere, from Instagram to even a garage or a car-based television show. The techno-metrosexual is a result of the metrosexual’s absorption into general popular culture, emerging as a particular hybrid figure of masculinity. As a mediated commodity on television, the techno-metrosexual is thus very lucrative in his ability to appeal to different contemporary audiences and gazes, while also providing the comfort of security in his representation of traditional values surrounding gender, class and sexuality.

The following will dissect the ideological anatomy of the techno-metrosexual through an analysis of Guy Martin and his motorcycle, focusing

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on a particular special episode from his television series – *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special* – aired in 2016 on Channel 4.⁴ In this particular episode, Martin and retired F1 racer, David Coulthard, take part in a series of competitive challenges ‘designed to test the defining aspects of racing’ and is presented as ‘the ultimate bike versus car challenge’. The entirety of the episode relies on presenting a duel–dual oppositionality to dramatise competition between the two men who must go ‘head to head’ against each other (Figure 7.1). There are constant references to the contrasting differences between the two men’s respective vehicles, practices, lifestyles, humour and bodies. Other television shows like *Top Gear* (2002–15) have been using such a style and format, where the contrast between the presenters become part of a discursive production of different masculinities as embodied by Richard Hammond, James May and Jeremy Clarkson. How can we understand the techno-metrosexual within this context? How can the techno-metrosexual embody not just one but various forms of masculinity?

The competitive racing and jovial banter between Martin and Coulthard as they ‘battle each other on and off the track’ are thus not only televisual techniques that engender and class different forms of masculinity, but also highlight the various tensions that push and pull at the techno-metrosexual. Bringing these considerations together, there are three key areas I want to look at which challenge and define Martin’s techno-metrosexual identity: the technologised body; homosocial relations; and working-class identities. Ultimately, I argue that the machines, not to mention the presence of Coulthard, enable Martin to safely articulate traditional working-class male sensibilities while being part of a metrosexual consumer culture.

Techno-Metrosexual Body: Motorised Discourse of Masculinity

One of the defining aspects of metrosexual masculinity is the aestheticisation and self-beautification of the body. As Coad’s (2008) discussion on the profitable use of athletes to model underwear and fashion reveals, sports like football, rugby or swimming/diving seem to have a high production rate of metrosexual bodies being pushed through the conveyor belt of popular consumption. From David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo, Jonny Wilkinson, Ian Thorpe to Tom Daley, these commodified male celebrity bodies have been subject to multiple gazes (in true metrosexual

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Figure 7.1 Martin/motorcycle and Coulthard/racing car go ‘head-to-head’ in *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special* (2016).

style, this gaze can be male, female, hetero/homo-sexual): one where the male body is on display during the sporting event (e.g. Ronaldo flashing his torso as he handles his top); and one where the body is on display outside of the sporting activity (e.g. Beckham modelling for Emporio Armani, Calvin Klein or H&M). Whatever gaze, male metrosexual aesthetics involve the ‘body beautiful in all its near-naked glory’ (Coad 2008: 87) where every masculine contour can be visually devoured.

But what about F1 or motorcycle racing where the whole body, including hands and head, is completely covered in protective sportswear, to the extent that the rectangular strip across the eyes (where the visor is open) is the only visible part? One could argue that these protective all-body suits are skin tight and thus amount to the same fetishisation and ‘spornification’ of the athletes: ‘where sport got into bed with porn while Armani took pictures’ (Simpson 2014: np). But in the case of motorcycle racing, unlike superhero suits which *highlight* musculinity (think of Batman’s abs-shaped armour), motorcycle racing suits have so much protective padding in non-strategic places (such as behind the neck or elbows and knees) to render the male

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body somewhat misshapen, even comical, resembling the hunchback of Notre Dame (Figure 7.2). Some other sports happen slowly enough for the camera to be able to zoom in, for example on Tom Daley's twitching pecs as he prepares to dive. In contrast, motorcycle racing is so fast that not only is the body misshapen, covered and invisible, it is too fast to be subject to any prolonged spornification, even in slow-motion.⁵ In fact, with both F1 and motorcycle racing, spectators rely on colour, sponsor's logo, model and athlete's racing number (Martin's being the famous 8) as there are no defining features of the body to distinguish one racer from another. In this sense, technology – the motorcycle – stands in for the male body (or lack thereof) inasmuch as the (sponsored) racer stands in for the motorcycle and the brand responsible for producing that technology: in the context of this episode, Coulthard represents Red Bull, while Martin represents BMW.

While the body-altering suits and lack of visible body might seem at odds with metrosexual practices that find any excuse to display the body beautiful, on the contrary the techno-metrosexual is as equally focussed on self-care, stylisation, maintenance and the performance of the body. But he articulates this through technology: a techno-metrosexual articulation through a motorised discourse of masculinity. This involves two main themes surrounding the motorcycle and motorcycling. First, the preoccupation with vehicle specs and factual details converts masculinity into a series of quantifiable data, enabling its gendered measurement and assessment of masculinity. Second, the breakdown of man and machine, where the machine not only becomes the body, but the body simultaneously becomes the machine that needs training in order to dominate and control itself. Let us explore these two themes closer.

Quantifiable masculinity: specs and pecs

We're here for two days, so I think we can learn a lot more about the sport, the technology, engineering, everything. But we need a bit of measuring, bit of a measuring stick

Guy Martin, *F1 Special*

In *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology* (2014), Rettberg examines the idea of quantitative self-representation in relation to the data we generate,

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Figure 7.2 As appealing as the hunchback of Notre Dame.

particularly the ones which are recorded, analysed and stored via technology. Rettberg argues that one of the reasons behind our need to produce quantitative data on ourselves is due to our desire to measure our lives: 'being able to measure something gives us the sense that we can control it. We can work to improve it, whether it's a marketing campaign or our productivity or our health' (Rettberg 2014: 62). Indeed, the entire episode of *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special* begins with a single sentence uttered by Martin, written across the screen: 'racing improves the breed'; shortly after, he states therefore that 'we need a bit of measuring'. Both human and technological participants of the episode are referred to in genealogical terms ('breed', 'pedigree') where each 'generation' is supposedly better than the last, 'improved' in speed, agility, efficiency and

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other quantifiable indicators. Such an emphasis on (self-)improvement of the body – especially through racing, part of what Pronger (1990) describes as ‘orthodox masculinity’ defined by ‘conventional masculine values of power, muscular strength, competition’ (1990: 177) – resonates strongly with the neo-liberalist metrosexual who prosumes his own body. He consumes (beauty, health, fitness) to improve his body, which in turn produces a body for broader consumption. Measuring enables the ‘tracking’ of this improvement, but in being done through technology, such a metrosexualised sensibility becomes subsumed in the language of numbers and mechanical facts.

On the surface, this episode is thus about measuring to compare differences through quantifiable data, where numerical specification and results assess and measure technology, using technology: which is better, the F1 car or the sports bike? As if to kick-start this set-up, shortly after Martin’s comments, the viewers are presented with two information cards (like trading cards) which have the images of the two vehicles concerned, each with some facts underneath. In many ways, of course, the provision of information on vehicle specs is relatively typical of auto-shows.

But as Drucker (2011) argues in her discussion about the visualisation of data, such facts and figures as above become naturalised, ‘pass themselves off as mere descriptions of a priori conditions’ while hiding the situated, partial and constitutive character of knowledge production. Numerical values relating to vehicle specifications can often be a way of measuring how ‘manly’ (or not) its handler is: ‘power’, ‘speed’, ‘weight’ are very much gendered qualities; being able to handle a powerful machine makes the handler in turn ‘powerful’ and thus more ‘masculine’: females

Table 7.1 Two information cards presented on *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special* (2016), with vehicle specs for both Coulthard’s car and Martin’s motorcycle.

Red Bull Racing RB8 (Coulthard)	BMW S1000 RR (Martin)
Engine: 2.4 Litre V8	Engine: 1000 CC In-line 4
Max Power: 750 bhp	Max Power: 220 bhp
Top Speed: 210 mph (est.)	Top Speed: > 200 mph
Weight: 570 kg	Weight: 162 kg
0–60 MPH: <2 seconds	0–60 MPH: <2 seconds
Cost: £5 million (est.)	Cost: £250,000 (est.)

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who can handle the weight, for example, become 'butch'; or men who might be too short to ride certain motorcycles as they are 'below average' become emasculated. Like medical discourses and practices that subject the body to a 'medical gaze' through measurements and assessments (Foucault 1989), technological practices also produce normative discourses surrounding the gendered body, masked by the 'fact' of numerical specification. Measuring technology can thus be a form of measuring gender and, most of all, naturalising difference in the guise of 'data', or what Drucker (2011) argues should be 'capta'.

In other words, while these information cards present us with quantifiable 'facts' about the two vehicles, they also produce a gendered discourse of (competing) masculinities (Connell 1995), where the two men's physical, social, cultural and economic worth are measured and compared through technology. The episode is almost entirely based on producing quantifiable results and numerical data – formally and informally – which, beyond their competitive value, construct Coulthard and his F1 racing car as being the dominant and 'manlier' male, in comparison to Martin and his motorcycle, both of which become numerically subordinated and thus potentially read as a 'weaker' form of masculinity. Informally, the episode frequently refers to differences between the two men based on quantifiable values: Coulthard has a larger crew of 11 men against Martin's 'man from Ireland', more expensive equipment, bigger trailer, not to mention being physically taller than Martin. Formally, apart from the four racing challenges, there is one particular scene where Coulthard and Martin are subjected to a series of physical tests which represent the quantification of the male body.

Coulthard and Martin are at the Porsche Human Performance Laboratory, which, according to their website, offer 'physiological analysis of your performance to *measure* output, *track* your progress and maintain precision in your training and preparation' (Porsche website, emphasis added) where they undergo two different tests crucial to 'racing fitness',⁶ one to measure their hand-grip strength and the other to measure their reaction speed and peripheral vision. Both men are given a device to grip while being told that, for a racing driver, the measurement should be around 65 kg of force: Coulthard measures 49.4 kg, while Martin measures 35.9 kg. These results are then followed by the narrator explaining how the 'the motorcycle rider needs a delicate touch so they can twist the throttle

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smoothly' (cutting back to Coulthard and Martin, the former joking Martin must thus be a 'gentle lover'). By contrast, the narrator then states, 'the forces involved in muscling an F1 car are far more physical'. Here, the use of words like 'delicate' and 'smoothly' – traditionally used to feminise objects and people – engender Martin and his motorcycle as the subordinate male and machine, in comparison to Coulthard and his F1 car that needs forces that involve 'muscling' and are 'far more physical' (i.e. require more 'masculine strength').

Coulthard's various numerical values as measured by technology thus substantiate the discursive production of a dominant, hegemonic masculinity;⁷ Martin's data – or *capta* – on the other hand construct him as the 'gentle' man: precisely the kind of discourse surrounding the 'feminine side' of the metrosexual, problematised by Coad (2008) in relation to the construction of binary oppositions. Therefore, the quantification and thus consequent verification of masculinity as measured by a piece of technology that reads the body, produces normative discourses of the male body hidden in the form of data. Furthermore, such technological measurements also serve to demarcate the boundaries between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities, valued differently through datafication and numerical hierarchy. Within the context of this episode, Martin embodies the quantified techno-metrosexual subject: engaged in masculinist pursuits – he is a no-nonsense lorry mechanic and sports bike racer – he can still generate measurements 'above average'; yet, within such structures, he is also a product of a gendered metrosexualised discourse which typically 'feminises' masculine identity (e.g. 'delicate', 'gentle' and 'smooth'), 'substantiated' through the comparatively lower numerical values achieved within traditional categories of masculine worth.

Breakdown of man and machine

As the scenes in the Porsche Human Performance Laboratory demonstrate, there is a blurring of human and machine throughout the episode. Even the four racing challenges between Coulthard and Martin are presented in a way that is unclear – perhaps intentionally so – as to whether it is the machines or the driver/rider that are being tested: 'a Drag Race will test acceleration; High-speed Braking; a Slalom will assess ability to rapidly change direction; and finally, a Race around the famous Grand Prix circuit.' Reflecting on

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Connell's (1995) ideas on masculinity as being shaped through the subordination of women to men based on gender difference, Fleming and Sturm (2011: x) propose that contemporary masculinity is additionally shaped in relation to the subordination of technology, based on the oppositional difference of human and machine. In fact, the conversion of numerical data into discursive *capta* relies on the very breakdown of (hu)man and machine, for the qualities of one (technological numbers) are transposed into another (human identity) in order to construct normative discourses surrounding gendered bodies and identities.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why the body is measured through technology is due to the desire to improve it, relating directly to Foucault's (1995: 136) ideas on the docile body that needs discipline, so that it may be 'subjected, used, transformed and improved'. In undergoing these tests at the Porsche Human Performance Laboratory – not to mention for the purposes of entertainment – both Coulthard's and Martin's (docile) bodies 'enter the machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it' (Foucault 1995: 138), becoming part of a network of institutions that seek to regulate and produce normative bodies through technology. Like the clinics and prisons as observational institutions regulating docile bodies, in this case both Porsche (automotive industry) and Channel 4 (entertainment industry) ensure that their (docile) bodies are productive for the purposes of consumption, all the while propagating dominant ideologies surrounding masculinity. It is not just the practices relating to the 'techno-culture of physical fitness' (Pronger 2002: 55) which Pronger critiques as reinforcing class, race and gender hegemony, but their mediated re-iteration as 'entertainment'. This in turn becomes part of the discursive production of normative masculinities, all in the name of technological and human improvement.

Yet, the example that is provided as 'the ideal' in this instance is *not* Coulthard or Martin. There is an entire section in the episode dedicated to explaining why the F1 racer's fitness is 'just as crucial as having the best car and the best team', referring to how Coulthard used to tow a gym behind his motorhome: all just to achieve the optimal results that 'combine the endurance of a marathon runner, with the strength of a power lifter, in a body that has less fat than a supermodel' (a hybrid assemblage in itself). While the narrator explains these points, the viewers are presented with stylised images of F1 driver Lewis Hamilton engaged in various forms of

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exercise. In this context, the discipline of the body is not just tied to athletic and technological competency, but also to its aestheticisation within consumer culture: it is not entirely coincidental that the word ‘supermodel’ is used, not to mention the use of Hamilton as an example. After all, Hamilton is a contemporary sporting metrosexual as unafraid of spornification and nudity as Beckham before him, modelling for brands like L’Oreal and ready to be consumed: ‘Phwoar-mula One! Lewis Hamilton shows off his bulging biceps and rippling six-pack as he strips off to front L’Oréal campaign’ gushes the *Daily Mail* (2016).⁸ Metrosexuality thus needs re-thinking and re-contextualising within the context of an increasing pornification of everyday life through the sexualisation of popular consumer culture.

But having said this, Hamilton can only engage in this metrosexualised sporno-world because of his technological disembodiment. In order to display his ‘bulging biceps and rippling six-pack’, Hamilton needs to disavow technology, to be divorced visually from it, to be ‘clean’ and nude where man and machine are separate entities. In that sense, the techno-metrosexual can never fully participate within the metrosexual world where machine-labour is invisible (more on this later) and, instead, only the ‘final product’ of labour is on display, offered *for* consumption. Martin might consume L’Oreal but is too much a *visible* part of the technological production of labour as a lorry mechanic and as a man with a close corporeal relationship to technology to be a full metrosexual commodity *for* the likes of L’Oreal. In other words, Martin is presented predominantly as using his body as a technological part of mechanical productivity, rather than the case of Hamilton who is presented as using technology as a means of disciplining the productive body.

In this manner, unlike the metrosexual, the ‘techno’ for the techno-metrosexual is an important and visible part of his masculine identity defined by the proximity between technology and the male body. Throughout the programme, Coulthard marvels at how much Martin uses his own body weight (rather than the technological mechanisms of the vehicle) to shift his vehicle – how much he is a part of the motorcycle – not to mention the revelation that Martin has metal screws in his hands, demonstrated via an x-ray. While I will discuss issues relating to class in further depth later, suffice to say the proximity between technology and the male body is also one that is marked by additional questions relating to

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corporeality and class. Bourdieu (2010: 210) discusses how ‘the instrumental relation to their own bodies which the working-classes express in all practices directed towards the body (...) is also manifested in choosing sports which demand a high investment of energy, effort or even pain and which sometimes endanger the body itself’, listing motorcycling as one of the sporting examples. Again, the differences between metrosexuality (‘Behold the metrosexual pampered by women, technology and capitalism!’ writes Simpson in 1994) and techno-metrosexuality become defined through the different levels and modes of engagement between the body and technology. Does the body indeed work for the machines, or are the machines working for the body?

Feeling the Vibrations: Homosocial Techno-Love and the Queering of Technology

Simpson (1994: np) describes the metrosexual in the 1980s as a man who ‘was only to be found inside fashion magazines such as *GQ*, in television advertisements for Levi’s jeans or in gay bars’. Such a statement aligns metrosexuality to homosexuality, a process enabled by the naturalisation and conflation of the sex/gender. Because of this conflation, metrosexual relationships potentially involve the destabilisation of symbolic sexual oppositions through the movement between hetero- and homo-stylisations of gendered sociality. From hand-slapping each other in a manner reminiscent of school girls in the playground (see Figure 7.3), referring explicitly to their ‘man-crush’ for one another, to Coulthard suggesting that Martin ‘must be such a gentle lover’ on account of his sensitive grip on the throttle, there are numerous moments during the episode where the two men are filmed engaged in off-track banter, the mast of innuendo erected high as they exchange suggestive double-entendres in the spirit of friendly competitiveness.

One such prolonged moment of homosocial intercourse involves a scene where ‘in between challenges, David and Guy get a chance to have a guided tour of each other’s machinery’. Martin leads Coulthard over to his stationary motorcycle and encourages him to ‘put your foot here and swing your leg over. It’ll be alright. What do you think?’ Coulthard obeys and straddles Martin’s motorcycle gingerly. As Coulthard looks at his body consciously, the ‘guided tour of each other’s machinery’ begins to take on a

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performance of technological intimacy, a queer subtextual exploration of each other's bodies and how they 'fit' into each other's physical configurations. One way of reading this homosocial exchange is by approaching the motorcycle as a replacement for the female figure as the third point of the 'erotic triangle', the mediating body that facilitates the 'erotic rivalry' between men whose bond is stronger to one another than either of their loves (Sedgwick 1985: 21). In other words, this scene is less about the relationship between Martin and his motorcycle or Coulthard and Martin's motorcycle, but rather about the erotic rivalry between Martin and Coulthard as facilitated by the motorcycle.

But the sheer physicality involved in this scene pushes such symbolic and discursive interpretations much further into the realms of corporeal intimacy and proximity, to a point where the motorcycle does not replace the woman, and instead replaces the male owner as a physical extension of their being. In this context, the motorcycle (and later the F1 car) enables the two men to very physically feel each other's presence and corporeal relation to one another; this being achieved via the exploratory positioning of each other's bodies on/in their respective vehicles for the first time. Ironically, as a culturally masculinised piece of technology, the motorcycle simultaneously provides the material means for homosocial intercourse – an erotic triangle of three masculinities (Martin – motorcycle – Coulthard) – while also offering a 'safe' focal point of heteronormativity which becomes their safeguard against their potential homosexualisation.

Like rugby or body-building, there is often a tension surrounding male-dominated activities (motorcycle and F1 racing included) which involve men socially and physically in close proximity with one another. The masculinised sociality in sports has been studied by scholars like Anderson (2008, later revisited with McCormack 2016) and Pronger (1990), the latter who describes the slippage between the homosocial and homosexual in sports as the 'homoerotic paradox'. This is the tension that often results in the externalisation and containment of heterosexual fears surrounding masculine intimacy through performative practices that articulate the opposite yet bring men closer. For example, talking about women sexually and/or making misogynistic jokes enable masculine intimacy while keeping homoeroticism and homosexuality at bay. Referring to metrosexuals and other forms of hybrid masculinities, de Casanova et al. (2016) argue that non-hegemonic masculine performances require legitimation by other men,

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Figure 7.3 Testing reflexes off-track ... patty-cake?

and that therefore such performances in the presence of other men may involve a degree of risk (de Casanova et al. 2016: 67). Martin and Coulthard's homosociality in this instance starts to pose as a potential 'risk', a situation that needs a rapid response of containment and the re-establishing of heterosocial difference.

Sure enough, just as he manoeuvres himself into a pretend riding position, Coulthard gestures at his legs – spread apart due to his sitting position as a rider on the saddle of a sports bike – and says uneasily, 'anything that involves my legs being like this, and sitting forward, is exclusively reserved for being at the doctor, having my prostate checked [*pause*] I feel *very* uncomfortable.⁹ Can I get off now?' Coulthard's physical discomfort and need to sterilise the situation by medicalising his physical stance reads like an attempt to back-pedal masculinity safely back into normativity, to contain any threat against acceptable heterosexual behaviour between men. Here, Coulthard's physical rejection of Martin's motorcycle represents his symbolic rejection of Martin's own technological corporeality: a declaration of his physical mis-fit with Martin.

But just as one thinks that the status of heteronormativity has been regained and restored through Coulthard's physical dismissal of Martin's motorcycle, the pair follow on with what could be considered as an even

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queerer set of actions. Prompted by Martin, who tells him to ‘press the starter button on’, Coulthard reaches over and starts the engine. The motorcycle emits a deep rumble and Coulthard says, ‘I *have* to do this’ while giving the throttle a few twists. Then it happens: Coulthard takes a step forward towards the bike, thrusts his hips and lower part of his body towards the engine, grabs the tank with his other hand and looking at Martin says: ‘Can I lean against it? Will I get the vibrations?’ [rolls his eyes] Ooooh hell!’ The look on Coulthard’s face resembles Kenneth Williams’ facial contortions, belonging to a world of high camp and gay sensibility (Sontag 1966; Newton 1979; Cleto 2002). While camp might have died through its commercial appropriation into mainstream culture (Harris 1997), Coulthard’s performative auto-eroticism (in all senses of the word) in front of Martin does momentarily resurrect camp by encouraging an oppositional reading – part of a queer audience reception (Wolf 2013) – which temporarily destabilises gender, technological and sexual identities. Not only is Martin’s high-calibre motorcycle queered into becoming a (boys’) toy for pleasure but, in sharing such a pleasurable moment together, both Coulthard and Martin become part of what could be described as a queer intercorporeality which is facilitated through a technological intimacy which thrusts homosocial masculinity into the realms of homo-sexual/-erotic sociality.

Whether one chooses to read such an incident through the queer lens or not, Coulthard’s good vibrations with Martin does represent the increasing mainstream ‘hybridization of straight men’s identities through the use of gay aesthetics’ (Bridges 2014: 59). In the context of techno-metrosexuality, such a migration of cultural sensibilities from gay to straight stylisations of gender is both facilitated and safely contained through technology. Compared to more ‘feminising’ objects and practices such as male grooming products or dance lessons, technology has a higher ‘masculine’ value. In this way, technology is ‘safer’ insofar that it enables the two men to be more sexually suggestive with each other in ways that might otherwise not be as explicit or acceptable.

Furthermore, as two highly competitive, fearless and accomplished racers in very masculinised, and male-dominated technology-based sports, both Coulthard and Martin represent competing forms of masculinity. It is

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precisely because the two men are at a race track, competing with one other in a series of physical and technological challenges – usually associated with hegemonic practices of masculinity – that such off-track moments of homosocial queerness feel incongruous and transgressive. And yet they ultimately become supportive of the ‘means associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with non-hegemonic masculinity identities’ (Bird 1996: 121). While the scene ends with Martin laughing shyly behind his hands while Coulthard admits that he finds Martin’s motorcycle ‘quite intimidating, it’s quite scary for me’, such displays of masculine affectation and technological affection which ‘queer’ the men ultimately serve the contrasting purpose. They constitute a form of ‘comic relief’ in between and against the rest of the time when they are presented more seriously as powerful males competing over masculine dominance.

As Demetriou (2001) argues in relation to hybrid masculinities, the very process of hybridisation in itself therefore becomes a strategy for the reproduction of patriarchy (2001: 349). The total lack of women and the throng of male pit crew members and technicians running around in the background throughout the entire one-hour episode further reinforces the idea that non-normative displays of masculinity are not only temporary, but ultimately part of the way patriarchy upholds an hegemonic masculinity that is supported by subordinate men and women (or lack of the latter). Technology is also a part of this complicit order of subordination, where mastery over machines becomes another supportive and reinforcing mechanism to protect the dominant and heteronormative *status quo*. In addition, the very fact that both Coulthard and Martin have the option to negate their non-normative articulations of masculinity by simply flexing their muscles and blasting around the circuit a few times reveals how such articulations are not destabilisingly performative, but rather just performances. Neither Coulthard nor Martin’s masculine identities are seriously under question: their homosocial/homoerotic sociality is simply an act devoid of political meaning that even conceals ‘the privileges associated with white, heterosexual masculinity’ (Demetriou 2001; Bridges 2014). Coulthard and Martin can ‘reset’ their status whenever they want to by jumping back on/into their respective machines.

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Ideology of Dirt I: The Mark of Class

Grimsby lorry mechanic and the Monaco superstar discover they have more in common than you may think

Voice-over on *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special*, 2016

Despite the *F1 Special* episode making an effort to construct competitive difference between Martin and Coulthard, there are also moments when the two men are presented as having ‘more in common than you think’ (such as their competitiveness). However, one area in which Martin seems to repeatedly embrace difference and differentiation from Coulthard is his class identity. It is his engagement with technology that seems to enable Martin to negotiate questions of masculine difference through class, specifically his working-class identity. One of the most symbolic and physical ways such a process of classed differentiation is often represented in auto-entertainment is through a given person’s relationship to dirt. By examining Martin’s and Coulthard’s differing relationship to dirt as represented in the *F1 Special* episode, I want to discuss the ideology of dirt. In particular, I want to focus specifically on mechanical dirt and its ability to class people, which in turn point toward some of the significant differences between the metrosexual and the techno-metrosexual.

Base, carnal, visceral and terrestrial. There is something symbolic about dirt that popular culture seems to find irresistible, possibly because dirt often suggests a liberating loss of (sexual?) control. It can sexualise, fetishise and glamorise objects and people: from women grasping phallic tools provocatively (think of Megan Fox as Mikaela Banes in her garage in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*), to men doing the same (John Travolta as Danny, with his mechanics in *Grease*, where sexual- and auto-lubrication collide in high camp). The ‘pornification’ of vehicles and vehicle-servicers through images of dirt and ‘dirtiness’ is ubiquitous across popular culture. But in the context of reality and lifestyle television programmes, ordinary dirt tends to be less about the sexualisation of bodies and objects and more about conveying a sense of labour and effort. While still part of a mediated stylisation of reality, televisual dirt is usually about doing some kind of work in order to be rewarded for the fruits of one’s labour. From gardening, DIY, building houses or outdoor survival, getting ‘dirty’ in these contexts leads to some kind of positive transformation.

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When dirt is mechanical, it is equally a product of labour and usually related to traditionalist men's skills like 'fixing a car', which in turn intersects with issues relating to class and gender. The image of the mechanic with dirt smeared across their overalls and face is one of the most common representations of blue-collar, working-class masculinity: a figure who provides the service for the paying customer. The *F1 Special* episode (as well as Martin's media presentation of himself more generally) takes great pains to mention he is a 'a Grimsby lorry mechanic', including footage of Martin in his blue overalls working away in his garage. Similarly, in one of the off-track challenges between Martin and Coulthard which involves emulating pit stop practices, the voice-over specifies how, compared to the car, the motorcycle's tyre changes consist 'entirely of manual labour'. As if to authenticate his credentials as a mechanic, Martin himself demonstrates how to change the tyre on his motorcycle (unlike Coulthard, whose team must show Martin how to do the same with an F1 car). Later on, Coulthard's own team are described by the narrator as 'happy to let [a] fellow mechanic carry out the gearbox check'. Combined with references to a very regionalised and relatively small town of Grimsby (at least compared to the affluent Monaco with its international inhabitants, including Coulthard), Martin's mechanical versatility, technological intimacy with his motorcycle and familiarity with the mechanics' (working-class) culture ('I got more out of talking to the lads in the garage', Martin states at the end) enables him to differentiate himself against Coulthard who can be read as a more traditionally 'white collar' metrosexual who lets others service him and his car.

Coulthard by contrast refuses any contact with dirt – and thus its associations with working-class labour and culture – at one point announcing how, 'these hands are not meant for [*gesturing labour*]'. Paradoxically for one who is so close to technology through his racing car, Coulthard reflects at the end of the programme that, compared to Martin, 'I'm clearly not as technically passionate and absolutely not as interested in getting my hands dirty as he is' (as he states this, the viewers are presented with footage of Martin joining the mechanics in rolling around tyres). Such reactions to manual-mechanical toil and a refusal to 'get his hands dirty' signals a 'conspicuous abstention from labour' which becomes a 'mark of superior pecuniary achievement and the conventional index of reputability' (Veblen 1994: 25). This aligns to not only the upper- and

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middle-classes but, by extension, with the aspirational sensibilities of a classic metrosexual as a 'young man with a high disposable income, living or working in the city' (Simpson 1994) who goes 'glamping' to avoid getting his clothes and body dirty.¹⁰

For Coulthard, if technology is part of *invisible* labour and the discipline of the self (as discussed earlier) then it is acceptable, while technology as a product of visible labour is not and must be delegated to others who service him. In discussing the differences between working-class and middle-class femininities in relation to hidden/apparent labour as read on the body through appearance, Skeggs (2004: 101 emphasis in the original) argues that 'classed difference can be seen in the value given to *labour* in the production of appearance'. Mechanical dirt and grease are no different to working-class women's 'excessive' make-up: smear it across a face and the bearer makes labour visible and is thus subject to class distinction. Of course, making working-class visible in itself can become laborious *per se*: for example, the back of Martin's second autobiography (*When You Dead, You Dead*, 2015) carries a carefully constructed image of Martin in mechanic's blue overalls, holding a cup of tea, mechanical dirt and grime under his fingernails with a heap of tools and mechanical objects in the background (more on this later). Hence for Coulthard, getting his 'hands dirty' becomes a marker of working-class masculinity, undesirable in the glamorous world of F1 racing, which in itself can be defined as a sporting activity of the elite (Monaco?), practised in 'exclusive places', demanding specific and distinct codes of practice which become the 'surest indicators of bourgeois pedigree' (Bourdieu 2010: 214).

In this context, the motorcycle becomes not just a technology of gender and mediator of masculine gender relations, but a technology of class and a mediator of class relations. In the already mentioned scene involving the emulation of a pit stop, when it is Coulthard's turn to change Martin's motorcycle tyre, we see his entire smirking team gather around him as the narrator states, 'David will have an audience. His pit crew are keen to see him getting his hands dirty for once.' Such moments serve to construct class difference, with Coulthard on the one hand as a middle-class, 'bourgeois pedigree' individual who is impractical, lacks technical know-how and is unwilling to touch dirt; his crew on the other hand – with whom Martin has chosen to side – form a mass, a group of manual labourers serving him by getting their 'hands dirty'. Therefore, separated

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by their different relationships to technology – as servicing and serviced – the two masculinities are made distinct from one another through questions of class and class hierarchy.

In being a man who jokes he has ‘two ladies’ to warm up his gloves (instead of ‘a man’ to warm up his gloves, as Martin suggests), Coulthard can be read in such scenes as a figure (re)asserting his dominance over Martin who, by the same token, can be configured as a complicit and subordinate figure, aligned with the imaginary ‘two ladies’ who are subservient to him. Or rather, Martin’s hybrid masculinity – techno-metrosexuality – enables him to use dirt as a way of embodying technological working-class culture and practices as a form of distinction and identification, while simultaneously allowing him to compete in the same arena of masculinity as Coulthard. Simpson (1994: np) originally described metrosexuality not necessarily as ‘a vice restricted to the poncey Southern middle-classes. Working-class boys are, if anything, even more susceptible to it.’ However, while metrosexuality might represent social mobility where dirt and labour have no place, techno-metrosexuality ensures that working-class identity is not erased. And this is precisely due to the visible articulations of labour.

Within the context of entertainment, such visibility of labour becomes in itself a key source of appeal. As Skeggs (2004: 98) argues in relation to working-class identities and media, ‘some parts of the working-class are represented as offering the potential for consumption’. As a traditionally male working-class job, the mechanic’s outfit, body, skills and knowledge are authenticating and marketable on television, offered for consumption as ‘an experience, an affect, a partial practice, a commodified resource’ (Skeggs 2004: 105). Mechanical dirt becomes re-assigned with a higher exchange value, bankable, as it represents working-class ‘anti-pretentiousness’ (Skeggs 2004: 114–16), a way of critiquing dominant, middle-class and bourgeoisie morality that values cleanliness and restraint. Sure enough, a *Sunday Times* review quotation used as the blurb of *When You Dead, You Dead* describes Martin as ‘unpretentious’, further reinforced by descriptions of him found on his own website: ‘from world speed records, to Spitfire restoration Guy’s programmes are genuine and honest’.¹¹

Furthermore, mechanical dirt from a motorcycle possibly has an even higher exchange value than that of a car’s because the motorcycle itself already represents a ‘cool’ dirtiness within a popularised order of subcultural

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signification. This is something that shows like *Sacred Steel Bikes* (2016); *Azeroth Choppers* (2014); *Biker Battleground Phoenix* (2014); *Orange County Choppers* (2013–current); *American Chopper* (2003–10); *Biker Build-off* (2002–7); and *Build or Bust* (2005–6) capitalise on. Such popularised images of motorcycle mechanics are not only part of a wider cultural discourse surrounding the ‘mythic status of the custom motorcycle and the “outlaw” biker lifestyle in American culture’ (Carroll 2008: 266–7), but also offer up the mechanic as a subcultural commodity for the audience’s consumption of *American* working-class masculinity.

Reflecting the strong American cultural tradition surrounding customised motorcycles, American television seems to dominate the mediascape in terms of motorcycle-themed reality shows involving ‘hard’ motorcycle mechanics at work. There is an abundance of men in such programmes packaging masculinity within homologous televisual assemblage: tattoos, stubble/stylised facial hair, bare arms, bandana and jeans, accompanied with often aggressive ‘macho’ behaviour. These programmes reinforce the existing romanticised figure of the American white working-class hero who ‘embodies a nostalgic America, based on traditional values’ who wears the “uniform” of the white working-class male: tight-fitting blue jeans and white T-shirt, showing off his muscular biceps’ (Kooijman 2008: 29–30).

Martin sits both a part of and outside of such Americanised discourses of blue-collar labour which celebrates ‘traditional consumption of the American dream as coterminous discourses of celebrity identity’ (Carroll 2008: 263). On the one hand, with his known penchant for Yorkshire Tea (enough for the brand to make a special customised package for him),¹² his insistence of living and working in Grimsby, his broad Lincolnshire accent, Martin also seems to represent the traditional celebration of a nationalised, ontological discourse of class, albeit in the context of post-industrial Britain. But on the other hand, Martin’s very brand of Britishness – including his ‘unpretentious’, ‘genuine and honest’ manner – anchors his masculinity firmly into existing media representations of British northern working-class identities in the tradition of British soap operas and other televisual genres (Dyer 1981; Rowbotham and Beynon 2001; Wood and Skeggs 2011). Martin’s particular brand of gendered and classed Britishness moves against the grain of Americanised discourses of blue-collar motorcyclic masculinity. In such a manner, Martin represents a

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hybrid form of masculinity – the techno-metrosexual – who represents a multiplicity of masculinities; masculinities that are increasingly convergent as different conflicting stylisations of men are becoming more acceptable and visible on television.¹³

Ideology of Dirt II: Unpretentious Anti-Celebrity

We've all seen pictures of celebrities and their high-end automobiles. We've seen Bentley's, Aston Martin's, Ferrari's and Lamborghini's as well as all manner of Range Rover and Cadillac Escalade carting them around. Their cars are treated to only the best mechanics and service that money can buy and are used as little more than props to further fuel their celebrity status. There are however, a very select few who, before fame and fortune, were true gear heads in the dirtiest sense of the word. These are celebs who are not afraid to get a little grease under their finger nails, to lie on their backs and wrench off an oil filter or flog the crap out of a high-end machine on the racecourse. These are the Top 10 Celebrity Gear Heads and we love 'em for bringing a little grit to the celebrity world [sic].

18 October 2010, RideLust.com¹⁴

Despite racing being tied to a profession and sponsorship, as the term 'Monaco superstar' (Coulthard) would suggest, expensive motorcycles and cars (especially cars) inevitably become linked at some point or another with ideas of classed leisure and the conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1994) of luxury reserved only for those who are rich and/or famous, 'to further fuel their celebrity status' (as stated in the above quotation from an automotive website). Throughout the episode, we are frequently given figures on how much things cost (Coulthard's Red Bull Racing RB8 costs an estimated £5 million, with its multifunction steering wheel costing £27,000; Martin's BMW S1000 RR costs an estimated £250,000) or provided with enough references to infer the 'high-end' lifestyle of Formula 1 racing: a bigger crew (Martin has the one man, 'Mark driving a van from Ireland') including 'a man flown in from France just to set up' the car. At one point, Coulthard even jokes, 'we are Formula 1, we don't suck' (referring in slang to why F1 are great and, also, to how F1 racers drink

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beverages through a special tube in the car which squirts liquid into the mouth, thus avoiding the vulgarity associated with literal ‘sucking’).

Inasmuch as Coulthard needs to demonstrate his ‘conspicuous abstention from labour’ (Veblen 1994: 25) by letting his larger team absorb the labour of production – getting *their* hands dirty – his ‘wealth of power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence’ (Veblen 1994: 24). In this case, the economic, cultural and social value of his car is very much on display. By contrast and providing a reference point for the majority of the viewing audience is Martin, who often reacts with shock at the price of an object or makes fun of Coulthard’s superior pecuniary, social and cultural position. In this manner, the world of glamour, luxury and fame which values shiny smiles and cleanliness (and hidden labour) is juxtaposed against the world of mechanics, labour and dirt, above and beyond reach but ultimately more ‘authentic’, ‘genuine’ and ‘unpretentious’:

A most engaging, natural and unpretentious writer, an anti-celebrity to celebrate.

Sunday Times review of *When You Dead, You Dead*

As mentioned earlier, the idea of ‘unpretentiousness’ – or what Skeggs (2004: 114–6) refers to as ‘anti-pretentiousness’ – is not only related to working-class identities, but to questions of celebrity. While celebrities may be part of a social class bearing the ‘mark of superior pecuniary achievement’ (Veblen 1994: 25) which grants them access to ‘the best mechanics and service that money can buy’, there is also subcultural value in celebrities who can handle dirt because it can bring ‘a little grit to the celebrity world’. While a car protects from the grime and muck, motorcycles fling mud, dust, splattering mosquitoes, road salt and general dirt directly onto the rider: the ideal visual antidote to the ‘high-end’ lifestyle of luxury of living with ‘fame and fortune’.

‘Clean’ celebrities like David Beckham or Ewan McGregor appear to ‘dirty’ their image by embarking on long-distance motorcycle rides,¹⁵ taking great measures to document their global efforts at two-wheeled travel for television. Here, the motorcycle acts as a de-celebritying object – an ‘anti-material materialism’ (Skeggs 2004: 106) – where ‘the experience he’s [David Beckham] buying is an attempt at some kind of non-celebrity normality’ (Wollaston 2014: np). Mechanical dirt enables both the visualisation of the riches-to-rags transformation of an un-pampered

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celebrity who becomes 'down to earth' and 'normal', as well as enabling the celebrity to project alternative glamour as 'authentic', 'rugged' and 'real'. Within the contemporary context of reality television and social-networking micro-celebrities (Senft 2013) who maintain their fan base through the performance of intimacy, authenticity, access and the construction of a consumable persona (Marwick and Boyd 2011: 140), mechanical dirt on celebrities sell ('we love 'em for bringing a little grit to the celebrity world'). Dirt brings 'clean' celebrities closer to the audience as common spectators through a carefully constructed and consumable media persona who is unpretentious enough to be authentic, accessible, unafraid and 'normal' enough to show dirt.

But unlike Beckham or McGregor, both fellow British men who have found global success, Martin's relationship to his motorcycle (not to mention his stardom) is far more domestic and domesticated. At one point during *Speed with Guy Martin: F1 Special*, Martin compares getting back on his motorcycle after a temporary hiatus as being 'just like putting a pair of old slippers on'.¹⁶ Such statements ironically de-glamorise the motorcycle by turning it into a mundane and everyday object, devoid of danger and even providing a sense of home comfort: not to mention how Martin is more of a television personality and thus is consumed with 'home viewers' in mind. In the words of Walton (2016a: 197), 'Guy Martin represents the moment when something of the mentality of the reality show meets the sport's documentary', where his appeal lies precisely in being able to embody the intersection where 'cult of the rider meets the cult of the reality-show celebrity' (Walton 2016: 199). The motorcycle is thus able to move between the cultural and the subcultural, the glamorous and ordinary, from celebrity to anti-celebrity, as quick as it can speed away. In this sense, the motorcycle is ideal for Martin as a techno-metrosexual whose mediated masculinity relies on being both the 'anti-celebrity celebrity', dirty but clean, and the anti-commodity commodity, socially mobile yet working-class.

Conclusion: Techno-Metrosexual or just Metrosexual 2.0?

Whether as a lorry mechanic, a super bike racer or as a heroic survivor of many accidents, Martin's relationship to technology reveals how machines become a means of both constructing and articulating different gendered

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and classed identities; mainly, because the machines themselves are already assigned with a set of social, cultural and monetary values through the practices that surround them. For example, the F1 racing car and the super bike might both be 'masculine', but their differences are often marked by the demarcations of class, which are in turn embodied by the steerer of the vehicle. As we have examined, it is technology that enables Martin to articulate a hybrid identity that resonates with both traditional working-class and metrosexual sensibilities.

This chapter has therefore re-framed the 'original' metrosexual of the 1990s as a classed, sexualised and gendered subject whose masculinity has been very much constructed through questions of (self-)consumption, social mobility and the aestheticisation of the body. As argued at the beginning of this chapter, so ubiquitous has the metrosexual become since its original popular emergence in the 1990s – especially as embedded even further in the world of sports (spornosexuals) and celebrities – that no longer is he just a part of white-collar, urban brigade. He has, in fact, now become subsumed more widely. In order to understand the transformation of the metrosexual, I have tried to explore how he has become technologised. As a piece of technology and as a type of sports equipment, the motorcycle becomes a way of understanding the various different kinds of tensions faced by the contemporary metrosexual who inhabits an increasingly technologised world. This is a world which encourages hybridity, fluidity and mobility while it simultaneously celebrates traditionalist values grounded within existing dominant social structures that continue to organize, regulate and discipline gendered, classed and normative bodies and identities.

Martin represents contemporary masculinity in a neo-liberal age of self-promotion and entrepreneurialism of the body: a return to the Renaissance perhaps, where no longer can a man be secure in singularity, he must be able to present hybridity and multiplicity at all times. As a mediated entity, someone like Martin is representative of how the techno-metrosexual can be a lucrative televisual commodity. This lies in his ability to appeal to different audiences and gazes, while also providing the comfort of security in his representation of traditional values surrounding gender, class and sexuality. This is why my female friends can 'fancy' his side-burns and hair, while my male friends in general like him for being 'down to earth'.

PART IV

Anime/Manga

PROOF

PROOF

8

Nuclear Dreams: Dis-Orienting the Human/Machine in *Akira*

Posters, T-shirts, stickers, fan art to real-life custom motorcycle replicas¹ – a look at any of these products will reveal that one of the most enduring and ubiquitous images related to the Japanese animation film, *Akira* (1988), is Kaneda's red motorcycle (Figure 8.1). As a Japanese biker and cyberpunk fan, I have (a little too predictably) always been drawn to *Akira* for this reason. What does the motorcycle mean in *Akira*? When it got down to really thinking about Kaneda's motorcycle (and other motorcycles in general) in *Akira*, I realised that they only really appear in a prolonged way at the start of the film. Despite being so central to the psycho-visual ethos of *Akira*'s cyberpunk aesthetics, Kaneda's iconic feet-forward crimson two-wheeler has a disproportionately small amount of reel-time. Related, for a work of art so influential and embedded within cyberpunk and cyber-cultural discourse, it seems peculiar that little scholarly attention has been paid to the examination of the motorcycle itself as a piece of technology and nexus for human/machine interaction. I seek to rectify this crimson oversight in this chapter within the context of Japanese culture and gender identities. What does the motorcycle do to Japanese gender identities in *Akira*?

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Apart from an action sequence at the start of *Akira*, which involves two rival motorcycle gangs chasing each other through Neo-Tokyo, there are also other more minor moments when the red motorcycle makes its appearance. Kaneda's motorcycle appears during moments of crises and almost always marks a symbolic convergence of technology, body and identity. But here I would like to challenge some of the most prevalent ways in which the human/machine interface in cyberpunk discourses has been understood. Through an analysis of the motorcycles in *Akira* – particularly Kaneda's red motorcycle – I want to re-think three key ideas within Cybercultural Studies (Haraway 1991; Bukatman 1993; Featherstone and Burrows 1995; Gray 1995; Hayles 1999; Bell and Kennedy 2000): that machines become a means to escape the very machinations of being human and the human race; that machines pose a systematic threat to human identity and humanity; and that whether celebrated or feared as above, machines and technology ultimately represent the future. A large portion of cyberpunk discourse brings one or more of these ideas together, thereby exploring and questioning how humans and humanity are transformed through some kind of machinic intervention with utopian and/or dystopian consequences. However, if we examine the representation of Kaneda's motorcycle in *Akira*, what begins to emerge is the reverse: that machines provide a means to secure unstable human identities and move *towards* being human (again); that it is the human-organism which overtakes machines – not the other way around – and poses a threat to humanity; and that machines represent the *past*.

Furthermore, underpinning my re-conceptualisations of these existing cyberpunk ideologies is my desire to 'dis-Orient' (Ahmed 2006: 111) some of the theoretical directions involving bodies, technology and gender; namely those conceptualisations that racialise the 'corporeal schema' in cyberpunk discourses like *Akira*. I argue that some Western feminist theories on bodies, technologies and gender – especially in relation to *Akira*/manga – need to also take into consideration the national psycho-visual residue of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This chapter revisits such existing configurations of the machine in cyberpunk discourses and considers how we might re-conceptualise other related ideas such as the body, time-space and gender identity within the context of Japanese culture.



Figure 8.1 Kaneda's iconic red motorcycle, being inspected by Tetsuo in *Akira* (1988).

The Machine-Body: Escape or Eviction of Human Identity?

The idea of cyborgs and post-humanism has prevailed in popular culture, especially within the realms of science fiction and cyberpunk discourses. From William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), the *Matrix* trilogy (1999–2003), to the performance artist Stelarc, the idea of leaving the body – carnal flesh – behind has been very much romanticised (*Neuromancer*/*New Romancer*?). No longer burdened by our bodies and boundaries that constrain human identity, we are now free to transcend human capability through technology and/or 'jacking-in' cyberspaces. Within Cybercultural Studies, one of the main ways in which the relationship between the organic body and machines has been conceptualised – especially through critical feminist, race and queer politics – is as a mode of contesting, decentralising and reconfiguring the boundaries that demarcate human identity. In doing so, it has challenged dominant and normative ideologies surrounding gender, race, class and sexuality that mark and suppress the organic body (Haraway 1991; Springer 1991; Nakamura 2002). Here, cybertechnologies and machines are thus politicised, understood as offering the transcendental 'post' in post-humanism. In other words, human/machine intersections represent a transgressive body politic within

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a post-gender, post-race, post-identity world; what Haraway (1991: 155) refers to as the cyborg's anti-essentialist politics. Such politics are capable of destabilising identities that have been forced upon us through 'the social realities of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism'.

In this context, the motorcycle can indeed be approached as a piece of technology belonging to a post-human and cyborgian world, a politicised machine that can enable the body – and identity – to transgress through corporeal speed, form, sound and mobility. Malone (2013) and Miyake (2015) have both examined the motorcycle as machines that can destabilise gendered configurations of the body and identity. Most pertinent here is Malone's (2013: np) phenomenological analysis of her own relationship to the motorcycle, where she argues that with 'the motorcycle and body as cyborg, gender performs as disorientation; the body's relation to objects becomes experiential and unfixed'. Malone's conceptualisation of the cyborgian motorcycle approaches both body and machine as being interconnective, revealing not only the performativity, but the myriad of possibilities of perceiving, experiencing and articulating gender and sexuality. Similarly, while neither Bolton (2014) nor Napier (2005) define the motorcycle specifically as a human/machine entity (as does Malone), both situate the motorcycles in *Akira* within a post-modern context where identities are subversive and unstable: the 'vigorous but fluid movement of the motorcycles' represent a 'symbol of subversive flexibility against a monolithic and indifferent state' (Napier 2005: 41), charging into the darkness as a 'visual figure for the post-modern world' (Bolton 2014: 309). In other words, the motorcycle in *Akira* can be understood as a transgressive, transformative human/machine convergence which can subvert normative ideologies, enabling the body to move beyond gender, race, class and sexuality. Tetsuo's weeping, seeping, oozing body – where genitalia, limbs and internal organs lose structural and symbolic integrity – certainly speaks to the film's overall emphasis on the disintegration of both organic and machinic identity, including the breakdown of boundaries that demarcate gender and sexual difference.

While I agree with such a reading of *Akira* more generally, I would like to contest one point in relation to the motorcycle. There is a particular scene in *Akira* where Tetsuo – who has had some psycho-neurological experiments conducted on him – begins to hallucinate, watching his guts and innards spill out onto the road, which in itself is crumbling beneath his

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feet. Nowhere to stand, we watch Tetsuo scabbling around on the ground as he tries to collect his imaginary (but real for him) guts, scooping up invisible internal organs and shoving them back inside his torso. Such images of corporeal disintegration represent what Ahmed (2006) describes as the disoriented body, one which has lost its support and thus feels undone and thrown (Ahmed 2006: 157), becoming just an object in itself. Such disoriented bodies 'need to be orientated, to find a place where they feel comfortable and safe in the world' but, in doing so, reveal the ways in which bodies and spaces are 'directed' to fit certain normative lines of being (Ahmed 2006: 158). Sure enough, the troubled Tetsuo spends most of his time throughout the film seeking out Kaneda's red motorcycle – the colour itself repeated as a motif throughout the film to represent blood, capillaries, vessels and human cells – especially during moments of crises, as if to find a reference point to reorient his own decentred body. But why the motorcycle?

In the context of a post-apocalyptic Neo-Tokyo in *Akira* where the societal and corporeal structures that define identity are disrupted, it is the *return* – not the escape – to the 'original' body which is desired. Most importantly, it is the machine – the motorcycle – that secures the body's route back to the safety of social and corporeal confinement, a way of *anchoring* human identity through regaining of a normative ideological order: gender, sexuality, race, class and physical ability are all markers of 'human' difference. For example, according to a gendered hierarchy of masculine virility, the very fact that Tetsuo is unable to operate Kaneda's red motorcycle already places him physically and symbolically in a subordinate position. The very ideological construction of competing masculinities (Connell 2005) relies on the gender difference as a societal practice, in this case as enabled through technology. Similarly, when Kaori (Tetsuo's girlfriend) rides as a pillion passenger on Kaneda's more powerful motorcycle: such an act situates the three characters – dominant Kaneda, subordinate Tetsuo, and submissive Kaori – according to their gender, class, sexuality, (homo)social positioning and physical ability. By marking the rider with 'human' values such as age, gender, sexuality, class and physical ability, the motorcycle as a machine provides a social and physical/spatial structure which, ironically, had been pre-apocalyptic constraints. Paradoxically, the agoraphobic fear of the expansive body unknown leads to a claustrophilic desire to contain the body through the

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machines. Motorcycles can measure time and space in finite ways, quantifying identity through numbers that appear on the speedometer, km/miles travelled or the clock; hence the numerical details listed by Tetsuo at the start of the film when he enviously sits on Kaneda's motorcycle.

Furthermore, one of the defining aspects concerning the motorcycles in *Akira* is the *bosozoku* culture and the practices that surround them. While the *bosozoku* in *Akira* can be read as representing the dissatisfied Japanese delinquent youth subculture of the 1980s, it also points towards the techno-social structures that provide the secure grounding and familiar systems of signification. Featherstone and Burrows (1995: 13) argue how cyberpunk is inherently linked to post-modernity, where patterns of both social and geographical mobility increase the fluidity of social life thereby weakening social bonds. This point is ever more relevant in the twenty-first century as we increasingly seek privatised retreat into mediated technologies, what Turkle (2011) describes as being 'alone together'. Ironically, while the motorcycles are the very sources of mobility and fluidity, the *bosozoku* – including its masculinised hierarchies, machinic fraternity and homosocialities – represents social bonds and structure. This is valuable in a world where structures are breaking down at a social, psychic and molecular level. In other words, rather than being 'agents of change' acting as 'symbols of subversive flexibility against a monolithic and indifferent state' (Napier 2005: 41), the motorcycle as a man-made product of such a capitalist state (Kaneda's motorcycle is even covered with corporate brand stickers including Canon and Shoen) marks a *return* of its dominant social values. These mark the body ideologically through difference, reverting it back to its familiar constraints and thus providing a point of security and reference. The motorcycles are thus symbols of *reversion* towards a monolithic and indifferent state of human identity, where being a delinquent once represented the existence of the body – gendered, classed, raced and generational – in relation to social structure, position and (dis)order.

I refer back to Ahmed's ideas on the disoriented body that must somehow reorient itself, and how such experiences of displacement can reveal that 'some bodies more than others have their involvement in the world called into crisis' (Ahmed 2006: 159). In the context of *Akira* and Japanese culture, the collective memory of the nuclear holocaust – the literal, technologically induced disintegration of the human body – means

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that theories surrounding the human/machine relationship must themselves be disoriented. They must take into consideration what happens when the body is surfaced by traumatic flesh, situated upon a Japanese spatio-temporality. Not only do we need to re-think the idea that machines are a means to escape the human/human race, but also to challenge how such a theoretical configuration is one that in itself begins with the normative assumption that both the body and machine are integral entities. The idea of leaving the body and flesh behind relies on the idea that there is a body to leave behind. Nuclear flesh is neither organic nor technological, it privileges neither while calling into question both. What if the organism is radioactive, human identity unstable, evicted out of its skin through technological force?

Nuclear Flesh: Containing the Uncontainable

I was born and raised in Spain, and Japan was somewhere far, far away where my parents would (confusingly for me) occasionally go to visit family. There is one particular visit to Japan during my teens that shall remain with me forever, and something that has affected me deeply and my sense of 'Japanese identity' throughout my life. I was about 13 or 14 years old and my parents took me to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum because we were visiting my uncle who lived in Hiroshima at the time. The Museum has a large collection of documents, artefacts and oral histories relating to the atomic bomb that destroyed the city on 6 August 1945 during World War II. Despite my having very little to do with Japan when I was growing up, I knew by then that some of my family members had been affected directly by the atomic bomb. I really sensed a kind of eerie personal connection as I walked through the doors. One part of the Museum at the time involved visitors going through a series of vignettes, recreated scenes of the 'aftermath' of the atomic bomb. Perversely, wax figures – I particularly remember a scene of a male figure pulling along two children with their arms and hands held out in front of them – had melting skin, representing the immediate effects of radiation and heat on the human body. Some had muscles showing through translucent, dripping skin. Horrified, I walked through quickly to then be faced with photographs and other remnants of human dissolution. For some reason, I went back to the vignette of the male figure and the children, and forced

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myself to keep looking at their skins dripping off their bodies. This is the moment etched into my mind and has consequently shaped the way I look at manga and other visual aspects of postwar Japanese visual culture which I would now like to explore.

In discussing disoriented bodies that embody racialised histories, Ahmed (2006: 111) states that 'bodies remember such histories, even when we forget them. Such histories, we might say, surface on the body, or even shape how bodies surface.' Thus moments of corporeal displacement disrupt the normative directionality of the body in space. For me, the visceral encounter with the melting wax figures in the museum represented such a political moment, a double-realisation. On the one hand, I understood how my own (Japanese) body somehow 'carries' and 'remembers' this historical moment in Japan through memories tied to family, nation and culture. On the other hand, where I realised the privilege of my own intact, radioactive-free skin, still adhering to my bones; molecular integrity uncompromised, unlike some of my relatives who, as children of parents who suffered from radiation, must still be tested for potential cross-generational contamination in their bodies. But this moment has led me to question anything that involves melting flesh and to re-think my own theorisations around it, especially in the context of Japanese culture where human disintegration cannot be completely separated from issues relating to nuclear technology and destruction.

There is a significant body of work (Kristeva 1982; Creed 1993; Kirkup et al. 1999; Stacey 2007) which examines – mostly through psychoanalytic approaches – gendered representations of abject bodies that are 'monstrous', grotesque, unruly, leaky, eruptive and disruptive. Such studies conceptualise the uncontrollable and often uncontainable feminine body, predominantly through the idea of sexuality and (re)productivity. Napier's (2005: 44) discussion of Tetsuo's pubescent masculinity joins such analyses of the gendered and sexualised body as being 'monstrous', where Tetsuo's 'total body transmogrification into a form of Otherness' represents the male body in crisis, symbolising 'his development from adolescent into adult' (2005: 44). For Napier (2005: 46), the grotesque body spectacle in *Akira* is read as an ambiguous rite of passage story, a 'post-modern celebration of spectacle and boundary transgression' which, again, is situated as part of a post-human and thus post-gender world. In many ways, one of the defining themes of *Akira* is indeed about the representation of masculine teenage

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anxiety surrounding sexuality and the uncontrollable transformation of the body: hence the desire to regain social and physical order through the motorcycle, that I explored in the previous section.

In her discussion of cyborgs as incarnating contradictory masculine identity, Fuchs (1995: 284) argues that figures like Robocop embody both technomascularity and a soft penetrability, representing ‘the failed distinction between organic masculinity and implanted hardware. In this context, Tetsuo’s – his name translates to ‘Iron Man/Hero’ in Japanese – consumption and embodiment of *both* machine *and* human flesh (Kaori and Kaneda) at the end of the film can be read in two related queer terms. First, queer as a form of breaking down physical boundaries that demarcate gender(ed) difference through the merging of male and female bodies: Kaori becomes absorbed into Tetsuo’s body by penetrating his various orifices, eventually erupting within him; yet her destruction itself also reinforces his technomascularity dominance over her, which is too powerful (even for him). Second, queer in terms of articulating a forbidden desire between Tetsuo and Kaneda, for Kaneda too is swallowed into Tetsuo’s soft penetrability, interlaced with wires, cables and hard pieces of technology. Unlike Kaori, Kaneda is ejaculated out from Tetsuo’s growing body and ultimately saved by his heterosexual relationship with rebel fighter, Kei, who calls his name and brings him back to safety. Tetsuo, on the other hand, dies a material death as do most characters in pre-Millennium films who represent the queer Other; they are monstrous and/or dead (Halberstam 1995; Benschhoff 2004).²

While I agree with the idea of the disoriented, pubescent male’s monstrous corporeal liquidism – a teenage masculinity in crisis and its consequent sexual rupture – in *Akira*, I also contend that such a conceptualisation of the body is not enough once situated within Japanese discourses of technology and the body: the anxiety is also part of a culture that lives with the memory of atomic flesh and thus cannot be divorced from its retinal residue. *Akira* emerges from an existing body of postwar Japanese manga which, as scholars of Japanese Studies have argued (Makela 2008; Nakar 2008; Gibson 2012), must be viewed in the light of atomic history, ‘as participant(s) in the cultural processing of the atomic bomb’ (Gibson 2012: 184). As Nakar (2008) discusses in relation to Keiji Nakazawa’s (1972) comic about the atom bomb attacks in Japan, *I Saw It: The Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima: A Survivor’s True Story* (おれは見た, ‘Ore wa mita’), some

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manga even went as far as to depict the deadly radiation burns of the victims, where the 'horrific effect of the war on the human body is no longer hidden' (Nakar 2008: 184). In the light of such existing discourses of melting atomic flesh and the national trauma of the nuclear holocaust, is Tetsuo's body transformation really only a 'post-modern celebration of spectacle and boundary transgression' (Napier 2005: 46)?

I thus argue that some ideas concerning the body monstrous need disorienting too. They need to be understood through the cultural skin that stretched across the Japanese national psyche. Images of unstable Japanese flesh articulate two main anxieties that have theoretical consequences on how gender, technology and the body are related. First, within a Japanese context, fears against the dysmorphic body can never really be disembodied from fears against nuclear technology and science, especially in relation to war and weapons of mass destruction. Second, and related, there is a fear not just towards (nuclear) technology, but the fear of flesh that can overpower and destroy the technology which can no longer contain it: a nightmarish vision of not only a post-human but post-machinic world.

Scary machines and friendly technologies

From Maria in *Metropolis* (1927), the evil eye of HAL 9000 in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), to the murderous T-models of the *Terminator* franchise (1984–2015, various directors) popular culture has provided us with visions – closer to nightmares – of the future where machines have overtaken humanity to a point of harming it: a time when Asimov's laws of robotics become overturned. For inasmuch as technologies have been celebrated as a post-human condition of progress and transcendence, equally they have been the cause of fear (Silverstone and Hirsch 1992; Lupton 1995), especially in relation to war and militarism. So many cyberpunk narratives involve some kind of ongoing combat against and/or alongside robots and technology. Postwar Japanese visual culture has articulated such anxieties, probably the most famous and well-known being *Godzilla* (1954). National fears towards the nuclear resurface, become refreshed and regenerated through events like 2011's tsunami and earthquake disaster which caused panic around the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Despite positive representations of (nuclear) technologies like

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Tezuka's *Atomu* (鉄腕アトム, 1952–68) (Gibson 2012, 2013) in popular culture,³ such real-life incidents mean that the Japanese national psyche always lives with a dormant fear of radiation, nuclear power and human obliteration.

Gray (2002: 56) argues that one of the characteristics of the 'post-modern war' – which he dates as starting from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – consists of the increasing integration between soldiers and their weapons, the so-called 'cyborg soldiers'. Of course, almost 20 years on since Gray's writing, drone technologies (for example) have not only outweighed the human/machine balance where the human is almost entirely absent as a merged product, these are now moving into the realms of civilian consumption. Motorcycles are no different in that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, they too have continuously moved between being a part of private consumer technologies, and being put to military service as vehicles of war (Ansell 1985; Alford and Ferriss 2007; Alexander 2008), the rider militarised into being a 'cyborg soldier'. The motorcycles used in both World Wars and consequent ones have been predominantly American or European models and designs (BSA, Triumph, Royal Enfield, BMW, Moto Guzzi, Benelli, Harley Davidson and FN) where even Japanese motorcycle companies like Honda used Euro-American designs.⁴

But perhaps such a kind of history behind military motorcycles is what makes Kaneda's red motorcycle so iconic and politically significant in *Akira*. Here is a machine that departs visually from such Euro-American World War vehicles, with completely different form and design which disassociates it from the historical idea of war and military use. As a visual figure, Kaneda's motorcycle dodges not just militaristic associations of technology, but also the dominant Westernisation of motorcyclic design and technology. In fact, one of Honda's relatively recent motorcycles – the NM4 released in 2014 – has been one of the first motorcycle designs to have intentionally drawn inspiration from Japanese manga and anime, rather than 'traditional' templates. Like the NM4, Kaneda's motorcycle can be read as 'a counter-hegemonic machine "tearing up the rule book and breaking free from the boundaries" of Western cultural hegemony by producing its own cultural space and modes of self-representation' (Miyake 2016: 216). Kaneda's motorcycle therefore represents a distancing from military technology, a vehicle just for the use of pleasure, leisure and rebellion *Japanese* style.

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In *Culture of Speed: the Coming of Immediacy* (2007) Tomlinson explores the three main aspects of machine speed: the sensual-aesthetic attractions of machine speed, the association of speed with a counter-cultural rejection of an ordered, bourgeois lifestyle and the connection between speed and the violence of war. As a vehicle belonging to the *bosozoku* ('speed tribe'), Kaneda's speeding motorcycle represents not only the attraction towards the performative sensuous-aesthetic and counter-cultural rebellion (not to mention the aestheticisation of counter-cultural rebellion), but visually and narratively avoids militarisation through its opposition of society, the state and its military faction (represented by the army tanks and various other weapons that appear in the film). Ironically, in true *bosozoku* style, Kaneda's motorcycle's colour (red) – significant to Japanese culture (flag, rising sun, happiness, luck) and appearing on many national symbols – subverts visualities linked with Japanese militarism, imperialism and nationalism through parodic performativity: what Alford and Ferriss (2007: 77) describe as the enactment of hypermasculine values associated with the Samurai, where 'the motorcycles and the ride are all a piece of dramatic theatre' (2007: 77). In many ways, it is not just Tetsuo's transformative monstrous body, it is also the *bosozoku* culture represented in *Akira* that constitutes a 'post-modern celebration of spectacle and boundary transgression' (Napier 2005: 46). Within the context of *bosozoku* culture, Kaneda's motorcycle enables the technological articulation of Japanese masculinity that is visually militaristic and, yet, politically anti-regimental and anti-Japanese society. It is of no wonder that the motorcycles are so much a part of the characters' identities: so much so that when fellow gang member and friend Yamagata gets killed by the now crazed Tetsuo, Kaneda takes his friend's motorcycle and rides it into a wall. The body dies, so must the machine.

Overtaking machines and technology

One of the central themes of *Akira* concerns power and control, be it over corporeal, mental, psychic, societal, economic, technological, military or political matters. As mentioned earlier, a large proportion of cyberpunk narratives – particularly those set in dystopian worlds – articulate society's anxieties of losing control over machines and technology. Cyborg tales represent our 'increasing anxieties about our own nature in a

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technological environment, and a kind of evolutionary fear that these artificial selves may presage our own disappearance or *termination*' (Telotte 1992: 26, emphasis in the original). Starting from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1831), robots to A.I. technologies, the idea that the creators can be surpassed by the created seems to be a frightening vision as it disturbs the dominant ideological construction that the (hu)Man is at the top of the food chain. This subversion resonates with cyberfeminist politics precisely because such a disruptive post-human landscape presents deconstructive possibilities of 'reconfigur(ing) bodies and identities outside of self/Other relations' (Toffoletti 2007: 21). However, what we see in *Akira* is *technology* that is powerless, and *not* the 'vulnerability of the human body' (Telotte 1992: 28). From tanks, machine guns, helicopters, cars to even Kaneda's motorcycle, man-made technology is simply too weak to defend itself from the mutating cell and flesh. In other words, *Akira* represents Japanese anxieties towards *both* (nuclear) technology *and* flesh: not only in relation to gendered flesh and anxieties surrounding its symbolic sexual disruption, but flesh as *overtaking technology*; where it is the organic-psychic that poses a threat to society *and* machines. The world which *Akira* envisions is not just post-apocalyptic and post-human, it is also post-machinic.

Throughout the film, the psychic-body is faster, bigger and stronger than any other (man-made) technology. The motorcycles, including Kaneda's, once impressive pieces of technology that had overtaken flesh – speeding vehicles which were once too fast for society – suddenly become obsolete, beaten and useless. Against the sheer speed of growth, size and potency of Tetsuo's psychic-organic permutations, Kaneda's motorcycle is slow, dwarfed and self-contained like a mechanical peanut, an empty shell that has no practical use as it can no longer control psychic flesh: just as medicine, science or technology were not enough to keep up with the melting bodies and mutated post-radiation flesh in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Within the context of Japanese culture and national memory, the post-human and post-machinic world of *Akira* can be read as the failure of technology – medical, military, consumer – and, as a result, a fear of flesh that is capable of destroying technology and itself. Wrapped up within the 'body in crisis' is also *technology in crisis*. For a country whose postwar national identity has been so carefully founded upon the belief that it is 'futuristic technology that would save Japan' (Sone 2014: 255), the

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failure of technology represents a double-loss of identity and stability: human and national. The fear of flesh represents a moment when technology can no longer contain, regulate or save human identity *and* Japanese economic and social security.

Furthermore, such a 'techno-nationalistic discourse' of postwar Japan (Yoshimi 1999: 151) becomes a gendered (usually masculinised) part of everyday life, not just through domestic technologies as argued by Yoshimi (1999) but in the consumption of mediated images of technology. After all, this is a country that has produced the Mecha genre (Tatsumi 2008; Park 2005; Napier 2005; Bolton 2002).⁵ But even at an ordinary and domestic level, *Akira* presents us with various gendered forms of technology: from computer game consoles; a robot figure that Kaneda 'wins back' for Tetsuo as children; and, of course, most masculinised of everyday technologies, the motorcycles that are so central to the characters' identities as young men, as members of a gang and as humans. While I shall explore questions of manga, Japanese subcultural masculinity and motorcycles through an examination of *Bad Boys* in Chapter 9, it is worth referring to the fact that the original manga series, *Akira* (1982–90), from which the film was adapted, was published in the *Weekly 'Young' Magazine* (週刊ヤングマガジン). This demonstrates the relationship between the articulation of Japanese masculinity through mediated images of technology, and cyberpunk as a particular kind of masculinised genre for consumption. Hence, when technology fails, it also represents the failure of Japanese gendered form, expression and consumption. When flesh overtakes technology, no longer can machines represent technocultural dominance or hard technomasculine patriarchy in Japan. Instead, melting flesh – American nuclear technology – has won: exactly what Japan feared?

Technostalgia: Future is Back Then

Almost 30 years on from the release of the film, in our current era of digitisation, software and dataification of everyday life, 'hardware' and hard machines seem to be becoming even more obsolete. Our lives are increasingly becoming part of the Cloud and, as a result, material technologies are regarded almost nostalgically, a visual and retrospective reminder of the things in the past that feel 'bulky' but are endearing. Think of consumer products like 'retro' radios or huge headphones that mimic analogue

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technologies. In this context, the re-examination of hard machines – like a motorcycle in *Akira* – is even more pertinent as it becomes necessary to re-think how we can further conceptualise futuristic spaces, technology and questions of gendered identities in cyberpunk discourses.

At the very end of the film, when Tetsuo merges with the newly awakened Akira in a psychic explosion that destroys Neo-Tokyo, Kaneda experiences and can visualise Tetsuo's and the three Extra-Sensory Perceivers' (ESPers') (Kiyoko, Takashi, Masaru) past. The very first of Tetsuo's memories that flashes across Kaneda's consciousness is that of himself teaching Tetsuo how to ride a motorcycle. In a hazy mist of bitter-sweet nostalgia, Kaneda can 'remember' Tetsuo learning how to corner his motorcycle, laughing, exhilarated, racing across Neo-Tokyo through a tunnel not too dissimilar to the one we encounter at the start of the film. This memory is followed by others, almost all of them involving some kind of hardware, from gaming consoles, a robot toy, to science lab equipment. As Ruppel (2009) argues, while technology cannot recover the past, 'it can help to *uncover* the past, record the past, memorialise the past, duplicate the past' (Ruppel 2009: 553, emphasis in the original). Uncovering the past in *Akira* specifically through technology – technological nostalgia, or technostalgia (Miyake 2016) – becomes an important and symbolic task for the characters. This disrupts some of the existing cyberpunk theorisations of technology (and Japan) as representing the future. In a post-human and post-machinic world, technology represents a spatio-temporal moment of ontological security belonging to *the past*: a time when industry, production and consumption guaranteed a material promise of grounded embodiment and national stability.

Pickering and Keightley (2006: 922) define nostalgia as a form of homesickness for a lost past involving a 'shift from spatial dislocation to temporal dislocation, and the sense of feeling oneself a stranger in a new period that contrasted negatively with an earlier time in which one felt, or imagined, oneself at home'. In the context of Modernity which the authors discuss, this 'new period' is characterised by the fast proliferation of new technologies and, as examined earlier, the 'increasing anxieties about our own nature in a technological environment, and a kind of evolutionary fear that these artificial selves may presage our own disappearance or *termination*' (Telotte 1992: 26, emphasis in the original). This overwhelming reaction to the technological present – part of a sensation popularly

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described as ‘future shock’ (Toffler 1970) – is what produces a homesickness for the past that supposedly involves less technological clutter, a more ‘simple’ and idyllic time. What happens, however, if the ‘new period’ is defined by the termination of not just of humanity but of machines themselves? What happens if technology becomes overtaken by nature where technology and civilisation (as opposed to the organic and nature) represent the safe refuge into the past? In the context of a quickly disintegrating Neo-Tokyo that is rapidly crumbling out of existence into the post-human and post-machinic world, ‘old’ technology – including a motorcycle – marks a point of temporal security while reflecting the spatial fixedness of the human past. Technostalgia is thus a desire for the technologised past, a historical future belonging to hardware and mechanical materiality.

Both Kaneda and Tetsuo are orphans, while the three ESPers’ childhoods have been altered through governmental experimentations (rather queerly, Dr Onishi and Colonel Shikishima act as surrogate parents – children of science and militarism?). As with Haraway’s (1991: 150) cyborgs that have ‘no origin story in the Western sense’, these characters’ rootless/uprooted personal histories reflect a certain loss and desire for the past, an origin, the material and the maternal; that which can only be accessed through a technologically mediated memory. Of course, the act of recollection and identity are very prevalent post-modern themes exploring the idea of ‘humanness’ within cyberpunk discourses (Bruno 1990; Landsberg 1995; van Dijck 2007). Such approaches usually conceptualise a rift between past and present, a ‘collapse of the “grand narrative” of history [which] leads to a fragmentation and individualisation of the past’ (Kirkland and Yilmaz 2013: 322). In a post-modern context, *Akira* can certainly be read as the collapse of linear chronology, hence the genesis of the universe occurring at the end of the film – ‘no origin story in the Western sense’ – not to mention the fragmentation and individualisation of the past we witness through Kaneda’s/Tetsuo’s memories. But in the context of postwar Japanese culture, *Akira* must also be dis-Oriented and simultaneously read as a re-location of what Bhabha (1994: 143) calls, ‘national time’, that which ‘becomes concrete and visible on the chronotype of the local, particular, graphic, from beginning to end’: in this case, the ever-present mushroom cloud across popular Japanese visual cultures.

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In discussing the idea of temporal repetition and trauma in *Akira*, Lamarre (2008) argues that the film's opening scene – a mushroom cloud representing the bombing of Tokyo on 16 July 1988 (the year of the film's release) (Figure 8.2) – places the nuclear holocaust close to viewers temporally, repeating the trauma of World War II through a 'double optic' mode. *Akira's* bomb is both the same and different as the initial atomic bomb (Lamarre 2008: 135). The film thus relies on national memory and collective trauma. It refuses the individuation of memory and the past while forcing a joint recollection of the nuclear holocaust. The ubiquitous visibility of the mushroom cloud across so many Japanese manga and anime is thus a repetitive marking of a 'point of origin' of national trauma, the 'before and after' that keeps recurring through its (re)mediation. At the time of writing this chapter, Tokyo is busy preparing to host the next Olympic Games in 2020, making *Akira's* staging of the Olympic stadium as the burial place for Akira's stem cells and eventual annihilation all the more chronologically (not to mention chillingly) salient once again: a visual repetition from the past which had envisioned the future. As such, *Akira* itself becomes an example of a mass mediated narrative of trauma that resists individuation while forming part of a 'chronotype of the local, particular, graphic, from beginning to end' (Bhabha 1994: 143).



Figure 8.2 The 'mushroom' explosion during the opening scene in *Akira* (1988), dated '1988.7.16'.

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The atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused not just a spatial but a temporal disruption – a national disorientation – and, as such, it re-directed some of the ways in which the country faced itself and others, including how it reconstructed national memory and identity. In *Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault (2002: 6) argues that, in relation to history, ‘the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations’. In the context of Japanese ‘national time’, the nuclear holocaust hollowed out a certain contemporary spatio-temporal division that led to the need for ‘new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations’ (ibid.) These foundations were *based on technology*: hence the reconstruction and production of a ‘new’ identity through a ‘techno-nationalistic discourse’ (Yoshimi 1999: 151), part of what Jameson (1991: 156) describes in relation to nostalgia, the ‘systematic transformation of an older monopoly capitalism (the so-called moment of imperialism) into its new multi-national and high-tech mutation. This moment in Japanese ‘national time’ is described by Kei to Kaneda, where and when knowledge and energy led to human evolution and the building of society, contained in the various man-made everyday products; Kei lists examples, including the motorcycle as one such artefact. The motorcycle (along with other hardware and ‘old’ technologies) thus provides a referential point of origin, a time-space when postwar techno-Japan was economically, socially and culturally stronger and more secure.

Furthermore, Foucault (2002: 7) argues that history is ‘primarily and fundamentally memory’, one which transforms documents into monuments. Kaneda’s motorcycle as envisioned in the past becomes a precious commodity that ‘documents’ not just an individual history of Tetsuo’s teenage freedom but commemorates a national one, that which society chooses to recognise and develop. In this context, the historicising and remembering the role of technology in the aftermath of the nuclear bombings – the process of technostalgia – converts document to monument, motorcycle to artefact, futurism to nostalgia. The mnemonic motorcycle is an historical product – a monument – that evidences and commemorates human capital, production and consumption; old currency going quickly out of circulation in the film and, as such, prized for their connection and connectivity to ‘old’ humanity and ‘old’ techno-Japan.

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Here, technology is not just about the future, it is about *remembering the past*: a dual directional paradox which Ruppel (2009) argues marks the tension between regression and progression. Such a paradoxical configuration of temporality and technology in itself challenges Morley's and Robins's (1995) discussion on Japan and techno-Orientalism: defined as the 'Japanisation' of both the future and technology by the West. Tetsuo's/Kaneda's technostalgia reverts this process by 'historicising technology – Japanising history – which, in turn, decentres and destabilises the temporal continuum of race and technology' (Miyake 2016: 218). In other words, 'old' Japan has now been replaced by an 'old' new techno-Japan that 'evokes and elides a problematic "origin," at once *past* and *future*' (Liu 2015: 74, emphasis in the original).

But, as Grosz (1995: 84) argues, the conceptualisation of space and time necessitates an examination of corporeality because bodies – as gendered, sexed, racialised and classed – are always understood within a spatio-temporal context; by the same token, space-time is 'conceivable only insofar as corporeality provides the basis of our perception and representation of them'. How can we understand technostalgic spatio-temporalities in relation to gender and the motorcycle? This destabilisation of linear temporality (or temporal linearity) and the consequent ontological decentralisation of identity leads us back to the post-modern theorisation of gender and its subversive deconstruction, especially in relation to the idea of motherhood. If motherhood 'ensures a fair degree of epistemological *certainty* – it is the mother who guarantees at least the *possibility* of certain historical knowledge' (Holland 2000: 167, emphasis in the original). When cyberpunk narratives 'collapse' time, the very notion of gender becomes pivoted upon questions of history, origins and reproductive temporality. If desiring the past is about 'the epistemological reliance on the maternal' (*ibid.*), what does it mean to desire a technological past?

Such a question begins to touch upon the tensions in cyberpunk narratives that explore biological and technological (re)production. A motorcycle represents masculinised forms of production that tick to an industrial time; it paternalises history through technology. In other words, to remember the body upon the motorcycle – a significant material and symbolic product of postwar Japanese industry (Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha, Kawasaki) emerging from Japanese techno-nationalistic discourse – is to situate it back into a fixed system of gendered time and the

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capitalistic gendered division of labour. Glucksmann (1998) critiques the engendering of time as being a near-essentialist view which defines women's time as cyclical and biological, while men's time is defined as linear, progressive and closer to industrial time. Yet in this context, as I argued earlier, the motorcycle physically places the body back into a dominant, capitalist and materialist system of signification, immediately marking the occupation of time and space through gendered, classed, sexual, racialised means of defining human labour. Remembering the motorcycle thus provides a means for a symbolic re-embodiment of 'old' ideological values while simultaneously marking a re-entry into the *past*. In representing a desire for such a moment in history – when technology was intrinsically tied to a masculinist and 'progressive' pursuit and ticking to an industrial time – technostalgia can thus be understood as a product of an idealisation and idolisation of dominant, patriarchal and nationalistic ideologies. Kaneda's/Tetsuo's memories represent such a masculinist nostalgia, a product of techno-nationalist Japanese discourse.

In *Akira*, the characters who survive the spatio-temporal instability caused by the psychic bomb at the end are those who still embody 'old' technologies and/or continue to submit to the 'old' ideological *status quo* and its normative markers of gendered identity. Kaisuke and Kaneda both ride away as fellow gang members on their motorcycles. Kei rides as pillion on Kaneda's motorcycle, thereby re-enacting and re-embodiment a heteronormative relationship on the motorcycle.⁶ Colonel Shikishima remains as the ultimate self-sacrificing, square-jawed, angular, toweringly big and militaristic male protector and patriarch of society. As such, the film's ending, which includes the reappearance of the trusty motorcycles – broken but still functioning – points to the ultimate reversion, 'regression', resurrection of 'old' dominant, ideological systems of signification from the past through the reinstallation of 'old' technologies in the present day.

Conclusion: An 'Old' Future?

Through an examination of the ways in which Kaneda's motorcycle, alongside other forms of technology, is represented in *Akira*, this chapter has explored and challenged some of the main theorisations surrounding relationships between human-organism and machine-technology within cyberpunk discourses. I have argued that: machines provide a means to

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secure unstable human identities and move *towards* being human; it is the human-organism ('flesh') which overtakes machines – not the other way around – posing a threat to humanity; machine-technology represents the *past*, provoking a certain nostalgia for and through technology. In the course of my discussions, I have revisited some ideas surrounding post-humanism in relation to questions of identity and gender. Such ideas conceptualise the convergence between human-organism and machine-technology as ontologically and ideologically subversive: hence the idea of post-humanism representing the condition of post-gender and post-identity.

Here, my mission was to dis-Orient some of these ideas – especially in relation to gender and bodies *and* technologies in crises – to think about the racialisation of such 'corporeal schema' and how we might re-think them in the context of Japanese culture. Therefore, underpinning this entire chapter has been my contention that while some Western (cyber) feminist and cybercultural theories are useful in understanding the representation of bodies, technologies and gender in manga/anime, such an understanding would also need to consider the role of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and postwar Japanese technonationalistic discourse upon Japanese visual culture. For example, the very concept of the human-organism may need re-thinking once we take into account flesh subjected to radiation (what I have referred to as 'nuclear flesh'). Kaneda's motorcycle represents both hope and futurity; and a new way of articulating Japan, or rather the re-articulation of Japan.

Kaneda's motorcycle is thus a paradoxical techno-beast. On the one hand, it represents everything that belongs to 'old' values and ideologies which are masculinist, essentialist, patriarchal, nationalistic and technophallogocentric. From the *bosozoku* culture that subjugates women as weaker sexual toys (at one point in the film Kaori's clothing is torn off by rival motorcycle gang, the Clowns, leaving her naked and beaten), the very phallic shape of the motorcycle itself, to its associations with masculinised technologies of industrialism and gendered means of production. But such a perspective equally requires a nuanced reading relating to national trauma and the collective memory of nuclear holocaust. On the other hand, Kaneda's motorcycle therefore represents national hope, like Tezuka's *Atomu*, which, as referred to earlier, was written 'in the hopes of creating alternate visions of atomic power that embraced new forms of

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technology as utopic possibilities for the future' (Gibson 2012: 183). In this context, the distinct design of Kaneda's motorcycle, which refuses to follow 'Western' motorcycle prototypes, represents this national hope and the re-creation of a 'new' Japanese identity forged through technology. As a mobile technology of not just gender but national identity, Kaneda's red motorcycle symbolises the reorientation of Japan through technology – in the past, present and future – despite and because of its collective memory of nuclear devastation: a process marked by the transition from a techno-nationalistic discourse based on militarism and imperialism to one based on consumerism and anti-war sensibilities.

PROOF

9

Bosozoku and Japanese Subcultural Masculinity: Thunder, Lightning and Everything Frightening in *Bad Boys*

BO - 暴 - Violent

SO - 走 - Speed

ZOKU - 族 - Tribe

My cousin is an *ex-bosozoku* member. As can be seen from the above breakdown of the term in Japanese kanji characters, *bosozoku* – ‘violent speed tribe’ – refers to a subcultural youth phenomenon in Japan centred on speeding motorcycles and cars. A model citizen now, my cousin owns and runs his own cafe with his wife (who used to be a *bosozoku* ‘groupie’ or ‘moll’) and has a child who attends after-school clubs. Long gone are the days in the 1980s when he used to be out racing, modifying (‘modding’) and generally causing havoc on motorcycles in Tokyo. As a biker, my cousin’s past has always been of particular interest to me. When I began to write this book, I visited Japan and so I had a chance to ask him directly about his youth. He agreed to be interviewed,¹ once by himself and a second time with his wife.

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When asked about reasons for becoming a member of a *bosozoku* group, I thought he would give me sordid tales of teenage rebellion, disillusionment and rage against 'the system' but instead the reply was . . . 'manga, of course'. He then proceeded to list all motorcycle-centred manga of his youth: *Akira* (1982–90), *Bari Bari Legend* (1983–91); *Samuraider* (1988) and *Aitsu to Lullaby* (1982).² During our second conversation with his wife, she too chirruped in enthusiastically that she had become a *bosozoku* 'groupie' having read the same manga books, especially ones with female characters riding motorcycles. I was intrigued: rather than talking about *bosozoku* motorcycles, activities and practices as I had initially intended, the conversations became more about what manga books they had read as teenagers. I assumed that this was something to do with my cousin's and his wife's particular love of manga (and a general proliferation of manga in Japanese popular culture) but I was to be surprised yet again by a chance encounter with a motorcycle mechanic and racer during the same trip ('Mr M'). While being a little too young to have been part of the *bosozoku* phenomenon of the 1970s to 1980s, and without my prompting him in any way, he claimed that it was manga that led him into the world of motorcycles, stating that he used to read them like motorcycle catalogue books, idolising the various models and the characters riding them. For him, being a motorcycle mechanic was the closest to being like a manga character. A manga character? 'Yes. I wanted to be like Eiji from *Bad Boys*', which he explained was a manga and anime series about a *bosozoku* gang.³ Now I was *really* intrigued.

This chapter does not claim to present an in-depth sociological enquiry into Japanese *bosozoku* culture or manga reading habits. Despite having used qualitative research methods and procedures, my discussion does not base its analyses on 'empirical data' or even suggest that the people I interviewed are 'a sample' representative of Japanese *bosozoku* culture. However, my conversations with those mentioned above were invaluable because they point towards a need to examine *representations* of *bosozoku* in Japanese visual culture, and how these representations might be as much a part of the media discourse surrounding the phenomenon itself. Outside of Japan, while there have been sociological studies of *bosozoku* as a subcultural group in Japanese society (Sato 1982; Kersten 1993; Mawby 1999), to my knowledge there is little or no investigation into the representation of *bosozoku* as a mediated text for consumption.

Bosozone and Japanese Subcultural Masculinity

The reading of manga and the watching of anime can become ways to consume the idea of deviance and engage with national narratives of violence, speed and 'tribal' practices surrounding motorcycles.

Theorising *Bosozone*

According to Sato (1982), *bosozone* subculture first emerged as early as the 1950s in Japan, and the public and mass media at the time labelled them as *kaminari-zoku*, translated as 'thunder tribe' due to their motorcycles' noisy exhaust pipes. At this point, the motorcycle gangs' activities were limited to minor offences such as the breaking of traffic regulations. However, motorisation advanced in Japan during the mid-1960s, making motorcycles a more accessible vehicle for the masses which, in turn, meant motorcycle groups flourished during this time and continued to do so into the 1970s. Several public incidents culminated in the significant Toyama Incident in 1972, when 3,000 observers joined in the rioting mob and 1,104 people got arrested (Sato 1982): the moment when the term, *bosozone* entered journalistic and popular discourse. Motorcycle gangs grew in numbers over the next decade, peaking in the early 1980s, by which time they were structured and organized, and were engaged in more serious criminal offences (such as murder and rape) alongside violent and disruptive motoring behaviour.

Stricter governmental road regulations and heavier policing were enforced during this period, supported by the motorcycle industry whose sales figures were suffering from the negative image associated with motorcycles: for example, as a way of intervention and counteracting the negativity surrounding motorcycles, Kawasaki Motors founded a riders' club that sponsored motor racing and sales exhibitions throughout Japan, to promote riding as a 'fun' and 'clean' activity and part of a safe, leisure pursuit (Alexander 2008: 207). These efforts reduced *bosozone*-related crime statistics to a point where, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, the *bosozone* were now almost a by-gone subculture (at least in the cities). However, there has been a rise in female motorcycle clubs in Japan since then, which, like its male counterpart, is becoming popularised into mainstream culture: for example, the Japanese designer label KENZO released a promotional fashion film in 2016 called *Sun To Sun*, a retelling

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of a Japanese folk story replacing the male protagonist with a female biker and her all-female motorcycle posse.⁴

As stated above, the *bosozoku* have occasionally been the subject of academic interest outside of Japan, mainly from criminological and sociological perspectives (Sato 1982; Kersten 1993; Mawby 1999). Here, *bosozoku* are approached as a subcultural 'social group' and 'social issue', to be understood empirically in relation to deviance, crime and regulation in Japan (almost always referred to as one of the 'safest countries' with the lowest crime rates). Such approaches resonate with similar sociological studies involving motorcycle gangs (Willis 1978; Wood 2003; Barker and Human 2009; Katz 2011) or as part of youth culture, such as Cohen's (1972) analyses of the Mods and Rockers in relation to 'folk devils' and moral panics. However, despite the *bosozoku*'s similarities with British and American counterparts – for example, preceding the media frenzy surrounding the Toyama Incident in 1972 were the infamous Hollister riots in California in 1947, or the Mods and Rockers riots across British seaside resorts in 1964 – *bosozoku* have never really received the same level of theoretical attention as a mediated and/or cultural phenomenon. Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies produced a body of work examining subcultural groups – including Mods and Rockers – and the semiotics of subcultural stylisations (Hebdige 1979; Hall and Jefferson 2006): with the exception of Alford and Ferriss (2007) who write briefly about the visual significance and meaning of *bosozoku* style and practice, alongside the most comprehensive ethnography of Japanese motorcycle groups to date in English, *Kamikaze Biker: Parody and Anomaly in Affluent Japan* (Sato 1991), *bosozoku* have yet to be understood in-depth in similar ways within the visual realm.

What is lacking within this relatively small body of work written in English about *bosozoku* is (in addition to understanding the visual stylisations of the 'real-life' *bosozoku* as a subculture and the journalistic discourse that surrounds them) that there needs to be more work done to analyse visual representations of *bosozoku* in popular culture as part of a wider consumer culture. Such a gap relates to McRobbie's (1993) critiques in relation to subcultural theories regarding the conceptual tensions between subcultures as 'authentic', and mainstream media and consumer culture as being diffusive of subcultural authenticity. In relation to Hebdige's work (and subcultural theories more generally), McRobbie

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(1993: 17) states that ‘so much attention was put in the final signifying products of the subculture and the permutations of meaning produced by these images, that the cultural work involved in their making did not figure in the analysis’. Hence, McRobbie argues that mass media and consumer culture are as much a part of the subculture’s realisation and thus need to be incorporated in any given analysis of the ‘final signifying product’.

In motorcycle terms, Wood (2003) explores how the counterculture’s view of the Hells Angels was largely shaped by 1950s pop culture, and especially *The Wild One* (1953), which he argues set the ‘mould’ for how all (real-life) bikers should act and look (Wood 2003: 337). Similarly, like Vivienne Westwood and the punks in the 1970s, despite the ‘authentic’ and ‘anti-system’ myth surrounding Harley-Davidson as a brand, they have proven to be successful precisely because they bought fully into the consumer culture and their brand community (Richardson 2013; Atkin 2004; Holt 2004). *Bosozoku* must also be understood in similar terms, in relation to the mainstream culture that interprets and is interpreted by it through media imagery, its consumption by both members of the *bosozoku* and the public – the ‘cultural work’ – ultimately propagating the subcultural myth. In fact, Sato (1991) refers to the importance *bosozoku* members place upon branded motorcycle parts and brand names in general (more than design and performance). Sato (1991: 50) suggests that *bosozoku* members’ love of ‘self-display’ is why they are highly concerned with their ‘self image as a power consumer’. In this sense, *bosozoku*’s visible and conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1994) share more in common with the ‘bling’ cultures, such as the ‘chavs’ in the UK or the American hip hop scene: in other words, as McRobbie (1993) states, mainstream popular culture and its consumption are an integral part of the visual meaning-making process surrounding the ‘signifying final product’.

We thus need to understand that the manga/anime *bosozoku* trope is as much a part of a wider popular culture as Pokémon or Hello Kitty and, as such, it needs to be considered as part of the subculture’s overall visual discourse. In addition, given that manga/anime is such a ubiquitous and widely consumed part of a national and globalised Japanese popular culture (Cooper-Chen 2010), there is even more of an imperative to analyse the *bosozoku* trope. Doing so would also shed light on some of the gender ideologies that inform *bosozoku* visibility and, in turn, would help us understand how these engender the motorcycle through aestheticised

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lens of *bosozoku* deviant glamour:⁵ all too often, *bosozoku* gets referred to within and outside of academia as ‘male-centred’ or as a ‘male youth subculture’. While this might be demographically correct, such a definition does not consider what *types* of masculinities are being embodied and represented, nor what kind of femininities are at stake. How can we understand the discursive production of Japanese gender identities through an analysis of *bosozoku* in manga/anime? Most importantly, what can the motorcycles featured in manga/anime texts tell us about the gendered representations of *bosozoku* in popular culture?

Bad Boys: Bosozoku Masculinities

I want to explore the idea of Japanese *bosozoku* masculinity as represented in *Bad Boys* (a TV anime series and manga) through their motorcycles. This particular text was chosen not just because my participant Mr M stated, ‘I wanted to be like Eiji from *Bad Boys*’ (not to mention my cousin and his wife also referring to the series), but also, as a franchise, it has been very successful in mainstream popular Japanese culture over a sustained period of time. Set in creator Hiroshi Tanaka’s home town of Hiroshima, the original manga series of *Bad Boys* (1988–96) was aimed at young boys, following the various antics, relationships, feuds and everyday life activities of members from a local *bosozoku* group, the ‘Paradise Butterfly’ gang. The success of the series led to: a sequel manga series, *Bad Boys Glare* (1996–2003); a televised anime series (1993–8); a live-action film (2011) and, most recently, a TV drama series, *Bad Boys J* (2013).⁶ Clearly, something about *bosozoku*’s ethos, culture, practices, visual appearance and behaviour as represented in the series captured the general popular Japanese imagination.

Through an examination of the *bosozoku*’s motorcycles as represented in *Bad Boys*, I shall investigate how traditionalist Japanese gender ideologies often inform the ways in which subcultural and motorcyclic masculinities are constructed in this particular manga and anime series. Ultimately, my aim is to provide an analysis that considers the specificity of Japanese subcultural masculinities and the role of their motorcycles in articulating gendered *bosozoku* identities within the visual realm of manga and anime. I have identified three main aspects of the motorcycle which operates as a subcultural technology of Japanese gender in *Bad Boys*: noise,

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light and the idea of the 'bad boy'. All areas are bound up in issues surrounding space, geographies and historicised discourses that produce *Japanese* articulations of subcultural masculinity.

Thunder and Lightning

There is a popular expression in Japanese: *jishin, kaminari, kaji, oyaji*, meaning 'earthquake, lightning, fire and father'. They are the four elements that cause fear and are terrifying because one has no control over them. While in general, 'the West' tends to maternalise nature ('Mother Nature', 'Gaia', 'Earth Goddess'), this particular Japanese expression reveals that, in Japan, the father/patriarch is the ultimate powerful ruling force of nature alongside the other consequently masculinised and paternalised elements of earthquake, lightning and fire. In a historically and culturally paganistic country that practises Shintoism, 'thunder' is indeed masculinised through a male Demon-God who is associated with fear: Raijin (*rai* = thunder, *jīn* = God) is the God of Thunder who is a ubiquitous figure in Japanese culture, appearing everywhere from countless shrine gates (alongside his partner, *Fujin*, God of Wind) to computer games such as *Final Fantasy VII*. A red and demonic creature, he is typically shown with a contorted face incandescent with rage, a set of *taiko* drums which he beats to cause the loud noise of thunder; a divine convocation, he is a mythical and 'archetypal' figure (Jung 1959) who acts as a cultural reference to primordial fear.⁷

In this context, the *kaminari-zoku* – predecessor to *bosozoku* – needs to be understood in relation to such a cultural and gendered discourse surrounding fear and terror. What is the role of the motorcycle in representing the masculinisation of this primordial and cultural fear of thunder and lightning? Two corresponding characteristics of the motorcycle come to mind: the noise of revving (thunder) and the light beam from the headlights (lightning). These serve as a mechanism to terrorise and territorialise spaces audio-visually, where *bosozoku* masculinities can be staged to both members of the public and to one another.

Noise of thunder: revving as a disruptive location

One of the most common gestures people make when imitating a motorcycle and/or a biker is to reach out in front to some air-handlebars,

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twist the wrists in a ‘revving’ motion, usually accompanied with a vocalised ‘vrooom vrooom’. The sound of the motorcycle is metonymic: one can hear and identify a motorcycle before one can see it; the sound *becomes* the motorcycle. In the manga series of *Bad Boys*, as is the case of most manga that uses Japanese language’s generous use of onomatopoeic words, images of the characters riding their motorcycles are always accompanied with a large font that dominates the frame to represent the sound of the motorcycle: *oh-oh-OH-OH-OH!!* Similarly, the very opening scene of the animated TV series begins with the sound of revving motorcycles first – high-pitched, squealing – as we are then presented with close-ups of the tyres and faces of the *bosozoku* members. Ironically, they are *not* speeding but instead, as a group, are slowly edging forward towards a couple of salarymen and cornering them into the front of a building.⁸ It is the sheer number of bikes and the noise of the revving that is menacing, as represented by the shrieking salarymen and other passers-by. Thunder has struck. And herein lies the difference between the sound of a motorcycle and the noise of a motorcycle.

While sounds have phenomenological implications relating to perception and the senses – what Merleau-Ponty (2012) calls the sense’s presentations of the ‘sonorous object’ (2012: 5) – noise is more about the disruption of our senses and the interference of perception. Extraneous and excessive, noise is the unwanted element within our auditory field: hence terms such as ‘noise pollution’, ‘white noise’, ‘noisy neighbours’ and ‘background noise’. As such, noise must be regulated and managed as a form of societal discipline. As outlined in the Noise and Regulation Law 1968, the Environment Agency of Japan established some strict rules and regulations surrounding the regulation of noise, enforced by the Minister of Transport who must ‘make certain that the maximum permissible levels of motor vehicle noise pursuant to (...) the Road Transportation Vehicles Law (Chapter 1, Article 16) are not exceeded’.⁹

Inasmuch as road regulation is about the regulation of speed, lane discipline, traffic lights and so on, noise is equally quantified and managed. In this way, noise almost always stands against some kind of institutionalised standardisation and regulation of sonorous normativity, whether it is in relation to transport, music or consumer technologies. What the opening scene from *Bad Boys* represents is sonorous menace and sonic deviance as produced by the noise of the motorcycle(s). There is no

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speeding, no physical trespassing, no violence at this point, just a violation of the civic soundscape and the consequent disruption of the normative sonicsphere:

noise and signal are indistinct because the noise is produced by discordant attempts in a crowded room to amplify the signal, report what it says, and shout down those who would report otherwise.

Lynch 2001: 448

While Lynch is referring to the relationship between noise and error within the context of US elections, the idea of noise as being part of a discordant (and thus conscious) attempt to amplify and thus override existing sounds is precisely what forms the basis of most counter-public politics of disruption. Most marginalised groups that have had to and still continue to protest in order to be heard (e.g. LGBT, black and other ethnic minorities, and the women's movement) rely on intentionally amplifying their signal – semantically and sonically – in order to be heard above the existing oppressive sound of normativity, to (re)claim the right for self-representation. Noise is disruptive, ideological; it can spatialise politics by creating an alternative auditory field of embodiment that can challenge dominant spaces of being.

In discussing noise and politics, Attali (2009: 6) argues that 'any theory of power today must include a theory of the localization of noise' in being the 'equivalent to the articulation of a space, it indicates the limits of territory'. Hence, for example, early LGBT activist and advocacy groups like the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACTUP) whose aim was to empower people by breaking the silence surrounding AIDS and the LGBT population (their motto being 'Silence = Death'); similarly Gay Pride/Mardi Gras are instances of disruption realised through a carnivalesque politics based on noise, 'place-making tactics' that lead to 'the production of queer counterpublics' (Halberstam 2005: 6).¹⁰ The disruptiveness of noise can thus be a way to engender, sexualise, racialise and otherwise spatialise ideologies and politicise public places. While I am in no way advocating violent practices or suggesting in any way that minority politics is akin to *bosozoku* tactics of fear, the idea that noise has a 'locality' and can territorialise a space through its disruptive ideological demarcation is pertinent here: it is the collective noise of motorcycles that marks out *bosozoku* territory, one that is based on Japanese patriarchal ideologies.

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The concepts of ‘taking over space’, territorialism and the invasion of land have been historically a masculine endeavour, as argued by post-colonial theorist McClintock (1995: 7) who states that gender dynamics were ‘fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise’. If we understand noise as an invasion of space or, to put it another way, that which spatialises disruption, then we can conceptualise the revving of the motorcycles as the sonic demonisation/masculinisation – like Raijin with his *taiko* drums – of public spaces. The noise of the motorcycles opens up a space for fear that taps into what Jung (1959) calls the ‘collective unconscious’; a motorcyclic incantation, it is the evocation of the patriarchal Demon-God of Thunder, at once engendering and even historicising public and civic space of contemporary urban Japan. The sound of *kaminari* is not just an archetypal reference to sonic fear, but one that is also part of a patriarchal and imperialist discourse of territorialism and male dominance in Japan.

Both the manga and anime versions of *Bad Boys* frequently depict motorcycles draped in the Japanese flag, not to mention the ‘Paradise Butterfly’ gang’s colours as being red and white. Similarly as with real-life *bosozoku*, there are many items of clothing and artefacts that appear in *Bad Boys* which have nationalistic significance: from *sentofuku* (military/fighting clothes); *tokkofuku* (clothes worn by kamikaze groups in World War II); *hachimaki* (a head band worn by kamikaze groups in World War II, usually with a Japanese flag at the centre), to name only a few.¹¹ While such symbols might be subversively ‘ironical’ or, as Alford and Ferriss (2007) argue, ‘apolitical’, visually, they borrow from a Japanese history of imperial militarism and, as such, become part of its visual discourse that reinforces the gender ideologies surrounding Japanese militaristic masculinity.

Discussing the question of maps, travel and land, McClintock (1995) also refers to the ‘male authority of the printed page’ within which the lay of the land represents the ‘colonised woman’ (McClintock 1995: 4). This authoritative dominance over space is evident in both the anime and manga version of *Bad Boys*. Much like cinematographic techniques of using sound to create another spatial dimension (Altman 1992; Sobchack 2005; Liang 2016) in the anime series, the sound of motorcycles play as much of a part as their visuality, acting as an aural metonym. In the case of the manga version, the noise (‘Oh oh oh oh’) literally occupies more space

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on the page – sometimes mis-aligning a comic panel – and thus territorialising and even trespassing the boundaries of visual convention. Gangnes (2014) discusses the use of onomatopoeia and sounds in relation to *Akira*, describing how creator Otomo ‘allows sound effects to breach panel borders (...) expressing a sound so loud it cannot be contained within a panel, or to interrupt the path a reader’s eyes travel’ (Gangnes 2014: 179). The idea of noise is disruptive not only within the narrative content but in relation to reading practices. It is therefore the noise of the motorcycle which ‘takes over’ by deafening, silencing and piercing through the city like a thunder bolt slicing through and rumbling across the skies.

Lightning: the penetrative phallic shaft of light

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (2010: 388–91), Sigmund Freud refers to Bismarck’s dream (1919) because an object – a riding whip – not only represents a male organ, it ‘has a further attribute which established it in the clearest fashion as a phallic symbol’. By extension, so to speak, Freud also refers to sticks, lances and other similar objects, handled largely by men, as phallic symbols. Such psychoanalytic symbology has often been used popularly to understand everyday objects and related practices like guns and fast cars. Motorcycles have also been conceptualised as phallic symbols of masculine virility and power (Lewis 1992; Slawinski 2005), its mechanical protrusions interpreted as ‘extensions’ of the cocksure male psyche. In discussing consumer culture and the materiality of phallic symbols, Thompson and Holt (2004: 317) argue that ‘to grab the phallus is to have the power to set the terms and rules of patriarchal competition in a manner where the phallic male will reign supreme’: to grab the throttle is to grab the phallus.

Yet here, I want to explore the extension of the extension, that which moves beyond the immediate and tangible materiality of the motorcycle, yet still forms a powerful and visual symbol of phallic masculinity: light. Referring back to the concept of *kaminari*, lightning acts as a visual counterpart to thunder; a penetrative shaft that slices through darkness. As with thunder, lightning not only evokes primordial fear – possibly greater due to its ability to kill or maim – it also forms part of a masculinised and phallic discourse of penetration, spatialisation and territorialism. Visually, light leads our sight towards the ‘end point’;

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whoever has control over light has the power to decide where, when, how and on what/whom our gaze falls, similar to some theorisations of cinema and photography (Mulvey 1989; Sontag 1977). Light is a scopic protrusion, a controlling pillar of contrast between darkness and lightness that can situate gender, sexuality, race and other markers of identity upon ideological boundaries defined by binary oppositions.

As if to capture the 'deviant' nature of *bosozoku*, in *Bad Boys* and beyond, the motorcycles are represented mostly in the dark and/or in nocturnal settings where the only visible aspect of the vehicle is the light emanating from the headlights. The motorcycle's source of light is either presented as a circular and glaring 'eye' in the darkness (Figure 9.1) or as a sharp beam of light cutting across the nightscape (Figure 9.2). In both cases, light is represented as something that is penetrating and harsh, like a ram-rod forcing its way ahead of the physical motorcycle. Such imagery presents us with a phallogocentric visuality that engenders darkness as a feminised space – an empty and vacant field – that must be filled and penetrated by the piercing, coruscant projection of the masculinised shaft of light. This reading resonates uncomfortably with the many scenes of sexual violence and rape (both manga and anime) that use the same perspective: a male character fills the screen/frame while moving towards the reader/viewer, as if to break through the fourth wall using the sheer force of their male sexual dominance.

In discussing Plato's concept of *chora* in relation to femininity, Grosz (1995: 116) states: '*chora*, then, is the space in which place is made possible, the chasm for the passage of spaceless Forms into a spatialized reality, a dimensionless tunnel opening itself to spatialization, obliterating itself to make others possible and actual'. In this context, the darkness of the night is the feminised *chora*, a 'chasm for the passage of spaceless Forms', the cavity and space that becomes a place upon entry, that which accommodates and receives the thrust of light shooting out from the phallic motorcycle. In fact, the anime version of *Bad Boys* has various shots of the characters racing through city tunnels on their motorcycles – a staple not just in anime/manga but extending to other areas in popular culture like motorcycle and car adverts – literally representing 'a dimensionless tunnel opening itself to spatialization' (*ibid.*). The tunnel, a fixed female interiority, opens itself up to the spatialisation of a mobile phallic masculinity.

Similarly, despite the city – another source of light at night – being associated with the architectural engendering of masculinised spaces



Figure 9.1 The glaring ‘eye’ of the headlight in *Bad Boys* (1993).

(Massey 1994; Rendell et al. 2000; Lane and Richter 2011), by comparison the racing *boso-zoku*’s headlights represent a more ‘dominant’ masculinity because of the motorcycle’s *mobility*. While city lights remain fixed – like the many (subservient and complicit) salarymen appearing in both the manga/anime of *Bad Boys* – the moving headlights of the *boso-zoku*’s motorcycles represent their ability to

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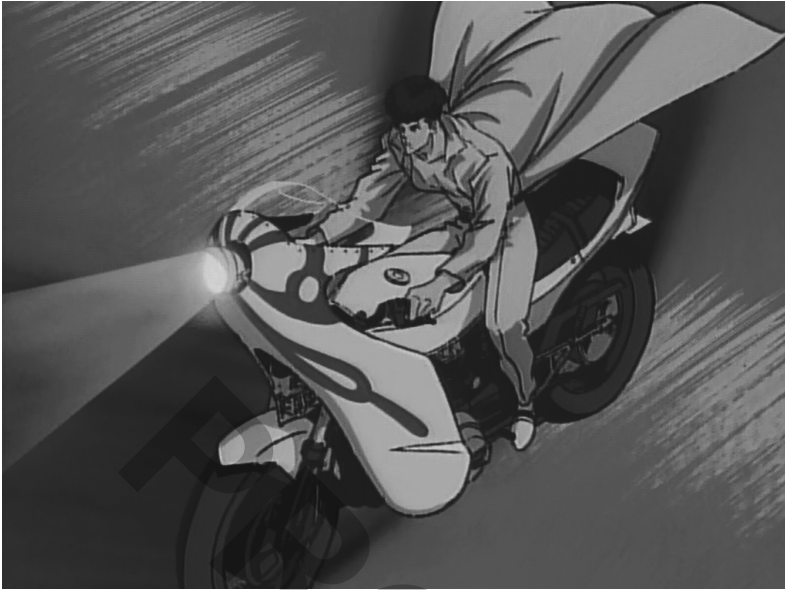


Figure 9.2 A penetrative shaft of light, piercing through the night and road ahead in *Bad Boys* (1993).

surpass and by-pass structured boundaries of being. Competing sources of light correspond to the different kinds of conflicting and localised Japanese masculinities.

There are many scenes in *Bad Boys* (manga and anime) where members of the 'Paradise Butterfly' gang must confront other rival group members by meeting them at an appointed time and place – usually a park or an open field at night – to settle a feud through an honourable duel. During such events, collected beams of light from the various members' motorcycles shine upon a particular spot which demarcate the duelling 'arena' (Figure 9.3). As with the noise of revving motorcycles, which draws a sonorous cartography of *bosozoku* territory, so too do the headlights: acting like theatrical lighting, they spatialise and even dramatise *bosozoku* masculine identities by staging their conflict through ritualised violence. Drawing from Goffman's work (1974), Sato (1982) refers to how 'indigenous social types are highly dramatized roles on the theatrical stages of *bosozoku* activities' where 'courage, manliness are emphasized and exaggerated' [sic]



Figure 9.3 The spatialisation of a fighting arena through headlights in *Bad Boys* (1993).

(1982: 80). The theatricality of *bosozoku* is similarly picked up by Alford and Ferris (2007: 77) who link it to questions of hypermasculinity, arguing that ‘the costume, the motorcycle and the ride are all a piece of dramatic theatre, enacted as a public display to horrify/amaze’. In this context, the motorcycles and their headlights become subcultural technologies of gender, lucent projections of masculinity that both dramatise and spatialise its performance while simultaneously revealing the very performativity of hypermasculinity within the context of Japanese subcultural semiotics.

‘I want to be like Eiji’: Japanese ‘Bad Boy’

At the start of Episode 1 of Series 1 of the animated TV series when we are introduced to all the characters, we are presented with Tsukasa, an over-protected (and thus stifled and frustrated) son of a rich family living in a mansion staffed with servants. Tsukasa is sitting at a large table, wearing a bow-tie, while trying to learn English; however, he is sneaking a peak at *bosozoku* reports on television, while we hear his mother’s voice narrating a letter (presumably in her absence): ‘under no circumstances are you to go

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outside to play. Outside is where all the bad people are'. He mutters to himself, '*kakkoi*', a term often used to describe (usually) men, objects or actions that are 'cool'. As if to challenge his mother's command, some *boso-zoku* members pass right in front of his mansion. Tsukasa goes to the window and shouts: 'That is the sight of a *real* man. I am going to be a *real man*!' He consequently jumps out of the window and the rest of the episode involves him being 'initiated' into the *boso-zoku* gang while making many 'un-manly' errors along the way. Tsukasa's idolisation of *boso-zoku* mimics (right down to the words used) Mr M who said to me, 'I wanted to be like Eiji from *Bad Boys*!' When asked what he defined as a 'bad boy', his response was 'a guy who is up to no good'.

I want to now examine the definition of 'bad boy' as a masculine identity associated with motorcycles in both academia and popular culture. In particular, I want to focus on how the 'bad boy' is defined through motorcycles within a *Japanese* context. Due to the dominance of American visual culture that has produced mainstream films like the aforementioned *The Wild One* (1953), Marvel Comic's *Ghost Rider* (1972–2014),¹² to TV series *Sons of Anarchy* (2008–14), representations of motorcycle gangs and the 'bad boy' tend to be associated in popular culture and media with American or Americanised culture. Furthermore, while the most famous real-life One-Percenter ('1%er') outlaw motorcycle gangs – especially the Hells Angels, the Outlaws, the Bandidos and the Pagans (collectively as 'The Big Four') – have become globalised phenomena with world-wide networks, they still originated from and remain predominantly strong in America.¹³

Members of these outlaw motorcycle gangs almost always ride Harley-Davidsons or choppers, which combined with the brand's efforts to sell subcultural authenticity – circulating the myth of the 'cool' outlaw – have cemented the connection between motorcycles and 'bad boys' with Harley-Davidsons, Hells Angels and America. As a result, the homologous image of the law-breaking biker in popular culture is one that is stylised after a highly Americanised form of masculinity: 'males, primarily White and ride American Iron, mainly Harleys and Harley facsimiles of at least 750 cc engine sizes. They wear three-piece patches signifying the club/gang and its territory' (Barker and Human 2009: 174). While both American and Japanese motorcycle gang stylisations share a similar spectacular and performative quality, *boso-zoku* masculinity must also be understood

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within the specific context of Japanese culture, and how the question of 'manliness' is constructed through the members' relationship with not just one another, other gang members, women and the law but, most importantly here, their motorcycles.

The underlying premise of this book has been to approach the motorcycle as a mobile technology of gender. Given this conceptualisation of the motorcycle, there are two key factors that need consideration when thinking about the differences between American and Japanese gendered representations of the 'bad boy' biker and how these are articulated through the motorcycle. First, Japanese and American geographies are vastly different and so the relationship to mobility – and how to challenge normative mobility – must be taken into account. Second, and relatedly, the geographical, cultural and legal differences between Japan and America mean that alternative specifications of the motorcycle are valued, correlating to different aspects of masculinity.

Roads of freedom vs thrill of obstacles

Something that my cousin said to me struck me at the time when we were talking about motorcycle gangs and 'coolness'. He told me he thought that Harley-Davidsons are definitely *not* cool. Upon being asked why, his response was: 'have you seen how narrow our roads are? Are you kidding? When you see someone ride a Harley here it just looks so silly. I mean, where are they going?' He then added while shaking his head, 'if you've got police chasing after you, how is a Harley going to help you: it's too wide!' Compared to Japan, the sheer landmass of America makes it possible to travel for days on a motorcycle. The idea of the 'road' is more open-ended, as wide and as large as is the expansive land that surrounds it. To move through such vastness, you need big roads and you need a big bike and, if the bike is big, the landscape is always going to be overwhelmingly bigger.

It is no wonder that there is an abundance of American road narratives in popular culture, for the idea of travelling across the land is such an intrinsic part of the American national psyche, part of its status as a 'mythical "land of dreams", a nation to which people fled from persecution, poverty and hardship in search of a better life' (Sargeant and Watson 1999a: 6–7). As part of this national discourse, American(ised) narratives of motorcycle gangs and 'bad boy' outlaws tend to 'set the scene' within

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such a vast landscape, often in desert-like environments. Here, the figure and concept of the 'outlaw' taps straight into an American discourse of romantic(ised) historicism involving the Western Frontier and territorialisation: cowboys, outlaws and bandits; they share similar ideological values of the 'bad boy' biker, linking the 'wild one' (like Marlon Brando) with that of the 'frontiersman [who] had an intricate relationship with the wilderness' (Sargeant and Watson 1999a: 7). In fact, Castleberry (2014: 269–700) argues that the American TV show *Sons of Anarchy* is both a revision and an update of outlaw culture and gunslinger violence found in American Western film genre, sharing common tropes and ideologies, including mythic conceptions of landscape.¹⁴ In other words, the Americanisation of the 'bad boy' biker figure – especially in relation to Harley-Davidsons, American landscape and roads – are all part of the same national discourse that constructs masculinity as the territorial, mobile hero who is affiliated with wilderness and danger.

By contrast, Japan has a significantly smaller surface area to a point where one could ride North to South across the mainland in about 24 hours. Furthermore, city roads tend to be narrow with many old and small alleyways that interconnect into a compact and dense network which mostly only pedestrians or cyclists can access. Consequently, the idea of national driving/riding 'long-distance' is not as romanticised in comparison to American discourses of the road,¹⁵ and similarly, the sense of empty vastness (and thus the lack of obstacles) is also missing. However, this does not necessarily mean there are no Japanese 'road narratives'; on the contrary, many folktales and historicised stories involve epic journeys undertaken by heroes and villains on the road. The very idea of the Japanese biker 'outlaw' draws from a different historical context which Napier (2005: 41) suggests relates back to questions of movement and the *ronin*, a marginalised clan-less Samurai figure, not to mention connections with the more contemporary Yakuza (a Japanese criminal organization), an outlaw culture which in itself draws from traditional Samurai codes of honour (Lee 2009: 123). Of course both American and Japanese 'outlaws' overlap thematically, something which was adopted by Japanese film maker Akira Kurosawa (Dresser 1983; Wild 2014) in his use of Western tropes in his films.

As a predominantly Japanese urban phenomenon, *bosozoku* motorcycles use roads differently to their American counterparts. As represented

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in *Bad Boys*, the characters' motorcycles are almost always racing (or slow-riding menacingly) through city roads or parked in the shadows of one of the countless of small back alleyways of the city, both hidden from the police, public and rival groups, but also ready for action at any moment. Therein lies one of the most fundamental differences between popular representations of American and Japanese motorcycle gangs and their relationship to the road. American biker gangs are often represented as 'outlaws', being out of town and avoiding the law altogether geographically; and, if they are parked up, the motorcycles are usually outside a biker bar, (the equivalent, perhaps, of a Western saloon). Japanese biker gangs, on the other hand, as is the case in *Bad Boys*, are almost always represented *in* town and thus operating outside the law and society but from within its tight grid, like the gaming character Pacman who must forever 'evade' its enemies (rival gangs, police) from the confined structures of an unmoving frame. This means that the manner in which such gangs 'escape' differ: American motorcycles 'hit the road'; Japanese motorcycles must overcome urban obstacles – weaving in and out – using roads as a thrilling means of evasion, as well as, as I indicated earlier, a mode of territorialism.¹⁶

Small is big: when size doesn't matter

Motorbike of legends.

Most powerful in Hiroshima.

Z400FX

Since birth, bad boys want to reach the top!

Front cover, *Bad Boys* 2009

The manga collection of *Bad Boys* (2009) is a book thick enough to carry a detailed illustration of a Kawasaki Z400FX on its spine, with the above words splashed across it. Mr M told me that he used to read *Bad Boys* almost like a motorcycle catalogue, to check out models he wanted to one day ride and/or acquire should he ever be able to afford it. Sure enough, unlike the characters who are drawn in more stylised ways that are not proportionate and thus 'unrealistic' (i.e. very broad shoulders, extremely pointy facial features and 'evil' eyes), the motorcycles are like technical diagrams: detailed and accurate illustrations of the real object. Apart from the consumerist implications of including existing Japanese brands and products in these texts (the national equivalent of American '1%'ers' with

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Harley-Davidsons as ‘American iron’),¹⁷ what I want to focus on here is the difference between the American (and ‘Western’) and the Japanese idea of what is considered as ‘most powerful’ (as above cited) and how such technological definitions relate to the production of certain dominant ‘bad boy’ masculinities ‘who want to reach the top’.

For example, in most of Europe, America, Australia and other expansive ‘Western’ countries, a motorcycle of 400cc would not usually be considered as ‘the most powerful’,¹⁸ especially in relation to outlaw gangs and bikers. As I pointed out earlier, Barker and Human (2009: 174) define American ‘1%er’ gangs as composed of ‘males, primarily White . . . [who] ride American Iron, mainly Harleys and Harley facsimiles of *at least 750 cc engine sizes*’ (emphasis added). Popular representations follow suit; ‘outlaw bikers’ are often represented riding big, chunky motorcycles. While speed is an important ideological aspect of a masculinised Western (post-) industrial culture (as explored in Chapter 2), another equally valued characteristic of the motorcycle is its engine size and the idea of power associated with it. The numerical value of the engine size (cc) seems to correlate directly with the ‘manliness’ of the rider, a way of quantifying masculinity: the larger the engine size, the more ‘masculine’ the rider in being able to be able to handle the sheer power of the motorcycle. From obsessions with torque, ‘depth’ of timbre in the noisiness of pipes, to the cost of the motorcycle: all provide different ways of articulating the size and power of the motorcycle, ways of measuring the rider’s masculinity against a dominant scale of gender hegemony.

Such a technological quantification and qualification of male dominance might work on wide, open roads as discussed earlier, but in the context of the narrow, intricate streets that enmesh dense urban areas of Japan, largeness is something that is unwieldy, heavy, slow and cumbersome: not cool at all. Furthermore, Japanese road regulations classify motorcycles into four legal categories: up to 50cc; 50cc–125cc; 125cc–400cc; and above 400cc. The 50cc–125cc is the most common range,¹⁹ and anything above 400cc requires more money, effort and time to acquire a special licence. The combination of urban topography and legal restrictions mean that the Kawasaki’s 400cc motorcycles in *Bad Boys* is indeed ‘top’ of the engine scale. Furthermore, while smallness and slimness in the ‘West’ might be engendered as ‘feminine’ (and thus emasculating and/or effeminising for the male), in the context of Japanese motorcycles it

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is *kakkoi* because diminutiveness is culturally understood in different ways, much in the same way that the colossal size of a *sumo* wrestler is aestheticised in ways that is less common in 'the West'.

What is valued is the idea of agility and speed, not just in terms of the thrill of breaking the law and the quickness of the ride, but speed in the sense of being nimble and stealthy like a ninja who is able to hide, evade and move through the city if and when necessary.²⁰ In this context, a narrower and smaller cc motorcycle – requiring skill to weave, filter and corner – becomes the masculinised currency of cool. In the anime version of *Bad Boys* (S1E1), there is a particular scene when Tsukasa – who is still yet to 'learn' how to be a *bosozone* member (and thus a 'real man') – borrows in an emergency a fellow member's prized Kawasaki Z400FX for the first time. But upon mounting it, Tsukasa is unable to go in a straight line because he cannot balance himself properly. While the expression on the other gangsters' faces signal the comical nature of Tsukasa's failure to weave properly, the scene does reveal how the idea of being 'a real man' within the context of Japanese culture is defined here by the ability to ride a motorcycle with dexterity, agility and balance. These are qualities usually associated with athletic masculinity (as explored in Chapter 7) – rather than through strength and force. Therefore, it is important to consider that while *bosozone* – the speed tribe – value speed, it is not just about speed for pleasurable speed's sake, it is also about evasion, escape and skill.

Conclusion: Women and *Bosozone* ... *Kamikaze Girl*?

It is important to note that while *bosozone* subculture is predominantly understood as a Japanese, male-centred phenomenon which peaked between the 1970s and 1980s, there is also a thriving female-centred *bosozone* culture to have emerged in Japan since then. These all-girl *bosozone* groups have become prominent and visible enough to have even caught the attention of media outside Japan.²¹ They have also gained pop cultural attention: from the aforementioned designer label KENZO's short promotional film, to the multi-award winning film, *Kamikaze Girls* (2004) which follows two female characters who represent different types of Japanese subcultural femininities. Most pertinently, the character Ichiko is a 'kamikaze girl' who rides her modded scooter in rural Japan.²² Such recent representations

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of female *bosozoku* present women as being active bikers and members of specifically all-girl groups. By contrast, the female characters in *Bad Boys* take on a more 'supportive' and passive role as girl-friends of the active male members of a given *bosozoku* tribe. However, they are still part of a gendered *bosozoku* culture being represented and so I want to end this chapter with a very brief discussion on the female characters in *Bad Boys*. I argue that not only do the women play an important role in defining *bosozoku* masculinities, but also that their presence ultimately 'balances' and sometimes even 'corrects' deviance, thereby revealing conventional codes of heteronormativity and citizenship.

As is relatively typical of Japanese anime and manga, scenes of sexual violence and rape are frequent in *Bad Boys* although, interestingly, the violators and aggressors are always members of the rival gang and never the protagonists themselves. In that sense, while such scenes are disturbing and even extreme in their visual detail of distress, ideologically they are conventional: the *good* 'bad boys' save the girls and their purity from the *bad* 'bad boys'. And so beneath the narrative surface of deviance and crime lies a moral code that distinguishes between good and evil. In discussing sexual explicitness common in Japanese manga and anime, Cooper-Chen (2010: 14) argues that 'women have a long tradition of pleasing men, including the accomplished geisha (...) to today's waitress/French maids in Tokyo's Akihabara district cafes'. While it is tempting to state that women 'are mere sex objects' in *Bad Boys*, this is far from the case. Girl-friends of the *bosozoku* members appearing in *Bad Boys* – sometimes themselves having been on the receiving end of sexual violence – tend to be as tough as their men and, in some cases, have a significant degree of control over them.

Erika is such a female character who is feared by her boyfriend Hiro – head Leader of Paradise Butterfly's rival gang Nights Angel – who otherwise terrifies and lords it over some very tough men. In one instance (anime version *Bad Boys 2*), Erika discovers her boyfriend has defiled a young girl and, through a sense of protective vindication, goes to his place to confront him. We can interpret Erika in this particular scene as the figure of the vengeful female in Japanese culture, who is 'a particularly common trope in patriarchal cultures' and becomes a way of articulating 'masculine anxiety within contemporary Japan, where modernity and social change are steadily undermining previously entrenched gender roles'

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(Wee 2011: 152). This masculine anxiety is of course embodied by Hiro who often has to hide from her and who fears her wrath. What follows is a comical scene where Erika *scratches* him into submission, witnessed by his entire posse as he runs scared around the room trying to avoid her nails, before she finally grabs him by the ear and pulls him out of the building unceremoniously like a whimpering child. Akin to the stereotypical Italian Mafia boss who kills men routinely and yet is afraid of his Mama, Erika represents a strong maternal figure who can fight with men, initiate other girlfriends into the gang while protecting them like the matriarchal brothel madam.

However, not only does the humour make it a 'safe' mode to reverse gender roles – male as submissive, female as dominant – there is something very domesticated about this scene, as if the characters are playing husband-and-wife or even mother-and-son. Erika must 'correct' the morally deviant Hiro and 'teach him a lesson' through a somewhat infantile form of corporal punishment while supporting him loyally and with patience. The most matrimonial of scenes is probably at the end *Bad Boys 1* (anime) when we are presented with a 'happy ending' reminiscent of *shojo-manga*.²³ The Leader of the 'Paradise Butterfly' gang – having passed on his leadership to the next generation (Tsukasa) – is outside a church as wedding bells ring and his bride smiles by his side. As Arons (2001) states in her discussion of women in Hong Kong Kung Fu films, 'although women frequently appear as stunningly powerful fighters, this positive image is often neutralized by the conventional depiction of women in the genre in general' (Arons 2001: 29). Nothing is more conventional than a Bride making a 'bad boy' into a Groom/Husband/Good Citizen.

As Sato's (1991: 177) real-life *bosozoku* informants' accounts reveal, marriage is an expected part of an average *bosozoku* life-span, as the 'process of "settling down" or "role exit" from *bosozoku* to ordinary citizen is, then, semi-institutionalised'. It is not even a question of 'growing out' of a youth subculture; instead, 'settling down' is a rite of passage, a process akin to a graduation marking a successful initiation into adult life. It is as if *bosozoku* is a pre-adult academy where one can learn 'to become a real man' and 'to become a real woman' capable of holding her own. Paradoxically, this is combined with the dominant forces of capitalism, patriarchy and heteronormativity which seem to form the very foundations of *bosozoku* subculture. These are the very grounds upon

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which traditional gender roles – for both men and women – are staged and played out.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, within the context of *bosozoku* culture as represented in *Bad Boys*, the motorcycle is a subcultural technology of gender that spatialises predominantly masculinised and counter-public practices in Japanese terror and fear – through noise and light – while providing the mechanical, geographical and legal conditions from which to embody the figure of the Japanese gangster outlaw and ‘bad boy’. Once the motorcycle is sold or passed down, these facets are no longer available *physically*. However, as an ideological aesthetic, *bosozoku* culture is readily available for vicarious and/or nostalgic consumption – as was the case with my cousin, his wife and the racer – through manga, anime, advertising, fashion and even motorcycles themselves. The continuous fascination that media and popular culture have towards this Japanese subcultural phenomenon mean that its legacy continues beyond its origins.

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A Typology of Motorcycle Meanings: Gender and Technology

Having explored the various different ways in which the motorcycle is represented in film, advertising, television and anime/manga, I have sought to demonstrate how the motorcycle carries a myriad of meanings in popular culture that include, but also move beyond, subcultural modes of visual signification. And yet, despite the polysemic nature of the motorcycle, there are some distinct and recurring themes that run across most motorcycle-based narratives. Not only do these recurring themes point towards the specificity of the motorcycle as a unique and distinct piece of technology, considering the specificity of a given piece of technology is also crucial if we are to understand its role in shaping gendered identities, relations and practices in ideological and material ways. As a mobile technology of gender, the motorcycle is thus no different: motorcycle meanings engender identities, relations and practices in often problematic ways which reinforce, reproduce and re-establish dominant, normative ideologies surrounding gender (as well as class, race and sexuality) that have significant material and political implications.

This final chapter offers a typology of motorcycle meanings which is designed to not only pin down specific themes that consider the motorcycle as a distinct piece of technology, but also outline how we can use such motorcycle meanings to think critically about gendered identities,

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relations and practices. I ultimately argue that almost all contemporary representations of the motorcycle and women reflect post-feminist sensibilities which encourage women to seek independence, empowerment and agency through riding a post-feminist motorcycle. And yet, by doing so, they inevitably re-establish traditional patriarchal values which subjugate, re-contain and discipline women as sexualised, domesticated and/or reproductive mothers or wives. Women are thus caught in a state of static mobility. Similarly, while this book has examined multiple motorcycle masculinities, what has emerged across all chapters is the notion that at the core of each motorcycle narrative lies traditional gender values which equally discipline and regulate men's bodies, identities, practices and relations in particular ways that strengthen, maintain and ensure the continuation of male dominance and masculine supremacy.

Freedom and Independence

George Hanson: They're not scared of you. They're scared of what you represent to 'em.

Billy: Hey, man. All we represent to 'em, man, is somebody who needs a haircut.

George Hanson: Oh, no. What you represent to them is freedom.

Easy Rider, 1969

Throughout this book, I have referred to the dominance of American popular culture and how effectively it has absorbed the motorcycle into its own national discourse. The above-quoted George Hanson and Billy's exchange from *Easy Rider* – an iconic and thus influential motorcycle-based film – encapsulates one of the most important (Americanised) values the motorcycle has come to represent in popular culture: freedom and independence of the Outsider. Motorcycles often appear in stories about freedom and independence, especially as staged on the road as a social system that represents the possibilities of individual agency ('road out of town' or 'off-road'), while also representing a structure containing restraints, necessities and responsibilities (paying for petrol at a station or using a shortcut to get to a destination). While one could of course argue this point applies to automobiles – the road trip in a car – the sheer size, shape and nature of the motorcycle mean that it is usually a solitary vehicle

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(kids and family unfriendly, unlike the car): riders ride alongside each other or even carry a pillion passenger, but generally almost always alone.

Discussing issues relating to the self in conditions of high Modernity, Giddens (2004: 81) argues that 'a lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity'. In this context, the motorcycle can be conceptualised as a functional commodity, part of a lifestyle choice, which not only fulfils a utilitarian need (i.e. transport), but also gives 'material form to a particular narrative of self-identity'. Generally speaking, for those who have the socio-cultural and economic means, motorcycle ownership thus enables the narrativisation of the self as a free and independent agent: to be mobile, to occupy public spaces, to have the autonomy and agency of choice. But, as aforementioned, such issues mean different things to men and women with equally different consequences.

For women, motorcycle-centred narratives of freedom and independence resonate strongly with post-feminist narratives of self-identity that evolve around questions of choice, agency and empowerment. As I have explored across various chapters, whether it is Anne Hathaway as Catwoman riding the Batpod, Kate Moss as a biker chick on a BSA or Keira Knightley as a sophisticated Parisian model on a Ducati, such images of female riders present the post-feminist motorcycle as a vehicle of political change. Here, the post-feminist motorcycle acts as a symbol of female liberation, where women have become free and independent agents in control of their lives while retaining their femininity despite the masculinity/musculinity of motorcycles. Yet one has to question why such imagery exists mainly within films and advertising (not for motorcycles but other products, usually beauty- and fashion-based). This visual preponderance suggests that the technological liberation of women as economically, socio-culturally and politically mobile beings is conditional, regulated by two mechanisms of re-containment: the sexualisation of women's bodies and the connection to consumer culture.

As I pointed out in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, while images of female characters as 'powerful, violent, skilled, smart and self-assured as any of the male characters' might seem like a 'positive development, it is offset by the compensatory exaggerated feminine form' (Brown 2004: 63–4). In other words, the price of being 'free' and 'independent' comes with the condition

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that women's bodies are still stylised according to very traditionally idealised and sexualised forms of femininity that are pleasing for the heterosexual male gaze. As we have seen, the post-feminist motorcycle becomes the perfect 'display cabinet' in laying out the female body in all its fetishised, curvaceous and sexualised glory. Similarly, like almost all post-feminist and neo-liberalist discourses that promote female individualism, freedom and independence, images of female riders ultimately result in 'interpolating women back into the sexual and economic hierarchies of consumer capitalism' (Purse 2011: 83). Women can be free and independent only if they are buying mascara or chic 'biker-style' jackets to 'improve' themselves as ideal women. Adverts for the sales of actual motorcycles are often devoid of women, unless they are posing in bikinis, acting as girlfriends ('enjoy the ride!') and/or commodified along with the motorcycle behind a veneer of soft pornographic titillation. The post-feminist motorcycle inevitably leads to the material and ideological containment of women back to their bodies – rather than machines – and the discipline of the self as informed by patriarchal and capitalistic ideals.

For men, motorcycle-based narratives of freedom and independence are also connected to issues of socio-cultural, economical and geographical mobility. But, unlike women, for whom freedom and independence means finally *gaining* access, whether as workers, consumers, voters and so on, to masculinised social, cultural, economic and geographical spaces and systems from where they have been historically barred, men have the privilege of already being situated within these systems. Thus, for men, freedom and independence are about finding the means to *escape* these systems and spaces that also regulate their bodies, relations and practices. As we have seen in Chapters 2, 5 and through my references to David Beckham as a man who 'for the first time in his adult life he has freedom to do whatever he wants' (2014, BBC website)¹ and thus got on his motorcycle, for men, the motorcycle represents a 'material form to a particular narrative of self-identity' (Giddens 2004: 81) which articulates pecuniary success that can be translated into a solitary pursuit. He has the means to buy not just an expensive motorcycle, but also the time to enjoy it and occupy spaces *outside* of the constraints of family and work. Those who must stay behind are immobile, fixed and subservient: usually women and/or other complicit men who perform the role of paid labour.

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The motorcycle has therefore become an ideal and popular way to represent the negotiation, navigation and/or by-passing of 'the System' of automobility, in itself a material and ideological manifestation of capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and other systems of regulation. In other words, the motorcycle often represents a vehicle that can find alternative pathways through such disciplinary systems of automobility. Whether it is in its physical ability to: go off-road (and off the proverbial grid) where cars and people cannot and dare not go; intentionally travel faster or slower than other cars; or filter through traffic. The motorcycle represents the breaking away from 'normal' citizen's constraints, concerns and regulations over time, space, money/labour and social relationships. But, as we have seen across various texts from *Easy Rider* to Chanel's and Davidoff's fragrance adverts, there is always a price to be paid for being outside of 'the System'. The terms and conditions for paying the economical, social, cultural and/or corporeal price of freedom and independence differ for men and women.

Travel, Adventure and Transformation

You see things vacationing on a motorcycle in a way that is completely different from any other. In a car you're always in a compartment (...) the whole thing, the whole experience, is never removed from immediate consciousness.

Pirsig 1999: 12

Compared to a car (and most other vehicles) motorcycles leave the rider more vulnerable, exposed and unprotected, thus necessitating an extra level of physical and mental commitment. Such a heightened sense of one's surroundings often entails toil, danger and hardship – fighting weather, bad roads and other road hazards for bikers – and so the motorcycle journey itself becomes a means to an end: riding for the sake of riding, the motorcycle provides a very specific set of technologically mediated experiences. As the above quotation from the popular *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Enquiry into Values* demonstrates, such sensuous and perceptual experiences on the motorcycle can lead to transformative and often existential moments of self-actualisation in which the rider can suddenly see 'life in a whole new light' (as uttered by Ewan

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McGregor in the fragrance advert, discussed in Chapter 5). The motorcycle's close connection with the Self and its ability to be a transcendental tool for the perception of the Self means that many motorcycle narratives are often articulated as autobiographies, travelogues, travel and adventure stories. These are transformation narratives which involve people 'finding themselves' or learning something new as they go on a life journey. Gastro-motorcyclism as explored in Chapter 6 is an example of such a narrative format: two celebrity chefs travel to foreign lands on their motorcycles, and despite accidents and mishaps along the way, ultimately find out about new foods and cultures while looking out into the sunset contemplating how 'two working-class lads from up North' have been transformed.

As I discussed in Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 9, the realm of adventure and travelling has been traditionally a predominantly 'masculinised' affair. Men have always explored, conquered and territorialised land and claimed it as his own. To refer back to Cater's (2013: 8) argument: 'culturally and historically the dominant Western meaning of adventure has been shaped by the European exploration and colonialisation of the world' underpinned by a masculinist imperative. In this light, adventure-based motorcycle narratives constitute an extension of what are often problematic masculinist and colonialist discourses which set up women and Natives as 'the Other'. Images of heroism, bravery and persistence – the motorcycle is ideal in representing the mechanical challenge to (hu)Man stamina and spirit – that lead to some form of Enlightenment only serve to glorify the traveller while hiding the ways in which such narratives often involve the appropriation, territorialisation and occupation of the Other.

Clearly, women have also travelled distances on motorcycles, and there are contemporary female adventurers like Lois Pryce, Elspeth Beard and Antonia Bolingbroke-Kent who have all produced motorcycle travelogues: but these are few and very far between, categorised as 'specialist' and hardly receive the same media coverage that David Beckham or Ewan McGregor did when they travelled around the world on motorcycles as celebrities. As I discussed earlier, women and motorcycles in popular culture usually come stylised in slick, skin-tight or skin-revealing clothes. We still have a long way to go for images of women dressed in practical biker clothes to emerge within the popular and mainstream media. Motorcycle-based travel narratives – and its related experiences and practices – are thus often

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masculinised, reflecting colonialist and masculinist discourses involving hardship, adventure, conquest and territorialism. This is because travel, adventure and mobility are gendered in themselves.

Design, Technology and Performance

Where the motorcycle is a significant part of a narrative – whether it is a concept motorcycle as seen in *Akira* or *Tron*, or Guy Martin's real-life BMW S1000 RR – there is usually some reference to the motorcycle's particular capabilities, personality, craftsmanship and/or design (usually revealing either heritage or futurist sensibilities). As with most pieces of consumer technology, the motorcycle's design, performance capabilities, model, brand identity – in short, its 'specs' – matter, because such attributes become ideologically and physically embodied by its user. Technological lifestyle commodities like motorcycles, cars, phones and watches are thus often promoted using highly fetishised and stylised language that emphasises the techno-anthropomorphic connections between the product and the user's body. At times, the distinction between the product and human body/user is left intentionally ambiguous: for example, Yamaha R1s 'redefine performance', which could be referring to either.

What is so distinctive about the motorcycle as a piece of technology is its especially close connection to the body: unlike the car in which the driver has a little more corporeal autonomy, in the case of the motorcycle both body and technology must work in unison. If the motorcycle needs to go around a bend, then the rider's entire body must lean the motorcycle into a corner. In other words, motorcycle specifications have a very physical, direct impact on the ways in which the body is shaped, contoured and attributed, as explored through riding styles and body shapes in Chapters 2, 3 and 7. As such, motorcycle narratives can often become stories about bodies, and the human/technological shape and form. But again, these technologically mediated articulations of the body are profoundly gendered and differ significantly between men and women precisely because their relationship to technology begins from divergent ideological and material points of origin.

Early motorcycle industry standards and measurements led to a 'mechanical sexism' (Hebdige 1988) where women were physically forced into a position where they were 'naturally' less able to manoeuvre a

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motorcycle, thus masculinising the commodity and practice. For example, Koerner (2007: np) refers to female motorcycle columnists in the 1930s who addressed the 'issue of physical strength, or rather the lack of it, which was thought to be one of the main reasons so few women bought and rode motorcycles'. Social mores concerning what constituted 'lady-like' behaviour (e.g. no straddling) further exacerbated the technological bias towards men. In this context, if a woman rides a motorcycle, her femininity is masculinised (Halberstam 1998) and/or subject to moral evaluation, thus compromising her position within a heteronormative social order. Such industry-led processes thus become part of a patriarchal regime which ensures women's physical relationship to the mechanical is minimal or, alternatively, rooted only within the home sphere through domestic technologies like the vacuum cleaner or oven.

In contrast to the above, men and men's bodies have always had a close historical connection with machines and technology, whether it is in their production and/or consumption. But as I explored in Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 7, having easier access to technology does not necessarily mean that men are in a better and more privileged position of power. The technologies that facilitate men's mobilities and dominance over other economic, socio-cultural and political factors can become the very technologies of masculinity that discipline and regulate male identity, bodies, relations and practices. And these can operate in equally normative ways as those enforced on women. In popular culture and media – especially in sports-related discourses – men's bodies are often likened to machines that need 'fine tuning' and maintenance in order to achieve maximum performance (athletic, sexual, work output and so on). This corporeal performance is of course technologically measured in technical terms that make the process of quantification a performative practice in itself.

As I suggested earlier, given the particularly close connection between motorcycles and bodies, references to motorcycle specifications in popular culture and media are often part of a motorised discourse that quantifies and qualifies male riders' masculinities in (often) competitive ways. Women feature very little in such narratives which contain motorcycle facts and figures. While women's (sexualised) bodies are used to highlight the specifications of the motorcycle (hence the bikinis and the pornification of the motorcycle in adverts), it is the motorcycle specifications that highlight men's bodies in ways that measure him against a popularised and

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naturalised scale of masculinity. 'Manliness' as measured according to how much weight, speed, dexterity, stamina, focus and so on, he can handle.

A female friend tells me how she would ride a motorcycle but the only thing stopping her is her height. 'I've tried sitting on so many bikes, my feet won't reach the ground' she sighs. Similarly, I have had numerous conversations with shorter-than-average men about how they will only ride cruisers or Japanese bikes because, according to them, Japanese men are smaller and so proportionately designed.² Either way, such examples demonstrate how the very design (height, weight, width) of a motorcycle becomes a material and ideological technology for biological gender (not to mention racial) essentialism, part of an industry-led technological determinism that binds both men and women's bodies to certain normative measurements. This process ultimately naturalises motorcycles as being a 'male' pursuit and commodity.

Speed, Danger and Risk

When the Victorians first embarked on trains, passengers experienced motion sickness from the previously unexperienced speeds of a moving vehicle (Guignard and McCauley 1990). The twentieth century also produced similar discourses surrounding the 'speeding up' of life through advancements in technology: from fears of nuclear power and military technologies to the 'information highway' of the digital age. The pairing of speed and technology has always caused a sense of giddiness, what futurist Toffler (1970) defined as 'future shock'. There has always been a sense of fear and distrust around the idea of speed and technology, especially surrounding their potential consequences: accident, death, paralysis, damage, loss of control, disorientation, over-production and so on (Virilio 1999; Hartmut 2003). As Walton (2016b) states, 'risks, then, arise from the technologies and lifestyles of late modernity itself, which creates high levels of anxiety and a general preoccupation for safety' (2016: np). In vehicular terms, these fears and anxieties are manifest in the form of automotive systems that record and regulate speed, providing disciplinary and punitive measures wherever there is a speeding offence. As I suggested in Chapter 2, speed is thus another disciplinary technology of normativity that ties automobility, citizenship and the regulation of techno-practices in everyday life.

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But inasmuch as there might be a fear of speed, there is also a fascination and desire for it. From popular TV scientist Brian Cox referring starry-eyed to a given galactic phenomenon as ‘faster than the speed of light’ to ‘speed junkies’ after an addictive adrenalin thrill, the idea of speed often relates to competition and performance, futurism and human progress and/or limit-pushing, perception-altering physical experiences which require being both in and out of control. These characteristics are associated with the motorcycle too, making speed itself an underlying meaning of the motorcycle. Such is the overlap that, often, the motorcycle stands for speed, representing it as a concept and technological experience to be both feared and coveted in popular culture (for example, in the computer-simulated corporate domains of *Tron* or in the post-apocalyptic world of *Akira*: see Chapters 2 and 8 respectively).

While sports and racing cars might reach similarly sickening speeds as the motorcycle (if not faster), the latter provides a more visceral and even immediately dangerous experience. For example, think of ‘knee-dragging’ (a practice where the sheer G-force of going round a corner at certain speeds requires the rider to lean into a corner, enabling them to ‘drag’ their knees on the ground to measure the lean angle). Speed/motorcycle narratives will thus often include some element of competitive danger, risk-taking, ‘cheating death’, accidents and, ultimately, the ability to endure all these emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually and skilfully. As such, discourses of speed often relate directly back to issues of ‘male bravado’ and, as discussed in the previous section, to the gendered and engendering quantification and qualification of (predominantly) masculine identity.

But there is more to speed than adrenaline-fuelled masculinised bravado, ‘mechanical sexism’ and the performance of male prowess. As I argued in Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 and 9, we can also understand the idea of speed as involving time and distance (and hence space). Once we take into consideration speed’s spatio-temporal dynamic, then we can begin to unpack how else gender is configured within such popular discourses of fast-moving – and indeed slow-moving – motorcycles. Time and distance relate to questions of mobility and its spatio-temporal organization of gendered bodies, relations and practices in everyday life. Such processes often (re)produce traditional gender roles: women are immobile, fixed, work at home and stay with the children; men work away from home with other men and are able to move between the two points and beyond.

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Almost all the preceding chapters have demonstrated that motorcycles represent the negotiation of technologically mediated mobilities of gender in everyday life that supposedly stray from normative regulations of time and space: from Keira Knightley's character in the Chanel advert whose 'independence' means she has the luxury to afford a speedy trip through the city as and when she pleases (Chapter 5); to the Hairy Bikers, who take their time riding long distances to set up their own outdoor masculinised domestic space. In other words, if the motorcycle is the mobile technology of gender, then speed is its ideological and material mode of practice. How far and for how long a rider can be mobile will most often depend on their gendered (not to mention classed, raced and sexualised) position within the socio-economic, cultural order.

Deviance, Rebellion and Crime

As part of its longstanding motorcycle safety campaign, *Think! Bike*, the Department of Transport in the UK commissioned research in 2009 to understand why motorcycle-related KIS (Killed or Serious Injured) figures were still so relatively high compared to other vehicles on the road, despite the success of previous campaigns that changed people's behaviour (e.g. 'look once, look twice for bikes, especially at junctions'). As part of the investigation, an insight agency (Sign Salad) was commissioned to conduct a semiotic analysis of past motorcycle safety campaign adverts and other relevant images in popular culture. The agency concluded that one of the reasons behind drivers' unwillingness to notice riders on the road could relate to the persisting, negative associations surrounding motorcyclists. Riders' facelessness (from being behind a helmet and/or balaclava) was given as one particular example of how existing images encouraged feelings of menace and fear towards motorcyclists: from Darth Vader, terrorists to evil pilots are mentioned in the report.³ Such an investigation demonstrates how motorcycle meanings, as constructed by media and popular culture, have real-life and material consequences such as whether a motorcyclist is killed/seriously injured or not.

Having said this, such media representations in popular culture do not just spring out of nowhere. Real-life incidents involving violent, 'deviant' and/or criminal behaviour by motorcyclists have meant that their consequent media coverage not only amplified related moral panics (as

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referred to in Chapter 1) but ensured that such perceptions remain in the public and visual conscience. Such perceptions are subsequently reinforced and re-articulated by representations in popular culture that often emerge a few years after the event, glamourised in films, books and other mediated expressions of a supposed subculture. To refer back to some examples given in this book: the Hollister riots in the USA in 1947 emerged later again in popular culture as *The Wild One* (1953) with Marlon Brando; the series of Mods/Rockers riots in southern England in 1964, later re-envisioned in *Quadrophenia* (1979); and the Toyama Incident in Japan in 1972 when *bosozoku* really reached the public eye, later represented in *Bakuhatsu Bosozoku* (1975). The loop is thus complete: these images then influence real-life perceptions of motorcycles and motorcyclists, further exacerbated by the specific physical features of the motorcycle from its sound, speed and shape, thereby evoking a sense of fear (see Chapter 9). The motorcycle has thus come to represent the physical and ideological resistance against normativity, authority and conventional rules. If cars are about 'autopia' and 'good citizenship', then motorcycles are about dystopia and bad citizenship.

Clearly, the media examples mentioned are significant and a large part of the way popular culture reads the motorcycle does indeed evolve around subcultural themes of deviance, rebellion and crime. Otherwise, adverts such as Rimmel's Kate Moss as the rebellious, rock 'n' roll 'girl on a motorbike' (Chapter 4) would simply not work. Part of the motorcycle's appeal is about its ability to represent glamourised subcultural lifestyles and identities. But the historical, cultural and theoretical connection between the motorcycle and questions of deviance, rebellion and crime has also ensured that the motorcycle – along with its related identities, relations and practices – remains predominantly perceived and conceptualised as masculinised; or, more specifically, as representing one particular type of masculinity because motorcycle gangs, outlaws and 'deviants' tend to be, demographically speaking, composed mainly of men.

There are two main pathways we can take at this point to redress the gender (im)balance. First, to conduct more research on motorcycle-based deviant behaviour as practised by women. While there are ethnographic studies of female riders (leisure, tourism and social movements), there is less on female 'outlaws'. For example, as I referred to in Chapter 9, there is a rise in female *bosozoku* in Japan. More future research into female articulations

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of motorcycle-based deviance, rebellion and crime would not only respond to McRobbie and Garber's (2005) lament concerning the lack of roles for (and studies of) women in subcultures, but it would also broaden the definitions of 'female deviance' as articulated through techno-practices within a regulated automobile system of normative citizenship.

Second, one of the main objectives of this book has been to re-conceptualise motorcycle meanings in ways that move beyond subcultural modes of signification. As I hope to have demonstrated, the motorcycle is not just a semiological extension of the rider's style that feeds into the overall meaning of subculture, but it is also a technology that enables the rider to *deviate* materially as well as ideologically. Here, I use the term, 'deviate' to include not just deviant behaviour in the criminal/breaching of the law sense (e.g. speeding, non-compliant exhaust pipes, stealing and street-racing) but also to refer to more ordinary actions that require going temporarily 'off-course' in everyday life. What I refer to here are the mundane deviations that mean the rider is still conforming and operating within automobile and other systems of regulation, but nonetheless has the ability to negotiate – to deviate – in ways that do not necessarily break the law: whether it is going 'off-track' for a while or going for a ride instead of the usual drive.

Once we broaden the description of deviation, then we can begin to loosen the tight connection between motorcycles and the very specific kind of subcultural masculinity. Exploring mundane deviations as facilitated by the motorcycle enable us to examine not just how women might be configured within such narratives – for example, Hepburn in *Roman Holiday* – but to pluralise masculinity, to tease out what other kinds of male identities are at stake that might not necessarily conform to the dominant images of the 'male biker'. Two examples of this are the Hairy Bikers and Guy Martin, both of whom 'deviate' from the conventions of their respective worlds (or at least present themselves as such), and yet remain very far removed from Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* or the bikers in *Sons of Anarchy*. In other words, the relationship between the motorcycle and the subcultural in popular culture is far richer than one would originally ascertain from its more obvious association with deviant 'biker gangs'. Popular culture is full of motorcycle narratives that place deviance, rebellion and crime upon a sliding scale of everyday defiance. From glamorous representations of

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criminal camaraderie found in all-male biker gangs, to comedic images of a single female rider doing a 'donut' in a car park: all are ultimately about using the motorcycle to represent techno-practices in everyday life as acts of defiance – large or small – against societal, cultural and ideological values.

Final Rev

The typology presented above can be used, more generally, to map out some of the most prevalent motorcycle themes found in popular culture, and hence to understand more broadly why the motorcycle has been and continues to be so meaningful across the mediascape. As such, my underlying aim has been to highlight how, on the one hand, the motorcycle is a versatile vehicle of polysemic signification; but, on the other hand, how it is a distinct piece of technology with its own systems of mobility, modes of signification, specific qualities and characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of technologies and vehicles. More specifically, the typology provides an overview of how such motorcycle meanings have ideological and material implications upon gender identities, relations and practices. In other words, such a conclusion is the result of my having analysed film, advertising, television and manga/anime texts through the conceptualisation of the motorcycle as a mobile technology of gender that considers both ideological and material factors. Such factors construct motorcyclic meanings in ways that both challenge and/or reinforce dominant and normative ideologies surrounding gendered identities, relations and practices.

Overall, my analysis of motorcycle meanings reveals that almost all contemporary representations of active women and the motorcycle reflect post-feminist sensibilities. That is, a woman who rides the post-feminist motorcycle is caught in a state of static mobility, where, on the one hand, there exists an illusion of economic, socio-cultural and political mobility; after all, the motorcycle can represent the idea of freedom, independence, rebellion, empowerment, control and agency. But, on the other hand, she remains static – a body on a prop – for her role as a rider is limited in its representational capacities, reducing her back down as a sexualised, domesticated and/or reproductive being for heterosexual, male consumption. This process can, in turn, further subjugate, recontain and discipline

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women within the patriarchal system of automobility, economy and other forms of social stratification. In this sense, the post-feminist female rider remains passive, and there is thus, arguably, very little difference between representations of her and those of highly stylised women who are posing or riding as pillions on motorcycles. In this light, 'masculinised' technologies either masculinise women or, ironically, enable the performance of political and social progress, all the while 'masking' the fact that such advances are conditional for women.

While there are a number of motorcycle masculinities represented in popular culture, nearly all seem to be underpinned and overruled by dominant ideologies of masculinity. Because so many motorcycle narratives are part of existing, traditionally masculinised subjects – technology, travel, adventure, sport, strength, industry, civilisation, knowledge and truth – popular representations of motorcycles inevitably result in the re-articulation, reproduction and the refortification of masculinist ideologies that ensure the continuation of male dominance and hegemonic masculine supremacy. Paradoxically, in this configuration women and motorcycles effectively become interchangeable, commodities which are circulated within a network of men engaged in everyday techno-practices. Whenever men's gendered identities are in crises or otherwise challenged, it is technology that re-stabilises and re-establishes their dominant roles in the heteronormative order by enabling them to embody and articulate 'masculinised' values of technological specification, quantification and qualification.

Through in-depth and critical analyses of motorcycles as represented in media and popular culture, *The Gendered Motorcycle: Representations in Society, Media and Popular Culture* has thus offered new and challenging ways to conceptualise gender and technology. As such, this book has been all about the motorcycle itself as a specific technological subject inasmuch as it has been about using the motorcycle as a theoretical and analytical tool to understand, critique and challenge some of the distinct, material and ideological ways in which one piece of technology can construct different forms of gendered identities, relations and practices. The fact remains that the motorcycle *is* just a piece of technology, an assemblage of materials. And yet, like the shine of chrome, the gleam of mirrors, the beacon of headlight, the motorcycle can reflect various images of gender and the different faces of mobile technology to reveal how the two are inevitably shaped by one another as they travel through visual space and time.

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Notes

Introduction: Why the Motorcycle?

1. For example, refer to latest report from Mintel, 'The Consumer – Ownership of Motorcycles and Scooters'. *Motorcycles – UK – December 2013*.

1 A Mobile Technology of Gender

1. See also: Hausman (1992); Balsamo (1996); Lewis (2006).

2 Too Fast or Too Slow: Ideological Constructions of Speed and Gender

1. Please refer to my article (2015) referring to Deleuze's and Guattari's work.
2. See Packer (2008).
3. While the site/campaign is no longer available, adverts from the campaign can be found on YouTube. <http://www.harley-davidson.com/livingbyit/>.
4. In many countries in Southeast and Southern Asia and Central Africa (for example) use motorcycles as the sole and cheapest mode of transport. In such cases, the motorcycle cannot be read in the same way as a car owner elsewhere for whom the motorcycle is 'for leisure'.
5. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b046prs6> (accessed 2 November 2016).
6. Harley-Davidsons themselves cost a lot of money, considered a 'high-end' purchase. I explore the tension between the cost of motorcycles and their link to youth in Chapter 4.
7. Clearly, not all men can afford to travel and, by the same token, there are women and/or Others who can and do travel. There are exceptions amongst women, such as female motorcycle adventurers Lois Pryce (2007, 2009, 2017), Beard (2017), and Bolingbroke-Kent (2017, 2014). But on the whole, travel

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- narratives – especially in the form of ‘road movies’ – usually adopt men’s perspective and ‘the male journey’ as the default.
8. Please refer to Chapter 3 which specifically examines the pillion.
 9. For more information: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160609173223/https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default-26-points> (accessed 18 October 2016).
 10. I use the term ‘digitised’ to mean computer-generated on screen, and ‘digital’ to mean motorcycles that are existing in the digital environment of the in-game world in the film.
 11. See Adamczyk (2015). Related, some specialists specifically customise similar bikes: <http://parkerbrothersconcepts.com/> (accessed 12 October 2016).
 12. For example, Harley-Davidson’s first electric engine motorcycle, ‘Live-wire’ (2014); Honda’s manga-inspired NM4 Vultus (2014); and Triumph’s Daytona 675 (2006), its ‘outstanding performance benefits from Triumph’s cutting-edge fuelling and engine management’. Available at: <http://www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk/motorcycles/roadsters-and-supersports/daytona/2017/daytona-675-abs> (accessed 17 December 2016).
 13. I explore masculinity and post-humanism in greater depth in Chapter 8.
 14. I use ‘gamification’ as a term to describe the use of game design elements (such as competition) in non-gaming situations and contexts for the purposes of encouraging motivation. See: Zichermann (2010); Nicholson (2012); and Zichermann and Linder (2013). In the context of my discussion on *Tron*, I am also using ‘gamification’ to refer to the characters being transported into an actual game.
 15. For more information on the pre-2001 Hayabusa, please refer to: <http://www.motorcyclenews.com/bike-reviews/suzuki/gsx1300r-hayabusa/1999/> (accessed 12 October 2016).
 16. See Chapters 4 and 5 where I discuss ‘static mobility’.
 17. I discuss the female body on the motorcycle in Chapters 4 and 5, in the context of post-feminist media sensibilities and consumer culture.

3 Tribute to the Pillion: Seating Bodies upon the Heterosexual Matrix

1. <http://www.motorcycle-grips.com> (accessed 4 June 2016).
2. Lush_trucker, posted 30 May 2014, 10:00PM. <http://www.triumphrat.net/street-triple-forum/421313-passenger-grab-handles.html> (accessed 7 May 2016).
3. One of the examples from advertisements Goffman includes is that of a male horse-rider with a female passenger on the back: a very similar ‘task’ and social dynamic to riding a motorcycle.

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4. Examples include Lady Penelope and Parker from *Thunderbirds* (1965–6) or Daisy Werthan and Hoke Colburn in *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989).
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYuPchWVOko> (accessed 3 May 2016).
6. So instrumental is the Vespa in this scene that Vespa's website refers to *Roman Holiday* in its description of the Vespa 125 model. http://www.vespa.com/en_EN/Heritage.html (accessed 10 June 2016).
7. Although not a film, the video for Kanye West's track, 'Bound 2' from his album *Yeezus* (2013) choreographs this exact sexual position in more explicit ways. Complete with suggestive vibrations and orgasmic facial expressions, his real-life wife, Kim Kardashian, is shown naked with her back against the petrol tank, while Kanye 'rides' the motorcycle (and her) facing forward.
8. I discuss issues surrounding homosexuality/homosociality and motorcycles in further depth, in both Chapters 6 and 7.

4 Girl on a Motorbike: Technology of Youth, Subculture and Rebellion

1. These are reasons I learnt from casual conversations with not just friends and family, but occasionally people coming up to me to talk about bikes as a way of reminiscing about their past.
2. Price figures taken from company websites (accessed 3 July 2016).
3. Giddens (2004) discusses the concept of the self as a reflexive project that must be developed, referring to the existence of self-help books and self-therapy as examples of this particular condition of Modernity. Interestingly, in her own self-help/self-development guide, *Kick Start: Cosmic Biker Babe's Guide To Life And Changing the Planet*, 'she-biker' Setters (2005) uses motorcycle-based metaphors, philosophies and stories to encourage female self-empowerment and spiritual growth.
4. <https://uk.rimmellondon.com/content/about-rimmel> (accessed 20 July 2016).
5. There is a strong connection with LGBT identities and the city, especially in relation to Modernity, urbanisation and coming out. See works by Chauncey (1995), Sedgwick (1991) and Duberman et al. (1989).
6. While the biker jacket is popularly presented in this way, historically the garment itself is a product of various material/industrial and socio-cultural factors that move beyond just image and fashion. See: Phillips (2005); Alford and Ferriss (2007, 2016); and DeLong et al. (2010).
7. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1393763/Kate-Moss-The-effect-20-years-drink-drugs-partying.html> (accessed 21 July 2016).
8. Referring to bikers who have done more than 100 mph ('a ton') on their motorcycles. See Clay (1988).
9. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1393763/Kate-Moss-The-effect-20-years-drink-drugs-partying.html>. (accessed 21 July 2016).

5 Luxury as a Gendered Discourse: Chanel's Ducati and Davidoff's Triumph

1. See Chapter 4 which includes an indicative price list.
2. The first instalment of *Coco Mademoiselle – le film* featuring Keira Knightley as the spokesperson was released in 2007, and the most recent one at the time of writing in 2014.
3. Chanel has established itself as a luxury brand with its founder, Gabrielle Chanel, stating 'luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends' (cited in Okonkwo 2007) and predominantly aimed at women. Similarly, Davidoff is a luxury brand founded by Zino Davidoff who, according to the brand's website, explored the world as an adventurer: 'Excellence based in expertise, vision and passion is the core, the soul of the Davidoff brand. Finding and fusing quality, craftsmanship and luxury together from every corner of the world is our never-ending, dynamic quest'. <http://www.zinodavidoff.com/brand/> (accessed 12 May 2017).
4. Refer to Chapter 8 where I discuss motorcycles in relation to *Akira* and post-humanism.
5. See: Grosz (1994); McLaren (2002); Kevin (2009); Gill and Scharff (2011). All provide excellent and concise overviews of feminist conceptualisations of the subject.
6. <http://motoress.com/motoressence/coco-chanel-motorcycle-woman-rider/> (accessed 14 September 2016).
7. McGregor was also an ambassador for Belstaff in 2012; as was his fellow 'real-life' biker and cultural icon, David Beckham. <http://www.belstaff.co.uk/belstaff-ambassadors.html> (accessed 4 August 2016).
8. http://www.ducati.com/history/70s/750_ss_/index.do (accessed 5 November 2016).
9. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b046prs6> (accessed 2 November 2016).
10. See Miles (2010) and Miles and Miles (2004) more generally on contemporary cities and consumer culture.

6 Gastro-Motorcyclism: Culinary Gender and Class

1. <http://foodbiker.com> (accessed 3 March 2016).
2. <http://www.motorcyclenews.com/news/2010/august/aug2410-gordon-ramsay-rides-monster/> (accessed 20 January 2016).
3. <http://www.motorcycledaily.com/2012/05/the-chefs-special-tyler-florences-triumph-bonneville-cafe-racer/> (accessed 10 December 2015).
4. Interestingly, it is becoming increasingly trendy to bake cakes – for both men and women – with famous shows like *The Great British Bake Off*

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- (2010–present) in the UK; *Cupcake Wars* (2009–present), *Holiday Baking Championship* (2014–present), *Cake Wars* (2015–present) and *Kids' Baking Championship* (2015–present) in the US. Perhaps this is partly owing to baking/baker being traditionally an acceptable man's job (the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. . .).
5. There are exceptions: for example, British Michelin-starred Angela Hartnett; fellow British Prue Leith who founded the Leiths School of Food and Wine; or a more 'domestic' American Julia Child. All are television celebrity chefs who are known to be professionally and traditionally trained, differentiated from the female 'professional amateur' and 'home cook' described here.
 6. Lawson's biography page on *The Taste's* website makes a point of referring to her being the daughter of 'one of the most renowned politicians in Margaret Thatcher's government, Nigel Lawson' as well as her education at Oxford University. <http://abc.go.com/shows/the-taste/cast/Nigella-Lawson-Bio> (accessed 18 March 2016).
 7. Lawson's promotion of home cooking and the importance of the 'home cook' is part of her mediated personality. For example: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3598971/Nigella-Lawson-blasts-restaurateurs-insists-home-chefs-creative.html> (accessed 5 July 2016).
 8. The highly competitive nature of restaurant has been well documented and reported by the media (e.g. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/01/benoit-violier-death-pressure-top-chefs> (accessed 10 June 2016)), especially the pressures faced by 'high end' chefs in maintaining their Michelin stars, with suicides committed by famous chefs like Benoit Violier (2016) and Bernard Loiseau (2003).
 9. Ramsay's corporeal masculinity has been further reinforced more recently through his non-food-related activities such as taking part in 'Iron Man' challenges in USA.
 10. For a discussion on cookbooks as celebrity chef's overall media rhetoric, see Mitchell (2010).
 11. Motorcycle fashion in itself has become appropriated by the fashion industry and usually forms part of an urban aesthetic in the manner of 'biker chic' styles adopted by many high street shops (see Chapter 4) or a luxury 'outdoor' aesthetic in the style of Belstaff/Matchless (see Chapter 5).
 12. <http://www.hairybikers.com/recipes/p2#KycGFWF6j6qAReJH.97> (accessed 1 April 2016).
 13. <http://www.foodmiles.com/> (accessed 5 April 2016).
 14. <http://www.hairybikers.com/news/2015/10/16/the-bikers-on-biking#GBEEB4f2tJKGFYdp.97> (accessed 31 March 2016).
 15. Lawson even has a book embracing this identity, *How to be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking* (2000).

7 The Techno-Metrosexual: Guy Martin and the Motorised Discourse of Hybrid Masculinity

1. <https://guymartinracing.co.uk/about-guy/> (accessed 2 February 2017).
2. Martin has made numerous attempt to break world records. Some are successful, for example his ‘Wall of Death’ record: <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2016/3/british-motorcycle-racer-guy-martin-smashes-world-record-reaching-78-mph-on-wall-422470> (accessed 30 August 2017).
3. David Beckham became one of Belstaff’s celebrity brand ambassadors (2015); others included Ewan McGregor (2012).
4. For a discussion of Guy Martin as a celebrity *rider*, especially in relation to the genre of documentary, see Walton (2016).
5. Clearly, outside of the actual sporting moment, when racers are being interviewed or about to win awards, there is more scope for the display of flesh and leather.
6. <http://www.porsche.com/silverstone/en/human-performance-center/hpc-courses/hpccourses-endurance/> (accessed 20 February 2017).
7. The other test involves the men using a Batak machine to test their reaction and peripheral vision. They are told that the average person is at 30 hits per 30 seconds, and the racing driver should be nearer 60 hits. Coulthard measures 37, while Martin measures 35.
8. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-3613501/Lewis-Hamilton-shows-bulging-biceps-rippling-six-pack-strips-L-al-campaign.html#ixzz4a1SNob00> (accessed 20 February 2017).
9. I discuss the particular riding position of the sports bike in Chapter 2, where the rear end goes up.
10. ‘Glamping’ is a popular term, short for ‘glamorous camping’ where campers might venture out to traditional camping areas (forests, mountains, countryside) yet, rather than stay in tents, would use comfortable accommodation equipped with all the modern conveniences (such as a converted yurt, or a heated teepee with cooking facilities).
11. <https://guymartinracing.co.uk/about-guy/> (accessed 2 February 2017).
12. Martin’s love for tea was enough for the brand Yorkshire Tea to customise packaging for him. <https://www.yorkshiretea.co.uk/brew-news/lets-have-a-proper-brrrrrrew> (accessed 12 February 2017).
13. Such multiplicity in itself is shaped by different historical, geographical and socio-cultural contexts that call into question the very idea of a singular ‘dominant’ form of masculinity, including metrosexuality itself.
14. <http://www.ridelust.com/top-10-celebrity-gear-heads/> (accessed 20 February 2017).
15. Although at the time of writing this chapter, David Beckham’s emails have been leaked concerning his supposed anger for not receiving a knighthood.

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His ‘clean’ image as a family man and active celebrity engaged in charity-work with UNICEF is being questioned.

16. Martin broke his back in a crash during the Ulster Grand Prix, 2015.

8 Nuclear Dreams: Dis-Orienting the Human/Machine in *Akira*

1. Many have built *Akira*’s concept/fantasy motorcycle, the most famous being Masashi Teshima’s replica: <https://www.ana-cooljapan.com/contents/dreams/movie/bike/INT13071023> (accessed 2 April 2017).
2. For recent work which critiques the relationship between queerness and monsters and representing heterosexual anxieties, refer to Elliott-Smith (2016).
3. Translated into *Astro Boy* for English-speaking audiences.
4. See Ansell’s (1985) *Military MotorCycles* for a comprehensive list of brands and models by country.
5. Mecha is particular sub-genre within science fiction that concerns robotics, especially of humans controlling huge robotic entities from within the robots’ bodies.
6. See Chapter 3 on ideological positioning of pillions.

9 *Bosozoku* and Japanese Subcultural Masculinity: Thunder, Lightning and Everything Frightening in *Bad Boys*

1. I use the term ‘interview’ in the sense that I followed ethical procedures, set out a specific time and place for the conversation to occur and be recorded with consent. Quotes that appear in this chapter have been taken from my own translated transcriptions from these recorded conversations.
2. There are many other more recent motorcycle- and/or *bosozoku*-centred manga/anime: e.g. *Shonan Junai Gumi* (1990–6); *Durarara!!* (2014); *Bakuon!!* (2016).
3. In general terms, the distinction between Japanese ‘Manga’ and ‘anime’ lies in the medium. ‘Manga’ (漫画) in Japanese translates to Man (aimless, wandering) Ga (picture), usually found in books and magazines. ‘Anime’ (abbreviated from ‘animation’) refers to hand-drawn/computer-generated creations that have been animated as moving images, for example TV series or a film.
4. Released on KENZO’s official YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMXIIzLtgFc> (accessed 6 April 2017).
5. Think of Yamaha’s MT series (with its ‘Dark Side of Japan’ campaign); its promotional materials outside of Japan rely very much on the

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- aestheticisation of *bosozoku* deviance (amongst other visual tropes like the ninja).
6. For the purposes of this section of the book – Anime/Manga – my discussion is based on only the manga and animated TV series.
 7. For a fascinating study on the different cultural understandings and manifestations of ‘thunder’ and ‘lightening’, see Elsom (2015).
 8. From ‘salariman’, an anglicised Japanese word referring to the typical Japanese male, white-collar corporate worker.
 9. <https://www.env.go.jp/en/laws/air/noise/ch.html> (accessed 12 April 2017).
 10. Sheila Malone gave a wonderful conference paper on the politics of noise in 2016 *International Journal of Motorcycle Studies Conference*.
 11. For a more full discussion on *bosozoku* costume, refer to Sato (1991). I choose not to discuss *bosozoku* fashion here as I am focusing more on the significance of their motorcycles.
 12. Adapted into a live-action film directed by Grogan Mark Steven Johnson in 2007, starring Nicholas Cage.
 13. ‘1%er’ is a self-defined term to describe outlaw bikers and outlaw motorcycle clubs (e.g. Hells Angels or the Outlaws) that form 1 per cent of the population of riders who do *not* abide by the law or are sanctioned by the American Motorcycle Association (AMA), unlike the 99 per cent of legal motorcycle clubs in existence. See: Wolf (2012) or Hayes (2011).
 14. Also refer to Cox and DeCarvalho (2016) who write about hypermasculinity in *Sons of Anarchy*.
 15. Having said this, there is a certain romanticisation surrounding travel via trains, reflected in tour packages and the importance of railway industry and networks in Japan.
 16. Having said this, American representations of solitary bikers (i.e. not belonging to an organized group) often operate in cities: hence high-adrenalin chases through narrow streets, as explored in Chapter 2.
 17. I have written elsewhere about the racialisation of motorcycles in relation to consumer culture. Please refer to Miyake (2016).
 18. In developing countries, a bike under 100cc would be powerful enough.
 19. Based on figures released in 2014 by the Japanese Automobile Manufacturer’s Association (JAMA). <http://www.jama-english.jp/release/release/2014/140508-3.html> (accessed 2 May 2017). For further information, also refer to the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism: <https://www2.unece.org/wiki/download/attachments/5801680/EPPR-02-09e.pdf?api=v2> (accessed 16 May 2017).
 20. One of the most longstanding models is Kawasaki’s trademarked series ‘Ninja’, released in 1984 (see: http://www.kawasaki-cp.khi.co.jp/ninja/index_e.html), and popular with racers. In this sense, agility and speed are valued in a more general and non-regionalised way in the context of competitive racing.

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21. Even the UK's *Daily Mail* ran an article: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2594830/Japanese-Bosozoku-bikie-gang-girls-bad-ass-feminine.html#ixzz4daDEecys> (accessed 6 April 2017).
22. Japanese title is *Shimotsuma monogatari* (Shimotsuma Story).
23. Specific manga genre with its own distinct aesthetic style, aimed at young girls. Typical themes include romance, family ties and friendships.

Conclusion: A Typology of Motorcycle Meanings: Gender and Technology

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b046prs6> (accessed 2 November 2016).
2. Japanese motorcycles come in a wide range of different heights and sizes; yet such conversations suggest that at least in the popular mind, there is a perception that Japanese bikes (and bikers) are smaller, lower and lighter.
3. Refer to semiotic think tank, Sign Salad's commissioned report prepared by Alex Gordon: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120924224603/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/motorcycling/DfT-Motorcycle-Road-Safety-Campaign-Topline.pdf> (accessed 20 March 2018).

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