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Chapter 48

"THE STUTTER OF THE WORLD BENEATH YOU": THE LITERATURE OF CYCLE TRAVEL

Dave Buchanan

Almost as soon as people began taking trips on cycles, they wrote about their travels. Readers were keen to hear about the possibilities of this new way of holidaying and exploring. By the 1890s, and cycling's first big boom, cycle-travel narratives abounded in both the periodical press and on booksellers' shelves in North America and the United Kingdom. Since then, the popularity of cycle-travel literature has risen and fallen with that of cycling in general. This chapter offers an overview of that literature, beginning with an important distinction: I separate *writing* about cycle travel from *literature* about it. The earliest accounts of cycle travel, from the 1870s, mostly in magazines in England and America, tended to be not so much literary as itinerary: plain-prose descriptive narratives of distances rode, places visited, and technical and logistical details about things like road conditions, supply points, and accommodation. Cycle-travel *literature*, I argue, offers something more: an aesthetic element, some kind of artful or captivating narrative, and, sometimes, a direct engagement with other literature and writers. For the purpose of this overview, I have classified producers of cycle-travel literature into three main categories--pilgrims, ramblers, and adventurers--and I will trace the evolution of the literature produced by each.

Pilgrims

In the 1880s and 90s, Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell, a husband and wife duo from Philadelphia, were pioneers of the literary cycling pilgrimage. She did the writing, he did the illustrating, and together they published five books and dozens of magazine articles about cycle travel in England and Europe, delighting readers curious about this new means of travel and inspiring others to hit the road on two or three wheels. The Pennells adapted the successful literary travel-writing style of Robert Louis Stevenson, whose breezy *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879) had been a success. The Pennell's version swapped out the donkey for a tandem tricycle, but maintained a Stevensonian spirit of literary nostalgia and charm.

Their first book, *A Canterbury Pilgrimage* (1885), which sees the Pennell's follow the footsteps of Chaucer's pilgrims on a three-day tricycle trip from London to Canterbury, exploring the literary geography of Kent along the way, hit on a formula that would prove popular for cycle-travel writing. Nicola J. Watson has traced the rise of what she calls "readerly tourism" in the nineteenth century, the impulse to travel to places associated with particular authors or books "in order to savour text, place and their intersections" (1). From Shakespeares' Stratford to Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford, the Brontes' Haworth, and Hardy's Wessex, homes, haunts, and resting places of beloved writers became tourist destinations in the Victorian period. Watson says this phenomenon peaked in England between the 1880s and 1920s, a period that overlaps with cycle-travel's flourishing, so it's no surprise to see the literary pilgrimage become such a prominent part of early cycle-travel literature. The Pennell's employed this successful angle again in their third book, *Our Sentimental Journey* (1887), which recounts their tricycle trip across France, this time following the trail of Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1765).

The Pennells may have invented the cycling version of the literary pilgrimage, but the idea was taken up by others, both in magazines like *The Wheelman/Outing* and in books. F. W. Bockett's *Some Literary Landmarks for Pilgrims on Wheels* (1901) is structured around a series of 1-2 day cycling trips to what Bockett calls "historic shrines" (8) of literary significance in England: locales associated with his favorite writers, including Jane Austen, Percy Shelley, Lord Alfred Tennyson, and Charles Lamb. Bockett evokes the religious connotations of pilgrimage too, though he sees the bicycle as an improvement on tradition: "staff and sandals" of yore can't compete with "rubber-tyred wheels" (vi). A serious pilgrim, Bockett travels with each beloved authors' sacred text--his "dearest treasures"(v)--in his pocket, which he pulls out, once at his destinations, to read from like scripture.

A decade later, Edward Thomas's *In Pursuit of Spring* (1913) continues this literary pilgrimage tradition. He recounts his Easter weekend journey by bicycle from South London to the Quantock Hills in Somerset, specifically, Nether Stowey, where, in the late 1790s, the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge had written some of his most famous poems. As was the case in the work of the Pennells and Bockett, Thomas's writing is infused with references to writers connected to the landscapes he passes through: William Cobbett in Surrey; the naturalist W.H. Hudson in Wiltshire; Thomas Hardy in Wessex; and, of course, Coleridge in Somerset.

In the 1920s, the American Charles S. Brooks continued the cycling pilgrimage tradition in *A Thread of English Road* (1924) and *Roads to the North* (1928). Brooks offers charming accounts of his quiet spins along the backroads of England, visiting spots of literary interest--birthplaces, homes, and graveyards of famous writers, from Shakespeare to the Brontes, Hardy to Hazlitt. Stylistically, Brooks is a kind of hybrid of the American perspective of the Pennells and

the nostalgic eccentricity of Bockett. The pages are studded with allusions to novelists who wrote of the English countryside--Dickens, Smollett, and Richardson--and playful imitations of Pepys and Fielding.

In general, the literary pilgrimage craze was in decline by this time, as Watson says, but one more significant contribution arrived in the form of the first cycling book by Bernard Newman, cycling's most prolific travel writer. *In the Trail of the Three Musketeers* (1934) is a classic example of the literary pilgrimage. Newman grew up savoring Alexandre Dumas' books about the adventures of d'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. So Newman sets out to "follow them yard by yard" (19) across France, and he chooses the bicycle as his ideal means of transport: "it has the approximate speed of the horse [the Musketeers' method of transportation], and is not so blatantly modern as a car; further, it can go almost anywhere" (19). Like the Pennells seeking a travelling experience close to that of Laurence Sterne in the eighteenth century, Newman sees the bicycle as the perfect bridge between past and present. While criss-crossing France, Newman, like many pilgrims before him, experiences the "excited feet" phenomenon: "I was now literally treading the paths, maybe the very stones, which my heroes had trodden, " he gushes (37).

The pilgrimage awheel faded in popularity in the middle of the twentieth century, but it was revived during another flourishing of cycle-travel literature in the 1980s and 90s, though often with a broader interpretation of pilgrimage. Bettina Selby employs a pilgrimage angle in several of her books. In *Riding the Desert Trail* (1988) she traces the route of Victorian explorer and author Amelia Edwards up the Nile; and in *Frail Dream of Timbuktu* (1991), Selby follows the footsteps of Scottish explorer Mungo Park, as outlined in his classic *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799). Elsewhere in, for example, *Riding to Jerusalem* (1986) and *Pilgrim's*

Road: A Journey to Santiago de Compostela (1994), Selby invokes and enacts the concept of religious, rather than literary, pilgrimage. Like Bockett long before her, Selby argues that the bicycle is ideal for such sacred travel, not just because its “gentle speeds” allow her to take in all the sights, sounds, and smells of the country, but also because the bicycle itself functions as the modern-day equivalent of the pilgrim’s staff and cockle shell, providing assurance of safety traditionally afforded pilgrims (Selby 1988: 3). Anne Mustoe, the British former headmistress-turned-round-the-world cycle traveller, incorporates elements of pilgrimage in all seven of her books, though she is more of an historical than a religious or literary pilgrim. In *A Bike Ride: 12000 Miles Around the World* (1991), Mustoe, a Classicist by training, traces old Roman routes in Europe and follows the footsteps of Alexander the Great through the middle east; in Pakistan and India, she traces the Moghuls and the Raj; in America, she follows the pioneer routes of the nineteenth century.

This pilgrimage motif pops up in numerous cycle-travel books in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Tom Vernon follows historical routes in *Fat Man on a Roman Road* (1983), Pamela Watson traces the fourteenth-century Moroccan explorer Ibn Batutta in *Esprit de Battuta: Alone Across Africa on a Bicycle* (1999). Brady Fotheringham embarks *On the Trail of Marco Polo* (2000); Edward Enfield traces the route of Lord Byron in 1809 in *Greece on My Wheels* (2003). A notable recent variation of the cycling pilgrimage can be found in Tim Moore’s *French Revolutions* (2011) and *Gironimo*! (2014), humorous travelogues of trips along historical routes of professional bicycle races, the Tour de France and the Giro d’Italia, respectively.

Ramblers

Not all cycle-travel writers emphasize destinations or specific routes the way pilgrims do. In fact, a vibrant tradition of cycle-travel writing from the 1890s to the 1940s is more concerned with celebrating the experience of the ride as an end in itself. For these ramblers, as I call them, almost all of whom are British writers, cycle travel is not about moving quickly or getting to a particular spot so much as it is about philosophical or spiritual reflection and experiencing the natural world. In the rambler tradition of cycle travel, the destination is a state of mind.

In the early decades of cycle travel, the literary inspiration for these philosophical cycle travellers was Izaak Walton's seventeenth-century classic *The Compleat Angler; or the Contemplative Man's Recreation* (1653), a celebration of the art and spirit of the gentlemanly pastime of angling. Walton's highly literary book, structured as a conversation between three voices, offers a combination of instruction, anecdotes, recipes, quotations, and poetry. The book gave some late nineteenth-century ramblers a kind of template for viewing a sporting pastime--even one as new as cycling--as a genteel, aesthetic activity. F. W. Bockett makes explicit the link to Walton, arguing that cycling is to Bockett's age what angling was to Walton's. Both are civilized, literary pastimes for "gentle folk" (1901: 230)--though Bockett claims that his sport is even more civilized than Walton's. Cycling is, Bockett says, "a companion to the solitary, a friend that is always exhilarating and never selfish, an aid to reflection; it gives inspiration to the poet, health and strength to the plain man, vigour to the man of science, and breadth to the philosopher" (Bockett 1901: 7).

One of the best early examples of this Walton-inspired rambleresque cycle-travel literature is William S. Beekman's *Cycle Gleanings: or, Wheels and Wheeling for Business and Pleasure and the Study of Nature* (1894). Like *The Compleat Angler*, it's a curious mashup of genres: polemic, dramatic dialogue, poetry, photos, and travel narrative. Beekman argues that riding

bicycles can enhance our understanding and appreciation of Nature, the cosmos, and ourselves. In particular, Beekman says that travelling by bicycle enables a unique perception of, and connection to, the natural world. The cyclist, he claims, "finds a warmth in the woodland paths" that the "ordinary tourist," afoot or in a carriage, cannot attain (13). On a bicycle, Beekman says, the rider is alive and attuned to nature in a unique way, capable of a special kind of perception that is almost mystical (14). Cycling, he argues, "allows one to view the kaleidoscopic panorama of Nature's face" (2).

J. W. Allen's *Wheel Magic: Revolutions of an Impressionist* (1909), another classic of the rambler tradition, also references Izaak Walton. Allen politely declines the mantle of the "Izaak Walton of cycling" but his book is, nevertheless, solidly in that *Compleat Angler* tradition, though with a modern twist. Allen describes a series of mostly day trips around southern England, favoring back roads and old routes, stopping at country inns and ruins. The actual destinations seem almost arbitrary; he refuses guidebooks (they're "disenchanting" (72)). Instead he wanders, sometimes with companions, other times alone, in search of a certain experience--pastoral, nostalgic, contemplative, mystical. Despite his dark view of the modern world, Allen concludes that bicycle-travel can be a kind of therapy: his machine, he says, "will carry me from out the shadow of any cloud" (167).

Allen's views on the restorative powers of cycle rambling would have resonated with Edward Thomas. While *In Pursuit of Spring* is, as I've said, a literary pilgrimage, it's also firmly in the "country writing" tradition of his other books, cataloguing marvelous details of English rural life and nature viewed from the saddle. Thomas's poetic inclination reveals itself in his description of clouds "hung like pudding bags all over the sky" and the "inhuman lamentation" of telegraph wires in the wind (Thomas 1913: 47, 66). Like Wordsworth, Thomas says he found

in nature a regenerative presence "both sensuous and spiritual," recalling some of the mysticism of Allen's cycling experience (275). Although this was Thomas's only cycling book, it captures as few have the transcendental possibilities of bicycle travel induced by movement through nature. On his bicycle, Thomas says,

> I was a great deal nearer to being a disembodied spirit than I can often be. . . . I fed through the senses directly, but very temperately, through the eyes chiefly, and was happier than is explicable or seems reasonable. (210)

Perhaps the best-known writer in the rambler tradition is W. Fitzwater Wray, who, under the pen-name "Kuklos," wrote cycling columns for London newspapers between 1894 and 1919. His essays about trips in England and Ireland, collected in *A Vagabond's Notebook* (1908), and travel pieces in *The Kuklos Papers* (1927), epitomize the wry, genteel, literary style that garnered him a loyal and large following. "A Puncture in Paradise," from the latter collection, captures his rambleresque style. Describing a flat tire on a trip through the Cotswolds with his wife, Klossie, Kuklos offers a droll blow-by-blow account of his "leisurely"(103) approach to fixing a flat, of which F. W. Bockett would have been proud. It entails a disquisition on pipe smoking, repair kits, and beech nuts.

The 1930s and 40s saw a few successors to Wray's elegant if self-deprecating accounts of cycle rambling. Bernard Newman, in his many books about European travel awheel, brings a charming "light style" and "casual attitude," as he puts it (1953: 18). Never a slave to the clock or a plan, Newman rambled freely through Poland, Germany, France, Albania, and Italy, mixing insightful observations and a mellow perspective. Similarly, James Arnold's *The Joyous Wheel* (1940) offers low-key accounts of his solo rides through the rural landscapes of the Chilterns and Cotswolds, evoking an idyllic, pre-war aesthetic of country innocence, much like the charming

illustrations of Frank Patterson in the Cyclists' Touring Club *Gazette*, and *Cycling Weekly* magazine.

Adventurers

Both pilgrims and ramblers tend to take a leisurely, recreational, small-scale approach to travel, one that emphasizes interactions between traveller, place, history, texts, and nature rather than distances covered and difficult terrain traversed. But a parallel tradition of what I call adventure cycling--more extreme travel, grandly ambitious, on an epic scale, full of risk and even danger--can also be traced from cycling's origins to the present. Such accounts are literary in a different way--not through direct allusion, appeals to literary nostalgia or history or philosophy but rather through the sheer narrative pull of adventure storytelling, in the tradition of Defoe, Dumas, and Stevenson.

Alfred M. Bolton, author of one of the first British cycle-travel books, *Over the Pyrenees: A Bicyclist's Adventures among the Spaniard*s (1883), plays up this adventure angle in his early cycling writing. His article about cycling in Sweden and Norway appears in *The Boys Own Paper* next to harrowing narratives of polar missions, African expeditions, and wild escapades in the Oregon gold fields. In keeping with the genre, his prose is punctuated with accounts of run-ins with Spanish brigands, toughs, and highwaymen. Bolton's thesis was obvious: cycle travel was the stuff of adventure.

The most famous pioneer of the adventure-cycling genre was Thomas Stevens. Around the same time that the Pennells began publishing their literary accounts of leisurely tricycle pilgrimages, this transplanted Englishman with virtually no riding experience and a background in journalism set off on a bold excursion to circle the globe on his high wheeler, leaving San

Francisco in April 1884. After reaching New York, he struck a deal with Colonel Albert Pope, owner of *Outing Magazine*, to become a travelling correspondent. As he journeyed across Europe and Asia, Stevens sent regular dispatches from the road, which became a popular feature with readers hungry for more tales of two-wheeled adventure.

After completing his remarkable trip in December 1886, Stevens gathered these articles into a book, *Around the World on a Bicycle* (1887). Stevens' writing was more journalistic, and not as explicitly literary as his contemporaries the Pennells.' But as Duncan R. Jamieson says, Stevens "had the good sense of a travel and adventure writer" (46), and knew enough to focus on exotic locales and thrilling encounters, while omitting the day-to-day details. His remarkable yarns, such as his account of huddling against the wall of tunnel in the Sierra Nevada mountains as a train passed by or his encounters with mountain lions and bears or the time he was arrested as a Russian spy in Afghanistan reveal an eye for detail "clearly worthy of Jules Verne's pen" (Jamieson 2015: 46).

In America, after the example of Stevens, much early adventure-cycle-travel writing was closely connected to newspapers. Inspired by Stevens, New Englander George B. Thayer straddled his high wheel, picked up his pen, and set off on a grand adventure, writing a series of dispatches for the *Hartford Evening Post*, which was later published as a book, *Pedal and Path: Across the Continent Awheel and Afoot from Connecticut to California* (1887). In 1892, Frank Lenz from Pittsburgh set out on his safety bicycle to follow Stevens' trail, writing dispatches for *Outing*, though his pieces were never collected into a book; he disappeared mysteriously somewhere in Turkey in May, 1894. Tom Winder, from Indiana, rode the circumference of the United States, penning pieces for the *Buffalo Express* as he went, eventually turning those into *Tom Winder's Famous Twenty-Thousand Mile Ride* (1895). A few years after that, the American

Darwin McIlrath wrote about his and his wife Hattie's around-the-globe cycle trip for the *Chicago Inter Ocean* newspaper, eventually collecting the dispatches in *Around the World on Wheels, for the Inter Ocean* (1898).

This forum of publication--newspapers--greatly influenced the content and style of early adventure cycling narratives. Adventure writers focused on action and intrigue: overcoming extreme hardship, surviving encounters with wild animals, braving moments of danger. The McIlraths were almost lynched in Nevada, when a posse of vigilantes mistook Darwin for a bandit; he was saved only by a lack of gold fillings in his teeth that proved he was not their man (McIlrath 1898: 22). When Tom Winder found himself trying to evade collision on a train trestle bridge, he tied his bicycle to a rope and lowered it off the side while the train passed. Such stories sold newspapers. Eventually, the focus on high adventure became part of the genre, and even cycle-travel books that had no affiliation with newspapers embraced the convention. The oeuvre of Englishman Robert Louis Jefferson, a former racer who wrote a series of adventure-style cycle-travel books, including *To Constantinople on a Bicycle* (1894) and *Across Siberia on a Bicycle* (1896), is a case in point. Jefferson appealed to those looking for extreme adventure. He was not interested in literature; nor was he a dawdler or ponderer of nature. He rode fast, covered enormous distances, ate whatever he could find, and slept rough. Readers liked this angle enough for him to sell five books' worth of his adventures. So popular was this strain of adventure-cycle writing in the 1890s, that even Elizabeth Robins Pennell, that ultimate leisure-cycle pilgrim, dabbled in the genre. Her *Over the Alps on a Bicycle* (1898) is a one-off, some would say ironic, experiment in the adventure cycling tradition.

In what Jamieson calls the "Golden Age" of cycle-travel writing, 1895-99, adventure ruled (2015: 83). The books of American couple Fanny Bullock Workman and William Hunter

Workman were less literary but more adventurous than their contemporaries the Pennells. In volumes such as *Algerian Memories: A Bicycle Tour over the Atlas to the Sahara* (1895) and *Sketches Awheel in Modern Iberia* (1897), the Workmans describe their exotic encounters with, for instance, snake charmers, surly camels, and bull fights. Despite her insistence that they travelled “at leisure, stopping where and when we pleased,” her accounts of her cycle travels often seem anything but leisurely (1897: v). Fanny carried a whip in North Africa to ward off menacing dogs, but she also packed a revolver, in the tradition of Thomas Stevens, and had to use it on more than one occasion, to scare off thugs and thieves.

John Foster Fraser’s *Round the World on a Wheel* (1899) is a classic of the adventure-cycling genre. Like Stevens and others before him, the Englishman Fraser and his friends Edward Lunn and F.H. Lowe embraced danger and the unknown as they set out from London on their Rover bicycles to visit 17 countries across more than 19 000 miles in a little over two years. They navigated atrocious roads (and sometimes no roads), coping with mechanical breakdowns in remote places, encountering hostile natives (they were pelted with stones so frequently that Fraser mentions it the way one might mention a rain shower), bad food (or no food for days at a time), illness, filthy lodgings, blizzards, wolves and bears and mobs. Like Stevens and the Workmans, they travelled with revolvers—which came in handy several times.

In the first half of the twentieth century, adventure cycling took on some new forms, such as in *Across France in Wartime* (1916) by the rambler Fitzwater Wray. Like so many adventure cyclists before him, Wray wrote trip reports for a newspaper, in his case London’s *Daily News*. But the dangers he faced on this trip were of a different magnitude than his predecessors’. Wray cycled a 520-mile loop into and back out of France’s war zone, taking on levels of risk far beyond anything experienced by Fraser or the Workmans. Pedalling through the “tortured and

desolate countryside"(80) of shattered trees and the "ghastly ruin" of burned buildings, the sounds of rifle fire in the distance (137), Wray on his Raleigh three-speed is arrested at one point, taken for a German in disguise on more than one occasion, and accosted by bayonet-wielding soldiers (52).

Epic cycling-adventure narratives declined in popularity in the first half of the century, but there are some notable instances, such as *Cycling Over the Roof of the World* by Framji Jamshedji Davar (1929), Fred Birchmore's *Around the World on a Bicycle* (1939), and Harold Elvin's *Ride to Chandigarh* (1959). But the tradition was revived in a big way with Dervla Murphy's *Full Tilt* (1965), her classic first book about a 3000-mile ride from Ireland to India, which hearkens back to the adventure tradition of Thomas Stevens. In fact, she follows the same general route that he did eighty years earlier (Jamieson 2015: 150). Murphy rides solo through perilous territory in Yugoslavia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, on her bicycle Roz (a nod to Don Quixote's trusty steed). Her plucky, indefatigable diary-style account captures more of the day-to-day grind of adventure-cycle travel than did her predecessors, punctuated by moments of high drama and hardship--running out of food and water; frostbite and heatstroke; and other chilling encounters. Like Stevens and Fanny Workman before her, Murphy packs a pistol, which she uses to ward off starving wolves, menacing men, and would-be bicycle thieves. But amid the tribulations, Murphy also writes of the astonishing beauty of the Himalayas and the relentless kindness of the people she meets.

Twenty years later, epic cycle-travel adventure stories began to boom again. In *Miles from Nowhere* (1983), Barbara Savage revives the couples tradition of cycle-travel adventure writing pioneered by the Pennells and Workmans, and carried on by the likes of the McIlraths and Jim and Elisabeth Young's *Bicycle Built for Two* (1940). Savage's book, a classic of the genre, may

be the best known travel book inspired by the Bikecentennial phenomenon that saw thousands of young people ride and tramp their way across America in 1976. It features plenty of adventure, from diving into ditches to avoid crazed Floridian motorists to dodging rocks hurled by Egyptian children; but also humour (Kiwi Geoff's "pet" tapeworm has become legendary); and Savage's disarming candor, recounting petty fights in the ditch but also the profound intimacy of cycle touring with one's partner.

In the 1990s, a new variant of the adventure-cycle travelogue took off: the cycle-trip memoir. In this sub-genre, an epic and often arduous cycling adventure becomes a metaphor for personal growth. In *The Wind in My Wheels* (1992), for instance, young Josie Dew overcomes initial insecurities to embrace her independence as a solo woman traveller, roving across four continents, making insightful and often humorous observations, touching on the hazards of a woman travelling alone but also the beauty of a life devoted to two-wheeled wanderlust. Sometimes these memoir travelogues are about re-connecting with the landscape of an individual's past, as in Andrew X. Pham's *Catfish and Mandala* (1999); or working through personal loss, trauma, or spiritual crisis, as in Brian Newhouse's *A Crossing: A Cyclist's Journey Home* (1998). Yet another variant is the coming-of-middle or even old-age cycle-travel book, such as David Lamb's *Over the Hills* (1996) and Daryl Farmer's *Bicycling Beyond the Divide* (2008), both about a mid-life reckoning; and Lorraine Veisz's *Conquering the Borderlands* (2009), about a woman in her 60s, exploring both geographical and chronological borderlands.

Lands of Lost Borders: A Journey on the Silk Road (2018) by Canadian Kate Harris is a notable recent example of how some cycle travel literature combines features of the pilgrimage, rambler, and adventurer traditions. Harris, like many before her, traces the famous trade route through Asia, but with a literary guide, Alexandra David-Néel, whose book *My Journey to Lhasa*

(1924) recounts her travels in Tibet almost a century earlier. Like so many of her predecessors in cycle-travel literature, from Pennell to Bockett to Brooks, Harris treasures both books and bicycles, for where both can take her. She references a dizzying array of literary influences, from Marco Polo and Charles Darwin to Annie Dillard and Rebecca Solnit. There's adventure too: sneaking across international borders under the cover of darkness, struggling with hunger and sickness. But Harris also has a touch of the rambler-poet to her too. The book itself blurs generic borders, combining travel writing, memoir, philosophy, and metaphor. Harris captures the experience-- shared by many a pilgrim, rambler, and adventurer: "Travelling by bicycle is a life of simple things taken seriously: hunger, thirst, friendship, the weather, the stutter of the world beneath you" (2).

The evolution of cycle-travel literature is not unlike that of the bicycle itself: by the late 1880s, the concept had been established, and the forms really haven't changed significantly since. The three main types of cycle-travel writers that emerged in the late nineteenth century--pilgrims, ramblers, and adventurers--remain responsible for the vast majority of cycle-travel literature produced today. The voices are more diverse, the perspectives broader, the number of sub-genres multiplied, but the essential impulse remains the same: to articulate in a compelling fashion the experience of seeing the world over the handlebars and capture on the page the "stutter" of life under one's wheels.

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