

*The  
Road Story  
and  
the Rebel*  
**Moving  
Through  
Film,  
Fiction,  
and  
Television**

Katie Mills

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
*Carbondale*

## Notes

### INTRODUCTION: WHAT AUTOMOBILITY OFFERS CULTURAL STUDIES

1. Dettlebach quotes the 1950 novel *Hot Rod* by Henry Gregor Felsen, which describes automobility thus: "Once removed from bodily contact with the ground, once in motion, once in a world of his own making, he escaped his troubles and sorrows in speed" (17).

2. Lackey notes:

Any taxonomy of twentieth-century highway books about America will be troubled by a surfeit of grounds for comparing them. I have mentioned a number of possible rubrics under which they could be grouped: literary mode (naturalism, pastoral, picaresque, satire); theme (self-discovery, escape from bourgeois confinement, racial identity); literary genre (autobiography, fiction, nonfiction, travelogue); persona (picaro, curmudgeon, social critic, troubadour); and tone (nostalgic, bitter, beat, euphoric). (24)

3. "Intermediation" thus stands apart from other useful terms, like Carroll's "hypermediation," which is "the process by which one medium directs the representation of another" (12), as when the Internet became known as the "information Superhighway," for instance. Yet intermedia is not the same as multimedia, for it stems from the desire of an artist in one medium to be inspired by another medium, as when Kerouac wishes to write a photo in *The Americans* (5); Dick Higgins used the term in 1965.

4. Film scholar Schatz addresses the problem of genre studies based only in film:

Genre study has tended to disengage the genre from the conditions of its production to treat it as an isolated, autonomous system of conventions. As a result, genre study tends to give only marginal attention to the role of the audience and the production system in formulating conventions and participating in their evolutionary development. (15)

Rhetorical theories of genre help overcome this tendency.

5. I have added the notes about difference and rebellion since the tendency of storytellers using the road genres is to foreground differences rather than similarities.

6. Cohen only hints at “generic variations” of a single narrative, looking briefly at how a ballad might be rewritten as “a prose fiction, a tragedy, a memoir,” and so on, as a way of “reshifting . . . the hierarchy of generic kinds” (“History” 215). Perloff notes that postmodern genres can be characterized by terms such as “*violation, disruption, dislocation, contradiction, confrontation, multiplicity, and indeterminacy*.” Postmodern texts are regularly seen as *problematizing* prior forms, as installing one mode only to contest it . . . *transgression* and *contamination*, of what Derrida calls the play of representations” (emphasis in original, 7–8).

7. Morley creates interdisciplinary methods for “making links between questions of residence, mobility, communications and cultural consumption in the constructions of identities” (3). His idea of the “conceptual space” of home, through which different discourses pass, can also be applied to the road (6).

8. E. L. Widmer argues that both automobiles and rock music provided “an important voice for a rising [postwar] generation of Americans eager to leave their impress on the national culture” (82).

9. For instance, Rascaroli notes the way European road films respond to American road films and differ from them.

10. Fowler reports on the Ford Motor company’s game show on Chinese television.

11. To achieve the latter goal, I do refer to films or books now out of print, including the novel *Come and Join the Dance* by Joyce Johnson (now Joyce Glassman) and *The System of Dante’s Hell* by LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka). The road film *Wanda* by Barbara Loden has been re-released in Europe.

12. Road stories from the 1940s often link unwitting common citizens with criminals; these works were, by and large, still being created by people who had been adults during World War II, rather than by the new generation embodied in Kerouac or Updike.

13. Etymologically from an Arabic root, “Fellaheen” means peasant (usually defined as an Egyptian peasant) and precedes Spengler. In *The Decline of the West* (1922), Spengler uses “Fellaheen” to describe people in old and exhausted cultures who are unable to reconstruct political agency.

14. As Corrigan acknowledges when he lists his influences for using hysteria “as metaphor” (137, 142–43), many scholars turned to this psychoanalytic concept in the seventies and eighties.

15. In texts like Cixous’ *Portrait de Dora* (1979) and Bernheimer and Kahane’s *In Dora’s Case: Freud, Hysteria, Feminism* (1985), scholars remapped hysteria as a feminist concept by revealing Freud’s will to power as well as his own counter-transference with his hysterical patient, Dora.

16. C. Kaplan echoes this approach in her studies of the metaphors of displacement and travel in the global context: “We need to know how to account for agency, resistance, subjectivity, and movement or event in the face of totalizing fixities or hegemonic structures without constructing narratives of oppositional binaries” (19).

17. For instance, evidence to the contrary can be found in works by Scharff: *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (2003) and *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (1991).

18. We see this resistance mirrored even in Tehran during the mid-nineties, when Azar Nafisi led her group of defiant female students through novels like the road story *Lolita*. She notes “we did hope to find a link between the open spaces the novels provided and the closed ones we were confined to” (19), for they found in Vladimir Nabokov’s fiction and life “the possibility of a boundless freedom when all options are taken away” (24). Eventually, many of these women did leave their environment, but their early rebellions via literature are equally important.

19. It is crucial to consider, as Wolff does, the ways in which critical theory might repress groups by virtue of their gender, race, and class; but Wolff’s argument makes its point by taking Said’s metaphor of traveling too literally. For instance, her critique of Said’s phrase “traveling theory” focuses on the adjective “traveling” and drops the second term, “theory,” as if the need to describe the diachronic changes in theory were irrelevant in light of the egregious nature of the metaphor “traveling.” Thus, Wolff’s quarrel with Said’s theory ignores his emphasis that any theory inevitably fails, and that the critic’s job is to offer the *necessary* resistances to theory that help it change in new circumstances—the very sort of “critical consciousness” that Wolff herself exercises.

20. See Corrigan 152 and Laderman 3.

## I. REWRITING PROHIBITIONS WITH NARRATIVES OF POSSIBILITY

1. For excellent studies of pre–World War II automobility, see Belasco for an overview of car vacationing and Scharff’s *Taking the Wheel* on early female automobility.

2. Musser calls this earliest era the “cinema of attractions” (127–32).

3. Heath speaks thus of the spectator:

What moves in film, finally, is the spectator, immobile in front of the screen. Film is the regulation of that movement, the individual as subject held in a shifting and placing of desire, energy, contradiction, in a perpetual retotalization of the imaginary (the set scene of image and subject). This is the investment of film in narrativization; and crucially for a coherent space, the unity of place for vision. (53)

A critique of this concept can be found in Cooper.