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How Automobility Affects Freedom

Automobility is important for many reasons. The availability of automobility allows for one to complete actions as simple as driving to the store for groceries. However, it can also be used for extremely complex tasks such as being “a medium for understanding American society” or also being used as a “tool that's fundamental for training good Americans' “(Packer 1-2). Most importantly though, automobility is a catalyst that allows one to achieve freedom. The being freed aspect of automobility has been seen countless times throughout history all the way from the introduction of the steam engine to the brand new occurrence of electric cars. When one becomes increasingly mobile they also experience more opportunities for independence and complete autonomy.

The purpose of this research paper is to demonstrate through the use of the road movie Q Brother Where Art Thou that automobility allows for freedom. The film follows three members of a Mississippi chain gang named Everett, Delmar, and Pete. The trio escaped with Everitt's promise of fortune and redemption from their previous crimes. Along the way due to lack of a car or other form of vehicular mobility results in constrictions to the physical body. As a result of the lack of these constrictions, the main characters encounter many challenges such as: backstabbing relatives, thieves, and of course the law chasing them at every corner. By using analysis of the central characters in the film, and the cycle of cars they use throughout the story the rest of this essay will outline how a consistent form of transportation from beginning to end of the epic would have allowed for the central characters to escape their past ,represented by Boss Cooley, and reach their goal of redemption much more hastfully than they were allowed to in the picture.

Throughout the film automobility Everett, Delmar, and Pete must achieve automobility through various different ways. Six times throughout the motion picture the characters change their mode of transportation. The first time they hop onto a railroad push cart with a blind man, then they steal a car through Pete's cousin who betrays them, they hitchhike with a criminal named baby face Nelson, they then hitchhike again, steal a car from a gas station, and hitchhike once more all while trying to escape Boss Cooley, "The relentless sheriff who, accompanied by a slobbering bloodhound, pursues the escaped fugitives like satan himself" (Adams 138). The main issue throughout the story is that the main characters are fugitives or what road films refer to as the outlaw couple. The trio doesn't follow the typical makeup of the outlaw couple, that being a heterosexual couple, but they share some the characteristics "most often the road film is divided along these lines: one is more wild the other is more straight" Pete the more wild and Everett the more straight and Delmar being the buffer between the two (Creekmur 3). The way the main characters bonded through their criminal roots is also similar to another outlaw couple Bonnie and Clyde and the way they strengthened their bonds through their own crimes. Furthermore, their outlaw status makes it nearly impossible to obtain a consistent mode of transportation. As stated by Glenn Man "The melodrama highlights the frustration or compromise of personal desire by environmental constraints", in this case the environmental constraints are the specific hierarchical status of the main characters and their personal desire being freedom and redemption which they are unable to attain from their lack of automobility (Man 43).

Another issue that arises with the lack of a consistent ride is the illegal means in which Delmar, Everett and Pete must come by their rides. In most road films there is an abundance of cars and little issue surrounding actually getting in the car and driving i.e. Thelma and Louise, Gun Crazy, Easy Rider.

The road movie protagonist as described by Cohan and Hark is “ the road protagonist[s] readily identifies with the means of mechanized transportation”, “where it becomes transformed into a human or spiritual reality” (Cohan & Hark 3). However, in this film since the main characters don't have this relationship with a car on standby like most other road films, they must rely on illegal means to get their own means of transportation. Upon being betrayed by Pete’s cousin they steal his car and make their escape, worsening their reputation as criminals, then after avoiding the law once more they get in the car with baby-face Nelson, a known bank robber so they could continue on their travels, and finally they steal another car at a gas station. All the actions taken lengthen their criminal record and make their goal harder to achieve. The road gave the characters the opportunity to escape their prison of chains, and it also gave them a pathway to their ultimate goal of redemption. But similar to the dilemma of Thelma and Louise “ something crossed over in me. I can’t go back.”, the main characters just like in the as stated road movie above the trio decided that they would rather break the law, steal cars and run from the so-called devil himself just so they don’t have to go back and work on the chain gang back in Mississippi (Cook 1). That is the freedom the road gives a person, Delmar, Everett, and Pete were being chased by the law until the conclusion of the movie they were wanted men throughout their entire journey. But the freedom the road gave them was that they had a choice all along to turn around and go back to their life as prisoners, or move from car to car on the road just to keep away and savor the freedom they escaped for.

In conclusion, the road film genre as a whole has the power to “reflect social change within the realm of fantasy and desire” through the use of film automobility also relates to social mobility by telling the story of the three escaped convicts from the Mississippi (Mills 2). Through the use of automobility the main characters became free from both their

physical shackles and their metaphorical ones, and had there been a ready source of transportation the whole time there would've been far less issue involving the main characters.

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I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who
has not
/s/Jaxson Haynes