Fall 2018

Individualism and Mobility

Markus Magiera
mmagi885@live.kutztown.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://research.library.kutztown.edu/englishENG366posters

Part of the American Literature Commons, and the Literature in English, North America Commons

Recommended Citation
https://research.library.kutztown.edu/englishENG366posters/10

This is brought to you for free and open access by the English Department at Research Commons at Kutztown University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Department: Traveling American Modernism Posters (ENG 366, Fall 2018) by an authorized administrator of Research Commons at Kutztown University. For more information, please contact czerny@kutztown.edu.
Individualism and Mobility

The subject of Individualism in the 18th and 19th century.

The Age of Enlightenment brought forth a change of thinking that emphasized the significance of free thought and reason. Before this era, monarchies and the church defined a person's place in the world. Resulting from this shift to rationality, concepts such as liberalism and individualism were brought to life.

Freedom, liberty and self-determination became critical values, that could be attained by travelling the road. In the poem "Song of the Open Road," Whitman places additional importance on the self and realizes that mobility enables us to identify our individuality in the world; by taking to the open road we create mental images of our country and gain a deeper understanding of it and ourselves.

In the 1880s the bicycle had become commonized. This new vehicle expanded the possibility of travel and set the stage for its successors. With the help of the bike, people could now travel farther and faster than before. Thus, they were given a device with which they could explore more distant places and learn more about their country. In order to satisfy their needs, bicyclists petitioned for paved roads even outside of towns. Magazines like "Outing and the Wheelman" or Karl Kron's guide helped draw awareness to the importance of functioning road systems.

In the 20th century emerged a new form of individualism - the so-called expressive individualism. Having grown dissatisfied with the status-quo, this idea emphasized the urge of self-expression and asserting one's uniqueness in order to identify one's place in the world. This self-expression could be achieved by wearing certain clothing, owning and riding cars, leading a non-ordinary lifestyle, etc. Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" is a very good example to showcase that mobility is a way with which we can ascertain individuality.

Works cited