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Fall 2018

Individualism and Mobility

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Magiera, Markus, "Individualism and Mobility" (2018). *English Department: Traveling American Modernism Posters (ENG 366, Fall 2018)*. 10.
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Individualism and Mobility

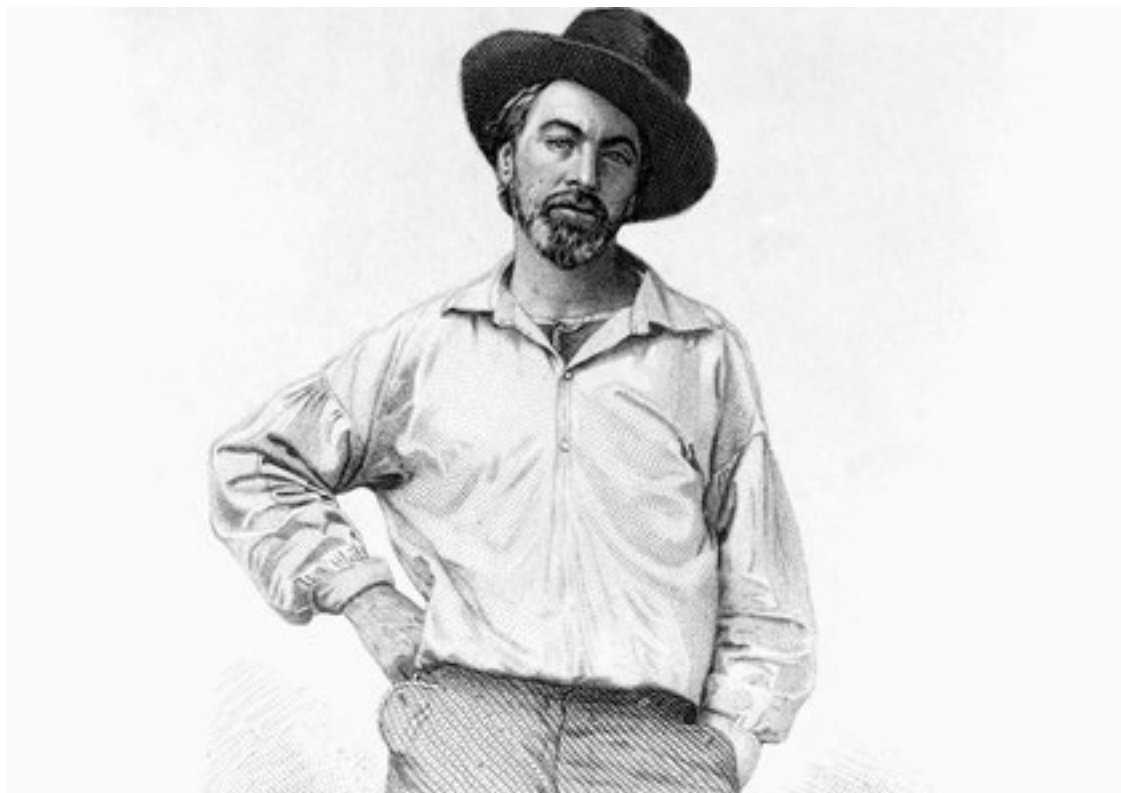
The subject of Individualism in the 18th and 19th century.

New means of mobility enhance the experience



“Der Wanderer ueber dem Nebelmeer” by Caspar David Friedrich.

In the 18th century in Europe 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.



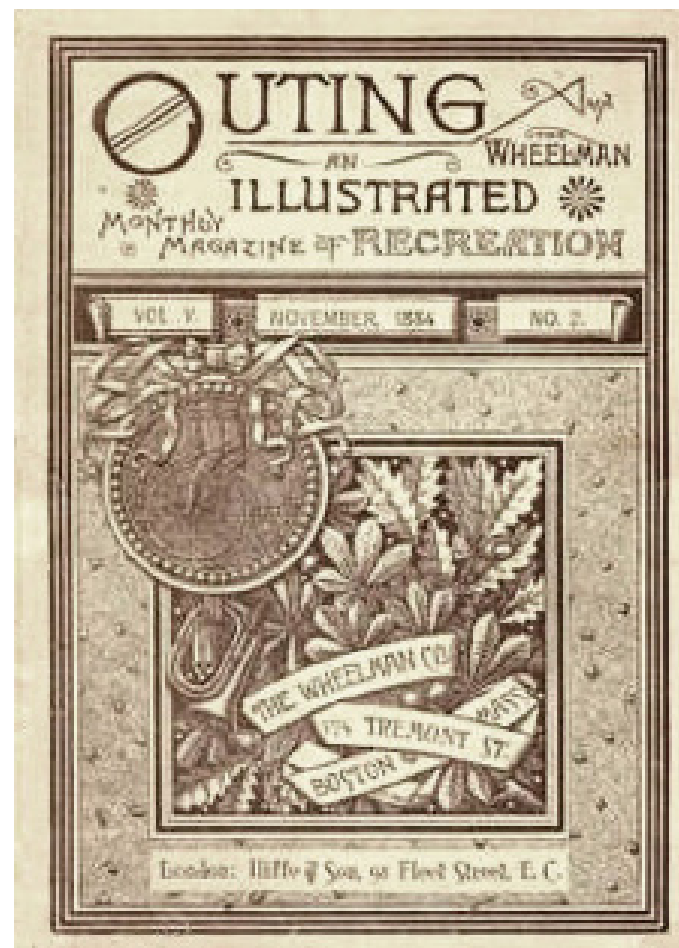
Picture of Walt Whitman, most famous for his collection of poems “Leaves of Grass”

In the early 19th. century, American poets, like Ralph Waldo Emerson or Walt Whitman were strongly influenced by these new thoughts. 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.

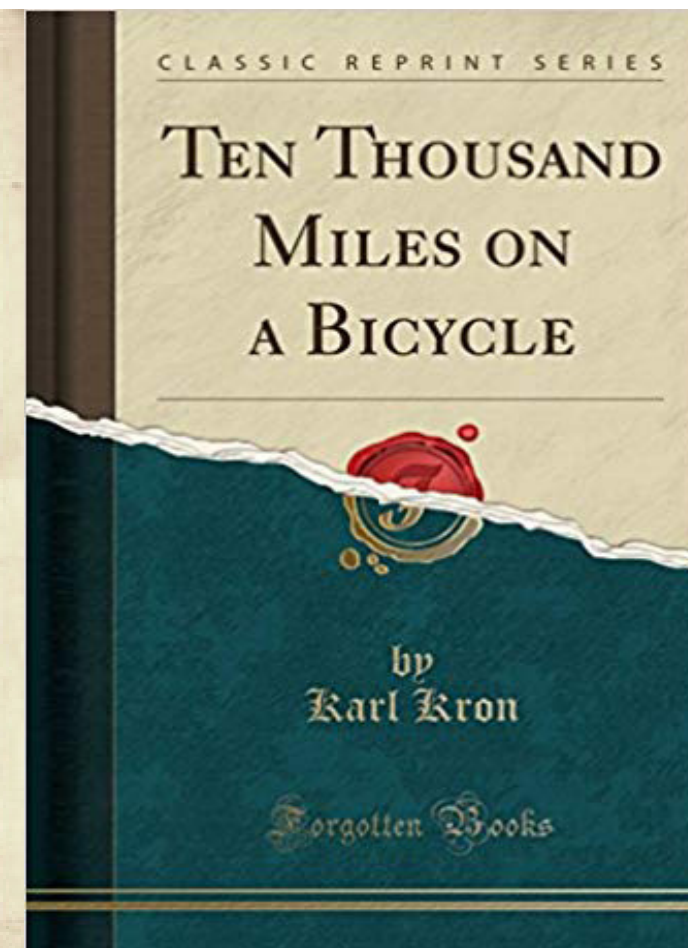


The Velocipede, colour lithograph by Nathaniel Currier and James M. Ives, 1869.

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.



“Outing and the Wheelman. An Illustrated magazine of recreation”. This journal aimed to both entertain and inform the common bicyclist. It contained travel logs, but also poems and fictional stories.



“Ten Thousand Miles on a Bicycle” by Karl Kron. This monumental is a representation of Kron’s experience of biking through America. He informs the reader of road conditions, suitable hotels, etc.



Horatio Nelson Jackson and Sewall K. Crocker on the Winton automobile in 1903.

The inception of the Automobile further changed the limits of mobility. This new vehicle made travelling even farther possible now and enabled people to explore their country more than ever. Thanks to the preceding good road movements, the existence of largely connected roads gradually increased.



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

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