

IMPORTANCE OF MOBILITY IN JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD* AND DENNIS HOPPER'S *EASY RIDER*

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Abstract

Journey as a mobility in 1950s and 1960s of the United States of America showed itself in the works of authors and directors of the films. Among them, Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* (1955) and Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969) are significant works. Analysing both works will put forth representation of mobility in America and the period.

For the method, mobility notion will be emphasized. The mobility notion in works and representation of its effects on people, period will be analyzed. Comparison of representation of mobility in two works will be done.

Finally, the study will reveal the importance of mobility in the American society.

Key Words: Beats, 50s, 60s, Mobility, Road

JACK KEROUAC'IN *ON THE ROAD* VE DENNIS HOPPER'İN *EASY RIDER* YAPITLARINDA HAREKETLİLİĞİN ÖNEMİ

Öz

Yolculuk bir hareketlilik olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletlerinin 1950ler ve 1960larında yazarlarla film yönetmenlerinin eserlerinde kendisini göstermiştir. Bunlar içerisinde Jack Kerouac'ın *On The Road* (1955) ve Dennis Hopper'ın *Easy Rider* (1969) eserleri önemli yapıtlardır. Her iki eserin incelenmesi o dönemde ve Amerika'da hareketliliğin temsilini ortaya koyacaktır.

Metot olarak hareketlilik kavramı irdelenecektir. Eserlerdeki hareketlilik kavramı ve onun insanlarla dönem üzerindeki etkileri analiz edilecektir. Her iki eserdeki hareketliliğin temsilinin karşılaştırılması yapılacaktır.

Sonuç olarak çalışma Amerikan toplumundaki hareketliliğin önemini ortaya koyacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beat, 50ler, 60lar, Hareketlilik, Yol

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INTRODUCTION

United States of America has a huge land which is the third biggest country with its land in the world. In such a big country, Americans always wanted and needed to travel from one place to another for their certain needs such as family visits, business trips or holiday journeys. In this context, the journey, the mobility of people have been ordinary habits for Americans. It has been just an act for them. But it wasn't same for all Americans. In 1950's and 1960's the mobility concept has gained significance for certain people. These people who are called Beats by the society wanted to travel, as well. But their aim on traveling was not same with many other Americans. The mobility, the journey, being on the road were something special for them. It was a life style, a need to survive, a resistance, challenge to beliefs of the day they lived. In this point, Jack Kerouac wanted to talk about these people in his novel *On the Road* (1955). He wanted to narrate the importance of the mobility for them when it is compared to many other Americans. Similarly, Dennis Hopper, in his film *Easy Rider* (1969) tried to emphasize similar issues and people. In this context, in order to understand the importance of the mobility in *On the Road* and *Easy Rider* it is required to analyze the values such as life, resistance, experience that represent and identify the importance of the mobility for these people who travel on the road.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Beat Generation and Mobility

First of all it is required to analyze these people who travel a lot and are called Beats. *"The Beat Generation is the term coined by Jack Kerouac to describe himself, his literary comrades and their associates. The term has since been expanded to include all the alienated and hip young of the post World War Two, pre-Vietnam period, before the 'hippies' became the dominant subculture"* (Cresswell, 1993: 253). As it is stated by Tim Cresswell, The Beats are the youth of the postwar area who feel alienated and lonely. They are the people who can't find place for themselves in the society but find place for themselves on the road. They are outcast, the people who don't believe the ideals their society believes. They are outcast and away from the society, on the road, mobile.

From this point, mobility is an action. It is not something stable. It means moving and acting. In this context, the characters of *On the Road* are always on the move. They can't stay in a place for a long time. They need to travel, be mobile. "*But I had to get going and stop moaning, so I picked up my bag, said so long to the old hotelkeeper sitting by his spittoon and went to eat*" (Kerouac, 1955: 17). As it is stated in the words of Sal who is the narrator of the story, he has to go. He has to be mobile. Moving is important for his life style. It is part of his life. "*We were all delighted, we all realized we were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time, move. And we moved*" (Kerouac, 1955: 134). So, it is certain in the book that their aim was moving. It is like breathing, talking, a necessity for them. "*As the story develops it becomes clear that non-stop 'going' for its own sake is the main joy of the two friends*" (Cresswell, 1993: 254). As Beat characters of the novel, Sal and Dean are on move. "*The title itself hints at this; the book is more concerned with movement than with fixed location*" (Mortenson, 2001: 53).

Beats move on the road. So their movement, mobility happens on the road. It doesn't happen on plane or bus. Only Dean gets on plane once. In this context, road is an important symbol for the analysis of mobility. The road is the space which allows the mobility. Space is an important concept for all the novels. The space in the novel gives the main idea, the mobility theme. And in the Jack Kerouac's work, space is road. The road allows the mobility so there is a respect for it. There is no negative representation of the road throughout the novel. The characters of the novel not only travel on the road but also live on it. So the road is the place where mobility occurs and as a result the life exists. "*Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalks again; we had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life*" (Kerouac, 1955: 211).

So, in the context of road and life, the mobility is their life style. From this point it could be said that mobility is the lifestyle of the characters in the novel. It is how they live. They don't stay in a place long time. They hitchhike or drive a car and travel from one place to another. "*I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split up and my feeling that everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my*

life on the road" (Kerouac, 1955: 3). As it is stated by words of Sal, road is life to him. That's what he and Dean lives on. That's life style. They meet people on the road. They eat on the road. They have relations on the road. Like the beginning and end of the road, their relations, friendships begin and end with the new road. They meet new people and leave them behind each time as they have to be on the road and mobile so mobility is life style for characters of Jack Kerouac. "Geographers have increasingly been concerned with the representation of marginal(ized) groups such as ethnic minorities (Jackson, 1991), women (Domosh, 1991) and people with a mobile lifestyle" (Cresswell, 1993: 251). As Cresswell states what Kerouac does is examining the lifestyles of mobile people.

DISCUSSION

Mobility and *On the Road*

Alienation of Beats from the Community

The people that Jack Kerouac examines are Beats as a minority group who are outcast and mobility is lifestyle for them. In this context, one of the reason for their lifestyle's being mobility is their loneliness. They are outcast in the society. They are not respected, believed or trusted as Sal says in *On the Road*. "I told Dean I was sorry he had nobody in the world to believe in him" (Kerouac, 1955: 217). As members of Beat generation, they are not trusted; in contrast they are taken under pressure by society and protective means of society such as policemen who behave rude against them each time. "Yessir" said a fat cop who'd spent twenty two years as a guard in Alcatraz. You could go to jail for doing something like that. The others nodded grimly. They were always sitting around on their asses; they were proud of their jobs. They handled their guns and talked about them. They were itching to shoot somebody. Remi and me" (Kerouac, 1955: 66).

As it is stated in these words, the protective means of society are against Beat characters like Sal and Remi. They could even kill them for nothing. In the representation of policemen by the help of these worlds, it could be said that they are presented as useless beings who are not necessary for society. But Beats were alone in their beliefs and no one would believe them. So this alienation and being alone drives

them to a lifestyle which is mobile. So the mobility represents their loneliness and the desire to get away from the corruption of the society.

Resistance And Mobility

Besides the desire of getting away from the corrupted society, the mobility is also the symbol of the resistance against such a corrupted society. They travel to prove that there are still people who oppose the corrupted, unchanging values of the society. *“This is the story of America. Everybody’s doing what they think they are supposed to do. So what if a bunch of men talk in loud voices and drink the night? But Sledge wanted to prove something. He made sure to bring me along in case they jumped in. They might have. They were all brothers, all from Alabama. We strolled back to station, Sledge in front and me in back”* (Kerouac, 1955: 68). Writer doesn’t see any wrong in drinking but the society’s protective mechanisms decide on behalf of others and try to stop those. Because as it is stated in the quotation, everybody has a duty, they don’t think whether it is right or not. In this point, Sal joins them and travels to resist the suppression of the society’s protective mechanisms and help others. He goes to station to help those drinking people. So the mobility as it is in this example, signifies the resistance against the suppression of the society. *“Mobility is a central theme in North American culture yet, in On the road, Kerouac clearly uses it in a resistant fashion”* (Crosswell, 1993: 253). They have to be on the road due to this reason as they are not wanted by the society. They are on the road with other undesirable characters of the society such as hobos and queers. *“I even spent a whole night with a girl on a park bench, till dawn, without success. She was a blonde from Minnesota. There were plenty of queers”* (Kerouac, 1955: 73). As it is stated, they are the outcasts of the society, as well. Because like Beats, they don’t suit the norms of the society so they move from one place to another to show that society can’t stop them. Mobility is symbol of resistance for them as it is for Beats.

Mobility As A Way of Escape

At the same time mobility is an escape from harsh realities of life. Because, as they stand against the corruption of the society which Beats encounter in this mobility, they escape from this society. *“I asked him the circumstances of his being in LA in*

1944. "I was arrested in Arizona, the joint absolutely the worst joint I've ever been in. I had to escape and pulled the greatest escape in my life, speaking of escapes, you see, in a general way" (Kerouac, 1955: 231). As Kerouac states, in the context of the power relation between the society and Beats, as much as they resist, the Beats also have to escape, to get rid of this suppression. "These forms of exchange, however, ultimately serve to destabilize connections that Kerouac and Cassady want and need to make between mobility, masculinity, and power" (Holladay and Holton, 2009: XII). As Hilary Holladay argues, mobility has connection with power, masculinity and mobility. In this context the characters of the novel that lose power and masculinity are not happy. Their mobility turns into a sad story and escape and during this long escape they drink. Their drinking habit is a symbol for their escaping from realities.

Mobility, Identity and Frontier Spirit

They escape from realities because their journey, mobility is a search for identity. These people like to find real, ideal America and who they are in it. "What all this talk is and what you propose to do. Dean why did you leave Camilla and pick up Marylou? No answer – gigles. Marylou, why are you traveling around the country like this and what are your womanly intentions concerning the shroud?" (Kerouac, 1955: 130). Sal searches reasons of his friends' acts. He questions why they travel. He questions the reason of their existence and the travels they do. "You'll all go flying West Coast and come staggering back in search of your Stone" (Kerouac, 1955: 130) By the help of these words of Sal, author states that this journey, mobility is a journey to inner self. It is a journey to find who they are and figure out their identity. "Kerouac called on the Road a search for inherent goodness in American man" (Leland 43). So, mobility is representation of the journey in which people look for their identity.

In this journey which they look for their identities, characters go west as it is stated in Sal's words. "Driving across the West with the long stretches my scythe had to be immeasurably longer and it had to curve over distant mountains, slicing off their tops, and reach another level to get at further mountains and at the same time clip off every post along the road, regular throbbing poles" (Kerouac, 1955: 207).

Going west is significant because it is a symbol for frontier spirit. In the American history frontiers went west for searching and exploring America. Like the founding fathers, novel characters' ancestors who are always idealized as good people, innocent face of America, these characters in the novel go west in search of America which they can't find at the place they are in. They look for that innocent America existing at the times of their ancestors. So their mobility becomes a continuity of frontier spirit in twentieth century.

In this context their journey, mobility is like a pilgrimage as it was in old days. *"Ten miles down the road Dean drove into a filling station with the motor off, noticed that the attendant was fast asleep at the desk, jumped out, quietly filled the gas tank, saw to it the bell didn't ring and rolled off like an Arab with a five dollar tankful of gas for our pilgrimage"* (Kerouac, 1955: 138). It is stated again the journey is a pilgrimage for them. Besides it's being pilgrimage like due to frontier spirit, it is pilgrimage like because they take passengers with them. They share gasoline, food, memories, everything they have like pilgrims did. In this context, the mobility of Beat generation is different from other Americans' journeys. Because, these people don't have worries about materialism. They share and support in contrast to many Americans. They are on a holy road as it is stated in the novel. *"All alone in the night I had my own thoughts and held the car to the white line in the holy road"* (Kerouac, 1955: 138). The road, mobility is holy according to writer. They do something good for society. They look for real America as the pilgrims look for God.

But when they go through west, their happiness doesn't increase. They look for the west where they will be happy but they can't find it there as it could be understood from these words in the novel. *"Beyond the glittering street was darkness, and beyond the darkness the West. I had to go"* (Kerouac, 1955: 58). The writer emphasizes that going west, mobility is hope but at the end of that road there is no hope but darkness. At the same time the place they are in is dark. But they have no place to go, so as it is stated in the sentence, he has to go. He has no other choice because he is outcast. But as his mobility is search for identity and reality, he can't have positive findings in this mobility. *"You know what President Truman said? She was delighted. I suddenly began to realize that everybody in America is a natural born thief"* (Kerouac, 1955:

71). His findings are a country full of thieves. So the truth that mobility reveals is not something good that the characters of the story expected.

Adventure, Exploration and Freedom in Mobility

In spite of all these negative findings, the characters keep traveling, continue their mobility. Because, mobility is adventure for them. *"He let me off South of Bakersfield, and then my adventure began. It grew cold. I put on the flimsy Army raincoat I'd bought in Oakland for three dollars and shuddered in the road"* (Kerouac, 1955: 80). As it is stated by words of Sal, their mobility is an adventure for them. They meet new people. They involve into fights. When they set on road, the events, adventure wait for them. They begin their active life which they like. So mobility is an enjoyable adventure for them. Because road lets them explore, find new things they didn't see before. Mobility becomes an exploration for them.

"In the whole eastern dark wall of the divide this night there was silence and the whisper of the wind, except it the ravine where we roared; and on the other side of the divide was the great Western slope, and the big plateau that went to Steamboat Springs, and dropped, and led you to the Eastern Colorado desert and the Utah desert; all in darkness now as we fumed and screamed in our mountain nook, mad drunken Americans in the mighty land. We were on the roof of America and all we could do was yell, I guess – across the night, eastward over the Plains, where somewhere an old man with white hair was probably walking toward us with the Word, and would arrive any minute and make us silent" (Kerouac, 1955: 55).

As it is understood from the quotation, they explore America. They go really far, high part of the country and search for the mystery of the country. They resemble the country to an old, wise man that could come and tell them something. So their mobility turns in to an exploration of America and they find beautiful nature of country in contrast to unpleasant nature of the humans.

Their mobility teaches them life, America and people. Their journey is an experience for them. They learn life by the events they come across as a result of their mobility.

"In Athen he looked up from his ouzo at what he called the uglies people in the world. In Istanbul he threaded his way through crowds of opium addicts and rug sellers, looking for the facts. In English hotels he read Spengler and the Marquis De Sade. In Chicago he planned to hold up a Turkish bath, hesitated just for two minutes

too long for a drink, and wound up with two dollars and had to make a run for it. He did all these things merely for the experience” (Kerouac, 1955: 143).

As it is stated by the words of Sal Paradise, the characters around him travel for experience. They want to experience life. Journey is also an experience for Sal as well as it is stated by John Leland. *“Everything Sal experiences is bigger than the words he has for it, leaving the language overwhelmed, and asking the reader to put it back together, reenacting Sal’s enthusiasm in the process. Even ordinary experiences are exceptional because they’re his and surely no one ever experienced them quite the same before” (Leland, 2007: 138).* As Leland stated, Sal experienced many things. In this experience the journey, mobility has great importance which allows him see world from a different perspective that other people who don’t have such a mobility opportunity can’t see.

The characters of the novel use this opportunity. Because, they rebel against the suppression of the society. They show their rebellion by traveling. The mobility becomes their freedom. They move from one place to another place. So that society can’t put them under control. They have nowhere to stay but everywhere to go.

“Although Gene was white, there was something of wise and tired old Negro in him, and something very much like Elmer Hassel, the New York dope addict, in him, but a railroad Hassel, crossing and recording the country every year, South in the winter and north in the summer, and only because he had no place he could stay in without getting tired of it and because there was somewhere to go but everywhere, keep Rolling under the stars, generally the Western stars” (Kerouac, 1955: 28).

They are outcast as hobo, Negro or Beats. So they have nowhere to stay but everywhere to go. They don’t submit the suppression of the society and looks for a place where they could be free. *“Catherine R. Stimpson argues that the Beats reconstructed erotic culture more ably for themselves, than for much unlike themselves. In language and action, they sought freedom, mobility and a state in which transformation and transcendence were viable” (Holladay and Holton, 2009: 96).* Road becomes the place where they could act freely. *“The literary style Kerouac adapted for On the Road also furthered his effort to identify the road as an alternative space of freedom” (Holladay and Holton, 2009: 47).* As it is stated, road becomes the symbol of freedom for them. So their mobility is their freedom which they can’t give up.

IMPORTANCE OF MOBILITY IN JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD* AND DENNIS HOPPER'S *EASY RIDER*

In this context, their journey to Mexico is a search for freedom because they finish roads in America but can't find the freedom they like to see. Because, the roads end at east and west coast of the country. This signifies that their hopes end in somewhere in the country with ending roads. But they have dreams and hopes as it is stated by words of Sal. *"Filled with dreams of what I'd do in Chicago, in Denver, and then finally in San Fran, I took the Seventh Avenue subway to the end of the line at 242nd Street, and there took a trolley into Yonkers; in downtown Yonkers I transferred to an outgoing trolley and went to the city limits on the east bank of Hudson river"* (Kerouac, 1955: 12). As it is stated by the words of Sal, journeys are dreams, hopes for Sal and his friends. The mobility is a joy for them. But as it is put forth in the sentence, they force the limits of this joy. They go till the end of the road as they do throughout the country. They reach east and west coasts of the country. *"White city of San Francisco on her eleven mystic hills with the blue Pacific and its advancing wall of potato-patch fog beyond, and smoke and goldness in the late afternoon of time. "There she blows!" yelled Dean. Wow. Made it! Just enough gas. Give me water. No more land. We can't go any further 'cause there ain't no more land!"* (Kerouac, 1955: 170). They reach to the end of the continent. No where left for them to go or to stay. Even mobility can't solve their problems and realize their dreams and hopes. They are happy as they reach their aim but they are not very sure about aftermaths as they reached to the end and there is no where to go. So mobility becomes the source of both joy and some sorrow as it led them to the truth that there is no more place to go. Because, sometimes they question but can't find why they travel as it is stated by this sentence. *"We are going to LA! They yelled. What are you going to do there? Hell, we don't know. Who cares?"* (Kerouac, 1955: 25). Their mobility is rebellion against the rules of the society. But they are not very sure why they travel. So when they reach to the end of the world and still can't find the ideal America and there is no place left to go, they are disappointed as it is time that their hopes are consumed and mobility becomes a means which brings them the awful truth.

However, at the same time mobility is the place where their hopes are. Because, when the roads are finished, they look for new roads. They think that the mobility to new places will bring them the happiness they look for. Because, mobility is dreaming, hoping as it stated by this sentence. *"Now this is the first time we've been alone and*

in a position to talk for years,” said Dean. And he talked all night. As in a dream, we were zooming back through sleeping Washington and back in the Virginia wilds, crossing the Appomattox River at daybreak, pulling up at my brother’s door at eight A.M” (Kerouac, 1955: 119).

Mobility is a dream for them. Because it is the place where they think their dreams come true. It is the place they are happy. So for this happiness, they go to new places out of the country because they travel almost the entire road in USA. *“We’ll go coughing and bouncing down to Mexico; it’ll take us days and days. I looked over map: a total of over a thousand miles, mostly Texas, to the border at Laredo, and then another 767 miles through all Mexico to the great city near the cracked Isthmus and Oaxacan heights. I couldn’t imagine this trip. It was the most faboulous of all. It was no longer east-west, but magic South” (Kerouac, 1955: 265).*

Finding Happiness in Another Route of Journey

They want the journey take them days long. They are happy due to their mobility and this time their mobility is not on east-west direction. This time it is to the South where they think they will find the freedom that they couldn’t find on east-west journey. So their mobility to South represent search for an alternative America for them which they couldn’t find in United States. In this respect it happens so. They find a world in which they are not discriminated, the policemen behave well and people are friendly.

“There is no suspicion here, nothing like that. Everybody is cool, everybody looks at you with such straight Brown eyes and they don’t say anything, just look and in that look all of the human qualities are so soft and subdued and still there. Dig all the foolish stories you read about Mexico and the sleeping gringo and all that crap- and crap about greasers and so on- and all it is, people here are straight and kind and don’t put down any bull. I am so amazed by this” (Kerouac, 1995 278).

Mexicans are outcast like characters of the novel. They are the people that society attaches certain stereotypes on them. But the characters of the novel consider that all these are not true as those stories about them are not true. So their mobility reveals truth again and let them find the similar people and freedom they look for. Because they could drink and party here and the policemen are not inpolite or restricting as they are in USA.

Counter-culture and Freedom

The reason for their joy and relief in this new place is the culture they represent in USA. They represent something unwanted, undesirable culture, the counterculture in America. *"The counter-culture as a 'movement' has all the characteristics of an 'oppositional' movement defined by Williams (1980) - the provision of alternative facilities for the production, exhibition and publication of certain kinds of work which actively oppose established institutions and the conditions within which these exist"* (Cresswell, 1993: 254).

As it is stated in this quotation, counterculture is an oppositional movement and brings alternative ways of life. The time that the novel was written was 1950's, the time of transition in America as Tim Cresswell stated. *"The Beat Generation seemed to have inherited a world in transition"* (Cresswell, 1993: 254). When the society was conservative, some changes were getting into society by the help of certain things such as TV, cars. But society was not willing this change in contrast to youth and like the characters of the novel. So many youth opposed society's lifestyle and showed their rebellion by alternative ways of lifestyle. In this context, the novel's characters' journey, mobility represent their lifestyle. This becomes an alternative way of life, culture for the dominant culture in USA. But when they go to Mexico, they come across to their culture which is represented by their mobility and not reacted. They enjoy their mobility more and freely here. *"Behind us lay the whole of America and everything Dean and I had previously known about life and life on the road. We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed the extend of the magic"* (Kerouac, 1955: 276). They go to the end of the road in USA but they can't find happiness but they find it here at the end of the road in Mexico.

So this new mobility for them is like a dream as they are allowed to do the things here they want to do. They play loud music. Policemen don't say anything. They smoke marijuana. Dream and reality intermix here. *"For a long time I lost consciousness in my lower mind of what we were doing and only came around sometime later when I looked up from fire and silence like waking from sleep to the world or waking from void to a dream, and they told me we were parked outside Victor's house and he was already at the door of the car with his little baby in his arms, showing him to us"* (Kerouac, 1955: 285).

The journey turns into a dream for them. The mobility becomes like a dream and they forget what real is and what dream is.

In this context, they sleep on the car in the middle of the street on the road. Sal sleeps on the top of the car in open air. He becomes one with the nature, the road and environment which surrounds them. *“I realized the jungle takes you over and you become it. Lying on top of the car with my face to the black sky was like lying in a closed trunk on a summer night. For the first time in my life the weather was not something that touched me, that caressed me, froze me or sweated me, but became me”* (Kerouac, 1955: 294). Sal becomes one with nature, with the road he is on. He becomes part of the mobility, being outside, living outside and traveling outside. He becomes a part of wildness.

Longing For The Mobility

After all these experiences and being part of the wildness, it is hard to go back to USA but not to travel anymore is not what the characters of the novel prefer. Nevertheless Sal prefers stable life and stays with his girlfriend. But his longing for travel never ends as it is stated by final words of the book.

“So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old-broken down the river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over the West Coast, and all that road, going, all the people dreaming in the innesty of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and tonight the stars’ll be out, and don’t know that God is Pooh Bear? The evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all the rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what’s going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty” (Kerouac, 1955: 309).

By these words, the writer emphasizes his longing for journey, the endless journey, mobility he has to give up. He longs his friend Dean. Because, mobility provided them a strong friendship and in some kind of love. So mobility becomes the way of love, friendship, support and togetherness between people. And at the same time the mobility is a search and in this search Sal and Dean can’t find the father. Father is a figure for them. It is like the founding fathers, the ideals that America lost long time ago. So mobility is a search for this and Sal is longing for this search and

mobility. The setting sun is a part getting away from his life as he gives up mobility so he gives up an important life style in his life.

Mobility in *Easy Riders*

Mobility and Lifestyle

In the context of lifestyle and mobility Dennis Hopper's film *Easy Rider* is an important work which presents the importance of mobility for people like Sal and Dean. Similarly in the film, like Sal and Dean, there are two main characters called Wyatt or Captain America who is acted by Peter Fonda and Billy who is acted by Dennis Hopper and a character joining them in later part of the film and called George who is acted by Jack Nicholson. In the movie which Dennis Hopper directed and was released in 1969, like Sal's and Dean's driving car, Billy and Wyatt ride motorcycles and travel all over the country. They are on the road. They stop by cities and meet people. They experience different events and the movie tells their journeys and experiences.

In this context, in order to understand the issues that film put forth, it is necessary to understand the way that road films emerge and look in to road, mobility themes.

"Clearly, the birth of the road film seems to reflect two interrelated postwar phenomena: the advent of the automobile as a fundamental expression of individuality and the emergence of a large strata of restless, often suburban, youth in the 1950s, depicted in such films as Rebel without a Cause and Blackboard Jungle. As this restless youth culture evolved into the countercultural movements of the 1960s, young people weaned on the automobile seemed to appropriate it from its drab nine-to-five or weekend leisure routine and transform it into a literal vehicle for their restlessness and rebellion. Thus, the road trip became valorized as a rite of countercultural passage" (Laderman, 1996: 41).

As it stated in these words, road film is a symbol for counterculture as it is for the road novels such as *On the Road*. In this context, road film is about rebellion of youth against the restrictions they suffer and their reaction's against it becoming as mobility such as travel by car or motorcycle.

From this point *Easy Rider* is about two motorcycle riders. They ride along the country. They go to have a look at America. *"Captain America (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper) went "looking for America" in Easy Rider, which epitomized*

the road film of the late 1960s” (Laderman, 1996: 47). Their mobility is a search. They want to find America. They travel for it and look for it. They don't stay still but go for journey with motorcycles. In this perspective, motorcycles are important for the mobility. Because, at the beginning of the film, the planes are represented as loudy and scary vehicles which fly over film's characters' heads. So, the mobility type which is on the road is praised when other types of mobility are represented negatively.

In this context, their mobility type is put forth as their life style. Their mobility becomes their lifestyle. At the beginning of the film when they ride motorcycle, *Born to be Wild* (1969) song is heard. It signifies that mobility is wild and that is their lifestyle. It is not ordinary, it is wild but it is their lifestyle. From this point, they sleep in wilderness. They become one with nature. They are not taken to hotels as they are outcast for the society but this situation doesn't lead despair in them. They are pictured peaceful in the nature, in the wilderness. So mobility is wilderness and lifestyle for them.

Freedom of the Mobility

At the same time, like representing mobility as lifestyle, mobility is also freedom for them. Their acts, lives are restricted by the society. They are not taken into hotels. They are not served at the restaurants but teased by the people around and furthermore they are taken into prison by the policemen. There is hostility against them as it is stated by words of policeman in the film produced by Columbia Pictures Corporation.

“Billy: You ain't giving me a cigarette dude?”

“Policeman: You animals are not smart of even playing fire” (Easy Rider, 1969).

As it is stated by policeman, society doesn't welcome and trust them. Because they are not like ordinary people as George says them at the prison when he sees them first time.

“George: You boys don't look like you are from this part of the country” (Easy Rider, 1969).

When he says this, he looks at their face and his gestures show that he is a little bit shocked as they are not like other people he meets everyday. His sentence also

signifies that they are like aliens in this country. They are outcast so their mobility is their freedom because when they are with people they are not welcomed. So they are alienated from society. They look for a society or place where they could act freely as Michael Allen states. *"In the 1969 blockbuster movie Easy Rider, western motifs abound as two hippie heroes ride roaring motorcycles on a quest to find freedom on the open road"* (Allen, 2005: 292). They search for freedom, a place where they could be happy and free, away from prejudices of the society.

But they don't have prejudices for society. When they come across a hitchhiker on the road, without questioning him, they welcome him and takes him to the place they travel. Their mobility becomes sharing, supporting each other without any prejudice. In this context, they travel to a hippy commune. It is place for sharing and living together. It is the place that they could be happy and free. But at the same time mobility is something that they can't give up as it is stated in the dialogue of Wyatt and the man from the commune.

"Man from commune: When you get to the right place, place with the right people, this could be right place".

"Billy: Hey men if we are going. We are going. Let's go".

"Wyatt: Yeah but bad time. Because, I just got to go" (*Easy Rider, 1969*).

As it is stated in these words of Wyatt, they have to go. The mobility must continue because it is life, a duty for them.

Frontier Spirit and Mobility of Modern Cowboys

They are modern frontiers of their society. They are like founding fathers. They travel to explore the country. They don't go west, their mobility is toward east but they are modern cowboys. In this context, film shows a man dealing with his horse and them Wyatt dealing with his motorcycle, Billy helping him in the same picture. They are like old times cowboy and search for America and who they are. *"Captain America's peaceful soul strangely recollects and rearticulates the quiet stoicism of the cowboy"* (Laderman, 1996: 48). He looks for his identity during his mobility on motorbike. But he is not happy with what he found. In one part of the movie he talks to Billy about this.

“Wyatt: *We blew it!*”

“Billy: *What?*”

“Wyatt: *We blew it!*” (Hopper, 1969).

These sentences signify the sorrows of Wyatt, Captain America. He means they could have found happiness in that commune on the mountain but they gave up and continued because they are destined to travel. There is not a certain place that they could be happy. So it is hard for them to be happy. Because, they can't stay in a place for a long time. Mobility is destiny for them. They are outcast, won't be free and happy anywhere and won't be wanted by society for the thing they represent as it is stated by Harriett Polt. *“In a way, freedom is what Easy Rider is about—the craving for freedom and the inability to use it once it's been attained. The small-townners who hound and imprison Billy and Wyatt are, as George says, afraid of the freedom they represent. “Don't ever tell anybody they ain't free, 'cause they're gonna get real busy killin' and maimin' to prove they're free” (Polt, 1969: 23).*

In this context mobility is loneliness for them. *“Lonely, driven, yet kind and generous to strangers, he is a modern variation of the classical frontier hero and not so very far from characters Henry Fonda used to play” (Polt, 1969: 24).* They are heroes and their act of journey is a heroic journey. Because, they rebel against the restrictions of the society. Their mobility is a resistance to society. They move from one place to another to show that they are free and moving on the road. When they do this, they don't harm anybody. But society tries to restrict their mobility by harming them. At the end of the movie two ordinary people who travel in an old truck attack them. One of them shoots and kills two of them. This killing is not the first and sole killing in the film. The local people in the town come to their camping area and kill George and society's hatred on them continues with killings of Wyatt and Billy. The society restricts their freedom again.

Mobility and Resistance to Restrictions

The society restricts their dreams and hopes. *“This gesture seems to represent two views: a cynical indictment of society as vicious and repressive and a reassertion of this society by its very triumph in narrative closure” (Laderman, 1996: 48).* The mobility is their dreams and hopes but society puts an end on this dream. In this

context, dream and reality intermix. They travel to Mardi Gras and they smoke marijuana there, too. They see hallucinations, dreams and what dream is what reality is not understood. Their travel, mobility turns into dream and reality mixture. This represents their escape from the reality. They cry in these scenes of the movie. They are with some women from brothel. They all cry and shout. One of the women tells that she wants to go out. They see dreams. They can't understand what true is what lie is in this world. So their mobility is an escape from harsh realities of life, the realities which restrict them.

Comparison of On the Road and Easy Rider

In the context of importance of mobility, *On the Road* and *Easy Rider* have many similarities as road films are closely connected to literature. “*The cultural roots of the road film go beyond the immediate context of its emergence, however, and include a literary tradition focused on voyaging (the Journey), which in turn often reflects an ideology of expansionism and imperialism (in the strict literal sense of asserting one's self elsewhere)*” (Laderman, 1996: 41). As it is stated, road film and literature about road has common point as journey. They are both about the mobility. They emphasize similar values that mobility represents such as freedom, lifestyle and resistance as it is stated by David Laderman. “*Yet despite its overt countercultural stance, Easy Rider reiterates many of the ideological contradictions of Bonnie and Clyde and On the Road*” (Laderman, 1996: 48). Both of the works are based on similar ideologies and concept. Both of the works emphasize the journeys of counterculture people. Their mobility is representation of their counterculture. They rebel against society. So their mobility is rebellion against society.

Suppression of The Society In Both Works

On The Road reflects certain issues about suppressed people of 50's and films of 60's like *Easy Rider* become visual voice of them.

“The novel's latent sexism and racism serve as an access point to its conservative ideological framework, because these views reinforce and derive from its other imperialist/capitalist values, which can be summarized as freedom to roam for the privileged white male; mobility and opportunism; and glorified individuality and conquest. On the Road admittedly wrestles with these issues, especially through Sal's conscientious and self-critical narration; however, these latent values create a tension in the work: a

critique of American culture via a renewed reiteration of it, through the back door, so to speak, and a rejection of and a rediscovery of Americanism. Not surprisingly, this ideological tension pervades many road films of the '60s and 70s" (Laderman, 1996: 43).

As it is stated, the film and the book become the rediscovery of America. Mobility is rediscovery for characters of the book and the film. Mobility becomes the very common point for both works. Mobility is shown as the source of life, the rebellion against society, experience, dreams and hopes of the people who are excluded by the society. Both works see the mobility as an escape and a solution for the problems.

In this context Mexico is important for both works. The last journey is to Mexico *On the Road* but in *Easy Rider* the journey begins from Mexico. So one's end is another's beginning. This signifies the mobility never ends. At the same time the mobility in Mexico is shown positive in both works. Both in *On the Road* and *Easy Rider* Mexico is the place where happy, laughing people live. But in America people are aggressive, hostile to the characters of the film and the book. So for both works mobility to Mexico is freedom.

In the context of freedom, in both works, they are in nature. They are one with nature. The society doesn't want them but nature welcomes them. They sleep peacefully in nature. The road is part of the nature and they travel on it. In both work, they are happy when they are on the road. So mobility is happiness for them. They are safe on the road. Mobility keeps them safe. Whenever they stay somewhere in the city, they encounter a threat. In both works, when they come to cities, the places where people live, they get into trouble.

Mobility and Experience In the Works

The characters of the novel and the film keep moving to stay away from people and experience life. In both works they experience many things. At the beginning of their journey they are not experienced but by the journey, they learn things. Mobility becomes experience for them. Because road is life for them. They live on it and experience life when they live it. When they experience the road, they learn to escape and resist. Mobility becomes both escape and resistance. They don't use ordinary ways

of transportation. They hitchhike or let hitchhikes travel with them on return of gasoline money. They share. Mobility becomes sharing. When they share things, if they come across a threat, as much as they resist, they also get away from threat. In *Easy Rider* when they are insulted by the people at the restaurant, they prefer to leave. So the mobility becomes a way for escape from ugly realities. It is same for *On the Road*, as well. When they are faced a threat, they keep driving. The mobility becomes their way of solving problems, getting away, escaping from them.

Road is adventure for them. Mobility is the greatest opportunity for this generation. They are not like their parents. They want to see the beauties of this world. They want to live it. They want to be active. They look for a life full of adventure. They have dreams. They can realize their dreams by the mobility. The mobility becomes the way for their dreams. Both in *Easy Rider* and *On The Road*, the characters travel for joy, adventure. They want to experience adventure. They want to overcome obstacles by living and learning it. So they go for journey and on the journeys, they come across many adventures like getting into prison, coming across interesting, different people. Mobility provides them the adventure they look for.

So, that both works become the completing parts for each other. When one tells about the lives of a certain group of people, the other one puts these lives on the screen. In this context, *On the Road* which is put forth before, becomes the frontier. It puts forth how mobility was important for the youth of fifties and after that *Easy Rider* puts forth how mobility was important for the following generation of fifties. In both decades, as different types of art, two works try to show importance of mobility by using some characters among Americans in ordinary life.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the fifties and sixties were important decades for Americans. It was post-war era. The society which came over the war recently was still and away from big changes due to the feeling and sorrows the war brought with. In this context, their children were different from them and they wanted some change. There was no war but a life, peace which they could experience. And they wanted to experience it, went on the roads. But their acts were not in favour of their parents. From this point they

became outcast, the unwanted children of the society. But when they were not wanted, there were also people who wanted them or wanted to be like them. These people reflected these people in their lifestyles and works such as Jack Kerouac did in his novel *On the Road* and Dennis Hopper did in his film *Easy Rider*. They tried to tell that these young people have ideas, ideals that they want to find and they need to travel for this. With these ideas, Jack Kerouac and Dennis Hopper produced these works and put forth how mobility is important for the youth of 50's and 60's. They tried to put forth that the mobility is their freedom, life, love, and everything they could have which society should not restrict or take from them.

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