

Katariina Tala

MASCULINE MOBILITIES IN AMERICAN COUNTRY MUSIC

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Tutkin pro gradu -tutkielmassani amerikkalaisten miespuolisten nykykantrimuusikoiden sanoituksia ja tapoja, joilla niissä ilmennetään amerikkalaista mobiliteettia maskuliinisuuden viitekehyksessä. Mobiliteetit ja tienarratiivit ovat vaikuttaneet siihen, kuinka USA nähdään kansana, ja edellä mainitut teemat liittyvät läheisesti amerikkalaisuuteen. Ne ovat perinteisesti olleet miehistä pelikenttää ja liittyvät olennaisesti amerikkalaiseen elämäntapaan. Hypoteesini on, että kantrimusiikin mobiliteettinarratiivit samanaikaisesti sekä rakentavat että vahvistavat maskuliinisuutta.

Graduni laajana viitekehysenä on erilaisia teorioita aina mobiliteettien tutkimuksesta sukupuolentutkimukseen. Tarkastelen kysymyksiä sukupuoli-identiteetistä, mobiliteettien sukupuolittuneisuudesta ja siitä, miten, missä ja kuka tuottaa niitä. Lisäksi luon katsauksen amerikkalaisten maskuliinisuuksien mobiliteetteihin kantrimusiikin kontekstissa. Analyysiosassa tutkin maskuliinisten mobiliteettien esiintymistä kantrilauluissa ja analysoin niitä maskuliinisten roolistandardien mukaisissa kategorioissa.

Työni tarkoitus oli tutkia, kuinka maskuliinisia mobiliteetteja esitetään nykykantrimusiikissa. Tutkimukseni vahvisti hypoteesini todeksi: laulujen sanat ilmentävät maskuliinisuutta mobiilinarratiivien tehokeinoin ja rakentavat kuvaa kantrimiehestä kovana, hallitsevana sekä maskuliinista itsevarmuutta ulospäin huokuvana, mutta toisaalta kuitenkin vastahakoisena paljastamaan tunteitaan edes lähimmilleen ja taipuvaisena ottamaan tarpeettomia riskejä uhkarohkealla elintavallaan.

Avainsanat: Sukupuolentutkimus, maskuliinisuus, mobiliteetti, kantrimusiikki, amerikkalaisuus

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ABSTRACT

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My thesis examines the lyrics of contemporary American country music by various male artists and the ways they portray American mobility in the framework of masculinity. Mobility and road narratives have shaped the ways the US is viewed as a nation, and these concurrent themes are closely related to Americanness. Both of the aforementioned concepts have traditionally been a part of a manly playground as well as an essential part of the American way of living and being. My thesis argues that mobility narratives in country songs' lyrics serve as a tool for men to simultaneously build and reinforce the ideal of masculinity.

The thesis employs a broad theoretical framework that includes different theories that range from the study of mobilities to theories about gender. I discuss the meanings of gendered identities and mobilities, and how, where and by whom they are produced. Additionally, I provide an overview of American masculine mobilities in the context of country songs. In the analysis section, I examine expressions of masculine mobilities in the country songs and analyze them according to the classification of masculine role norms categories.

The objective of this study was to investigate representations of mobility in the lyrics of contemporary country music artists in the framework of masculinity. In the light of my analysis, my hypothesis proved to be true. The lyrics manifest masculine ideals through mobility-related themes and draw a picture of a country man that is tough, dominant and confident about his masculine charm and attractiveness on the outside, but on the other hand, reluctant to show his emotions even to his loved ones and very inclined to take unnecessary risks with his reckless lifestyle.

Keywords: Gender theories, masculinity, mobility, country music, Americanness

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Gender studies and research on mobilities.....	9
2.1. Study of masculinities.....	12
2.2. From mobility studies to American mobility.....	19
3. American country music	25
3.1. History and development of country and Southern music	27
3.2. Contemporary country music.....	33
3.3. Gendered country music	34
4. Analyzing Men on the Move	39
4.1. Methods.....	39
4.2. Masculinity ideologies	41
5. Conclusion	56
Works Cited	59

1. Introduction

I have always been fascinated by road narratives, adventure books and accounts about exploring new spaces and places. My favorite books as a child were *The Little House on the Prairie*, *Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain and all books of Karl May, the German travel writer and explorer, who wrote extensive travel accounts about the American old west and the Orient. Now as an adult, I enjoy reading novels by Clive Cussler, however vernacular they may be, as they are filled with the thrill of adventure, mobility and excitement about learning about new places and spaces. In short, works that deal with mobility and exploring have always captured my attention.

In all of these books, the protagonists are men and I have started to wonder about it. Combined with my interest in country music, where the men almost unanimously hold the role of the protagonist, I have slowly begun to wonder why agency is always held by a male character. Why do men always explore and go to places? Naturally, there have been women adventurers and singer/songwriters as well, but where are they? Is there an alternative reality somewhere for the agency of the other gender as well? I began to wonder whether there is an invisible structure in society which determines who is to be seen or heard and who is not, and who decides this. After all, there are as much women in the world as men. This line of thought has led me to investigate the invisible power structures in society and the means one could adopt to make them more visible. In this thesis, I write about gender relations and therefore I explore gender theories. In addition, have I acquainted myself with theories about mobilities and especially gendered mobilities by geographer Tim Cresswell. I want to see whether through these theories on gender and mobility I could understand the gendered world better.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines country music in the following way: “Popular music of a style originating in folk music of the rural southern United States and cowboy music of the American West, typically consisting of ballads and dance tunes accompanied by fiddle, banjo, guitar, and pedal steel guitar.” Since its birth, country music has had a special place in the hearts of Americans. It is considered as one of the cornerstones of American identity, an indeed, country music

is on a whole an American genre, its "[p]erformers were American, its audience was American, its stories were American, its sound was American" (Scaruffi, 2007).

I have loved American country music as long as I can remember and, as an avid listener of country music, I chose the lyrics of country songs as the topic of my research. From my point of view, it is a manly and masculine realm where women are seldom protagonists – they are merely seen as objects, if at all. Therefore, I combined all my areas of interest into this study and began to research more profoundly the connections between masculinity and mobility and, when talking about spaces and places, the realm of country music. This thesis raises from my own interest in these themes, and this has been an interesting journey that has led me to think deeper about society's underlying power structures, meanings and manifestations of mobility, gendered practices and prejudices and the social order.

From Lucky Luke to Wyatt and Billy from the movie *Easy Rider*, from Jack Kerouac to a modern-day trucker, mobility has always played a significant role when talking about the American way of living and American men's quest for freedom, independence and autonomy. Even though we cannot know for certain what James Truslow Adams, who coined the phrase "The American Dream", meant to be included in the original meaning of the phrase, together with the Declaration of Independence (1776) they have become the epitome of Americanness. Adams noted that "[l]ife should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstances of birth" (Adams, 1931; JStor Daily, 2015). When Adams put together this set of ideals, he was also discussing freedom and opportunities for prospect and success. It is a question of interpretation whether by freedom he meant the freedom to pursuit prosperity and happiness and the freedom to live freely in a democracy where there are equal rights for everyone despite their background or social status. To me, it seems that this characterization of freedom was rather figurative, but many Americans have taken it quite literally as it has been added to the ample array of American masculine virtues and has become something that men pursue just

because the sake of it. In fact, the male quest for freedom and independence has become important tokens of masculinity (Uteng and Cresswell 3; Hanson 6) and combined with mobility, one of the few masculine things available for the majority of males regardless of their place in the masculine hierarchy created by the American society.

One of the themes related to mobility which I want to discuss further, is the juxtaposition of mobility and sedentariness. According to Liisa Malkki (1992), mobility can be seen as a threat or a disorder in the system, something, that ought to be controlled. According to Malkki, people that are not sedentary, such as drifters, vagabonds or refugees, are the outcast of society and the mobile lifestyle they have chosen or have been forced to adapt to, is seen as immoral and a threat that needs to be disciplined. This view contrasts sharply with Tim Cresswell's notion about mobility as something dynamic, desirable and fluid. Later in this thesis I will take a closer look at these themes of mobility versus sedentariness and examine them in the context of masculinity and its expressions in country music.

Mobility and freedom on foot are and have always been available for everyone, but it was not until the last century when the heyday of the mass production of automobiles made cars affordable for all and true automobilism could start at full throttle. (Douglas et al. 2011, 163) This development started with Henry Ford, who paid his automobile factory workers more salary so that they could buy the factory's Model T-Fords for themselves (Hounshell 1984, 218). Since then, thanks to the massive advertising campaigns, consumers have been convinced that the ownership of a car provides paths to freedom, helps an individual to be more mobile and raises their status (McCarthy 2007, 583). The whole continent of North America is crisscrossed by highways, roads and paths so mobility by the vast network of paths has been made very easy. According to the US Department of Transportation, there were in total 4,161,000 miles (6,696,000 km) of roads in the US in 2018. There are also plenty of vehicles to cover those lanes, the amount of vehicles in 2019 was 279,6 million and it is raising yearly by 1,6% on average (Statista, 2019). An interesting fact is that even though the number of

motor vehicles in the us is quite vast, only 35% of car owners are women. This indicates also that there is a strong connection between masculinity and (auto)mobility and indeed, cars and driving are an essential part of Western masculinity, at least according to the corpus of my thesis, which I will introduce in chapter 4.

Along with mobility, another masculine and male-dominated area is country music: while listening to it, I have noticed a strong connection between country songs and expressions of mobility. The country singers often use metaphors of roads, lanes and paths and I started to wonder what the connection between masculinity and mobility might be. There are a number of ways in which a man can portray his masculinity – whether it be via songs' lyrics or ways of representing himself – so why use expressions of mobility? Do male country singers just love roads or is there a deeper or subtle message of expressions of masculinity within the lyrics?

My thesis examines the lyrics of contemporary country music by various male artists and the ways they portray (American) mobility in the framework of masculinity. Mobility and road narratives have shaped the ways the US is viewed as a nation, both from the citizens' point of view as well as from the outside. There are concurrent themes which are closely related to Americanness such as freedom, frontiers and mobility (Brigham, 3). All of these have traditionally been a manly playground and also an essential part of the American way of living and being. Cresswell (2016, 26) and Franklin (2014, 77) observe that there are existing binaries in the field of mobilities, such as *familiarity/difference* and *stationary/mobile*. Cresswell (25) rates the binary opposites in negative and positive and postulates that the words associated with mobility are always very positive, while sedentariness and immobility acquire negative attributes, such as regressive and dull (26). In the light of Cresswell's notions, the values represented by the idea of the American Dream are not very positive but nevertheless, people desire to have their share. According to Robert J. Shiller (2007), a *New York Times* journalist, the meaning of the American Dream has transformed in the course of times and become something completely different from its original meaning. At the time when the phrase was

coined, in the 1930's, in the core of its message were freedom, mutual respect and equal opportunities for all.

The newly acquired meaning of the American Dream now includes a house surrounded by a white picket fence, stable and tranquil life and, to put in more briefly, sedentariness. This seems quite contradictory when we take into consideration that, on the other hand, mobility and freedom and their different manifestations have always been revered and desired but, at the same time, been looked upon as rebellious, norm-breaking and reckless (Cresswell 2016, 26). One reason for this might be that while Cresswell mainly discusses about mobility from the point of view of the human geography, where the mobility is seen as the movement of human beings through space and time (28), there are other ways to perceive mobility as well. Perhaps The American Dream's *sedentariness* is a result of mobility, but not the spatio-temporal or geographical mobility Cresswell discusses, but instead social mobility, which refers to individual's movement up or down the scale of social ladder (Sheller 2014, 46). In my thesis, I will examine mobility from the point of view of the human geography rather than from the sociological point of view.

According to Janis P. Stout, the journey narrative is one of the oldest forms of storytelling and it is a literary pattern present in literature all over the world. In her book *The Journey Narrative in American Literature*, she also postulates that most of the journey narratives have considerable symbolic and metaphorical meanings (1984,12). In other words, besides of being ways that take a person from one point to another, the roads and mobility might have other, deeper meanings. Brigham (2015) discusses the meanings of mobility in her book *American Road Narratives*, where she stresses the importance that roads and mobility have always had for Americans. She describes the road trips as "the actual manifestation of an authentic American experience" (3) as they "direct and project Americanness, connect the traveler to the country and acknowledge the American as a mobile subject"(3). Additionally, Brigham notes that road trips connect the notion of spatial mobility to other

mobilities such as social or economic, and all these different mobilities serve as a vehicle for one to achieve a range of goals whether they be economical, social, sexual or psychological (3).

In my thesis, I part from the presumption that mobility related utterances in county songs' lyrics in my corpus serve as a tool for the protagonist to simultaneously build and reinforce ideas about masculinity through the themes; this means that the road narratives in the songs serve as a vehicle to bolster masculine qualities.

I will discuss the concept of masculinity and define different types of masculinity according to the classifications of such scholars as R.W. Connell and Michael Kimmel, among others. I will further take a look at the ways American men manifest their masculine character from in the framework of different mobilities. What kind of narratives of mobility are there in contemporary country songs? What kind of – if any – masculine attributes do the songs present or embody? Why are the men on the move? I will explore these themes and try to find underlying themes that give us a better understanding about construction of contemporary masculinity and, on the other hand, examine the significances mobility is given in the songs of my corpus. In short, I will provide a brief overview of American masculine mobilities in the context of country songs. In the analysis part, I will discuss the expressions of masculine mobilities in the country songs and analyze them according to the classification of masculine role norms categories postulated by Levant (2013). For the corpus, I have chosen six songs from American contemporary country musicians or groups; Tim McGraw, Sam Hunt, Kenny Chesney, Dierks Bentley, Justin Moore and The Mavericks, which is a group, not a solo artist. These artists represent well the genre of country music because they are white, American and very popular what comes to the sales of their albums. Their songs are very traditional what comes to their themes, yet contemporary what comes to the melodies and instruments, and their lyrics are filled with themes such as work, love, sports, hunting, going to church and, naturally, expressions of masculine mobility. The chosen songs from aforementioned artists have plenty of themes which deal with masculinity and mobility, and those kinds of songs are an excellent object of study.

The thesis employs a broad theoretical framework that includes different theories that range from the study of mobilities to theories about gender. I will look deeply into the meanings of gendered identities and mobilities, and how, where and by whom they are produced. I will also discuss the criticism of gender studies and present alternative approaches to the theme.

2. Gender studies and research on mobilities

In this chapter, I will first introduce the field of gender studies and examine different approaches towards the field. There are different understandings and theorizations of gender, and I will move from one to another to be able to draw a coherent picture of complexities and multifaceted nature related with the concept of gender. This is important to my research, because I intend to study mobility in country songs' lyrics from a masculine perspective and, therefore, I will first have to investigate gender theories and theories about masculinity to be able to determine which theoretical approach suits best to my purposes.

Gender studies (including both female's and male's studies) is a discipline that studies representations of gender and different gender identities. It analyzes, theorizes and challenges the meanings of sex and gender in society, in economic and political practices, and in social life and culture (e.g. Whelehan and Pilcher 2004). As Simone de Beauvoir, the author of *The Second Sex*, so elegantly put it, "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (de Beauvoir 2011, 293). According to Rudman and Glick, gender can be approached from different point of views. One way is the evolutionary approach, where it is seen as a fact that genders are and have always been fixed as a result of built-in or fundamental evolved sex differences (6). Another way to interpret gender is to see it from a historical point of view, where gender is seen as an arbitrary construction produced by prevailing culture and the ways masculinity and femininity differ from each other are mostly determined by history; biological considerations are thus excluded. These two views are sometimes seen as oppositional, but Rudman and Glick have proposed a third way which fuses these two apparently opposing views together. This is called the social structural approach and it seeks to combine the previously mentioned concepts and create a consensus among them. The social structural approach parts from the presumption that in all societies people form groups within society. Inside these groups, they interact with their peers in specific ways, but in different ways when in contact with others that do not belong to their group. Within their own social group, everybody has a social

position and role they typically occupy. There is a hierarchy among these roles and positions as well so that some members of the group rank higher and are more powerful than the others. These inner power structures within the group define and shape the behavior of the people inside the group more than the aforementioned built-in sex difference or history. The structural differences have more to do with shaping gender relations, behavior and stereotypes. Social structural theorists see this development as a result of socialization and a way to explain underlying beliefs of gender and the true realizations of gender related behavior (Rudman and Glick, 20).

The development of gender roles starts very early in childhood and the surrounding social structures and social groups reinforce the formation of these roles even further. Children are socialized from early age – according to their sex – to their corresponding gender roles, and as women and men customarily behave in ways that maintain and support the traditional labor division, it is more likely for a woman to be a stay-at-home mother or, if working outside home, she is likely to be employed in a traditional caretaking job such as nurse or kindergarten assistant. Nevertheless, it is the men who are traditionally seen as the providers in families and, in contrast to women, are more likely to be employed in a high(er)-paying job in a field that requires strength, firmness, longer workdays or management skills (20). Because women are able to bear children and nurse them, they are seen as more suited in nurturing roles than men. According to the theory, since this role is factual and rooted in reproductive biology, it is seen as something that characterizes and ties women in professional life as well. Because of this distribution of roles, stereotypes arise, and expectations of gender roles became even more rooted. Men, thanks to their (stereotyped) role as a provider, are seen as more aggressive, competitive and because of all this, more dominant in the social hierarchy in comparison to women. This all leads to a vicious circle; because men have more opportunities to show their leadership skills, power and aggressiveness, this reinforces even further the gendered stereotypes and takes the genders even further apart (20). This becomes a problem when, according to the social role theory, "[r]oles not only foster stereotypes about each sex but also help to create a

corresponding reality” (20). There are several reasons for this development: firstly, people are socialized to perform following the example of the group they are socialized in, for example, girls play with dolls, pretending they are nurturing babies just as they have seen women (from their social group) do. Secondly, they endorse characteristics typical to their social group and learn to define themselves through these traits. One more reason is that a certain behavior reinforces and increases the intensity in which people manifest the traits and behaviors expected by their social role (e.g., the nurturing behavior emerges prominently when a woman becomes mother) (20).

Understanding gender roles and different theories associated with them is relevant to my research question, because classifying people in different categories based on their actions cannot be done on somewhat frivolous basis but, instead, has to have a steady ground where to build the research. If we are inclined to think of gender from the evolutionary point of view, where the vision about genders is fixed and a result of built-in sex differences, then we might interpret the meanings of masculine mobility differently than in case that we see the gender development as something people are socialized to from a young age.

The most salient identity that defines us is the sense of ourselves as being gendered beings (Avery, 323). According to Deaux and La France (1998), in classifying and understanding others and defining themselves, people rely heavily on gender. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word gender as “the state of being male or female”. Even though the origins of gender are rooted in biological sex categories, the visible genitalia, gender, unlike sex, is not biologically determined but a socially accomplished and culturally constituted ongoing construction project which we “[p]erform through situated, symbolic social interaction.” (Rudman and Glick 2010, 3) We construct gender by tailoring our actions to conform to the normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity that exist in our culture (Gherardi 1995) by choosing from a cultural repertoire of gendered behaviors (Wetherell and Edley 1999, 353). These practices, in turn, create a social gender display that reinforces (or resists) the prevailing conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Avery 324; Butler

1990, 28; Lorber 1994, 14). The terms sex and gender can sometimes be confusing. Originally, the word *gender* has an Indo-European word root that means “to produce”. It has been borrowed to English from Latin and Greek where it signifies the distinction between the classes of nouns (Hakala 2006, 53). In English, only the gender of pronouns is distinguishable, ‘she’ being female and ‘he’ being male. In some languages, all the nouns are either feminine, masculine or neuter but, nonetheless, there are languages where the distinction in these categories cannot be made with means of grammar. When talking strictly about biological categories – the categories of female and male – we can use the term *sex*, but when it comes to society’s constructions when talking about social roles, stereotypes and such, in these cases the use of the term *gender* is nowadays more suitable (Rudman and Glick, 6). Nonetheless, it is paramount to bear in mind that *gender* is not usually seen as binary unlike sex in its most rudimentary meaning. Gender, on the other hand, is repeatedly performed construction whose interpretations depend on the one receiving the performance (Uteng and Cresswell 2008, 2). This is true especially in cases, where a person defines their gender as non-binary. Some people have a gender that is neither male or female or can blend elements of being a man or a woman. Sometimes, it is possible that the gender changes over time and the person’s perception of their own gender is neither male nor female (Non-Binary Defined, 2018).

2.1. Study of masculinities

In male’s studies (also known as masculinity studies and critical studies of men) (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 836), men are most often defined in terms of masculinity as opposed to femininity. According to Arto Jokinen (2003, 7), masculinity is not just something that is innate in men; instead, masculinity lies in the speech and actions of a person, and refers to both being and behaving, which are closely linked to cultural and social life of a person. Yet, defining masculinity has proven to be a difficult task. Hakala (56) notes that until the second half of the twentieth century masculinity was defined as a socially accepted way of being a man. Masculinity was regarded as a

fixed and stable state that was mainly sex-based. However, nowadays masculinity is “[u]nderstood as fluid, time-related and variable across different cultures and eras as well as subject to change over the course of a person’s life and within any society or time.” (Kimmel 2004, 503)

Connell (2002, 33-35) has postulated that gender differences are based on social norms and differences of personalities between men and women. According to Jokinen (8), the ideal qualities of Western masculinity include functionality, dominance, performance, competitiveness, rationality, physical capability and violence. Feminine traits, such as emotionality and communality, are generally excluded from this definition. Furthermore, femininity and masculinity are seen as mutually exclusive opposites, even though in real life all men possess some feminine features and vice versa. According to cultural and social expectations, however, men ought to possess notably more masculine than feminine qualities in order to demonstrate a “real” man (8).

Based on the ideas of Connell (1995), Jokinen (9-11, 14, 21) postulates four essential notions that comprise masculinity on the grounds of: 1) personality and physical features that are related to being masculine, 2) how well a man fulfills the masculine ideals and prevailing norms, (3) time and place in relation to masculinity, and (4) the historical development. The first notion refers to the range of personal and physiological features that possess their equivalents and symbols in the world of objects and phenomena (9). This unfolds to me in reference to those languages in which words are categorized according to their masculinity or femininity. For example, in Spanish *el sol* (masc.) means *the sun* and *la luna* (fem.) means *the moon*, because due to their physical attributes, some objects or phenomena are considered masculine and some feminine. An *earthquake* possesses masculine qualities: violence, low-pitched roaring voice, physical capability and force. Yet, the objects and phenomena are neutral, and the connotations are created in the minds of people.

Second, the model of masculinity signifies that the more masculine attributes a man can encompass the more respected and manly he is. Thus, being a man is not just something men are born with, but the masculinity has to be earned and constantly proved (10).

Third, instead of something fixed, masculinity is a result of a social process bound in time and place. It is a configuration which forces and allures men to adopt certain masculine attributes but is by no means the sum of one's personal characteristics (14). Masculinity involves the positions in social genders' relations and different practices which, in turn, organize those positions and link men to masculinity. These men can come from different backgrounds and have different social statuses but may share the same ideals and representations of masculinity (14). Furthermore, certain discursive structures offer certain kind of masculine subject positions through which masculine subjects are constructed. According to Hakala (174) masculinity is always culture-bound and time-related and consequently, all the masculine enactments are subject to their own era.

In such discourses, a person occupies a certain role and behaves accordingly, enabling the manifestation of different points of view from which the speaker operates. (Jokinen, 20). The fourth notion, historical development, refers to the fact that masculinities are constructed by members of a certain culture who mark, make meaningful and represent certain acts, gestures, things and phenomena as masculine. Therefore, all things and phenomena which are considered masculine must be seen in its own context and judged against its background and history (27).

Multiple masculinities

Based on Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, Connell (1995) suggested that there exist various masculinities and a hierarchical ordering of them, in which one form overrides the others, by identifying three categories of Western masculinity: hegemonic masculinity, conservative masculinity, and subordinated masculinity. According to Connell, hegemony refers to the beliefs and values held and enforced by dominant and powerful social groups. As Harrison (2009, 16) points out, Connell insists that masculinity is not an object, but instead, a set of "processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives." Hegemonic masculinity, the first masculinity type, is intended to dominate and manifests itself in the popular hyper-masculine ideals

of toughness and strength as well as the patriarchal kind of masculinity. According to the idea of hegemonic masculinity, the men, who are the most capable of dominating others, are the most admired and respected, for instance in political and economic life (Hakala, 64).

Connell's second masculinity type, the conservative masculinity, represents changing masculinities, moving from the hegemonic virtues of toughness and strength to a sensitive, nurturing ideal, embodied by images of men engaged in childcare and domestic chores (Hakala, 64). The third type of masculinity, the subordinated masculinity, is in direct opposition to hegemonic masculinity, representing a kind of alternative or outcast masculinity that slips even further away from hegemonic masculinity. Feminine characteristics are likely to put an individual into this category and the stereotypical view of the gay man is often perceived as part of this form of masculinity (65). In addition, Harrison (24) lists marginal and complicit masculinity. Even though inspired and approved by hegemonic masculinity, marginal masculinity is marginal in the sense that it can only dominate in its own sphere of society, which is normally a social class or race, while, in turn, complicit masculinity applies to those men, who do not live up to hegemonic masculinity but can take advantage of it without being, as Connell (79) puts it, "in the front line of troops of patriarchy." Conceivably, the most remarkable benefit of belonging to this style of masculinity might be the gain achieved through the subordination of women (Harrison, 24).

Critics have tried to capture the nature of hegemonic masculinity by various classifications. Gregor (2009, 39) focused on social roles and identified two masculine categories: provider (of security and resources) and protector (defending others and territory). David and Brannon (1976, Badinter 1994) identified four standards of traditional American masculinity: 1) "no sissy stuff" referring to distancing oneself from femininity, being homophobic and avoiding emotions, 2) "be a big wheel", i.e. striving for achievement and success and being competitive, 3) "be a sturdy oak" endeavoring to avoid vulnerability, staying in control and being tough, and finally 4) "give 'em hell" i.e. acting aggressively and becoming dominant. Levant et al. (1992), in turn, expanded this

classification and developed a tool for measuring the norms of traditional masculinity ideology. This tool, the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI), is comprised of seven categories that can be used to measure the level of commitment to masculinity norms in a person. The factors are 1) Restrictive Emotionality, 2) Self-Reliance through Mechanical Skills, 3) Negativity toward Sexual Minorities, 4) Avoidance of Femininity, 5) Importance of Sex, 6) Dominance and 7) Toughness. Levant's approach to the classification of masculinity factors appeals to me because of its clarity and self-explanatory quality and I will use it in this thesis as a basis of the analysis of the data. I will dedicate more space for the description of the method in chapter 4.

Southern masculinity

At the beginning of her dissertation *The Southern Gentleman and the Idea of Masculinity* Emmeline Gros gives an illustration of the Southern masculinity and how it was depicted in the decades preceding the Civil-War: "Aristocratic at heart, Victorian in his manners, the Southern man was characterized by autonomy, self-discipline, and integrity, combining all the elements of older chivalric codes with an acute sense of private and caste power." (Gros 2010, 1). Additionally, she discusses that the Southern masculinity is "[a] masculinity that has been considered by most as the normative, invisible, and unquestioned referent from which to measure marginalized others – foreigners, women, or non-whites" (2). Furthermore, Watson D. Ritchie lists an assortment of qualities pertaining to the Southern man, such as "fortitude, temperance, prudence, justice, liberality and courtesy" (quoted in Gros). All of the attributes above are very classical and predictable or even "traditional", but in the light of these examples it seems quite obvious that the archetype of a man representing Southern masculinity could not be black or gay, for instance. There is a more contemporary approach to the Southern masculinity in an article written by Jason T. Eastman, *Rebel Manhood: The Hegemonic Masculinity of the Southern Rock Music Revival* (2012). In his article, Eastman writes about the contradictory role of Southern men in the U.S culture: "[t]he rest of the

country stereotypes them as backwards and deviant, yet simultaneously celebrates Southern males as quintessential exemplars of American manhood “(189). Eastman argues that marginalized men “[e]mbrace a Southern rebel identity to meet hegemonic masculine ideals shared across social classes and geographic regions” (189). He depicts the Southern rebel masculine ideology as contrary to the middle-class morals and practices, instead, marginalized men use the symbolic resources they have to meet the hegemonic masculine ideals that are revered throughout the U.S. (189). An example of this is that when higher class men use the economic resources and authority, they have to demonstrate their hegemonic manhood, marginalized rebel men have to resort to different identity work strategies to compensate the lack of resources pertaining to hegemonic masculinity (195). According to Eastman, these strategies include manifesting hegemonic masculinity through the independence attained by irregular employment, protesting the traditional breadwinner role and exploiting domestic labor and women’s bodies, and abusing substances such as drugs and alcohol and, being violent (195). I argue that there are multiple masculinities and men use different means to meet hegemonic masculinity ideals. Both Gros and Eastman acknowledge that the Southern masculinity is not hegemonic masculinity, but their views about the traits of Southern masculinity are very differing. Different categorizations produce different archetypes of masculinities (Hakala, 61) and often they are very stereotyped and exaggerated. As I mentioned before, Connell (1995) has classified different types of Western masculinity into three categories, whereas David and Brannon (1976) introduced four masculinity themes. There are other scholars as well who have created their own categorizations of masculinities. Hakala (65) describes the *New Man* introduced by Elisabeth Hirschman (1999), whose masculinity has five categories and each of the categories is a mix of external and internal characteristics. She has named the categories as 1) the prince, 2) the public warrior, 3) the rogue adventurer, 4) the father figure and 5) the scientist (65). All of the categories above are characterized by positive qualities only, such as *handsome, honorable, clever, resourceful, a moral guide, brain power* (65). Even though the above classifications are far from the ideals of hegemonic masculinity,

they still characterize individual that is undoubtedly very manly and powerful. Thus, there is no law that states which of the multiple masculinities is “better” and in what sense. All the masculinities can be judged according to some subjectivities and the judgement depends solely on the subject. In this thesis, I do not intend to find and define the ideals of Southern masculinity nor try to look for the norms of hegemonic masculinity from my corpus. My intention is to choose a classification of masculine characteristics and use it to discuss the mobile masculinities and their significance in my corpus, and for this intention I have chosen to use the Male Role Norms Inventory created by Levant.

Hiramoto (2012) examined mediatization of Chinese masculinities through martial arts films and discusses mediatization in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Mediatization (or mediation) spreads hegemonic ideas and is an ongoing process in social life that unfolds through linkages among semiotic encounters that yield multi-sited chains of communication (Agha 2011, 164). It links people or elements of society and involves the exchange of meanings and ideas through formalized types of communication, such as news reports and political speeches but, in fact, involves all resources concerning language in the creation of media products such as text, image, and talk (Hiramoto, 168; Agha, 165). Thus, also popular media mediate conventions and make the audience complicit in that naturalization in both popular and academic discourse (MacDougall, 2002). Hiramoto (169) states that hegemonic gender ideologies are usually accepted without much thinking as a given ideology of masculinity appears natural within cultural and historical contexts. In today’s social life, many people associate images typical to American culture; jocks, macho men, action movie heroes such as cowboys and James Bond or, even butch lesbians, with masculinity (Reeser 2010, 33). Country songs’ lyrics are very masculine as well, especially the songs sung by a male singer. As Eastman (2012) notes, it is not uncommon to hear a Southern song stating that someone “loves his baby” because of her baking skills or telling a woman to shut up and get back to the kitchen (201). Even though the behavior described in the song would barely be tolerated in a relationship, when country songs use that kind of expressions they are acquiesced as a part of the genre.

2.2. From mobility studies to American mobility

In this subchapter, I will first discuss the different concepts that the term mobility encompasses and the meanings they are given. Then I will move on to introduce mobility studies in the past and present and describe different fields of study with the focus on my research question and primary material. First, I will discuss the concept of mobilities on a general level, but I will then also focus on American mobility in detail., I will especially concentrate on how gender and mobility are intertwined and how this manifest itself in everyday life.

Mobility is a rapidly expanding discipline. One of the most prominent scholars and researchers in this field is Cresswell, whose research considers the roles of different ways of thinking from a geographical point of view. He utilizes the notions on space, place and time in his studies on mobilities and, in his own words, practices “critical geosophy” that investigates the interlinking and overlapping connections of notions of place and mobility and how they are represented in different fields, such as medicine, planning, social justice etc. The geographical ways of thinking are of interest in this kind of geosophical research and in its framework, it is possible to see the different power relations which underlay in representations of mobility. Cresswell has written and published a number of scientific articles and books on geography, places and mobilities and has also co-edited several books, *Gendered Mobilities* (ed.) (2008), *Place, A Short Introduction* (2013) and *On the Move* (2006), just to mention few.

Mobility studies is wide and interdisciplinary field and it brings together researchers from different backgrounds; for example, when studying e.g. migration, there can be scholars from the fields of geography, social sciences, linguistics, etc. Mobility studies can tackle all kinds of current, past or future issues such as the prospects of private vs. public transport’s development, development of logistic systems or even the informal services of megacity slums (Adey et al. 2014, 1). It can investigate the paths of illegal migrant workers or even the subjects that are on the move for one reason or another. In the past, mobility studies existed as well but not quite in the same extent as

currently. For instance, the means for studying mobilities nowadays are much more developed than they were in the past: for instance, qualitative, participatory and multi-media data collection that we can use nowadays did not exist in the past, so when studying historical aspects of mobility there are only old structures, archaeological transport machines and perhaps some information in print (Revill 2014, 506).

When thinking about mobility, people often think about traveling by boat, driving a car or perhaps flying by plane somewhere far away. However, mobility is much more than that. All kind of movement is mobility whether it be dancing, moving your limbs, walking or exercising (Cresswell, 2006, 1). Besides giving us an opportunity to move our bodies when doing daily chores around the house, mobility enables us to move from one place to another, perhaps in search of adventures or flying away from trouble. Cresswell makes an analytical distinction between movement and mobility. He postulates that while both terms involve a shift or move to one direction or another, movement is the act of displacement on an imaginary level, i.e. mobility without the context of power, a general fact of displacement. He goes on to compare movement to the “dynamic equivalent of location in abstract space” (3) which, consequently, leads mobility to be the dynamic equivalent of place. By this, he intends to claim that a place is a location which has meaning and power, in other words, something concrete and tangible, whereas when talking about the term movement, we are dealing with a concept that is purely on an imaginary level, an idea. A place is something concrete and factual that can be experienced, but the same does not apply with a location (3).

Rootedness

In the Western world, a principal way of thinking about mobility is to see it as a threat or a disorder in the system or something that ought to be controlled; this is why those people that are not sedentary have an outsider’s role in modern society. These persons, such as the drifters, the vagabonds and the refugees, have adopted a mobile lifestyle and are seen with immoral intents. In the eyes of society, they are seen as a threat in need of discipline (Cresswell, 26). The anthropologist Liisa H. Malkki has

written a seminal paper about refugees and how there is a tendency in a society to think that mobile people are morally inferior to the people who are more fixed in space and place (Malkki 1992, 32). Why is it then that mobility is seen as a negative or despicable thing while sedentariness is regarded as superior? Isn't it a bit contradictory to the fact that Cresswell describes the notions attached to *place* as being “[s]tuck in the past, overly confining, and possibly reactionary” (Cresswell, 26). Additionally, he goes on and discusses the notions of mobility in solely positive terms: “If something can be said to be fluid, dynamic, in flux, or simply mobile, then it is seen to be progressive, exiting and contemporary. If, on the other hand, something is said to be rooted, based on foundations, static, or bounded, then it is seen to be reactionary, dull, and of the past” (Cresswell, 25).

However dull and old-fashioned rootedness may be in comparison with cool and exciting mobility, the notion of roots is an important concept what comes to feelings of safety, security and the mere identity of oneself. The conceptions of culture and identity are linked to a sedentarist way of thinking and permit the classification of the world into, nations, countries or places (Cresswell, 27). Malkki (24) postulates that sedentary discourses and practices are seen as a norm and in that light the discourses and practices related to mobility are detrimental and the repercussions of a sedentarist metaphysics for mobile people are harsh (Malkki, cited in Cresswell, 27).

American mobility

In this chapter, I will discuss cars and car cultures and also the links they have with Americanness, masculinity and country music. The reason why I dedicate so much space to cars and automobility is that they play an important role in the ways mobility and masculinity are performed, lived and experienced in the framework of Americanness. It would be difficult to imagine how the US would be if it was deprived of cars or what country music would look like without roads and paths. And what about masculinity, if it were stripped off of its mobile manifestations – without the freedom to roam, wander or explore?

In the Western society, cars and mobility are a theme that does not leave anyone cold and, especially in the USA, many people have opinion about private and public transport, gas prices, leisure cruising, car ownership, etc. When planning urban infrastructures, roads, commuting or dwellings, engineers tend to look at the future trends and tendencies and the factors behind them, such as climate warming or population growth, and base their plans on the strong evidence and the supposed environmental-friendliness, among other things. Almost always, the ecological factors together with economic ones take over and the decisions are being made based on these solely. However, many times it is disregarded that there is a strong emotive component involved in private cars, driving and mobility; the car culture has emotional constituents and “[i]s never simply about rational economic choices, but is as much about aesthetic, emotional and sensory responses to driving, as well as patterns of kinship, sociality, habitation and work” (Sheller 2004, 222). There is a parallel here with the manifestations of mobility in country music: leisure driving just for the sake of it is a very strong core component of American masculinity and especially visible in the lyrics of country songs. Cars are not used solely as a means to go from place A to place B, but rather a way to self-expression and a cause to the “[v]isceral and other feelings associated with car use are as central to understanding the stubborn persistence of car-based cultures as are more technical and socio-economic factors.” (Sheller, 223) According to Brigham (3), road trips can be seen as ways to achieve “a range of other mobilities; from the social and economic to the psychological and sexual” (3).

Even the promise of mobility is sometimes enough to create a sense of freedom and the excitement of the unknown. Nigel Thrift develops further the idea of a car being more than just a transportation device when he notes that “[t]he objects do not just constitute an extension of bodily capacities; they themselves are a vital element in distributed ecology of thought” (Thrift, 38). According to him, these instincts or feelings what cars and mobility incite in us are of biological origin or culturally sedimented. The latter would agree with the notion that people are socialized in their gender roles since childhood and that the feelings and emotions that cars and mobility bring on

would somehow be gender related instead being mutually shared by all genders. Nonetheless, it is impossible to deny the fact that cars or other objects acquire a sort of personality on their own and become “objects of desire to be collected and cosseted, washed and worshipped” (Sheller, 225); indeed, they participate in the “ego-formation of the owner or driver as competent, powerful, able and sexually desirable (225). According to Sheller, also popular cultures treat cars as “extension of drivers’ bodies” (225) and this goes very well with the notions about country music. Even though music genres such as hip-hop or rock have had their share of cars as the main component in their manifestations of coolness, richness or sexuality, even more important is their role in the realm of country music. Cars and mobility have such a great importance in country music because, in contrast to hip-hop, for instance, country is all about freedom and roaming, being independent and challenging the limits set by authorities or superiors, such as God, society or the boss, whereas hip-hop has other resources to draw upon; objectification of women, manifestations of wealth, use of illegal substances, bragging etc., just to mention few. In contrast, country music has a number of core elements to draw upon and this is why the car is so important in manifesting masculinity. In fact, it is such a common element in country songs that almost everything seems to revolve around cars or car related action.

Sheller (223) distinguishes three levels in the emotional sociology of automobility: micro-, macro- and meso-levels. The micro-level is about individual drivers and their preferences, whereas the macro-level has become to signify bigger, national or regional patterns of emotional geographies. With meso-level Sheller designates car cultures that are specifically located, i.e. in a specific region inside a country, such as a big city’s suburb or similar. An example of emotional meso-level geography could be found in an ethnographic study by a Swedish scholar, Dag Balkmar, who has written about gendered, risky and dangerous behavior in his doctoral thesis *On Men and Cars* (2012). In his seminal thesis, Balkmar first describes how masculinities are reproduced as a result of cultural and social processes. He discusses about “a gendered paradox”: the assumption that the relation between men and cars is somehow more natural than when women and cars are in question. There is

a relationship between masculinity, men and cars that seems so obvious it is normally taken for granted without any questioning (16).

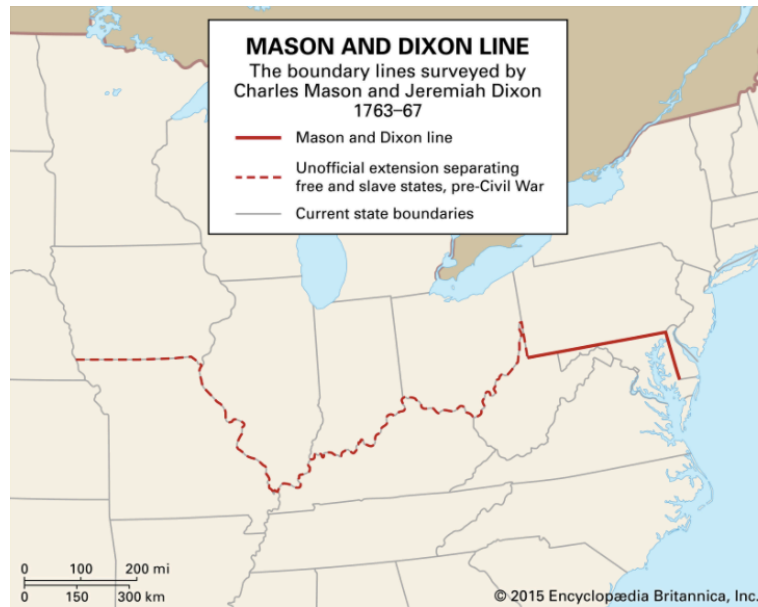
Pauline Garvey has studied mobility in the context of cars, speed and display of materialism among young men in Norway. She found out that among their social circles, speed and its configurations of freedom were an essential part of mobility. On the other hand, equally important was the display of materialism. Even though the vehicles were not of great monetary value, the time and effort invested to decorate and personalize them made them more precious for their owners and this way the materialism and personality of the owner intertwined in the context of mobility (Garvey 2001, 143). Lachlan B. Barber (2019) writes in his article about the connection of automobility and masculinities in America in the field of construction. He postulates that the meaning and use of trucks is shaped by different aspects of identity and gender is one of the aspects (Barber, 251) and claims that trucks have come to reflect the hegemonic masculinity among certain groups of men and the meanings the vehicles are given are complex and contested (251). He pictures the trucks as status symbols; tools of work but also as objects of personal consumption imbued with symbolism (252).

When defining connections between mobility, masculinity and cars, it is worth pondering whether car ownership itself is reinforcing the practice of masculinity or whether the experience of movement, speed or mobility is enough to fulfill the norms imposed to Western masculinity? This is an interesting topic and I hope my analysis will shed more light to this question in its' outcome.

3. American country music

In this chapter, I will first take a look at the history of the American South and highlight the conditions which have led to the birth of country music's predecessors. Since the old Southern music is a fusion of black and white music, religious hymns mixed with field workers' tunes, it could not have been born anywhere (White 2008, 185). Instead, the heterogenous population in the place of its origin enabled Southern music's birth and helped it to become the way we now know it. In fact, in her article *Country Music* (2008), Barbara Ching notes that even though Southern music has never formally been called "Southern music", it easily could have been, as the term encompasses all the Southern musical genres and styles, including country music as well (205). After a brief glimpse to Southern history, I will move on to describe the birth mechanisms and the eventful history of Southern and country music, which has many waypoints that are linked with Southern history and its remarkable moments. Finally, I will conclude with the state of the genre nowadays and list some of its most distinguished artists and accomplishments.

The south-eastern region of the United States, The South, is generally considered to be south of the Mason and Dixon Line and it includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Colombia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020).



Picture 1. Mason and Dixon line (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020).

Historically, the South was set apart from northern part of the country by many factors, the most important probably being the black agricultural labor force, free or enslaved, and the white domination over the black population. The main produce in the Southern fields was tobacco, sugarcane and cotton and the black slaves worked at the fields under the European descendant settlers. The population of the blacks was quite substantial; in 1790 the black people constituted a 30 % of the entire population of the South (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020).

The relationship between the South and the rest of America has been strained for more than 200 years, from the times of slavery until at least the 1960's (Griffin 2008, 4). There was a remarkable gap between the wealth of the South and the northern part of the United States. In the 1930's, the Southerners worked mainly in the fields and the South continued to be impoverished and undeveloped while the North was rapidly becoming more industrial and developed. Subsequently, when the Great Depression made cotton industry to bankrupt and the legislation that the New Deal brought on, cotton fields' sizes were greatly reduced and together with the unemployment relief the black workforce was

driven to move into the big cities and it was a pivot point where the Southern music begun its proliferation in the continent as a whole (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020).

The South has always had a somewhat divided nature. In the past, the South was filled with contrasting binaries such as the lazy South versus the booster South, rural in contrast with the urban industrial South. However, despite these dichotomies, there is one thing in common that most people would agree with; that the South is the land of music (Malone and Stricklin 2015, 1). This romantic image from the South comes from the fact that be it gospel and soul singers, blues guitarists, hillbilly string bands or Cajun accordionists, they all are an essential part of mental landscape, the notion how we perceive the South (1). There are at least two ways in which the South has influenced the world of music in the US. Firstly, the inspiration of the musicians has been incited by Southern metaphors, even though not all the images and symbols were necessarily positive, and secondly, the South has functioned as an incubator for different styles of music and entertainers, especially for country songs and singers, and that has had a great influence on the entire sphere of the American music (1).

3.1. History and development of country and Southern music

According to Malone and Stricklin, all American music has European and African roots, but this is especially true when it comes to Southern music (3). Because of the slave trade and the relationship with Britain, the South has very rich and varied musical legacy. What makes it even more diverse are the lamentable conditions which have shaped and given rise to the sound of the South, the music born in the society that was marked by poverty, deprivation, slavery, fundamentalist religion, and cultural isolation (3). Despite the conditions – or because of them – music became an essential part of the Southerners' cultural legacy: it offered a form of self-expression that did not demand either wealth or power. Country music has its origins in early Southern music as well and, additionally, it has taken influences from Scottish, Irish and French folk dances as well as the minstrels, which I shall discuss later in this chapter. The documented written origins of country music in the South date back to the 1910's when "Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads" was published by John Lomax.

Shortly after Cecil Sharp began publishing folk music that originated from the Appalachian Mountains. This musical genre was thought to have the true “American spirit”, and the mountaineers were considered as humble people who in spite of their daily struggles possessed noble qualities and were isolated from the bad world in their modest mountain dwellings (Scaruffi).

Since people often have an urge to label everything, musical categories were also created dividing the early Southern music into two categories, *race music* and *hillbilly music*, which besides marking the social class of the musicians marked also their race. Hillbilly music was all-white whereas race music was for blacks only (van Venrooij and Schmutz 2015, 801). This division was artificial and quite awkward as well, since both genres used the same musical instruments at the beginning, influenced heavily each other; thus, it seems that the reason for dividing the genres was only a record company’s invention. Nevertheless, both genres developed side by side and artificially created boundaries did not matter as the predecessors of country music continued evolving.

Following hillbilly music and race music, minstrel shows started to emerge. The minstrel shows or minstrelsies were musical entertainment shows that started in the early nineteenth century and reached their peak in between the years 1850 and 1870 (White 2008, 191). The actors in the shows caricatured the singing and dancing of slaves, and usually portrayed stereotypical images of the blacks, characterizing them as superstitious, dim-witted, lazy and stupid. Nevertheless, the performers were white people (at least in the beginning of this form of entertainment), who had blackened their faces and impersonated blacks (185). From here derives the other term for this tradition, the blackface minstrelsy (White, 191). The minstrel shows were at the height of their popularity during the 1840s, but their fame slowly declined towards the end of the century and the last documented minstrel show was in 1961. Even though the minstrel tradition started from the northern part of America, it soon became a Southern item and by 1865 the African-Americans had started to perform in their own minstrel shows and that continued progressively until the end of the nineteenth century (Malone and Stricklin, 2).

The minstrelsies were the first form of theatre that can be said to be authentically American. At the turn of the twentieth century, the demand of the shows had diminished substantially as new medias; phonographs, jukeboxes and radio, gained more popularity. As the old performers gradually lost their livelihoods when the shows ended, several of them continued performing but in a different genre; they turned into making music and they would play folk music, country, jazz or ragtime and show their talent on venues outside theatres. Therefore, minstrelsy provided a nursery for Southern black composers and musicians (191) and as a consequence, revealed to audiences they might not have reached otherwise. Even though the minstrelsies are nowadays seen as racist, disrespectful and derogatory shows, they brought on something good as well. Besides the appreciation of the Southern music, they also taught the White people more about the culture, traditions and folklore of the African Americans, even though the way it happened was far from ideal.

As the minstrelsies established base to the Southern and country music by the surge of the musicians and the fusion of black music and its white interpreters in the scene, the realm of religious music traditions mingled with secular music as well and added to the fusion. Until the early twentieth century, the most widespread forms of popular music in the South were religiously inspired songs and rituals (White, 186). The British-Celtic folk music together with the African musical traditions soon mixed with Spanish and Caribbean sources and further enriched the popular music tradition. Irish, Scottish and Welsh settlers' musical features intermingled rapidly to the existing folkloric base and the African American styles and performances mixed with the musical style of Western Europe (Malone and Stricklin, 5). The development which has started in the middle of the seventeenth century, when slaves and poor Whites were together in Southern plantations and farms, drew from the same conditions of poverty and isolation which both of the groups were forced to face and with their shared background fashioned a unique style of music that very much defined the rural South (6). This shared culture of poverty manifested itself not only in the similar tastes in food or social occasions but in the music and other leisure activities. Religion was also something in common

among these two groups. Even though the slaves had a religion or a system of worship of their own, Christianity and its customs were something they learned from the slave owners and along with it came the hymnody, the singing of the Psalms (7). Albeit the whites had more access to the religious music, the slaves were also in contact with the English hymnbooks and exchanged musical ideas with the white Southerners. In the early years of the 19th century both of these groups attended eagerly in revival events of the Second Great Awakening (7). At these revival events, blacks and whites had musical encounters where they both learned songs and musical styles from the other group and later fused them together. Even though the printed hymnals were scarce and not everybody could read, the oral tradition carried on the songs and the common musical folk culture was thus passed on (8). This way the music became their common property.

The need for hymn and tune books for the revival events led to the emergence of several enterprises that made religious music accessible for the poor people of the South. The demand of the devoted was fulfilled and, simultaneously, the book sellers unintentionally propagated the spread of Southern music into the north (9). Together with the late minstrel shows' musicians' dispersion around the continent and into the big cities, these events had a great influence on the dispersion of Southern music (10).

In the 1920's, a band might have been put together from such a humble setup as a fiddle and a banjo. However, the most popular musical combo was the one formed with a fiddle and guitar and these simple duos were the early predecessors of the future country music bands (12).

During World War II, there was a shift from agriculture and farming to industry and production and as the people from the rural areas moved to big cities in pursuit for better opportunities for work, so did the country music as well. The same effect but at much larger scale had the American military forces when its troops took their music all over the world and among them were blues and country musicians as well (White, 185). The music was especially important during the military service because it reminded the soldier of home, but the genre did not matter so much (Malone and

Stricklin, 92). After the war, Southern music continued gaining popularity. The invention of jukeboxes was a major step for all kinds of music, especially when the record companies started to discourage radio stations from airing music in fear of losing record sales. However, there was an interesting occurrence that helped country music to gain footing in the industry. In 1942, big record companies refused to establish an unemployment fund for musicians and the refusal resulted in strike among the artists. The small independent record companies which were mainly specialized in country or folk music saw their opportunity and took the musicians under their wings. This enabled the genre's growth and dissipation both nationally and internationally (93).

When country music is in question, it is impossible not to mention the Grand Ole Opry, which is a weekly country music live concert held in Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tennessee. Founded in November 28, 1925, it first started as a barn dance event that was broadcasted live on the radio. This weekly broadcast first of its kind because commercial radio stations had been born only five years before. Nowadays, the Grand Ole Opry is the longest running radio program in the US. Its founder, George D. Hay, was a radio personality and a broadcaster for the WSM radio station. (Country Music Hall of Fame, 2020) The first person to perform there was the fiddle player Uncle Jimmy Thompson. After him, many chart-topping artists have gotten a boost for their careers for performing there and some other already in the peak of their face, have come to pay homage to the iconic "home of the American music" (Gran Ole Opry, 2020; Ryman, 2020).

When the Grand Ole Opry started its broadcasts, there was not yet a clear definition of genres of Southern music. Indeed, Southern music seemed to make a distinction between 'us' and 'them', 'them' being the Northerners. There was a clear gap between the music of the South and North: Northern music was more fashionable, richer and progressive and less racist than its Southern counterpart (Ching 2008, 204). The term "hillbilly", which was used to designate Southern music before the end of the 1950's, was universally replaced by the term "country" or "country and western" (Ching, 204; Malone and Stricklin, 94) Gradually, when country music gained more and more fame,

it started to attract bigger crowds as well. Part of this is due to the fact that female country singers started emerging. This was made possible by the more liberal post-war atmosphere and more tolerant stance toward female artists. However, the focus of country music still stayed on rural and Southern lifestyle despite the female artists' emergence (97). After the mid-1950's, Southern music started to increasingly lose its appeal. The proliferation of television and radio programs together with the teenagers' new awareness caused the emergence of a new youth- oriented culture, which regarded country music as something that belonged to their parents' era and, instead, the young adults started embracing cultures that suited them better – more adventurous and rebellious alternatives and anti-authoritarian role models such as rock n' roll singers and turbulent movie stars. Several of the old-school country artists saw this development as unsettling and therefore resorted to new means, which in this case were electric instruments. They reinvented their music and stripped some of the rural connotations of it (98). Many older country singers took influences from rock music as they took their artistry to a whole new level in hopes of attracting younger audience with their new and heavier electric sound (130). There had also been an alarming development for individual singer-songwriters, when the big record companies had signed more and more Southern artists and the music production was mainly in the hands of producers and marketing executives. Evidently, this led to the outcome that Southern music was rapidly on its way to becoming the music of the middle class. The term "hillbilly" disappeared almost entirely, and the word "country" became to designate the music style universally (130; Ching, 206). The decline of country music ended in the early 1960's, when the Country Music Association (CMA) started to elevate country music's image and encouraged successfully the radio stations to play solely country music. The "less hillbilly" and more middle-class image of the genre was planned to attract more advertisers by raising the music's commercial potential and this strategy succeeded. When the stations complied with the exhortation it paid off as the popularity of the country music grew rapidly. At the wake of the commercial resurgence and the growth in popularity came the attachment to national purpose and patriotism. Since the genre had

gained more respectability and many of the artists readily adhered the term “American” to their music, it started rapidly to become a mainstream patriotic genre and gained respectability even in the White House (132). In a way, country music’s growing popularity was probably a counter-reaction to the polarized view in the society that was divided in the aftermaths of the Vietnam war (132). Country music was a safe and patriotic choice because it revered the core values in the society as well as the homely everyday habits and traditional ways of life. Malone and Stricklin (133) have come to the conclusion, that country music’s national success was also boosted by the Civil Rights movement because the nation was still suffering from emotional problems associated with the Vietnam war as well as the rise of the counterculture and the “[p]erceived link between rock music and the youthful rebellion”(133). There is an interesting development when the music previously known by the name “hillbilly”, vulgar and disdained by the academic and sophisticated circles, suddenly had become the upholder of national norms and the emblem of unquestioning patriotism. Even though the genre was still not mainstream as it was undoubtedly Southern, it was, however, very *American* despite being the embodiment of Southernness in the field of music (134).

3.2. Contemporary country music

On the whole, it can be said that despite all the hardships in the past, in the contemporary scene country music has seen many changes and turns in its way to the mainstream where it pertains nowadays. It is a good example of adaptation and assimilation, a true melting pot in the sense that all the different styles, artists, genres and demographic groups have added something to the mix, and it has reinvented itself on several occasions. Its rootedness in traditions, the identity and originality which it has managed to restore from the beginning, the innovativeness and the ability to be in the pulse of time might even sometimes overshadow the fact that behind all this are talented people who, in spite of adversities, have believed in what they do and how they do it. Country music has lived with the nation even though it sometimes has been torn between tradition and innovation. From cotton

fields to suburbs, from the lower-middle-class to highly educated circles, country music is the genre for all, and it has been able to change with the times. It has not abandoned its heritage even though the contemporary lyrics deal with up-to-date themes: the genre has always dealt with social commentary and as the times change, so do the issues in the society (168). In the songs, there are always underlying Southern metaphors and themes that offer comforting messages from the olden days. Road narratives and mobility pertain strongly to this imagery, and in the following I will develop the theme of mobility and road narratives further.

In the past, it was typical that the country songs' lyrics would tell about real life and its events, such as laboring in mines or woods or on the railroads and even about calamities and catastrophes; accidents, natural disasters or even crimes (Scaruffi, 2007). The focus was in the occurrences of the daily life and its' whole diversity. Life was hard and poor, and the music reflected those facts. Mobility, the theme of roads and journeys, was and still is a recurring subject in the lyrics of country music. Moreover, it seems that the themes in contemporary country music have switched from mining or lumbering into the pursuit of freedom, exploring, driving, mobility and journeys. When other music styles might emphasize the melody or the rhythm, for country music the most important element has always been the story. In fact, country music's composition is quite simple, as Harlan Howard, American songwriter wittily describes it: "All you need to write a country song is three chords and the truth" (Montgomery, Spoto et al. 2018, 1).

Subsequently, I will analyze the lyrics of six contemporary country songs using a close-reading method. My intention is to find all the mobility-related expressions from the songs' lyrics and identify how the songs discuss masculine mobilities.

3.3. Gendered country music

All popular music is somewhat gendered but perhaps country music is one of the most typical genres in which gender roles are very divergent and persistent. According to Richards (2012, 8), the

women of country music are marginalized, and the gender roles are very prominent (14). Female country singers are usually very feminine looking and groomed. Females in the songs sung by men, also occupy very traditional roles as objects of desire, partner, homemaker or mother. Country music is characterized by conservative rules of conduct which bound the women of country and hold them in subordinate positions in relation to men. Patriotism, family values and Southern gentility mark the boundaries which impede the women from expressing themselves freely (15). The above-mentioned values also restrict the subjects suitable for women to discuss in their songs. Many country songs' lyrics are written by men even if the performing artist is a woman. It seems that often the women give their physical presence and their voice to the industry, but the content of their message is created by another gender. Yet, according to the statistics, the female portion of country music listeners is slightly larger than male (women 54% comparing to men 46%) (Brandongaille, 2020) .

A study by Jada Watson (2018) revealed that the way female and male artists are treated in country radio stations are far from equal when it comes to unbiased treatment. For example, women are allowed much less airtime on country radios than men. These radio play decisions have a direct consequence on the songs' success, and it shows clearly that women are not given the same opportunities as male singers. According to the data taken from the *Billboard* Hot Country Charts that tracks county music's sales and streaming, songs by women were played in a ratio of 1 per 9,7 songs played by male artist. When looking at the statistics of the most played man, Kenny Chesney, versus woman, Carrie Underwood, and the times some song of theirs was played on air, Chesney had almost a double the amount of spins with his 6 million count in comparison to Underwoods 3.1 million (Watson, 2019). According to the study, when women question the state of the affairs and their small share on the music that is played they hear responses such as “[c]ountry radio is principally a male format “, “[w]omen don’t have as many hits” or “[w]omen don’t want to hear women” (Moss, 2019).

Especially the last two utterances seem quite contradictory in all their inconsistency. If women were given more spins on the radio, would more hits surface then? And if the songs sung by women for women were also chosen by women, would the audience then be more willing to listen to them? As long as men and women are not equal in society and the hidden power structures hinder women in their aspirations, the situation will probably continue as it is. Among others, the country music's field is far from unbiased and the best there is to do is try to reveal the hidden and unfair power structures, face them and hope that creating more awareness might provide a solution for gender equality. So far, the situation does not look good; quite the opposite is true. The trends show that there is a significant downturn in the development: according to the statistics, in the year 2000 women held 33,3% of the songs played on the country stations but in 2018 the percentage had dropped to 11.3%. These figures seem to confirm the inequality that torment the whole culture of country music. It is a vicious circle: the less radio play women get, the less familiar they will be for the great audiences and it will further broaden the gap between male and female artists success, record sales and, eventually, livelihood (Moss, 2019).

Nevertheless, however biased the country music industry is and women artists despised, these facts have not had any effect on the popularity of the genre. The number of country radio stations has increased quite much during the last decades. While in 1944 there were around 600 country music stations the number had grown to over 2,000 in the 1964, and more than doubled by the end of the year 2016 (Grizzlyrose, 2018). While there are approximately 15,000 radio stations in America, 37% of them are dedicated to country music.

As we have learned earlier, the country music's realm has always been and still remains predominantly masculine. Previous studies have already addressed representations of masculinity and gender roles in the context of popular music, for example Harrison (2009) focused on masculinities and music in relation to engaging man and boys into making music. The studies that analyze lyrics, often focus on the genres of rap (Oware 2014, 61). Additionally, there is at least one study that

addresses the connection of hegemonic masculinity in Southern rock and lower-class status, an article by Eastman (2012) in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Moreover, Richards (2012, 37) examined how female country musicians portrayed hegemonic masculinity and suggested that future research should also address male musicians.

Furthermore, there are some studies which connect mobility and gender, such as Jessica Enevolds (2003) dissertation *Women on the Road: Regendering narratives of mobility*. It explores the recurring themes of gendered road narratives from a feminist point of view. M. Polk (1998) has investigated men's and women's relations to automobility.

Thus, in addition to my personal interest, there seems to be academic interest towards representations of gender and gender roles in the realm of mobility and within popular music. This is partly due to the fact that music and other forms of popular culture shape and influence, i.e. mediate, our thoughts and values (Hiramoto, 386). Moreover, gender related journey narratives and mobility have been under scrutiny as well and my intention is to contribute to the discussion of the pivot point of gender and mobility expressed in music by examining masculine mobilities and the ways they are portrayed in contemporary country music.

Traditionally, America and Americanness have always been and still are about mobility and journey, from the times of the Puritans and the early settlers to the modern days which, especially post-9/11, have seen the new emergence of domestic travel. If the motives for traveling before came from the desire for expanding the territory, searching for wealth or fertile land to harvest, today the motives are rooted more deeply and based on a profound affective desire; the desire to reconnect with America in search for patriotic values and connect to the natural environment and to America itself (Brigham 2015, 2). I am intrigued as well by all this as it can be viewed in a more extensive context of the global continuum of journey narratives.

The notion of roots and rootedness is worth mentioning in this context. There is a concept known as *Roots music*, which is an umbrella term for different Southern musical genres such as blues,

gospel, country and Cajun. Roots are metaphors for rootedness and as the name itself suggests, this style of music stems from the idea of sedentariness, of belonging and commitment to a certain place (Malkki 1992, 32). Roots are important in a metaphysical sense as well. There is a connection between roots or homeland and individual identity that seems to be essential to Americanness, as well as the notion of belonging, as I wrote earlier when quoting Brigham. In the light of this, it is worth pondering why country musicians, the epitomes of patriots and Americanness, might resort to such acts as vagabondry, mobility, roaming and restless behavior? Is this due to the fact that they want to express their independency, masculinity and rebelliousness to further emphasize their masculinity by going against the rules of the society and, when people value their sedentary lives with their houses and white picket fences, they act in a contrary manner and express their attitudes towards ordinary life, conformity to rules and the lives of law-abiding citizens through mobility and the rebelliousness it brings on? In chapter 4, I will investigate the connection of the notion of rootedness with different masculinities and the ways they are manifested.

4. Analyzing Men on the Move

Journeys and mobility are an essential part of the masculine way of life. According to Brigham, there is a binary relation between “[f]emale and male, dependence and autonomy, and entrapment and liberation” (Brigham, 107). Since ancient times, journeys and mobility in general have been associated with masculinity. Men were hunters, explorers and vagabonds, while women were more sedentary; homemakers, preservers and somewhat settled. Female mobility has been seen as something undesirable or even suspicious, whereas the masculine journeys have been regarded with almost heroic prestige (Hanson, 5). Barber (2019) has examined the connection between automobility and masculinities in America in the field of construction, where the meaning and use of trucks is closely related to aspects of identity and gender display and the amount of masculinity one possesses is directly related to the size of his truck. In this context, the meanings the vehicles are given are complex and contested (251). The cars are status symbols and objects of personal consumption and loaded with symbolism (252).

4.1. Methods

For the corpus of my study, I have chosen six contemporary country songs from six male American country artists or groups. In the following, I will briefly introduce the artists and state the reasons, why I have chosen them. First of the artists is Tim McGraw, contemporary country music artist, who has released 16 full albums and 71 single albums. He started his career in 1993 and his latest album is from the year 2020. Second, I have chosen a song from Sam Hunt. Hunt has released two studio albums, the first is from 2014 and the second from 2020. Third artist is Kenny Chesney, who has 16 full albums and six single albums. Fourth, I have chosen Dierks Bentley, who has recorded six albums between the years 2003 and 2018. Fifth artist is Justin Moore. Moore has five full albums and 15 single albums. The first album was released in 2009 and the most recent one is from the year 2019. The last song that I have chosen is not from a single artist but from a group called

The Mavericks. They have released 12 full albums and 24 single albums, ranging from the years 1990 to 2020.

The reason why I chose these particular artists is that they are good exemplars of country music's genre. They are white, American and very popular what comes to the sales of their albums; Chesney, Hunt, McGraw and Bentley are currently on the Billboard list on *Top 20 artists of the decade 2010–2020*, which is yet to be completed in the final two months of the year 2020 (Billboard, 2020). The songs of these artists are very traditional what comes to their themes, yet contemporary what comes to the melodies and instruments. These artists belong to the new generation of country musicians, in contrast with the old generation of artists such as Hank Williams Jr., Alan Jackson and Johnny Cash, just to mention a few. Their songs are filled with typical themes such as work, love, sports, hunting, going to church and, naturally, expressions of masculine mobility.

After selecting the artists, I chose the songs that form my corpus. As I am very familiar with country music already, I searched for the songs that I had heard previously and of which I knew they dealt with mobility-related themes. I analyzed the lyrics using a close reading method. I chose this method because with close reading it is possible to extract the exact meaning of the words from the text under observation and focus only in the information that there is within the text itself, instead of paying attention to the external traits of the text, such as the conditions where and the time when it was written (if known). Close reading, also known as close textual analysis, is a widely used method in academic fields such as communication, English and literature (Ruiz de Castilla 2018, 2). In my study, using the close reading method is important because it is essential to keep all the background knowledge away so that they cannot interfere with the interpretation of the lyrics. With this I mean, that my intention is to read the lyrics as if they were the singer's reality and the view of the world at that point and time. If, for instance, the song's lyrics were written by a woman and I knew it, I would not let it interfere with my interpretation of the song. I would not use the background information "against" the message in the lyrics or try to read them in a critical manner.

4.2. Masculinity ideologies

Besides employing the concept of mobility, I have chosen an instrument called the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI) for the analysis of my corpus. It was developed by psychologists Ronald F. Levant, Rosalie J. Hall and Thomas J. Rankin in 1992 for the purpose of investigating gender roles and their effects on the lives of men and boys. The scholars part from the view that the acquisition of gender roles is a variable process and it is strongly influenced by each society's gender ideologies. These ideologies, in turn, can uphold gender-based power structures that often are patriarchal and detrimental, and have strong influence on the ways teachers, parents and friends socialize children according to gender expectations (Levant and Richmond 2007, 130-131). The MRNI instrument is actually a questionnaire that can be used to measure the amount of adherence, in a scale from one to seven (strongly disagree – strongly agree), of the study subjects into the norms of traditional masculine ideology. The meaning of *ideology* in this context is the collection of qualities attached to the idea of masculinity in Western societies, an individual's internalization of cultural belief system regarding gender role norms (130). Male Role Norms Inventory has several adaptations such as the *short form* with less categories, that suits well for public health, psychological, or medical survey batteries, for instance. Different versions of the MRNI are still widely used in studies about masculine ideologies and their construction worldwide (Levant et al. 2013, 228). In my study, I will employ the seven categories of the MRNI in the analysis of textual material and sort my corpus in different groups.

In addition to the MRNI forms, there are also other types of formulas for assessing masculinity ideologies. The Gender Role Strain Paradigm parts from the idea that men are strained in performing their masculine roles and this masculinity crisis can be dealt and understood better with the help of the Gender Role Strain Paradigm (Levant 2011, 3). Levant postulates that there are several different ideals of masculinity that have somewhat varying content, as discussed before in the thesis. Because of masculinity's nature as a social construct, ideals of manhood are different depending on the

subject's age, race, social status, sexual orientation etc. (Levant 2001, 5). There is a concept of traditional masculinity ideology (Pleck 1995, 20) that includes particular standards and expectations for men and have several negative concomitants (20). It was the dominant view of gender in the late 1960 but has further been challenged. There are four basic components in the traditional masculinity ideology, which state that men should not be feminine, they should strive for achievement, men should never show vulnerability (neither physical nor mental) and they should be adventurous risk-takers and even resort to violence if needed; this is the four category classification developed by Brannon and Juni in 1984, which I mentioned earlier in the thesis. These components were the first instrument for classifying the features of masculine ideology, and the theory was further developed by the same scholars to include a set of seven norms. This factor analysis was called the Short form of the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS) and it has the following scales: avoiding femininity, concealing emotions, being the breadwinner, being admired and respected, toughness, the male machine and violence and adventure (Brannon and Juni, 6). In sum, there have been many attempts at categorizing the norms of different masculinity ideologies and, despite the number of scales they use, they all have in common the same goal: to create positive new ways or perceptions of how to be a man in the contemporary world, without the weight load imposed by past visions of strained masculinity. This means that even though there is a certain "set" of ideals of masculinity and ways to be a man in a traditional sense – the way men are socialized to their roles since their childhood – there is no need to follow those ideals but, instead, understand that they are only a dated convention that can be broken. By understanding that there are "norms" by which men are supposed to perform their masculinity, men are able to make them visible, break and counteract them. The studies of masculinity can create more understanding and equity between genders and improve the development of men and their lives as a part of a family (Levant 2011, 2).

In the following, I will describe in more detail Levant's categories of masculinity norms and investigate their meanings in relation to the song lyrics. The basic idea in Levant's postulations is that

if somebody was to conform to the traditional Western masculine norms, they should agree with the statements in the norms' subscales. The scales deal with themes such as avoidance of feminine things, fostering negative attitudes toward sexual minorities, aiming for self-reliance through mechanical skills, being tough and dominant, stressing the importance on sex, and not revealing any signs of emotionality or vulnerability. In the questionnaire, there are statements which inquire the study objects' attitudes on a scale from 1 to 7, one being "Strongly Disagree" and seven "Strongly Agree". Examples of the statements include the following: "Homosexuals should never marry" and "A man should always be the boss". In this way, MRNI evaluates the approbation of masculinity ideologies, a construct that is regularly used in the study of emotional issues related to men and masculinities. Masculinity ideologies are culturally bound assumptions about the correct standards and norms for boys' and men's performance of masculinity. They have an impact on the socialization of boys in their community and to pressure men to accommodate to prevailing masculine norms in society (Levant 2016, 534).

Subsequently, I introduce the contents of the male role norms categories created by Levant. I will use his categorization of the norms in my analysis. Based on his research as psychologist and scholar, Levant has created a model that can be used for measuring aspects of masculinity in people and it is a useful tool that provides information regarding people's attitudes towards different masculine ideologies in the society. The tool is comprised of seven categories and their names describe the most prominent feature of the category's contents. The titles in italics are the names of the norms. Understanding the contents of the norms categories is important for my analysis because I will discuss the masculine mobilities' findings in my corpus in the frame of reference of the male role norms categories. Moreover, I want to emphasize that the image of masculinity described in the categories is very exaggerated and stereotypic and it is due to the aspired simplicity in its use. Undoubtedly, the categories do not reflect any reality as such, but instead are simplified for the sake of clarity for research purposes.

Avoidance of Femininity: According to Levant, traditional Western cultural norms of masculinity tend to demand that men sharply avoid anything that even hints of femininity. For instance, men should prefer to watch football games instead of soap operas or, instead of reading romantic novels, they should prefer action fiction or perhaps horror books. Little boys should preferably like to play with cars or mechanical toys, such as robots, rather than dolls. Men should wear manly clothes in dark colors, such as jeans and shirts, and avoid brightly colored garments or vibrant patterns, such as floral or animal patterns. Men do not use skirts either, except the Scottish traditional dress.

Negativity Towards Sexual Minorities: The cultural norms of the Western society expect men to be strictly heterosexual and that they reject any deviations from it. Levant insists that men are inclined to view sexual minorities, such as gay, bisexual, and transgender persons negatively. They think that homosexual men should not show any signs of sexual interest towards their partner in public and they should not be able to marry either. Straight men see negatively all gay bars and think that they should not allowed to be open.

Self-Reliance through Mechanical Skills: According to Levant's norms, men are expected to be self-reliant by using their mechanical skills. They should have home repairing skills, be able to repair home-related objects and should be able to fix his car if it malfunctions.

Toughness: In Western cultures, men should be physically tough and aggressive, and they should not hesitate to take risks. The risk of getting hurt should not prevent a man in his adventurous endeavors. Additionally, adolescent men should compensate their small physical size with physical toughness.

Dominance: Male leaders or superiors are a typical manifestation of Western cultural norms. The presidents should be men, men should be leaders of companies, any groups or other genders, and the head of the family is always a man.

Importance of Sex: According to the cultural norms in the West, men should supersede sex over everything. They should be willing to participate in sexual acts with the opposing sex anywhere and whenever, they should enjoy sex and be always libidinous and not turn down any sex offers from women.

Restrictive Emotionality: Levant notes that men are expected to restrict their emotionality by subduing their expressions of emotions. If somebody hurts their feelings, men are not supposed to admit it. They should avoid telling people too soon that they care about them and also stay isolated in emotional situations.

In this study, I will employ the theoretical framework of gender and critical men's studies as well as literary studies, especially journey narratives. I will use the close reading method and analyze my corpus. I will then separate the utterances that contain mobility-related themes and proceed to divide the utterances in their corresponding categories in a table according to the themes from the seven Male Role Norms Inventory related masculinity subscales earlier mentioned. The names of the songs that I analyze are in the horizontal bar of the table and the seven factors or subscales are located in the vertical bar on the left. In the vertical column below each song I have placed the findings from the lyrics in the categories depending on their context. It is worth noting that there can be one or several utterances in the same slot or the same utterance can occupy more than one slot. It is interesting that all the songs had themes that filled more than one slot but, notwithstanding, there were two factors that did not get any mentions at all.

FACTORS - SONGS	Shotgun Rider	Body Like a Back Road	She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy	What was I Thinking	Robbin Trains	Pardon Me
Avoidance of Femininity						
Negativity toward Sexual Minorities						
Self-reliance through Mechanical Skills			She thinks my tractor's sexy, it really turns her on, She's always staring at me, while I', chuggin' along, she likes the way it's pulling, while it's tilling up the land			
Toughness	"...I just gotta ride - to those honky-tonk bars that stay open way past closing time - songs 'bout free thinkin' and drinkin' sure light my fire..."			We tore out the drive he peppered my tailgate - By the county line the cops were nippn' on our heels, pulled off the road and kicked it in a four-wheel, shut off the lights and tore through a corn field	We'd be the ones on the wanted posters, dead or alive in a dozen states, saddlin' up when the sun went down, haulin' ass out of some open plain, yeah, raisin' hell and robbin' trains	
Dominance		On the highway to heaven, headed south of her smile. Get there when I get there, every inch is a mile.	I open up the throttle and stir a little dust, look at her face, she ain't foolin' me			
Importance of Sex		Body like a back road, drivin' with my eyes closed. I know every curve like the back of my hand. Doin' 15 in a 30, I ain't in no hurry, I'mma take it slow just as fast as I can.				A steady run of one-night stands, from one town to the next
Restrictive Emotionality	While I'm wearing out roads don't you know that I'm sure missing you? When I leave, you'll be wondering when I'll be back again - between Texas, and ranchers, and old friends, where do you fit in?					A steady run of one-night stands, from one town to the next

Table 1. Factors of masculinity norms and their corresponding utterances in the corpus.

In the table above, I have placed the Male Role Norms Inventory's scales on the left and in the following, I will see what kind of utterances, if any, there are in their corresponding slots and how they reflect masculinity in the framework of mobility.

Surprisingly, the first two categories, *Avoidance of Femininity* and *Negativity Towards Sexual Minorities* did not get any hits. There was nothing in the corpus that would have fit into these categories. I will get back to this later in this thesis and try to identify reasons for this.

The third category's meaning, *Self-Reliance Through Mechanical Skills*, was initially a bit obscure. Even though the words themselves make perfect sense, the deeper meaning of the utterance remained unclear. However, after reading the Doctoral thesis by Balkmar (2012) about car-tuning men and their subcultures, I understood why mechanical skills play such a big role in building one's masculinity through mobility-related themes. In this category, I have the chorus part from Kenny Chesney's song, namely "She Thinks my Tractor's Sexy":

"She thinks my tractor's sexy, it really turns her on,
She's always staring at me, while I'm chuggin' along,
she likes the way it's pulling, while it's tilling up the land"

These lyrics clearly depict a situation where the man's ability to maneuver such a sizeable machine as a tractor is seen as a masculine act, because it requires skill and self-assured demeanor. Additionally, the description of the tractor's movements can be seen as ambiguous and suggestive. Further, here the side-effect of the manifestation of mobile masculinity is instantly visible; it serves as an aphrodisiac for the female counterpart and has an indirect reference to having sex. This mobility-related utterance is indeed an explicit manifestation of the *Self Reliance through Mechanical Skill*. The Southern man in this song is self-assured, competent and sure about his seduction power and he uses a combination of mobility and masculinity to display this.

In the next category, *Toughness*, there are utterances from three different songs. The first one is from Tim McGraw's song "Shotgun Rider":

"...I just gotta ride, to those honky-tonk bars
that stay open way past closing time

songs ‘bout free thinkin’ and drinkin’ sure light my fire...”

I have placed these lyrics in the category of *Toughness*. First of all, even though there is not much mobility expressed there is a clear feeling of the urge to move “...I just gotta ride...” in the first phrase. Where and why the protagonist is moving? He goes to honky-tonk bars that are open illegally, even when by law they should be closed because of the late hour and intends to stay there because he fancies musical pieces that talk about free thinking and free drinking. This Southern man uses mobility to express his toughness, he is not afraid of driving in the dark. It is obvious that he is about to engage himself in some masculine rebelliousness, at least in his thoughts; after all, if we take a look at the definition of the category *Toughness*, it is clearly stated that men should not hesitate to take risks and they should be tough and aggressive. It might just be all the aforementioned attributes he will be needing if he drives around in the night under the influence of alcohol, looking for conspicuous and law-breaking bars in order to get even more drunk. So, the mobility is expressed through going from bar to bar and it includes risky behavior, that is very masculine.

The second song that is included in this category is “What Was I Thinking” by Dierks Bentley.

According to the lyrics, the speaker is quite a macho man:

“We tore out the drive he peppered my tailgate”
 “By the county line the cops were nipn’ on our heels,
 pulled off the road and kicked it in a four-wheel,
 shut off the lights and tore through a corn field”

In these utterances, there are multiple allusions to toughness, violent behavior and risk-taking through expressions of mobility. In the first line, he describes an aggressive exit from a person’s driveway while the person shoots his pick-up trucks tailgate with a firearm, which is masculine toughness expressed in context of mobility. Despite the risk of getting hurt, he continues his reckless driving as he is escaping from the law enforcement officials by getting off the road to a corn field, where he drives without lights to avoid being detected. Corn fields are one of the cornerstones of Southernness and here mobility serves as a tool to express Southern man’s masculine attitudes of toughness. In the same passage above, we can also see an allusion to the category of *Self-Reliance through Mechanical*

Skills, when the driver “kicked it in a four-wheel”. This mobility-related expression shows that he knows how to operate his vehicle in special situations, and this definitely pertains in the aforementioned category and displays masculine mobility as well.

The third example of the *Toughness* category is from the song “Robbin’ Trains” by Justin Moore:

“We’d be the ones on the wanted posters,
dead or alive in a dozen states,
saddlin’ up when the sun went down,
haulin’ ass out of some open plain, yeah, raisin’ hell and robbin’ trains”

In these lyrics, Moore compares himself and his crew to the outlaws of the past drawing a parallel to the Wild West, where cowboys rode their horses and tough criminals robbed trains and were wanted dead or alive across many states. This implies that they are indeed quite mobile, as their line of work, train robbing, requires a lot of long-distance traveling. Horseback riding in the night is quite risky and adventurous as well, and with “haulin’ ass” he probably means running away from the police. Both of these expressions are expressions of mobility and masculine as well, the power and maneuverability of horses is masculine and rebellious illegal comportment too. There is evidently quite much risk taking in all this action, including the last lines “raisin’ hell” by which is meant unpredictable behavior and causing trouble.

Up next is the category of *Dominance*. According to Levant, this is the category claiming that a man should always be the boss or leader of a group. Men are supposed to be in charge in all situations and dominate other genders:

“On the highway to heaven, headed south of her smile.
Get there when I get there, every inch is a mile.”

In the above, there is a passage from Sam Hunt’s song “Body Like a Back Road”, where the protagonist is in an erotically charged situation where he, the man, decides the pace and the course of action and the masculine themes here are expressed with mobility-related expressions. This

supports the postulation that the man is superior in every situation and this situation is particularly interesting, because Southernness is expressed in context with masculinity and mobility as well as dominance, because the man clearly dominates the woman. It is worth noting that he uses a mobility-related figurative image even in an intimate situation to reaffirm his masculinity. The name of the song is quite insinuating as well: the woman's body is objectivized and compared to a road, another mobile expression. This can either mean an affinity toward roads and mobility or just plain domination: the man dominates the woman as if she was a mere country road and the man traveling down the road. Another example of domination is in the song already discussed, "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy". When the lyrics note that "I open the throttle and stir a little dust, look at her face, she ain't foolin' me", this is a clear example of domination. The protagonist is saying that because of his superiority in relation to the object, he can come into a conclusion about the woman's thoughts. He is in a position of power because there is a situation of cause and effect where he is dominating, at least that is what he thinks.

The next category is the *Importance of Sex*. Masculinity is often about dominance and that goes hand in hand with the notion that men are supposed to think about sex frequently, be ready for it whenever and should never turn down an opportunity for sex should it arise. In the following lyrics, the protagonist makes it very clear that he is willing to get what he wants from his partner and is in charge:

"Body like a back road, drivin' with my eyes closed.
I know every curve like the back of my hand.
Doin' 15 in a 30, I ain't in no hurry,
I'mma take it slow just as fast as I can."

Here, besides the domination which I already examined in the previous paragraph, it is evident that the subject is ready for sex and is using mobility-related imagery in the expression of his desire. Another example of masculine willingness for sex whenever, wherever and without commitments is in the song, "Pardon Me" by The Mavericks:

“A steady run of one-night stands,
from one town to the next”

According to the categories defined by Levant, men should supersede sex over everything. This means that the normal rules of courtesy, decency and virtue are obsolete as long as a man can execute his masculinity. In the lyrics, the man uses women just to accomplish the masculine norms imposed by the Western society. Additionally, he does it moving from one place to another so there is a masculine point in this kind of mobility as well.

The last category is that of *Restrictive Emotionality*. To be able to behave in a masculine way, men are supposed to act indifferently and hide their feelings, to pretend that they do not care and to avoid showing any vulnerability:

“While I’m wearing out roads don’t you know that I’m sure missing you?
When I leave, you’ll be wondering when I’ll be back again,
between Texas, and ranchers, and old friends, where do you fit in?”

Above, there is another quote from McGraw’s song “Shotgun Rider”. Earlier, the speaker was exhibiting toughness and this time he shows manifestations of restrictive emotionality. While he is frequenting honky-tonk bars he is, nonetheless, thinking about his partner and misses her. He knows that the feeling is mutual, but he does not want to admit it. He leaves the partner in uncertainty because he does not want to admit his true feelings and, at the end, questions if there even is a place for those emotions. An alternative view would be that he knows that the woman is thinking whether she can be a part of his life or not. In either case, it is interesting that mobility is used to designate restrictive emotionality; it almost seems that the singer is running away from his emotions and feelings.

I will close my analysis, what comes to the categorized expressions, with the Mavericks’ song about one-night stands, which I already addressed before. In the same passage that I already studied, there are also signs of restrictive emotionality. Love affairs, even purely physical, still contain some kind of emotions but this protagonist denies all the possibility for emotional connections by moving from town to town looking for new sexual encounters with different partners. This is a clear example of masculine mobility in two ways; the man is mobile in search for new conquests and, in addition,

is mobile because of his restricted emotionality that does not allow him to show signs of affection and he rather runs away. He is subduing his feelings and stays isolated in emotionally charged situations and does not want to admit that he might actually care about the other person.

When I started classifying my corpus in different masculine norms categories earlier in my thesis, I noted that, contrary to my expectations, the first two categories –*Avoidance of Femininity* and *Negativity towards Sexual Minorities*– did not get any mentions at all. There were no such elements in the songs that would have incited reproachful attitudes towards sexual minorities nor anything that would have indicated evasion of feminine objects as such. One reason for this might be the limited size of my corpus. Were it bigger, there might have been instances where these traits would have appeared as well. Another and more probable explanation for this might be the fact that there are other alternatives to demonstrate masculinity through mobility than being homophobic or trying not to be feminine. How might this kind of attitudes even manifest itself in a country song? Perhaps through driving a small and pink car or perhaps even a mini-van? As a matter of fact, I once heard a song by Justin Moore, “Bait a Hook”, that said “I heard you had to drive him home after two umbrella drinks, I heard he’s got a Prius, ‘cause he’s into bein’ green” (Moore, 2011), and these kind of statements are indeed quite homophobic or at least insinuating, because it is rather feminine to drink umbrella-decorated beverages and, Prius, being an environmental hybrid and rather small car, is not very masculine either. Big and powerful cars have an important role in the display of masculinity, as I mentioned earlier in my thesis. Big or fast vehicles offer a simultaneous display of materialism, masculinity and mobility (Garvey, 143; Barber, 251). In “Bait a Hook” there are expressions that are homophobic and have negative attitude towards femininity, but that kind of expressions were not visible in my corpus. For instance, in the song “What Was I Thinking” by Bentley, the singer evidently has a car, because he makes allusions to driving, but the car’s type, make or model is not emphasized in any way. Nonetheless, an avid listener can come to the conclusion that the vehicle must be a truck from the fact that the singer mentions “tailgate”, which other cars than

trucks do not have. Moreover, the expression like “kicked it in a four-wheel” and “tore through a corn field” imply, that the vehicle is a large truck, because even though some smaller cars have also a four-wheel steering, it is not suitable for a small car to drive in a corn field. In this particular song, it seems that for the song’s protagonist, the movement is more important than the vehicle, and therefore the material possessions do not play a role in the masculinity he displays. Homophobic behavior or, rather, the lack of it in manifestations of masculinity, is another interesting phenomenon that deserves closer analysis. There are several possible explanations for this. Besides the limited size of the corpus that might be offer one reason, another reason might be that in real life outside the music industry, country men are as conservative and prejudicious than the rest of the population. However, since the growth of the LGBTQ movements and Pride parades becoming common and, furthermore, all the support the queer communities are getting from the cisgender it would be outrageous to make fun or be disrespecting towards sexual minorities in the songs. Moreover, there is always the fear of the consequences of the so-called cancel culture, which can erase all one’s past achievements because of its reproach or disagreement about something committed. A simpler explanation is that perhaps the country man is just so sure about his own seduction power that he does not have to worry about queer issues or fear that the wrong gender would take interest in him.

Another theme that was not implicitly present in the corpus was hegemonic masculinity. Previously, I discussed about multiple masculinities and the fact that there are different types of masculinities and a hierarchical ordering of them, in which one form overrides the others. Connell (1995) identified three categories of Western masculinity: hegemonic masculinity, conservative masculinity, and subordinated masculinity. Here, hegemony refers to the beliefs and values held and enforced by dominant and powerful social groups. Connell postulates that masculinity is not an object, but instead, a set of “processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives.” Hegemonic masculinity is intended to dominate and manifests itself in the traditional hyper-masculine ideals of strength and toughness, as well as the patriarchal form of masculinity.

According to the idea of hegemonic masculinity, the most admired men are those who are the most capable of dominating others, for instance in political and economic life (Hakala, 64).

If we were to think that in order to be a true upholder of hegemonic masculinity, all hegemonic masculinity's ideals would then have to be present in one person. In other words, that person would have to be, for instance, dominating and hyper-masculine white heterosexual leader, who is a wealthy and successful politician. Additional to Connell's three masculinity types that I discussed earlier, there are also marginal and complicit masculinity types proposed by Harrison. Marginal masculinity is inspired and legitimized by hegemonic masculinity but only has influence in its own particular sphere of society, usually a social class or race. Complicit masculinity, which is a form of masculinity that does not challenge the dominant forms of masculinity in Western society. Complicit masculinity, in turn, does not challenge the dominant forms of masculinity but rather benefit from it in the background.

In the style of masculinity the Southern men portray according to my analysis, there can be seen attributes of both hegemonic masculinity and marginal masculinity as well, but I would not go so far as to say that they *are* or *are not* one type or another. While toughness, heterosexuality and dominance evidently allude to hegemonic masculinity, it can be argued that Southern man's dominance, for instance, is only limited to women and not to subordinates as in workplace or to cultural dominance, as in having a university education or political power.

While marginal masculinity can refer to a lack of some of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, it can also refer to a masculinity that is almost hegemonic, but marginal in the sense that it only has influence in those social classes that Southern people identify themselves with. Non-whiteness or being disabled are definitely characters that abnegate the belonging to hegemonic masculinity's sphere, but, on the other hand, so are lower-class status, being in subordinate position or unemployed in work life, poverty, or lack of education, be it formal or cultural. As Eastman aptly observes, "Southern men rebel from the middle-class norms and social roles to compensate for their

marginal class status and meet the cultural standards of American manhood” (190-191). This means, that while the men deviate from middle-class roles and cultural capital, they still reflect the masculine ideals of the Western society because they rebel in order to meet the prescribed tenets of American manhood (191).

Since in this thesis, the objective is not to determine whether the Southern masculinity is hegemonic or not but rather describe the quality of Southern man’s masculinity using expressions of mobility in country songs as a tool, I note that there are multiple masculinities and it is important to recognize that a man choose freely, which of the attributes he wishes to embrace in his own particular masculinity. After all, masculinity, femininity and all different gender roles can be seen as a performance and its interpretation depends always of the recipient, the time and the place of the performance.

I will conclude this analysis by writing few observations about Southern man’s mobile lifestyle in contrast to the pressure for sedentariness imposed by society. Earlier in this thesis, I discussed about the notion of roots and rootedness. While it has to do with Southern music as it serves as an umbrella term for different Southern genres, they are also a metaphor for sedentariness. When people are connected to a certain place, it can be said that they are rooted there. In country songs, the idea of belonging is constantly present but always challenged, as the Southern man executes his mobility, is constantly on the move and even expresses his masculinity through mobility. I think this represents their aspirations towards hegemonic masculinity by using compensatory manhood acts (Eastman, 191) and manifesting their independency by rejecting the rules and norms of sedentariness – which is seen as good – in their society and, instead, use mobility as a compensatory manhood act. In order to be closer to hegemonic masculinity, they are willing to abandon their roots and rather be mobile and vagrant.

5. Conclusion

The scope of this study was to investigate representations of mobility in the lyrics of contemporary country music artists in the framework of masculinity. I started with the hypothesis that while dealing with mobility-related themes in their songs, country singers simultaneously build and reinforce their masculine attributes through these themes: the road narratives serve as a vehicle for the speaker to resort to in order to demonstrate his masculine qualities. The theoretical framework outlined in chapters 2 and 3, consisted of three focal themes: gender studies, studies of mobilities and Southern music. In chapter 3, I started by discussing the differences between sex and gender and why it is important to distinguish these two. I argued that the gender roles' formation starts early in the childhood when children are socialized into their gender roles according to their sex and discussed the problems this may cause. I then introduced the study of masculinities and discussed the male role norms imposed by the Western society that restrict and define men's behavior and the ways they perform their masculine roles through life.

In chapter 2, I analyzed mobility and studies of mobility from different aspects. All traveling, moving oneself or even displacement on an imaginary level is mobility. Therefore, it is a complex and multifaceted study field. I further investigated American mobility and the different factors that have formed it to be the way that it is nowadays. I also took a deeper look at car cultures and tried to establish a connection between cars and masculinity.

The third chapter is dedicated to Southern music and its evolution from its beginnings to our days. I examined the connections that in its development parallel with the changing antebellum and postbellum society, among other factors. I discussed the current state of the music and paid special attention to gender in country music and the problems that the unequal treatment of genders in the music industry causes.

After discussing the theoretical background and its connections with my study, I began my analysis by classifying the masculine mobilities in my corpus to their corresponding categories. Then

I moved on to analyze the results of the study. I had chosen to use seven male norms categories established by Levant in his MRNI-SF formula for analyzing scientifically masculine role norms in the Western society. The categories that I introduce more in detail in chapter 6.2 were *Avoidance of Femininity*, *Negativity towards Sexual Minorities*, *Self-Reliance through Mechanical Skills*, *Toughness*, *Dominance*, *Importance of Sex* and *Restrictive Emotionality*. From my corpus of six contemporary country music songs, I chose all the utterances that involved masculine mobility narratives and placed them in the aforementioned categories. The findings were interesting.

In the light of my analysis, my hypothesis proved to be true concerning the remaining five categories in the MRNI-SF scale. The lyrics manifested masculine ideals through mobility-related themes in the rest of the categories and drew a picture of a Southern man that is tough, dominant and confident about his masculine charm and attractiveness on the outside, but on the other hand, reluctant to show his emotions even to his loved ones and very inclined to take unnecessary risks with his reckless lifestyle. Before I started to analyze the lyrics, I was expecting to find more traits of mobile masculinity that would relate more with the attributes associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as the role of a wealthy provider. It turned out that mobile masculinities portrayed in country songs, the providing nature of a male did not show at all in the lyrics. This may be due to the fact that country men simply are not part of the hegemonic masculinity's demographic group; their social class is lower. They might be farmers or blue-collar workers and it is due to this fact that they manifest their masculinity in alternative ways. This has led me to the conclusion that their masculinity is rather marginal in this sense but very masculine indeed.

While there are studies about mobility and gender (Cresswell 2006), men and cars (Balkmar 2012) and studies about lyrics in rap music (Oware 2014), my thesis adds its part to the studies of gender, mobility and music. Since the scope of my thesis is limited and this thesis only focuses on the lyrics of six songs that are analyzed in the framework of masculinity in the realm of country music, an interesting research topic for the future might be a comparative study between feminine and masculine road narratives or a diachronic study about the evolution and development of country lyrics. It would be interesting to see how the genre has evolved through times with the lyrics in question and perhaps see if female singers' lyrics contain same kind of themes as their masculine counterparts.

In writing my thesis, one of my ambitious goals has been making the society's hidden power structures more visible. Even though the choice of my topic may at first glimpse seem trivial and mundane, I still wish it had an impact in the society on some level. When talking about gender and mobility and gender and music, we should not forget that behind *gender* there are people that are impacted and affected by the choices made by governments and executives. "If you see something, say something" is a phrase originally coined by the *New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority* and I like it because when taken a bit out of its original context it can serve as an important reminder of making the invisible visible. If important issues are not put into words they cannot be addressed and dealt with and that almost equals to their nonexistence. In the Western society, different concepts are very often seen from the masculine perspective and dichotomies such as *pilot – female pilot* or *officer – female officer* still prevail. The more attention we pay to the words, expressions and the meanings behind them, the more power we have over them, and by recognizing this in theory and practice is the only way that we can actually change things in the world.

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