

Antti Markkanen

Exploring Freedom through Mobile Outcast
Characters in Bob Dylan's Song Lyrics

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis investigates the appearance of mobile characters, such as tramps, in Bob Dylan's lyrical output between 1964 and 1967. In his song lyrics, freedom and American attitudes toward mobility play a key role when investigating different individuals who exercise personal freedom through mobility. The hypothesis was that Dylan's lyrics challenge the traditional American attitude toward mobile characters and the freedom they exercise.

The theoretical framework includes theories on mobility and freedom. In the analysis section, the freedom expressed by mobile characters is explored through the following themes: traveling away from home, existing outside of social norms, and rejection of the domestic sphere. The section examines American attitudes towards mobility, as well as how Dylan's examples of mobile characters are at odds with the narratives created and maintained by the American media. In addition, it explores how Dylan's song lyrics shape the discourse of freedom and what kinds of narratives his songs create about mobile characters, as well as what kind of social criticism his mobility-related characters promote.

The thesis argues that while the mobility of the characters encompasses the ideal of American freedom, the mobile characters also face strong social condemnation. Dylan's lyrics construct a solidarity-based and humanising attitude toward individuals who fall outside the safety net of American society and question the assumptions of the second-class nature associated with mobile characters. Finally, Dylan's lyrics which focus on mobile characters remind the listener that mobile characters struggle with the same basic needs as the people living in the mainstream society. The need to be accepted and heard is a strong need for some of the mobile characters. However, Dylan's lyrics do not represent the mobile characters as identical to each other, because some romanticised outlaw figures, such as "John Wesley Harding", seem to enjoy their life outside of the confines of consensus society.

Keywords: Bob Dylan, mobility, freedom, mobile characters, social norms

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Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkii mobiilihahmojen, kuten kulkurien, esiintymistä Bob Dylanin laulujen sanoituksissa vuosina 1964-1967. Amerikkalaiset asenteet liikkuvuutta sekä vapautta kohtaan ovat keskeisessä roolissa kun tarkastellaan eri henkilöihahmoja, jotka toteuttavat henkilökohtaista vapautta hänen kappaleissaan liikkuvuuden kautta. Tutkielman hypoteesi on, että Dylanin lyriikat haastavat perinteistä amerikkalaista asennetta mobiilihahmoja ja heidän toteuttamaansa vapautta kohtaan. Teoreettiseen viitekehykseen sisältyy liikkuvuutta ja vapautta käsitteleviä teorioita. Tutkielma tarkastelee mobiilihahmojen ilmentämää vapautta kolmen teeman kautta: kotoa pois matkustamisen, sosiaalisten normien ulkopuolella elämisen ja kodin sfäärin hylkäämisen kautta.

Analyysiosio tutkii sekä yleisiä asenteita liikkuvuutta kohtaan Yhdysvalloissa että miten Dylanin edustamat esimerkit kulkurahmoista ovat ristiriidassa amerikkalaisen median luomien ja ylläpitämien narratiivien kanssa. Lisäksi osio tarkastelee sitä, minkälaisia narratiiveja hänen kappaleensa luovat kulkurahmoista ja minkälaista yhteiskunnallista kritiikkiä kulkureihin keskittyvät lyriikat edistävät.

Työn tarkoitus oli tutkia, kuinka mobiilihahmoja esitetään Dylanin sanoituksissa. Hahmojen liikkuvuus toteuttaa amerikkalaisen vapauden ideaalia vaikka hahmot samalla kohtaavat vahvaa yhteiskunnallista epäluuloa. Dylanin kappaleet rakentavat solidaarista ja kohentavaa asennetta amerikkalaisen yhteiskunnan turvaverkon ulkopuolelle päätyneitä yksilöitä kohtaan. Samalla hänen laulunsa kyseenalaistavat kulkureihin liitettyjä oletuksia toisarvoisuudesta. Dylanin sanoitukset pyrkivät inhimillistämään liikkuvia hahmoja, jotka ilmenevät ihmisarvosta riisuttuina Amerikan kulttuurissa. Dylanin laulut myös muistuttavat kuuntelijaa siitä, että kulkurahmot kamppailevat samojen perustarpeiden kanssa kuin yhteiskunnan valtaväestö; lisäksi joillain kulkurahmoilla on vahva tarve tulla hyväksytyksi ja kuulluksi. Kulkurahmot eivät kuitenkaan muodosta yhtenäistä joukkoa, kun esimerkiksi romantisoidut lainsuojattomat hahmot, kuten "John Wesley Harding", näyttävät nauttivan olemassaolostaan yhteiskunnan ulkopuolella.

Avainsanoja: Bob Dylan, liikkuvuus, vapaus, mobiilihahmot, sosiaaliset normit

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1. Introduction

The homelessness crisis on the subcontinent of North America, particularly in the United States of America, has become an ever-increasing concern on a national level in recent decades. In the 1960's, singer-songwriter Bob Dylan drew upon the theme of homelessness and the mobility related to such a way of life by singing “nobody has ever taught you how to live on the street / and now you find out you're gonna have to get used to it” in one of his most popular songs “Like a Rolling Stone”. By December 2020, there has been an estimated 226,000 Americans living in unsheltered homelessness. Keeping in mind that the United States is regarded as a first world country, it makes it all the more shocking to hear that unsheltered homelessness has increased by 30% in America since 2015, as *The Economist* reports (“Pandemic”).

Bearing the unsheltered homelessness crisis in America in mind, the interest in this thesis resides in examining the way that the folk and rock song lyrics of Bob Dylan represent mobile characters. In this thesis, I explore how Dylan makes use of mobile characters to explore American cultural attitudes towards freedom as well attempts to give a voice to marginalised people within the American cultural context. My investigation proposes that the idea of individual freedom is related in his 1960's lyrics to themes of mobility and travelling away from home, existence outside of social norms and rejection of domestic life.

Even a quick glimpse at the titles of Dylan's albums in the 1960's show that freedom and mobility are present in his lyrics, such as *The Freewheeling Bob Dylan* and *Bringing It All Back Home*, of which the latter refers to bringing back the stories of mobile characters for his audience to hear. Dylan is a prolific American singer-songwriter, with a career spanning 39 studio albums from 1962 until 2020. His lyrical roots owe much to folk music, as many of his stylistic choices initially relied heavily on the conventions of the folk tradition (Pichaske). Many of the themes of folk music, such as giving a voice to social outcasts, appear in Dylan's lyrics, even after having shed the strictly folk-based musical composition. This allowed for a less restrictive mode of expression in his songs, unhindered by the conventions of any one single genre of musical oration.

The mobile characters appearing in Dylan's songs, another convention of folk music, can be regarded as social outcasts. Their personal voice has gone mostly unheard in the American cultural matrix, or, worse yet, has been demonised. Characters associated with a mobile way of life have been regarded with fear, with the potential to shake the very foundations of society. Part of this can be explained by the capitalist reality in which Americans are expected to abide, since mobile characters are not necessarily the most productive members of society – sometimes they resort to criminal behaviour, which is possibly a result of downward mobility. It is somewhat ironic that the fearful cultural attitudes allowed for the earliest appearance of tramps in a post-Civil War America in the late nineteenth-century. These tramps epitomised mobility by travelling on railroads, mostly without ticket and “riding the rods’ underneath passenger or freight cars”, in order to find work (Cresswell *The Tramp*, 31). While some songs by Dylan that pertain to mobility are about characters other than the narrative persona, other songs are written in the first person, which serve to be incisive and revealing of the plight of the mobile character in a more emotive way. In these songs, such as “Motorpsycho Nightmare”, the narrative persona takes on many of the features that are linked to mobile characters. Freedom functions as a prerequisite for the mobile lifestyle, which is why the origin of the American attitude towards freedom is relevant for this study. To be able to understand what freedom entails for an American, this thesis will consider, among other things, the influence of the American Declaration of Independence.

When examining the alternative way mobile characters express freedom through their mobility in relation to the Declaration, the attitudes of philosophical thinkers that influenced the formulation of the Declaration are important to consider in the present thesis. This is because freedom is a central aspect of the Declaration and helped formulate the cultural bedrock of America in fundamental ways. The cultural context of the 1960's America is also touched upon in light of this in order to evaluate how the statutes written at the birth of the American nation still exudes a strong influence the American cultural landscape, where the idea of the sacredness of a person's

self-determination is a strong constant. It has been found that freedom plays a central role, regardless of time in history, in how to become an American.

Bearing in mind the scope of a graduate thesis, this study has been limited to the earlier albums of Dylan's career. While themes pertaining to freedom are consistently present in his later lyrics, too – even in his most recent album *Rough and Rowdy Ways* (2020) – his earlier lyrics created a vast gallery of mobile personages, resulting in multiple narratives centring around the experiences of social outcasts and personages associated with mobility, existence outside of social norms and rejection of domestic life. In addition, the social upheaval America underwent in the 1960's favours the focus of this study being limited to Dylan's early work, as American cultural attitudes towards freedom and mobility were challenged during that time. For many of his characters, the most natural way to carry out their freedom is to hit the road. Restricting the thesis to his early lyrics between 1964 and 1967 provides this study with a sufficient amount of primary material for studying how individual freedom is presented through mobility. When seen as a whole, Dylan's collection of songs forms into a cohesive self-reflexive process (Day 6), where wayward characters traverse the American cultural landscape, in turn re-evaluating the values that this landscape has been founded on.

Examining the various types of mobile characters that are constructed in Dylan's lyrics is central to answering my research question on how the longing for freedom in Dylan's lyrics is expressed. Besides the three themes of mobility (travelling away from home, existence outside of social norms and rejection of domestic life), further byproducts of one's personal search for and exercise of freedom are also explored in the thesis, such as the loneliness that is associated with becoming estranged from the society one has been born and, to some extent at least, assimilated and conditioned into. On the one hand, then, these mobile characters have internalised the values of American society and, on the other, they have purposefully decided to reject and deviate from the values imposed on them by American culture.

The wider objective of this thesis is to explore how Dylan's song lyrics participate in the American discourse surrounding personal freedom. I propose in my thesis that Dylan is illustrating prevailing cultural attitudes towards mobile characters in his songs, as he is building a commentary on freedom through the expression of mobility, which are both core American values. I place this thesis within the framework of mobility studies and hypothesise that Dylan's songs form a uniform attitude towards mobile characters, one where social outcasts are related to each other by the way they exercise their freedom, as well as how they are treated by those individuals who are operating within the confines of a more domestic existence. Before carrying onto the focal points of each analysis chapter, the term of mobile character will be defined and given examples of in Dylan's lyrics.

The term mobile character will be used in the analysis to refer to the tramps, outlaws and other characters that operate outside of the confines of domestic life. Various rootless and wandering figures play a central role in his songs from the 1960's, such as "Like a Rolling Stone", the Drifter in "The Drifter's Escape", the Joker and the Thief in "All Along the Watchtower", "Mr. Tambourine Man", "John Wesley Harding", "The Wicked Messenger", and the "unpatriotic / rotten doctor Commie rat" ("Motorpsycho Nightmare"). While these tramp characters are not always at the forefront of each song, they do make passing appearances in other songs as well, in the form of "railroad men" in "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Texas Blues Again", the "mystery tramp" in "Like a Rolling Stone", "a hobo sailor" in "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream" and "the peddler" in "Visions of Johanna".

As suggested above, the analysis of the lyrics is divided into three themes. Mobility and mobile characters are examined throughout each subsection of analysis. The first analysis chapter focuses on how travelling away from home, or being on the road, is a prominent component of numerous Dylan's songs. Travel signifies and unifies the mobile nature of the characters being represented in songs such as "Motorpsycho Nightmare" and "A Hard Rain's A-gonna Fall". On top of this, references to trains and railroads, roads and cars, and even ships and docks appear elsewhere

in his lyrics, “your railroad gate” in “Absolutely Sweet Marie” being one example. In “Bob Dylan’s Dream”, the speaker is “riding on a train going west”, which evokes the idea of a mythic West and the American ethos. The first analysis chapter therefore establishes a connection between the theme of mobility and freedom in Dylan’s lyrics and the American way of living.

There was an increase in the number of mobile individuals called tramps who then started making use of the new opportunities that the advent of the railroads and trains ushered in the late nineteenth century (Cresswell *The Tramp*, 26). It will also be considered whether the idea of opportunity that has been instilled in the American cultural milieu is misleading, as those of lower economic status don’t necessarily have a choice in the matter. In reality, opportunities are hard to come by when one is stuck in a spiral of downward mobility. After transport via railroads became commonplace, the introduction of the earliest automobiles in as far back as 1886 ushered in a new mode of transportation and made the subsequent traversal of the American highways by personal vehicular means possible in a previously unseen form of mobility. However, it was not until much later that cars and camper vans were more fully embraced by the mobile community that took shape in the 1960’s. This historical context provides a backdrop for Dylan’s lyrics that became intent on providing the listener with instances of mobility and freedom. It also shows that mobility, alongside freedom, is a concept that is at the heart of American culture.

On top of this historical context, it is important to recognise that mobility has also had a crucial place in American literary narratives. From Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* to Jack Kerouac’s *Sal Paradise*, mobility has been a central element of the American ideal of freedom, encompassing the freedom to live one’s own personal life the way that one wants to. From this point of view, it seems justified to approach Dylan’s lyrics from the framework that mobility studies provide.

The second analysis chapter of the thesis examines how the freedom and mobility of mobile characters relates to an existence outside of social norms. It is important to remember that mobility can be defined “as the entanglement of movement, representation and practice” (Cresswell *Politics*

of *Mobility*, 19). Having named his 1964 album *The Times They Are-a Changin'*, Dylan may be seen to be referencing mobility in the shift in cultural values during that time, one that stands in reference to the social upheaval and mobility present during the civil rights movement and countercultural revolution during the 1960's. Thus, as a term, mobility may also be regarded as a process by which a society reforms from one set of values to another. As a concept, then, mobility deals with potentially far more than the physical action of movement and can be used to refer to movement in more abstract terms, such as climbing the social ladder. For an individual to have the capacity for such mobility is a powerful way for an individual to exercise their own personal freedom. Individuals in Dylan's lyrics can, however, also refuse such social mobility and thereby challenge social norms. Songs from the album *John Wesley Harding* are analysed in this context, as well as "Subterranean Homesick Blues".

The rejection of domestic life, the focus in the final analysis chapter, is another way for mobile characters to challenge the prevailing sociocultural norms. The disillusionment towards traditional domestic life is explored from the viewpoint of juxtaposing mobility with stagnation, since mobile characters are associated with having no roots. These issues of stagnation are most clearly explored in Dylan's double album *Blonde on Blonde*, released in 1966, especially in "Visions of Johanna". Other songs, such as "Down the Highway", "On the Road Again" and "From a Buick 6" are also analysed in relation to the theme of rejecting domestic life. Before moving on to the theory portion of this thesis, where the previously mentioned sub-themes will be further inquired into, it is necessary to take an overview of previous research related to mobility studies, especially in relation to song lyric analysis as well as Dylan scholarship exploring the presence of mobile elements in his lyrics.

There is currently only a limited amount of existing research combining mobility studies with the study of song lyrics, especially when focussing on only one performing artist. Michael Varnum et al. recently wrote an article exploring residential mobility called "Why are song lyrics becoming simpler? A time series analysis of lyrical complexity in six decades of American popular

music” (2021), but this particular study was more concerned with the effect of immigration on the shift of lyrical content in contemporary pop songs, as well as concentrating on the entire genre of pop songs instead of one artist in particular. While mobility was a central theoretical tool in the study, it utilised the concept of residential mobility, which refers to the movement of housing adjustments of a household, be it a single individual or a larger familial unit. Residential mobility can even extend to meaning the movement of larger groups of people, as in entire population groups (Lutoff et al.). This makes the focal point different to this thesis which is more concerned with mobile characters who are more or less in a constant state of mobility.

There is however a wealth of literature exploring the connection between American road narratives and mobility studies. Ann Brigham has explored this in *American Road Narratives: Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film*, which has proved useful for exploring the mobile characters in Dylan’s lyrics. While there are other studies looking at this connection between Americanness and mobility, for example, Esla Court’s *By the Way – The Roadside as Other Space*, her study emphasises the mediums of film, photography and Emigré literature. The explicit study of song lyrics within a framework of mobility, especially when concerned with the American context exclusively, has not been a focal point of interest in academic studies.

Previous research into Dylan’s song-writing repertoire is of course relevant to this thesis. For example, Andrew Gamble’s research pertains to similar areas of interest as this thesis, such as the abundance of mobile characters in Dylan’s lyrics. While the framework that mobility studies provides has not previously been used in the analysis of Dylan’s lyrics, Gamble has examined the consistent appearance of mobile characters, such as outlaws, in “The Drifter’s Escape”. Even though themes pertaining to the field of mobility studies are present in Gamble’s essay, he does not explicitly employ the theoretical framework of mobility studies. Nevertheless, he draws attention to the persistent use of mobile characters in Dylan’s lyrics, even after Dylan’s music stylistically diverged from its folk roots, in which mobile characters are prevalent.

According to Gamble, Dylan's songs "convey the lifelessness and absurdity of contemporary America, where capitalism produced a consumerist, militaristic and nationalistic culture that destroys authenticity" (22). His songs attempt to convey that the way of life that mobile characters lead, regardless of moral judgement, is a more authentic existence than the caged existence inside the rubrics of American society, where mobile characters are regarded as a nuisance in the eyes of the general public, to the extent that they are stripped of all their humanity.

Richard Brown, another Dylan scholar, has been reported to say that "Dylan's mid-1960's songs are held to harmonise with a new, youthful, radical counter-culture consensus" (23). This thesis would extend this perspective to include mobile characters as a central element in bringing the issues of less stable, low-income Americans forward. They often have to resort to mobility for their survival, be that of a psychological stand-point or a purely physical one. For many of Dylan's mobile characters, freedom contains intrinsic value in and of itself. If these characters forced themselves to remain within the confines of consensus society, they would suffer tremendously. Be that as it may, Dylan's characters do not form a uniform depiction of mobile characters. Some songs, such as "I Pity the Poor Immigrant" and "I am a Lonesome Hobo" approach mainstream society just as cynically as they themselves are regarded by that same society.

When analysing the characteristics of the tramp figure, we notice that Dylan owes much in terms of the form and utilisation of the folk vernacular in his lyrics to Woody Guthrie, especially in the early stages of his musical career. John S. Partington's edited compilation of essays on Woody Guthrie contains a chapter by Martin Butler which helps shed some light on the motives behind the recurrent presence of mobile, vagabond-type characters in Dylan's songs. This connection is most explicitly exemplified in a "Song to Woody", where travelling "out here, a thousand miles from my home / Walkin' a road other men have gone down" reminds the listener of how the idea of mobility could be found in Dylan's lyrics from the very beginning. D.A. Carpenter's chapter in the same compilation is also in line with the theme of mobility.

John Gaffney's review of David Boucher and Gary Browning's *The Political Art of Bob Dylan* provides a poignant critique towards the essay collection, in that the distinction between the author and narrator are often forgotten when analysing Dylan's lyrics. This has been taken into consideration in this thesis, as connections to details in Dylan's life during that time are not taken into consideration when analysing his lyrics. The essay collection has nevertheless been extensively used as a foundation for this investigation. While there is a plentitude of existing research in this field, mobile characters have not been this specifically inquired into in any given artist's work. The present study provides new insight into the relevance that freedom and mobility hold for Dylan's songs in the 1960's.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of three fields of research: mobility studies (Aguir et al.; Brigham; Cresswell; Sheller and Urry), contemporary philosophical discourse (Berlin) and older philosophical discourse on freedom (Locke; Mill; Rousseau), especially ideas of those philosophers that influenced the thinking of the founding fathers of America, because freedom is a key value in the American Declaration of Independence. Throughout this study, these theoretical tools will be used to determine how the personal freedom exercised by mobile characters is expounded upon in Dylan's lyrics through the three themes of mobility, existence outside of social norms and rejection of domestic life. As an example of an unconventional way of living outside of the rooted existence of domestic life within mainstream society, the 'Rolling Stone' in Dylan's song "Like A Rolling Stone" can be defined as "a person who is unwilling to settle for long in one place, a rambler, a wanderer" (*OED*). This definition carries an air of restlessness with it in the unwillingness to settle down, but also hints at an existence without responsibilities or commitments, and could be seen to apply to the mobile characters analysed in this thesis as it combines mobility with freedom.

Mobility and freedom are core characteristics of the American way of life for the mobile characters in Dylan's songs. His characters may be living out a promise that they perceive to have been made by the Declaration, which states that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (US 1776). For the mobile characters appearing in Dylan's songs, this would entail the right to pursue their own happiness by freely traversing the American landscape. While there is a strong connection between mobility and freedom, the theory portion is divided into separate subchapters on freedom and mobility respectively. Connections between these terms are highlighted, although the interplay of freedom and mobility is explored more thoroughly in the fourth theory subchapter *Mobility and Place*, and further still in relation to Dylan's lyrics in the analysis section.

The freedom section, 2.1., comprises of explaining the influence of thinkers on the American ideas of freedom by contrasting them against the cultural context of the 1960's, when Dylan wrote the lyrics that are explored in the analysis section. There was great social upheaval during that time as a noticeable portion of the American population started re-evaluating their idea of freedom. Also, philosopher Isaiah Berlin's terms of negative and positive liberty are presented to the reader, as they will deepen our understanding of the kind of freedom expressed in Dylan's lyrics.

The mobility sections, 2.2.-2.3., will explore what positive and negative attributions are associated with mobility, as well as the fluid nature of the term. It draws connections to the time after the American Civil War, when the mobile character of the tramp was born out of soldiers being on the road in search of employment, as this forms a start-off point for how the type of mobility was regarded by the average American. The freedom associated with mobility is studied further as a genuine and dignified way to live, instead of only being a way to escape the social order. Before proceeding further in expounding the concept of freedom in this thesis, the distinction between liberty and freedom warrants some clarification.

The terms liberty and freedom are often conflated to represent the same thing, but the difference in these terms is worth some elucidation. While freedom is primarily used in reference to one's ability and power to make decisions in accordance with their personal aspirations, liberty is used to refer to the absence of arbitrary restraints as well as the rights of the other people another person's exercise of liberty would affect. (Mill).

2.1 Freedom

Previous Dylan scholarship has identified ties between the artist and earlier American writers who spent a considerable amount of time pondering the different facets of freedom. Dylan puts himself in opposition against the establishment by revelling in the poetic reimagining of narratives that celebrate the mobile characters of an almost mythological America; part of this is done through aligning himself with the thoughts of American transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson

(see Ford), Walt Whitman (Brake; Saluzinski), and even German philosopher Immanuel Kant (Brown). A link to Rousseau has been made as well (Gamble) and the influence of Locke can be traced in Rousseau's writings. That is why for the purposes of this investigation I choose to focus on Locke's way of looking at the world as he had an overreaching influence on thinkers including Kant and has formed the bedrock for the American conceptualisation of freedom. Rousseau also developed Locke's thoughts (Doernberg), and for this reason fits the theoretical framework of this thesis in relation to Dylan's lyrics.

Gamble cites previous research in Pichaske's article "Bob Dylan and the Search for the Past" when he draws a connection between Dylan and the American transcendentalist tradition which was inaugurated by Emerson, and includes the likes of Henry David Thoreau, Whitman and Herman Melville (Pichaske qtd. in Gamble). There is a strong sense of anti-authoritarianism in many of the literary and philosophical figures that have been connected to Dylan's work in previous research. Gamble brings forth Marqusee's finding that Dylan displays an "understanding of the modern world as one of unjust power and the denial of human potential" (34). Here the reader may find a connection to Rousseau's quote "Man is born free but everywhere is in chains" (*Social Contract* 1). Before considering the influence of such philosophical thinkers on Dylan's lyrics, the concept of freedom is explored in its American cultural context.

Freedom, after all, is an idea that plays an integral role in each individual's personal life – and it has also been a driving force of the entire American nation. America was conceived as a result of wanting to become free from the British monarchy, working under the presupposition that the people who had chosen to migrate to North America had the ability to govern themselves. A new democratic system was sought after as a detachment from the feudal system in Britain. The American Declaration of Independence was written in 1776, and its rights were called inalienable by the founders. They were rights that could not be taken away from an individual by anyone, not even a king.

When considering the philosophical ideals that inform the average American's idea of freedom, the influence of the founding fathers of America permeates the general approach to freedom in present-day America. These founding fathers consisted of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison. Though Thomas Paine is not officially considered a founding father of America, he is worth considering because Dylan actually mentions him in "As I Went Out One Morning": "To breathe the air around Tom Paine's." One may ask, however, what light Paine is presented in, as he owns a slave in the song: the song may reflect a disappointed attitude towards the limitations of the Declaration which allows for the continued practiced of unequal rights among the citizens of America.

While there are others who contributed to the construction of the American nation, the previously mentioned figures are widely held as the contributors to the Declaration and therefore a big influence on the formation of American attitudes towards freedom alongside the Constitution of the United States. However, it is impossible to explore these founding fathers in closer detail due to the scope of this thesis. This is why it is important to trace the thoughts of those philosophers who influenced their disposition towards freedom and concentrate on their thoughts regarding freedom. Before moving onto John Locke, a key figure when considering the influential thinkers that shaped the thinking of some of the founding fathers of America (Doernberg), the connections between Dylan and other influential thinkers will be outlined. This is relevant for the study of mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics, as his songs seem to create a commentary towards the very way freedom was outlined in the Declaration.

The influence of Locke's *Second Treatise in Two Treatises of Government* (1690) on the Declaration cannot be understated, and many passages of the Declaration echo Locke's views on liberty: the creation of all humans as equal, possessing the same rights. Richard Brown, a Dylan Scholar, argues in "Bob Dylan's Critique of Judgement: Thinkin' about the Law" that "Dylan sees law for the most part as coercive, part of a structure of power which disadvantages the poor and the

weak, and is used systematically against them” (45). In Dylan’s song “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” we find a sentiment in the lyrics that change in the shared American values was being stunted by the older generations, showcased by the following line: “Old lady judges watch people in pairs / Limited in sex they dare / To push fake morals, insult and stare”. Locke’s idea of a country’s government being ruled by the majority would fall in line with Dylan’s sentiments of the people having the power to change any piece of legislation, regardless of whether we are considering the sexual liberties or other rights pertaining to the freedom of the individual.

Locke’s influence on the Declaration and American system of governance reaches as far back as the founding fathers, to the works of Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Madison for example. The Declaration of Independence drew on issues central to the notion of the so-called social contract as elucidated and developed further by Locke: it stood for the government being chosen by the consent of the people. It essentially meant that the views supported by the majority of a nation’s people would be held by the government and other government institutions.

Moreover, both Locke and the Declaration stress that when the government does not serve the wellbeing of its citizens anymore, the people have the right to re-evaluate the system that governs them. The right to revolution is not only the right but also the duty of the American citizen according to the Declaration. Locke argued in *First Treatise of Civil Government* (1689) that it was within the rights of the people to set themselves in opposition against the King, if their own leader decided to set himself in direct opposition against the well-being of his common-wealth. The Declaration re-articulates Locke’s principles of governance, as Locke’s argument mentioned above is echoed in the Declaration, as “whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government” (US 1776). The principles of a human being’s inherent rights of equality, as well as the right for self-governance in a state of nature, are further strengthened by the ideas of John Stuart Mill.

Besides Locke, Mill has been chosen as part of my framework because his ideas relating to individual freedom seem to inform the views related to freedom in Dylan’s lyrics. Mill’s philosophy

is central to the exploration of the concept of individual freedom and acting out one's mobility, as he stresses that uniformity in thought results in a stationary way of life, where "all deviations from that [one] type will come to be considered impious, immoral, even monstrous and contrary to nature" (69). Through this thought there is a connection to the primary focus of this thesis, namely the juxtaposition of mobility with sedentariness and a stationary existence that is evidently limited in mobility. He also argued that the freedom of an individual to act how they desire should only be obstructed in an instance where this act would harm or infringe upon another person's freedom (73). By this principle, people should be free from interference up until the point where their actions can be potentially dangerous to other people; otherwise an absence of interference is warranted. In Mill's own words, "the only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way" (29). It is my proposal in this thesis that Dylan's mobile characters do precisely that: pursue what they feel is best for them, regardless of what other citizens think of their pursuit.

While Locke and Mill have been identified as being influential on the founding fathers of America, Isiah Berlin is a central voice when conceptualising freedom in the twentieth century. His concepts relating to liberty are especially useful when analysing the mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics, because they help form a theoretical frame to understand in what ways freedom surfaces in Dylan's lyrics in terms of the contemporary philosophical discourse concerning freedom. Berlin's 1958 lecture "Two Concepts of Liberty" identifies two distinct varieties of freedom that persist throughout history: negative and positive liberty. In short, these two concepts could be defined as freedom from and freedom to. Negative liberty is concerned with not being restricted from doing one's will, while positive liberty is concerned with internal restrictions on one's freedom.

According to Berlin, negative liberty, as in freedom from something, is interested in the following question: "what is the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons"? (*Two Concepts* 155). It is associated with being free from coercion, interference or authority; from other people telling an individual what they can and cannot do. One way of approaching mobility in this

study is by focusing on the constraints, or negative liberty in Berlin's words, that these characters seek to be freed from by travelling away from home: away from "society, self, the family, the past, or the familiar" (Brigham 6). Negative liberty can range from cultural attitudes against mobile characters to actual concrete measures that may be resorted to in order to restrict the personal freedom of the mobile characters. Furthermore, Berlin writes that there is a chasm between one's private life and public life. Individuals should, for instance, have the freedom to say what they like and express their religious or political views openly, but external forces may not only impact one's own decisions but deep-seated beliefs as well. In Dylan's lyrics, the idea of private and public thoughts is exemplified by "if my thought-dreams could be seen / they'd probably put my head in a guillotine" ("It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)"). This line reveals that the narrator is imposing internal restrictions on themselves – self-imposed internal restrictions that make it harder for the speaker of the song to express his actual thoughts. There is no tolerance towards the thought-dreams that stand in opposition to the shared restrictions of mainstream society. The threat of social ostracisation is likened to a very real form of execution, alluded to by the danger of being executed for revealing one's radical thoughts. One may also draw attention to the choice of punishment being a form of public execution, driving further the point of the general public holding the true power to decide what is within the bounds of acceptability within the framework of society.

Positive liberty is concerned with the question of what the source of control might be, when it exists, and whether it can prevent someone from doing what they wish. (361). Even when one is free from interference to do as one chooses to, is one still free to achieve those goals? Even if one is free to achieve something, this does not necessarily entail that the individual has the ability to do so. While one may not be a literal slave, one can still be obstructed by one's impulses, or be otherwise ignorant or misguided to the point where these inhibitions make one less free than one would desire to be. Utilising Berlin's terminology, this would be termed as internal restrictions. (361). Here a different type of interference is introduced when compared to that of negative liberty, but one that nevertheless constrains one's freedom even if not by external coercion. Positive liberty is the

freedom to, as in having the innate capacity and resources to do as one wishes. This pertains to the idea of self-determination and being able to rely on oneself. This includes the desire for self-direction, independence, and it also implies competence on part of the individual. The will to self-mastery and autonomy allow the individual to make decisions for oneself and be the master of one's own life. (362).

While there may be no physical objects coercing one physically, positive liberty is more concerned with psychological issues that may block an individual from saying what they want. Being part of society entails a certain degree of positive liberty already. A certain way of living is also enforced through the fellow citizens who make up and agree to adopt the social norms and values that society has constructed. Dylan acknowledges this fight against the expectations as a constricting factor on one's freedom as well, a form of negative freedom, as "everyone want[ing] you to be just like them" ("Maggie's Farm" 144). Nevertheless, criticism towards these shared conventions is an integral part of a functioning and democratic society. What is more, Berlin also asserts that "liberty consists in the preservation of an area within which human personality is to have the fullest possible play", where the negative freedom caused by external restrictions seeks to restrict the human personality from select types of play, such as the full realisation of one's desires towards mobility (190). It is the argument of this thesis that the mobile characters of Dylan's songs engage in this very act of play to its fullest potential. When viewed in this light, these mobile characters can start to be seen as an attempt at preserving a cultural sensitivity towards a more mobile lifestyle. Berlin's ideas will be used in the analysis section to distinguish to what extent the lyrics concentrate on external restricting factors surrounding mobile characters, as in negative examples of negative liberty, or internal restrictions, as in positive liberty.

2.2. Defining Mobility: Not a Fixed, but a Fluid Concept

In this subchapter, the field of mobility studies is first discussed to give the reader a general understanding of the aspects of mobility that surface repeatedly in mobility studies. Furthermore, an overview of the history of the research field will be examined with a particular focus on the contemporary discourse surrounding mobility and what relevance it holds for my research question and objective. The field of mobility will thus be first introduced on a more general level, making connections to the primary material of the present thesis where appropriate, after which this subsection will move on to focus on American depictions of mobility and the social order aspect related to the study of these depictions. Prevalent attitudes towards mobility and freedom in the American cultural context are then contrasted and compared with the attitudes present in Dylan's lyrics concerning mobility and freedom.

Throughout this subchapter, the concept of personal freedom, which was explored in the previous subchapter, will be connected to the concept of mobility. When proposing a special relation between mobility and freedom, the American context must be kept in consideration, because Dylan's lyrics were born within the American cultural milieu. This thesis proposes that the attitudes that are voiced in his lyrics relate to an effort to challenge the general negative attitude towards the freedom that Dylan's mobile characters enact.

While the study of mobility often explores the more typical forms of mobility, such as human migration and social mobility, the study of mobility is not limited to these forms of mobility. The transference of ideas, in the form of songs for instance, may be seen as an act of mobility. This thesis investigates whether mobility has the potential to contribute to the creation and development of an individual's identity, which relates to the overarching research objective of investigating the relationship between individual freedom and mobility. But first the term mobility will be defined.

The book *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* by Marian Aguir et al. is a good source for defining the term mobility for the purposes of this thesis. This is because the work of Aguir et al. covers the influence of major contributors to the mobility studies field in recent years, namely Cresswell, and

Mimi Sheller and John Urry. Her work makes use of more literary approaches to the questions central to mobility studies, namely “questions of travel, technologies of transport, migration and (post)colonialism through a close engagement with textual materials” (2). Aguir et al. defines mobility studies as an examination “of the social and spatial aspects of mobile practices within their cultural milieu”, and it “recognises that mobility operates at multiple scales of meaning, any and all of which constitutes a society’s mobile culture” (2). Mobility does not need to be limited to a conceptualisation strictly focussed on physical movement, as mentioned previously.

There was a “‘humanities turn’ in mobility studies in 2006 with a particular focus on scholars who approach the field through literary and cultural studies” (Aguir et al. 2). The use of literary texts by Cresswell “had begun to conceptualise a world in which the mobilities that characterised the lives of certain groups of people (e.g., nomads, tramps) was an important means of investigating changes in the social realm and world order” (Aguir et al. 5). From this point of view, exploring mobile characters in Dylan’s lyrics can contribute another form of textuality in the form of songs to investigate what issues arise in terms of the American outlook on freedom.

This change which began to incorporate humanities-based fields into a previously geographic and social science approach in the field of mobility emerged from the rigid way in which the social sciences approached mobility. Aguir et al. note the “need to move beyond traditional conceptions of the social order”, and a move towards a more multidisciplinary approach to mobility studies has happened since then (5). Nigel “Thrift’s interventions were instrumental in moving human geography beyond the place-bound and ‘sedentarist’ characterisations of the spatial realm and refiguring it as mobile, motile and ephemeral” (Aguir et al. 4). The integration of humanities-based disciplines into mobility studies arose from a need to combat the binary view held in the social sciences towards mobility being placed in direct opposition with domesticity; by extension, people were seen as either a static entity tied to a specific geographical location, or completely placeless. There seemed to be no grey area between these two binaries. If mobility would be approached in a binary manner, it would undermine “the importance of the systematic

movements of people for work and family life, for leisure and pleasure, and for politics and protest”, as there seemed to be no in between: individuals were either static entities anchored to a specific place or entirely placeless (Sheller and Urry 2008). When mobility is viewed as an unchangingly static phenomenon – a view held within mobility studies before the humanities turn in 2006 – the potential of the paradigm of mobility is stifled. The inclusion of literary representations meant that researchers in the field of mobility studies were no longer restricted to a one-dimensional conception of mobility. One could even argue that the static approach towards mobility relinquishes mobile individuals of their individuality, as they are relegated to the status of fixed and unchanging entities.

When mobility is seen as a “process of engagement” (Brigham 8) rather than an act of escape, mobility may start to be regarded as a more stable form of existence than previously thought, instead of being a threatening and unpredictable form of engagement with the external world. By approaching mobility in this fashion, one can also distance oneself from the reduction of mobility to the binary propositions of “home / away, domesticity / mobility, conformity / rebellion, stasis / movement, confinement / liberation” (Brigham 8). Brigham argues that mobility does not function as a form of escape, but as a way to engage with social conflicts.

The mobile lifestyle could be seen as part of an American tradition not much different from the pioneers during the westward expansion of America onto the west coast. Dylan uses his mobile characters to disregard dependency on the state in his lyrics in place of a more self-regulated and autonomous existence, chosen by oneself instead of being restricted to being assigned a role from a ready made list of professions to choose from. This strong connection that mobility has in relation to American identity will be expounded in the following subchapter.

2.3. American Mobility

In this subchapter, the way mobility has surfaced in the American cultural matrix is surveyed through the smaller issues that consist of the contradictory meaning of mobility in the U.S.A. and what it means to the American sense of self, especially when exploring the way these issues surface in marginal mobile characters such as tramps. Furthermore, the role of the road in mobility narratives is also considered, because the narratives of mobility often feature the open road. On top of this, the way mobility is seen to challenge the social order of mainstream America is studied.

Mobility and the possibility to expand ever westward was a feature that distinguished Americans from their European ancestors. It was important to the American cultural identity, as it came to epitomise “a uniquely American geographical and historical experience guaranteeing freedom, opportunity and independence” (Cresswell *The Tramp*, 21). Mobility became a central aspect of executing one’s personal freedom in America because it was seen as a way to create a feeling of connection between the individual and grander concept of the American country as a whole. Through mobility and travel, they were able to reconnect with the essence of what it meant to be an American and to be able to have an authentic experience of living as an American. One could argue that the experience mobility promises is an essential part of becoming an American.

Cresswell claims that giving more visibility to mobile characters that are located at the margins of society would provide a more complete picture of mobility’s role on the American sense of self. Denying the humanity of such marginalised characters has led to a lack of humane representation within the cultural matrix of America; the misrepresentation of mobile characters as being completely devoid of morality has not helped either. American mobility narratives, according to Cresswell, need to represent the American population more accurately by including “less central stories, often untold: tales of marginality and exclusion, which cast a different light on the grand narratives of nationhood, of progress, of democracy and of modernity” (20). The marginalised

characters of mobility showcase a dramatically different attitude towards life, providing alternative knowledge to the reader. When the representation of marginalised characters within the larger cultural framework is lacking, an ever widening rift is produced between the perceived debauchery of the mobile character and the pristine citizens playing by the rules of American society. Nevertheless, “the matter of alternative knowledges points towards the incompleteness of ways of knowing” (21), which the inclusion of mobile characters narratives into the mainstream could begin to rectify. In the context of this study, mobile narratives represent the stories of homeless figures who traverse the American cultural landscape in Dylan’s lyrics; this includes instances of downward mobility, but mobility is also used to serve as an escape from domestic life.

It is almost as if mobility introduced uncertainty within the cemented ways of American society. The uncertainty associated with mobile characters may stem from a lack of knowledge concerning mobile characters in the American mainstream. The mobility of the tramp, for instance, might be seen as dangerous and threatening the stability of respectable society. Cresswell draws attention to the “conflict between the order and hierarchy of the state and its agents, and the threat posed by the mobile bodies of the vagrant, the vagabond and the tramp” (*The Tramp*, 21). Knowledge of the tramp, one of the most essential types of mobile characters in late nineteenth-century America, “was informed by a morally coded set of geographical suppositions about mobility” (16): what was assumed of mobility in general was presupposed of the tramps in turn. Cresswell defines a mobile character as “a mobile body inscribed with multiple signifiers of deviance and transgression” (22). When analysing the mobile characters in Dylan’s songs, the setting of the road cannot be overlooked.

The “open road” is “perceived as a mythic space of possibility” by Americans, offering a new horizon with new possibilities, unrestricted by the constrictions of domestic life (Brigham 4). This is important in the study of mobile characters in Dylan’s lyrics, as reinvention of oneself could be seen as part of what attracts individuals to seek personal freedom through mobility. The road, in addition to being connected to reinventing oneself, is seen by mobile characters as a viable place to

escape their lives, as mobility can provide an escape from the normal day-to-day life within the framework of society. There was a further increase in suspicion towards those who had embraced mobility as a part of their lives. It may be surmised that some types of mobile characters, such as tramps, could even be considered as a threat to the foundations of society, that would be eroded and thrown into disarray if the emergence of mobility was not expunged from American culture.

At the same time as posing a national threat, “mobility slotted quite nicely into an ideology that placed mobility right at the heart of American national identity” (14). There is thus an inherent tension associated with mobility, as it is regarded as a danger to the sanctity of the American way of life and simultaneously as a “uniquely American geographical and historical experience guaranteeing freedom, opportunity and independence” (21). Mobile characters, such as tramps, find themselves in a tight bind between the negative and positive elements associated with mobility.

This is not to say that there is not a subversive element contained within mobility – the road narratives that appear in Dylan’s lyrics are more than just a deviation from and rejection of social norms, even if they are that, too. The thesis focuses on road narratives because there are numerous examples of mobile narratives in Dylan’s songs that revolve around a road. The image of the road can also be seen as symbolising opportunity. An alternative way of viewing mobility and opportunity to Cresswell’s suggestion above, which also serves to remind that the motives of each mobile character are unique, is put forward by Brigham, in that “many road scholars understand mobility as an inherently positive or liberating form of transgression that subverts and transcends social order” (9). Yet, Brigham believes that transgression and transcendence are not that different in their functions: both allow the individual to gain some autonomy over their own actions and choices.

At the root of the mobile characters’ yearning desire to exist outside of social norms in Dylan’s songs is a longing to be free of the values that have been decided by the society, oftentimes before they were even born. In this way, mobile characters may be approached as a reactionary force against the predominantly conformist ideology presiding over America in the 1960’s. This is

why it is useful to explore what kind of image Dylan creates of the society his mobile characters long to distance themselves from. To want to be free of societal constrictions is to desire a wider degree of autonomy to direct one's own life – or to have the autonomy to disregard the whole idea of pursuing anything.

2.4. Mobility and Place

The issues in the following subsection consist of the comparison between mobility and stagnation, the social ostracisation associated with the mobile characters, as well as the role of place and sedentarism as a point of comparison to mobility. While it cannot be said that mobile narratives would have faced deliberate exclusion in the American cultural milieu, the lack of differing perspectives towards mobility in the stories representing mobile characters within the cultural narratives of America seems to give an imprecise picture of the American people as a whole. I scrutinise in the following paragraphs how this issue stagnates the concept of place, when even the representations of mobile characters are based solely on the viewpoint of mainstream society. It is important to study place because it provides a contrasting concept to mobility and because it features in many of Dylan's songs which relate to the concepts of freedom and mobility. Places, often in the form of a home, are alluded to by some mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics, such as the speaker of "Down the Highway" and "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues", as it provides brief moments of respite amidst their predominantly mobile lifestyle, as explored in analysis sub-chapters 3.2. and 3.3.

Mobility is oftentimes approached as something that entails the disruption of the prevailing cultural matrix (Malkki); for example, if the mobile lifestyle of vagabonds or even immigrants is not controlled, it presents a threat to the rest of society. It is often forgotten that mobile characters do not necessarily choose the outcast lifestyle for themselves and may, in fact, be considered as victims of circumstance. As mentioned before, being too mobile often carried the implication of such an individual being a threat to the moral rules of "place-based communities" (Cresswell *The*

Tramp, 16). Underlying this belief in the essentiality of place in modern human civilisation is an idea known as the metaphysics of sedentarism, which “treats mobility as socially dysfunctional or pathological” (Morley 59). I have included the concept of sedentarism in this thesis because the stagnation that mobile characters fear will result from sedentarism represents antipathy of the type of freedom which Dylan’s mobile characters seek by remaining mobile. The concepts of mobility and sedentarism are often reduced to a black and white binary in the social sciences. An individual’s roots tie them to a fixed place, where culture in itself becomes static. This antagonistic relationship between mobile characters and the rest of society creates an ever disparaging gulf between the two. The identity of the mobile character and its negative associations are internalised by the person who finds themselves at the edge of society. Related to this issue is Dylan’s song “My Back Pages”, where he reassures his listeners that “we’ll meet on edges, soon, said I” in an act of solidarity towards those alienated by the larger cultural matrix.

In late nineteenth century, continuing into the twentieth century, mobility “played the role of a suspect other” (Cresswell *The Tramp*, 16) and was heavily contrasted with the familiarity and security that place carries with it. It must be recognised that an inherent human need for the creation of order and homeliness is related to this notion of place – even in the direst of situations. The mobile characters may be seen to struggle with this predicament, often resisting any need for place in the traditional sense of the word in favour of a more independent way of living their own life and redefining where they gather and construct their sense of place from. Mobile characters attempt to resist the ambivalent attitude towards themselves by those from within consensus society, who view the need to reinforce order and control over mobile characters – the so-called free agents. Perhaps the very converse is true, and the mobile characters are in fact fighting against the perceived inactivity of the sedentary.

Be that as it may, the mobile character must come to terms with their otherness, as their “freedom [is] often associated with mobility [and] always occurs in relation to conflicts around the introduction of spatial and social otherness” (Cresswell *The Tramp*, 10). In other words, the

otherness inherent to mobile characters is impossible to avoid, as exercising their freedom automatically sets them apart from the more mainstream way of American life, with its close relation to domestic life and being a productive member of society.

Yi-Fu Tuan, a humanistic geographer, concurs with Cresswell's assertion of the assumed threat that mobility presents to "rooted, moral, authentic existence of place" (*The Tramp*, 14), insinuating that place is a prerequisite for the stability of the moral world, without which the very notion of authentic existence and meaning would be thrown into disarray. Tuan describes place as a moral concept, easily associated with the cosiness of a home. Involvement and commitment are related to the notion of place, insinuating that mobility connotes a lack of responsibility and absence of adherence to any creed of shared values. Therefore mobile characters are easily seen as uncommitted and unconnected – in terms of respectable society, mobile characters very well may be. At the same time, it could be argued that the types of mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics, namely hobos and criminals, are simply committed to a different set of values. They deem the aspects attributed to a mobile lifestyle, such as living outside of the status quo and rejecting a domestic lifestyle, as something that deepens their connection to their own life. Through this rejection, a sense of purpose is provided by mobility that living within the confines of society could not provide.

When place is also seen as "most important significance giving factor in human life" (Cresswell *On the Move*, 15), the disposition of the general public may tend to be a fearful attitude towards those individuals that are putting mobility into practice, becoming increasingly suspicious of the threat their mobility presents to the shared values and the way of life of those within consensus society. Place, it is held, is something without which a mobile character is living in a world without significance, since meaning in life is derived from a sense of belonging for those within the constraints of society, outside of which a sense of belonging is supposedly not possible to achieve. The relevancy of place for mobile characters will be explored further in the analysis section *Rejection of Domestic Life*.

3. Analysing the Mobility and Freedom of Dylan's Mobile Characters

The analysis portion of this investigation has been divided into three subsections: mobility and travelling away from home, existence outside of social norms as well as the rejection of domestic life. In each subsection, particular attention has been paid to the mobile characters present in Dylan's lyrics and how the mobile characters stand in relation to freedom and the aforementioned themes. Freedom is usually expressed through the motif of travelling, which plays a role in his lyrics, for example, in "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues", where the narrator resolves to "g[o] back to New York City / I do believe I've had enough" (179). It was also found that this mobility is often used to refer to returning back home and not always away from home, which will be explored in 3.3.

3.1 Mobility and Travelling Away from Home

When studying the freedom that the wandering figures represent in Dylan's songs, the most central aspect that this gallery of personages shares amongst themselves is their mobility. This mobility could be conceptualised as a form of resistance against the social norms of American society, of which the domestic sphere is a primary feature. The listener can find repeated instances of mobile characters going against the grain in Dylan's songs and pursuing what they want themselves. The aspects that will be explored in this subsection can be divided into opportunity and mobility, the possibility to choose a mobile lifestyle, as well as the way that mobility surfaced in the countercultural revolution.

As was outlined in the introduction, travelling is a common motif of Dylan's lyrics, especially in his 1960's output. When tying the recurrent motif of travelling in Dylan's songs to a wider American cultural context, Daniel Boorstin's *The Americans: The National Experience* provides some useful insights into the American attitude towards freedom. Boorstin argues that Americans "valued the freedom to move, hoping in their very movement to discover what they are looking for. Americans thus valued opportunity, or the chance to seek it, more than purpose" (95).

This quote also illustrates how the concepts of freedom and mobility are inextricably tied to one another in America. By the same token, opportunity seems to be valued as a higher ideal than purpose in the American ethos surrounding an individual's freedom.

After all, the American road stories carry the promise of opportunity, often in the form of employment. Katie Mills sees the road stories "as vehicles for Americans' sense of the self as autonomous and mobile" (3), meaning that the opportunity associated with travelling is seen as an essential component of American mobility, especially when considering issues of self-governance and the freedom of the individual. The character of Dylan's song "Motorpsycho Nightmare" fits this depiction, as the song tells a story of a weary traveller who "pounded on a farmhouse, lookin' for a place to stay". His weariness is betrayed by how he is "mighty, mighty tired", having "come a long, long way".

"Motorpsycho Nightmare" follows a man seeking shelter on the road. The focus of the following analysis centres around the way this particular mobile character is received by the people he encounters travelling away from home. The song tells the story of a wandering doctor, if the narrator of the story is to be believed, as he also says he "was born / at the bottom of a wishing well". Mistaken for a "travelin' salesman" by the owner of the farm he had come across, this story of a doctor on the road could be taken as an example of downward social mobility. Thus the travelling salesman has no other choice but to make the most of the opportunities he faces while being mobile. The line "by the dirt 'neath my nails / I guess he knew I wouldn't lie" seems to endorse this claim that the travelling doctor has had to resort to work involving manual labour. It also works as an indication that visual signs of manual labour are connected to an individual's sense of good character and trustworthiness, even though there is definitely very strong initial skepticism that the farmer has towards the narrator, as "he'd stuck a gun into my guts". The narrator proceeds to fall down, and on bended knee "[say], I dig farmers / Don't shoot me, please!". The use of such a slang word as "digging" is used to indicate mutual respect towards farmer, but it also serves to reveal that the narrator is hip to how English was spoken amongst the youth of the 1960's. This

difference in the vernacular of these two men foreshadows that there may be more confrontation between the men and their differing social realities later on in the song.

Towards the climax of the song when events begin to escalate, the “unpatriotic / Rotten doctor Commie rat”, as he ends up being characterised by the farmer, decides the only way he can escape the advancements of Rita, the farmer’s daughter, is by yelling “I like Fidel Castro and his beard”. The travelling salesman is not characterised as a communist before this provocative proclamation. In an attempt to purposefully provoke and aggravate the farmer into chasing him out of the house, the travelling salesman plays on the fears that many an American would project onto mobile characters: of holding beliefs in direct opposition to mainstream Americans, who would have felt that communism is a direct threat to the American way of life. The clash of capitalism and communism was only exacerbated by the sociopolitical context of the early 1960’s, namely the effect of the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) on the general predisposition towards communism during that time in America. The reason the travelling salesman uses such a desperate measure to get out of a difficult situation is because he had agreed to not touch the farmer’s daughter as one of the conditions for him being allowed to stay the night. He also feels it would be too rude to leave without milking the farmer’s cows first: “Well, I couldn’t leave / Unless the old man chased me out / ‘Cause I’d already promised / That I’d milk his cows”. With this song, the audience is confronted by a mobile character who feels a sense of obligation to complete the chores that he had previously promised to do. This sort of sense of obligation towards promises made stands in stark opposition with the nature of a mobile character, at least through the perspective of a cultural context where the mobility of an individual has been seen as a threat by default. Instead of finding the promised opportunity that American culture has projected onto a mobile lifestyle, the travelling salesman is actually restricted to a very limited amount of choices; in his view, “As I seen him get his gun”, there is no choice but to run “down the road”.

At the same time, the song shows another type of mobility: the ability to adjust one’s plans in accordance with the changing circumstances. Once the narrator realises that he “knew I had to

split / But I didn't know how / When she said / 'Would you like to take that shower, now?'" , he makes a somewhat dramatic decision to get himself out of a predicament, as he says "Oh, no! No! / I've been through this before". An allusion to Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Psycho* is made, as Rita reminds the travelling salesman of Tony Perkins, the actor of Norman Bates in *Psycho*, a dangerous figure; the motel to which Rita moves to work at in the last stanza of the song serves to allude to the movie as well. Depictions of mobility in the song are not restricted to the more traditional mobile characters, as even the farmer's daughter Rita exercises her individual freedom to move away from home. The song suggests that freedom and mobility are exciting from the point of view of Rita, who wants to realise her yearning for an existence as seemingly care-free as that of the mobile character's:

Me, I romp and stomp

Thankful as I romp

Without freedom of speech

I might be in the swamp

A certain type of attractiveness is implied to the mobile character, which could be attributable in part to the fact that the mobile character of the song exercises his freedom to its fullest extent. This attractiveness could also be explained through the mythical way mobile characters are depicted in American folklore. Perhaps an aspect of danger and unpredictability that is associated with mobile characters serves to make the mobile characters more interesting and exciting. A common occurrence in American folklore, the lyrics in Dylan's songs showcase some degree of acknowledgement towards the romanticisation associated with wandering figures.

In addition, the narrator's identification of himself as a rat in the line "I was sleepin' like a rat" further illustrates the mobile nature of this character because rats are often seen as a nuisance and a danger to the food storages of the average American living in an agrarian context on a farm.

The song gives a glimpse into the circumstances that may surround a mobile character and the sort of reputation he builds, travelling from one place of rest to another. He encounters many different people, reminiscent of the way Huckleberry Finn meets many characters on his journey with the slave Jim (cf. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*), and the mobile character's need for shelter is often dependent on the benevolence of strangers. A certain kind of image is created of America in the way mobile characters are received by those within the confines of mainstream society. Brigham explores the anxiety concerning mobile figures in *American Road Narratives* and argues that the difficulty in being able to categorise and identify any individual with relative ease becomes a point of contention when investigating the nature and shared characteristics or traits of a mobile figure (5). The inability to understand the motives of mobile characters becomes a source of anxiety for the average American, made all the more difficult when one considers the sheer variance amongst different mobile characters. What is forgotten by the rooted population of America is that mobile characters are enacting their ideal of what America as a land of freedom stands for, but they do not necessarily actualise their ideals in the same way. For example, the travelling salesman enacts his freedom to its fullest extent, as he stomps and romps as he pleases.

When analysing the mobile characters in Dylan's songs, the listener should also consider whether they have chosen the mobile lifestyle themselves, or whether they have had no other option than embracing a mobile lifestyle. This may mean that a mobile lifestyle is not as free as one would assume on first glance. After all, if one is forced into a mobile lifestyle, one cannot be said to be exercising one's freedom when adopting a mobile lifestyle. The travelling doctor in "Motorpsycho Nightmare" could be an example of a person who had no choice but to adapt to a more mobile lifestyle, as this example of downward mobility could suggest that the character is an example of mobility out of necessity, evidenced by the "dirt 'neath my nails". The promise of opportunity disappoints the expectations of mobile characters because, in reality, the choices of mobile characters are severely limited.

The character of the song finds some connection with Philippe Margotin's description of the hobo character as "a vagabond or tramp, traveling by train throughout America and offering his services to farms to earn enough money to survive" (351), as the travelling salesman is also on the road, "[pounding] on a farmhouse / Lookin' for a place to stay". Margotin and Jean-Michel Guesdon's book *Bob Dylan: All the Songs: The Story behind Every Track* affirms that this type of hobo character was a "key figure in early twentieth-century American society" (351) and stands in relation to the array of mobile characters and narratives that Dylan is bringing forth in his songs.

In the case of the post-Civil War emergence of tramps as a new type of mobility in the American cultural milieu, many veterans were forced to travel from town to town in search of work (see Cresswell's *The Tramp*). These veterans did not have any other option than to hit the road in search of work. This holds relevance in the inspection of mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics, as it provides a good representation of how radical social change may result in an exponential rise in mobility.

If the context of the countercultural revolution of the 1960's was contrasted with the narratives of American mobility found in Dylan's lyrics from the same decade, then his songs could be viewed as generating an indirect commentary on the type of freedom that the hippie movement exercised during that time. By the end of the 1960's, many individuals were forsaking the culture that they had been brought up in due to the predestined lives that the customs and norms of post-World-War II America brought into existence. Reasons for this disillusionment towards American culture partly emerged from the disillusionment towards the Vietnam War as well as racial segregation on a national level. While nineteenth-century mobile characters had been forced into mobility out of necessity to survive and make a living because they had no other option, the mobile characters of the 1960's introduced the concept of personal agency into the discourse surrounding mobile characters. This relates to the discussion above about the supposed threat that mobility poses to mainstream values as it shows that attitudes of fear towards mobility stretch further back.

Where mobility had been seen as a threat to mainstream values, mobility began to be celebrated in popular culture at an unprecedented scale, in movies such as *Easy Rider* in 1969, showing that not all mobile characters were necessarily victims of circumstance, but individuals whose ideals and values were in such distinct contrast with the rules and regulations of American society that they yearned for a better system in terms of more humane values and more personal freedom. When considering how freedom appears in “Motorpsycho Nightmare” from the point of view of Berlin’s terminology, it may be found that the main character has the capacity to make his own decisions, which is an example of positive liberty. In terms of negative liberty, the limiting factors on the protagonist’s freedom are present in the rules that the farmer enforces on the travelling doctor when residing under his roof.

Many songs by Dylan allude to a certain freedom that cannot be achieved or reached without going away and seeing what travelling can show one. The narrator of “A Hard Rain’s A-gonna Fall” recounts what he has seen, heard, and who he has met while away from home, far away stumbling “on the side of twelve misty mountains”. The song uses a “repetitional device typical of many traditional folk songs” in the repeated use of the verbs to be / see / hear / meet / do (Wilde 126). When the narrator says that he “Heard ten thousand whisperin’ and nobody listenin’”, it exemplifies the idea that a lot of narratives go unheard within the social matrix. Mobile characters get thrown to the wayside, like “the song of a poet who died in the gutter”. Perhaps the narrator fails to recognise how the current American way of life is producing casualties before having “been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard”. It could also be argued that the narrator is not providing any solutions or changes to long-standing cultural values. Instead, the lyrics seem to indicate the shortcomings of current cultural values and the corruption inherent in it: “I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken” paints a picture of a consensus society where something has gone awry with its “crooked highways”, bringing into question existence inside cultural norms that allow for such societal shortcomings.

“A Hard Rain’s A-gonna Fall” is “an unashamed profession of solidarity with the powerless and oppressed” (Wilde 116). In the last repetition of the “inaugurative question and the concluding refrain” (Ricks 331), the mobile character is enquired as to what he will do next, with all that he has experienced within the preceding stanzas: “Oh, what’ll you do now, my blue-eyed son? / Oh, what’ll you do now, my darling young one?”. Proclamations to “reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it” have the narrator avow to continue bringing a voice to those mobile characters that have fallen to the wayside and are either underrepresented or misrepresented in the American cultural landscape, and show “Where the people are many and their hands are all empty / Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters”. Mobile characters who usually exist at the periphery of mainstream culture are thus championed at the forefront of American culture through the songs of Dylan. While the speaker of the song may be regarded as mobile, so can the “clown” and the “poet” who are mentioned in the song: we hear “the sound of a clown who cried in the alley” as well as “the song of a poet who died in the gutter”, which seems to suggest some crossover in the identity of artistic performers with homelessness and implying that a poet and clown are closely related to mobile characters. There is some crossover between the identity of the artist and that of a mobile character, the implication being that mobile characters, much like artists, seek an alternative and even clearer perception of the actual state of affairs in the general cultural landscape of America. This is exemplified by how outsiders of society such as mobile characters are considered.

3.2. Existence Outside of Social Norms

This subchapter consists of analysing the mobile characters’ existence outside of social norms in Dylan’s lyrics, which also tie depictions of mobility to the American past (Pichaske 103). Dylan “was to take the persona of the drifter and the outlaw from the folk and radical tradition personified by Woody Guthrie and translate them into the very different world and experience of 1960’s urban America” (Gamble 50). On top of this, negative considerations towards mobile characters are explored, as existing outside of social norms places mobile characters in opposition to the status

quo. The distrust towards the motives of individuals was tangible in the previously analysed song, “Motorpsycho Nightmare”: it revealed that the three subsections under which mobility and freedom in Dylan’s lyrics surface are inextricably tied to each other to form a more complete exposé of the lives of mobile characters. Moreover, the distrust towards existence outside of social norms often results in feelings of rejection. Attention is drawn to the aspect of rejection and loneliness in the song “I am a Lonesome Hobo”. The analysis also shows that mobile characters are utilised in Dylan’s songs as a tool to criticise the mainstream society.

Dylan’s *John Wesley Harding* album touches on numerous themes pertaining to mobility and social norms, and there is a very strong yearning to escape the rule-enforcing atmosphere of American culture into a mythical America, as is exemplified by the joker’s and thief’s conversation in “All Along the Watchtower”: “‘There must be some way out of here,’ said the joker to the thief / ‘There’s too much confusion, I can’t get no relief’”. The duo seeks an escape from the confines of normative society, as “There are many here among us who feel that life is but a joke”, hinting at a difference in attitude between mobile characters – one of whom is a criminal – and those within mainstream American society. Choosing to exist outside of social norms is an avenue through which these characters seek relief from the confusion they felt within society. On the one hand, the album does not portray the pursuit of an existence independent of societal constituents, divorced from the rules and regulations of society, as entirely easy. On the other, the lyrics in this album are clearly harking back to and romanticising a bygone age. Songs such as “I am a Lonesome Hobo” and “I Pity the Poor Immigrant” provide instances of mobility that are situated in nineteenth-century America.

Tramps, a pertinent example of the American mobile character, could be regarded as the very living embodiment of the freedom-infatuated values of America. However, the term tramp was coined in the 1870’s “to describe homeless or mobile people” (Cresswell *The Tramp*, 10), and this social type was dehumanised to the extent that respectable newspapers, such as the *Chicago Tribune*, advocated lacing supplies meant to be bought by tramps with arsenic in order to combat

situations “where one is not a member of the Humane Society” (9). This is relevant for this investigation because some of the characters that appear in Dylan’s lyrics are situated in the heyday of the Wild West in America. Often the guise that the narrative persona adopts in the songs is an actual person who lived and breathed.

On top of this, it must be kept in mind that the Wild West was still very much happening in the nineteenth century. It is important in regard to the analysis because the songs on *John Wesley Harding* offer nineteenth-century America as a backdrop for the mobile narratives to unfold in. The mythical America with its ideals of freedom, autonomy and independence was not very far gone in the early twentieth century. Gamble claims that “Dylan is recognised to embrace the romantic counter-image of the outlaw or drifter” (23), such as “John Wesley Harding”, a claim which bolsters the connection between freedom and outlaws that are both part of the American mythical narratives – as opposed to the negative assessment of mobile characters being seen as a threat to society.

“John Wesley Harding” tells the tale of a historically controversial folk icon – an outlaw and “a friend to the poor”, which speaks of solidarity towards those residing in a lower social class. Be that as it may, the ends of two stanzas distinctly commemorate his positive personality traits: “But he was never known / To hurt an honest man” and “For he was always known / To lend a helping hand”. Dylan is retelling the tale of a gunfighter, and while Harding is not explicitly praised, as “No charge held against him / Could they prove”, the song does not make any negative assertions about Harding. He is prepared to take the law into his own hands, as “He trav’led with a gun in ev’ry hand”. The song could be seen as challenging the widely and overwhelmingly negative image of this particular outlaw character, as he is adorned in vague descriptions as an elusive outlaw:

All across the telegraph

His name it did resound

But no charge held against him

Could they prove
And there was no man around
Who could track or chain him down
He was never known
To make a foolish move

The idea of the attractiveness of the mobile character is repeated in the fact that Harding had a female companion alongside him on his escapades: “’Twas down in Chaynee County / A time they talk about / With his lady by his side / He took a stand”. The elusiveness of the Harding character makes him all the more interesting, and nothing definite is told of him apart from the fact that “He trav’led with a gun in ev’ry hand”; the song thus manages to create an atmosphere of mystique and intrigue around the outlaw. Harding is romanticised in an effort to celebrate a character who is completely outside of social norms. As the song is the opening song on this particular album, it establishes a well-known mobile character as a template for mobile characters to strive towards and sets the scene in which the following mobile characters are able to reveal that mobility is not all it promises to be. With their cowboy aesthetic, the songs on *John Wesley Harding* hark back to an age close in proximity to the Wild West, which the mobile characters of these songs project their dream of America onto. On top of this, the opening of the second stanza draws up an image of a time when the telegraph was still in use. An extension of the negative liberty that Harding faces is exemplified in “For he was always known / To lend a helping hand”, as it shows that his does not let external restraints dictate what to do, even though the use of the telegraph was used in an attempt to restrict his freedom.

Appearing in the same album as the previous song, the song “I am a Lonesome Hobo” also tells the tale of a homeless and criminal character. The narrator says that “Once I was rather prosperous”, which may give the listener a clue that in this song we find another instance of downward mobility, as “There was nothing I did lack / I had fourteen-karat gold in my mouth / And

silk upon my back”. In terms of Berlin’s view on liberty, these images of wealth may be seen as a metaphor for positive liberty. Once this hobo had been self-sufficient, but now that he exists outside the confines of society, he has been forced to make decisions he would otherwise not have made: “I have tried my hand at bribery / Blackmail and deceit / And I’ve served time for ev’rything / ’Cept beggin’ on the street”. The last line assures the listener that the hobo has not lost all control over his own actions, as he has enough pride in himself as to not allow himself to beg for a living. His need to be independent in his survival would allow him to do something where he is still an active participant – as in stealing – but never allow himself to become reliant on the kindness of strangers.

Narrated in the first person, the song describes the hobo as being “Without family or friends / Where another man’s life might begin / That’s exactly where mine ends”. The weariness that is directed towards mobile characters is in this case mirrored in the hobo’s confession of his misgivings towards his brother, as “I did not trust my brother / I carried him to blame”. This results in the subsequent embarrassment that the hobo feels for holding these preconceptions in the first place, “Which led me to my fatal doom / To wander off in shame”. The hobo is trying to teach the listener a lesson: to keep others from repeating the same mistakes in order to avert the same fate which he suffers. This song ties in a view of freedom that was expressed in “Like a Rolling Stone” by Dylan: “When you got nothing, you got nothing to lose”. The hobo has nothing to lose, but is no more content for it; instead, he has become ashamed of his downward mobility. While Harding was romanticised in his song, the hobo sees himself as being beneath ordinary people, as he addresses the listeners as in a very formal manner:

Kind ladies and kind gentlemen

Soon I will be gone

But let me just warn you all

Before I do pass on

Stay free from petty jealousies

Live by no man's code
And hold your judgment for yourself
Lest you wind up on this road

The hobo hints at not being long for this world, but may be also referring to the fact that a mobile character does not remain constant in his defining characteristics and is in a state of constant flux, as he participates in a process of constant self-discovery through the risks associated with a mobile lifestyle, as one is more acutely aware of one's need to survive.

In this song we also find the influence of Woody Guthrie, who was also known for having included portrayals about marginal characters teetering at the edges of society, bringing the experiences of marginal mobile characters to the consciousness and consideration of a wider audience through the medium of popular song. The use of social outcast characters may be considered a facet of Dylan's social critique, appearing as a recurrent motif in his 1960's lyrics. Gamble contends that Dylan is "keeping alive the true American spirit" (27) by populating his songs with mobile characters, such as social outcasts, who are considered staples of the folk tradition (Brown). His songs provide a voice to marginal ways of existing in the world – narratives pertaining to mobility that are often left unexpressed. Mobile characters, such as the tramp and the hobo, provide the listener with an alternative outlook on the prevailing societal norms that determine how mobility is understood. This thought is echoed in "I am a Lonesome Hobo", where the narrator proclaims to "live by no man's code". Mobile characters have become unentangled with the modern world, disconnected "from their true selves and their true nature" (Gamble 15). The second stanza's ending illustrates that the hobo blames his own distrust of his brother, "Which led me to my fatal doom / To wander off in shame". It is left ambiguous whether the hobo chose to exist outside social norms in the first place, or whether he ended up on the margins of society because of his own actions.

In addition, Gamble argues that the mobile characters in Dylan's songs are in a process of trying to become free from the expectations of mainstream American culture, a culture which has distanced people from "from their true selves and their true potential. To escape from this entrapment individuals must either find redemption or escape" (36). Gamble also notes that "Dylan has always been attracted by the persona of the drifter, the outlaw, the vagabond, hard-travellin' with no fixed commitments or fixed abode" (36).

The song "I Pity the Poor Immigrant" on *John Wesley Harding* draws a rather lonely and callous picture of the mobile character, who "in end is always left so alone". Robert Shelton, in *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan*, makes a link to an old Scottish ballad "Come All Ye Tramps and Hawkers", which Dylan had borrowed the melody from for "I Pity the Poor Immigrant". This is relevant for the present study, as it shows that even the way in which the song's words have been formulated alludes to this connection between mobile characters, such as tramps and hawkers, that extend beyond the purely literary forms in which this surfaces in Dylan's lyrics. "I Pity the Poor Immigrant" paints a much more callous image of the mobility of the immigrant:

I pity the poor immigrant
Who wishes he would've stayed home
Who uses all his power to do evil
But in the end is always left so alone
That man whom with his fingers cheats
And who lies with ev'ry breath
Who passionately hates his life
And likewise, fears his death

As Americans are predominantly a nation of immigrants, one way of interpreting "I Pity the Poor Immigrant" is from the point of view of the Native Americans, the original inhabitants of the North American continent. The immigrant expanding westward is depicted as someone who has an

insatiable appetite “And who builds his town with blood”. The line “Who eats but is not satisfied / Who hears but does not see” exemplifies this need to constantly consume without any satisfaction and depicts the mobility of a larger group of people. The song is dealing with mobility from a different perspective than the other songs, namely the mobility of the European immigrants who began to settle into America in the late 1600’s. The song may be critiquing the American society as a whole, in particular its materialistic and individualistic values. The lifestyle that mobile characters lead draws into question the blind acceptance of such values as being fulfilling in themselves. While the materialism of consensus society is quite directly rejected, one point of deliberation would be whether mobile characters stand in opposition to the glorification of individualism. Since Dylan’s mobile characters seem to follow their own whims, they at least in this respect have not rejected the values of the normative cultural sphere as they are exercising their agency to execute their individualistic values by dropping out of the mainstream. In terms of negative liberty, mobile characters need the existence of the mainstream society to be able to exercise their freedom from this society. Without the existence of the mainstream society, the mobile characters would lose the very reason that they seek an escape from.

Social ostracisation, or by the very least existence outside of social norms, is also shown to be an inescapable by-product of mobility in Dylan’s lyrics. It is worth considering whether this existence outside of the traditional framework of society leads to the alienation of the characters in Dylan’s lyrics, like the poor immigrant “who wishes he would’ve stayed home” in “I Pity the Poor Immigrant”. An impression is created that the pitied immigrants are above the normal hierarchy of society. Going beyond the social norms may perpetuate one’s exclusion from mainstream culture.

Dylan’s song “Mr. Tambourine Man” could be seen as being told from the first-person view of a mobile character. Addressing the Tambourine Man, the speaker says “I’m not sleepy and there is no place I’m going to” which could allude to having no fixed abode – placelessness – which is the fate attributed to the mobile characters in Dylan’s songs. The speaker also says: “Take me on a trip upon your magic swirlin’ ship”. This alludes to the romanticisation of mobility. The song may be

trying to relate a sense of perpetual tiredness from having to be on one's toes constantly when mobile. The tiredness related to a mobile lifestyle is present in how "My weariness amazes me, I'm branded on my feet". This tiredness is found in "Motorpsycho Nightmare" as well, where the wandering doctor was "mighty, mighty tired / [having] come a long, long way". There is an implication that the speaker of the song is at least strongly sympathetic towards mobile characters, or is in fact a mobile character themselves. Dylan seems to conflate the identity of a wandering troubadour with that of other mobile characters, such as tramps.

As the previous paragraph illustrates, there is an inherent rootlessness associated with tramps and other figures of mobility in Dylan's lyrics. After all, is it possible "to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free" ("Mr. Tambourine Man") if one is deeply entrenched in the framework of society? Perhaps this lack of responsibility is an aspect that further propagates the sentiment that tramps are seen as an unwanted, almost parasitic entity that is trying to destroy the foundations of American values of hard work.

The idea of rejecting the values and rules of mainstream society has been enquired in a William Burroughs-esque song of Dylan's called "Subterranean Homesick Blues" where the narrator is saying "don't follow leaders". Here we find an example of negative liberty, as these leaders would set limits on what one is allowed to do and what one is not allowed to do. In effect, following leaders would stifle one's individual freedom as one would become subservient to following a leader, which would limit one's mobility. The song also gives a frenetic depiction of what it is like to live surrounded by cultural expectations where you "Try hard, get barred, get back, ride rail / Get jailed, jump bail, join the Army if you fail". Stepping outside the bounds of social norms is present in the first two lines of the song as well, as they allude to the production of a "medicine", but as it is mixed in the basement, one may ponder whether this is an extension of the criminal proclivities connected to mobile characters earlier in this subchapter:

Johnny's in the basement

Mixing up the medicine

I'm on the pavement

Thinking about the government

Having these characters appear in the same scene makes the character “on the pavement” complicit in what Johnny is doing, connecting the idea of criminal behaviour with “Thinking about the government”. The speaker of the song is giving out advice in a listing manner that builds up to the repeated phrase “Look out kid, it’s something you did”, purporting a sense of being guilty before being proved innocent just because of one’s outside appearance, not to mention race, sexuality or class. The song conjures up an existence in a state that is oftentimes connected to the fear and suspicion that is directed towards mobile characters.

3.3 Rejection of Domestic Life

The issues explored in the following analysis section pertain to the chaotic representation of the domestic sphere in Dylan’s lyrics, as well as the claustrophobia and stagnation that he relates to this sphere in his songs. There is a dichotomy between confinement and spaciousness which is also explored, as the mobile characters seek to escape and distance themselves from their personal problems through mobility. Choosing to embrace mobility offers an escape to the problems related to the domestic sphere, but also reveal that this escape can often end up being an empty pursuit. Mobile characters in Dylan’s songs are tempted to go back to the domestic sphere, which is exacerbated by a sense of involvement with familial or romantic bonds back home.

In contrast to the allure of the domestic sphere, boots appear in Dylan’s songs as a symbol for mobility, such as in “Boots of Spanish Leather” and “The soles of my feet, I swear they’re burning” (“The Wicked Messenger”). Footwear may be regarded as a symbol against the mobile character’s perception of the rooted nature of the domestic sphere. Even in a state of numb stupor the speaker wants to “Wait only for my boot heels to go a-wondering” (“Mr. Tambourine Man”),

indicating footwear to be essential for mobility and walking, especially when one “is ready to go anywhere”. The presence of some woe weighing down on the protagonist is evident from how he asks to “Let me forget about today until tomorrow”, which seems to indicate that there is something in the mobile character’s life that he wishes to forget, perhaps by escaping the domestic sphere.

Travelling away from home, besides being an essential component of becoming an American for mobile characters, carries connotations towards an American conceptualisation of realising one’s freedom. In my analysis I have found trouble to be connected to the idea of adversity in one’s personal life in Dylan’s song “Down the Highway”: “Right now I’m havin’ trouble / Please don’t take away my highway shoes”. The recurring motif of the mobile character’s highway shoes is present, which seem to stand for a mobile character’s ability to remain mobile and able to execute their personal freedom. In addition, the idea that being mobile is a way in which this character deals with and processes his own ‘trouble’ is apparent in this line. By stepping out of one’s ordinary life, situated within the confines and rules of the American society, one could “reconnect to what mattered” (Brigham 2). By choosing to adopt a mobile lifestyle in the face of uncertainty in one’s habituated life, one could find release in following one’s desire to break free from the rules of society that constrained one’s personal freedom.

In the song “Down the Highway” the familiar theme of the road is featured in the title of the song. The protagonist is on foot and separated from his “baby”. Perhaps he is trying to catch a ride by lifting, as he does not seem to have been able to afford a car as his own mode of transportation:

Well, I’m walkin’ down the highway

With my suitcase in my hand

Yes, I’m walkin’ down the highway

With my suitcase in my hand

Lord, I really miss my baby

She’s in some far-off land

In this song the “baby” works as an anchoring element for the mobile character, even though “she’s in some far-off land”, acting out her own mobility. It could be argued that this “baby” is an anchoring element despite the distance between the two, because “my baby took my heart from me”. The fact that “she packed it all up in a suitcase / Lord, She took it away to Italy, Italy” could indicate a double entendre: the narrator’s heart is emotional baggage that she carries in her suitcase. The narrator’s counterpart is performing her own mobility, clearly away from home. Here we also find that a significant other’s presence is essential in the mobile character’s conceptualisation of home, as well as the idea that the mobile character is more at home on the road than in a domestic setting:

Well, your streets are gettin’ empty

Lord, your highway’s gettin’ filled

And your streets are gettin’ empty

And your highway’s gettin’ filled

In these lines, the emptying streets could be seen as metaphors for the old way of life, where the trouble offered by the highways is enticing more and more people to get off the streets and onto the highway. They could also be referring to the cultural shift in values in the 1960’s that was shedding the previous values of the stricter 1950’s of America. The Civil Rights Movement contributed significantly to this shift in equal rights regardless of race, gender, creed or sexual orientation. The resistance towards the Vietnam War, one of the first wars to be televised extensively in America, signalled a move away from McCarthy-type politics and the witch hunts for communists back in the 1950’s, which have been reflected on as being a decade of prosperity, conformity and consensus, while the 1960’s ushered in a turbulent decade filled with protest and disillusionment with the status quo of the 1950’s.

The song “From a Buick 6”, directly referencing a particular automobile, is another example of how inextricably tied a significant other, or even a travel companion of sorts such as a “graveyard woman, [who] you know she keeps my kid”, is to a sense of security: she provides physical protection to the mobile character, because “She keeps this four-ten all loaded with lead”. This is tied to the focus of this subchapter, as the domestic sphere is often represented through a significant other in Dylan’s songs pertaining to mobile characters. The relationship that the two have in the song is not a typical relationship, either. In this way, it rejects the way the domestic emerges within American society by depicting an alternative form of the domestic sphere. The type of sustenance provided sounds meagre and yet a staple for mobile characters: “She’s a junkyard angel and she always gives me bread / Well, if I go down dyin’, you know she bound to put a blanket on my bed”. The quote “Well, when the pipeline gets broken and I’m lost on the river bridge” further illustrates this stark opposition, or hesitance, presented towards domestic life. As soon as something goes awry, the man is all too quick to turn to mobility in search of his freedom: even a small infraction seems to be enough to the point where “I’m cracked up on the highway and on the water’s edge”.

The title of “On the Road Again” would seem to indicate that the story would be set outside of a domestic setting, but the song flips the listener’s expectations by having the song consist of small instances situated in a domestic setting. The refrain of each of the five verses is “Then you ask why I don’t live here / Honey, do you have to ask?”, signalling a rejection of wanting to live in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the domestic setting. The second line of the refrain changes in each stanza, changing from “Honey, how come you have to ask me that?” in the second stanza to “Honey, I gotta think you’re really weird” and “Honey, I can’t believe that you’re for real” in the third and fourth stanzas. The last reprising line in the fifth stanza has a slight alteration of the second line as well, with the last refrain being “Honey, how come you don’t move?”. The speaker may be alluding to the mobility that the speaker’s life could lack if he did move in to live with his significant other’s family. What is more, the uncertainty of survival, oftentimes attributed to the mobile sphere instead of the domestic one, is evident in how “Everything inside my pockets / Your

uncle steals”. The speaker also has “got a hole / Where my stomach disappeared”, indicating that the security that the domestic place promises is not always guaranteed. The song also builds up a very chaotic and even absurd picture of the domestic sphere:

Well, I woke up in the morning

There's frogs inside my socks

Your mama, she's a-hidin'

Inside the icebox

Your daddy walks in wearin'

A Napoleon Bonaparte mask

One would think to associate this sort of frenetic assortment of instances with the sphere of mobility, because the domestic sphere is traditionally tightly related to a sense of order, but instead this assumption is turned on its head. The mobile lifestyle, in contrast, seems like the safer alternative to the domestic sphere in the song. While mobility is often seen as a threat, in Dylan's lyrics mobility seems to provide an escape from the absurdity that exists in the domestic sphere. Instead of being a place of safety, the absurdity evident in the lines of the song showcase how the domestic sphere has become rooted in unpredictability.

In mobility studies, stagnation is set side by side with rootedness. The value of safety is linked to the idea of rootedness, ensuring a sense of continuity. Stagnation is found in the song because the narrator gives the impression of the domestic sphere as nothing new. He has come to expect the individuals in the domestic sphere to be consistent in their chaotic nature, which is disorienting for the narrator. Some of the mobile characters in Dylan's songs, such as the protagonist of “On the Road Again”, may be seen to be embracing a mobile lifestyle. He regards this sense of security gained by domesticity as an illusion that creates a false sense of security. To the mobile character, the comfort gained through living in a context where “Your grandma prays to

pictures / That are pasted on a board” and people interfere with your personal affairs is superfluous, where “The mailman comes in” and “Even he’s gotta take a side” is not safe in the way one would expect one’s home to be (“On the Road Again”).

The interplay between mobility and stagnation that is identified by Cresswell can be found in Dylan’s songs as well; for example, “Visions of Johanna” associates a sort of claustrophobia with domesticity. In this song, the counterpart of mobility is evoked, and this stagnation in the room is depicted through the personification of an inanimate object that fills the speaker’s mind: “the heat pipes just cough” as “we sit here stranded, though we’re all doin’ our best to deny it”. There are other mobility-related words in this song as well: “escapades ... D train ... highway blues ... peddler ... road ... truck”. These words related to mobility serve as a connection between the mobile aspects of the song and remind the listener of the constant existence of mobility happening outside of the confines of the apartment, where “Lights flicker from the opposite loft”.

Where the previous song captures the atmosphere of stagnation in the uninterested attitude towards the mainstream entertainment that “The country music station plays soft / But there’s nothing, really nothing to turn off” it also provides a stark contrast to the spacious atmosphere of the beginning of the song “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues”, where the line “When you’re lost in the rain in Juarez / And it’s Eastertime too” is sung. It is then all the more surprising that the confinement witnessed in the setting of “Visions of Johanna” seeps into here as well. If anything, “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues” depicts how hard it is to live wholly outside of the culture one has been born into. The narrator misses home, saying “I’m going back to New York City / I do believe I’ve had enough” at the end of the song. After an extended period away from home, a common trope in narratives on mobility is the cyclical return back to the familiarity of the domestic sphere, only to need another mobile venture outside of the safety of the domestic sphere.

This presence of home on the road is explored further by Brigham. She argues that wherever mobile characters go, they end up forming a new space that is considered home (126-27). The investigation of this thesis is now confronted with a dilemma in relation to the placelessness that

has been related to mobility in this thesis, as “the home also represents narrative stability in the way it creates circularity and closure” (114). In “Down the Highway”, the main character clearly misses someone who becomes a metaphor for home. Other songs showcase characters that have resigned to the fate of placelessness, where the familiarity that a home provides only exists wherever they are or merely in the past (cf. “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”). It is indeed difficult to rid one of the ingrained search for an “alternative space of home or community” (Brigham 126), but Brigham insists that these new spaces end up feeling just as unfulfilling as the old spaces that the mobile characters are trying to leave behind. There is a longing, and “home as an ideal . . . seems to be just over the next horizon, but it is forever deferred” (Brigham 127). This ideal that Brigham identifies as a domestic ideal is identified as an opportunity that the mobile character seeks in an effort to stay alive.

In the face of such a consideration, the lifestyle of a mobile character is not necessarily one of rootlessness as the romantic ties of the mobile characters in Dylan’s songs often function as an element that strengthens the mobile character’s need for an escape from the domestic. The mobile narratives explored in his lyrics raise questions concerning what life trajectories are deemed culturally acceptable in America, as well as what qualifies as a home. While a mobile lifestyle carries the cultural baggage of containing a variety of mobile characters whose values may differ radically from each other to the extent that calling a character mobile may not warrant ascribing a shared outlook on life, the characters that carry out acts of mobility in their life are at odds with the strong presence of the concept of home in their mobile lifestyles.

The alluring safety of the domestic sphere remains in the periphery of some of Dylan’s mobile characters and even intensifies their need to be mobile, as the domestic sphere acts as a key driving force for mobile characters to return to mobility. Without the possibility of maintaining a mobile lifestyle, many of Dylan’s mobile characters are not able to actualise their ideal of personal freedom.

In the end, to be a mobile character does not mean a lack of community. Being mobile does not decrease a mobile character's sense of or need for belonging. Quite the opposite seems to be true, as their very willingness to lead a mobile lifestyle is precisely what makes them feel like they belong and highlights their ties to the domestic sphere. In cases such as these, some mobile characters are willing to sacrifice some of their freedom and mobility in order to receive some safety.

4. Conclusion

In Dylan's songs, there is an effort to purport a more humane window of perception into the lives of mobile characters, many of whom have spiralled into downward mobility. It has also been investigated in this thesis how mobile characters challenge prevailing sociocultural norms in Dylan's lyrics. One avenue of further deliberation that this investigation raises is related to what sort of commentary or insight the mobile characters afford in the analysis of Dylan's lyrics: are any of the American people actually free – even the mobile characters? When considering the majority of the American people, from the nation's inception and the days of the frontier to the countercultural revolution of the 1960's and the present day, Americans live surrounded by the free-market economy of the capitalist world.

Americans are irrevocably as well as unwittingly part of the culture, regardless of whether they inhabit a suburban cul-de-sac and have a steady job or exist in the periphery of society. Dylan's mobile characters appear to not be able to sever their ties completely with the rest of society. The characters carry the cultural baggage of the society they have found themselves at the fringes of. American society could be argued to reward those who give something back to the society by going to work, being obedient taxpayers. As a result, the American cultural machine does not afford any pity to the poorest of its citizens, the ones who the metaphorical hard rain of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" hits the hardest on and is felt the most by. They are precisely the "countless confused, accused, misused, strung-out ones an' worse" referred to in "Chimes of Freedom". Dylan, however, goes as far as to claim in his lyrics that not even those who work hard for a place in society are repaid for their efforts, as even after "20 years of schoolin' / and they put you on the day shift" ("Subterranean Homesick Blues").

Dylan's inclination towards mobility related themes had already been established in his first self-titled album, where even the names of borrowed songs hinted at the same motifs that would become commonplace in his discography (cf. "Highway 51", "Freight Train Blues"). If the scope of this research into mobile characters was extended beyond his 1960's albums, tracks and highways

and narratives of mobile characters would proliferate Dylan's lyrics in album names such as *Blood on the Tracks* (1975) and songs such as "Hurricane" (1975), which tells of the false trial given to Rubin Carter and would continue the proliferation of downward mobility and illustrating these unfortunate fates for the wider public. As this study finds, downward mobility recurs as a shared element of some of Dylan's mobility and freedom related songs. When considering the key findings of this thesis, it has been found that Dylan's songs fight against the notion that endorses the perpetuation of an antagonistic relationship between mobile and place-based individuals, in which the mobile are often ostracised and wholly defined on the basis of this one characteristic.

When assessing what unites Dylan's mobile characters, they seem to seek an escape from the grind of ordinary life through the adoption of a mobile lifestyle. The mobile characters are however not uniform in their backgrounds, as some have been forced into mobility while others seek to escape domesticity. Contrarily to what the investigation presupposed, this former type of mobile character, who makes the deliberate choice of being mobile, remains ultimately rooted in the ordinary domestic life. Their adoption of a mobile lifestyle stands as a rebellion against the oppression that they assume domestic life would otherwise enforce upon them. In contrast, place, by taking care of the mobile character's basic needs, eventually becomes a stagnant concept in their mind, and they seek to repeat the same cycle of escape onto the road, if only to be able to appreciate place upon returning once more. Going away allows for these male characters to return home with a newfound appreciation for place, until place becomes too claustrophobic again and the mobile character needs another excursion from their domestic life.

The existence outside of social norms relates to personal freedom through the mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics. Brigham posits that "mobility is not a method of freeing oneself from space, society, or identity but instead the opposite – a mode of engagement" (4). Through this lens, what is often regarded as escapism and lack of adherence to cultural norms may be instead understood as a means of existing and finding meaning in life that is just as valuable and valid and

to be considered on par with an existence within the framework of the larger society from which mobile characters are seeking escape from. Perhaps through engaging in a mobile lifestyle, the mobile characters of Dylan's songs are able to derive a sense of purpose and agency in their own life. Mobility seems to allow these individuals to form an identity that feels meaningful and authentic to themselves. Furthermore, this act of deviating from cultural norms regarding mobility could be exactly what fosters a sense of belonging and connection for them. Suspicion towards mobility and mobile characters today only serves to drive a deeper wedge between those who choose a mobile lifestyle and those who settle for a more traditional, domestic lifestyle.

The use of Berlin served as a theoretical foundation to understand the dynamics of how freedom is conceptualised in contemporary philosophy. This helped enrich the concept of freedom and determine what factors must be taken into consideration to understand mobility in relation to freedom, namely in the terms of negative and positive liberty.

When considering future research into how mobility and freedom surface in the mobile characters of Dylan's songs, a focus on female protagonists could be given more attention, because the presence of a female companion is often at the core of what is pulling the male mobile characters back home. Unfortunately, the scope of the present thesis left little space to include theory pertaining to gender aspects. Future studies could focus on the female counterparts to a larger extent and should definitely be considered in potential future studies of mobile characters in Dylan's lyrics. It would also be possible to investigate female instances of mobility beyond Dylan; Patti Smith or Joni Mitchell would provide ample examples of connections between mobility and freedom in their lyrics, with characters to go along with. On the other hand, it would be interesting to investigate to what degree female characters reject domestic life in Dylan's lyrics as well (cf. "Just Like A Woman").

Dylan's songs could be seen as an act of solidarity towards the outcasts of society, who would be left unseen and unheard by the more well-to-do American population. To belong to such a subsection that is barely recognised to have any value must be alienating: how could one ostracised

by one's own culture feel like they belong to any larger whole, if the larger cultural context does not accept their mobile way of life? In addition, many of Dylan's songs stand to show how similar the toils of mobile characters may be to the average American living inside the confines of mainstream society. His songs seek to remind the listener that mobile characters struggle with the same basic human struggles as any other human being: the need to be accepted – to feel like one belongs. Other romanticised outlaw characters, such as “John Wesley Harding”, seem to relish in their continued existence outside of consensus society. Having said that, the same basic human value is just as ascribable to a mobile character as a domestic character. As “I Shall Be Free No. 10” proposes, mobile characters “ain't different than anyone”.

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