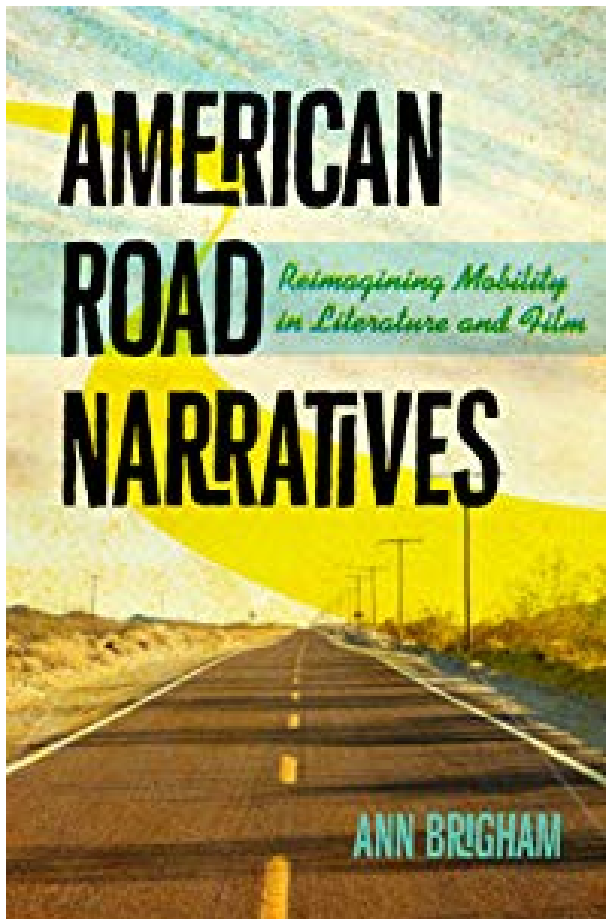


American Road Narratives: Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film



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The freedom to go anywhere and become anyone has profoundly shaped our national psyche. Transforming our sense of place and identity--whether in terms of social and economic status, or race and ethnicity, or gender and sexuality--American mobility is perhaps nowhere more vividly captured than in the image of the open road. From pioneer trails to the latest car commercial, the road looms large as a form of expansiveness and opportunity. Too often it is the celebratory idea of the road as a free-floating zone moving the traveler beyond the typical concerns of space and time that dominates the discussion. Rather than thinking of mobility as an escape from cultural tensions, however, Ann Brigham proposes that we understand mobility as a mode of engagement with them. She explores the genre of road narratives to show how mobility both thrives on and attempts to manage shifting conflicts about space and society in the United States. From the earliest transcontinental automobile narratives from the 1910s, through classics like Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and the film *Thelma & Louise*, up to post-9/11 narratives, Brigham traces the ways in which mobility has been imagined, created, and interrogated over the past century and shows how mobility promises, and threatens, to incorporate the outsider and to blur boundaries. Bringing together textual and cultural analysis, theories of spatiality, and sociohistorical frameworks, this book offers an invigoratingly different view of mobility and a new understanding of the road narrative's importance in American culture. Choice Outstanding Academic

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