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Travel Writing on Screen

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Re-Evaluation of Hidden Messages: RM Chapter 8 Response

I would like to take a focused approach to the Road Movie Book’s eighth chapter, specifically the subsection titled Amerika: Death, Disaster, and the Apocalypse. The opening to this section tells of a very real, yet seemingly ignored—by myself at least—historical accuracy. Nowadays, everything is becoming increasingly “politically correct.” However, Easy Rider and the beginning of this chapter have made it abundantly clear just how recently racism and intense prejudice were considered socially acceptable. I was blind to many “anti-prejudice” hidden messages throughout the movie. Example, the Road Movie Book recalls the dinner scene where Wyatt, Billy, and George “suffer … prejudicial treatment at the hands of the locals.” The locals would whisper obscenities to each other such as referring to the travelers as “refugees from a gorilla love-in.” If you think back to this scene, the movie almost portrays these locals as exaggerated or stereotypical rednecks. One man has oversized features including a large gut, big ears, and a big nose. One man is in mud-stained overalls, while another wears a trucker hat. Easy Rider even includes a crooked law enforcement officer cliché with yellow stained teeth, but it just works so well for the scene. All of these stereotypical features provide a message of ridiculousness towards prejudice which just so happens to mirror the Wyatt’s, Billy’s, and George’s reaction to the events in the dinner. The Road Movie Book also comments on the movie’s final scene: “As Wyatt’s motorcycle explodes into the flames, an aerial shot places the wreckage within the context of a landscape vista to clinch the tragic proportions of the assassination.” This shot may have a hidden message itself. Wyatt and Billy have again found themselves victims of prejudice and the aerial shot showing the scope of the land as it mirrors the scope of the tragedy is very powerful indeed. Prejudice was no longer be equated to a simple disliking of someone, it was being equated to a strong and irrational sense of hate and disgust which lead to the harm of another human being. My classmate’s comment before the movie was very accurate. Ignore the plot of this movie. The underlying themes give the movie value, not the plot.