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Natural Born Killers: the Significance of the Wedding Scene

Natural Born Killers grabs and shocks viewers with deviant visions of a fast life fantasy on the edges of society; presenting two lovers whose legacy will never be forgotten. It is rich with equal parts temptation and repulsion. It follows Mickey and Mallory, two psychopaths in love, as they travel across America in a rampage, leaving piles of mutilated corpses in their wake. The scene in *Natural Born Killers* where Mickey and Mallory decide to get married on the side of the road is an ode to the wild, crazy, irreplaceable love of two broken people who find their missing pieces in each other. It stands in strong, passionate opposition to American consumer capitalism and all that has previously been considered true love and holy union.

In the wedding scene, Mickey and Mallory begin by throwing the last of their possessions into a rushing ravine many feet below them and agree to marry each other while standing on the side of the road. Mickey officiates the wedding himself, speaking to himself in the third person when he asks, "Mickey, do you take Mallory to be your lawful wedded wife to have and hold and treat right until you die?" After a moment's pause, he answers his own question with "I do". Mallory grabs a threadbare sheet and ties it around her head like a long, gauzy durag to serve as a veil. Mickey slits his palm open and then does the same to hers, and they drip their blood into the canyon together.

This is Mickey and Mallory becoming their own gods, ascending past useless physical possessions, certifications, legal documents, and 9-to-5s into a higher plane with room only for the two of them. This is a rejection of American materialism and the American dream as a whole. The side of the road is their church, the ravine that stretches out below them is their aisle to walk down, a silver snake is their diamond. They have completely and totally stripped the American order of life, that is, school, work, townhouse, marriage, and children, of its value. They don't need dates, or a diamond ring, or a marriage certificate to make it real. The stinging in their palms is real, proof of their devotion, more so than a flimsy certificate could ever be. They have nothing, and need nothing, except each other. This is alien and dangerous in the American culture of housewives, breadwinners, and crying babies.

In the film, there is a large emphasis on the way mass media portrays crime and sensationalizes Mickey and Mallory's image. *Natural Born Killers* serves to condemn the way media coverage turns criminals into celebrity-like figures of fame and mystique. Mickey and Mallory become America's sweethearts without ever looking past each other. In their symbolic marriage bloodletting, they pledge allegiance to violence as the only currency of any importance. They know the difference between right and wrong, they just don't care. In not caring, they break free. Anywhere they go is the land of the free, the home of the brave. Despite its obvious immorality, it is undeniably romantic.

As a whole, *Natural Born Killers* celebrates chaos, violence, and doing whatever you can for a thrill. Mickey and Mallory don't buy into the classic structures of authority, including the nuclear family. They have no interest in trying to recreate and uphold these structures in their own lives. They care for nothing, for no one, they burn all they have to the ground and start again. The marriage scene is so significant

because it is a rare moment where Mickey and Mallory's humanity shows through their destruction and carelessness. Their roadside wedding doesn't feel blasphemous. It feels pure. Stripped of all the usual marriage fanfare, it is simply the two of them, souls bared, blood flowing freely, smiling and laughing together into the sky. They dance together in the sunset, and when Mallory says "it's very romantic, baby," their mutual adoration is tangible.

The scene opens with an aerial shot, moving over the couple until the stretch of earth in front of them comes into view. Mickey calls it "the road to hell in front of us". The camera's movement from above gives an impression that this scene is just one of many in a sprawling natural world, of canyons, trees, and rivers, of two people wandering forever in an endless maze of natural marvels, of living off the land. It feels wild and open, like a return to an overgrown world of natural beauty, long before buildings and jobs and industrialization. Long ago, before humans built up the earth, there were primal beings, there was adventure, and bloodshed. It wasn't money that took you to the top, it was courage and fight. Mallory, wearing a big blond wig whipping wildly about in the breeze, puts her hands in the air and sways, looking every bit like a majestic lioness, queen of the rugged landscape.

After they slit their palms, there is an animated section in the scene, depicting two red snakes spiraling around each other, evocative of the classic medical or hospital logo of two snakes wrapped around a pole. The snakes burst into bubbles, which upon clearing, expose a hole that looks like a cross between a rose and a portal. "We'll be living in all the oceans now," Mallory sings. To them, everything is symbolic. The very real consequences of their actions, bodies raped and pillaged and scattering floors countrywide, act to them as nothing more than symbols of their devotion and freedom. Cutting themselves will set snakes free to roam the oceans

eternally. Each time they kill it is their love being reborn. They always leave one person alive to say “Mickey and Mallory did it!” They are proud of their wreckage; they want “credit” for their crimes.

Earlier in the film, when Mallory talks of the beauty in their love, Mickey tells her, “that’s poetry, Mal”. Their killing spree, though undeniably evil, was not born out of sadistic malice. Everything they do, the essence of their relationship and their crimes, comes out of a deadbeat artist's desire for poetry, for symbolically immortalizing their lives and their love. Mickey and Mallory are serial killers and psychopaths, no doubt about it. But what they also are, is truly, madly, deeply, in love. Once, they also were victims of the American dream, with Mallory being abused by her dad and Mickey having staged a prison break shortly before meeting Mallory. It is undeniable that they are happier together, with blood on their hands and wind in their hair, then before in their respective entrapments.

The bigger picture begins to emerge here: they are not senseless murderers. They are escaping a structure that failed them and building an alternative on their own terms. Who could deny the magic of that? *Natural Born Killers* positions Mickey and Mallory’s love almost as justification for their crimes, and makes a compelling case in doing so. Can acts, no matter how blasphemous, done in the pure ecstasy of freedom and love, be anything less than quintessential Americana?

Natural Born Killers paints a world parallel to the one we know, sacred in its primal symbolism, seeped in blood offerings. The American public is disillusioned, bored of stuffing their life and love into the template already premade for them. This lack of satisfaction with everyday American living is not a new idea or fabrication presented for the first time in *Natural Born Killers*. In *The Diary of Anais Nin* (1931), Nin writes: “You live like this, sheltered, in a delicate world, and you believe you are

living. Then you read a book... or you take a trip... and you discover that you are not living, that you are hibernating. The symptoms of hibernating are easily detectable: first, restlessness. The second symptom (when hibernating becomes dangerous and might degenerate into death): absence of pleasure. That is all. It appears like an innocuous illness. Monotony, boredom, death. Millions live like this (or die like this) without knowing it. They work in offices. They drive a car. They picnic with their families. They raise children." *Natural Born Killers* is, to an extent, a reaction to the idea that if you follow in the path already paved for you, you are not living, but simply distracting yourself from your life, hibernating.

The public has been sheltered, caught up in a mass campaign to convince themselves they are living, starving for a spectacle. Mickey and Mallory know how to give them one, resulting in widespread adoration and accumulation of fans. Obviously, they are criminals whose actions should be condemned, but instead, It seems the whole world lives vicariously through their intense, passionate love and the wreckage left in its wake. *Natural Born Killers* serves as both a reflection of America's fascination with carnage, and an exploration of mad, deep, all-consuming love between two victims of trauma. The wedding scene exposes the intimacy, beauty, obsession, and severity of Mickey and Mallory's relationship otherwise obscured by all the gore.

Link to scene being discussed:

[Natural Born Killers - We're not murderin' anybody on our wedding day \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)