Jack and Sal: Voyagers of the Between

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I assert that through Sal's journey in On the Road, Kerouac navigates conflict between his social position in America and his disaffiliation from norms of American culture. As a result of this navigation, Kerouac engages us in an exercise, intended to expand our awareness of the nature of perception. I argue that through Sal's journey, Kerouac depicts Sal's freedom from the conventions of society through a series of complicated negotiations. Kerouac's emphasis on visual imagery enables him to delineate a journey as it emerges through the multiple and fragmented images that he observes and "sketches." Thus, meaning is welded and control exerted through his prose form. I suggest that because of the richness and precision of image, Kerouac's technique provides him with an active recording of consciousness rather than merely event. I explore the demands of his syntax upon the reader to assume the role of seer, his depiction of the road as a sphere of space that represents a perceptual between, and Sal's necessary mediation between the oppositional notions of disaffiliation and affiliation that his journey demands.

In an effort to examine Sal's attempt to regain command of perception and thus, recapture the sense that living is a process in which he is an active, journeying voyager, I first examine his preoccupation with the hobo culture that lurks in the underside of America. I suggest that his interest in hoboes stems from his belief in their ability to confront the unrestraining nature of existence, their ability to exist within the demand of the moment. I argue that Sal, like Kerouac, perceives these figures as breaking with standard behavior in order to rely on a complete engagement with and reactivity to the surrounding environment. Thus, they are able to access a wild, uninhibited freedom, which eludes most of society. Sensory experience emerges and serves as a means of detachment, from both society and the constrictions of time.

I then explore Sal's self-conscious awareness of his alienation from the rest of society. He, like Kerouac, represents the outsider. I assert that Sal's aim is to be asocial, not antisocial. As a result of his quest to free himself of dictates he perceives as imposed by community, he articulates an alternate tribal vision. Out of his disaffiliation from community, emerges a sense of affiliation with an alternative tribe-like society. I assert that Sal's experience on the road reflects a mediation between the realms of community and tribe through the notion of kinship, which bridges the community's terms to those of the tribe, and emphasizes sensory experience over that of personal emotion. As a result of Kerouac's depiction of Sal's shifting stance towards tribal values, he redefines the idea of community and thus, achieves an alternative notion of existence somewhere between these two realms that is inspired by the lifestyle of the road and all those figures affiliated with it.

Contents

Short Titles

LB: Charters, Ann., ed. The Beats: Literary Bohemians in Postwar America. Part 1: A-L, 2 Parts, 279-302. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1983.

PJK: Charters, Ann., ed. The Portable Jack Kerouac. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

GR: Holmes, John Clellon. "The Great Rememberer." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 575-595. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

PBG: Holmes, John Clellon. "The Philosophy of the Beat Generation." In On the Road Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 368-379. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

COTR: Hunt, Timothy A. "The Composition of On the Road." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 368-379. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

AAE: Hunt, Timothy A. "On the Road: An Adventurous American Education." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 534-537, New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

Essentials: Kerouac, Jack. "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 531-533. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

OTR: Kerouac, Jack. On the Road. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

KS: Tallman, Warren. "Kerouac's Sound." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 513-530. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

BC: Tytell, John. "The Broken Circuit." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 313-341. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

JOTR: Tytell, John. "The Joy of On the Road." In On the Road – Text and Criticism, edited by Scott Donaldson, 419-430. New York: The Viking Press, 1979.

Introduction

For Jack Kerouac, cars represent both intimacy and isolation. They embody thoughts of rescue and thoughts of capture, enticing the imagination. Representative of the paradoxical, both strong and curvaceous, cars manifest notions of freedom and confinement simultaneously. But more than the cramped and confining aura that surrounds cars, the privacy, the antisocial nature of continual motion, and the experience of scattered relationships appeal to Kerouac. A car is a means of becoming a voyager. While contained within the isolation of this intimate sphere as it hurtles through time and space, the fields, homes, and trees that exist beyond it seem different, changed by the barrier of the windshield, which distinguishes between outside and inside. From within the car, everything beyond it appears to be both moving and still. Thus, a single moment contains both familiar and extraordinary difference. Kerouac explores paradox through the voyager's perception.

Kerouac values the changing expression of an image's form, as it exists within the mind. He elicits visual imagery so as to imply that images themselves contain a life of their own upon entering the mind's realm. For Jack Kerouac, the idea that something can be looked at so often that it is no longer seen, drives him to "'Always pull back...and see how...it all must look to God'" (Holmes, GR, 582). By disengaging oneself from the moment, that moment becomes independent of time, something in and of itself. The result of breaking with the continuum of time is a feeling of immediacy. And this sense of immediacy is precisely what Kerouac seeks to achieve through his writing:

> By not revising what you've already written you simply
>
> give the reader the actual workings of your mind during the

> writing itself: you confess your thoughts about events in
>
> your own unchangeable way...(Berrigan, 541)

Kerouac's art emphasizes his ability to convey feeling rather than craft. He intends his thoughts and images "to clack along all the way like a steam engine pulling a 100-car freight...if the thinking during the swift writing is confessional and pure and all excited with the life of it" (Berrigan, 541). He believes that punctuation and revision interrupt the flow of this process, disjointing it, and thus destroying the free-flowing consciousness of image as it pours from within. Kerouac is "careful not to *will* anything," instead preferring to succumb to the movement of his consciousness as it shifts backwards and forwards, thus, creating "an open circuit of feeling...between his awareness and its object of the moment" (Holmes, GR, 590).

Kerouac's technique actually functions as an exercise in control. (Hunt, COTR, 536). He resolves that "reason's domination of the mind," as embodied by the acts of revision and rewriting, be destroyed for the sake of truth in an attempt to imitate the process through which impressions come into being and pass through the senses into the intellect (Charters, LB, 292). Thus, Kerouac attempts to mediate the tension between what one sees and what one knows. Accordingly, his negotiation of this tension rests at the center of his text. He believes that reality can only emerge out of detail and intends to "cut as close to the bone of the detail as words" will go (Holmes, GR, 582).

"Spontaneous prose" leads Kerouac to the edge of the possibilities of language (Charters, PJK, 482). He believes that "To break through the barrier of language with WORDS, you have to be in orbit around your mind" (Charters, PJK, 487). Thus, he intends the mind to shift freely among its sensed impressions and memories, providing an

active recording of intricate detail. Thinking is to act as little more than a mode of reception, enabling truth emerges from intuitive cognition. The blending of raw sensory image with the action of the mind issues in literary form. Presented with access to the visual whole of possibility, Kerouac's method, while consciously sought after, must be intuitively practiced (Charters, LB, 302).

In the first section of this thesis, I argue that Kerouac's method attempts to mediate the disparity between knowledge and explanation through perceptual experience. I suggest that he is particularly interested in the relation between objects and himself. In turn, his method enables us to trace the progression of thought as it passes through the narrator's mind. Because we have access to the speaker's train of thought, and thus his method of association, like the speaker himself, we are privy to the surprise of experience. Like Sal, I suggest that we, too, are voyagers in the process of exploration, simulating an experience of discovery through language. But rather than jumbled images, the narrator's thoughts appear to surge "from his immediate perceptions, to his memories, to his tentative inclusion of these perceptions and memories" within, around, and under the larger systems of 'Time' and 'living structure,' back to immediate perception once again (Charters, LB, 292). Through Sal's perspective, we glimpse the movements of Kerouac's mind, his digressions from reality to memory and back again, as they negotiate the expression of Sal's emerging character. In Sal's quest to explore unknown sensation and experience, Kerouac accesses the transparent nature of awareness by documenting it, through his "sketching" of imagery.

As a result of the "cataclysm of perspective" which I delineate in the first section, I argue that Sal is made aware of lost awareness, through the juxtaposition of all that

reality contains with that of his limited ability to perceive. Hence, in the second section I assert that as a result of Sal's quest to access a new realm of perception and thus, reality, he embraces the transient nature of the hobo culture. In doing so, I study Kerouac's romantic notions about the road and his depiction of the hobo as confronting the restraining nature of convention. Because I assert that these figures embody the agency to break with standard behavior, they provide a model for an alternative state of existence. Rather than cut themselves off from the rest of society, Kerouac depicts their lifestyle as free of convention. Thus, he implies that their estrangement enables them to attain a cultural freedom that eludes most others. But in order to achieve this way of living, Sal believes that he must detach himself from the dominant norms of existence and disaffiliate. In turn, he comes to navigate the road in an atmosphere that extends beyond reality, passing through it, as a result of the heightened sense of awareness that the hobo lifestyle demands. This section explores Sal's attempt to divorce himself from both the constraints of society as well as that of time, in order to discover an alternative form of existence that he perceives to exist in the underside of America, extending beyond the restraints of community and conventional ideology.

As a result of Sal's mediation between hobo culture and conventional society, the third section of this thesis attempts to explore the realm of existence in which Sal resides. He seems to exist somewhere between these two spheres, drawing upon elements of both to create an alternate series of values, which embody the ethics of both the tribe and the community. I suggest that he represents a voyager of the between, residing in a place that fluctuates between different arena's of existence (Mendelsohn, 138). In turn, this section studies Sal's journey away from community and convention and examines his

progression towards the realm of the tribe, which unites itself around an alternate code of ethics. In assuming a transitory existence associated with the road, the tribe tends to rely on instinct as guiding principal. Through the notion of kinship, which Kerouac perceives as forming along the road, he aligns the tribe's terms with that of the community. Consequently, Sal assumes a form of existence, which draws upon an element central to both the community and the tribe. I argue that social bonds are fundamental to the nature of existence and function to align the realm of the community with that of the tribe.

Kerouac's quest after an alternative social and literary ideal parallels Sal's quest to achieve an alternative form of existence. While Kerouac disaffiliates himself from literary standards, Sal disaffiliates himself from the binding conventions of bourgeois America. Like Kerouac, Sal is in search of an idiom all his own because as Kenneth Rexroth noted of the beat generation's ideology, it is "impossible for an artist to remain true to himself as a man, let alone an artist, and work within the context of this society" (Rexroth, 186). And although one must first realize an affiliation with something in order to disaffiliate, I do not believe that disaffiliation is merely a relationship of opposition. Instead, I explore the relational dynamics in Kerouac's writings, with the purpose of arguing that disaffiliation is actually a complicated negotiation, which Kerouac intends Sal to mediate through his journey.

"Spontaneous Prose:" A Perceptual Exercise

Kerouac's emphasis on the eye as well as his controlled vision result in his distinct form. His narrative merges and is, at times, overcome by an accumulation of visually inspired improvised detail. Through Kerouac's recording of improvisation within each moment, however, a sense of continuity emerges in which every episode seeks to accommodate the dominating resonance of the visual whole. Critic John Clellon Holmes details Kerouac's purpose by explaining that his,

> eye was like a fine membrane vibrating between the intolerable pressure of two walls of water: the consciousness flowing outward to absorb everything in the drench of thought; and reality flooding inward to drown everything but the language to describe it" (GR, 590).

Thus, Kerouac's technique, which is piqued by visual stimulation, seemingly attempts to negotiate the truth of reality and the subjectivity of consciousness. Holmes' commentary touches on the paradox inherent to his "spontaneous prose." It is a method of perception that while consciously formed "to absorb everything" presented to they eye, must be unconsciously and intuitively practiced to capture "the drench of thought," as it emanates forth from visual stimulation (Charters, LB, 302).

Through his navigation of "conflicts in the material itself and conflicts in his relationship to it," Kerouac's technique actually functions as an exercise to expand his sphere of perception. (Hunt, COTR, 536). As a result of Sal's extension of his body through his physical travels, as well as the extension of his intellect through the negotiation of visual stimuli he encounters, Sal engages in a dialectic with society. Thus,

his statements gain authenticity because he acknowledges both the idea of corruption that surrounds him and the corruption inherent within himself. The tension arising out of this dialectic serves to mediate, structure and order the picaresque actions and images that compose On the Road. Accordingly, Kerouac's negotiation of this tension rests at the center of his text. He explains how his technique developed as a response to the way "his guts and heart...*felt* coming out" (Berrigan, 542). But it can only occur once "You think out what actually happened, you tell friends long stories about it, you mull it over in your mind, you connect it together at leisure" (Berrigan, 560). For Kerouac, the process of writing is a means to an end, a route to perception and an indirect way to harness control over his subject.

On the Road is a record of Kerouac's process of articulation. He gropes to exert control and wield meaning among the multiplied and fragmented images that he observes. Kerouac's visually inspired writing method reflects a design to consciously mediate a vast infinite. Kerouac aspires to "Release, liberation from fixed categories." His "is an ongoing prose that cannot be concerned with its origins. There are no origins and no end" because the world consists of more than pure objective fact (Parkinson, 288) It includes consciousness on some level, which emerges as the image is interpreted both within and against the visual whole, giving it significance (Berger, 11). Although Kerouac relies upon images that frequently carry little authority within themselves, as a result of their succession and accumulation, he constructs an irreversible argument, which qualifies the possibility of their infinite relation to each other (Berger, 26).

Kerouac relies on image because it is more precise and richer than concept, enabling background to emerge through foreground, mingling their divisions as he

navigates the specific within the general and vice versa. Kerouac's push to discover "something beyond the novel and beyond the arbitrary confines of the story...into the realm of revealed Picture...revelated prose..." becomes central to his reliance on the visual stimuli provided by the eye (Charters, PJK, 610). Paramount to this notion is Kerouac's perception of the road, especially as that viewed from the inside of a car. As a landscape is sketched before us, we are forced to situate ourselves within it (Berger, 11). The road "becomes the imaginative space where inside and outside world intersect, where one is in the outside world but not of it, encountering the real without having to form attachments that might limit the imagination" which enables this process (Hunt, COTR, 536). Through the fusion of speed and space, existing forms such as forests, fields and homes collide and merge, giving rise to "new transient forms, semi-forms, even formless forms" (Tallman, KS, 523). Though these images are fleetingly familiar, Kerouac successfully achieves distance from them, through both the formlessness of the experience that he tries to record and through his writing style. Thus, he negotiates a sense of disillusionment, as it emerges, coinciding with the collapse of exterior form.

Kerouac turns disillusionment inward towards Sal Paradise's character, focusing on the disaffiliation that Sal ultimately feels from Dean at the end of their travels, and consequently, the road. In response to pictures that Dean displays, Sal explains how

> these were all the snapshots which our children would look at someday with wonder, thinking their parents had lived smooth, well-ordered, stabilized-within-the-photo lives and got up in the morning to walk proudly on the sidewalks of life, never dreaming the raggedy madness and riot of our

> actual lives, or actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road – all of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness – pitiful forms of ignorance (OTR, 241).

Like the children deceived of their actual parents' lives and existences, Sal views the opportunity of the road and the optimism and energy of Dean with a childlike innocence. He reaches a pivotal point in which he realizes that like the photos which misrepresent reality, his earlier notions of what both the road and Dean represented – wild individuality, kicks, freedom – are disillusioned, too. According to Sal, these "snapshots" are empty because they are unable to convey a sense of totality of the progressive nature of existence.

Sal's commentary on the photos reflects Kerouac's own questioning of his notion of perception. He describes how "Wild form's the only form holds what I have to say – my mind is exploding to say something about every image and every memory in it" (Charters, PJK, 610). Kerouac intentionally merges and blurs the distinction between image and memory, thus, breaking down the barrier between reality and illusion. He questions the disparity between how "smooth, well-ordered, stabilized" an image appears within the bounds of the picture, yet, in reality may actually exist as nothing like how it appears. It seems that a picture functions to capture one segment of a series of linked moments, sometimes idyllic and non-representational of reality, which serves to bind one facet of an instant in a smaller context, providing limits and tangible edges. Because the image is removed from the continuity of time and displaced, the viewer must bring meaning to the image presented. Thus, an image necessarily records something other than

pure objective fact, because it incorporates some level of consciousness on the viewer's behalf (Berger, 11).

Hence, Kerouac's text is centered more with consciousness than events, because for Kerouac, "the *ultimate* events are images" (Hunt, COTR, 536). Through the linking of associative thoughts and feelings, Kerouac elicits image through his pursuit of the detail of experience. Because an image is an appearance that has been liberated from time and space, there is a relativity assumed in that 'the photographer' must select his sight from an infinity of sights. Thus, images are man-made (Berger, 10). Kerouac attempts to verbalize through dialogue how Sal sees things, metaphorically and literally. Sal's specific vision integrates into and converges with the image, resulting in an increased consciousness of individuality. As Kerouac's treatment of Sal shows, his craft encourages an exploration of the material both in relation to oneself and as independent of oneself.

Thus, Kerouac's syntax is a visual representation, which can be likened to the effect of photographs. His method demands that the reader, like Kerouac himself, assume the role of seer. We are forced to study the unusual word construction and in doing so, come to understand what it means to be stabilized within a larger continuum. The condition of "stabilized within-the-photo lives" implies, for Kerouac, adherence to social customs or living within socially approved bounds. Mimicking a sense of de-stabilization, Kerouac successfully breaks up his syntax through the use of dashes, thus destabilizing the reader within the flow of the sentence. "The capital letters, the broken lines, the long long long lines, the shift from vernacular idiom to lofty rhetoric, these are attempts to shift from conventional idiom to actual" (Parkinson, 287). Kerouac's form, like his content, commands authority, thus illustrating the power inherent to his

technique. Because the reader is unable to anticipate the words on the page as a result of unconventional sentence structures and word combinations, we rely not only on Kerouac's sheer momentum, but on the "unchecked outpour" of his energetic prose to propel us forward (Sisk, 199). Our experience with the text mimics Sal's experience with the photographs: we are somewhat destabilized by the visual image that has been placed before us, yet able to regain direction to continue onward. The fundamental power of the image emerges as a result of the compositional unity evoked by the words (Berger, 13).

For Kerouac, the road is a place that represents a perceptual between. Sal's journey documents the middle ground between disaffiliation and affiliation, control and unrestraint, intention and impulse. These polarities indicate Kerouac's own endless mediation of a tension that results from his intentional disengagement from mainstream society and his gradual move towards alliance with an alternative group. For Sal, his experience represents a cycle of emptiness; he and Dean are the "Pitiful forms of ignorance." The road and his continual flight between the East and West coasts is an infinite nightmare because, like Kerouac, he is trapped in a cycle that has neither an end nor a beginning. And this idea of emptiness relates back to Sal's initial reason for travelling as he does – journeying with no destinations – to achieve a sense of wholeness. Rather than accept affiliation into something presented before him as "the norm," Sal, like Kerouac, exerts control by disaffiliating from conventional ideas of societal affiliation, seeking instead an alternative society in accordance with his individual beliefs. For Sal, what has until now been a purposeless flight is in the process of evolving

into an intuitive journey – out of "the raggedy madness and riot" will emerge something that he can hold on to and believe.

But can a camera capture the essence of "raggedy madness and riot?" These seem to be qualities that exist beyond the customary scope of the camera's lens, beyond traditional America, beyond the control of the photographer. After all, the way in which we "see things" is reflective of an individual photographer's choice of subject matter (Berger, 10). But is there any way to capture the "smooth, well-ordered, stabilized" life of the American middle class either? Because photography distinguishes a single moment out of the context of a larger whole, it unknowingly moderates and controls. And according to Kerouac, living – its intangibility – escapes the preservation and compression intended by photography. This notion is emphasized when Sal wonders how anyone can "walk *proudly* on the sidewalks of life" (my italics). For both Sal and Kerouac, it is when one ventures off the sidewalks, beyond the reach of convention, descending into an alienated world, that of darkness and unfamiliarity, submerging oneself among all that is not contrived, that one can walk *proudly*. Through Kerouac's subtle revision in context of "the raggedy madness and riot of our actual *lives*, or actual *night*," he suggests that the essence of living occurs mostly at night, rather than during the day (my italics). Indeed, night enables Sal and Dean to realize a freedom, which "counter[s] the corruption of the whole of which they are articulate parts" (Sisk, 197). In darkness, no one can see anything or anyone else, therefore, the individual must contend with the essence of his sole being.

Like Sal, we are left to redeem life from darkness, as it not only emerges from the images of the text, but also from the depths of his confusion. To submerge oneself within

the abyss of darkness that composes both the night and the mind, results in an emergence of "the dream of utopian freedom and innocence," enabling some element of consciousness to emerge through "a commitment to instinct and feeling" (Sisk, 200). The exuberance of motion is all one needs to *feel*, in order to reassert some element of control within the moment. The notion of night is so relevant because it examines an alternate element of visual perception. The effect of motion no longer solely converges on a visual point of reference. Rather, it manifests itself in relation to the sensation of motion as well, thus expanding the realm of perception to incorporate more than vision alone.

Due to a heightened awareness of percept, Kerouac suggests that one can enter into and become the moment, enabling wild form to prevail, which, in turn, stymies Kerouac's ultimate enemy: time (Tallman, KS, 517). He stresses in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" that one must begin with the center of interest, "not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from jewel center of interest in subject of image at *moment* of writing, and write outwards" (Kerouac, Essentials, 532). And his emphasis on the moment enables his characters, who have lost control of their lives within the social continuum, to recover them once again, within the moment and make that moment habitable. "The moment becomes the outcast's island, his barricade, his citadel." (Tallman, KS, 515). And rather than overtake the moment, Kerouac's characters, like Kerouac himself, must indirectly assert control within it through perceptual consciousness. Out of this yielding to the moment, emerges a promise for a new life, contingent upon entering into full alliance within the moment's realm. (Tallman, KS, 516). Through the act of bonding to a moment, one enters into a

community within one's own perceptual sensations and experiences, promoting affiliation through intuition.

Kerouac proposes that "Nothing is muddy that *runs in time* and to the laws of *time*" (Kerouac, Essentials, 532). It is when one changes the nature of time, as man has by mechanizing it, that alters the nature of its impact. Thus, the notion of time and its consequent effect on experience, distorts perception because it hinders a feeling of fluidity. By giving the concept of time limits and boundaries in the form of minutes, hours, and days, much like the pictures Dean shows Sal, a structural restraint is placed upon the free-flowing, fundamentally structureless concept of time. Time has evolved into a restraint because it is a construct imposed by society, which functions to govern a sphere of space, thus, removing its ineffable nature. In mechanizing time as society has, Kerouac believes that we deny ourselves the opportunity to capture the essence of the living process, which he attempts to access through his writing method and convey via Sal's accelerated movement across the open space of America. For he and Sal, "An hour is really a cluster of events" in which the end is "not the fruit of experience but experience itself" which results in the "immediate apprehension or intuition of [those] events" (Duffey, 180). His writing style parallels his theory in that his stream of consciousness technique results in a sense of continuity formed, within "which each episode tells a separate story" (Tallman, KS, 523-24). Together, these episodes enable the "impulses from within" a work to emerge. (Tallman, KS, 517-18). Thus, Kerouac implies that time yields the image.

Moreover, because he draws on images from the plane of lived experience, Kerouac's ideas are accessible. This notion arises as Sal relates his apprehension of returning to

> Times Square; and right in the middle of a rush hour, too, seeing with my innocent road-eyes the absolute madness and fantastic hoorair of New York with its millions and millions hustling forever for a buck among themselves, the mad dream – grabbing, taking, giving, sighing, dying, just so they could be buried in those awful cemetery cities beyond Long Island City (OTR, 98).

Kerouac documents the course of life – tracing its progression from infants grabbing, to children taking to adults giving and finally, to death – recapitulating the life cycle and its continual nature. He attends to a narrative logic that has been submerged by pattern and once realized, serves to forge a relation among time, space, and perception.

As a result of his journeying, he understands that there is more to aspire towards than the "grabbing, taking, giving, sighing, dying" which he perceives to be the cold and impersonal "mad dream" that society thrives upon. Indeed, like Kerouac, Sal "seeks to clear away the debris of convention to discover anew the reality which pattern has come to obfuscate," and resultantly recapture the process of living (Duffey, 181). As a result of the instability of Sal's journey and the unpredictability of the life processes associated with "the road," Sal gains "road-eyes," which enables him to see how contrived the New York millions' existences really are. Because the road adheres to a different series of norms, norms that aren't obvious to outsiders, Sal's situation is paradoxical. He is no

longer innocent. Rather, his acquisition of these "road-eyes" enables him to see the controlled nature of the existence that hustles and bustles before him. But Sal desires more. He wants to assert control over his life intuitively – living with only survival as an end, shirking the contrived expectations that drive the New York millions. Resultantly, he desires to recapture the sense that living is, indeed, a process and that he is a voyager on a journey.

Kerouac attempts to regain command of perception, by clearing away the fixity of convention in his quest to access a new realm of reality (Duffey, 182). Although I do not agree that Kerouac "destroyed convention in order to create a completely new way of looking at experience and cannot be assimilated into the existing institution" of genre, I do believe that "spontaneous prose" is a method that exists beyond the realm of literary formality (Parkinson, 289). However, it is not an escape from it. And while Kerouac's method enables the inner mind to articulate and work through its contrasting ruminations, it represents a form of paradox in that, while it is a consciously developed perceptual technique, it must be practiced unconsciously and intuitively (Charters, LB, 302). Moreover, regardless of how completely Kerouac tries to sever himself from society and to disaffiliate from the context of the general public, he will always remain somewhat engaged with that very realm because he judges his place in relation to it. The value of his method is determined in juxtaposition to the kind of thinking that he presumably rejects (Charters, LB, 293). Thus, Kerouac's disaffiliation is bred out of ties that amalgamate him to that very society that he tries to escape.

The Transient Nature of the Hobo Culture

Kerouac's preoccupation with "real life" stems from his desire "to speak *for* things," including the outcasts of society – minorities, criminals, hoboes, the poor – because these figures are witness to the necessity of motion (Creeley, xiii). Kerouac relies on the "American untouchable, the hobo," because his existence brazenly refutes "careerism and competition" (Tytell, JOTR, 426). Kerouac recognizes the social requisite, which demands them to keep moving simply because there is no place for them to come to rest. He uses their circumstances to represent a cultural freedom, preferring the risk and adventure innate to "their lives of constant journey and insecurity," to the complacencies associated with an urbanized existence (Tytell, JOTR, 426). He implies that their distrust of "securing relations, to locate whatever would tie one usefully down" is functional, keeping "the otherwise common world just that painful distance beyond one's own reach or means to enter it" (Creeley, viii). Like the prose form Kerouac seeks to achieve, these figures represent a mimesis of process for him.

> The hobo was a descendant of the frontier prospector who once lived in the hills searching for gold, always hoping for an unexpected gift from nature, wandering from mountain lode to washed-out stream in the hope of some momentous discovery (Tytell, JOTR, 426).

Hoboes function as both subject matter and instrument, moving within the realm of the moment's demand, assuming existence within it out of necessity, rather than around it as Kerouac's own cultural freedom enables. For Kerouac, these figures are liberated from the constraints of both society and time because they are able to *be* what the process of

living is *about* (Clark, 7). Although all these figures represent this idea, I intend to focus on Kerouac's depiction of the hobo, which "omits the deprivation, humiliation, the hopelessness and victimization...to emphasize a romantic sense of brotherly community and joy in simple pleasures" (Tytell, JOTR, 427). Thus, Kerouac disregards the necessity of motion to their survival, instead, depicting their circumstances as representing freedom.

On the Road features the hobo as a figure who confronts the restraining nature of existence more than any other character that Sal encounters along his journey. He seems to almost mythologize their existence, idolizing them as romantic and carefree, free of responsibility:

> You spend a whole life of noninterference with the wished of others, including politicians and the rich, and nobody bothers you and you cut along and make it your own way.' I agreed with 'You spend a whole life of noninterference with the wished of him. He was reaching his Tao decisions in the simplest, direct way. 'What's your road, man? – holyboy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It's an anywhere road for anybody anyhow. Where body how?' (OTR, 239)

Kerouac explains that he respects the thought of being a hobo because rather than cut themselves off from the world, hoboes chose to live on the borders of society, skirting its edges, estranged from dominant norms, free of the conventions of time, space, and self. For Kerouac, hoboes exploit the ability to live life moment-to-moment, precisely because

they don't have the stability of the rich or the politicians or the domestication of the middle and working classes. Kerouac underscores this idea through the cutting and arranging of images, actions, and words, strung together loosely by the motif of the road: "holyboy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road." He elicits a sense of a raw processing of the real as we see his mind working itself out on the page, gaining momentum through his associations, as they unfold in connection with the core theme of the road. Hence, Kerouac promotes a sense of immediacy on two levels – that in relation to his mind as well as that in relation to the hobo's experience. "There is, after all...a value in seeing freshly, if imperfectly, from a perspective that temporarily precedes society's preconceptions and categories" as a hobo's does (Hunt, AAE, 467).

Kerouac's writing style promotes a sense of urgency, which mirrors the pressure that hoboes understand as a result of engaging in day-to-day survival techniques. He simulates the effect of an emerging, improvised perception in his refusal to conform to conventional word order or to formulate complete thoughts: "Whoo, Frisco nights, the end of the continent and the end of doubt, all dull doubt and tomfoolery, good-by" (OTR, 190-91). Kerouac appears to approach ideas fleetingly, barely having touched upon one before moving on to the next. However, he actually articulates a carefully crafted prose. By opening the sentence with "whoo," he brings us into the moment that he inhabits. This single word conveys a fusion of feeling and thought, aligning them together so that they become a functional whole. "Whoo" seems to merge his body's physical exhaustion within his mind's mentally exhausted state. Thus, Kerouac elicits a sense of excited reflection, as though Sal is both overwhelmed and awed by all that has transpired, by the vast amount of land covered in his journey across the continent. Kerouac then goes on to

position us, specifying the time of day and the locale by uttering "Frisco nights." We feel the force of the expressive acceleration as he condenses the four syllable, San Francisco, into two syllables: "Frisco." He relies on this slang form because it merges the beginning and ending sounds, rushing them together so that they blur, creating a new structure out of the original. He also alludes to the vastness of possibility available to him, which is suggested by the idea of night discussed earlier and as indicated by the edge of the continent. Thus, Kerouac implies that Sal actually rests on the verge of inception, rather than that he has exhausted his prospects, which his reaching the end of the physical landscape of America might suggest. Furthermore, by structurally paralleling "the end of the continent" with "the end of doubt," Kerouac juxtaposes a tangible, physical boundary with a philosophical, metaphorical terminus, which functions to indirectly reveal the artful, careful craft of his prose.

Although it may seem that he relies on repetition to structure and correlate his thoughts, repetition also seems to elicit a sense of spontaneity, delineating an outline of the linking process within his ruminating thoughts. He shifts from having reached "the end of doubt" to the more general characterization of "all dull doubt," which he ties to "tomfoolery" through his serial logic that relies on the stringing together of words, concepts, and themes via "and." He then concludes his torrential reverie with a light-hearted, colorful "good-by," which reflects a dismissal of his thoughts, thus providing a sense of closure. More than thought though, "good-by" signals action, a speech event that expresses the feeling of urgency innate to Kerouac's prose. Hence, he offers his mental processes up to the reader. We see the line working, combining colloquial exclamation and repetition, to create a spontaneous effect through the sense of piling on, which

accelerates the pace of the prose. Kerouac achieves this feeling of rushing via his stringing together of predominantly one syllable words, creating an additive affect. This sequential logic qualifies his technique and accounts for some element of Sal's urgency.

Kerouac depicts hoboes as embodying the agency to determine their own destination. He perceives that they break with standard behavior to carve their own place in the world, "rejecting as insufficient the value base offered...by his culture," as he intends (Swartz, 71). Kerouac seems to perceive this figure as representing something wild, savage, even primitive as evidenced by his forays into an unknown, metaphorical territory that subsides beneath America's dominant ideology of conservatism. According to Caroline Gottlieb Vopat, Kerouac manifests this notion, believing that "America is a land of corruption and hypocrisy, promising everything and delivering nothing, living off the innocence and opportunity, the excitement and adventure of the past" (437). The result of the intentional disaffiliation he depicts and construes as intended by hoboes, enables access to free will. Hoboes, with regard to living, as well as Kerouac, with regard to both living and writing, actively attempt to create new criterion out of the chaos that composes the world through their penetration into a new, unexplored realm. Like himself, Kerouac perceives hoboes as rejecting a dominant culture of suspicion and control and espousing a "pro-body, pro-desire, pro-experience" mentality (Swartz, 65). Although hoboes must live somewhat deliberately, as Kerouac's writing must be, in part, consciously formed, he depicts them as the freest of all men. There is almost nothing routinized about their existence. However, Kerouac tends to ignore the fact that their "world has a painful underside of poverty and rootlessness...haunted by a sense of isolation and mortality" (Hunt, AAE, 469). For him, a hobo's existence embodies the

philosophy of spontaneity behind his writing method. Every experience, for a hobo, yields up the opportunity to discover, wrestle with, lose, and recover insight. Their existence rests beyond the pale of normal living. Indeed, for these men "everything is collapsing," as Kerouac repeatedly notes, everything that they, as well as the rest of society, has regarded as reliable and natural, typical of conventional American values (OTR, 50). For him, hoboes, like criminals and minorities, inhabit an uncluttered plane of existence where reality and pretense are subject to collide, advancing an unordered state of affairs, and thus, giving rise to a new variety of existence.

Kerouac's interest in hoboes stems from his belief in their ability to access a wild, uninhibited freedom that eludes most of society. For a hobo, "Bitterness, recriminations, advice, morality, sadness – everything was behind him, and ahead of him was the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being" (OTR, 184). Kerouac attributes to them an ability to reduce themselves to the raw basics of existence. For hoboes, the essence of living is not *how* you live, but the simple understanding of what it means *to live* – simply and directly. They disregard "lying, illusions, false pretense," and espouse a value system that acts in opposition to the dominant myths that guide the middle-class culture (Swartz, 70). There is a purity to a hobo's existence that illuminates a lack of pretense, which resonates in the core of America's ideology. For Kerouac, hoboes as well as criminals and minorities, embody "a psychological and spiritual reorientation, a new pattern of conduct, a new system of values, including spontaneity, sensuality, energy, intuition, and instinct," which centers their existence (Swartz, 70).

Kerouac likens a hobo's freedoms to "apple pies in the sky," which evokes a sense of free-floating rootlessness that implyies that these figures move through life on

impulse (OTR, 25). It is ironic that he chooses a symbol central to that of American identity, "apple pie," to represent a group of figures that act in antithesis to the traditional American way of life. Indeed, he further distances the realm that the hobo inhabits from that in which the rest of American men reside, when he explains how these men

> need to worry and betray time with urgencies false and otherwise, purely anxious and whiney, their souls really won't be at peace unless they can latch on to an established and proven worry and having once found it they assume facial expressions to fit and go with it, which is you see, unhappiness, and all the time it all flies by them, and they know it and that *too,* worries them to no end (OTR, 197).

Worry gives most American men a false sense of control. Kerouac elucidates a typical male desire to conform to the establishment, explaining that once a man has latched onto a "proven worry," he must then assume the appropriate "facial expressions to fit and go with it." Kerouac depicts the encompassing cycle of conformity that has become intrinsic to the American way of life. More importantly, he focuses on the role of masculinity and it's stereotypical manifestations within society. Through Sal's perception, it becomes clear that Kerouac is adverse to the notion of a man's personal freedom being sacrificed to the idea of conventional "responsibilities of the systematic world: the world of marriage, work, and school" (Swartz, 67). It is evident that to a large degree, women seemed to be marginalized from the experience of these men (Swartz, 17). Through Sal's perception, the illusion that Kerouac depicts above is that of a faceless mass, in which distinct outlines blur and dissolve to form an obscure whole, where people

become indistinguishable from one another, supporting and continuing "the machine" that is America (OTR, 44). Through conformity, these men represent an abdication of control that Kerouac perceives America as demanding of its men, who suffer from "a false consciousness...imposed on them by the hegemonic social order" which "the disenfranchised, the poor and the masses of the lower working classes and unemployed" seem to rebel against (Swartz, 68).

Instead of wearing "thick-soled shoes so that he can't feel the sidewalks of life," Sal desires to always be in contact with the surface of the earth, like a hobo, to receive "the world in the raw" (OTR, 172). "At the bottom of [their] primitivism is a desire to confront the primal sources of pure being, to discover life as it was – shapely, formless, dark – before being molded into self or society" (Vopat, 446). In order to achieve this practice of living, Sal believes that he must detach himself, disaffiliate from the norms that dominate one's existence. Because of the lifestyle hoboes adopt, they can actively decide what road to choose, whether it's the "holyboy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road" The choice comes from the distinct consciousness of an individual man and not the dictates of a society. Because these men have no particular destinations, "the road on which they run is 'all that old road of the past unreeling dizzily as if the cup of life had been overturned" (Vopat, 446). And in making a conscious decision of deciding which road to take, hoboes disaffiliate from society only to affiliate with an alternative realm that they, themselves, have helped to create.

Kerouac sees the typical American men that he "sketches" as representing something phony, conforming to an already established role rather than striving to create their unique place in the world, as both he and Sal actively try to do. Kerouac implies that

America relies precariously on materialism and conformity. He implies that Americans are resting on a false floor of security. This idea of a false floor that is suspended above the real 'floor' of the earth is symbolized by the suspended floor of the car, which literally and metaphorically drives the novel and Sal forward. The distance between these – the earth's surface and the car's suspended floor – mirrors the distance between reality and pretension, which Kerouac details. However Sal, too, rests on a false floor, a floor that speeds over the real surface of the earth. In it, he is "suspended from life and living, as if in a capsule hurtling coast-to-coast above the earth" (Vopat, 435). Thus, Sal attempts to submerge himself in an alternate pretense, seeking paradise and salvation, as his name, Sal Paradise, suggests. "The car functions as a protected environment. It allows comrades to enter society and then withdraw" (Hunt, AAE, 482). This disparity between reality and pretense functions to create a tension that we, along with Sal, negotiate throughout the novel, as he strives to mediate the relationship between disaffiliation and affiliation, through the insights gained via his liminal position between these two worlds (Swartz, 95). Indeed, Sal's sense that "everything is collapsing," seems to be the result of the fundamental antithesis between the vision that both he and Kerouac attempt to break from and that which they work toward (OTR, 91). For both Kerouac and Sal, the road enables an escape to a place that they believe the hobo has come to explore and know well, a place that mediates the friction between these two realms, between the conflicting value systems that distinguish the two structures. Yet their notion is idealized because unlike a hobo, for both Sal and Kerouac, "Reality is never good enough; it must be classified, embroidered, and intensified; above all, the sheer reality of reality must be avoided" (Vopat, 432).

Through muddled action and a barrage of imagery, Kerouac simulates a feeling of submersion of the self into an ideology that lurks in the underside of America's belly. He implies that access to "IT," or truth, can only emerge as a result of some form of a subterranean exploration. Because he chronicles the loose, shifting, and constantly fluctuating attachments his characters have towards one another, much like them, we never gain a sense of stability. We realize that "Only the sheer impetus of their frantic, speeding cars holds their scattered selves together" (Vopat, 434). However, out of the shared flow of sensations that carry along and, consequently, unite these men, there emerges a coalescence of experience out of their individual reasons for disaffiliation, which unifies them within this alternate realm. As a result of the affiliation that develops, they mediate a network of associations that both differentiates them from everyone else, yet attaches them to each other.

Consequently, a new society emerges, a hobo culture, which relies on a complete engagement with and reactivity to the surrounding environment. Kerouac calls into being a version of community, "a special vision they all shared, a romantic ideal" (Swartz, 24). To be independent and free from the notion of anticipation, which Kerouac sees as impinging upon one's ability to live actively, enables a constant state of perception within this culture. As a result of a more transient state, which is due to their disaffiliation from the dominant ideology and their submersion within the alternate realm, they are able to live more intensely and thus, become increasingly receptive to all that surrounds them. It is through the intensity upon which their lifestyle thrives, as well as an increasing awareness that emerges from the inherent instability that Kerouac believes hoboes are able to live on a more conscious and deliberate level. Out of this intensity emerges a

sense of affiliation with others that pursue a similar vision, linking them together, bringing a new network of relationships that form along the road to life. Through Sal, Kerouac's perception of living in a state of immediate and continual perception, which arises from the lack of continuity and disjointedness that the road promotes, enables him to delineate his social vision of living. This vision is reflected by those figures who Sal intends to affiliate with precisely because they exist within an alternate social reality that lies beyond conventional society.

The notion of time as an alternative concept serves as a central idea, which encompasses and unites these transient hobo figures. For them, it still represents a temporal unit, yet it serves as a means to access detachment from the constraints of time that society appropriates. Through Sal, Kerouac explains that he quests to reach that moment, "which was the complete step across chronological time into the timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm" (OTR, 195). Kerouac alludes to reaching an alternate notion of truth that emerges through this relation with time, which he characterizes as "IT" (OTR, 85). He explains that these figures of deprivation and despair, as society views them, actually attain access to a liberating dimension of space. The jazz musician already occupies this space, in which "Time stops...the filling empty space with the substance of our lives, confessions of his bellybottom strain, rememberance of ideas, rehashes" (OTR, 195). Kerouac describes a quest to access this moment where time ceases to exist in the familiar way that we know it. Instead, it becomes "empty space," free of society's self-imposed limitations and constructs: twenty-four hours in a day, sixty minutes in an hour, sixty seconds in a minutes. He depicts a sphere in which time derives through a synthesis of an "infinite

feeling soul-exploratory" search, with a pursuit of improvisation that resonates within the harmony of the prevailing moment (OTR, 195). "'IT' signifies the indescribable moment of perfect understanding when the sensating individual merges with time, blending indistinguishably into it, thus enabling transcendence beyond its realm. Hence, time feels like it no longer exists and seems to actually drop out of existence. Both Sal and Kerouac desire "to live as if he were outside time by cultivating the moment and exacerbating the senses" to attain a 'timeless' notion of perception. (Hunt, AAE, 476).

Kerouac implies that it is only when this sensory experience transpires that one *"gets it,"* and time is no longer organized in a quantitative form, but rather exists merely as energy (OTR, 195). He suggests that we must internalize the raw material that composes the moment and reinvent it, enabling an organized whole to emerge from a fragmented deconstruction. As a result, truth emerges, consuming consciousness, advancing transcendence towards "the attainment of a synchronization with the infinite" (Swartz, 20). Kerouac seeks to eliminate the fragmented nature of time that most of society has adopted as standard, instead promoting association with the marginalized condition of "IT." It seems that in his characters' pursuit of liberation, they seek to achieve a sense of wholeness through union with others that inhabit this alternative realm. Like Kerouac, they exist not only to attain their own fleeting moments of ecstasy, but in order to renew their fellow comrades, by providing an experience of community among them that is based on each individual's recognition of his isolation (Hunt, AAE, 477). To disaffiliate from a dominant hegemony assumes an act of free will that this experience is intended to impart. It is through this assertion of free will that both Kerouac and Sal assume the means to recover and, consequently, reinterpret the fundamental nature of

existence. Like hoboes, as well as criminals and minorities. Kerouac believes that to reduce oneself to his most raw and basic elements, to be "guts and juice and ready to go," enables a means to access truth, to get "IT" (OTR, 85).

For Kerouac, hoboes, minorities, and criminals are figures that represent a breaking with normal time. They supercede the mundane, "confronting the implications of images inherited from [an] American past," through transcendence (Hunt, AAE, 481). "Kerouac vindicates the unrecognized genius of people existing on the margin of high experience" (Swartz, 12). He believes that virtue comes from the dissipation of a sense of self as it merges into the bliss of experience and comes to burn with intensity and life. "These are the people who live and die to release the human beings from the cages of our own construction" (Swarz, 13). On the Road reveals a split between social culture and the role of the individual.

> Ironically, however, while these "converts" were seeking social freedom from societal norms and the establishment of their own individuality and values, the shifting of narratives, brought with it, as it always does, a shifting of constraint (Swartz, 26).

There can never be a sense of liberation achieved, however, precisely because a new value system and social beliefs, will have their own boundaries and binding conditions, thus eliminating this notion of complete freedom, which Sal seeks to achieve. Hence, the alternative visions and fantasies Kerouac depicts, "while suggesting new avenues of cultural and personal expression," must function to limit and bind its inhabitants on some level, while reifying its own system of beliefs (Swartz, 26). It is paradoxical that like

society, Kerouac's vision itself, is necessarily bound within its own "limiting social apparatuses" (Swartz, 26).

The Road: A Tribal Community

Kerouac believes that independence can be achieved as the inherently creative individual emerges out of the control of the interpretive group. The road enables Kerouac to mediate a tension between hierarchy and limitation as represented by society, and openness and expansion as represented by the hobo community. While on the road, one must suspend dichotomous beliefs in order to achieve a state of continual flux (Dardess, 412-13). For Kerouac the notion of transience, as embodied by the symbol of the road, presents an opportunity for the discovery of an alternative existence, which cannot be taught, but rather can be only inferred through the sharing of experience. An individual can only become assimilated into this road culture through his adherence to an unspoken code of ethics,

> which includes the inviolability of comradeship, the respect for confidences, and an almost mystical regard for courage – all of which are the ethics of the tribe, rather than the community; the code of a small compact group living in an indifferent or hostile environment, which it seeks not to conquer or change, but only to elude (Holmes, PBG, 375).

This distinction between community and tribe enables us to better understand the purpose that underlies Sal's affiliation with a road culture. His aim is to be asocial, not antisocial. Despite Kerouac's efforts at mediation however, in differentiating between community and tribe, we realize that Kerouac indirectly structures a dichotomous opposition of affiliation and disaffiliation, through his contrast of the tribe and the community, in an effort to define man as more than social being, product or victim. Kerouac longs for an

alternate series of values, somewhere between the ethics of the tribe and that of the community. He seeks values that espouse, "that it is *how* a man lives, not why," which enables the human spirit to emerge (Holmes, PBG, 379).

Throughout Sal's quest to free himself of community's prescribed pattern to access an alternate tribal vision, he describes a loss of consciousness in his lower mind, "like waking from sleep to the world, or waking from void to dream" (OTR, 272). What he alludes to is a process of accessing something remote within himself. To lose consciousness, Kerouac implies that Sal moves beyond the realm of order, transcending it, giving himself over to a loss of control, succumbing to the fluidity of unshaped life that the tribe demands. Thus, Kerouac insinuates Sal's tenuous state, his vulnerability as he negotiates his existence in an elongated moment of transition, somewhere between imagination and reality, consciousness and unconsciousness, confusion and stability. This vulnerability emerges from his negotiation between two alternate worlds, that of society and stability and that of the road culture and transitory existence. Hence, when Dean yells "this road drives *me!!,*" Kerouac indirectly alludes to the inversion of reality that these men quest after (OTR, 267). For them, the tribe upholds a variety of ideals that are the ideological opposite of the community. This notion perpetuates itself when Sal describes how "the whole world opened up to me because I had no dreams." This inversion of American ideology and American 'reality' to most, also suggests a power contained in and by the road. Through alliances formed along its domain, the notion of a tribe emerges, providing an alternate form of affiliation and thus, disaffiliation.

Sal, like Kerouac, represents an outsider. This notion of an individual existing within a world that isn't enough for him, "a world that [is] neither immediate, nor

pleasurable, not exciting enough," propels him toward an alternate state, in which his sensibilities might be engaged in a "process of constant mutation" (Tytell, BC, 332). Fearing the horror of stasis most, the tribe tends to rely on instinct as guiding principal. However, this reliance sometimes creates a feeling of alienation and results in a tribe member's sense of estrangement from community (Tytell, BC, 334). Sal describes the point in time when he arrived at "the strangest moment of all, when [he] didn't know who [he] was...just somebody else, some stranger" (OTR, 14). Both Kerouac and Sal are alienated by their quest for "a proper perspective from which to see" (Tytell, BC, 321). Each has become estranged from the community that he once belonged to, but has yet to achieve affinitive ties to the tribe. They embody a sense of alienation that emerges from an individual that exists between two realms of existence, accepted into neither fully, fluctuating in limbo.

Sal details a self-conscious awareness of his alienation from the rest of society when he jumps on the flatbed truck with Montana Slim, explaining, "we were a funny-looking crew" (OTR, 25). Sal acknowledges a sense of unity with this group, which is defined by its utter alienation from everyone else. They take on the status of tribe precisely because there is an absence of belonging to anything else. Each individual's sense of aloneness is obliterated, if only briefly, by the shared experience of riding on the flatbed of the truck. These men actively engage in an experience together. Navigating a sphere of space and a select few moments of time *together,* these men become differentiated from everything else that surrounds them and thus, unified by the shared sensation of isolation.

Through disaffiliation emerges some form of alternative affiliation. Thus, we can infer the tribal figure's intent as seeking to escape from under the canopy of the community, to free himself from the exertion of power that he perceives as intended by the community (Holmes, PBG, 375). The tribe distinguishes itself from the community in that it urges individual energies to meet head-on, unconstrained, rather than just racing in parallel, never converging, which the community endorses for fear of what might result (OTR, 5). This way of living, "intensely in alternate explosions of tenderness and violence; eager for love and a sense of purpose," without the self-conscious and artificial sense of collectivity that the community relies upon to maintain order and control, enables the tribe to recognize a belief in the principals of intensity and sensation to sustain its existence (Holmes, PBG, 372). The tribe promotes introspection as an engine for intensity, because it enables an avoidance of what it considers to be absurd and contrived devices, which the community depends upon to maintain and perpetuate tradition. Out of this introspection, a longing for values emerges as a result of the tribe's conscious concern with the problem of belief. Grappling with this problem manifests itself in an alternate, yet ineffable belief system that is linked to the road's domain. Like the community, the tribe realizes that values can only emerge from a sense of belonging. The tribe member's "ideal [is] knowledge of how the regular world functioned so as to circumvent it" (Tytell, BC, 333).

Thus, Kerouac carefully balances elements of free action, which the tribe relies upon to help define itself. At the same time, he acknowledges the contradictions and absurdities of community taboos. Through this notion of kinship, Kerouac aligns the community's terms with those of the tribe, thereby merging the community's emphasis

on significance with the tribe's emphasis on action. Thus, he constructs a hybrid notion of existence, which incorporates elements of both. In delineating this third state of existence, Kerouac fuses elements of the community and the tribe together, suggesting that social bonds and the notion of kinship are fundamental to the nature of existence. He suggests that these bonds represent a method of association that "presupposes self-knowledge of motives" because there exists a genuine necessity for them (Tytell, BC, 320).

On the Road is a celebration of human kinship; throughout Sal's journey, Kerouac replaces notions of human community with elements that are characteristic of the tribe. He does not abandon community altogether, however. Rather he works towards redefining it. Kerouac's depiction of an underground subculture, offers as ideal the simultaneous sensation of elation and exhaustion, release and joy, that Kerouac believes innate to the lifestyle of the "less materially privileged segments of society" (Tytell, JOTR, 419-20). Accordingly, this segment of society, which relies heavily on the sensation of experience, forms the basis of a tribe society. Hence, it can be inferred that it is the tribe's emphasis on shared experience, which leads to a new series of values, which although not easily defined, "have something to do with caring, with the involvement of conscious and subconscious, of attitudes toward right and wrong, of conscious and motive" (Askew, 391). Through Kerouac's juxtaposition of the experiential quality of the values espoused by the tribe, with the emotive quality of the values espoused by the community, he creates a tension that Sal must mediate between the realm of the tribe and the community.

Through the lifestyle supported by the road, Kerouac suggests a quest for experience that relies almost exclusively on sensation. He implies that regardless of the nature of experience, it is simply the idea of contact which enables experience to emerge as significant. Thus, Kerouac implies that a distinction can be drawn between the experience of sensation and the experience of emotion (Tytell, BC, 329). Kerouac suggests that sensory experience empowers an ability "to communicate with absolute honesty and absolute completeness," which averts a sense of irrationality associated with emotion (OTR, 37). He proposes that it is when emotion issues forth that our minds diverge. Thus, when shared experience which is intended to connect people to each other via communal sensation, succumbs to the highly individual nature of emotion, the associative ties between individuals may be broken. Kerouac illustrates this point when Sal and Terry, after first meeting, mistakenly assume each other to be a pimp and a hustler. Sal describes how,

> He pleaded with all my soul. 'Please listen to me and understand, I'm not a pimp.' An hour ago I'd thought *she* was a hustler. How sad it was. Our minds, with their store of madness, had diverged (OTR, 77).

Through Sal and Terry's confused exchange, Kerouac alludes to the conflicted nature of kinship, which he perceives as based primarily upon emotion within the community's realm. In approaching the nature of experience, Kerouac prefers sheer sensation to that of personally interpreted emotion, because in the realm of the tribe, it is a shared moment of experience that ties people together, not subjective feeling per say. He focuses on the effect that shared experience has in bringing these two divergent minds back together

once again. Sal describes how, "I made love to her...two tired angels of some kind, hung-up forlornly in the LA shelf, having found the closest and most delicious thing in life *together*, we fell asleep" (OTR, my italics, 78). Through sensation, Kerouac resolves momentary conflict, which is initially brought on by the standard emotions of community, through the experiential union of Sal and Terry.

Indicative of his shifting stance towards tribal values, Kerouac stresses a sense of etherealness, which envelops Sal while on the road and differentiates him from the car, the road, and particularly Dean. Sal implies that he is able to derive comfort from the road, however, which functions as a form of companionship, itself. He is able to draw on the raw energy that the road provides as inspiration: "I was alone in my eternity as the wheel, and the road ran straight as an arrow" (OTR, 267). In turning to the road, Sal represents the individual moving out of society. Kerouac suggests this move as enabling him to gain insight into the doubleness of experience, through the mediation demanded of fluidity and form, ecstasy and reason, frontier past and urban present (Hunt, AAE, 480-81). The culture associated with the road, enables Sal to assume a position that exists between community and tribe, precisely because he is able to cut across the multiplicity of experience. Kerouac conveys this idea through Sal's description of Gene's behavior towards a young boy on the flatbed truck:

> the blond young fugitive sat the same way; every now and then Gene leaned out of his Buddhistic trance over the rushing dark plains and said something tenderly in the boy's ear. The boy nodded. Gene was taking care of him, of his moods and his fears (OTR, 25).

Kerouac depicts a sense of hierarchy, common to community that carries over into the tribe's realm as well. Gene has taken on a charge, becoming a father figure to this young boy. Although this relation is seemingly unintentional, it automatically relegates Gene to a position of power, over that of the boy. This allusion to a father-son relationship suggests that elements of authority and subordination, dominance and submission are cross-over traits that are common to both community and tribe. This image alludes to a disparity that arises, which enables Kerouac to suggest that the road elicits dual sensibilities. Hence, according to Sal's depiction of his experiences, Kerouac suggests that some form of comfort may be derived from this lifestyle that the road demands. However, this notion is countered by Kerouac's allusion to a sentiment of loneliness, which may also be evoked by the lifestyle associated with the road, as inferred by the scene in which Sal characterizes Gene as a caretaker. Thus, in recognizing the duality that this experience presents, Kerouac enables us to transcend the dissonance created by Sal's existence in "the Divide," between two groups (OTR, 50).

Kerouac emphasizes this duality of experience through Sal's double vision, which enables him "to comment on the people and events of the novel as he saw them when they happened, and as he views them now that they are over, a sadder-but-wiser hindsight" (Vopat, 437). This structure is established early in the work as Sal reflects, "With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road. Before that I'd often dreamed of going West to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off" (OTR,1). With this introduction, Kerouac distinguishes among Sal's present voice and his past voice, which reflects his recent experiences with Dean and their "life on the road." Moreover, he even distinguishes Sal's past from his

deep past, which consists of that time in his life that was before "the coming of Dean Moriarty" (Dardess, 412). As a result of these distinctions among present, past, and pre-past, Kerouac articulates a constructed sense of differential, segmented periods of Sal's life, which is in alignment with how a tribe member might view experience, rather than incorporating these episodes into a single perspective, as a community member might, to indicate an ongoing and continual process of evolvement. In acknowledging Sal's multiple perspectives, Kerouac sets up his impending shift of perspective from that of community member, conflicted by a fragmented, imposed ideology, to that of tribal member, whose only discipline is that "of following desire, *always* doing what [he] want[s] to do" in the quest after sensation (Tytell, BC, 320). And although it is an incomplete transition because Sal adopts elements of both groups, Kerouac derives authority from his creation of an alternative way of living that is "independent of relation to what has gone before" (Vopat, 435).

In ending the work in the present tense, he brings together all the various parts of his life, with that from which he currently speaks:

> So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all the raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going...(OTR, 293).

Although Kerouac enables a convergence of viewpoints, he still creates the effect of an open ending, much like the loose guidance that a tribe intends. Kerouac's quest for "freedom, wholeness, illumination," as represented by Sal's shift from multiple

perspectives at the beginning of the novel to his annihilation of such distinctions at the end, functions to indicate a fusion of temporal and spatial boundaries that Kerouac attributes to the tribe's lifestyle (Jones, 493). Through Sal's mixing of hope and discouragement, his acknowledgement of expansiveness and resignation, we accept his lack of resolution as inevitable. In turn, emotion, which is assumed to define individual experience, is obliterated and the self, as represented by Sal and sensation, comes to represent all other people. In the same way that Kerouac eliminates divisions within the realm of time, he performs a similar function for Sal's perspective of experience, merging his "final assimilation of the events he is dramatizing with the moment of dramatization itself" (Dardess, 413). In turn, this technique functions to circumvent the distinction between sensational experience and personal emotion, thus creating a sense of continuity that Sal, as representative of Kerouac, has sought all along.

Conclusion:

Because Kerouac seems to portray cars as vehicles for dreaming, embodying notions of isolation and privacy, he suggests that they contain a means for release from the constraints of society, American ideology, and even time. As a result of the ensuing freedom, we, like Kerouac and Sal, are free to explore what it is that composes "the substance of our lives" (OTR, 195). Thus, we understand that there is no entrance to the "one and only indispensable Paradise," where everything merges and consequently culminates in a sense of wholeness (OTR, 56). Like Sal, we too must mediate the effects of disorder, which are magnified by the desperate and frenetic activity of his journey. Through Kerouac's depiction of Sal, he presents us with a negotiated freedom in which Sal comes to represent the "between voyager " (Mendelsohn, 138). Thus, I have tried to explore the complexities and subtleties that are inherent to the structure of On the Road.

We follow Sal as he seeks to achieve a release from the conventions of society through a series of complicated negotiations between awareness and perception, affiliation and disaffiliation, conventional culture and hobo culture, and community and tribe. Accordingly, Sal's quest for release represents the release Kerouac desires to achieve through "spontaneous prose," which seeks to negotiate the truth of reality and the subjectivity of consciousness. In studying these relational dynamics, I believe that this changes the way that we can come to understand and interpret Kerouac. Because he presents us with a view that results in a feeling of freedom from the constraints of traditional America, he redefines the idea of social so that it feels anti-social. However, the sphere of existence that he really depicts is most closely aligned with a version of asocial.

Although it may seem that Kerouac's philosophy embraces and celebrates rebellious opposition, On the Road functions to redefine our definition of social. In turn, Kerouac creates and depicts a new social realm that can only exist in relation and conjunction with conventional society. Thus, this sense of freedom, which Kerouac seeks and elicits via Sal's experiences, is intensely negotiated through already existent social conventions. Through the notion of kinship, Kerouac provides us with a new understanding of the complex relationship between social culture and conventional culture. Both these notions, social and convention, are redefined as a result of Sal's mediation of conventional society and its alternate version. Thus, Sal's relationship with society emerges as the result of an intensely negotiated freedom. Accordingly, it is the accumulation of Sal's experiences that enables him to come to gain insight into the transparent nature of awareness and perception, which resultantly provide him with the sense that he is, indeed, a voyager, rediscovering the process of living. And as a result of his navigation of America's roads and its ideology, he enables us to realize that through disaffiliation, there emerges the possibility of affiliation with an alternate culture of existence, a culture that exists beyond the paved roads of America.

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