

**DEAN AS SAL'S GUIDE IN THE SEARCH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT IN JACK
KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD***

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**LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS INGLÉS – FRANCÉS
ESCUELA DE CIENCIAS DEL LENGUAJE
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Monograph directed by professor
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Edward Sarasty

INTRODUCTION

On the Road is Jack Kerouac's most representative book and also one of the most emblematic books of a postwar American literary generation of poets and novelists known as the Beat Generation. Kerouac's magnum opus fictionalizes his adventures as a hitchhiker roving across U.S.A.

According to Repiso and Rep (2000), the story is simple: two young men travel the American continent looking outwardly for "kicks" and inwardly for salvation. Its form is simple and episodic and it chronicles a friendship over five journeys, from winter 1947 to January 1951. It took six years to get the manuscript published and the names of the characters had to be changed for legal reasons. "Sal Paradise", the main character of the book and its narrator, incarnates Kerouac himself. "Dean Moriarty," the "holy goof," incarnates his heart-breaking friend Neal Cassady. In the book, other characters are represented by the rest of the members of the "beat" gang. For example, Allen Ginsberg is called "Carlo Marx," William Burroughs is "Old Bull Lee," John Clellon Holmes is "Tom Saybrook," and Herbert Huncke is "Helmo Hassel."

Among the protagonist's reasons for hitchhiking the American highways is the recent "split-up with his wife" (and the loss of his father, an issue which is not mentioned in the book.) The trip represents a kind of rejection of the "American way of life," a reaction against the social strains that begin to consume American society after World War II, such as the growing consumerism and the concerns of an atomic war.

The book starts with a melancholic Sal Paradise immersed in the "feeling that everything was dead" and a dream of going west to join a mystic and mysterious Dean Moriarty, the archetype of a free man and the one who would contribute to his emotional recovery and discovery of new approaches to living. Throughout the novel

Sal's life on the road is full of adventures, rides, kicks, drugs, starvation, loneliness, women and sex, in the intermittent company of his "sideburned hero of the west."

The characters' personal matters related to their family backgrounds, the absence of fathers and their women, will be studied from a subjectivist point of view in which a psychological criticism approach will be taken into account in order to show how personal issues give shape to the characters in the book, and how the characters are influenced to find reasons for their cross-country trips.

The main characters, Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, are the gears that move the machinery of the book. Therefore, the present literary analysis attempts to shed light on the dynamics of friendship and self-discovery throughout their travels in search for enlightenment.

The elements in the novel that are connected to Sal's search for enlightenment are: the compelling tie that binds him to Dean, his constant search for a woman, his desires regarding writing, his longing to know his country and his need for "kicks." This attempts to analyze the aforesaid elements in order to demonstrate in which extent they occur and how they represent Sal's enlightenment.

This analysis is based on New Criticism, Psychological and Sociological critical approaches. These approaches, which date from a classical period in the U.S. literary criticism (1940's-1960's,) suggest the construction and development of a core theme resulting from a set of unified elements. The psyche of the characters and their social interactions will be examined.

JACK KEROUAC BIOGRAPHY

Jack Kerouac (né Jean Louis Kerouac) was born in Lowell, Massachusetts on March 12, 1922 into a French-Canadian immigrant family and died in Saint Petersburg, Florida on October 21, 1969. Jack was the youngest of three children, along with his older sister Caroline and his older brother Gerard, who died of a rheumatic fever when Jack was four years old. His parents, Leo and Gabrielle, who first emigrated from rural Quebec and later met in New Hampshire, married shortly before moving to Lowell. According to Jorge Repiso and Miguel Rep (2000), Jack Kerouac enjoyed a happy life in his first years of existence in a pretty two-story house in a beautiful neighborhood in Lowell. His family enjoyed a good economic condition and always gave him a lot of affection.

His entry to high school coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929 and with the Crash of the Stock Market. He received a Jesuit education and at age 17 he decided to become a writer under the influence of Sebastian Sampas, local young poet. And after reading the life of Jack London at age 18, he decided to also be a “lonesome traveler and adventurer.” Among his early literary influences are Saroyan and Hemingway; later Thomas Wolfe. In 1941 he graduated from high school as a star athlete and received a football scholarship to Horace Mann College in New York City. Later he enrolled at Columbia University. His family followed him and settled in Queens. Due to a leg injury that ended his football career, Kerouac lost his scholarship and dropped out of the university and tried to enlist in the Navy at the outbreak of World War II. However, because of difficulty meeting the Navy’s requirements, he served as a merchant seaman for the remainder of the war.

During his work as a merchant seaman, Jack Kerouac started his first novel called *The Sea is my Brother*, which he finished in 1943. In New York his aspiration to

become a writer was encouraged by a group of friends he met on the campus of Columbia, among them: Allen Ginsberg, Lucien Carr and William Burroughs. These friends and Kerouac himself, as well as their life experiences, would inspire the characters of *On the Road* and would be the pioneers of a whole generation of writers and poets: The Beat Generation. This group of men was in a way characterized by nonconventional criminal-like actions such as shop lifting, drug dealing, alcohol and drug consumption.

As defined by Kerouac, this “clique was the most evil and intelligent buncha bastards and shits in America but I had to admire them in my youth” [*Vanity of Duluo*] (P. 201). In spite of these characteristics, this group was worth Kerouac’s admiration for they represented an upcoming counterculture movement exposing society’s conventions and vices such as war and capitalism. Through literature, they attempted to step out of that world by exploring alternative ways of living. They wanted to shout to the world that they were a new voice in North America and that they were interested in finding a “new vision.”

At a time when a nation suffered from the aftermath of the war and the values that reigned in America were conformism, religion and materialism, Kerouac was one of many who felt suffocated with the “American way of life.” He dedicated his life to writing because through it he found a way to defend himself from the world. As the father of the Beat Generation he rebelled against urban civilization, consumerism and the growing armaments industry, and he attacked utilitarianism by making pleasure his main occupation. (Repiso & Rep, 2000).

Kerouac’s position as a Beat writer could be seen after his inconformity with the “American way of life” exposed in his books. As Howard Webb Jr. (1964) expresses in *The Worlds of Jack Kerouac*, the author of *On the Road* shows humility and a particular

concern about the way American society is living. Webb says that Kerouac's own ethic is nonviolent; the values that he praises are peaceful and gentle ones. He is not hostile to civilization, but he is opposed to destruction of joy, tenderness and spirituality in American life and to the deification of "rows of well-to-do houses with lawns and television sets in each living-room with everybody looking at the same thing and thinking the same thing at the same time" [*Dharma Bums*] (1964, P. 131). With Kerouac's decision to turn away from such a way of life, it is clear that he finds in it no means for defining his individuality and his humanity.

In New York, Jack Kerouac wrote *The Town and the City*, his first published novel (1950), though it was poorly acclaimed by the critics of the time. The purpose of this work was to redeem himself to his family for being involved in a brawl that ended up in an assassination case when Carr stabbed David Kammerer, one of the members of the group, in August 1944. In this novel which was autobiographical as was almost all of his following work, Jack wrote the anecdotes he experienced with his family and friends. He dramatized the activities of the Martin family, revealing his feeling of nostalgia for his life in Lowell (the town) and the new attractions and pleasures that provided a new life in New York (the city) under the influence of the romantic prose style of Thomas Wolfe as well as William Saroyan's human sympathy.

Jack considered himself "a strange solitary crazy Catholic mystic;" his Catholic youth was something that also drew his confessional style. His books include fiction, nonfiction, selected letters, religious writing, poetry, and the "true-story novels" which made him famous. His writing aimed to make his life into art showing through language charged with freedom. His immigrant, working class experience, the loss of his brother, the death of his father, The Beat Generation, alcoholism, his Catholic mysticism and contemplations of Buddhism were also strong influences that characterized Kerouac's

writing. The “Duluo Legend” is what he called his entire life’s work, which he pictured as “an enormous comedy.”

ANTECEDENTS

The group called Beat Generation gradually rose from Post-war North American society as a response to the incompatibility with the values and economic system of the time. “At a time when millions of Americans were entering the middle class, Kerouac and his friends paid a price for opting out” (Leland, 2000, P. 47). Kerouac embraced the “mad ones”, the misfits and hitchhikers traveling across the country with their own philosophy, experiencing free love and having fun, living for the day. Kerouac’s opposition to the machinery of his time was extensively exposed in his books.

Some other representatives to the Beat Generation include the group of intellectuals who began the movement at Columbia University: Ginsberg, Burroughs, Huncke, Orlovsky and Corso. Others further afield were Kesey, Creely, Ferlinghetti, Snyder, Baraka, Olson and Bowles. Additionally, there was singer Bob Dylan, whose lyrics also conveyed the message which Beat writers and poets wrote about and lived for.

Regarding Kerouac’s writing style “spontaneous prose,” one can track his roots back to major poet Walt Whitman, the Spanish Surrealists and the persistent introspection reached by interior monologues and stream of consciousness styles from the British, those from the Bloomsbury group and like-minded authors. Whitman approached poetry with a more quotidian language, focusing his attention on nature and contemplating man’s beauty from his very nature as a liberal thinker and a free lover. As for the surrealists, Kerouac shares the style which praises writing under effects of drugs and alcohol, what the surrealists called automatic writing based on free association. Besides, he studied writers such as Jack London who can be considered lonesome travelers from where he must have first gotten his idea of hitchhiking in order to write about a different reality from that of sedentary-conventional-consumerist

middle class Americans. Finally, the religious occurs as a strong influence on his writings due to his education (Jesuit) and family's Catholic beliefs.

As mentioned by Rick Moody, besides drugs as a means of “deformation of the senses,” Beat writers also found in “spiritual investigation” a radical theme that influenced the life and writing of some of them. Kerouac held that: “What’s really influenced my work is the Mahayana Buddhism, the original Buddhism, the Buddha himself of the India of old.” Throughout their search based on mobility and getting to know like-minded people, the Beats found “pot, junk, benny, booze, cars, ghosts, cunnilingus and cheese spread, and language that moves as fast as the action.”

War, commoditization of living and social conventions caused Kerouac and his friends to distrust science and society: “They were romantics and Gnostics, not shills for science and progress” (Leland, 2000, P. 52). On one hand, the nuclear era brought fear and discontent towards science and its alleged service to humanity due to the fact that it rose as a potential permanent global threat. On the other hand, there was the possibility of genocide perpetrated in front of uncaring governmental and religious establishments who supposedly were to protect and to defend the people in need.

As for the term ‘Beat,’ Kerouac states: “Oh the Beat Generation was just a phrase I used in the 1951 written manuscript of *On the Road* to describe guys like Moriarty who run around the country in cars looking for odd jobs, girlfriends, kicks. It was thereafter picked up by West Coast Leftist groups and turned into a meaning like ‘Beat mutiny’ and ‘Beat insurrection’ and all that nonsense; they wanted some youth movement to grab on to for their own political and social purposes” (Plimpton, 1999, P. X).

The Beat Generation's influence can be tracked to the sixties where the Hippies rose as a dominant subculture as opposed to consumerist society, later the punk and rock movements in the following decades to the hip hop and movements of the nineties.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

New Criticism

A branch of formalism dominated American criticism from the 40's to the 60's. In an attempt to demonstrate the existence of formal unity, critics focused on every part of a work –words, images, elements – thus showing how each contributes to a central unifying theme. Since every detail of the work is linked to a theme or idea, those are generally treated as *symbolic*, as figurative or allegorical representations of that central, unifying idea.

When every part of the unit is related to the whole and the whole is reflected in each part, is called organic unity. The external, preconceived structure of rules that do not arise from the individuality of the work but from the type of genre is called mechanical unity. New critical analysis, “or explication of the text,” is especially effective in the critical reading of poetry.

The New Critics focus on the theme or meaning as well as form means that for them the literature is referential: it points to something outside itself, things in the real, external world or in human experience—a tree, a sound wave, love. The New Critics, in general, do not question the reality of the phenomenal world or the ability of language to represent it. (Bain, C., Beaty, J., & Hunter, J. 1991, P. 1394-1395).

Psychological Criticism

Here are encountered three stances of psychological criticism, namely: Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian Criticism. The first one asserts that the meaning of a literary work is to be interpreted from the very psyche of the author –an individual sharing similar stories and structures with the rest of his kind. As well, there are two sides to work on, the unconscious of the writer and the universality of the psychological elements alluded.

As stated in this theory, the value of the work lies in how powerfully and convincingly the aforementioned aspects are developed in the novel. Hence, aspects of the author's personal life are to be studied as well as to single out the relating broad issues addressed in the novel in order to come to a comprehensive understanding of the work. Those can be catharsis, search, judgment, retaliation, redemption, freedom, etc. An example of this is briefly presented as follows: in the Freudian tradition repressed desire is shown through the carnal yearning explained in Oedipus complex as contextualized in Shakespeare's Hamlet, where the main character is purportedly driven by jealousy and vengeance, which are some manifestations of an unconscious desire yet to be fulfilled, i.e.: the sexual union between son and mother.

Finally, there's the Jungian view which is in accord with Freudian assumption of a common set of psychological constructs shared by every human. According to Jungian stance, the unconscious both individual and collective comprises universal images, patterns, and forms of human experiences or archetypes. The aforementioned archetypes are represented by archetypal images (symbolic imagery.) Accordingly, the function of the Jungian is to make a sense of archetype enclosed in archetypal images (character aspects and story elements.)

In the present essay it is intended to analyze some aspects of the novel concerning motion and inner search –as portrayed by main characters Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*– under the lens of psychological criticism, an approach of literary analysis. According to its concept, the oeuvre and the psyche of the author are connected: “The assumption is that literature is the expression of the author's psyche, often his or her unconscious, and, like dreams, needs to be interpreted.” (Bain, C., Beaty, J., & Hunter, J. 1991, P. 1398-1399).

Sociological Criticism

Literary historians or historical critics began to see literature not as a mere passive product of “history” but a contributor and even creator of history. Sociological criticism has seen literature as an aspect of the larger process of history, especially when those processes involve people acting in social groups as members of social institutions or movements. In sociological criticism literary texts are used to illustrate social attitudes and tendencies. Although this approach has been strongly resisted by other “objectivist” critics for being not properly literary, sociological criticism attempts to relate what happens in the texts to social events and patterns as it takes into account the effects of texts on human events as well as the effects of human events on texts.

Sociological criticism assumes that the most significant aspects of human beings are social and that the most important functions of literature thus involve the way literature both portrays and influences human interactions. On one hand, much sociological criticism centers its attention on contemporary life and texts, seeking to affect both societal directions and literary ones in the present. On the other hand, some sociological criticism is historical, concerned with differences in different times and places and anxious to interpret the direction of literature in terms of historical emphases and patterns. (Bain, C., Beaty, J., & Hunter, J. 1991, P. 1401-1402).

Dean as Sal's Guide in the Search for Enlightenment in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

On the Road, Kerouac's most acclaimed book, is the story of his adventures traveling across the roads of North America in the late forties and early fifties. The book begins with a melancholic Sal Paradise immersed in the "feeling that everything was dead" and a dream of going west to join his new friend Dean Moriarty, the character that would later contribute to his recovery. Dean is a young man whose enthusiasm for life finds in Sal the possibility of adventure and discovery.

In *On the Road*, enlightenment does not appear as a concrete notion that Sal proposes to seek. It is rather Sal's process of growing – through accumulating miles and experiences on the road – that leads him to enlightenment. The present thesis aims to determine the role of Dean as a guide and generator of a significant change concerning Sal's way of conceiving life.

Sal's search for enlightenment is mainly associated with the notion of home and marriage as well as a quest for adventure, Sal's development as a writer and a conceptual reconstruction of America. The character Dean Moriarty appears in the novel as the guide who helps Sal reach illumination. After a life of travelling (which entails a long process of learning) Sal finds at the end of the road what he expects out of his life.

Making a parallel between the two characters, it can be suggested that Sal's reason to hitchhike and get on his whole road adventure has to do with a desire of getting away from home; he needs it in order to live new experiences; he has to leave his mother's lap so that he can pursue the dream of becoming a writer; he must leave New York so as to find Dean; he has to move along the road if he is to find a new woman, love, faith, and a home of his own – in other words, he needs to leave in the

search of enlightenment. In Dean's case, since reformatory schools, the street and poolhalls were his home, travelling represents the way he can find what he has never had: a family and real friends.

In *On the Road*, it is difficult to separate the lives of the characters from a car at fast speed sparkling flames and burning the roads of America. In other words, it is relevant to point out that Dean and Sal's relationship is sealed by travelling. The road means travelling, the way they solidify their friendship and the way Sal finds enlightenment.

George Dardess (2003) points out that "the men's relations are intimately connected to the direction and the scope of their geographical movements. As their geographical range increases, so does the range and complexity of their relation" (P. 202). The road appears as a converging point in the relationship of these two comrades. The more Dean and Sal's relations are explored through this fantastic and poignant book the more readers and characters are pushed to the *holy road*.

According to John Leland (2007), "much of the book's richness comes from the friendship at its center, unstinting in its account of the petty betrayals, disappointments, jealousies and insecurities that passes even between the closest friends" (P. 55). Their relationship will be a subject of study in order to demonstrate how Sal's companion becomes the guide he needs in his search for enlightenment. Their private conversations, thoughts, dialogues and other characters' comments throughout the book, will be taken into account to illustrate the strong bond that links these two characters.

In order to depict Dean and Sal's camaraderie as they move ahead on the asphalt, it would be suitable to start with one of Sal's phrases that summarizes very well his rationale when it comes to people –and friends:

The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn like fabulous roman candles exploding like spiders across the starts and in the middle you see the blue center light pop and everybody goes 'Awww!' (P. 7).

Dean emanates sparkles of joy and zest, and this is exactly what Sal finds most appealing and fascinating. Dean is one of those who “never say a commonplace thing,” Dean “burn[s], burn[s] like fabulous roman candles exploding like spiders across the starts.” Sal sees him like “a young Gene Autry – trim, thin hipped, blue eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent – a sideburned hero of the snowy West” (P. 4). That is why the whole road experience kindles and the lives of these two “sons of America” entangle, in Kerouac’s words, “in a whole mad swirl of everything that would mix up all their friends and all there had been left about their families in a big dust cloud over the American Night.”

To begin with, as Dardess states, it can be perceived that “Sal’s attitude towards Dean is at this point too wide-eyed, too bedazzled by admiration” (P. 202). It could be avowed that Sal regards Dean almost like a brother: “(...) in spite of our difference in character, he reminded me of some long-lost brother; the sight of his suffering bony face with the long sideburns and his straining muscular sweating neck made me remember my boyhood” (P. 9). Sal is so captivated by Dean that he almost counts him a member of his family “A western kinsman of the sun, Dean” (P. 10).

Dean also reminds Sal of his younger self: “in his excited way of speaking I heard again the voices of old companions and brothers under the bridge,” (P. 9) Dean evokes Sal’s early years of unsullied beauty, and what Sal once had thought was forever lost. By sharing some chapters of his life hitting the asphalt in the company of his hero Dean, Sal begins to find the escape from the haunting sense of “homelessness, valuelessness and faithlessness” (Webb, 1964, P. 123).

Another aspect of their relationship is that it is also based on conning each other. Sal admits: “[Dean] was conning me. I knew (this has been the basis of our relationship)” (P. 6). On one hand, Dean is taking advantage of Sal’s hospitality conning him for “room and board and how-to-write, etc.” But on the other hand, Sal is taking advantage of Dean’s company; he is learning from him, he is *drinking him*, he is beginning to get the “bug” like Dean. Sal begins soon to regard life from another perspective, one that starts helping him to get over that horrible sense that “everything was dead”, and it is all thanks to Dean.

Despite Sal’s awareness of Dean’s conning, he finds some brightness in his new friend and it is worth a try. He knows Dean “was simply a youth tremendously excited with life, and though he was a con-man, he was only conning because he wanted so much to live,” (P. 6) and he understands him. As shown above, Sal is totally aware of Dean’s intentions: “Hell, man, I know very well you didn’t come to me only to want to become a writer (...)” (P. 5), yet he allows him to stay at his house. Furthermore, they agree on going out West some time.

Dean is a synonym for trouble; nonetheless, Sal decides to take the risk. In the first part of the novel and before the beginning of his travels Sal says:

Although my aunt warned me that he would get me in trouble, I could hear a new call and see a new horizon...a little bit of trouble or even Dean’s rejection of me as a buddy, putting me down, as he would later, on starving side walks and sickbeds – what did it matter?” (P. 10).

Sal is young and he wants to see how life tastes, he is eager for experiencing all he could experience, for living: “I was a young writer and I wanted to take off” (P. 10). and who is better to take off with than Dean, who is a son of the road: “Dean is the perfect guy for the road because he actually was born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake in 1926, in a jalopy, on their way to Los Angeles” (P. 1). Sal knows that in the company of this *holy conman* “somewhere along the line

there'd be girls, visions, everything; somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to [him]" (P. 10). "So Sal cannot lose"; Theado claims, "[Sal] will encounter the vivifying ordeals of life after Dean's pace, and the result will be a more comprehensive life" (P. 31). Dean becomes the guide that takes Sal to the adventure of his existence – his life on the road.

Moreover, Dean offers a way out of society's strains and requirements that had started boring Sal: "(...) my life hanging around the campus had reached the completion of its cycle and was stultified (...)" (9). He feels that his expectations about life are not being met in the company of his friends at that moment. Sal says:

All my current friends were 'intellectuals' – Chad the Nietzschean anthropologist, Carlo Mars and his nutty surrealist low-voiced serious staring talk, Old Bull Lee and his critical anti-everything drawl – or else they were slinking criminals like Elmer Hassel, with that hip sneer; Jane Lee the same, sprawled on the Oriental cover of her couch, sniffing at the New Yorker (P. 9).

Dean is different and he offers him something new and marvelous. Critics such as Theado sustain that "Dean represents possibilities, open-ended adventure, and an escape from the decadence of Sal's sullen hipster friends in New York City." Theado's opinion is explained when Sal says: "Dean's intelligence was every bit as formal and shining and complete, without *tedious intellectualness*" (P. 9). The figure of Dean prevails upon other intellectual friends of Sal's despite his lack of formal education. Dean is one of a kind; he embodies the genuine type of individual that stands against the mainstream. At the beginning of the book, this duo is having some beers in bar and they notice the great potential of their rising friendship. "We understood each other on other levels of madness," (P. 6) Sal comments.

Writing is an important issue in *On the Road* and it can be considered a unifying element that brings them together. Sal's interest and curiosity about Dean occurs after having read Dean's personal writing. Sal first knows about Dean from the letters written

to Chad King: “I was tremendously interested in the letters because they so naively and sweetly asked Chad to teach him all about Nietzsche and all the wonderful intellectual things that Chad knew” (P. 1). Dean’s first journey – cross-country to New York – referenced in the book has to do with a desire for learning, especially how to write. After his wife Marylou leaves New York, Dean, being a conman as he is, sees an opportunity and looks for Sal. He uses writing as a tactic to approach Sal at the beginning of their relationship:

I was living with my aunt, and one night while I was studying there was a knock on the door, and there was Dean, bowing, shuffling obsequiously in the dark of the hall, and saying, ‘Hel-lo, you remember me – Dean Moriarty? I’ve come to ask you to show me how to write (P. 5).

Their relationship would start in New York and their lives would be connected forever. It can be stated that Dean’s vibrancy somehow boosts Sal’s desires to write: “Yes, and it wasn’t only because I was a writer and needed new experiences that I wanted to know Dean more” (P. 9). From the beginning Sal sees in Dean something that catches his attention and awakes his curiosity: “[Dean] was a young jailkid shrouded in mystery” (P. 1). Indeed it is this interest in Dean what makes Sal think of living a new life by travelling around the country. Sal starts following Dean only to see what he does next as if mentally chronicling; “in this passive role Sal Paradise gains fuel for writing as the car burns fuel on the road” (Theado, 2000, p. 31).

A brief extract of Sal’s speech at the very beginning of the book would better exemplify why Dean is here presented as a guide in the search for enlightenment: “With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road” (P. 1). The character Dean Moriarty represents the element that gives rise to the plot of the novel. By searching themselves from coast to coast as they do throughout the novel, sometimes by travelling alone (meeting marvelous yet flawed people along the

way,) or by telling each other about their lives in the front seats of a car, the novel gains momentum as Sal seeks enlightenment.

In trying to deepen on the motives driving Sal to regard Dean as a guide, it also can be said that he makes of Dean a sort of god. In Sal's words, Dean has "the tremendous energy of a new kind of American saint" (P. 35). At the very beginning of their relationship Sal also sees "a kind of holy lightning flashing from his excitement and his visions" (P. 6). He sees the light that can lead him to enlightenment, therefore he decides to follow. Sal wants to sip from the fountain of life that "the holy conman" represents; his excitement and craving for living become a reason for Sal to see him as a holy figure.

Dean appears as a guide in Sal's life because he can be taken as the push that Sal needs to get on the road. On the very first page of the book Sal comments: "Before [Dean's arrival to his life] I'd often dreamed of going West to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off" (P. 1). After having met Dean, some pages later, Sal starts showing his first desires for travelling: "Then came spring, the great time of travelling (...) I got ready to travel West for the very first time" (P. 8). Later, just after giving the first farewell to Dean who was leaving New York for Denver, Sal feels that he wants to follow his steps: "I promised myself to go the same way when spring really bloomed and opened up the land" (P. 9).

Sal's first travel becomes, as Dardess describes, "the innocent section of *On the Road*, the one most unqualifiedly romantic" (P. 202). He asserts that Sal is making his first trip alone across the country, as 'his feelings are those of boyish delight: "I'll just stay on 6 all the way to Ely, I said to myself and confidently started" (P. 11). At the very beginning of the road trip, Sal's naïveté is evident when he thinks that by following one great red line when taking Route 6, he would cross America. Theado also

comments that “his naive notions of travel on his initial hitchhiking trip lead only to a rainy night along a lonely road” (P. 29). Sal starts his travels as a young and naïve hitchhiker who gets easily lost; nonetheless, thanks to the lessons on the road, he will later learn how to make a profit out of the difficult situations in order to grow up.

Sal’s first experience on the road turns out to be his first failure as well as his first lesson. “It was my dream that screwed up,” (P. 12) he comprehends, “the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes” (P. 12). As Leland states, Sal learns in his first road lesson that “he must leave behind the boyish certainties of books and learn to improvise, play the changes” (P. 12), as his alter ego Dean would do.

Sal acknowledges being at a transition as he gets half way the country. He remarks that “the West” stands for future whereas “the East” could be regarded as a previous life that is left behind: “I was half way across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future” (P. 16). This episode reveals that growing up implies moving ahead; the “West” represents maturity, and maturity represents enlightenment.

On the Road is a combination of the sweet and the bitter; there are some curves in the road in which leads Dean and Sal to the light, and there are other times when they get stuck in the ditch of blurriness and desolation. If *On the Road* were just joy, sex, alcohol, drugs, music and kicks and only ‘kicks,’ it would merely be a modern fairy tale for young people. The road needs to be tough; otherwise, there wouldn’t be lessons to be learned. Enlightenment comes out as a result of mixing light and darkness. The characters need to see the dark side so they can be granted intermittent flashes of illumination along the road.

Solitude and homesickness are recurrent elements in the novel that can be linked to the dark side of the road. Here Sal demonstrates his poor tolerance of these feelings when on the move. This is exposed through the uneasiness related to his environment. He feels the lack of a place of his own and this distorts his reality:

[Staying at an inn of a hotel by the old Plains near the locomotive roadhouse] I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, here in the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs, and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and didn't really know who I was for about fifteen seconds (P. 15).

After experiencing some moments of extreme solitude, Sal runs into another hitchhiker and realizes the value of human friendship: "[Eddie] was a real red-nose young drunk of thirty and would have bored me ordinarily, except that my senses were sharp for any kind of human friendship" (P. 16). Howard W. Webb says that Sal starts finding on the highways people for whom he can feel "compassion, affection, and love." Sal comments: "That's why I stuck with him. It was like having an old friend along, a smiling good-natured sort of goof along with" (P. 17). Sal finds on the way what Leland calls "the inherent goodness in American man" (P. 43). Enlightenment is finding people he can identify with and to whom he can truly express feelings of "compassion, affection, and love." The interest he shows for these Americans renews his faith in his country.

Howard Webb (1964) describes the people Sal finds on the road as "warm honest persons, quick to share their pleasures and pads," some examples are Sal's companions on his trip at the back of a truck, Mississippi Gene and Montana Slim. Sal says: "I squandered my pack on them, I love them so. They were grateful and gracious" (P. 27).

Cresswell argues that:

The people Kerouac describes with the most passion are the very ones society does its best to ignore: the junkies, the dropouts and the hobos. Most of these characters are homeless and travel from one place to the next – "happy to be nowhere and everywhere" (P. 255).

Sal identifies with people like Gene, who is “crossing and recrossing the country every year, south in the winter and north in the summer and only because there was nowhere to go but everywhere, keep rolling under starts” (P. 25).

On Sal’s first trip, Denver, “the Promised Land,” as he describes it, represents his first accomplishment on the road. Getting to a new city is quite an achievement for a young hitchhiker and this is the reason Sal shows himself so excited: “I felt like an arrow that could shoot out all the way,” (P. 25) he says. The closer he is to the city the more anxious he gets: “I tingled all over; I counted minutes and subtracted miles. (...) I’d be seeing old Denver at last” (P. 32).

It is possible to say that Sal’s anxiety and excitement to get to Denver are related to the desire of seeing his guide Dean. Although John Leland avows that “Dean is the gasoline for these travels, not the destination,” it is clear that When Sal arrives in Denver, he seems very frantic in the search for his “joy-rider” friend. This is demonstrated on repeated occasions in Sal’s speech. The first thing he does after arriving is to ask Chad about Dean: “Where is Dean and what is he doing now?” (P. 34). Once he has dropped his bags at Chad’s place he says: “But where was Dean?” (P. 36). Later, not having received any answer, he persists: “I asked everybody, ‘Where’s Dean?’” (P. 37) finally when he rushes over to meet Carlo Marx he greets him with the question “And where’s Dean?” (P. 38).

Part One finishes with Sal Paradise putting in a scale all he learns during his first trip crossing the country. It is evident that life on the road means a process of changes that eventually helps Sal learn and mature. The direct lessons from his guide start a year later at Christmas 1948.

Sal is having a quiet Christmas in family and Dean comes with all his franticness to put him back on the road. “I’m going to New York and bring Sal back,” (P. 100)

Dean says. He is like a bug that produces bites of enthusiasm. One of the symptoms of Dean's bites in Sal has to do with the notion of travelling. Sal explains how he gets bitten and how this produces him longings to hit the road: "(...) now the bug was on me again, and the bug's name was Dean Moriarty and I was off on another spurt around the road" (P. 104). Dean's return impulses Sal back on the road so as to keep learning and enjoying the company of his guide.

On one occasion Carlo Marx asks Dean and Sal about the purpose of their travelling: "...what kind of sordid business are you on now? I mean, man, whither goest thou? Whither goest thou, America, in thy shinny car in the night?" (P. 108). Sal and Dean having no answer "just sat and didn't know what to say; there was nothing to talk about" Sal concludes saying that "the only thing to do was go" (P. 108). When analyzing this dialogue one can notice that the two friends seem not to have a clear reason for their travelling. Cresswell states that "it is the simple experience of going which drives them (...) [Thence,] it never matters where they are going; they are just going celebrating travel itself" (P. 255).

An extract from Carlo Marx's speech exemplifies the influence of Dean's madness for Sal and the others:

'I want to know what all this sitting around the house all day is intended to mean. What all this talk is and what you propose to do. [...] 'Marylou, why are you traveling around the country like this and what are your womanly intentions concerning the shroud?' Same answer. 'Ed Dunkel, why did you abandon your new wife in Tucson and what are you doing here sitting on your big fat ass? Where's your home? What's your job?' Ed Dunkel bowed his head in genuine befuddlement. 'Sal - how comes it you've fallen on such sloppy days and what have you done with Lucille?' (P. 117).

Even with all his uncertainty, Sal perceives Dean like an angel who must be followed. Nevertheless, some of the characters do not agree with this idea and instead, they see Dean as a bad influence that will only cause Sal troubles. Before going to San Francisco, Sal narrates: "When Lucille saw me with Dean and Marylou her face

darkened – she sensed the madness they put in me” (P. 113). She complains: “I don’t like you when you’re with them,” (P. 113) Sal, who has begun to acquire Dean’s philosophy of life, replies: “Ah, it’s all right, it’s just kicks. We only live once. We’re having a good time” (P. 113). According to this dialogue, it can be stated that Sal is aware of the peril Dean represents, though the thought of living on the spot and of keeping on ‘having a good time’ next to his mentor is stronger.

Lucille is not the only one who warns Sal about Dean. On one occasion, Sal comments that his aunt also recommends him to stay away from him. “My aunt said I was wasting my time hanging around with Dean and his gang” (P. 116). Sal doesn’t pay any attention to his aunt’s words. Instead, he ponders whether or not moving forward is what he cares about: “I knew that was wrong, too. Life is life, and kind is kind. What I wanted was to take one more magnificent trip to the West Coast” (P. 116). As noted, Sal is somehow so dazzled with Dean’s sparkles of zest that he follows Dean at his own peril.

Besides being just a guide, Dean is somehow a mentor for the ones who follow him. Nonetheless, a good mentor doesn’t necessarily have to always teach good things. As has been pointed out before, the road is harsh and inclement in some places; consequently a guide for the road needs to be tough and bold, just like Dean. In Testament, Dean takes Ed Dunkel, Marylou and Sal downtown in his Hudson so as to make them shoplift. Sal comments: “He made us all hustle, Marylou for the lunch groceries, me for a paper to dig the weather report, Ed for cigars” (P. 104). Sal and the others receive some of Dean’s road lessons on how to undergo difficult circumstances.

Dean knows how to survive on the road since his life has been bound to it from his childhood. All the circumstances he has had to face over the years have made him an experienced ‘cat’ of the highways. Thus, Sal walks after him: “It was a completely

meaningless set of circumstances that made Dean come, and similarly I went off with him for no reason,” (P. 105) he says. The reason why Sal follows Dean is because he trusts his madman expertise at the wheel; Dean knows how to take the curves of the road at great speed and without crashing (as is proved throughout the novel.) There may be risks of crashing, but Dean is a fast thinker who always comes out with alternate solutions on the spot – the perfect guide for the road.

Another relevant aspect of Dean’s guidance is presented on the occasions that he acts like a conductor telling everybody what to do. Dean is the one who gives the instructions and the others just follow, nobody opposes. Even being at Sal’s place Dean is the one who leads, Sal relates: ““All right, now,’ said Dean, (...) ‘what we must do is eat, at once. Marylou, rustle around the kitchen see what there is. Sal, you and I go downstairs and call Carlo. Ed, you see what you can do straightening out the house’” (P. 107).

In addition, Dean’s lessons seem to be learned not only by Sal, but by some others around as well. In the case of Ian MacArthur, Sal comments that “He began to learn ‘Yes!’ to everything, just like Dean” (P. 114). Another example is Ed Dunkel. When Sal asks him “What are you going to do with yourself, Ed?” He answers *following Dean’s line*: “I don’t know (...) I just go along. I dig life” (P. 111).

Dean always leaps up and tells others which way to take. He is the one who charts the road and the others are just spectators who get involved in Dean’s impulses. Sal’s words exemplify this notion when he says that “Dean is the chief hero of the Western” (P. 114). Dean is a lover of speed and he captures others’ interest and admiration by being an eager-to-go man – a “kick” finder. ““Here we go!’ And he hunched over the wheel and gunned her; he was back in his element” (P. 120). The road causes Dean extreme exhilaration: “Dean is happy as far as he has a wheel in his hand

and four on the road,” (P. 191) and by following, Sal catches some of Dean’s sparkles of enthusiasm.

In his essay, Cresswell avers that “the road becomes the central metaphor for all the experiences the two friends share. [It is] so important that it becomes their meaning” (P. 255). The road leads to enlightenment as it gives meaning to their randomness: “We were all delighted, we all realized we were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time, move. And we moved!” (P. 121). Accordingly, Cresswell defines the road as “a symbol of holiness and purity inhabited by mad angels, hungry for experience” (P. 255). The “nonsense and confusion” of the city is replaced by the “joy and exhilaration of pure movement.”

One could say that there are no limits for these two travellers; the only thing that makes them stop is the oceans. When they get to San Francisco at the beginning of Part Three, Dean exclaims in an enthusiastic way: “Wow! Made it! Just enough gas! Give me water! No more land! We can’t go any further ‘cause there ain’t no more land!” (P. 154). Back in New York, at the end of Part Three, it is Sal who mentions: “We were so used to traveling we had to walk all over Long Island, but there was no more land, just the Atlantic Ocean, and we could only go so far” (P. 224).

“The purity of the road” represents some kind of holiness for Sal: “All alone in the night I had my own thoughts and held the car to the white line in the holy road. What was I doing? Where was I going? I’d soon find out” (P. 125). By moving along the “holy road” in the company of his hero, Sal starts finding what he expects to reach out of his travels. “He and I suddenly saw the whole country like an oyster for us to open; and the pearl was there, the pearl was there” (P. 125). Cresswell states that “The pearl is the essence of America” (P. 260).

Although Bull Lee (another mentor of *On the Road*) tries to keep Sal away from Dean: “If you go to California with this madman you’ll never make it. Why don’t you stay in New Orleans with me?” (P. 133). Sal chooses being next to his guide Dean and to keep on with the plan of sharing Marylou and heading to San Francisco.

Sal’s expectations of having an affair with Marylou, under common consent, later rain out, yet he does not care much as he considers that “Dean had every right to die the sweet deaths of complete love of his Marylou.” Sal says: “I didn’t want to interfere, I just wanted to follow” (P. 120). So far it is evident that Sal is moved by witnessing: “[He] only [goes] along for the ride, and to see what else Dean [is] going to do” (P. 116). By following Dean’s movements along the road Sal finds the experiences he needs for his personal growth as well as for his aspirations as a writer.

Despite the fact that Dean is the one who charts the route and sets up the plan, becoming as it were the master of ceremonies of the road, it is clear that he moves for his own benefit. As soon as they arrive in San Francisco Dean goes to Camille, leaving Sal and Marylou adrift. Marylou says: “You see what a bastard he is? Dean will leave you out in the cold any time it’s in his interest” (P. 154). As long as he can get what he wants, he doesn’t care about others’ welfare. Even though Dean has the qualities to be a guide, his followers end up in a ditch every now and then as a result of his frantiness.

Sal and Marylou get a room on credit and they stay two days until Marylou disappears with a nightclub owner. Sal comments: “I saw what a whore she was. Now I had nobody, nothing” (P. 156). This is another tough lesson of the road and the first time Sal expresses a faithless regard for Dean: “Where is Dean and why isn’t he concerned about our welfare? I lost faith in him that year” (P. 155). He confesses that that week in San Francisco walking around “picking butts from the street” is “the beatest time of [his] life” (P. 155). The reliance upon his guide on the road is undercut

by Deans' abandonment despite his role of leader and mentor. Dean's action can be better understood by taking into account his upbringing on the streets and reform schools where survival means looking after oneself above all. Besides, he has also been abandoned more than once throughout his life when most vulnerable.

Walking down Denver streets, Sal experiences an episode in which he suffers a weird alteration of his senses caused by the delirium of starvation and exhaustion. As Leland points out, "[Sal] has been trying to follow Dean, and now he is adrift, lost even to what he thought he knew of himself:" (P. 81).

And just for a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on (...) (P. 156).

Later, Sal assesses himself: "What I accomplished by coming to Frisco I don't know" (P. 161). The image of immaculate provider of joy and sheer love for life Sal had built around Dean had fallen and there was nothing left but discontent:

At dawn I got my New York bus and said good-bye to Dean and Marylou. They wanted some of my sandwiches. I told them no. It was a sullen moment. We were all thinking we'd never see one another again and we didn't care (P. 161).

After their sullen farewell in San Francisco, apparently Sal comes to a renewal of his faith upon the 'holy con man' and he is ready to meet him again. So Sal goes in search of Dean again and heads to San Francisco. As soon as he gets "[he] ran immediately to Dean." (P. 165) Sal finds him in a lamentable state:

(...) I'm classification three-A, jazz-hounded Moriarty has a sore butt, his wife gives him daily injections of penicillin for his thumb, which produces hives, for he's allergic. He must take sixty thousand units of Fleming's juice within a month. He must take one tablet every four hours for this month to combat allergy produced from his juice. He must take codeine aspirin to relieve the pain in his thumb. He must have surgery on his leg for an inflamed cyst (P. 169).

A good guide is one who never shows himself defeated in spite of the difficulties, and that is exactly what Dean teaches Sal many times. Sal sees that his guide, even

dealing with a bunch of health problems, can face life with the same vibrancy and energy that characterize him:

And yet –and yet, I’ve never felt better and finer and happier with the world and to see little lovely children playing in the sun and I am so glad to see you, my fine gone wonderful Sal, and I know, I know everything will be all right (P. 169).

Dean’s actions throughout the novel become something that Sal admires and at the same time feels compassion for. A brief excerpt of Sal’s speech will better exemplify his noble spirit:

Poor, poor Dean -the devil himself had never fallen farther; in idiocy, with infected thumb, surrounded by the battered suitcases of his motherless feverish life across America and back numberless times, an undone bird (P. 171).

Sal has a high regard for his hero; he knows he is occasionally like a child who needs love and protection: “I was glad I had come, he needed me now” (P. 171). Dardess avers that “By taking custody of Dean, Sal changes from being little more than an admirer caught up in Dean’s wake to becoming Dean’s father defender” (P. 203).

Sal defending Dean is something repeatedly found throughout the novel. On one occasion when Dean was receiving a nagging talk from Galatea: “Dean, why do you act so foolish?” (...) ‘Camille called and said you left her. Don’t you realize you have a daughter?’ (P. 175). Sal rises in Dean’s defense before a “jury” composed of Dean’s former friends: “‘He didn’t leave her, she kicked him out!’ I said, breaking my neutrality... ‘And with that thumb, what do you expect the poor guy to do?’ I added” (P. 175).

Sal would not mind standing against the world to defend Dean, as long as he can remain close to his hero. “[Dean] tried all in his power to tell me what he was knowing, and they envied that about me, my position at his side, defending him and drinking him in as they once tried to do” (P. 177). Sal is the only one who understands him because he realizes that “Dean, by virtue of his enormous series of sins, was becoming the Idiot,

the Imbecile, the Saint of the lot" (P. 176). With this in mind, even if Dean "has absolutely no regard for anybody but himself and his damned kicks and all he thinks about is what's hanging between his legs and how much money or fun he can get out of people and then just throw them aside," as alleged by Galatea, Sal doesn't consider Dean's behavior as improper; instead he is amazed by it. Sal doesn't care if he is "goofing all the time" because he regards Dean as a saint, "holy and pure", "the soul of Beatific" and "the HOLY GOOF" that brings sparkles of joy to his life.

As a guide, Dean gives Sal a great lesson of tolerance by not talking back to Galatea (or anyone) and by remaining imperturbable all the time. Sal comments that at the end of Galatea's nagging talk: "In tick-tocking silence [Dean] walked out of the apartment without a word." When Sal looked out of the window "[Dean] was alone in the doorway, digging the street. Bitterness, recriminations, advice, morality, sadness - everything was behind him, and ahead of him was the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being" (P. 178). Leland claims that "their role as friends and pilgrims is to suffer, confess and forgive. Their friendship is not a pact of illicit thrills as much as a hymn to human sorrows. We hurt therefore we are" (P. 53).

Other observations show that the latent desire for steadiness represented by a home and a family comes out as an end of the road. "All I hope, Dean, is someday we'll be able to live on the same street with our families and get to be a couple of oldtimers together" (P. 231). The yearning of settling down to start a family awakens serious considerations concerning their "franticness" and "jumping around." An extract from Sal's speech exemplifies this idea:

I realized 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, our actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road. All of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness. Pitiful forms of ignorance (P. 231).

Mexico represents for the travelers what they enjoy most on the road, novelty and excitement upon a new land yet to be explored: “Oh me, oh my, I don’t know what to do I’m so excited and sweetened in this morning world. We’ve finally got to heaven. It couldn’t be cooler, it couldn’t be grander, it couldn’t be anything” (P. 253). The permanent need for girls is also to be fulfilled in this new land: “‘Damn,’ he said under his breath. ‘Oh! This is too great to be true. Gurls, gurls’” (P. 253).

Dean’s nature surfaces once again following a pattern (selfish nature) as previously referenced in this essay. Similarly, Sal is keen on believing in his guide-friend’s motifs and behavior. Leland is right when he mentions that Sal has the ability to see things in two states at the same time; more specifically to see Dean as both “myth and rat.” Therefore, when Sal is re-abandoned when in need: “Yes, yes, yes, I’ve got to go now. Old fever Sal, good-by.’ And he was gone” (P. 276). He meditates and accepts Dean’s decision: “When I got better I realized what a rat he was, but then I had to understand the impossible complexity of his life, how he had to leave me there, sick, to get on with his wives and woes. ‘Okay, old Dean, I’ll say nothing’” (P. 276).

Dean’s need for ongoing mobility is not to stop unless he finds a reason meaningful enough to, one in particular. He appears to be biding his time until he finally solves his marital situation: getting a divorce and marrying a new woman to settle down with, for good. Thus, his inability to stay in one place and his self-centeredness push him forward, he must go on “digging” and getting “kicks” and women alongside his traveling companion and friend. Sal ignores that Dean’s company is conditioned by the aforesaid issue. Thence, the sudden end of Mexico trip is best illustrated here.

Sal's search for a woman in *On the Road* actually ends up where he first started and when he less expected. He finally finds the woman "he wanted to marry" and the one he can age and rest his soul with. The following quote provides a hint:

'Come on up,' she called. 'I'm making hot chocolate.' So I went up and there she was, the girl with the pure and innocent dear eyes that I had always searched for and for so long. We agreed to love each other madly (P. 278).

By offering "hot chocolate", Laura actually offers Sal a whole new chance. Laura epitomizes the proper halt to "all his franticness and jumping around." Here 'hot chocolate' is a token for faith and engagement, i.e. the warmth of a home he had always yearned for.

As for Dean, he seems to have achieved the similar steadiness to Sal's: "So Dean's life was settled with his most constant, most embittered, and best-knowing life Camille, and I thanked God for him" (P. 279). Dean and Sal call a halt to their adventures on the road and engage on a new project: family and home.

At the end of *On the Road* Dean goes on an eastbound trip with the idea of retrieving his companion and his new girl, so they can carry out their plans of living like neighbors. Sal says: "[Dean] was coming to get me and personally select the old truck himself and drive us home" (P. 278). He gets to New York and when meeting Sal, in a customary rush of emotion, he comments: "Long long awful trip five days and five nights just to SEE you, Sal" (P. 279). This time, Sal is settled, he has come a long way and seems to have a different regard of Dean and his bug-like magnetism. The piper has no longer power upon the rodent's will. He is not longer compelled to run after his guide without first considering his own plans and those of people around him. It seems he has transformed his idealistic vision of Dean Moriarty who does not make up for everything and everyone else any more. The late encounter flows without the customary magic: "The last time I saw him it was under sad and strange circumstances" (P. 280).

Finally, they have a sullen farewell and each one takes a different way. Although Sal knows his guide “will be all right,” (P. 280) alone on his trip back, fraught with nostalgia he comments: “(...) all the time I was thinking of Dean and how he got back on the train and rode over three thousand miles over that awful land and never knew why he had come anyway, except to see me” (P. 281). The book ends sadly with Sal Paradise missing his beloved friend: “I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty” (P. 281). Thus, this farewell determines the end of their roving together and the beginning of a quieter time. Sal is no longer in the company of his guide, so he has to face life with the lessons learned on the road.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, it can be said that at the end of the novel there is no “a final climax” or “denouement,” the characters find “momentary flashes of illumination episodically.” Therefore it can be argued that enlightenment is found intermittently throughout the story. Since Dean and Sal live at a strain-free pace—even though if it represents eventual struggling and sacrifice—they are able to have intermittent access to this enlightenment regarded as clearness of thought, inner peace, and joy.

Thanks to the whole experience on the road next to his *mad hero*, Sal finds a new view of life. After living a series of events as an itinerant traveler, Sal learns about himself and reaches sufficient maturity to undertake projects as set by family and literary ambitions. Sal’s travels can be seen as preparation for marriage, helping him mature as a potential husband and as a writer. Sal seems to be ready to write a new book since he has accumulated a broad range of experiences worthy to be told. Embedded in the story there is the notion that he looks not only for ‘eyeball kicks’ but for details to depict in his ‘road book.’

When looking into the notion of home in the novel, it is seen that Americans perceive their homes as an important symbol of who they are. For Sal and Dean it is not merely a social and economic symbol, but it also entails an important function as a place broadly perceived—consciously or unconsciously—as a mirror of the inner self. All the frenetic shifting and movement is actually a search for something permanent and transcendent. What it is proposed as *permanent* and *transcendent* is indeed enlightenment. Consequently, there comes the time for both characters to settle down and enter a mature level after road.

The road proved to be liberty from social strains and limitations. It is demonstrated that it is valuable for its own sake, regardless of the destinations, just

going is the key. Enlightenment is living differently than dictated by conventional society.

The persistent search for Dean's lost father finally becomes an element of the story that gives sense to Dean and Sal's travels. They don't find him because Dean's father would not be of any use for the story. Sal's interest in Old Dean is nostalgic, so believing in him is more important than actually finding him. The search per se is what matters. Furthermore, finding him would bring the game to a halt, because then Sal and Dean would have to stop searching.

Sal ends up with a reconfigured image of his country and that of himself. He learns the value of "human friendship" when reflecting himself on the faces of the "mad ones." He finds enlightenment as the "inherent goodness in American man." Kerouac uses travelling as part of a search for his own, "reconstructed, America." It is observed that his writing outstands his affection for the country; the words American or America are laden with sentimentalism, this is why they appear constantly throughout the book. Sal and Dean are 'American angels,' 'travellers of the American road' and 'new American saints.'

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