

Jack Kerouac: An Uncommon Public Intellectual

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“His writing turned struggling friends into epic heroes, and persuaded many youthful vagabonds ... to go *now*, to find saints among the sinners.”¹ This observation from Damien Cave’s *New York Times*’ article aptly described Jack Kerouac’s writings. In his writing, Kerouac romanticized and glorified his friends. He narrated his life through his novels in a way where he was the background character observing another more interesting character. Such an example is seen in *On the Road*.² Dean Moriarty, who was the novel’s protagonist, was inspired by Neal Cassady, one of Kerouac’s friends. Cassady spent his youth in and out of jail. In total he had been arrested ten times and was sent to reform schools for petty crimes.³ Throughout the novel, Moriarty had difficulty settling down. He was always looking for his next pleasure and for the next adventure. Moriarty craved ecstasy and always on the go. He did not have a steady job, nor did any of the other characters in the novel, and the only jobs they did have were temporary. Dean even had a hard time staying monogamous. He had a new girl in all the cities he visited. Throughout the novel, the characters are geared towards being nomadic. Constantly traveling across the country, the characters and their spontaneity were driven by looking for their next fix. Whether it was committing crimes, doing drugs, looking for sex, or simply enjoying jazz, the characters were always on the go. *On the Road* introduced the Beat lifestyle.

Since the movement impacted all forms of art, figures such as James Dean and Elvis Presley can be connected to the Beat Generation. Presley and Dean, like Kerouac and the other Beat Writers were critiqued by their art work. Presley’s dance moves were vulgar and Dean’s movie characters inspired teenagers to rebel. Kerouac and the other Beat Writers opened doors for future generations. Much of the literature produced by the Beats influenced the San Francisco Renaissance of the 1960s. However, their fame did not happen over night. Most of the Beat Writers struggled for several years before they were published. Kerouac and the Beats impacted all forms of art, not only literature. Their work defined obscenity, displayed heavy drug use, was stirred by crime, and was promiscuous.

Kerouac’s most popular novel, *On the Road*, was published on September 5, 1957. It was an instant hit and continues to be one of the most widely read books. On the day of its release, Gilbert Millstein of the *New York Times* wrote, “‘On the Road’ is the most beautifully executed, the clearest and the most important utterance yet made by the generation Kerouac himself named years ago as ‘Beat.’”⁴ *On the Road* has been classified as the Bible of the Beat Generation, just as Kerouac has been named the father of the Beat Generation. Through his literature, Kerouac was able to introduce an alternative to the American Dream or the average way of life in the 1950s.

America transformed during the 1950s and the 1960s. The Civil Rights movement’s momentum gained force in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. The Board of Education* that segregation in schools was unconstitutional.⁵ One year later, Rosa Parks refused

¹ Damien Cave, “Kerouac’s Mexico” *New York Times*, October 11, 2013.

² Jack Kerouac, *On The Road* (New York: Viking, 1997).

³ James Campbell, *This Is the Beat Generation: New York, San Francisco, Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 57.

⁴ Gilbert Millstein, “Book of the Times.” *The New York Times*, September 5, 1957.

⁵ Robert L. Lineberry, George Edwards, and Martin Wattenberg, *Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy*, 11th ed. (Boston, MA: Longman, 2011), 153.

to give up her seat when city buses were integrated.⁶ Then, in September of 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas, desegregation was attempted at Central High School.⁷ The nation's media covered the results. The nine students were blocked from entering the school and the National Guard had to step in.⁸ The group of students later became known as the "Little Rock Nine."⁹ In addition, another important Supreme Court ruling happened on June 24, 1957. In *Roth v. U.S.*, the Court found that the First Amendment did not protect obscenity. The Civil Rights and Beat movements were showing people that there was more to life than what they had already been exposed to.

For instance, the literary movement of the Beats challenged social standards. Although Kerouac and the other Beat Writers attended college, they believed that creativity could be harbored anywhere, from an alley way in Harlem to the halls of Harvard. Cassady was a perfect example of this. When Cassady and Kerouac first met, Cassady asked Kerouac to teach him to write.¹⁰ They formed their own space for education, outside of the traditional institutions.

Despite the wonderful review and popularity that Kerouac's novel received, he faced heavy criticism. On November 8, 1959, Stuart Mitchner of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, wrote an article entitled "'Those Phony Beatniks!: They're a Bunch of Bearded Bums, a Young Writer Asserts, as He Challenges 'High Priest' Jack Kerouac to Reform.'"¹¹ Mitchner began by stating, "If the Beat Generation is a label for our time, I'll not submit to it."¹² He was not only speaking for himself, because there were many people that felt that the Beats were degenerates. Then, Mitchner went on to say that the Beat Generation were freak products from radiation.¹³ To further condemn the Beats, he later stated, "But if there is one thing in this year 1959 that is cheap and phony, it's the cancer called the Beat Generation."¹⁴

Mitchner then took his attack directly to the writers themselves. He stated, "Most of the poets and writers who consider themselves Beat make the same nonsense on a typewriter, create worthless literary dissonance – and get away with it!"¹⁵ Mitchner's article slowly progressed from a generalization of the Beat Generation to directing his words to Kerouac. Mitchner stated, "Whether you admit it or not, Kerouac, there is hatred and bitterness and ugliness in this thing called the Beat Generation."¹⁶ Mitchner was speaking for all the people who felt this way about the Beat Generation. By 1959, Kerouac had been classified as the creator of the Beats. The Beat lifestyle was an unusual lifestyle. Just like Kerouac's literature was filled with drugs and promiscuity, so was his life. Bensedrine, alcohol, marijuana and hard drugs were a part of everyday life for Kerouac and the Beats.

Anything out of the ordinary was considered a threat to the purity of America. In an era fueled by the hope of stopping the spread of communism, Joseph McCarthy was ready to blame

⁶ Lineberry, et al., *Government in America*, 147.

⁷ Lineberry, et al., *Government in America*, 153.

⁸ Lineberry, et al., *Government in America*, 153.

⁹ James A Banks, Barry K. Beyer, Gloria Contreras, Jean Craven, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Mary A. McFarland, and Walter C. Parker, *United State; Adventures in Time and Place* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill School Division, 1999), 623.

¹⁰ Barry Miles, *Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats: A Portrait* (New York: H. Holt, 1998), 130.

¹¹ Stuart Mitchner, "Those Phony Beatniks! They're a Bunch of Bearded Bums, a Young Writer Asserts, as He Challenges 'High Priest' Jack Kerouac to Reform," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 8, 1959.

¹² Mitchner, "Those Phony Beatniks!"

¹³ Mitchner, "Those Phony Beatniks!"

¹⁴ Mitchner, "Those Phony Beatniks!"

¹⁵ Mitchner, "Those Phony Beatniks!"

¹⁶ Mitchner, "Those Phony Beatniks!"

anyone and anything.¹⁷ That included Kerouac and his fellow Beats, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs. The Cold War era of 1950 brought discontent to anything that dared to step outside the box, like Kerouac and the Beats.¹⁸ It is no surprise that most people were appalled when they found out what the actual content of the literature was. It was deemed so inappropriate by public opinion that Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* and Ginsberg's *Howl* were banned.¹⁹ These bans on their literature led to court cases and trials that helped expand First Amendment protection.

The Beat lifestyle was a different outlook on life in 1950s America. It rejected middle-class American values for a search of a higher truth and a better way of living. The term "Beat" came from Kerouac. The Beat Generation grew up during some of the most difficult events in U.S. history. Most of them born after World War I, they lived through the Great Depression and World War II. Kerouac talking with a fellow Beat, John Clellon Holmes, said, "So I guess you might say we are a 'beat' generation."²⁰ The Beat life dove into a world of drugs, drinking, sexual deviancy, and rebellion. In their normal lives Kerouac suffered from alcoholism, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs were open homosexuals, and Neal Cassady had a criminal record.

Who was Jack Kerouac, and why were his writings so popular? Certainly he, his writings, and his friends were always talked about. Whether it was good or bad they were the center of many controversies. Kerouac and his fellow Beat writers embarked on a culture shock that revolutionized the way literature could be written and published in America. They questioned and railed against the mainstream way of life, against what was perceived to be proper and what was right. Kerouac is a unique public intellectual who created a new genre of literature, displayed a different lifestyle that challenged norms and inspired a counter-culture movement, and his work helped to expand First Amendment protection in American literature. The Beat movement was small, and although Kerouac and his fellow Beat writers were disliked in their time, their movement continues to inspire many.

Childhood

In the Franco-American town of Lowell, Massachusetts, Kerouac was born Jean-Louis de Kerouac to Gabrielle (Gabe) and Leo Kerouac. Both of his parents were French-Canadian immigrants from Quebec. Kerouac was born on March 12, 1922, only a couple of years before the Great Depression. His father, Leo, owned a print-shop called Spotlight Print.²¹ Gabe was a stay-at-home mother. The Kerouacs had three children, two boys and one girl. Kerouac had an older brother named Gerard, who died when Kerouac was four years old, and an older sister named Caroline. Gerard died at the age of nine in 1926, after suffering from rheumatic fever.²² In memory of his brother, Kerouac wrote *Visions of Gerard*.²³

¹⁷ Anna Lou Jessmer, "Containing the Beat: An Analysis of the Press Coverage of the Beat Generation During the 1950s" (Thesis, Marshall University, 2012), 3.

¹⁸ Jessmer, "Containing the Beat," 3.

¹⁹ William Lawlor, *Beat Culture: Icons, Lifestyles, and Impact* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 51-52.

²⁰ Daniel Garcia, "Go: The Beat Generation From A Critical Perspective," *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 60, (November 2010): 154.

²¹ Joyce Johnson, *The Voice is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 31.

²² Joyce Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 3.

²³ Jack Kerouac, *Visions of Gerard* (New York: Farrar and Straus, 1963).

When the Depression reached the Kerouac household, Gabe was no longer able to be a stay-at-home mother, and had to take a job at a local shoe factory.²⁴ Leo lost his print shop and fell deeper into his gambling and drinking addiction. Due to his drinking, Kerouac's father had a difficult time maintaining a steady job to keep the family afloat. He often got into arguments and had gambling bets. As a result, the family had to move around Lowell in search of affordable rent. At the age of seventeen, Kerouac and his family had moved a total of eleven times.²⁵ The family lived in the neighborhood of Centralville in Lowell until Kerouac was ten years old.²⁶ After Centralville, the family moved to Pawtucketville in Lowell.²⁷ Within both of those neighborhoods, they lived in multiple apartment complexes.

In 1928, Kerouac began school at St. Louis de France, which was a Catholic school where the children learned mainly in French. When they were taught in English, it was just enough to function in an English-speaking society.²⁸ He spent four years at St. Louis de France before going to St. Joseph's in Pawtucketville in 1932. After spending a year at St. Joseph's, Kerouac was transferred to Bartlett Junior High.²⁹ At Bartlett Junior High, he was able to skip sixth grade straight to seventh grade. His homeroom teacher, Miss Dineen, noticed that Kerouac was a quiet and well-behaved student, and she was surprised by his writing ability.³⁰ Through his childhood friend, Sebastian Sampas, he joined the Scribblers' Club run by the school librarian, Miss Mansfield.³¹ Kerouac would show Mansfield his stories at the club's meetings. Mansfield was impressed and immediately took Kerouac under her wing, providing him with new materials to read.

Mansfield first suggested he read classics like *Huckleberry Fin* and *The Iliad*.³² While growing up, Kerouac liked giving stories to his friends for fun, but he wanted to become a serious writer. Father Morissette, from his local parish, made a good impression on him. Kerouac was able to confide in Father Morissette about his dream to become a writer. He inspired Kerouac to look for scholarships to be able to attend college, as he knew the Kerouac family living situation was tough. Kerouac had been suffering from being laughed at by his peers because he wanted to be a writer, but speaking to Father Morissette helped him.³³ Now that Kerouac knew there was a way to get to college, he became involved in football. In 1935, he joined his first football team named the Dracut Tigers.³⁴ Since Kerouac had skipped a grade level, he was physically smaller than the rest of the boys in high school, and so he worked extra hard to stand out. Eventually, he earned a scholarship to Columbia University.

Columbia and the Beat Generation

After graduating high school in 1939, Kerouac was on his way to college with a football scholarship to Columbia University. He attended Horace Mann, a prep school, for a year before

²⁴ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 39.

²⁵ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 27.

²⁶ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 31.

²⁷ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 43.

²⁸ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 34-37.

²⁹ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 46.

³⁰ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 47.

³¹ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 48.

³² Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 48.

³³ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 55.

³⁴ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 51.

entering Columbia.³⁵ At Horace Mann, Kerouac met people who had completely different upbringings than he did. Most of his fellow classmates came from wealthy families, which helped expand his world. They shared their food with him and invited him over to their homes for the weekend, as was the case with Eddie Gilbert.³⁶ At this point of his life, Kerouac befriended Seymour Wyse, a Jewish boy who loved jazz.³⁷ Both boys often went to Harlem and listened to Jazz all night.³⁸ Seymour's older brother worked for a jazz magazine and was able to tell them where the best jazz musicians played.³⁹ This was the introduction of the bop music in his life, and this music prominently influenced in his literature.

Unfortunately for Kerouac, his football playing days at Columbia were limited. He had a difficult relationship with Coach Lou Little, who did not allow him to play in most games. When Kerouac finally played, he broke his leg.⁴⁰ However, this was a blessing in disguise for Kerouac as he no longer had to attend practice. He was now free to spend his time reading and writing. Kerouac began to read Thomas Wolfe as suggested by Sebastian Samps.⁴¹ He joined Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity and he enjoyed their large collection of jazz records.⁴² Kerouac befriended another young man named, Jack Fitzgerald, who shared the same passion for writing and jazz.⁴³

Kerouac took the summer of 1941 to spend time with his family. The Kerouac family had moved from Lowell, Massachusetts to New Haven, Connecticut and eventually to Ozone Park, New York.⁴⁴ After the summer and after arriving back at Columbia, he continued to have problems with Coach Little. Disillusioned, he abandoned his education at Columbia to fulfill his dream of becoming a writer. With the United States involved in World War II, Kerouac thought he would have been drafted.⁴⁵ As the War progressed he was not drafted and managed to gain readmission to Columbia for the fall of 1942. Nonetheless, things with Couch Little remained the same.

During his fall semester at Columbia, he met Henri Cru and Edie Parker. Both, Cru and Parker were important characters in Kerouac's life. Edie quickly became Kerouac's girlfriend. In order to pay for his semester, and since things were not working with Coach Little, Kerouac joined the Naval Air Force V-12 Program in December. Kerouac officially dropped out of Columbia in the fall of 1942. While Kerouac was away, Edie waited for him thinking they were going to marry. By the summer of 1943, Kerouac was discharged on psychiatric grounds.⁴⁶ When he returned to New York, he moved in with Edie.

The year of 1944, brought together the Beat Generation. Lucien Carr, who is credited with bringing the Beat Generation together, entered the soon-to-be Beat scene through Edie Parker.⁴⁷ The two became acquainted and started to spend time together. While Parker and Carr

³⁵ Barry Miles, *Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats: A Portrait* (New York: H. Holt, 1998), 27.

³⁶ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 75.

³⁷ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 77.

³⁸ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 77.

³⁹ Edie Kerouac-Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, ed. Timothy Moran and Bill Morgan (San Francisco: City Lights, 2007), 70.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 75.

⁴¹ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 93.

⁴² Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 97.

⁴³ Johnson, *The Voice is All* 99.

⁴⁴ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 104.

⁴⁵ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 117.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 140.

⁴⁷ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 155.

became friends, Kerouac's childhood friend, Sebastian, was killed in combat in North Africa in 1944. Kerouac was devastated and decided to mourn in New Orleans.⁴⁸ Kerouac and Sampas had kept in contact over the years through letters and had made plans to travel after the war. Unfortunately, they never followed these plans through. Upon his return to New York, Kerouac and Carr were introduced. Through Carr, he met Allen Ginsberg as they were both students at Columbia. Kerouac also met William S. Burroughs through Carr. While all three were together, they spent hours talking about literature, high on Benzedrine.

In a letter dated October 1944 to Ginsberg, Kerouac described Carr as "different" and that he "seeks new vision."⁴⁹ Carr, like Kerouac wanted to be a writer.⁵⁰ He was magnetic and well liked. As was the style of the Beats, Carr brought an unusual event to Kerouac's life. Kerouac was dragged into a tense situation that had formed between Lucian and Dave Kammerer. Kammerer's connection to the Beats was through Carr and Burroughs. Burroughs and Kammerer were both Harvard graduates. Carr was considered a very attractive man and Kammerer was obsessed with him. In July of 1944, Kammerer's obsession intensified when Kerouac and Carr started hanging out without him. By August, Kammerer was out of control and Carr could not take it anymore. On August 13, 1944 Carr confided in Kerouac and Burroughs that he had killed Kammerer.⁵¹

Kammerer wanted Carr to feel the same way about him. He attempted to force himself upon Carr and in self-defense Carr stabbed him, killing him, then threw his body into the Hudson River. Kerouac spent the remainder of the day with Carr and helped him dispose of the murder weapon. Burroughs advised Carr to turn himself in and to hire a lawyer. Carr did so after he and Kerouac finished their day together. Carr was booked and charged with Second Degree Murder.⁵² Burroughs and Kerouac were also arrested as material witnesses. They were both held on \$5,000 bonds.⁵³ Burroughs's family immediately sent him bail money.⁵⁴ Kerouac's father, however, was unwilling to help him, so he sought Edie Parker for help. He married Parker on August 22, 1944, as a stipulation for her family to help them with the money for his bail.⁵⁵ Her family's money was invested in real estate, and therefore, their marriage had to be secured before anything could be put into place.⁵⁶

As devoted Catholics, Kerouac's parents were happy that he and Edie were now married. At 22 years of age, Kerouac was not happy being married. By October of that year, Kerouac was done with the marriage. Carr was sentenced to Elmira Reformatory for pleading guilty to first-degree manslaughter.⁵⁷ Secretly, Ginsberg allowed Kerouac to live with him in the dorms of Columbia. During these couple of weeks, Ginsberg brought Kerouac books from the library, by authors such as William Butler Yeats, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Aldus Huxley.⁵⁸ Kerouac developed his vocabulary and furthered his self-education during his time living in the dorms of

⁴⁸ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 156.

⁴⁹ Jack Kerouac, letter to Allen Ginsberg, 1944, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, ed. Ann Charters, (New York: Viking, 1995), 81.

⁵⁰ Ann Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*. (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973), 43.

⁵¹ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 47.

⁵² "STUDENT IS INDICTED IN 2D-DEGREE MURDER," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, August 25, 1944.

⁵³ "STUDENT IS SILENT ON SLAYING FRIEND," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, August 18, 1944.

⁵⁴ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 48.

⁵⁵ Barry Miles, *Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats: A Portrait*, (New York: H. Holt, 1998), 72.

⁵⁶ Kerouac-Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 188.

⁵⁷ "STUDENT SLAYER SENT TO THE REFORMATORY," *New York Times*, October 7, 1944.

⁵⁸ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 53.

Columbia. A couple months after Carr's trial, Burroughs returned to New York and allowed Kerouac to move in with him.⁵⁹ Burroughs' apartment was filled with needles, morphine, and Benzedrine. At first, Kerouac refused to take morphine, feeling that bennies (Benzedrine) were satisfactory, but enjoyed watching Burroughs take the stronger drug.⁶⁰

In February, Kerouac told Edie that they should have their marriage annulled.⁶¹ They, along with Ginsberg and Burroughs had been living together in Joan's, Burroughs' girlfriend, apartment. But by July 1945, it all came to an end. Kerouac went back to live with his parents as his father was diagnosed with cancer of the stomach.⁶² In a letter to Ginsberg dated November 13, 1945, Kerouac said, "Benny has made me see a lot."⁶³ He explained, "[I]ntensifying awareness naturally leads to an overflow of old notions, and voila, new material..."⁶⁴ Kerouac took Benzedrine to write in the nights after a long day of taking care of his father, Leo. By December, Kerouac had abused Benzedrine too much, and developed thrombophlebitis in his legs.⁶⁵ Leo died in the spring of 1946.⁶⁶ His father's death created an appreciation in Kerouac for his mother, and he vowed to always take care of her.

The Road and Neal Cassady

Kerouac first heard of Neal Cassady through Hal Chase, a Columbia friend around December of 1946.⁶⁷ Kerouac was fascinated with Cassady's excitement.⁶⁸ Cassady, like Kerouac, enjoyed Benzedrine, though he did not need it. They both connected on a different level and it led to them spending a lot of time together. Cassady's high-level of energy drove Kerouac to continue taking bennies. To his surprise, Cassady had not tried marijuana. Kerouac suggested they go smoke at Vicki Russell's apartment, where their group of friends often gathered.⁶⁹ Ginsberg and Cassady met at Russell's, and there the two connected and became lovers.⁷⁰ By March 1947, Cassady had tired of life in New York, and headed back to Denver. In the few months they spent together, both Kerouac and Ginsberg became tutors for Cassady. This friendship led Kerouac to write his most popular novel.

In 1959, Kerouac appeared on the *Steve Allen Show*. There he read a portion of *On the Road* while being accompanied by a jazz melody on piano. Before the reading began Steve Allen asked Kerouac, "How long were you on the road?"⁷¹ Kerouac replied, "Seven years." Kerouac said that it only took him three weeks to write the novel. He typed it in its entirety on a scroll,

⁵⁹ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 55.

⁶⁰ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 56.

⁶¹ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 183.

⁶² Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 59.

⁶³ Kerouac, letter to Ginsberg, 1945, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 100.

⁶⁴ Kerouac, letter to Ginsberg, 1945, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 101.

⁶⁵ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 59.

⁶⁶ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 61.

⁶⁷ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 69.

⁶⁸ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 71.

⁶⁹ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 72.

⁷⁰ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 72.

⁷¹ History Films Stock Footage Archive, "Jack Kerouac on The Steve Allen Show with Steve Allen 1959," filmed 1959, YouTube video, 06:51. Posted January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LLpNKo09Xk>

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which he said he bought from a good stationary store.⁷² Kerouac did not want to lose focus when he was typing by having to change the page in the typewriter. Just like his life, *On the Road* was spontaneous. Inspired by his friends, their road trips, and his passion for jazz, his most popular novel is the epitome of the Beat Generation.

In a letter to Cassady dated 22 May 1951, Kerouac wrote, “I’ve telled all the road now. Went fast because road is fast... wrote whole thing on strip of paper 120 foot long (tracing paper belonged to Cannastra.) – just rolled it through typewriter.”⁷³ In 2001, James Irsay purchased the scroll at auction for \$2.43 million.⁷⁴ This scroll is now on display and been seen by thousands around the country. In New York City, the displayed scroll only shows 60 feet, but at some stops on the road, the scroll has been shown at its full 120 feet.⁷⁵ Kerouac finished writing *On the Road* in 1951. In 2007, *On the Road* celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Due to libel, Kerouac changed the names and locations in his novel. He began writing in November 1948.⁷⁶ When he finished in 1951, it had undergone many versions.⁷⁷ He had to edit much of the novel before it could be published. He wrote without commas, periods, or paragraphs. He also had to cut down on his uses of profanities. It says Neal instead of Dean, Allen instead of Karlo, and Jack instead of Sal. The number of times Kerouac edited or wrote a different version is unknown.

Kerouac was inspired by Ernest Hemingway to head out on the road. Before the Beats had met in 1941, Kerouac was still attending Columbia. He grew frustrated with the way Coach Little treated him, thus he decided to go as far south as he could.⁷⁸ He ended up in Washington DC, where he spent the day looking around the nation’s capital.⁷⁹ He ran out of money and felt he was one of the starving young writers who others had written about.⁸⁰ In April of 1944, Kerouac decided that he was going to fulfill his desire to see New Orleans.⁸¹ He packed up his belongings, said his goodbyes, and left. He wanted to mourn the death of his friend Sebastian Sampas and thought New Orleans would be an appropriate place to do this. It was one of his first trips.

Former Columbia classmate and friend, Henri Cru, presented Kerouac a promising situation in San Francisco. In a letter to Burroughs dated July 14, 1947, Kerouac told him: “It seems that we [Henry and Jack] are going to ship out together, he is now in San Francisco arranging for rather good jobs on a ship, and I am going out there in three days, hitchhiking from New York.”⁸² Kerouac figured he would go out to Denver to visit Cassady and Ginsberg, then head to Texas to visit Burroughs, and finally end in San Francisco. Kerouac later asked Burroughs, “If Neal Cassady or Allen are at present visiting you in Houston, would you kindly let them know that I will be passing through Denver around the 23rd or 24th of this month...”⁸³

⁷² History Films Stock Footage Archive, “Jack Kerouac on The Steve Allen Show with Steve Allen 1959,” filmed 1959, YouTube video, 06:51. Posted January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LLpNKo09Xk>

⁷³ Kerouac, letter to Neal Cassady, 1951, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 315-316.

⁷⁴ “On the Road Scroll Hits the Road,” *LA Times*, February 15, 2005.

⁷⁵ Joyce Johnson, “Kerouac Unbound,” *Vanity Fair*, August 20, 2007.

⁷⁶ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 97.

⁷⁷ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 97.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 106.

⁷⁹ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 106.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 106.

⁸¹ Johnson, *The Voice is All*, 151.

⁸² Kerouac, letter to Burroughs, 1947, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 103-109.

⁸³ Kerouac, letter to Burroughs, 1947, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 109.

After spending all spring of 1947 planning his route, he took off in July.⁸⁴ Kerouac began hitchhiking from the Bronx, New York trying to reach California via Route 6.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, Route 6 did not provide Kerouac a straight route to California so he changed his plan. He hitchhiked a ride back to New York City then bought a bus ticket to Chicago.⁸⁶ From Chicago, Kerouac hitchhiked to Denver, Colorado. He met another hitchhiker in Adel, Iowa, who he incorporated in *On the Road* as the man who kept Sal Paradise's plaid shirt.⁸⁷ From Iowa to Nebraska, Kerouac rode on a truck filled with a dozen men in the back, which he wrote about in his novel. While on the road, he sent his mother post cards.

While in Denver, Kerouac spent time with Hal Chase and Ed White who were both former Columbia classmates. In *On the Road*, Kerouac renamed them Chad King and Tim Grey. When Kerouac finally caught up with Cassady and Ginsberg, he was broke and still needed to get to San Francisco to meet Henri. Cassady promised a reunion in San Francisco, but the reunion never happened as Cassady was struggling to manage his time between Ginsberg and the girls he was seeing. To help Kerouac finish his journey his mother sent him money, enough to get to San Francisco.

Once in San Francisco, Cru secured him a job as a night watchmen and offered him a place to stay. On August 26, 1947, Kerouac sent Cassady a letter where he told him, "Yes, Neal, I am a cop – it is one of the funniest things ever to happen to me."⁸⁸ Kerouac gave a well detailed account of this job in *On the Road*. While there, Kerouac stayed with Cru and his girlfriend, and he sent almost his entire paycheck to his mother back in New York; as a result though, Kerouac did not pay his share to Cru causing tension in the household. On top of everything Kerouac was fired, and he had to find a new place to go.

From Oakland, he went to Bakersfield then to Los Angeles. While on the bus ride to Los Angeles, he met the Mexican woman who he wrote about in his novel. In *On the Road*, her name is Terry. Just like in the book, they stayed together in downtown Los Angeles and eventually moved over to Selma, California as her family worked in the cotton fields. Kerouac also worked in the fields to help provide for her and her child. When October came, once again Kerouac knew he had to go back to his New York life. His mother sent him money in which he then bought himself a ticket from Los Angeles to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; from Pittsburgh he was able to hitchhike to New York.

Kerouac took some time off during 1948. As the year went by Kerouac grew restless with his New York life, and he told Cassady that he did not think he could leave New York until after New Years because he was trying to sell his manuscript, *The Town and the City*.⁸⁹ In January of 1949, he took his opportunity. For this cross-country trip, Cassady bought the 1949 Ford Hudson mentioned in *On the Road*. From New York, they headed to New Orleans to meet Burroughs, who was now living there. Once they arrived to Burroughs, they spent their time using Benzedrine, marijuana, and morphine.⁹⁰ Kerouac and Cassady, while in New Orleans spent everything they had. Again, Kerouac's mother, Gabe, sent him enough money to get to San Francisco. When they arrived to San Francisco, Cassady abandoned Kerouac and Luanne, his

⁸⁴ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 79.

⁸⁵ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 79.

⁸⁶ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 80.

⁸⁷ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 83.

⁸⁸ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 113.

⁸⁹ Kerouac, letter to Cassady, 1948, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 161-162.

⁹⁰ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 104.

mistress, to get back to Carolyn, who was now his wife.⁹¹ To end this adventure, Kerouac's mother once again rescued him and sent him more money to get back home.

After *The Town and the City* was published, Kerouac moved to Denver. There, he became restless. In August of 1949, he went to San Francisco to live with Cassady and Carolyn. Cassady no longer had the Hudson, nor a car at all.⁹² As both were prone to restlessness, they began their next adventure. They offered to help drive a Plymouth to Denver. In the car, they sat in the backseat and talked with excitement as normal with Cassady. On the way to Denver, the owner of the Plymouth let Cassady drive from Nevada to Utah and quickly realized that that was a mistake, but nonetheless, Cassady got everyone safely to Denver.

From Denver, their goal was to get to Chicago. It took Cassady seventeen hours to get from Denver, Colorado to Chicago.⁹³ The two spent the night in Chicago listening to bop then took a train to Detroit, Michigan. They ran out of money again and could not afford to spend the night in a hotel. Instead, they spent the night in a movie theatre, but they were kicked out. They found a ride to New York and when they arrived at Kerouac's mother's house, they were exhausted. It was not easy being on the road. They arrived in New York at the end of August.

In the summer of 1950, Kerouac felt it was time to go on another adventure. After being cross-country a few times, both Kerouac and Cassady felt that they had exhausted U.S. highways and everything they offered. Burroughs lived in Mexico City and Kerouac had not been out to see him yet. The trip to Mexico City provided Kerouac the inspiration to finish his novel. Just like in *On the Road*, they had their set of adventures while driving through Mexico. Once they arrived in Mexico City, it was the regular Beat scene for a short while, drugs and literature. Unfortunately, while in Mexico City, Kerouac contracted dysentery.⁹⁴ Cassady left Kerouac in care of Burroughs and his wife, Joan, and he returned to New York in October. After he recovered he wrote about his experiences in Mexico and his other trips, and after a three-week writing binge, *On the Road* was finalized.

While searching for a publisher for *On the Road*, Kerouac kept busy writing and visiting his fellow Beats Writers. For some time during 1951, Kerouac lived with Cassady and his wife, Carolyn, in San Francisco. He used his time there to revise *On the Road* and plan his next novel. After exhausting his stay with the Cassadys, Kerouac decided to stay with Burroughs in Mexico. Kerouac wrote to Ginsberg on May 10, 1952 and told him about his bus trip and stopping in Culiacan to purchase opium.⁹⁵ Kerouac even sang bop for the Mexican singers as they were curious about what it sounded like.⁹⁶ Kerouac's drug use was heavy and consistent while in Mexico. This was one of the influences of his book, *Dr. Sax*, in which he incorporated his hallucinations.⁹⁷ The Mexican police arrested Burroughs for drug possession that led the men to quarrel over drugs being kept in the apartment.⁹⁸ Kerouac returned to the United States and North Carolina to join his mother and sister, but then decided to return to Mexico a couple months later.⁹⁹

⁹¹ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 106.

⁹² Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 114.

⁹³ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 116.

⁹⁴ Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 225.

⁹⁵ Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 225.

⁹⁶ Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 225.

⁹⁷ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 160.

⁹⁸ Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 375.

⁹⁹ Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 375.

Life After *On the Road*

Kerouac continued writing and in 1953 he went to California and worked as a brakeman, but quickly became bored. He moved back to New York in August and met with Gregory Corso, Ginsberg's friend, joined the Beat Generation that year. Kerouac and Corso first met in 1951, but they did not keep in touch. This time, it was different, Corso knew that he could learn from Kerouac so he stuck around. As Kerouac wrote his novels based on his life, in 1953, he met the women that inspired him to write *The Subterraneans*. Kerouac narrated his affair with a colored woman through the novel. This novel only took him three days to write.¹⁰⁰ While the rest of the year rolled by, he continued to push for *On the Road* to be published, but had no luck.

By January of 1954, Kerouac was back the Cassady's in California. While there he drew inspiration from Buddhism, which caused him to fight with Cassady, as he did not believe in karma. After the fight, Kerouac moved to Richmond Hill, New York with his mother. Cru and Carr were back in New York and went out every weekend with Kerouac to get drunk and listen to Jazz. Kerouac had developed thrombophlebitis from taking too much Benzedrine back in 1946, when he first discovered the Benzedrine high. Thrombophlebitis caused his legs to swell. Kerouac's thrombophlebitis prevented him from holding a normal job.¹⁰¹ In July, *On the Road* was finally accepted by Viking Press.¹⁰² With his new income, he moved back to Mexico City. While in Mexico, Kerouac wrote *Mexico City Blues* in a matter of three weeks.

In August 1955, a woman named Tristessa came into his life. Together they had long sessions of marijuana and morphine. Once again, Kerouac grew restless of Mexico City. He decided it was time to head to California to visit Ginsberg in Berkeley. While there he met Gary Snyder, a friend of Ginsburg. This trip to Berkeley inspired Kerouac's, *The Dharma Bums*. In October, Kerouac went to San Francisco to visit Cassady. He managed to stay with Cassady until December, until he hitchhiked back to see his mother in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. In January of 1956, Kerouac finished writing *Visions of Gerard* in memoir of his brother. By April, he was on the road again, and on his way to visit Snyder in California.

In June of that same year, Kerouac left California heading for Washington to work at the Forestry Service.¹⁰³ During his time in the forest, he was alone, and he wrote *Desolation Angels*. After finishing his term, he hitchhiked his way to Seattle. After Seattle, he headed by bus to San Francisco where he stayed with Cassady and Carolyn. After exhausting his stay with Cassady, he headed to Los Angeles. From Los Angeles, Kerouac went to Tucson and then to Mexico. When he arrived in Mexico City, it was not the same. Drugs had overtaken his friends. They could not function without their fix. Even Burroughs was quite done with the Beat scene in Mexico. Nevertheless, Kerouac managed to stay only to have Ginsberg join him in Mexico City in October.

Things seemed to look up for Kerouac in 1956 when Donald Allen from the Grove Press gave Kerouac a chance. Donald Allen's magazine featured Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Corso as San Francisco poets.¹⁰⁴ By February, 1957 Kerouac visited Burroughs in Tangier, Morocco. Kerouac stayed for less than three months. He wanted to be back in New York as he had grown weary of being on the road. Kerouac spent years traveling, he was exhausted. He stopped in Paris and

¹⁰⁰ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 188.

¹⁰¹ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 218.

¹⁰² Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 223.

¹⁰³ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 265.

¹⁰⁴ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 283.

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London before making his way to New York. With his advance from *On the Road*, he took his mother to California. Kerouac wanted his mother to experience a part of his life while he was on the road. He also took advantage of their trip to show her everything he had learned in his travels, but his mother did not like being so far away from his sister, Caroline, who lived in Florida.

Later that year, Kerouac took his mother around the country with him again. They went to live in San Francisco, but she did not like the San Francisco life and he missed New York. After September and the publication of *On the Road*, it made the best-seller list for five weeks.¹⁰⁵ It received praise, but it was also ripped apart by critics and the public along with Kerouac's character. Since *On the Road* and the characters in it were out of the ordinary in 1950s America, it was difficult for some to accept the Beat life. *On the Road*, *The Dharma Bums* and *The Subterraneans* are the novels that shaped Kerouac's public image. *On the Road* catapulted the Beat Generation, especially Kerouac, into the spot light. *The Dharma Bums* and *On the Road* presented the counter-culture movement as an alternative lifestyle.¹⁰⁶ This was seen in Kerouac, as he worked many odd jobs sometimes on the rail road and picking cotton to make ends meet. He lived in Skid-row hotels, couch surfed, and would spend the night in movie theatres. He did not live a glamorous life of a famous novelist until he was published and often times, he struggled to function, as his drug use became more pronounced.

Kerouac's largest book advance was for *Tristessa* for \$7,500.¹⁰⁷ After the publication of *On the Road*, Kerouac was able to live comfortably and take care of his mother. They moved to Orlando, Florida, but Kerouac loved being in New York. Later on, he bought a house in Northport, New York. His mother insisted on taking care of him, as Kerouac tended to be a drunk. He was often being hunted down by fans and reporters, which left him little privacy. By 1960, Kerouac had grown weary of his life. He retreated to Bixby Canyon, California until August. Cassady was sentenced to San Quentin for two years, after the release of *On the Road*, Kerouac had not spoken to him. After *On the Road*, speculation had it that Cassady's incarceration was due to the book because of all their drug use.¹⁰⁸

Death and Legacy

In 1968, Kerouac appeared on the William Buckley's Firing Line.¹⁰⁹ His behavior was unpredictable and kept interrupting the other guest. He also gave Ginsberg a thumbs down gesture while one guest was speaking, later he explained that it was not for the guest, but for Ginsberg. Unfortunately, for Kerouac, drinking was his way to cope with his fame. Kerouac was a shy person his whole life. His friends observed him drinking wine alone in the corner at a party. He struggled with the fame he gained after publishing *On the Road*. He also hated being credited for the Hippie movement in the 60's as he felt they were unpatriotic.¹¹⁰ During the 1960s, when most of the Beat Writers were expressing radical thoughts, Kerouac separated himself. He was an American patriot and thought his friends should be as well.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 288.

¹⁰⁶ Lawlor, *Beat Culture: Icons, Lifestyles, and Impact*, 219.

¹⁰⁷ Lawlor, *Beat Culture: Icons, Lifestyles, and Impact*, 211.

¹⁰⁸ Kerouac, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1957-1969*. Edited by Ann Charter, (New York: Viking, 2000), 175.

¹⁰⁹ SensitiveSkinTV, "Buckley, Kerouac, Sanders and Yablonsky discuss Hippies," Filmed 1968, YouTube video, 22:42. Posted May 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaBnIzY3R00_

¹¹⁰ Jack Kerouac, "After Me, The Deluge," *Chicago Tribune*, September 28, 1968.

¹¹¹ Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography*, 346.

Even before his fame, Kerouac held a conservative patriot approach to politics. On March 16, 1948, in a letter to Caroline and her husband Paul Blake, Kerouac wrote, "However, a war against Communism, if and when it comes, is a war against the real enemy of American life."¹¹² Kerouac took after his father in his conservative views and was in favor of the Vietnam War during the 60s, and opposed the Hippie Movement. His image in the 60s shifted because of his view on the Vietnam War. From being the inspiration of the counter-culture movement, during the 60s the hippies had forgotten Kerouac. In their view he was an redneck, Vietnam supporter, anti-hippie, and a right wing alcoholic.¹¹³ Kerouac's purpose for appearing on William Buckley's Firing Line in 1968 was for patriotic reasons as the topic of discussion was the hippie movement.¹¹⁴ Since Kerouac was shy and never really liked the spotlight, he often coped with public appearances, pretending to be drunk.

Kerouac's drinking took his life on October 21, 1969, at the age of 47. He suffered from liver chirosis. According the *New York Times*, on October 24, 1969, over 200 people showed up to Kerouac's funeral mass.¹¹⁵ The mass was held at St. Jean Baptiste Roman Catholic Church in Lowell, Massachusetts. Father Morissette, who knew Kerouac since he was a child, was the speaker at the mass.¹¹⁶ Kerouac's first wife, Edie, was also present at the funeral along his third wife, Stella Sampas Kerouac.¹¹⁷ In addition to Edie, Stella, and the 200 mourners that showed up, his fellow Beat Poets, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and John Clellon Holmes were present.¹¹⁸

According to Edie, she was taken aback to see that not many of their friends were present. The majority of the audience present were just there to sell their story.¹¹⁹ As his former wife, she felt so proud that Kerouac had finally become the famous writer that he always dreamed about.¹²⁰ According to Ginsberg, Carr was so upset that he was not able make the trip for the funeral.¹²¹ Gabe outlived all three of her children, as Caroline died in 1964. Gabe's health was so deteriorated that she could not make the trip from Florida to Lowell for Kerouac's funeral. Despite the situation, Edie was amazed that so many people even knew who Kerouac was.¹²²

Kerouac spoke eloquently, he drew people in and had an impressively sophisticated vocabulary.¹²³ Kerouac often read his works in The Village. His last few years consisted of interviews, drunken parties, and abrupt behavior. Through his life, he lived what he preached. His life was out of the ordinary and at times impractical. It is not normal to wander the country penniless and hitchhiking, or even at times, passed out from hunger. It was his dream to write and he suffered for it. On September 13, 1947, in a letter to Cassady, Kerouac tells him "I am bugged because I can't use that wonderful typewriter here..."¹²⁴ Kerouac was talking about the

¹¹² Kerouac, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 144.

¹¹³ Miles, *Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats: A Portrait*, x.

¹¹⁴ SensitiveSkinTV, "Buckley, Kerouac, Sanders and Yablonsky discuss Hippies." Video.

Kerouac, letter to Sterling Lord, 1968, quoted in - *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1956-1969*, 517.

¹¹⁵ "OVER 200 AT MASS HONOR SACK KEROUAC," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, October 25, 1969.

¹¹⁶ "OVER 200 AT MASS HONOR SACK KEROUAC," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, October 25, 1969

¹¹⁷ Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 26.

¹¹⁸ "OVER 200 AT MASS HONOR SACK KEROUAC". *New York Times*.

¹¹⁹ Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 33.

¹²⁰ Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 33.

¹²¹ Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 30.

¹²² Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 33.

¹²³ Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 65.

¹²⁴ Kerouac, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 124.

typewriter he would use while working as a night guard in San Francisco. He loved writing. It was interesting that he would sometimes rent typewriters or borrow them from others when he wanted to write.

During his lifetime, Kerouac had 18 books published including some of his poetry books such as, *Mexico City Blues*.¹²⁵ After his death, another 16 books have been published, including his collaboration piece with Burroughs, *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, and the original scroll of *On the Road*. Burroughs and Kerouac wrote, *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, in 1945 while the group was living all together in the New York City apartment.¹²⁶ *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks* was published in 2008. Carr asked to please wait until his death to have the work published. Carr died in 2005, the novel was inspired by the Kammerer incident.¹²⁷ Aside from books and poems, Kerouac's letters and his play, *The Beat Generation*, have been published.

In 2012, the University of Massachusetts at Lowell produced his play, *The Beat Generation*.¹²⁸ In honor of Kerouac, Lowell holds the Jack Kerouac Literary Festival. At the festival attendees can participate in seeing some of the history of his hometown and can learn about writers that were inspired by Kerouac. In addition, a guided tour is offered of places Kerouac visited or read his literature at open mic nights. Along with the University of Massachusetts celebrating Kerouac, The University of Naropa in Boulder, Colorado has established the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. The Jack Kerouac School focuses on innovative approaches to the literary arts.

Before the Beat Movement, there was no Beat genre in literature. Literature's content was limited in the sense that sex, drugs, crime, and nomadic tendencies were not included in mainstream literature. Obscenity was defined in *Roth v. U.S. (1957)* as unprotected by the First Amendment. Kerouac and the rest of the Beats challenged the norms of 1950s America and expanded First Amendment protection on speech.¹²⁹ Their worked paved the way for the expansion and creative freedoms on what could be published in the U.S.¹³⁰ Kerouac knew that and he felt *On the Road* was pushing the limit. In a letter to Carl Solomon, he wrote, "I didn't write "On the Road" to be malicious, I wrote it with joy in my heart, and a conviction that somewhere along the line somebody will see it without the present-day goggles on and realize the freedom of expression that still lies ahead..."¹³¹

Kerouac knew his literature was different, but he pushed for it and helped expand creative freedom for future generations. Kerouac and the other Beats' work was considered outrageous. Kerouac said to Ginsberg in 1952, "*On the Road* is a very great book, but I may have to end up daring publishers to publish it... but he who publishes it will make money."¹³² And he was right about that, *On the Road* was a huge success. Kerouac's literature continues to speak to

¹²⁵ Matt Theado, *Understanding Jack Kerouac*, (Columbia, SC: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

¹²⁶ Michiko Kakutani, "When a Real-Life Killing Sent Two Future Beats in Search of Their Voices," *New York Times* November 10, 2008.

¹²⁷ Michiko Kakutani. "When a Real-Life Killing Sent Two Future Beats in Search of Their Voices."

¹²⁸ "Kerouac Literary Festival Celebrates Writer's Legacy, Contemporary Authors," Kerouac Literary Festival Celebrates Writer's Legacy, Contemporary Authors | UMass Lowell. August 29, 2012.

¹²⁹ Lawlor, *Beat Culture: Icons, Lifestyles, and Impact* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 54-55.

¹³⁰ Kathleen A. Tracy, *Superstars of the 21st Century: Pop Favorites of America's Teens: Pop Favorites of America's Teens* (ABC-CLIO, 2013), 120.

¹³¹ Jack Kerouac, letter to Carl Solomon, 1952, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, ed. Ann Charters, (New York: Viking, 1995), 377.

¹³² Jack Kerouac, letter to Carl Solomon, 1952, quoted in *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956*, 353.

thousands and is highly respected. Ginsberg's constant encouragement of Kerouac's work, has contributed much to Kerouac's success.¹³³

Other than the expansion of literature, the movement has touched music. Many musicians continue to draw inspiration from Kerouac and the Beats. One of the most recognized musicians, Bob Dylan, is known for being friends with the Beat Writers themselves. Ginsberg and Dylan have been photographed sitting at Kerouac's grave. Dylan and Ginsberg being present at Kerouac's gravesite demonstrated Ginsberg's effort to push forward Kerouac's image into a positive one. It also shows the impact that Kerouac's writing was able to have on Dylan. The Doors also credit Kerouac for their inspiration. Modern day artist, continue to draw inspiration from the Beat Generation.

The British band, The 1975, on their newest album, "I Like It When You Sleep for you are so Beautiful yet so Unaware of it," in their song 'Change of Heart' Matty Healy sings, "I'll quote *On the Road*..." Often in interviews, Healy said he gathers inspiration from the Beats' literature. In an interview with Wonderland Magazine, The band explained their name came from "an annotation "1 June, The 1975" that they had spotted in a Kerouac book..."¹³⁴ Healy has even named his loyal friend (his pet dog), Allen Ginsberg.¹³⁵

Brooke Fraser a young singer/songwriter from New Zealand released her album "Flags" in 2010, with a song entitled 'Jack Kerouac.' The song is about being on the road and traveling around to the west coast, drawing inspiration from Kerouac's novel.¹³⁶ Lana Del Rey's aesthetic is heavily focused on the 1960's, an era where the Beats are a huge part of the culture. Some of her lyrics mention the Beats and relate to the Beat lifestyle. In an interview Del Rey stated "Yes, he (Ginsberg) was an early influence — the whole Beat poetry movement..."¹³⁷ Del Rey is a native of New York and paid tribute to the Beat Generation in her song 'Brooklyn Baby' from her album "Ultraviolence". In her song, she mentions Beat Poetry and a jazz collection. Jazz was a huge part of the Beat Generation and Kerouac's literary muse.¹³⁸

In addition to music and literature, another form in which Kerouac's legacy lives on is through television and film. In AMC's, *Mad Men*, which focuses on the life of Don Draper in a 1960's ad agency, the characters made a reference to Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* when one character is found out to be dating a woman of color, since *The Subterraneans* deals with an affair with a woman of color. In 2012, *On the Road* became a movie and the film is a fair depiction of the actual book. *Kill Your Darlings* (2013) is another film portraying the Beats. The film is a rendition of Lucien Carr killing Dave Kammerer. It focuses from the point of view of Ginsberg. It begins with a bit of history of his family. Then the movie shows his acceptance to Columbia. Once there, the film shows his encounter with Carr and later with Kerouac. The film depicts Ginsberg's connection to Carr and touches on some of the rumors of their love affair. Kerouac is depicted in the film as a cool cat, in love with the feeling of jazz. To an extent it is a true depiction of Kerouac, but does not portray his timid side. Also in 2013, *Big Sur* was created into a film. The film portrays the novel and real life. As Kerouac retreated to Bixby Canyon,

¹³³ Miles, *Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats: A Portrait*, x.

¹³⁴ Bryony Stone, "Matty," *Wonderland Magazine*, March 10, 2016. The 1975, "Change of Heart" in *I Like It When You Sleep Because You are so Beautiful yet so Unaware of it*, Dirty Hit Records, 2016, MP3.

¹³⁵ Matthew Healy, Instagram Post. May 31, 2016. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BF9AgBkS1CC/?taken-by=trumanblack>

¹³⁶ Brooke Fraser, "Jack Kerouac" in *Flags*, Brooke Fraser, 2010, MP3.

¹³⁷ Scott Simon, "Lana Del Rey: 'I Don't Have Other People in Mind,'" *NPR*, June 21, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/06/21/323209791/lana-del-rey-i-dont-have-other-people-in-mind>

¹³⁸ Lana Del Rey, "Brooklyn Baby" in *Ultraviolence*, Polydor Records/Interscope Records 2016, MP3.

California, he became involved with Cassady's new girl. This film accurately portrays a tired, worn-out Kerouac escaping the world of fame in the woods struggling with his drinking addiction.¹³⁹

Conclusion

Kerouac categorized his work as autobiographical and his method as spontaneous prose.¹⁴⁰ Within his works, he always placed himself as the narrator observing a more interesting hero. Even though Kerouac was Sal Paradise in *On the Road*, sitting in the background observing, the public characterized him as Dean Moriarty. The public saw him as a new American hero, rejecting tradition and responsibility. Kerouac traveled extensively because he grew bored everywhere he was. Whether he was surrounded by his friends in New York or San Francisco, or alone in a cabin, he was always looking for his next adventure. Only his mother could always count on Kerouac's return.

The Beats were heavily criticized for the content of their works. Before *On the Road* was published, Burroughs, Ginsberg, and Holmes had already made their literary appearances. When Ginsberg's poem *Howl* was published, a storm of controversy arose. Publicist Lawrence Ferlinghetti and store manager Shigeyoshi Murao were charged under the State of California for disseminating obscene literature. The controversy of *Howl* was that it used foul language and it depicted homosexual behavior, which turned into the main reason for the trial.¹⁴¹ The San Francisco police raided City Lights Bookstore and all the copies of *Howl* were confiscated.

Growing up in a Franco-American neighborhood where French was the primary language, Kerouac was timid about the way he spoke English. He eventually had to speak in public due to the success of his books and as Edie says, "his voice was musical and hit all the keys" and that he "enunciated his words perfectly."¹⁴² His hard work as a child helped him reach his goal of becoming a writer by sending him to Columbia, where he met the other key figures of the Beat Generation. Although, he dropped out of Columbia, he stayed in New York and met Neal Cassady who became his muse for *On the Road*.

For Kerouac, attending Columbia University opened new possibilities that he had not thought of before. It was a turning point in his life. He met people who had completely different lives than he did. With the help of the people he met and the connections he made, his group became The Libertine Circle, just a few guys that shared a passion for literature. Kerouac, Carr, Ginsberg and Burroughs began the Beat Generation and helped each other expand their literary knowledge. They also created the Beat lifestyle that sometimes included drugs, crime, and sex. After Cassady entered the Beat scene and encouraged Kerouac to travel, Cassady became a new American hero through Kerouac's words. Kerouac and the Beats brought a new take on literature. *On the Road* provided Kerouac the ability to use his gift of writing to expand the protection of speech. It was not until the mid-1960s that Kerouac was considered a serious a writer. His writing was criticized for being amateur and as nothing but nonsense. Despite the

¹³⁹ *Mad Men*, "Flight 1," Episode 2, directed by Andrew Bernstein, written by Matthew Weiner and Lisa Albert, AMC, August 3, 2008. *Kill Your Darlings*, directed by John Krokidas, 2013, New York, NY: Killer Films. *On the Road*, directed by Walter Salles, 2012, United States, Mexico and Canada: MK2 Productions. *Big Sur*, directed by Michael Polish, 2013, Big Sur, CA: Sundance Films.

¹⁴⁰ Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters 1940-1956*, 326.

¹⁴¹ James Campbell, *This Is the Beat Generation: New York, San Francisco, Paris*, 193-194.

¹⁴² Parker, *You'll Be Okay: My Life with Jack Kerouac*, 65.

criticism and negativity, he received, the Beat Generation created a new genre of literature, their unique style incorporated the way they viewed and lived life.

Kerouac never gave up on his dream to become a writer. Since he was a child, he knew he wanted to write. He was constantly writing, giving his writings to his friends and teachers to critique it ever since he was young. Kerouac also struggled with gaining confidence in his English as he spoke French at home and in his neighborhood. On top of everything, his family did not have the funds to send him to college, yet he was able to use football to get himself to an Ivy League university. At Columbia he surrounded himself with other writers to reach his goal. He struggled for years to get his works published and spent sleepless nights writing and re-writing to get his works perfect. Despite many rejections for his novels and poems, Kerouac worked vigorously to find a publisher. He never gave up on his dream, even when his friends were being published and he was not. His determination and self-belief were courageous. At any given time, he could have dropped writing, but he pushed through.

It is safe to say that most public intellectuals are known for being of good moral character or are highly educated, Ivy League graduates. That is not entirely the case for Kerouac. Although he went to Columbia University, he never graduated. Sometimes he behaved rudely and he did not take responsibility for his actions, especially when he was drunk, but never imagined the impact *On the Road* would have on the hippie counter-culture movement. Over the years, Kerouac changed the meaning of “Beat” and it evolved from being beat down by the events of history to a celebration of individualism going against the current.¹⁴³

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¹⁴³ Miles, *Jack Kerouac, King of the Beats: A Portrait*, 274.

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