

I. *On the Road* as Post War Novel

On the Road embodies a hysterical outburst of raw energies of the youth of Kerouac's time. Fueled by inspiration, Jack Kerouac wrote the novel that would make him the voice of his generation. *On the Road* was completed in only three weeks. The novel succinctly captures the mood of the post war situation in America. Though America was at the zenith of material prosperity, it was spiritually paralyzed by moral decay and cultural decline. It is one of the most controversial American novels of the 20th century. The failure of ideology and of the American Dream in the 1960s gave young dreamers who are eager to live just one way out: the road. *On the Road* is inspired by the drug-fuelled cross-country car rides that Kerouac made with Neal Cassidy. It is a novel that makes the reader want to go out there, seize the day, and live life to the fullest. It is a novel of experience. It tells tales of madness played out by all kinds of strange characters, in settings as diverse as a Virginia small-town diner, a New York jazz-joint, and a Mexican whore-house. What connects these adventures is the characters' refusal to miss out on life and their determination to get the most out of the present.

Critics concede that the book and its author are instrumental in triggering the rucksack revolution. Kerouac never understood what his book meant to the hordes of youngsters taking to the highways after the fashion of the characters peopling the narrative. He is ill-fitted to grasp what his book had kindled in generations of young readers who feel stifled by the limitations of their parental homes. He never realized that he had prefigured their longings. A study of *On the Road* enables us to understand it as an iconoclastic novel because it lashes out at the Moloch of society, which is an image bringing to our mind an array of ideas representing authority, materialistic bourgeois culture and mechanization of human experience. Moloch

represents a vast all encompassing social reality that is at best unresponsive, at worst a malign presence that feeds of individuality and difference. Kerouac is born on March 12, 1922 in Lowell, Massachusetts, to French-Canadian parents. He learned English as a second language and went to parochial school where he was educated by Jesuits. In 1939 he entered Columbia University on a football scholarship.

On the Road depicts the condition of the main characters of beat generation who are in journey of life. They celebrate their life by using their freewill and ignoring all their responsibilities without accepting the changes in society which seems to suggest that they are running away from it. In this regard, the major questions for investigation are: Why are the main characters escaping from the reality and indulging themselves in illusion? Why are they unable to accept the changes in society? Why do they, finally, return home without gaining anything? So, what could be the possible reasons behind their escapism? This research will try to find out the answers to the above questions as the main characters are escaping because they are not ready to bear the responsibility. Therefore this research will deal with the issue of escapism in *On the Road*.

Literary Output of Jack Kerouac

Some prominent works by Kerouac include his first novel, *The Town and the City*, *The Dharma Bums*, *The Subterraneans*, *Big Sur*, *Visions of Cody*, and *Visions of Gerard*. *The Town and the City* which appeared in 1950, is written when he was 28 years old. He believes that creative writing should be spontaneous. He had already begun writing a novel, stylistically reminiscent of Thomas Wolfe, about the torments he is suffering as he tried to balance his wild city life with his old-world family values. The novel's publication earned him respect and some recognition as a writer, although it did not make him famous. The account of the decline of his own family

received good critics but Kerouac judged the novel as a failure.

Other works by Kerouac are *Visions Of Gerard* (1963) that is based on his childhood and depicted the last months in the life of the narrator's 9-year-old brother Gerard. Another work *Satori In Paris* (1966) is an account of his quest for his Breton ancestors. *The Subterraneans* (1958) is written in three days with the help of Benzedrine. It depicted Kerouac's affair with Mardou Fox, a mulatto woman. Critics were not happy with its disintegration of syntax. In *Big Sur* (1962) Kerouac's alter ego was Jack Duluoz. The book was part of the author's massive series, in which he told the story of his life from 1922 to the summer of 1965. His novel *Visions Of Cody* was published posthumously in 1972.

The Beat Generation and its Influence on Kerouac

The literary movement known as the Beat Generation exploded into American consciousness with two books in the late 1950s. The first, *Howl and Other Poems* by Allen Ginsberg, was published in 1956. The book achieved notoriety when poet and bookstore owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti went to trial for selling it in San Francisco. The second book had an even more profound cultural effect when it was published. Kerouac's *On the Road*, published in 1957, is viewed as nothing less than a manifesto for the Beat Generation.

Kerouac's book gives rise to the Beat generation, which symbolizes rebellion and self absorbed pursuits of pleasure and exploration. He is an American novelist, poet and is considered a leading figure and spokesman of the Beat Generation. His search for spiritual liberation produced his best known work, the autobiographical novel *On the Road* (1957). Despite the charge of obscenity brought against the novel, a sympathetic appreciation of the novel gives us an insight into its beauty. The glorification of free love, drug use and alcoholism is regarded as obscene and

negation of life by the people of mainstream American culture, but for the people whose voice the novel represents, these experiences have liberating effects amidst social denial and possible displacement. *On the Road* became the defining text of the beat culture. The first beat novel is based on his travels across America with his friend Neal Cassidy. Its importance is compared to Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises*, generally seen as the testament of the Lost Generation of the 1920s. It is written over a short period of 20 days on a single roll of telegraph paper. The book is based on his wild adventures while traveling across the United States with his friend Neal Cassidy, who he fictionalized in this cult book as Dean Moriarty.

It seems that the beat generation has one and only ideology, and that is life. Kerouac presents the beat generation as a holy generation, because it is liberated from the peril of ambition, materialism and ideology, and is in a constant search for some greater truth that life would teach them. Kerouac presents Sal Paradise, a young and innocent writer, and Dean Moriarty, a crazy youth, tremendously excited with life racing around America, and testing the limits of the American Dream. Their journeys consist of scenes of rural wilderness, sleepy small towns, urban jungles, endless deserts. They are all linked by the road, the outlet of a generation's desire and inner need to get out, break its confinement, and find freedom, liberated from any higher belief, notion, or ideology. The desperation and the lack of fulfillment made these youths feel that the only thing to do was go, searching for their personal freedom, and finding pleasure in sex, drugs, and jazz. They did all in their power to experience as much of Heaven as they could while still alive. They are wise enough to see that there is no point in conforming to the materialism of the American Dream.

Technique in Kerouac's Writing

While hanging around Columbia campus in 1944, he began to mix with a group of New York based intellectuals including William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, whose Bohemian life style and search for new philosophy profoundly influenced him in his writing. He spent the early 1950's writing one unpublished novel after another, carrying them around in a rucksack as he roamed back and forth across the country. He found enlightenment through the Buddhist religion and tried to follow Snyder's lead in communing with nature.

While working on his novel, and in his attempt to write about these trips he began experimenting with freer forms of writing, partly inspired by the unpretentious, spontaneous prose he found in Neal Cassady's letters. He decided to write about his cross-country trips exactly as they had happened, without pausing to edit, fictionalize or even think. With his page-long paragraphs, Kerouac sought to do no less than revolutionize the form of American prose and experimented with spontaneous autobiographical fiction chronicling his travels into the American West.

Kerouac's *On the Road* is a first person narrative, in which the main characters are based loosely on actual people and events. His original writing style is influenced by the prolific explosion of Jazz, especially the Bebop genre established by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk. The central feature of this writing method is the idea of breath, improvising words over the inherent structures of mind and language, and not editing a single word. Connected with his idea of breath was the elimination of the period, preferring to use a long, connecting dash instead. As such, the phrases occurring between dashes might resemble improvisational jazz licks. When spoken, the words might take on a certain kind of rhythm, though none of it pre-meditated.

Kerouac would later include ideas he developed in his Buddhist studies. He called this style Spontaneous Prose, a literary technique akin to stream of consciousness. The novel is often described as the defining work of the post-World War II jazz, poetry, and drug affected Beat Generation. It seemed America wasn't ready for Kerouac's stream-of-consciousness tale of jazz, sex and fast, aimless driving on an open road that was described in *On the Road*. He wrote the entire novel in an extended session of spontaneous prose. It is pure poetry for almost a boy's love for his country that's just gushing in its adjectives and descriptions. There are basically no paragraph marks to speak of in the original document that Kerouac typed. It just goes and goes and goes.

The episodic prose instills its characters with a disdain for established values and a romantic code born out of the West. *On the Road* is the story of the travels of two young men who crisscross the United States in search of excitement and adventure. The novel took shape over a period of three and a half years, was written in at least five different versions. There are three in print. *On The Road* was the fourth version and published after Kerouac's death. The author's changing image of what it means to be on the road can also be applied to his view of what it means to be a writer. In its first version, the road is a specific place. In the second, it is a symbol, and in the final three versions the road is a mix of the imaginative and the real. The story of Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise parallels Jack Kerouac's own life when he partnered with a young man named Neal Cassady, who is portrayed by Moriarty in the novel. The bohemian lifestyle and free spirited adventures of Moriarty and Paradise were magnetic for American readers in the repressed era of the 1950s.

Criticism of *On The Road*

Critics and readers of Kerouac's books have always recognized the attraction of his writing style, and his capacity to transform everyday events into sacred moments of beauty. He wrote in an honest manner and conveyed his stories with a style that employed spontaneity. They refused to take Kerouac seriously as a writer and began to ridicule his work, hurting him tremendously. After its publication *On the Road* has undergone immense criticism. Some critics have considered the novel to be obscene where as some others have appreciated the novel as a beautiful work. Ellis Amburn comments that:

Like his fiction, Kerouac covered a great deal of territory in a short period of time. Known as the father of the Beat Generation, Kerouac's freewheeling life on the road and his chronicles of that life paved the way for the youth counter-culture of the 1960s. Reality was, of course, a little different. Like the highly trained jazz musicians he was emulating, Kerouac actually spent a good deal of time preparing for that creative eruption. (272)

Here Amburn credits Kerouac as the pioneer of the Beat Generation and feels that the novel depicts true modern experience and reflects the absurdities of modern America. Kerouac had already been done with *On the Road* for several years, but Tom Clark points out that:

He hadn't found much early success getting someone to publish the book. It could have been that America wasn't ready for his stream-of-consciousness tale of jazz, sex, and fast, aimless driving on an open road. But, just as, more than any other novel of the Twenties, *The Sun Also Rises* came to be regarded as the testament of the "Lost

Generation,” so it seems certain that *On the Road* will come to be known as that of the Beat Generation. (18)

The novel is an act of affirmation. For the mainstream culture it could sound like negation of life but for the writer it affirms his own way of looking at life and the world amidst the filth, the ugliness and the drabness of contemporary American society. It serves as a novel of protest and difference. Supporting this view, David Dempsey says that Kerouac has written an enormously readable and entertaining book where:

Words spill across the pages like a manic drive, evoking the raw energy of eating up miles in a car across America; in search of the next place, the looming epiphany. *On the Road* changed the entire culture of the beat movement it was associated with and the action of road travel itself. Love it or hate it, the story contains all the adrenaline and locomotion of a true American odyssey, the darker, more physical flip side of the 40s and 50s. (73)

The story reveals a deep psychological reality which is original in its own right. The explosion of repressed psychological forces questions the complacency of bourgeois culture. Remarking along these lines, Gilbert Millstein traces a nostalgic time when he writes:

He represents a time when America was free and innocent and the bebop band played all night while hipsters chugged cheap California wine. Women wanted him to make love to them and all the men wanted to fight him. The novel is the most beautifully executed, the clearest and the most important utterance yet made by the generation Kerouac himself named years ago as 'beat,' and whose principal avatar

he is. (47)

He presented the resulting manuscript to his editor on a single long roll of unbroken paper, but the editor did not share his enthusiasm and the relationship was broken. He would suffer seven years of rejection before *On The Road* would be published and as Gerald Nicosia says:

Although *On the Road* was considered to have inspired the peripatetic hippie generation of the 1960s, later evaluations have paid greater attention to the narrator's disillusionment with the life of the road at the conclusion of the novel. The novel is evaluated as depicting the conflicting appeal of a contemplative, inner-directed life on the one hand, and an unexamined, outgoing existence on the other. (69)

To Nicosia, *On The Road* appears to be a sandwich where a concoction of different ideas takes place. It includes the ideas ranging from the saddest to the loveliest, vulgar to visionary and funny to serious. As for the language used in the novel, it ranges from the language of the street to the language of mystical illumination. Barry Miles talks about the patriotic and poetic richness of the novel as:

While the story about the method of its creation has fascinated readers, *On the Road* continues to affect audiences because of what Kerouac put into the novel. There are basically no paragraph marks to speak of. It just goes and goes and goes. All this is pure poetry for almost a boy's love for his country that's just gushing in its adjectives and descriptions. The freaks are fascinating although they are hardly part of our lives. (152)

On The Road is not only a diatribe against false values but it also represents the voice of a movement that seeks to establish a set of new values that stand out as new and

distinct. The novel is a protest against the cruelties of the dominant culture. It gives voice to a rising, dissatisfied fringe of the young generation of the late forties and early fifties. It is after the Great Depression and World War II and more than a decade before the Civil Rights movement and the turmoil of the '60s. Yet, though it has been fifty years since the events in *On the Road*, the feelings, ideas, and experiences in the novel are still remarkably fresh as expressions of restless, idealistic youth who yearn for something more than the bland conformity of a generally prosperous society.

II. Escapism in Literature: A Methodology

Escapist literature is designed for imaginative entertainment rather than readings. It is designed for provoking thought or addressing serious social issues, as an escape from the perceived unpleasant aspects of daily stress. It is a term to define the actions people do to try to help feelings of depression or general sadness. Some people believe that this diversion is more inherent in today's urban, technological existence because it removes people from their biologically normal natures. This form of literature includes books and short stories about desperate protagonists escaping from confinement, like from prisoner-of-war camps during the First and Second World Wars. These books and stories are usually designed to be suspenseful and focus on the psychological effects of imprisonment.

Escapism is a term to define the actions people take to try to help relieve persisting feelings of depression or general sadness. It is the mental diversion by means of entertainment or recreation. It is the desire to retreat into imaginative entertainment rather than deal with the stress, tedium and daily problems of the mundane world. Many activities that are normal parts of a healthy existence can also become avenues of escapism when taken to extreme. The term is considered derogatory in connotation, though one might argue such writing serves a psychological purpose by offering a relief from the stresses of life.

Escapism as a philosophical movement flourished after the devastating World Wars. The apocalypse and devastation of the First World War was followed by the great economic depression of the thirties. Before healing such wounds, humanity saw the nuclear holocaust of the Second World War. People's faith on God had already begun to decline. The social and intellectual situation of that period was influenced by the Nietzschean declaration of the death of God and people realized the lack of unity

and order in society. People could not believe in rationality and denounced traditional form of norms and values. There was no center or central authority that could bring peace and harmony in the world. Regarding its subjectivity, individual freedom and choice, Nietzsche explains thus:

Hence there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However it may be said that with the existentialist the problem of man is central and that they stress on man's concrete existence, his/her contingent nature, his/her personal freedom, and his/her consequent responsibility for what he/she does and makes himself/herself to be. (817)

The negative aspects of human existence such as pain, frustration sickness, and death became for existentialists the essential features of human reality. Though escapism, as a philosophical movement flourished during the aftermath of world war, we can see the seed of its thought rooted in the philosophical ideas from the ancient Greek period. Escapism has become an appropriate philosophical tool that could effectively address the contemporary situation. As a result of sense of loss, alienation increases and people suffer from frustration, anxiety and absurdity. The scholars and artists vividly depict the alienation of individuals as well as their essential and inescapable loneliness and uncertainty along with individual's reaction to the predicament in their fictional and non-fictional writings.

There are different types of self struggle among which alienation or estrangement is the most important. Scholars are of the opinion that all our personal human relationships are poisoned by the feeling of alienation from each other. As with Nietzsche, man creates moral values. Besides being free, man is a finite and contingent being, existing in a world that is devoid of purpose. The pessimism

resulting from this position is likewise expressed by Albert Camus' doctrine of 'the absurd'. Absurdity or contradictions arise from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown.

There is no way to define individual's freedom without the consciousness of loneliness and alienation. The sense of loneliness, estrangement and alienation are the inflexible situation of being bound by our own actions. An individual suffers not only when others restrict his freedom of action but when others define him. Although man acts freely and defines himself through his actions, his activities occur in the social circumstances where his activities are judged by others. As a result, these social circumstances contribute to the definition of the individual's self that is defined by our actions. If our actions come to half in death, they become our essence. Only our actions determine our essence because there are no alternative chances. The sense of other is the unavoidable human situation of being free which confines the individual's own judgment.

Escapism and Literature

Escapism literature is designed primarily for imaginative entertainment rather than readings designed for provoking thought or addressing serious social issues. The vast bulk of popular reading is escapist in nature. Escapism mode of writing is of little value, particularly when compared to the normative standards of conventional realistic writing. This implies that this kind of literature is not as serious or important as other literature and not as worthy of study. The authors and readers of these types of literature have social, political and intellectual agendas. Critics do not take such literature seriously because it intentionally sets out to portray and explore other worlds, rather than the present world.

This sort of writing is born out of day-dreaming and wish fulfillment. It is an

adolescent desire for alternative ways of life or modes of being and experience and a refusal to accept the normal and ordinary. For example, escapist societies appear often in literature. *The Time Machine* depicts the Eloi, a lackadaisical race of the future and the horror their happy lifestyle belies. The novel subtly criticizes capitalism as a means of escape. Escapist societies are common in dystopian novels like *Fahrenheit 451*, where society uses television and “seashell radios” to escape a life with strict regulations and the threat of the forthcoming war.

One explanation for the emergence of this form of writing is that it represents a negative or a positive response to the effects of modern industrial civilization. It is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss. Escapist literature might be seen as the expression of the transcendental and supernatural and the extraordinary and other. It can also be seen to be based on a radical, utopian and liberating vision, championing the imagination and its products. Escapist literature may appear comparatively modern but rather belongs to established modes of writing like the Romance, the Epic, the Fable, the Allegory and the Satire.

This type of modes appeared to be escapist, were means of writing about this world, presenting it as strange and other, showing up its absurdities, limits and arbitrariness. Escapist literature may appear to take us to alternative worlds, but more frequently it offers an inverted yet revealing portrait of this world. This form of literature points to the basis upon which cultural order rests. It opens up for a brief moment, on to disorder, illegality and that which is outside dominant value systems. But escapist literature like any other type of literature also has a value. It has examples of varying degrees of quality and is neither good nor bad in and of itself.

Postmodernism and Escapism

One common thread linking various manifestations of postmodernist theory is a conviction that grand narratives have proved to be intellectually exhausted. There are a number of interpretive difficulties that are encountered in coming to terms with the idea of postmodernism. Postmodernist theorists often disagree with one another about what the exact parameters of postmodernism actually are. Postmodernist writers frequently write in an impenetrable jargon and their ideas appear to be comprehensible only to those who are knowledgeable of the mysteries associated with complicated concepts of postmodernism.

Critics have argued that postmodernism is a contemporary form of nihilism, characterized by a loss of meaning and a loss of faith in our ability to translate theory into practice. The Enlightenment belief that a more rational world would lead to a more humane world is abandoned. Critics contend that postmodernism can be seen to be encouraging escapism. Escapism is mental diversion by means of entertainment or recreation, as an escape from the perceived unpleasant aspects of daily life. It can also be used as a term to define the actions people take to try to help relieve persisting feelings of depression or general sadness.

Literature is just a map of reality, not reality itself. Good literature does not need to be realistic. It does not need to follow any of the conventions of modern realism, but must speak to reality in some form. Where mainstream literature leaves us desiring more about our souls, escapist literature is happy to confront us about our deepest longings. Escapism connotes artistically, psychologically or socially irresponsible flight from reality into delusion. Escape literature rejected the modernist aesthetic as productive of art that had become, over the years, esoteric, obscurantist, elitist, safe, sterile, dead. It called for rebellion against all forms of authority and

rejected the notion that the artist must distance himself from his material, seeing in it an unhealthy need to control or contain nature, life and people.

Escapism is the desire to retreat into imaginative entertainment rather than deal with the stress, tedium, and daily problems of the mundane world. This type of literature actually illustrates the most important themes of life more accurately than “main-stream” literature can. The literature of escape includes books and short stories about desperate protagonists escaping from confinement. These books and stories are usually designed to be suspenseful and focus on the psychological effects of imprisonment.

Alienation

The easiest way to start thinking about postmodernism is by thinking about modernism, the movement from which postmodernism seems to grow or emerge. Postmodernism is a complicated term and has emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. It is a term hard to define because it appears in a wide variety of disciplines or areas of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion and technology. It is hard to locate it temporally or historically, as it is not clear exactly when it begins.

Alienation is the estrangement or separation of individuals from one another. The human mind as the subject of perception relates to the world as an object of its perception. It is therefore distanced from the world rather than living within it. This line of thought can be found in Soren Kierkegaard, who examined the emotions and feelings of individuals when faced with life choices. In a broader philosophical context, especially in existentialism and phenomenology, alienation describes the inadequacy of human being or mind in relation to the world. Existential elements can be seen even in the medieval age, especially in the philosophy of St. Augustine. Again

Richard Tarnas, in *The Passion of the Western Mind*, supports in the following passage as:

Augustine possessed an existentialist's self-awareness with his highly developed capacity for introspection and self-confrontation, his concern with memory consciousness and time his psychological perspicacity, his doubt and remorse, his sense of solitary alienation of human self without God, his intensity of inner conflict, his intellectual skepticism and sophistication. Augustine who could doubt in everything, but not the fact of soul's own experience of doubting and knowing, willing and existing thereby affirms certain existence of human ego in the soul.

(144)

Alienation is most often associated with minorities. They are the poor, the unemployed and other groups who have limited power to bring about changes in society. In a nutshell, alienation can be defined as the state of being withdrawn or isolated from the objective world, as through indifference or disaffection. It is the feeling of being alienated from other people and separation resulting from hostility. In social science, alienation is associated with the problems caused by rapid social change, such as industrialization and urbanization, which has broken down traditional relationships among individuals and groups.

The psychological state of alienation is said to include isolation, powerlessness and meaninglessness. Many 20th-century philosophers, both theistic, atheistic, and theologians drew many concepts from Kierkegaard, including the notions of angst, despair, and the importance of the individual. In sociology, alienation refers to an individual's estrangement from traditional community. It is considered by many that the atomism of modern society means that individuals have

hollow relations with other people than they would normally. This leads to difficulties in understanding and adapting to each other's uniqueness. It is also sometimes referred to as commodification, emphasizing the compatibility of capitalism with alienation.

Alienation is centrally the idea of something being separated from or strange to something else. Marx believed that alienation is a systematic result of capitalism. Alienation in capitalist societies occurs because in work each contributes to the common wealth. An individual can only express this fundamentally social aspect of individuality through a production system. This is not publicly social but privately owned, for which each individual functions as an instrument, not as a social being. Marxism holds that workers in capitalist nations are alienated because they have no claim to ownership of the products they make.

Marx's theory of alienation is based upon his observation that in emerging industrial production under capitalism, workers inevitably lose control of their selves. His theory of alienation argues that things naturally belong together are kept separate. Therefore it refers to the alienation of people from aspects of their human nature. There are different types of existential struggle. Among them, alienation or estrangement is the most important. Existential theorists are of the opinion that all our personal human relationships are poisoned by the feeling of alienation from each other. The sense of alienation gives rise to despair from the established order and values. Alienation in the social science context is the state of feeling estranged or separated from one's milieu, work, products of work, or self. In other contexts alienation can suggest a sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness or self-estrangement brought on by the lack of fit between individual needs or expectations and the social order.

The Root of Modernism

For historians the modern period begins in the sixteenth century. The intellectual underpinnings of modernism emerge during the Renaissance period when, through the study of art, poetry, philosophy and science of ancient Greece and Rome. Here humanists revived the notion that man, rather than God, is the measure of all things and pioneered the ideas of citizenship and civic consciousness. The period also gave rise to utopian visions of a more perfect society. Renaissance humanism is an expression of modernist confidence in the potential of humans to shape their own individual destinies and the future of the world.

The modernist thinking which emerged in the Renaissance began to take shape as a larger pattern of thought in the 18th century. Mention may be made first of the so-called 'Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns', a literary and artistic dispute that dominated European intellectual life at the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. The crux was the issue of whether modern's i.e. contemporary writers and artists were now morally and artistically superior to the ancients. Talking about avant-garde and modernity, Stanley Mitchell writes:

The historicity of modernism offers a fundamental reconceptualization of the avant-garde in relation to experience. It is the radicalism of this concept, together with its political, aesthetic, and ethical implications, that makes the avant-garde critical for contemporary reconsiderations of modernity. The main operative concepts and strategies of the avant-garde underpinned the practices of canonical writers. (82)

It was the 18th-century belief that the enlightened mind can find truth. It is in the ideals of the Enlightenment that the roots of Modernism and the new role of art and the artist, are to be found. The ultimate goal of Modernism and modern art has

been the creation of a better society. Both enlightenment and truth were discovered through the application of reason to knowledge, a process that also created new knowledge. The individual acquired knowledge and at the same time the means to discover truth in it through proper education and instruction. The Enlightenment saw the intellectual maturation of the humanist belief in reason as the primary guiding principle in the affairs of humans. The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement for which the most immediate catalyst was the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th-centuries. This was led by men like Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galileo and Isaac Newton. Through the use of reason, the mind achieved enlightenment and a whole new and exciting world opened up. Tony Myers seems to give a chronological time frame to modernity as:

In the history of art, the term ‘modern’ is used to refer to a period dating from roughly the 1860s through the 1970s and describes the style and ideology of art produced during that era. It is this more specific use of modern that is intended when people speak of modern art. The term modernism is also used to refer to the art of the modern period. More specifically, modernism can be thought of as referring to the philosophy of modern art. (39)

The concept of freedom became central to the vision of a new society. Enlightenment thinking projected the human race as striving towards universal, moral and intellectual self-realization. It is believed that reason allowed access to truth and knowledge of the truth would better humankind. In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Inquiry into the Nature of the Social Contract* proposed a new social system should rest on an equality that is moral and legitimate. By joining together into civil society through the social contract, individuals could both preserve themselves and

attain freedom. These tenets were fundamental to the notion of modernism. Arato Andrew and Paul Breines talks about the nexus between art and modernity as:

All artistic innovation, although created with eye toward the future, can ultimately be considered hopeless with regard to artistic validity, for, as soon as the work is created it becomes a present achievement whose eventual fate is to become an obsolete artifact of the past. Hence, the transformation of a Modernist art work from an object worthy of attention to one of aversion is merely a matter of time once it is created it is past, and once it is past it is no longer an object of aesthetic concern. (26)

The 18th-century thinkers believed that virtually everything could be submitted to reason, tradition, customs, morals and even art. But it was felt that the truth revealed thereby could be applied in the political and social spheres to correct problems and improve the political and social condition of humankind. This kind of thinking quickly gave rise to the exciting possibility of creating a new and better society. The truth discovered through reason would free people from the shackles of corrupt institutions such as the Church and the Monarchy whose misguided traditional thinking and old ideas had kept people subjugated in ignorance and superstition. Through truth and freedom, the world would be made into a better place.

Fragmentation

In literature, postmodernism is accompanied by a complex of certain artistic strategies and tenets. Postmodernism defines itself in contrast to modernism. The Western world has descended into a post-cultural state that has shaken everyone involved. This process partially promoted by technological advances is not necessarily related to a particular cultural or political philosophy. Originally, the term

comes from modern architecture that denotes the familiar glass, steel and concrete buildings with their straight, rectangular, geometric shapes. From here the term "postmodern" spread to art, where it denoted a departure from the radicalism. It is replaced by a fusion of different popular and traditional elements.

The most important impact of postmodernism is seen in philosophy, where it is heralded as a new stage in the history of ideas. In history, the start of "modernity" is usually taken to be the 18th century period of Enlightenment. During this period, a belief in rationality, progress and science spread through the intellectual establishment, preparing the grounds for the industrial revolution. According to the ideology of modernity, rational thought is the key to discovering the truth about the world and our self. The more elements are known, the better science will be able to predict and control nature, and the more the individual will be liberated from the vagaries of fate.

Fragmentation is characteristic of postmodernism and is a basic feature of postmodernism. Fragmentation denotes not escape from reality, but a more fundamental analysis by a dissection of its growing complexity. During the last hundred years, every aspect of art has been broken up. The art of this century has been characterized by shattered surfaces, broken color, segmented compositions and shredded images. From the fragmentation of color by the impressionists to the broken distortions of the expressionists, the break-up of form and content in modern art is complete. It is fair to say that in literature, fragmentation is a broad term for literary techniques that break up the text or narrative.

Postmodern art favors reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and discontinuity, ambiguity, simultaneity and an emphasis on the decentered, dehumanized subject. Postmodernism does not lament the idea of fragmentation or

incoherence, but rather celebrates that. On the other hand modernism tends to present a fragmented view of human subjectivity and history. It presents that fragmentation as something tragic, something to be lamented and mourned as a loss. Many modernist works try to uphold the idea that works of art can provide the unity, coherence, and meaning which have been lost in most of modern life.

The postmodernists see knowledge as a set of perspectives, where different people have different views without anyone being right or wrong. When talking about culture, they see a plurality of views, which are competing, supporting each other or simply existing side-by-side. They emphasize fragmentations, discontinuities and chaos, rather than the order, coherence and simplicity. When we look at the development of science, the movement towards fragmentation is unmistakable. As more and more concepts, theories and models are developed it becomes impossible for any one scientist to keep informed about all of them. Researchers are forced to focus on smaller and smaller domains, becoming ever more specialized.

Lukacs sees nineteenth-century capitalism resulting in a growing fragmentation in life. He believes that literature and culture undergo a corresponding tendency toward fragmentation and loss of totality. In nineteenth century the bourgeoisie in power becomes a reactionary rather than a revolutionary. For example, he characterizes the transition from realism to naturalism in European literature as a process of decay. He believes that the formal fragmentation of modernist texts participates in the process of reification that is itself central to the fragmentation of social life under capitalism. He sees in the dazzling verbal constructions of modernist writers a reflection of this process.

Postmodern thinkers reject the idea that there exists an integrated world view. There are no basic principles or foundations on which to build an encompassing

picture of the universe. There is no unique story telling us how the world and the different things in it were created and how humanity is progressing from primitive tribes to an advanced technological society. Though not everyone will agree with such radical conclusions, our present age undeniably shows fragmentation. This state of affairs defines the postmodern condition.

III. Sal and Dean as Escapists

Escapism is a complex concept. There is a fine line between escaping from something and escaping to something. People travel to leave emotional baggage behind or travel to find something new to bring back. Most, if not all journeys involve both forms of escape. It is the mixture between the two that matters as there is a push and pull for every journey. With *On the Road*, Kerouac infused a sense of freedom that had seemed to elude him during his adolescence and early twenties in which he drifted from one vocation to another.

On the Road focuses on giving a detailed account of what happened rather than why it happened. Sal Paradise, the writer laboring at his desk is the narrating “I,” recedes almost completely behind the experiencing “I.” He is recently divorced at the onset of the novel and is its protagonist. His narration is the text of *On the Road*. As its author and participant in the events he gives himself the role of, “responding spectator” who is caught between “the present of the novel and the past, which he has never fully left and who cannot go back” (5). The central theme of the journey is the taste for adventure, landscapes and strange fellows that creates unity in the novel. It is the story of a friendship and four trips across America.

It is a travel diary and the immediacy of the prose makes seem the actions happening right now. It covers in four parts and an epilogue the accounts of four trips inspired by Dean Moriarty. In 1947, when the two friends first meet, Dean is seventeen and Sal is junior by seven years and, “simply a youth tremendously excited with life” (6). Sal is alone during the first outing to the west and leaves New York with the plan to hitchhike to San Francisco. Narrating one moment of his journey, Sal moment of escapism as:

I woke up as the sun was reddening; and that was the one distinct time in my life, the strangest moment of all, when I didn't know who I was - I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, hearing 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 really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds. I wasn't scared; I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost. (78)

As he doesn't arrive very far in his first try, he tries again taking a bus to Chicago and heading to Denver. There he discovers that his other friends have alienated Dean because of his wild ways. Each of their continental criss-crossing undertaken between 1947 and 1950, turns more fast-paced and breathless, indicating Sal's degree of involvement and identification with Dean where, "we got along fine—no pestering, no catering; we tiptoed around each other like heartbreaking new friends" (7).

The Beat Generation and Escapism

World War II marked a wide dividing line between the old and the new in American society and literature. Post war America became a nation of consumers where it seemed that every young man was doing the same thing like getting a job, settling down and starting a family. One group that was against conforming to this dull lifestyle was referred to as 'Beatniks'. The Beats or Beatniks condemned middle class American life as morally bankrupt. They praised individualism as the highest human goal and felt the need to celebrate life according to their wish. This perspective was present in poetry and literature through out the beat movement.

The Beat generation became an accepted entity in intellectual debate and popular media culture in America. The Beats are a criticism of American complacency under the Nixon regime. It is an expression of new forms of prose, poetry and an exploration of consciousness. The Beats joined the dissent to produce a distinct style of literature and living. It was based on disaffiliation, poverty, anarchic individualism and communal living. The Beat writing can be and have been used as blueprints for Bohemian living by many of its creators and readers. Probably no other generational construct has had as direct a relationship between its textual expressions and its members' socio-cultural behavior.

On the Road is fresh and captivating that follows the life of Sal as he heads to the roads of America to escape the repetition of every day life. He is daunted by his middle-class life after a divorce when he meets Dean Moriarty, “a young Gene Autry—thin-hipped, blue-eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent—a sideburned hero of the snowy West,” (1). Dean is only a remote friend from Colorado, “who had the tremendous energy of a new kind of American saint” (39). His journeys became a quest for new experiences and a new way of living by crossing both moral and legal boundaries in search for true freedom. At the end of their journey, Sal is nostalgic and says:

So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, and all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and tonight the stars'll be out, and don't you know that God is Pooh Bear? the evening

star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all the rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty. (289)

Sal has his eyes open to new possibilities by the sheer energy of Dean. He is presented as an uncompromising forerunner and advocate of a new radical subjectivity, whose goal it is to fulfill his own desires, regardless of the societal order and its established patterns. Having grown up without being subdued to parental supervision or school, Dean could escape societal indoctrination and become Sal's "hero of the snowy West" (5). Sal is exuberant about his new friend who had grown up "spending a third of his time in the pool hall, a third in jail and a third in the public library" (7). In Sal's opinion,

All my New York friends were in the negative nightmarish position of putting down society and giving their tired bookish or political or psychoanalytical reasons, but Dean just raced in society, eager for bread and love; he didn't care one way or another. I promised myself to go the same way when spring really blossomed and opened up the land. And this was really the way that my whole road experience began, and the things that were to come are too fantastic not to tell. (10)

On The Road represent an escape from all responsibilities turning to the artificial paradise of sex, drugs and alcohol. Describing the experience of a group of

young and rebel friends who react to the establishment, reveals nostalgia of repressed emotions. Dean is a prisoner, a former-university student, a vagabond, a reckless driver, a frenzied lover and an occasional car thief. He is a man who always got in trouble with divorces and new wives. He is pure energy and with a repressed primitive savage soul that denies the contemporary society respectability. For Sal, Dean is just like a lost brother, a part of himself made of spontaneity and freshness. He becomes the model for the entire American innocent idiots, “humiliated and offended” and as Sal says:

Dean’s intelligence was formal, lightning and complete in every way but it was lacking in boring intellectualism. His criminality was something resentful and mocking; it was the unbridled bursting, full up of assens and of American joy. It was the West, it was the wind of the West; it was an ode to the prairies. It was something new, prophesied for a long time and waited for a long time. Dean just ran along society, eager for bread and love. (57)

Taking to the road in the novel is escaping and returning. It is like a ritual and a rebellion against the given circumstances. The tiresome travels from the East to the West and from the North to the South have been created along the old ways. Actually Sal and Dean know that beyond the coast there’s the sea and nothing more to explore. They understand perhaps that the beatitude brings to an end in the continuous research of strong emotions and it’s not possible to go beyond.

Sal’s journeys to the west are celebrations of going on the road and of the simple people he meets. He is also awe struck by the vastness and raw beauty of the country stretching from coast to coast. While Sal learns from his adventures on the road, Dean in the end falls silent. Sal’s description of traveling and of the landscape is

immediate, without any narrative distance. It is a sensuous devouring of every new experience. Sal is in search of more excitement and in the act of going on the road, lays a quest for self-realization and discovery. He states the objective of his journey and about his close friend Dean as:

Yes, and it wasn't only because I was a writer and needed new experiences that I wanted to know Dean more, and because my life hanging around the campus had reached the completion of its cycle and was stultified, but because, somehow, in spite of our difference in character, he reminded me of some long-lost brother. (17)

Central to the concept of a journey is the idea of escape. Sal's attraction to Dean is partly due to his innate desire to break from the rigid confines of ordinary life, society and authority. Instead of coping with his problems, Sal decides to run away and to head west. He heads west in spring and returns in autumn. What he learns about life on the road is that the road has no destination. That beyond Denver there is San Francisco, Los Angeles. Soon after arriving there, all dreams about Western cities turn into nightmares. He feels that, "L.A. is the loneliest and most brutal American city" (85). Apocalyptic visions begin to haunt him as soon as he settles down to rest, even if he only plans to stay for a few days. Nevertheless Sal stops and questions himself. Between moments of ecstasy and dismay, he questions the final sense of the coming and going and of the tossing around the American world, "You can't go on forever. All this frenzy and all this jumping from one place to another one. We have to arrive somewhere, find something" (191).

Sal's friendship with Dean is the consistent thread that binds the formers haphazard journey around America together. It is the only constant in a story where everyone is moving, meeting and parting. This odyssey of theirs is portrayed as an

attempt to escape from an intolerable personal or social situation. On the symbolic level it is a search for values or the inner light and understanding, a search for the road, the way to spiritual truth. Sal and Dean are seeking something bigger in their travels embarking on a road trip to unfamiliar lands. It is their attempt to discover a purpose in life previously hidden in the grind of normal routine.

Perpetual motion may be a means of escape for Dean, but he too often forgets that he is also looking for something. He cannot tell Sal the destination of the road as it leads only away from personal and social responsibilities. Later their journeys also become pilgrimages. Having been unable to find fulfillment of their desires in the United States, they head for Mexico, where, the former hopes:

We would finally learn ourselves among the Fellaheen Indians of the world, the essential strain of the basic primitive, wailing humanity that stretches in a belt around the equatorial belly of the world. They had high cheek-bones, and slanted eyes, and soft ways; they were not fools, they were not clowns; they were great, grave Indians and they were the source of mankind and the fathers of it. (280)

The passion for escape is behind Sal's desire to go on the road, to get away from his confused life in New York. Dean, a carefree wild man, becomes the hero of the West who roams the country uninhibited by or disregarding of societal obligations. He was born on the road and therefore is for Sal the perfect guide. Dean opens Sal's eyes to another America. It is the America that is stretching along the highways far away from the neatly patterned front lawns of suburban areas. The insight gained is multifaceted and Dean says, "We know America, we're at home; I can go anywhere and get what I want because it's the same in every corner" (120).

The vastness, grandeur, and diversity of the landscape of the impenetrable

mangrove forests of the Mississippi Delta, the street jungles of Vieux Carre or North Beach are juxtaposed to the likeness of places such as Iowa, Fredericksburg, Texas or Bakersfield, California. These places are more than a thousand miles apart from each other when passing through. This kind of America cannot be the destination at the end of the road. The various journeys resemble each other, even though the choice of route varies, and they take place under unfavorable conditions.

The Celebration of Life and Free Will

Sal idolizes Dean for his style, his ease with women and for his joy of living. He realizes he doesn't want to conform to societal pressures. He is a man who has very little direction and is very much lost in the world. He seems to be constantly trying to escape from his present situation. Sal's means of escape is his constant travel. He traveled from east to west, New York to San Francisco and stopped everywhere in between. He made this trip over and over, constantly on the road and another of his memorable moment is:

But then they danced down the streets like dingedodies, and I shambled after as I've been doing all my life after people who interest me, because 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 that never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'www!' (218)

Sal is a literate keeper of American culture, who represents the American man. He tells us in the opening paragraph that, "With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of life you could call life on the road". Dean is the instigator and the inspiration

for the journey that Sal will make, the journey that he will record. The arrival of Dean is the catalyst, Sal describes him as, “simply a youth tremendously excited with life”. He is a young novelist who lives with his aunt in Peterson, New Jersey. He wants to go to Denver to meet his crazy friend Dean who came to New York to learn to be a writer.

Sal and Dean were freed from material constraints. They wanted to change the world, but their manners of changing started from within and were looking to fill up the void inside by escapism. The motto of the Beat generation exemplified by Sal and Dean is to live life to the fullest. It is to experience as much as one can and to fill the days on earth with much color and notoriety. Their odyssey is one long road trip wherein one event leads to another, one woman to the next and igniting a ball of madness. In the end, full of bitter-sweet memories, Sal finally renounces his life on the road with a mournful tear in his eye as he ends his travelogue on an elegiac note for a lost America:

So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the intensity of it, the evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairies, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty. (309)

Sal's renunciation of his life on the road comes across as half-hearted. He forgives Dean and alludes vaguely to the possibility of a meaningful relation to the girl named Laura. He rejects his life with Dean with hesitation and he often confuses in his story what was and what ought to have been.

Sal's travels gave him the opportunity to be an outsider with no worries. He was able to witness and observe all that there was to offer throughout the country. While journeying and staying in small towns for no more than a few nights, Sal was able to obtain a life with no commitment or responsibility. Even if he was to make some sort of commitment to one of his many girls along the way, it wasn't unlike him to just pick up and leave.

On the other hand, Dean is married to three women at once, without feeling more than sexual attraction for any of his wives. He is a personification of free will, called "mad" by Sal. After all the only thing people around seemed to know about him was that he liked to drink and celebrate life. He would mentally alter his perception of reality through the use of drugs and alcohol, "I was getting drunk and didn't care; everything was fine" (35). To him everything in life was fine as long as he was drunk. Describing his friend Dean, Sal says:

Dean Moriarty is himself America, or rather the dream of America, once innocent, young, full of promise and holiness, bursting with potential and vitality, now driven mad, crippled, impotent, ragged, dirty, lost, searching for a past of security and love that never existed, trailing frenzy and broken promises, unable to speak to anybody anymore. (47)

Dean's poor ability to maintain relationships is evident through out his life. He along with Sal are constantly chasing down one girl or trying to make another. The

running and bingeing throughout the country was actually an expedition to find them. All through their life, they may not have been escaping but rather discovering. Sal needed to see the way the rest of America was in an effort to find what he was. The human experience is about self-discovery. It is a universal theme that he simply recorded this journey at a turning point in America.

Rebellion and Exploration

Counterculture as a movement of cultural resistance is a 1960s American phenomenon. The project of the movement was to resist the mainstream white culture. They found the white culture's way of life unauthentic and psychologically unsatisfying. These people endeavored to lend a voice to the repressed or marginalized cultural elements and themes. Physically or mentally branded by life, they all grew up during the depression. They were in their teens when the world was at war or even served in the armed forces. In the post-war days they were appalled by the persistent nuclear threat. Politically, both the Civil Rights Movement and the new left of the early 1960s took their initial cues from the cold war claim of the United States to be the foremost exponent of democracy. *The Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History* comments:

The black counter culturists argued that to overcome the psychic, social and cultural effects of centuries of enforced subordination , American Blacks, like their African brothers and sisters, would have to construct and maintain an opposition to the norms and practices of white society that would be as forceful as it was absolute. (252)

The counter cultural discourse of the period is everywhere informed by the assumption that the dominant society and its conventions are both entirely distinct from and inimical to the true self they degrade and repress. They viewed the existing

society as a dysfunctional, alien, absurd yet potentially lethal machine. The wanderers of *On the Road* identify with the skid-row bum, the psychopath and seek out their gathering places. The only thing to guide their spiritual journey was wine, women, jazz and the wide-open road. Repelled by the restrictive society, these people profess disjunction from society and its depraved values which they replace. Sal Paradise explains:

The place filled up. People began to bring bottles. We rushed out to hit the bars and rushed back. The night was getting more and more frantic. I wished Dean and Carlo were there- then I realized they'd be out of place and unhappy. They were like the man with the dungeon stone and the gloom, rising from the underground, the sordid hipsters of America, a new beat generation that I was slowly joining. (54)

The true self thus requires to be loosened from the imprisoning grip of dominant society in order to realize itself. The members of this Beat generation like Sal, Dean and friends feel beaten by the political, social and economic circumstances of a time which went from hot war to cold. In keeping with their identification with the social outcasts, they reject racial segregation and discrimination. Despite their often non literary level of verbal communication, Sal and Dean are entangled in the very rhetoric of whatever they revolt against.

Sal treks on well-worn paths in his writing. It is social enough to express his dissatisfaction with what had become of America as he saw it. Though they reject society, they are hopelessly entangled in it. They pursue the American dream, but the particular versions of their dreams are not so different from traditional ones. The central element is a longing for liberty and individuality. Their unwillingness to adjust

to society is paired with inability and to express their own discomfort. In spite of the weaknesses in point of view, the novel sounds honest note of protest and Sal says:

We arrived in Washington at dawn. It was the day of Harry Truman's inauguration for his second term. Great displays of war might were lined along Pennsylvania Avenue as we rolled by in our battered boat. There were B-29s, PT-boats, artillery, all kinds of war material that looked murderous in the snowy grass; the last thing was a small ordinary lifeboat that looked pitiful and foolish. (135)

Sal's name is ironic. Sal Paradise never finds what he is searching for. He sides with the socially disadvantaged, the poor and the minorities while he is on the road. He catalogues connivances of constitutional rights and social obligations as he witnesses them all over the country. He uses harsh words and is captivated by the impressions collected during his trips. At the end of *On the Road* he settles down for a few months, to catch his breath. With the onset of spring, he plans to go on his next outing to the west.

The value is in the journey, not the destination. Each person constructs his or her own concept of what is valuable and important in life. It is the experiences that mould and shape a person while he is on the road. Keeping in mind that Sal and his friends are on road trips, the physical journey is also a spiritual quest for a deeper personal meaning in life. Sal does not find the ultimate meaning in life at the end of the road trip, but the vain attempt is itself valuable and results in personal growth. This fits with the postmodern and existential concept of Man, where the individual is isolated and personal meaning is a construct which grants meaning to otherwise empty lives. Sal describes his moment of ecstasy as:

And for just 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, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness, the potent and inconceivable radiancies shining in bright Mind Essence, innumerable lotuslands falling open in the magic mothswarm of heaven. I realized that I had died and been reborn numberless times but just didn't remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy. (231)

On the Road takes on the myth of the American Dream and tears it apart. The novel is informed by depression-era anxieties of what America represents as opposed to what it might and should represent. The novel belongs to the new Bohemian trend in American fiction in which an experimental style is combined with eccentric characters and a morally neutral point of view. Their rejection of conventionality was only part of a larger restlessness that grew out from the chaos of the Second World War. This was also a time when most people were looking for comfort in a safe and prosperous world. While the Beat Generation would push and help extend the limits of free speech, a number of repressive steps to limit self expression would be enacted at the same time. Their culture would be presented as a real danger to American youth who might succumb to its enticements which finally boiled over to help create the counter culture of the 1960's.

Behind the wheels of numerous automobiles, the two young men zigzag across the continent "leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing [their] one and

noble function of the time, move." Being alienated from the mainstream of American middle-class life, Sal and Dean's search for ecstasy takes them back and forth across the United States. Their journey is filled with all-night talk sessions, drunken parties, sex, drugs, an orgy with Mexican whores, and an exploration of jazz. What the Beats understood and identified with in jazz, was protest against the white middle-class world. As Sal Paradise observes in part one of the novel, "Every single one of us was blushing. This is the story of America. Everybody's doing what they think they're supposed to do" (279).

IV. Conclusion

All young people at a certain point feel the need to get away from their life. They feel like escaping from the first responsibilities, from the feeling to be ready to be independent and the impossibility to be it. It is their urge to escaping from society and the establishment, into a world of disaffiliation, poetry, drugs, alcohol and sex, without rules, just going forward on the road. Kerouac wants to express the sense of alienation from the technocratic society of the 1950's and the deep desire to find again the life energy that seems to be lost. This testifies the disenchantment from the American dream.

On the Road fostered an alternative view of American life, preceding the counterculture of the 1960s. It is an hymn to escape. It is the odyssey of the underdogs and social outcasts inhabiting the country along the road. This trip initiates a series of cross-country trips by car, bus, and hitchhiking. The groups of people including Sal and Dean have taken into consideration the escape and escapism motif in American literature. This theme appears very often in American novels and it reflects a dominant mood in American life. Though escape generally implies a flight from one reality to another, escapism has a wider cluster of associations. It has been exemplified by the Beats with the use of drugs, sex, alcohol and the journey, to be forever wandering forward into new realities, replacing the old for the hope of the new.

Sal Paradise with a little money in his pocket, a great calm in his soul and the wide open road in front of him personifies freedom. He represents the American man who realizes he does not want to conform to societal pressures. The simple title of the novel exemplifies Sal's ongoing need to travel. When he and his friends get tired of traveling east to west they travel north to south, driving all the way down to Mexico

City. He is a man who has very little direction and is very much lost in the world as he knows it and seems to be constantly trying to escape. But escape it's something completely different, it's something profound. It is the expression of an existential problem.

Sal's first means of escape is his constant travel. He travels from east to west, New York to San Francisco and halts everywhere in between. He makes this trip over and over, constantly on the road. His travels give him the opportunity to be an outsider with no worries. He is able to witness and observe all that there is to offer throughout the country. While journeying across America, staying in small towns for no more than a few nights, Sal is able to obtain a life with no commitment or responsibility. Even if he is to make some sort of commitment to one of his many girls along the way, it isn't unlike him to just pick up and leave. After all the only thing people around seem to know about him was that he liked to drink. This led to the other form of escape, which is the alteration of reality.

On the other hand, Dean Moriarty is like a human-seeming mechanism without interior and gone wild. At first he appears to be a kind of superman, beyond good and evil. They are always talking about "the old days," by which they mean six months ago. Later, Dean begins to come to pieces as he loses part of his thumb, his legs don't work like they used to and he can no longer dodge the consequences of his acts. But he still goes roaring on, like a bulldozer out of control and fueled with alcohol.

Thus, *On the Road* is one of those books that remind us of how uptight and conventional our society is today. We all get stuck in the same routine, day after day, year after year. We all get the urge to escape from our habitual, ordinary lives, but very few of us actually have the courage to follow through, due to familial and

financial responsibilities. But for Sal and Dean, daily life is never 'ordinary life.' In their college years, neither has a stable job, neither knows what they want to do in life, yet they don't seem to care. They go to bed each night not worrying about tomorrow might have in store. They take each day as it comes. Their story follows their spontaneous lives as they travel cross-country multiple times meeting new people, hitchhiking, partying, drinking, smoking, etc.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Bangalore: Prism Books, 1993.
- Amburn, Ellis. *Subterranean Kerouac: The Hidden Life of Jack Kerouac*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Andrew, Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism*. New York: Seabury Press, 1979.
- Clark, Tom. *Jack Kerouac*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1984.
- Dempsey, David. *The Works of Jack Kerouac*, Eds. W.H. Gardner and N.H. MacKenzie. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*. 5th ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001.
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. New York: Viking, 1957.
- Miles, Barry. *Jack Kerouac—King of the Beats*. New York: H. Holt, 1998.
- Millstein, Gilbert. "A Re-Evaluation of *On the Road*." *Philosophy and Literature* 25.2 (1979): 41-53.
- Mitchell, Stanley. *The Historical Novel*. New York: Grove Press, 1947.
- Myers, Tony. "Modernity, Postmodernity, and the Future Perfect." *New Literary History* 32.1 (2001): 33-45.
- Nicosia, Gerald. *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac*. New York: Grove Press, 1983.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Death of God and the Anthichrist." *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature*. Eds. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr. New York: Oxford, 1965: 905-12.
- Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of The Western Mind*. London: Pimlico, 2000.