

Tribhuvan University

Iconoclastic Images in Kerouac's *On the Road*

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in English**

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August, 2006

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Date: August, 2006

Acknowledgements

The present study owes much to the scholarly guidance and indispensable suggestions from my mentor Mr. Shankar Subedi, Central Department of English, T.U. for the accomplishment of the dissertation. I am grateful to Prof. Chandra Prakash Sharma, Head of the Central Department of English for his Cooperation.

I am highly obliged to my teachers, Prof. Dr. Shreedhar Prasad Lohani, Prof. Dr. Abhi Narayan Subedi and Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, I am obliged to all my respected teachers of the central Department of English for their generous assistance to complete this work.

Words lack to convey my sincere gratitude to my parents: (Bhadra Bahadur Bauwal and Guma Kumari Baruwal), brother, Rajendra Baruwal and sister in law, Nanu whose warm affection enabled me to accomplish this work.

The most worth mentioning name is that of my beloved wife Mrs. Sangita Baruwal. Without her support, affection and encouragement, I would not be able to complete my dream of Master Degree. Similarly I would like to remember my little son Mr. Sajag Basanta Baruwal.

I am highly indebted to the brother, Mr. Prem G.C. for his valuable suggestions and possible assistance. I also thank Wowids Computer System for the efficient typing.

August, 2006

Mr. Hira Bahadur Baruwal

Abstract

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* is an Iconoclastic novel as it dismantles the images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experience. It studies the characters' unconventional lifestyle and their protest against conformity and contemporary capitalistic culture. The people that the novel talks about search for freedom and pleasure through drug use, sexual promiscuity, stealing, hobo life and jazz and exploration of Eastern religion, Zen Buddhism reflects their protest against the mores of capitalistic society.

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Abstract

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I. Introduction

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, that captures the spirit of the Beat Generation has become a centre of criticism because it talks about open and excessive sex, homosexuality, marijuana smoking, drug use and alcoholism, with a great degree of openness. This research tries to analyze the characters' protest against the dominant mores of mid – twentieth century through the characters open involvement in sexually promiscuous activities, social violence and jazz music. It embodies a hysterical outburst of raw energies of the youths of his time. The novel talks about the mood of the post war situation in America. At that time America was progressing materially but there was the spiritual decay and cultural decline.

A study of Kerouac's *On the Road* enables us to see it as an iconoclastic novel as it dismantles the images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experience.

The present research will try to find out iconoclastic images in Kerouac's *On the Road*. It is iconoclastic in the sense that it criticizes the popular belief and values of the contemporary mainstream American society. Nudism, homosexuality, alcoholism and free sex can be taken as the celebration of life for the people the novel presents but it might come as a shock to people who don't partake of these joys. In addition the novel revolts against the academic grip on the contemporary American writing. This novel deals with travel subject in a detached way. This novel pours its feeling first and then worries about the esthetics later.

Ever since its publication, the novel has undergone diverse interpretations. Though the novel has been seen as obscene, a sympathetic appreciation of it gives us

insight into its beauty. Glorification of free love, homosexuality, drug use, and alcoholism are 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 effect amidst denial and possible displacement. The single marriage, bearing a few children, building sophisticated house having all modern facilities, using formal languages obeying the rules and regulations of the state strictly and keeping healthy relationship with the relatives are the images of the materialistic American society.

On the Road is a novel about road trip in which all the characters are homeless and wander around the road. Kerouac's semi – autobiographical novel *On the Road* celebrates direct sensory experiences, freedom from conventional responsibilities and emotional intensity of a life of hiking in second hand cars casual sex and recreational drug use. The road stands for an emotional journey as well as for the actual road the writer traveled.

Kerouac was born on March 12, 1922 in Lowell, Massachusetts and died at the age of 39 on October 21, 1961. His parents, Lea and Gabrielle were French – Canadian immigrants. He got married three times and his sexual orientation was bisexual. He is a citizen of United States and he is white by ethnicity. He wrote *The Town and the City* (1950), *On the Road* (1957), *The Dharma Bums* (1958), *The Subterraneans* (1958), *Doctor Sex* (1959) and *Lonesome Traveler* (1960). *Desolation Angels* (1965) and *Visions of Cody* (1972) were published after his death. He learnt English as a second language as a school boy but got a scholarly name because of his distinct narrative style which countered the spirit of the time i.e. 1950s. The depiction of his ideas and experiences showed detachment from the contemporary mores. In

addition to the novels some poems and essays made him stand as a popular literary figure in American Literature.

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, is not only the soul of the Beat movement and literature, but one of the most important novels of the century. Like nearly all of the Kerouac's writing *On the Road*, is thinly Fictionized autobiography, filled with a cast made of Kerouac's real life friends lovers and fellow travelers. Narrated by Sal Paradise, one of Kerouac's alter – egos, *On the Road* is a cross – country bohemian odyssey that not only influenced writing in the years since its publication but penetrated into the deepest levels of American thought and culture.

Fans of Kerouac got the whole beautiful, groovy deal with this new recording of the radically hip novel that many consider the heart of the Beat Movement. Poetic, open and raw, Kerouac's prose lays out a cross country adventure as experienced by Sal Paradise, an autobiographical character. From the moment he gets on the seven trains out of New York city, he takes the readers through the high and low of hitchhiking, bonding with fellow explorers and opting for beer before food. First published in 1957, Kerouac's perennially hot story continues to express the restless energy and desire for freedom that makes people rush out to see the world. The tale is only improved by Dillon's well – paced, articulate reading as he voices the flow of images and graveled reality of paradise's search for the edge.

Kerouac's novel *On the Road* emerged in the culturally repressive century in the cold war era. The characters' unconventional life style reflects profound dissatisfaction with the contemporary society. The characters object and criticize American materialism in a bitter, harsh and often abusive language. They mock its conformity; denounce its immorality and set out *On the Road* to discover America's true spirit. The experience of extreme joy and freedom is the true spirit of America

and to gain it they go out of cultural, social and legal boundary of the contemporary society. They experience freedom and pleasure with drugs and sex, highlight jazz and explore Eastern religion and Zen Buddhism. Kerouac's *On the Road* seeks to counteract a philistine and inhibitive society by exploring the most extremely potential ecstatic areas of the self.

Review of Literature

Many critics have diversely commented on Kerouac's *on the Road* since its publication in 1957. Steve Wilson opines: *On the Road* is quest for spiritual authenticity and enlightenment. Kerouac moved to different parts of America and lives among the people who are outside the domain of normal American society. He writes:

On the similar quest for spiritual enlightenment, Jack Kerouac sets out at the mid century to surround him with the lives of those beyond the bounds of normal American society. Fictionized in *on the Road* and subterranean his quest leads him to the love of criminals and drug users and are interracial affairs with Mexican and native American women. All this contains the social environment of the late 1940 America. When conformity was seen as a civic good. (32)

George Dardess finds the delicate relationship of the characters. He uses the epithet of "love story" to describe the novel He finds love intrigue among the characters and love issues are continued in the course of traveling. He adds that love is also a kind of human art. Characters fall in love consciously and unconsciously violating the images associated with the mainstream bourgeois American culture. He says;

On the Road is a love story not a travelogue (Certainly not a call to revolution) it is told with all the art the conscious and unconscious shaping of verbal materials – one expects from best writing. Kerouac may legitimately be called even on the basis of *On the Road* alone, a great American author – and the equal of Mailer himself (201)

Erik R. Morterison takes *On the Road*, as an attack on the corruption of the time by capitalism. At that time exploitation and corruption were the two major things in United States of America. All the characters move here and there on the command of the clock. It means a man has become a slave of the time. He continues:

On the Road waves an attack on constricting nation of the time that companies like Unites States time were so eager to exploit. Repeated questioning the accepted concept of temporality defined by Kerouac's work instead probes for a way to break through constricting notion o time in an attempt to address the even large existential problem of temporality. (52)

Ann charters writes that Kerouac explicitly compared his writing with Jazz music Kerouac wrote spontaneous prose that was a difficult business. Ann charters mentions the method of such prose and its effect on Kerouac in her book *The Portable Jack Kerouac*.

In an essay that appeared in Escapade magazine in 1967...He (Kerouac) mentioned that his method of spontaneous prose had led him “to the edge of language where the babble of the subconscious begins” and confessed that he “ begins to rely too much on babble” in his attempt to” race away from cattish clichés, “ending up” raving

enslaved to sounds...There is a delicate balancing point between bombast and babble (482).

Peter Cohn takes this novel as an artistic shock to the structured American writing. He comments '*On the Road*... demonstrates the artistic misfortunes that attended the effort to use Ginsberg's Yawp as a principle of structure' (455) John Tytell praises Kerouac's spontaneous prose which is American in many ways. He feels that the reviewers misread this novel as an unstructured and incoherent art.

On the road...seems characteristically American in its search for fluid, Unshaped life, free of premised patterns fearing most the horrors of stasis, of staying in the same place without possibility of change. The reviewers misread the novel almost without exception, finding it incoherent, unstructured unsound as art, unhappy as prophecy, (Tytell 23).

James Combell observes that Kerouac's writing style in *On the Road* is similar with the rhyme flow and breath of Jazz music. Original version of *On the Road* was a jazz prose shaped by jazz music. He writes:

The improvisatory technique of long scroll version of *On the Road* "sketching he calls edit – was shaped by his belief that jazz was the essential American art form and his feeling that no one before him had seen the potential scope of a jazz prose. Kerouac's model for this new and self consciously American melody line was adopted from the tenor man.' Blowing a phrase on his saxophone till he runs out of breath and he does his statement's been made. (Combell 367)

The second part of this thesis will treat the issue of theoretical modality. To this end the research will turn to different critics for help in developing the modality that I have proposed to use. It will attempt to trace the origin of the term, iconoclasm and its relation with the project of Beat Generation. It will also deal with American capitalistic society in 1950. It will also deal with the term 'counterculture' and finally try to define iconoclasm in the light of definition of these terms. It will use beat movement as major support for iconoclastic reading of Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*.

On the basis of the second part of this thesis the third part of research will analyze the text itself to the greatest extent possible for conducting textual analysis of the novel, *On the Road* at a consideration length. It will sort out some extracts from the text to prove the hypothesis of the study. Kerouac's *On the Road* violates the images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American Culture which stands for authority conformity and mechanization of human experiences. The text will be the primary source for textual analysis. Moreover to support the statements about the textual analysis it will bring in critical commentaries and insights of different critics. It will try to prove how *On the Road* is an iconoclastic piece of literature. It will talk about meaning and definition of iconoclasm, homosexuality, open sex, marijuana smoking, alcoholism, drugged hallucination, and violation of form and technique relating to the novel. The last part will be a summary of textual analysis.

The fourth part of the research will be the conclusion of this thesis. The present novel can have multiple meanings and interpretations. A single research will not be sufficient for uncovering the richness of meanings and interpretations of the novel. This research will enable us to see the novel as an iconoclastic novel as it

dismantles the images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experiences.

II. Iconoclasm, Counterculture and Beat Movement

Iconoclasm and its Historical Roots

The term, 'Iconoclasm' refers to violating or breaking mental images that represent any occurrence or picture. Iconoclasm was a movement in the Eastern Church that challenged the traditional use and symbolic significance of icon or picture of religious figures such as Christ and the saints. The word iconoclasm derives from Greek and it consists of two words Eickon (image) + Kalastes (breaker). So iconoclast is a breaker of icons or of images or an opponent of their religious use. Thus iconoclasm is an act of breaking the religious significance associated with icons or images. The iconoclastic controversy emerged partly because of a genuine desire to eliminate practices capable of deteriorating into superstitious usage and partly because the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire, like their Jewish and Arab neighbors had a marked antipathy to the representation of divinity in any material mediums. The dispute was in a sense continuation of the Christological controversies. When charged by iconoclasts with idolatry, the iconodules who were the worshippers of icon replied that to reject the use of icons for this reason was to deny that the incarnate Christ was divine as well as human. (Chambers 105)

Leo III started the iconoclastic controversy in Byzantine Empire by declaring that those who gave importance to the icons or images would be severely penalized. While the European provinces supported the traditional use of icons the Asiatic provinces supported the traditional use of icons the Asiatic provinces sided with iconoclastic policy of the emperors. The strongly iconodule monastic world has so persistently attracted that one of the main aim of the iconoclasts was the reduction of the wealth and influence of the monasteries. The Caliph's ban on the use of icon in Christian churches showed contemporary muslim feeling against icons. The struggle

also seriously affected the relation of Rome and Constantinople, the papacy condemned Leo III's decree and the rift was aggravated by the transference of Byzantine provinces from the ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Rome. This was bitterly resented by Rome. In future it was to be a bone of contention whenever negotiations between two churches were in progress. The emperor Constantine vigorously and cleverly continued the struggle. But if there was substantial support for iconoclasm there was also determined opposition particularly in the monastic world where severe penalties would be meted out to iconoclasts the iconodules took a very staunch position against the iconoclasts. The iconoclasts were condemned for holding heretical view. Leo Z revived the iconoclast policy (8143 - 20). Orthodoxy was , however restored by a council in 843.

Thus iconoclasm is a practice aiming at destroying the halo of respect placed around icons or images. It is unconventional and counter traditional in nature. It attempts to turn upside down the established cultural and religious values. It would be safe to say that it is a politics of subversion. Iconodules and iconoclasts stand in sharp opposition to each other. Whereas iconodules respect the religious and cultural significance attached to certain symbols or icons the iconoclasts reject them. The iconoclasts warn us against the danger of image worship. According to the Christina iconography the use of visual symbols can be exploited advantageously for making religious instruction effective and fruitful. Iconoclasts are against this idea and shatter the halo given to the images. By extension anybody who turns his back to socially accepted values be they whether cultural or religious is an iconoclast. Thus iconoclasm is counter traditional and counter conventional in character.

Counterculture

The word 'Counterculture' refers to the culture that opposes the prevailing culture. It is a movement of cultural resistance in America during 1960s. The project of the movement was against the mainstream white culture. It regards the way of expression of ideas very radical that makes people in power and institution compel to listen to those voice and vision of even a small group. It foregrounds the language of the street rather than the so called standard language. The counterculturalists found the way of the white culture unauthentic and psychologically unsatisfying.

Encyclopedia of American culture and Intellectual History comments;

The black counterculturalists 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).

These people endeavored to lend a voice to the repressed or marginalized cultural elements and themes. Counterculture denotes the groups that are able to provide an intellectual justification and account of their radical and unconventional position. It speaks against the strict standard norms of morality and speaks for the sexual behaviour including the extreme sexual conduct. It articulates the issues of drug use and sexual experience to take them into the public area and set them in motion. It is an anti-establishment and anti-traditional literary movement that speaks against the cultural conformity and complacency deeply rooted in capitalistic culture.

Countercultural discourse of the period is everywhere informed by the assumption that the dominant society and its convention both are entirely distinct

from and inimical to the true self they degrade and repress. The true self thus requires to be loosened from the imprisoning grip of dominant society in order to realize itself. They viewed the existing society as a dysfunctional, alien, absurd yet potentially lethal machine. The idea that the self link to other devices from some pool of communality lying beneath, beyond social and seemingly outside of historical time were the fundamental axiom of countercultural common sense. The common sense also comes to include suspicion of or hostility to all fixed institution or organization form. For white counterculturalists, free speech advocates anti-war activists. Counterculture claims the existence of other form of realities beyond the conventional emporium. The concept embraces the idea of heroism and focused that self-created ideas should not be controlled , denied and exploited in the name of morality and tradition, rather they are to be acknowledged, respected and responded. Counterculture violates formal structure and formal leadership of materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. It is leaderless because all of its participants constantly innovate and . their ideas, norms and values in new area or territory.

Counterculture identifies a social attitude that opposes the cultural, moral and social values of the prevailing materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture seeking the alternative lifestyle of the counterculturalists. They want self realization and self expressions by means of the counterculture. So the counterculture is a moving crest of a wave and an area of uncertainty.

Counterculture is one kind of subculture. Both counterculture and subculture are contrasted to the mainstream American culture. The varying distance between subcultures and institutional power centers does seem to make it possible subordinate and dominant subculture. The subculture is followed by the majority of the people and

is always contrasted with mainstream culture which is practiced by the middle class people whose life standard is always weaker than the high class people.

Phil Whine opines that subculture arises from the working class people where as counterculture is the product of middle class people. And he continuous, "I don't think the middle class proceeds subculture, for subculture is produced not by dominant culturalists, but by a dominant culture(85).c

Countering the Parental culture has its own dreams and aims. Fred PFell, a culture critic, orderly sorts out the countercultural dreams and practices, in three ways.

...those initially developed to counter the racism of dominant culture those formed in opposition to its undemocratic character; and those formed in reaction against mainstream white culture's in authentic and psychologically unsatisfying way of life through only the last of these current of resistance and revolt received the curse and blessing of the all label counter culture.

The counterculturalists violate all the norms and values constructed by the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. The capitalistic American society of 1950 was practicing materialism, conservative sexual mores and corporate life. But the counterculturalists opposed the social, intellectual and moral images of the society and adopted the alternative life style such as included freedom, shared possessions, experimentation with drugs and return to nature. Then the counterculturalists gave special emphasis on experimental drug use, jazz and rock and roll music, communal living and sharing of responsibilities and sexual partners without any stubbornness in behaviours.

Beat Movement

It was literary movement, which was anti-establishment, anti-political and anti-intellectual in character. The writers of this movement were opposed to the prevailing cultural, literary and moral values. The term 'Beat Generation' identifies a loose knit group of writers of the 1950s and early 1960s, who shared a set of social attitudes. The writers of the Beat Movement also opposed the prevailing culture. They always stood for self – realization and self – expression. The Beat Generation of writers sometime performed some activities in coffee houses and public places that were rejecting the mainstream organizational feeling and emotion. Talking about the Beat writers M.H. Abrams says:

The group included such diverse figures as poet Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and novelist William burroughs and Jack Kerouac. Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956) is a central Beat achievement in its breathless, chanted celebration of the down – and out and subculture of drug addicts, social misfits, and compulsive wanderers, as well as in its representation of the derangement of the intellect and the sense effected by a combination of sexual abandon, drugged hallucinations and religious ecstasies (21).

Jack Kerouac's the representative novel of the Beat movement *On the Road*, was short – lived. It left its imprint on the subjects and forms of many writers' literary works of the 1960s and 1970s. The term 'Beat' was used to signify both 'beaten down' by the oppressive culture of the time and beatific meaning many of the Beat writers' cultivated ecstatic states by way of Buddhism, Jewish and Christian mysticism and drugs that induced visionary experiences.

The Beats were related to many avant-garde movements. These writers had a deep desire to beautify the artist and accept their sense of disgust with conventional society. They were praised by improvisational Jazz and filled with scorn for the conformism of mainstream society. They were anarchists and radical individualists who found company and stimulation in literature and music. They felt tired of facing the conventional society. Their attraction to drugs and to eastern philosophy represented a search for transcendental values and expressed their rejection of commercial culture. Beat writers were experimental. Ginsberg revived Walt Whitman's experimentation with the poetic line and the expansive poetic voice that Ginsberg used to express a kind of eccentric populism. In *On the Road* Kerouac captured the restless troublesome qualities of the Beats. He also exploited the spontaneous, episodic quality of their lives and of their art. 'Encyclopedia of American literature' adds "Beat poets like Gary Snyder were rigorous and disciplined craftsmen, William Burroughs, particularly in his novel 'Naked Lunch' explored the psychedelic and surrealist consciousness that verged on nihilism ...one of the extreme options available to a Beat writer" (51).

Beat movement was a national and urban phenomenon of rebellion in mid-twentieth century America. It went further challenging the assumption of American society than any of the radical movements which preceded it in the thirties (Spiller 1413). Beat Generation refers to a heterogeneous mix of young people artists and intellectuals around 1950. Their unconventional work and lifestyle reflected profound dissatisfaction with contemporary society they expressed objection and criticism against American materialism in a bitter, harsh and often abusive language. They evoke bohemian lifestyle as an alternative lifestyle.

The explosion of Atomic bomb over Japan, the revelations about prison camps of the Soviet gulag, the new corporate mentality of the Eisenhower cabinet and the effect of McCarthyism all contributed to a feeling of disgust in these writers against dominant American culture. The best Generation writers responded to malaise by living at the margin of American life. They mocked at middle class conformity and materialism by refusing its institution and values. They experimented with different kinds of drug, excessive sex, explored Eastern religion and alcoholism. Clarifying the idea of Beat, Kerouac said, "Beat referred to world weariness, being down – out but full of intense conviction" Beat were always oriented to the drug activities religions mystic vision, eastern belief system, black jazz music and excessive and open sex. These sorts of behavior were exposed because nation didn't address who were fully unemployed and under poverty line. The centralized group always exploited them and the marginalized groups were not provided any opportunities to develop their personal social, economic and moral standard of life. The Beat writers were fighting against the authority and materialistic bourgeois culture; they wanted literary experimentation against the mechanization of human experiences. They openly adopted free sex, alcoholism and marijuana smoking regarded these experiences as absence and life denying, but the Beat writers relished these experiences with the great degree of frankness. The Beat writers exposed their propound dissatisfaction with contemporary mainstream society through their unconventional writing and lifestyle. They created an alternative life style negating norm and values of the mainstream society.

The Beat Generation of the writers were highly affected after the second world war. They had a quest for individualism and distaste for middle class society. They were the seekers of truth, beauty and mystical experience. The book 'American perspective the united states in Modern Age' comments "that the young and above all

middle class young would be able to seize power and for two decades impress their values on their middle class parents was something that very few people foresaw at the end of the 1950s (184).

The society the Beat writers rebelled against was the society of conformity and economic affluence after World War II. Cultural Historians point out that acquisition of consumer goods, which had been scarce during wartime became central feature of post war life, driven by mass media, advertising and generous loan terms. At that time television broadcasted an idealization of suburban family life. The cold war, which pitted the united states and its allies against Soviet Union and its satellites allowed for denunciation and even prosecution of social dissidents and non-conformists as threats to national security. Against this backdrop, a group of writers came forward to declare their alienation from what they saw as the creed of suburban conformity in favor of what Allen Ginsberg called, “ the lost America of love”. In Jazz musicians the Beat writers found artists who had broken away from mainstream art forms with spontaneous expression that challenged their audience emotionally and intellectually. These writers discovered Asian literature while exploring the ideas of Zen Buddhism. Although most of them did not practice Buddhism in any strict form, they borrowed certain Asian literary forms including the haiku, a Japanese verse form. Kerouac’s semi – autobiographical novel *on the Road* celebrates direct sensory experience, freedom, from conventional responsibilities and emotional intensity of a life of hiking casual sex and recreational drug use. The road stood for an emotional journey as well as for the actual roads the writer traveled.

Emerging in the culturally repressive America of the cold war era the Beats sought to counter a philistine and inhibitive society by exploring the most extreme potentially ecstatic area of the self. Characteristic preoccupation of those engaged in

this quest were jazz in its bebop and cool phases, drugs; communal living, frantic travel anarchistic drop out politics religious experimentation, the espousal of anti-materialistic ascetic lifestyle and an infatuation with criminality. Those writers attributed superior value to the individual rather than the collective, subjective rather than the objective, the irrational, rather than rational innocence rather than experience with children, blacks bums and the drug addicts being especially respected. The best way of affecting the readers emotion is to speak directly from one's own heart. With regard to the act of composition their focus was on a privatizing of the spontaneous, the epiphanous and inspirational over the considered and the meditated.

The Beats exported the idea of postwar avant-garde to the youth counterculturalists of the 1960s. The writers Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg were at the core of a "Beat Generation" that brought together projective verse, bebop jazz, prosody Buddhism and Marijuana *Encyclopedia of American Culture and Intellectual History* defines.

The term Beat was coined to refer to their preference for margins of American society and for the dissuaded whose survival strategies they admired than affluence and sophistication spontaneous Beat writing purchased the integration of conscious and unconscious thought in order to bring awareness the ideological contradictions underpinning corporate liberal culture and normally hidden from the conscious mind(250).

Kerouac's novel *On the Road* was best selling travelogue of Beats bohemian life style but his "*The Subterranean* and posthumously published *Vision of Cody* were better examples of his vision of literature founded on spontaneous bebop prosody. These works underline Kerouac's commitment to a dialogical or conversational form

modeled on the structure at bebop “vision of Cody ‘is a palimpsest of conversations, remembered exactly as they transpired. It was not selectivity of expression but following free deviation of mind into limitless subjects and sea of thoughts. Kerouac compared his spontaneous sketching technique to a bebop style. He said that a poet should satisfy himself first and then the reader can not fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning excitement by same laws operating in his own mind. This shows that for the Beats practice and perfection meant nothing before spontaneous expression, which was characterized by both frankness and sincerity, the Beats used the feeling of excitement as an idea of authenticity defined as communicating close to the bone of physical, psychological need. Aided by drugs they often tried to write on the edge of consciousness where inarticulate emotions changed into the howl of pure prosody.

The beats were anti – elitists and anti – hierarchic. They were concerned with removing artificial barriers between their lives and arts. So they naturally were ready to accept an ethic without orthodoxy and without dogma. They wanted a practical accommodation of Buddhist texts to their existence and as a result of their use of Buddhism was eccentric. Tantric practices encouraged the kind free sexual companion.

Davidson clearly states “sexual openness and alternative spiritual practices were ridiculed by mainstream media during the 1950s” (64). But Beat Flourished neglecting the social mores in Kerouac’s *On the Road* excessively promiscuous sexual activities are openly explained . Many Beat writers practiced homosexual and wrote about its showing masculine. The generation was masculinity in temperament and ideology, relegating woman to the role of family providence.

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines ‘transcendent’ as going beyond or exceeding usual limits or proceeding beyond or lying outside of what is

perceived or present in experience''(246). To transcend is to cross the border of the limitation of our living. The Latin translation of transcendentalism is 'over passing' which means to go beyond. The notion of transcendence has the assumption that things of material existence can not yield a sense of peace to human beings as much as spiritual things do. In the field of literature transcendentalism has acquired its high rank from the 19th century. To the American transcendentalists like Thoreau and Emerson it came "to include an intuitive cognizance of moral and other truth that transcend the limits of human experience" (Abrams 326)

Though the early 1960s saw a decline in energy of bent movement it has left behind a powerful legacy of culture resistance that has continually found new audiences across the globe. Their ideas of spontaneity and expression of first impression was also criticized by critics who saw it as a pathetic poverty of feeling. They were leveled anti – social for their opposition to the capitalistic values and manner of materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, culture which stand for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experience.

Iconoclasm, Beat Movement and Counterculture: - A Close Relation

Iconoclasm was a movement in Eastern Church that challenged the traditional use and symbolic significance of icons or images or pictures of religious Figure such as Christ and The Saints. An iconoclast is a breaker of icons or images or opponent of their religious use. Iconoclasm refers to violation of religions images which is formulated by the capitalism. Beat Movement is a movement which was anti– establishment anti–political and anti–intellectual in character. It identifies a loose knit group who shared a set of social attitudes The writers of this movement were opposed to the prevailing cultural, literary and moral values. They stood for unfettered self realization and self expression. On the other the name counterculture is a culture,

which opposes the prevailing culture. It regards the way of expressing of ideas very radically and make them listen to their voice and vision of even a small group. It foregrounds the so called standard language. It is also anti-establishment, anti political and anti-traditional movement that speaks against conformity and complacency deeply rooted in capitalistic culture.

Since iconoclasm is a practice of shattering and rejecting values or significance attached to certain images or icons. It is countercultural in character. As opposed to the iconodules, the iconoclasts objected to the idea of embodying gods and goddess in material forms. They advocated for the destruction of these forms. They advocated for the destruction of the sacred halo put around religious icons. They were image breakers. Beat Generation of writers took a stance against the ruling cultural values and norms of the 1950 American culture. American is regarded as synonymous with foremost example of democratic ideals. The post-war America was enjoyed the status of the superpower of the world. That century was hailed as American century however, the marginalized and cruelties of the dominant society. Therefore the Beats took upon themselves the revolutionary task of rejecting and vulgarizing the bourgeois culture. They turned their back to everything in mainstream. They broke the images and significances attached there with. They saw the sphinx that suppressed the ecstasies of the body and the senses.

Thus the Beat writers rejoiced in marijuana smoking excessive and open sex, drug induced hallucination, homosexuality and alcoholism. The image of America as a land of democracy, the land representing Jeffersonian definition of unalienable rights, the images of American dream is all taken to pieces. What appears is the America of witch hunting, the war mongering America, the America of racial discrimination and the capitalistic America and the America embodying the essence

of the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest. Iconoclasm, counterculture and Beat movement are interrelated and intermingled. Their central purpose is to violate or dismantle or seeking identity in the society. Iconoclasts, counterculturalists desire their alternative lifestyle in the mainstream culture.

III. Iconoclastic Reading of *On the Road*

A Reading of *On the Road*

Indeed, Kerouac thought of himself as the writer of “One Book” “one Vast Book” (he even called it” a divine comedy of Buddha”) made up of the nineteen books he wrote, taken together and to be called the legend of Dulunz. Kerouac’s true legend is the progression of his language through book after book in search of a linguistic equivalent of the breakdown of traditions, the new consciousness that was all around him. It was not until the best selling *On the Road* that he began to use a form that would reflect the fast – paced life of hitchhiking, sex, and drugs. The language of *On the Road* is speedy, and its composition on a roll of teletype was well publicized. His so – called spontaneous writing follows a jazz analogy. Kerouac explained his process as that of a horn – player sounding alone long unrevised note – although the manuscript underwent extensive revision according to Viking editor Malcolm Cowley *On the Road* shows the progression of Kerouac’s stylistic innovation. The development of his spontaneous bop prosody in the principal novel, explains how his one vast book, his legend of Dulunz, follows a poetic unity, not the linear unity we must identify with legends. That his writing even had unity was not understood during his lifetime. Ironically, Kerouac reacted adversely to celebrity. He either canonized as the king of the Beats (a sociological, not literary phenomenon) or put down as the last decade’s passing fad, his writing dismissed as rebellious ragged and ungrammatical. Worse he was regarded as merely autobiographical chronicler, so much of his writing depending on his childhood and early Beat history. Moreover Kerouac suffered from the misbegotten celebrity of being confused with Dean Moriarty figure in his book, and amoral rogue whose prototype was Neal Cassady with whom he was traveling during his life on the road, and who inspired the non –

stop writing and fast life style. The true practice nature of his achievement is just now being recognized. An imaginative sensibility prevails over a historical one. His art is the recreation of American myth: Kerouac's Sal Paradise, the narrator of *On the Road*, resembles the "sparkling incandescent Roman Candle" Dean Moriarty in romantic Huck Finn/Jim relationship, the Mississippi River supplanted by the automobile.

The title of Kerouac's novel, *On the Road* itself shows that the novel has mobility or movement. *On the Road* is a novel about road trips in which all the characters are planning a journey to 90 somewhere and return and the journey is *On the Road*. In the novel the characters have already departed from their previous state of conformity authority and mechanization of human experiences of the time. And the characters are roaming around the road to get their individual freedom. *On the Road* presents a Wasteland of Postwar America. A selection of society which is not recognized and needed by the mainstream society is spilling itself on the street wasting its energies. It shows those neglected people who are shouting barbarically in order to be heard. We see a group people who are wandering through the streets. They are naked, hungry and are affirming their lives through whatever means they deem suitable for externalizing their pains and agonies. Those people are ridiculing the norms and values and restrictions of mainstream society. They involve themselves in drug taking, jazz music, excessive and open sex, and traveling across continents hitchhiking in the second hand cars. The characters indulge in socially and morally promiscuous activities to violate the conventional images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture which stands for conformity, authority and mechanization of human experiences. The characters go against such highly ambitious materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. They violate the

society because they can not get pleasure within the confinement of the capitalistic society. So *On the Road* is an attempt to defy American values that is suggested by all pervasive and dominant motif of bumming or wandering around. These intellectuals are the victim of war, oppression, exclusion and indifference. They don't seem to care for how they are reacted to. For them drug use, casual sex and homosexuality are the means through which they can liberate themselves. These peoples have a lot of potentials to be scholar, creative writers, intellectuals and philosophers but because of the attitude of capitalistic cultures of American dream. They feel loss and suffer from rejection. However to survive amidst the sense of loss and social denial they celebrate the remaining vestiges of energies. They run, they jump, they howl, they have one sex, scream, laugh dance and seem to be neurotically driven whenever their whims and fancies take them.

The Novel in Brief

This is the world in which Kerouac takes his journeys that become the material for *On the Road*. Sal Paradise, the narrator of *On the Road* and the character identified as Kerouac's alter ego, is a literate keeper of American culture. We become intimately aware of an elusive narrator, but fixated upon the epic hero of the novel, Dean Moriarty. The narrator tells us in the opening paragraph that "with the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of [his] life you could call [his] 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 characters are introduced to us in brief vignettes, in a way reminiscent of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*; New York City is the starting point, and Sal wants us to understand the people we will be dealing with. The arrival of Dean is the catalyst; Sal describes him as "simply a youth tremendously excited with life." He also sees "a

kind of holy lightning...flashing from his excitement and his visions." When Dean meets Carlo Marx (a pseudonym for Allen Ginsberg), Sal's closest friend in the city, Sal tells us that a "tremendous thing happened," and that the meeting of Dean and Carlo was a meeting between "the holy "con-man with the shining mind [Dean], and the sorrowful poetic con-man with the dark mind that is Carlo Marx." Sal remarks that it was in their meeting that "everything that was to come began then." Carlo tells Dean about the friends around the country, their experiences, and Sal is telling us that he is following them "because the only people for [him] are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live" and so on.

Sal describes Dean's criminal tendencies as "a wild yea-saying over burst of American joy.. .Something new, long prophesied, long a-coming." The early descriptions of Dean establish a religious motif; people and their personalities are regularly referred to as holy, or prophesied. Dean is "a western kinsman of the sun," and this pagan comparison is yet another supernatural moment in the description of Dean Moriarty. Sal introduces him as the savior of his generation; Sal says that "all [of his] New York friends were in the negative, nightmare position of putting down society and giving their tired.. . reasons, but Dean just raced in society, eager for bread and love." (46).

Sal's journey continues with his arrival in Chicago. He dates the narrative at 1947, marking it as a specific era in jazz history, "somewhere between its Charlie Parker *Ornithology* period and another period that began with Miles Davis," and it inspires Sal to think of his friends "from one end of the country to the other.. .doing something so frantic and rushing about." Sal doesn't say what they are frantically doing, and this is the premise of the narrative. Sal is hardly immune from this. After

aping in Des Moines, he wakes up, "and that was the one distinct time in [his] life..
.when [he] didn't know who [he] was."(46).

In San Francisco, Sal confronts social expectations. He takes a job as a night watchman at a boarding camp for merchant sailors waiting for their ship. When he finds the work distasteful he tells his supervisor that he "wasn't cut out to be a cop." In response, Sal is reminded that "it's [his] duty...[he] can't compromise with things like this."(88) Sal's aversion to commitment and duty ensure that he does not hold this job for long, and he is soon on the road again, where he meets one of his biggest temptations.

Her name is Terry, and he meets her on the bus to LA. She is a Mexican who has run away from her husband. They spend "the next fifteen days.. .together for better or for worse." Sal spends the better part of a week with Terry and her family in a migrant worker's camp. The agrarian lifestyle initially appeals to Sal, and he says that he "thought [he] had found [his] life's work."(201). The economic reality sets in and Sal begins to pray "to God for a better break in life and a better chance to do something for the little people [he] loved."(103).

The next significant character that Sal meets is the "Ghost of the Susquehanna" His role "is to complete the triad" (Goldstein) of symbolic structure in the narrative.

Sal's continued journey on the road is entwined with the making of Dean as the epic hero: Dean Moriarty, the "son of a "Who". Dean has spent time in prison, for stealing cars. Sal discusses what effect this experience had on Dean saying, "only a guy who's spent five years in jail can go to such maniacal helpless extremes.. .Prison is where you promise yourself the right to live". Dean's imprisonment, according to

Sal, is when his heroic personality was solidified. Prison had the effect of fueling his obsession with the road. What make him heroic to Sal is his free nature, and his reluctance to tie his spirit to social demands. This self-centered personality causes Dean to "[antagonize] people away from him by degrees." The institution of marriage is particularly difficult for Dean, and by the end of the novel he is "three times married, twice divorced, and living with his second wife." This decline of Dean makes up the second part of the novel, and culminates in the end of Sal's journeys.

Sal's travels erode into disappointment. He slowly becomes more dissatisfied with what he finds on the road, and he begins to look back on his previous travels in a more cynical way. His companions begin to be people from lower classes, old Negroes and Mexican whores. Back in Denver, and very alone, he speaks in verse saying, "Down in Denver, down in Denver/All I did was die." We begin to confront the possibility that this journey and Sal's hero Dean were both failures. After reuniting with Dean, Sal begins to sense Dean's decline and labels him "the HOLY GOOF," when earlier he was called holy in a reverent tone. Dean's abilities falter. When confronted with his abandonment of wife and child, he is silent. Sal explains, "where once Dean would have talked his way out, he now fell silent.. .He was BEAT."

Sal's last attempt at finding an answer to his problems is a trip through the Mexican countryside to Mexico City with Dean and a hanger-on picked up in Denver. The travelers perk up as soon as they hit the Mexican border, and some of the novel's \more memorable scenes depict their marijuana-fused introduction to Mexican culture, including a vivid (but expensive) " sojourn to a bordello offering mambo music and underage prostitutes. (Indeed, throughout the book both Sal and Dean betray a robust attraction to extremely young girls.)

Upon arriving in Mexico City, he immediately develops dysentery and the final betrayal occurs when Dean leaves him behind, feverish and hallucinating. Sal reflects that "when I got better I realized what a rat he was, but then I had to understand the impossible complexity of his life, how he had to leave me there, sick, to get on with his wives and woes."(107).

The novel ends a year later, in New York. Dean comes back to New York to see Sal and arrange for Sal and his girlfriend to migrate to San Francisco with him. The arrangements to move fall through and Dean returns to the West alone.

Sal closes the novel sitting on a pier during sunset, looking west. He reminisces on God, America, crying children, and the idea that "nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old," and ends with "I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty."

The Characters and their Activities

On the Road can be interpreted as a quest undertaken by the narrator Sal Paradise who sets out to test the unlimited freedom and opportunity, Dean Moriarty, Kerouac's friend Neal Cassidy "a Young Gene Autry – trim, thin hipped, blue eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent – side hero of the snowy west" (*On the Road* 5) is as much of the margin of the materialistic society as Sal Paradise (Jack Kerouac) is. The marginalized character, Dean is the perfect guy for the road because he really was" born on the road when his parents were passing through lack city in 1926 in a jalopy on their way to loss Angeles" (3). For Sal Paradise, his friend Dean is "holy conman" (19). Who can liberate him from the materialistic society and is the "Beat - the root, the soul of Beatific" (195). So he says "with the coming of Dean Moriarty began the

part of my life you could call my life on the Road “(3). Dean has no illusion about his future envising it. He tells credulous Sal:

There’s no harm ending that way. You spend a whole life of non-interference with the wishes of others, including politicians and the rich, and nobody bothers you and you cut along and make it your own way.” I agreed with him. He was reaching his Tao decisions in the simplest direct way. “What’s your road, man? – holyboy road, madman road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It’s an anywhere road for any body anyhow. Where body how?”(251).

Kingsley Wilmer opines talking to the road is an institution of ritual and educational foray as well as rebellion against the given circumstances. Talking to the road in this novel both escaping way and countering to the notion of static i.e. given conventional capitalistic dream. Perpetual motion is a way of escaping for Dean, but he too, often forgets that he is also looking for something he can’t tell Sal the destination of the road, when they talk:

What a weird town-wow, and that woman in that window up there, just looking down with her big breasts hanging from her night-grown, big wide eyes. Whee. Sal, we gotta go and never stop going till we get there.”

“Where we going, man?” “I don’t know but we gotta go” then here came a gang of young bop musicians carrying their instruments out of cars. (238).

The narrator and Dean’s journeys become the pilgrimages and are permeated by a sense of reverence for life. The characters do not encompass ambition to be

materially rich so the reference to Tao, Christian Mythology, Principles of Buddhism, the canon of American literature eulogize the characters' spiritual notion not confining them within the American capitalistic Materialistic society. Being unable to find the fulfillment of their desires in the United States, they head for Mexico where Sal hopes "We will 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" (280).

At the end of the novel Kerouac's description of Dean Moriarty is so compelling that most readers of the novel don't dwell on the fact that the frantic cross-country trips leave Sal exhausted, strung out, penniless and deserted. When Sal was at the lurch Dean "stood outside the windows with his bag ready to go Penn station and on across the land" (308). The novel is far from the traditional American way of life that has been condemned in this novel rather a defeatist cautionary tale about the endless and beginning less emptiness of what Sal calls "the senseless nightmare road" (254). Its downbeat ending maintains his constraint rejection of any responsibility of the mainstream for the counterculture.

Most of the characters of the novel are homeless. They drink and wander along the road. The hoboes gather on the Main Stem in urban areas. In Chicago, the Main Stem is west Madison street and it is known as the Hobo capital of the world where poor and homeless people stay. Sal narrates how William Holmes Hazard, a character in the novel turned a hobo in Ogden:

In my earlier days I'd been to sea with a tall rawboned fellow from Louisiana called Big Slim Hazard, William Holmes Hazard, who was hobo by choice. As a little boy he'd seen a hobo come up to ask his mother for a piece of pie, and she had given it to him, and when the

hobo went off down the road the little boy had said, “ma, what is that fellow?” “Why, that’s a ho-bo.” “Ma, I want to be a ho-bo someday.” “Sheet your mouth, that’s not for the life of the Hazards.” But he never forgot that day, and when he grew up,... he did become a hobo. Big Slim and I a spent many nights telling stories and spitting tobacco juice paper containers. (28 – 29)

The indented passage gives a sense that being hobo is a main and immoral act for well to do families in that society but William Holmes Hazard didn’t confine him in family’s but chooses to be a hobo. The hoboes are the iconoclastic images in the American society. These hoboes are sometimes engaged in short run jobs in harvest field, construction sites, mining and lumber camps through the employment agencies. After finishing their jobs, hoboes either rush to another worksite or they take their campaign first to the streets, launching boycotts against extortionist employment agents and then to the fires striking against employers to bring down the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. The industrial workers of the world (IWW) leads his crusade to mobilize hoboes for revolution.

When the middle class is not gripped with the “Fear of Falling” into poverty and homelessness the romance of road is free to flower. *On the Road* is structured around a search for Dean Moriarty’s “hobo father” who has never been found (215). Kerouac laments the loss of open road of mainly freedom from family wage conformity. In the absence of the road, the novel turns to non – white cultures Mexican and African American in particular, as alternatives to white ambitions (180). The capitalistic system does not encompass the socially unprivileged and down trodden hobo group. Kerouac himself is a hobo who does not want to include the deprivation, humiliation, hopelessness and victimization that a writer like James

Baldwin would magnify, to emphasize the romantic sense of brotherly community and joy in simple pleasures. At this point when he sees the hobos passing on the freight, Sal has been having an affair with Mexican girl, Terry living with her and her son in a tent surrounded by migrant workers. To support he says:

My back began to ache. But it was beautiful kneeling and hiding in that earth. If I felt like resting I did, with my face on the pillow of brown moist earth. Birds sang an accompaniment. I thought I had found my life's work. Johnny and Terry came waving at me across the field in the hot lullal noon and pitched in with me. (96)

Kerouac prefers the risk and adventure inherent in their lives of constant journey and insecurity to the smug complacencies of urban living.

In the bright, sunny morning Terry got up early and went to find her brother. I slept till noon; when I looked out the window I suddenly saw an SP freight going by with hundreds of hobos reclining on the flatcars and rolling merrily along with packs for pillows and funny papers before their noses, and some munching on good California grapes picked up by the siding. "Damn!" I yelled. "Hooee! It is the promised land." They were all coming from Frisco; in a week they'd all be going black in the same grand style. Terry arrived with her brother, his buddy, and her child. (91)

There are many unsavory aspects of Dean's jaunts through America like the frequent thefts. These thefts are a dismal anticipation of the youth culture and absolute disregard for property, especially when institutionally owned and argument that property rights are invalid because the entire economic system is based on

exploitation. Sal describes Dean's specialty was stealing cars (39) that he began in his small age and went to "reformation and stayed there from the age of eleven to seventeen" (39) while Dean and Sal were planning to run away from the police after stealing detective's car in Denver Dean tells Sal that he "Stole five hundred cars" (223) in his lifetime.

Sal Paradise rationalizes stealing by claiming that every one in America is involved in stealing and indulges himself in stealing. He remembers his past, "I had a gun. I had to show it some one, I walked by a Jewelry store and had the sudden impulse to short up the window, take out the finest fangs and bracelets, and run to give them to Lee Ann. Then we could flee to Nevada together" (73).

Dean can easily beguile the policemen too. The policemen are authoritative persons of mainstream capitalistic society. They are appointed to safeguard mainstream society. But Dean who is accustomed with stealing cars. When cop said somebody is been stealing cars left and right there.

"Somebody's been stealing cars left and right here!" the cop was saying. Dean stood right in back of him, listening and saying, "Ah yass, ah yass." The cops went off to check. Dean came in the bar and rocked back and forth with the poor spastic kid ... Simultaneously a cop rushed in and said a car stolen from downtown Denver was parked in the driveway. People discussed it in knots. From the window I saw Dena ump into the nearest car and roar off, and not a soul noticed him a few minutes later he was back in an entirely different car, a bran-new convertible. "This one is a beaut!" he whispered in my ear. "The other one coughed too much-I left it at the cross roads, saw that lovely

parked in front of a farmhouse. Took a spin in Denver. Come on, man, let's all for riding. (221)

Sex is one of the important physical needs of human beings. It is essential for continuation of life in the world. Different societies have different concepts about sex. In the same society, the change of time may bring different concepts about sex, for example open sex had been repressed in American society in mid-twentieth century. Living in the time when sexuality was repressed and associated with evil for Dean "Sex was the one and only holy and important thing in life" (4)

On the Road starts after the narrator's painful end of formal heterosexual relationship because Sal divorced with his wife. Through Kerouac's friends involved in homosexual activities and wrote about it relegating the role of woman in sex, this novel is about open and excessive heterosexual activities of the characters especially Dean Moriarty. They go far away from the normal more of the society. Dean boasts of "his innumerable girls and sex parties and pornographic pictures" (8) Sal tells Dan on ear when the woman accompanying Dean on arrival in New York "his beautiful little. Sharp chick Marylou" (4) is labeled a whore as soon as she decides to go her own ways. The narrator's narrate is no doubt willed by author when he states that 'conning' was the basis of our relationship and we got alone fine no pestering, no catering. We tiptoed around each other like heart breaking new friends" (7)

The characters in the novel try to violate the norms and values of the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, involving directly in open sex, marijuana smoking drug use and alcoholism. In the United States there should be a plan life, in connection to sexual matter, conjugal life and settle and permanent hous. But the characters try to violate these images associated with the capitalistic culture, to make the novel as an iconoclastic piece of literature.

Drug Use, Alcoholism and Free Sex.

In the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, drug use, alcoholism and free sex are taken as immoral, asocial and illegal activities. If somebody does those activities publicly, he/she is stared with the eye of punishment from the strict authority. Kerouac's characters do these activities throughout the novel. The American people including those in the authority were so critical of people using drug that the authority declared them criminal and sent them to jails. Ken Kesey was psychedelic sixties' figure for pioneering the recreational use of psychotropic drugs. Neal Cassidy (Dean Moriarty) was the most notable of Kesey's followers. Kerouac (Sal Paradise) and Neal Cassidy's cross-country driving trips taking different drugs depicted in *On the Road* became a record of an adventurous decade. The cross-country trip with psychedelic drug was iconoclastic activity when drugs were illegal.

Drug taking was culturally and socially immoral in American society. In contrast to this Timothy Leary, a devoted researcher of the Psychological and spiritual complexities of LSD use, focuses that drug liberates the human mind from the conventional psychological limitation to consciousness. As a result president Nixon labeled him the most dangerous man in America because of his effort to proselytize LSD. However *On the Road* presents his idea on issue of drug use standing in opposition to the self-centered establishment culture of capitalistic system that condemned the drug culture. The characters always take drinks and start howling against mainstream culture. For Kerouac, "the use of drug empowers individuals to forget the pains and difficulties and enhances imaginative power. He used to create art while intoxicated Sal and his friends are trying to communicate with absolute honesty and absolute completeness everything in our minds" (42).

The common people want to get rid of social restriction through the use of drugs that lessen “the psychological extremity of the situation”. The characters are seeking ecstasy. Though they are ambition less, they are hopeful and want to have all pleasure in the same day. Kerouac writes “ too late today, tomorrow, man we make a lot of money, today we have a few beers (94) Kerouac’s attempt is to show the realities of common people who spend their days involving in smoking and drinking. American Youths are always drinking crossroad saloons on Sunday afternoon bring their kids able and brawl over brews” (92).

Pleasure is their motto of life. So they need in life a drink for pleasure. Through the use of drug, the people are seeking vision to acquire the sense of freedom, attachment and eternity, Kerouac portrays a colored bar in new Orleans which he assumes an ideal bar and different from American bar, where men used to go illegally to meet in 1910s but now all they get here is “Chromium, drunken women fags, hostile bartenders, anxious owners who hover around the door, “worried about their leather seats and the law: just a lot of screaming at the wrong time and deadly silence when a stranger walks in” (147).

Through going in a colored bar was against the law, different group of society and the characters in the novel violate the norm of authority. Not only in bars, but in jazz party too the drugs are used to foster the energy and enjoyment. The musicians are “whooping and other scores of men and women stood against the wall drinking Wine – spodioidi and spiting at the stars – wine and whisky” (196). Kerouac attempts to depicts his friends as immortal and courageous who celebrate their with using drug. The youngsters, the drugs decrease the layer of depression, concepts of fear and exploitation of these upset common people in America. So *on the road* came into existence starting its views in favor of drug addiction, which sets the voice of protest

against the rigid cultural imposition of American system. These people are confident that heaven can be experienced on the earth through the uses of narcotics and take “fifty” glasses of beer sat on our tables at one time” (264). Authority did not deserve the sense of responsibilities for the better life of these psychologically victimized people. Rather these people were arrested and kept in jail. Dean, the over excited nut, had spent “a third of his time in the pool hall, a third in jail, and a third in the public library” (7).

The youngsters not addressed properly by the government are passionate with the drug culture experimenting with the drug culture experimenting with a belt of marijuana and Benzedrine as a method of reducing ego to have a renewed life. These people practice their different cultural styles making beards long with unique styles. Kerouac describes Dean:

I looked at him. He was wearing a T-shirt, torn pants hanging down his belly, tattered shoes; he had not shaved, his hair was wild and bushy, his eyes bloodshot, and that tremendous bandaged thumb stood supported in midair at heart-level (he had to hold it up that way), and on his face was the goofiest grin I ever saw. He stumbled around in a circle and looked everywhere. (188)

The youngsters view the idea of drug and intoxication not as crime but as a liberating principle that draws the attention of concerned authority. So *On the Road* is the novel that assumes on the idea of drug and alcohol violating images of the mainstream authority, and use of force and control. The purpose of drug and alcohol is to win the consent of youngsters and unite them to rebel against the capitalistic system that reflects the sense of cruelty and hostility and wants to terrify and control the drug addicts who bear the spiritual vision.

The characters see the deathly paleness in American capitalistic culture. So they violate it following a romantic and Bohemian route. They seek out novel savages. Interracial love is an affirmation of rough impulse against the over upholstered pale faced mind. They groove on white working class men, Mexican and blacks. When Sal meets ‘Terry’ whom he finds at first sight the cutest Mexican girl in slacks” (81). On the bus to Los Angeles, he falls for her, the daughter of migrant farm workers from San Joaquin valley, she has a baby son and a husband whom, she left because “he beat her” (81). Only after two weeks Sal leaves Terry and her family of poor happy Mexican cotton pickers. Terry is working class, Mexican, a fallen woman. Later on Sal recollects:

At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Walton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night. I stopped at a little shack where a man sold hot red chili in paper containers; I bought some and ate it, strolling in the dark mysterious streets. I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a “white man” disillusioned. All my life I’d had white ambitions; that was why I’d abandoned a good woman like Terry... I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling in this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America. (180)

Glorification of free love is the cusp in their manic depressive adventures. They are keen about sexual adventure with women and with each other and with many partners. Dean Moriarty “married three times and divorced twice” (305) with

Camille in three years' time. That was uncommon in Mid – twentieth Century American society is the worshipper of sex and love Dean replies positively when Major surprisingly asked him. “Moriarty, What’s this I hear about you sleeping with three girls at the same time” (46) in the forth part of the novel. Dean and Sal hire the whores and dance. More than this, the repressive society is shocked to hear that Dean after his own wife, Marylou, to Sal paradise to make love with her in Dean’s watchfulness. That Dean did in the second part of the novel while going to Washington. Sal narrates:

Suddenly Dean learned to me earnestly and said, “Sal, I have something to ask of you-very important to me-I wonder how you’ll take it-we’re buddies, aren’t we?” “Sure are, Dean.” He almost blushed. Finally he came out with it: he wanted me to work Marylou. I didn’t ask him why because I knew he wanted to see what Marylou. I didn’t ask him why because I knew he wanted to see what Marylou was like with another man. (130 – 31)

The women also purpose to make love with husband’s friends in the novel. Marylou and Camille both are Dean’s wives. But they fall in love with Dean’s friends. Sal himself is the centre of their love. Drug use, alcoholism and free sex are taken as immoral and illegal matter in American mainstream society, but the characters in the novel involve in these socially and culturally promiscuous activities to violate the images associated with the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American cultural, culture which stands for conformity, authority and mechanization of human experience.

On the Road as Protest Literature

The characters in the novel openly adopted free sex, homosexuality, marijuana smoking, drug use and alcoholism. The characters had a quest for individualism and distaste for middle class society. They were the seekers of truth, beauty and mystical experience. Kerouac's semi – autobiographical novel *On the Road* celebrates direct sensory experience, freedom, from conventional responsibilities and emotional intensity of a life of hiking, casual sex and recreational drug use. The road stands for an emotional journey as well as for the actual roads the writer traveled. The characters try to experience heaven in their life time. Their ideology is pleasure in life. The desperation and lack of fulfillment make these youths go against the more of contemporary society and they travel on the road searching for their personal freedom indulging in socially promiscuous activities such as taking drugs, involving in open and excessive sex, stealing and jazz. All the characters in the novel are fictionalized as Kerouac's friends and the novel contains four parts and a short epilogue. The account of four trips across America and each of continental crisscrossing undertaken between (1947 – 1950). At that time there was a movement known as the movement of Beat Generation of the writers. The literary figures such as Kerouac, Ginsberg, Cassidy and Burroughs were writing literature against the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experience. *On the Road* is taken as the manifesto of Beat Generation of the writers. The characters in the novel are the true representatives of middle class and working class people on the basis of the contemporary American society.

The single marriage, bearing few children, building sophisticated houses having all the modern facilities, using formal language obeying the rules and regulation of the state strictly and keeping healthy relationships with the relatives are

the images of the materialistic American society. But the characters in the novel try to violate all these images associated with the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. All the characters are homeless and wonder around the road. They are preparing to depart just returning from somewhere, planning a journey mostly on the road, the characters in the novel start their trip from capitalistic society and their destination is to achieve their individual freedom. The jazz music is closely related to the black culture which violates the white mainstream American culture. Jazz music contains creativity, spontaneity and originality. Another feature of the novel is sacrificial. The performances of the unnamed characters are handled with some care and empathy. The youngsters view the idea of drugs and intoxication not as crime but as a liberating principle that draws the attention of the concerned authority. In the case of socially promiscuous activities as the narrator, Sal vividly describes:

Then Marylou began making love to me; she said Dean was going to stay with Camille and she wanted me to go with her. "Come back to San Francisco with us. We'll live together. I'll be a good girl for you." But I knew Dean loved Marylou, and I also knew Marylou was doing this to make Lucille jealous, and I wanted nothing of it. Still and all, I licked my lips for the luscious blonde. When Lucille saw Marylou pushing me into the corners and giving me the word and forcing kisses on me she accepted Dean's invitation to go out in the car. (125)

Free sex, drug, jazz etc. are amalgamated whether as liberation or scandal. These were out of the domain of mainstream society. The characters enter in jazz party, take different types of drugs and narcotics, and keep sexual relation with their friends and whores individually or in a group. The open talk about sex shocks their parents and other parental authorities too.

In America, as in most of the rest of the world, homosexual love "is a disease, a sin, or a crime" (Gitlin. XVII). But Sal and his friends did not consider about it. They seek pleasure. In the name of pleasure, they counter the social and cultural impositions of the time. During the first visit to New York, Dean Moriarty began a brief, though intense homosexual affair with Carlo Marx.

The Beats congregate with outcries from parents and authorities at high schools, colleges, churches, corporations and in armed services. It fits with the moral outrage out juvenile delinquency in the 1950s. The undercurrent has been embodied in a new breed of nihilists. In this line, Kerouac's *On the Road* is an attempt of defy established American values with the characters' all - pervasive and dominant motif of burning and wandering around. Why do they wander? The simplest reply seems to be that their minds are filled with a profound disquiet: they are obviously ill - at - ease in the familiar urban milieu. From the opening line of *On the Road*, when Sal reveals himself as "having just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about except that it had to do with ... my feeling that every thing was dead" (3). Kerouac establishes that the narrator is stricken by materialism and is on quest for a spiritual cure.

Furthermore, the Beats "quest for transcendence" has always been seriously questioned. Michael Davidson refers to a "popular misconception" about the Beats that they were "dabblers in esoteric religion.... in order to discover new-high" (95) as it can be inferred from contemporary criticism to materialistic society. Throughout the novel, through the central element in Sal's exploration, his friend and road-buddy, Dean Moriarty, modeled closely after Kerouac's real life friend. Neal Cassidy. Sal Paradise is intrigued by the

boundless energy-both psychological and sexual-he finds sin Moriarty because Dean has pure joy of living not confining him in the limit of materialistic prosperity. Dean has already become a "resident of skid row in his early youth" (7). Sal thinks Dean can teach him to understand and partake of the purity of his authentic existence spurred by joy.

To search the spiritual truth in life, Siddhartha Gautam left materialistic world his magnificent palace-where he felt familial ties. Similarly Dean is "starving" for the essentials of existence, but he has turned not into bitterness but an unbridled, essentially early American appetite for life. Sal considers Dean a different persona and follows him. What is it that Dean discovers in his frantic existence? Although

Dean cannot put "IT" into clear terms when Sal tells him he "wanted to know what it meant" (106). Dean departs Sal at the end of the road after an intense and intimate friendship and several wild trips across the U.S. and into Mexico. One important lesson Paradise learns from his tutelage under Moriarty is that authenticity in life requires abandoning our personal ties. This philosophy is shown to Paradise in clearest terms as Dean says. lie "gotta get back to my life" (302). Thus Sal assigns Dean's shirking of responsibility not to a lack of caring but the life he has led.

According to the description above mentioned it is understood that the characters are the true representative of the society and Kerouac has become able to disclose the reality of the society through his book. So, Kerouac's on the Road is a piece of American literature as Protest literature.

Freedom from Bourgeois Cultural Values

Everybody has the right to work, speak and create in his own way without external intervention. It is not appropriate in a modern society to impose restriction on individual. It is not appropriate in a modern society to impose restriction on individual way of thinking; doing thing and creating their own values by passing the established values of dominant culture it society exists for an individual then that society is supposed to function in such a way that an individual can feel free. Otherwise the longing for freedom makes individuals revolt and fight for their rights. *On the Road* presents a world where the rights of individuals are controlled any are made desperate by controlling external forces. Through the novel Kerouac tries to unite the ropes of controlling authority by howling freely in the public. Thus *On the Road* is an iconoclastic shouting aimed at violating the decorum's and the rules of order of the mainstream society. The novel is a struggle against domination and a desire is projected for freedom from dominating bourgeois culture. He wants to create a different structure in society through creative understanding.

Going through human history it is revealed to us that conventional society was characterized by worship of power and people were in habit of blindly embracing the values and principles of the ruling cultural group. To copy the norms and values of the dominant cultural grouping was a habit which did not allow them to voice their won concerns and to creatively channel their own concerns and to creatively channel their won energies. It is believed that blind imitation reduces individuals to the status of honesty. Moreover the people living on the margin of society don't find the values of the mainstream in their favor, rather peoples' existence is threatened and thus in danger. In the sense *On the Road's* purpose to by pass the exclusivist values of the materialistic society and live in a world of creativity generating a different set of

values of unrestrained freedom and an affirmation of life. By throwing off the controlling forces of society *On the Road* is peopled by those who had difficulty surviving in a society that focused on material requisition and which was alien to many of the human values life pity, kindness sympathy and compassion they were always followed, spied, controlled and checked by the caretakers creativity is suppressed and their voice is controlled by the false authority.

These people's activity of throwing watches and giving their vote to eternity that they were rebelling against the limitation of the bourgeois culture water is an object that shows time and we have to conduct our live as the hands of the watch guide and control us watch is also a product of bourgeois profit mongering and throwing it is equivalent to rejecting values of that class. The novel speaks against domination control and the feeling of being secluded and discarded. This is freedom that *On the Road* attempts to make. The hipsters have discarded the principles of good and bad moral and immoral as defined by the mainstream society. They are bent on exploring their won psyches, consciousness and personal feeling and emotions. They have their own values and ways of doing things. There is an endeavor to create a free world for themselves where they can be what they long to be.

The Images Associated With the Mainstream Bourgeois Culture

Each and every society has its own priorities. The priorities in the society are formulated by means of the rules and regulation of the society. The priorities which are given importance are the images. They are many images in the materialistic bourgeois mainstream. American cultures which are strictly followed by the iconodules, but the iconoclasts violate them. The drug use, smoking marijuana, open sex, homosexuality, alcoholism and free love are against the materialist bourgeois mainstream American culture a culture which stand for authority, conformity and the

mechanization of human experience. But the characters in the novel involve in these activities. The capitalistic American culture gives importance to a single marriage building sophisticated houses having all the modern facilities and formal use of language, at any time. But the protagonist of the novel, Sal Paradise wanders around the road with his friend, Dean Moriarty without building a house and getting married through his life. The characters throw their watch thinking that the watches are making them careful. The motto of the character is pleasure and freedom but the watch disturbs them in getting pleasure and individual freedom. Dean Moriarty got married three times and divorced twice in his life. He established love relationship with many characters throughout the novel. Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty involve in socially and culturally promiscuous activities violating the images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and the mechanization of human experience. Therefore the main characters of the novel are the iconoclasts of the materialistic bourgeois mainstream culture.

On the Road as an Iconoclastic Novel

Iconoclasm is primarily related to image breaking. The value and sacredness which is attached to certain ideas is demolished by an iconoclast. Iconoclasm was a campaign in Eastern Church and it challenged the symbolic value of icons or images of religious figures. An iconoclast is a breaker of images an opponent of their religious use. Iconoclasm went against the practice of representing divinity in any material form. The iconoclasts were opposition to the iconodules who were in favor of image worship. The project of *On the Road* is to dismantle the images that represent the materialistic bourgeois culture that degenerated into filth and ugliness in the aftermath of Second World War. The norms and values hold by the mainstream

society were rejected and demolished by the people who were the numbers of Best Generation Kerouac's *On the Road* being a manifesto of the rebellious generation counters the values of the mainstream society. It exposes the emptiness of these values. He neglected and marginalized people whose voice *On the Road* represents were wandering through the streets protesting the cruelty and inhumanity of the mainstream cultures

On the Road is an iconoclastic poem like Ginsberg's *Howl* is. He in his poem says "I am the iconoclast of ugliness" The speaker of the poem expresses his wrath and disagreement with the hollow and hostile world. The Poet says that solidity rationality, prose, inhumanity are what the contemporary society and contemporary society and so – called intellectuals of his time are associated with. In the similar vein *On the Road* also turns upside down the scale of values and takes an antithetical stance to the mainstream American culture in the 1950s. While the mainstream society practices discrimination and brings separation in the world, Kerouac is in favor of whole which includes everything. It is an inclusive approach to life and celebrates everything as holy and sacred. He sees the value of everything equal. It ruptures the hierarchy between big or small and good or bad in the overall pattern of creation. Everything is holy for him. It is a kind of celebration of cosmic unity where all that comprises the world has its due place and value in the total scheme of things.

Thus Kerouac's *On the Road* is an iconoclastic piece of literature. It dismantles the images associated with the materialistic bourgeois mainstream culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experience. It apposed to the hypocritical values of the mainstream society and it has its own way of looking at life and the world. It envisages a world of unity and

integration as against the monstrous world of separation and disintegration
characterized by cruelty, prejudice conflict and indifference.

IV. Conclusion

Jack Kerouac's novel, *On the Road* shows protest and dissatisfaction against the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. It presents the wasteland of Postwar America. The characters in the novel reflect the practice of the extreme and unconventional lifestyle which shows the profound dissatisfaction with the contemporary ambitious materialistic society because a section of society was neglected by mainstream bourgeois culture. And these people had to howl loudly to be heard by the society. The characters desire freedom and pleasure through drug, sexual promiscuity, stealing, hobo life and jazz, and explore Eastern religion, Zen Buddhism. Although American society was in progress in material development after the II world war, but it was in the problem of spiritual decay and moral decline. The characters are the true representatives of the contemporary American society, therefore the neglected characters nakedly wonder along the road. They were the best minds of the time but were destroyed by the cruel and indifferent capitalistic society. These intellectuals were the victims of war, oppression, exclusion and indifference that is why they adopted the unconventional lifestyle which was against the mainstream American culture. They enjoyed homosexuality, celebrated open sex ,drug use and alcoholism.

Kerouac's *On the Road*, known as a manifesto of Beat Generation refers to a group of writers who were terribly exploited and suppressed in the hands of the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture. The novel reflects the writers' protest clearly against the contemporary society in a bitter, harsh and often abusive language. They practiced non-uniformity in life style and dress code. The novel forcefully communicated the sense of sudden bursting of repressed energies. It is the serious contemporary revolutionary novel which always stood against materialism,

cruelty and suppression. So the militant youngsters in the novel are unusual and unconventional in their costume, language and lifestyle in contrast to the mainstream society. Therefore they are seeking the individual freedom and pleasure standing against the norms and values of the repressive mainstream culture. The atmosphere in which people were living was that of narcotic tobacco haze where people felt choked. It was a suffocating capitalistic American society of the 1950s. The poor people had difficult living in a Darwinian world of competition which followed the idea of the survival of the fittest. These innocent victims of that culture were the people that on the Road talks.

The characters in the novel indulge themselves in jazz music. And it is closely related with typical black culture which helps to expose their creativity, spontaneity and originality. The individual thought and emotion of the black society can not be expressed in the white dominant society. By idealizing the picture of the life of Negroes in the back section of Denver, Kerouac developed the empathy with the black musicians, marginalized group in the capitalistic society. Therefore the characters follow the jazz music in order to violate the mainstream American culture. The characters who follow the jazz music are anti – conventional and anti – establishment in their approach. The use of provisional quality of jazz music was the revolutionary expression of freedom. The people of the generation walk from one place to another place waving genitals which is an act of revolt against the materialistic bourgeoisies mainstream American culture that places great emphasis on discipline, decorum, secrecy, morality and normal human behaviour. The above activities done by the characters in the novel , are the advocating of individual freedom in the American society.

The characters in Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, involve in drugs using which is considered as asocial, irrational and non – conformist activities in the contemporary society they take drugs, narcotics, Marijuana, Benzedrine to forget the life of uneasiness and cultural oppression. The drug culture enables them to give conscious power to rebel against the social restriction and limitations of the contemporary system of dehumanizing nature. The suppressed people enjoy drugs and develop their capacity to rebel against the contemporary society. The use of drugs opens up the sixth sense in their vision to widen the level of consciousness.

The characters' indulgence in excessive and open sexual, and homosexual activities show their strong protest against the so called moral, social and ethical American norms and values. Excessive sexual behavior of the characters is the means of celebrating emotion, feeling and passion instead of power of rationality. The concept of having heterosexuality and homosexuality is the important thing in Dean Moriarty's life. All the characters in the novel try to protest parental authority and conformity because it is symbolically, a strong opposition to the materialistic bourgeois mainstream American Culture. In that American culture, the cruel force is present every where in banks, jails, colleges, government and authority. The American society is in lack of the values of love, kindness, compassion, and sympathy.

This novel portrays the life of hobos who wonder along the road, getting involved themselves in drinking and hitchhiking in the continental second hand cars. They engage in short – term jobs through the employment agencies. After having finished their routine jobs, they take their campaign boycotting the programs of employment agencies to bring down the capitalistic system. Kerouac himself is a bum and psychopath. So he shares his empathy with socially unprivileged hobo group. The

narrator of the novel *Sal Paradise* himself says that there are many characters in the novel whose especial involvement is in stealing. Stealing is immoral and illegal in the mainstream American culture but the characters in the novel involve in these activities.

The characters disregard the material and technological development though they use material things as means to achieve pleasure to forget their pain inflicted on them by the oppressive culture. Since the materials are subject to decay. They seek for something eternal and they find it in God, death and it. Violating the materialistic notion of the society, *Sal Paradise* roams across America in search of Japanese religious god through the novel. God symbolically refers to the salvation and emancipation of the people who are extremely dominated and neglected by the mainstream American society. *Sal Paradise* finds the embodiment of his quest in Dean Moriarty whose past life is the history of sufferings, troubles and hardships, for the narrator *Sal Paradise*, Dean is god and sees him as holy common, the Angel of Terror and Mad – Ahab. Therefore, the quest of transcendence is violating of materialism. The characters turn to Eastern religion, Zen Buddhism to achieve peace and tranquility of the mind that has made disquiet because of materialism. They detest the idea of conformity and authority claiming that nothing in the world is stationary or permanent. The conformity, authority and mechanization of time may be changed in course of the time because the number of non-conformists is increasing day after day in the capitalistic American society.

On the Road vulgarizes and demolishes different kinds of authority. It rejects familial authority and it is against the ideas of getting married, having children and fulfilling many other familial responsibilities. It rebels against social authority by violating the rules and regulation of the mainstream society. It favors the celebration

of homosexuality, drug use, alcoholism and careless wandering without caring what the mainstream society thinks of them. Their behaviour is deviant and thus anti – social. They don't show any respect for authority. Kerouac has used slang languages in the novel which pours feeling and emotions in naked naturalness. It focuses on spontaneity and unchecked eruption of feelings

On the Road, advocates freedom from materialistic bourgeois American cultural values. Everybody has right to speak, work and create in his own way of thinking, doing things and creating their own set of values bypassing the established values of dominant culture. If the society exists for the individuals, they must be given freedom of expression. Otherwise the longing for the freedom makes individual revolt and fight for the rights against the contemporary society. So this novel is an iconoclastic shouting aimed at violating the images associated with materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture which stand for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experiences. The people that the novel talks about, threw watches and gave their vote to eternity which shows that they were rebelling against the limitation imposed by bourgeois culture. Watch is an object that shows time and we have to run ourselves as the hands of the watch guide and dictate us. Watch is also a product of bourgeois profit mongering and throwing it is equivalent to rejecting the values of that culture. By giving vote to eternity these were trying to live in their own timeless world, being free from the hustle and bustle of materialistic bourgeois society.

Kerouac's *On the Road* is an iconoclastic novel like Ginsberg's *Howl* is. Ginsberg was an iconoclast of ugliness and Kerouac also express his disagreement and thus rejects the values of bourgeois culture. It is a turning upside down of values of the mainstream society. This novel goes against the hierarchical thinking and

celebrates everything as holy and sacred in the world. The value of the bourgeois culture stands for separation and disintegration where as Kerouac advocates assimilation and integration because all the time the characters in *On the Road* are engaged in the activities that are contravene the values of the mainstream capitalistic American culture. Thus, in the analysis made above, it becomes evident that the characters deliberately and openly participate in activities, the contemporary society regards as immoral. Therefore, this novel dismantles and ruptures the significance attached to the values of the 1950s materialistic bourgeois mainstream American culture, a culture which stands for authority, conformity and mechanization of human experience.

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