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The Concept of a Tramp according to Jack Kerouac

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„The Beat Generation: Critical Essays.“ Edited by Kostas Myrsiades. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2002.

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## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis focuses on the tramp lifestyle that Jack Kerouac depicted in his novel *On the Road*. The theoretical part provides information about the Beat Generation and explores the lifestyle of the Beat authors. The practical part analyses Kerouac's depiction of the tramp characters and explores the opposition to consumerist society. The last chapter also considers and compares other similar tramp lifestyles.

## **KEYWORDS**

tramp, Jack Kerouac, Beat Generation, consumerist society

## **NÁZEV**

Kult tuláka podle Jacka Kerouaca

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na život tuláka, který Jack Kerouac ztvárnil ve svém románu *Na Cestě*. Teoretická část se věnuje informacím o Beatnické generaci a zkoumá životní styl Beatníků. Praktická část analyzuje Kerouacovo ztvárnění tuláků v díle *Na Cestě* a rozebírá vzdor postav vůči konzumní společnosti. Poslední kapitola také zvažuje a porovnává další podobné životní styly tuláků.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

tulák, Jack Kerouac, Beatnická generace, konzumní společnost

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## INTRODUCTION

The Beat Generation is a phenomenon that emerged in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and marked a milestone in culture and literature of the USA. The political and cultural situation of the post-war America launched an initiative of young poetry writers to express their discontent and opposition to consumerism and materialism that had emerged with the post-war economic growth. What were the reasons for the Beat authors to give up conformist life? That is a question that is answered in this bachelor thesis along with providing an illustration of what the tramp lifestyle was like according to what Jack Kerouac depicted in his most famous novel *On the Road*.

The theoretical part explores the topic of the Beat Generation in order to provide a theoretical background. One of the first steps is introducing the Beat Generation, its origins and emergence in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century USA, along with defining which authors belong to the Beat Generation and explanation of the term “Beat” to cover its possible meanings. A closer insight is provided into the reception of the Beat Generation by the post-war American society, criticism and examples of the most significant milestones in the Beat history. To provide a background to *On the Road*, the thesis also considers the importance of Kerouac’s writing style evolution and the process of writing of the novel along with factors that influenced Kerouac’s writing style. The last topic included in the theoretical part is the Beats’ hedonistic lifestyle, attitudes and characteristic values. Following that, the Beat Generation and the Hippie subculture is differentiated and both subcultures compared, along with a few examples of how the former influenced the latter in order to illustrate the influence and distinguish their core values.

The practical part deals with analysing the tramp characters in Jack Kerouac’s novel *On the Road*. The aim is to analyse and describe what the tramp life was like according to Kerouac and support the claims by particular excerpts from the novel. The analysis deals with the character of being a tramp, its advantages and disadvantages. As Kerouac’s novel contains two characters, Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, who are both tramps but each one of a different personality, the separate analysis of Dean Moriarty’s character is included in order to demonstrate in which way Dean Moriarty is extraordinary and different from Sal Paradise. As the concept and lifestyle of a tramp is a contradiction to the consumerist society, it is possible to research the novel for passages expressing the opposition to the consumerist society. The practical part is concluded by a discussion and outline of preceding American novels that also



depict the tramp lifestyle and Kerouac's concept of a tramp is compared with similar lifestyles that subsequently emerged throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

# 1 THE BEAT GENERATION

At the beginning of this chapter, it is necessary to introduce the Beat Generation and the authors of this literary movement. Martin Procházka characterises the Beat Generation as a group of avant-garde writers reacting to the social situation in the post-war USA, rebelling against conformity, rejecting materialism and searching “for a deeper meaning to life.”<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that the Beat Generation was a response to the post-war American society. Antonín Zita briefly explains that when the Second World War ended, the American society experienced relief and an economic boom and started to demand conformity in order to conserve the stability of a post-war improvement.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the Beats turned away from materialistic society and rather pursued a spiritually oriented lifestyle instead.

Mentioning the end of the Second World War, the Beat Generation is generally dated in the 1950s and 1960s. Although their influence became significant in late 1950s, most anthologists and biographers, such as Jean François Duval, suppose that the Beat Generation initiated in 1944 with the meeting of Allen Ginsberg and other Beat authors during their college studies.<sup>3</sup> It could be also assumed that the publishing of John Clellon Holmes’ novel *Go* in 1952 was the beginning, because it is considered to be the first Beat novel. Therefore, the answer to when exactly the Beat Generation started might not be clear as it is a matter of the point of view.

It is also problematic to specifically define the authors of the Beat Generation, as it could only be assumed who considered himself or herself a Beat. According to Duval, the Beat Generation is an indefinite entity of authors. Still, he mentions authors such as Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and many others, emphasising that each one is a genuine author with their own writing style and that it is not easy to find common features in their works.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Bill Morgan points out that “many of the writers we commonly think of as quintessentially Beat didn’t consider themselves members of the Beat Generation.” Therefore, the most suitable definition according to Morgan would be that Beats were “a group of friends who gathered around and interacted with Allen Ginsberg.”<sup>5</sup> In other

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<sup>1</sup> Hana Ulmanová, Erik S. Roraback, “Twentieth-Century American Fiction,” in *Lectures on American Literature*, ed. Martin Procházka (Praha: Karolinum, 2002), 279.

<sup>2</sup> Antonín Zita, *How We Understand the Beats: The Reception of the Beat Generation in the United States and the Czech Lands* (Brno: Filozofická fakulta Masarykova Univerzita, 2018), 36–37.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-François Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation: Allen Ginsberg, Carolyn Cassady, Joyce Johnson, Timothy Leary, Anne Waldman, Ken Kesey* (Hodkovičky: Pragma, 2014), 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy: The complete, uncensored history of the Beat Generation* (New York: Free Press, 2010), xviii–xix.

words, what linked the authors to the Beat Generation was the close friendship with Ginsberg, while each of the authors still had his or her own writing style and approach to literature.

To illustrate the controversy over naming someone a Beat writer, it is also possible to demonstrate the point of view of some of the Beats. Duval, in his interview with Allen Ginsberg, asked him about the first meeting of Ginsberg, Burroughs, Kerouac and some other Beats in 1944, which is often marked as the beginning of the Beat Generation. In his answer, Ginsberg completely distanced himself from the concept of the Beat Generation and also stressed the fact that each of the authors was a genuine writer.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, when Duval made an interview with Carolyn Cassady, she also mentioned that not all of the authors were “beats,” but if one truly was, then it was Ginsberg.<sup>7</sup> This again proves that it is very uncertain who considered himself or herself a Beat writer. Eventually, it could even mean that none of those authors would describe themselves as a Beat and that it is only a term used by the public and the media in order to refer to this literary and cultural phenomenon.

One of the reasons for the controversy over who is and who is not a Beat author might be the number of possible definitions of the term ‘beat’. Therefore, it is important to mention the origins and the most probable meanings of the term. Duval mentions that the first person to use this word was Herbert Huncke when talking to Kerouac. Huncke described himself as ‘beat’, most probably because of his poor lifestyle. However, Kerouac perceived this ‘beatness’ also as being spiritually blessed. Then the term got into hands of John Clellon Holmes, who asked Kerouac to describe its meaning. Kerouac said that they were a “beat generation.”<sup>8</sup> Duval continues that Holmes is known for subsequently using this term and making it popular in his journal article “This is the Beat Generation” as well as in his novel *Go*. Duval further concludes that this term was and still is open to many different connotations, positive or negative. Moreover, Kerouac supposedly tried to popularise the rather positive meaning and changing it to ‘beatitude’ in order to distance himself from young rebel beats.<sup>9</sup> Even Carolyn Cassady, in an interview with Duval, confirms that Jack Kerouac, despite being the most famous Beat writer, did not feel as a Beat at all and tried to distance himself from the concept.<sup>10</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>6</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-François Duval, *Bukowski A Beatnici: Pojednání O Generaci Beatniků; Interview Večer U Hanka Doma* (Hodkovičky: Pragma, 2014), 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 63.

the multiple meanings of the word 'beat' make it more problematic to specify the Beat authors while each of the Beats might have their own definition of this term.

Anyway, even though Ginsberg kept close friendships with Beat authors and therefore sustained the Beat Generation as such, there was also Jack Kerouac, who was probably the most prominent Beat author because of media popularisation of his novels. However, as has been previously indicated, both Kerouac and Ginsberg distanced themselves from the concept of the Beat Generation. Morgan further specifies that although Kerouac is the most famous author of the Beat Generation, often labelled as "the King of the Beats," Ginsberg is the one who created the Beat Generation and supported its existence.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, both Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg played a significant role, yet each one in a different manner. Kerouac might be the most important and famous Beat in the eyes of the society and the media, but actually, the most important person and the core of the Beat Generation was Allen Ginsberg.

### **1.1 Reception and criticism of the Beat Generation in the USA post-war society**

This chapter briefly illustrates the attitude of the post-war USA society to the Beat Generation, as it is possible to point out specific events that show the society's approach to the Beats.

The post-war ideal, as Antonín Zita describes, was to have a family living in a house full of modern house appliances, having a car and electronics that came with the post-war technological boom all in hand with consumerism and "belief in capitalism."<sup>12</sup> The Beats, on the other hand, saw the meaning of life in completely different ways. Overall, the Beats were perceived as a counter-culture and as rebellious non-conformists not only because of their literature, but also their lifestyle, which is closely introduced in chapter 2.

Generally, the Beats were endangered by media stereotypes. Zita points out that as a consequence of media coverage, the differentiation between the Beats as literary artists and young rebels became blurred and brought humiliating prejudices about the Beat authors.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Zita continues describing the public perception of the Beats. The Beat writers were mainly perceived as a "social phenomenon" opposing "generally accepted social norms," rather than writers in the first place. In addition to being stereotypically called juvenile delinquents, another humiliating term used for the Beats was calling them "beatniks." As Zita explains, this term is a combination of the word "Beat" and the word "Sputnik" referring to the

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<sup>11</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, xx.

<sup>12</sup> Zita, *How We Understand the Beats*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 48.

Soviet satellite. The word Beatnik therefore leads to indicating “otherness of the Beats” and suggests that “the Beats are communists and therefore represent un-American values.”<sup>14</sup>

To demonstrate the critical approach to the Beat literature, it is possible to list events that drew attention of the public to the Beats. The first one, concerning the censorship of the Beat literature, is the trial case of *Howl and Other poems* written by Allen Ginsberg, before it was published by the publishing company City Lights in 1957. Procházka mentions that Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a Beat author and an owner of City Lights, was in charge of publishing of Ginsberg’s *Howl* but a few months later, the San Francisco police confiscated copies of this book and Ferlinghetti was accused of selling obscene literature. However, the trial ended up in the Beats’ favour and the judge eventually allowed the book to be published.<sup>15</sup> Bill Morgan, also mentioning this trial and its consequences, states that “the *Howl* case set a precedent allowing other important literary works to be published in America without fear of censorship.”<sup>16</sup> This case therefore might have influenced the future publishing of the Beat literature, controversial or not, as well as the overall perception of the Beat Generation.

Another significant moment for the Beats was when Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* was published. Antonín Zita stresses the importance of the positive review by Gilbert Millstein, who wrote book reviews and articles for *The New York Times* magazine. The review in *The New York Times* brought Kerouac immediate fame and also drew attention of the media, which continued with positive as well as negative reviews of the Beat generation.<sup>17</sup> The review praises not only the content of the book, but also the writing style, when Millstein says that “there are sections of ‘On the Road’ in which the writing is of a beauty almost breathtaking” and at the end concludes that *On the Road* “is a major novel.” Furthermore, at the beginning of the review, Millstein attributes the term “beat” to Kerouac, naming him “the principal avatar” of the Beat Generation and comparing him to Ernest Hemingway from the Lost Generation.<sup>18</sup> This might seem complimentary to Kerouac, but naming him a representative of the whole Beat Generation might be one of the reasons, if not the main reason, for his gradual decline after publishing of

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<sup>14</sup> Zita, *How We Understand the Beats*, 52–53.

<sup>15</sup> Ulmanová, Roraback, “Twentieth-Century American Fiction,” 280–281.

<sup>16</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 128–129.

<sup>17</sup> Zita, *How We Understand the Beats*, 48.

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Millstein, “Books of the Times,” *The New York Times*, published September 5, 1957, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/97/09/07/home/kerouac-roadglowing.html?module=inline&fbclid=IwAR3O6SOIrCaxXsXIOyMD0uim1JM6lZrZ3cwnXKAgHI2SlgKI63Ae2uazNhw>.

*On the Road*. Joyce Johnson argues that due to Kerouac's personality, he had severe problems dealing with the media attention and criticism, leading to his issues with alcohol.<sup>19</sup>

The Beat Generation reacting to the post-war society was therefore seen as threatening because of its tendencies to oppose American values. The media and critics mainly constructed the image of the Beat Generation, while the Beat literature created milestones important for future acceptance of the Beats. Publishing of *On the Road* might have been the most significant event in the Beat history.

## **1.2 Development of Jack Kerouac's writing style and writing of *On the Road***

Jack Kerouac as an author went through many different stages of his writing styles before he found the one to be content with. Not only is his first published novel *The Town and the City* different from each new book later published, but even *On the Road* itself went through many different stages as Kerouac gained new inspiration during the writing process of his most famous book. In other words, the earliest version of *On the Road* was very different from the published version in many aspects.

Ann Charters, Jack Kerouac's biographer, wrote a comprehensive introduction to *On the Road* also containing an overview of the evolution of Kerouac's writing processes, especially that of *On the Road*. Jack Kerouac's earliest inspiration, which Ann Charters mentions, is known to have come from American author Thomas Wolfe and is apparent in Kerouac's first published book *The Town and the City*, which Kerouac wrote, inspired by one of Wolfe's books. Just after finishing it in 1948, Kerouac started his first attempt to write *On the Road* before *The Town and the City* was even published as he felt the need to write about his early road trips with Neal Cassady.<sup>20</sup>

As Charters further mentions, Kerouac tried to suppress the inspiration coming from Wolfe while writing the first version of *On the Road*. However, Kerouac still struggled to express his thoughts and "couldn't find a way to turn his thoughts and feelings into fiction." Additionally, when *The Town and the City* was published, the book did not reach high sales. Kerouac felt "dissatisfied with the conventional result,"<sup>21</sup> which might have influenced his immediate attempts to write and deepen his effort to distance from Wolfe's writing style. Later, Kerouac started to write *On the Road* again. This time, as Charters further specifies, he wrote inspired

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<sup>19</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 132.

<sup>20</sup> Ann Charters, "Introduction," in *On the Road* (Penguin Books, 2000), xii.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* xii–xiii.

by Theodor Dreiser and tried to imitate his “naturalist or factualist” way, but even after that he was not content because he felt he was still unable to express himself with this writing style and felt “emptiness and even falseness.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Kerouac was still tied down by his efforts to write according to some rules, still being inspired by different authors he admired, which apparently did not suit him.

During his studies, Kerouac was supposed to write a final essay on Thomas Wolfe and because Kerouac struggled with differentiating himself from Wolfe’s style, he was very critical in his essay. Harold Bloom, a literary critic, mentioned that Kerouac was “experiencing ‘the anxiety of influence,’ struggling to free himself from his affinity for the work of a writer he admired.”<sup>23</sup> This suggests that Kerouac, be it subconsciously or intentionally, criticised Wolfe in order to feel more distant from his writing style.

A significant milestone and a change impulse in Kerouac’s writing style were letters from Neal Cassady. Not only was Cassady an inspiration for characters in Kerouac’s books, but he also tremendously inspired Kerouac in his writing style. Bill Morgan mentions the importance of Cassady’s letters, emphasising that Kerouac was astonished by “the effortless way in which Neal was able to tell the story using exactly the same words as he would if he were speaking to Jack in person.”<sup>24</sup> This statement can be supported by one of Kerouac’s response letters cited by Ann Charters, in which Kerouac expressed his fascination and excitement about Cassady’s ability to write so naturally and with attention to detail:

... I say truly, no Dreiser, no Wolfe has come too close to it; Melville was never truer. I know that I don’t dream. It can’t possibly be sparse & halting, like Hemingway, because it hides nothing; the material is painfully necessary... the material of Scott Fitz was so sweetly unnecessary.<sup>25</sup>

This, additionally, shows the number of failed inspirations Kerouac might have looked up to but always felt disappointed with the inability to express himself in his texts. Then, these letters from Cassady were probably the very first impulse when Kerouac started to initiate his own writing style suited exactly for his needs, in other words, writing as if speaking directly to the reader.

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<sup>22</sup> Charters, “Introduction,” xiv.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Charters, “Introduction,” xvii–xviii.

At the beginning of April 1951, as Ann Charter dates, Kerouac started to write another, new version of *On the Road*. At that time, he lived with his wife Joan Kerouac, who asked him a simple yet inspiring question: “What did you and Neal really do?” This, added to previously received Cassady’s letters, boosted Kerouac’s ability to write in a more spontaneous style and he started to write as if telling his wife exactly what had happened, all that as a first-person narrator. Moreover, he did not write on separate papers, but he got a single very long paper scroll.<sup>26</sup> This means that Kerouac did not want his writing and thoughts to be interrupted by changing sheets of paper in the typewriter. Bill Morgan further specifies that in this version of the book, Kerouac ignored “punctuation, paragraph breaks, and traditional form...,”<sup>27</sup> which was most probably an intentional part of his spontaneous writing style. This might evoke an idea that Kerouac got too immersed in his quick and spontaneous writing that he went too far in neglecting the structure of the text, which might be unsuitable for the publisher. But with later adjustments, the published version does contain chapters and paragraphs.

Another important feature is the rumour that Kerouac finished this version of the book in three weeks. This three-week long typing needs to be taken with caution, as Carolyn Cassady states that during these three weeks, Kerouac wrote only one of many versions, since in the following years it had to be retyped many times.<sup>28</sup> Even Ann Charters mentions that this version was retyped in terms of omitting details about Cassady’s and Ginsberg’s intimate relationship and, more importantly, in terms of changing the names of actual people into fictional names in order to make sure everyone was safe from being libelled.<sup>29</sup> Significant changes had to be made also because of the publisher, even in 1956, one year before the publication. Kerouac had to change some parts of the book for Malcolm Cowley, an editorial advisor for Viking press, who insisted on removing traces of another possibly libellous material.<sup>30</sup> On the whole, the book was actually being edited from the first scripts in 1948 to the very last months of 1956. It is therefore inappropriate to assume that Kerouac managed to write the book in only three weeks. When comparing the earlier versions of the book with the published one, it is significant that the content was influenced not only by Kerouac’s evolution of his writing style, but also by editorial requirements.

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<sup>26</sup> Charters, “Introduction,” xix.

<sup>27</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 86.

<sup>29</sup> Charters, “Introduction,” xxii–xxiv.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* xxvi–xxvii.



Even though *On the Road* was significantly focused on Neal Cassady, named as Dean Moriarty in the book, Ann Charters also mentions that Kerouac felt he was unable to write everything he wanted about Neal as he had to omit some parts of the text because of publishers. Therefore, he decided to dedicate a book completely to Cassady's character while using a spontaneous prose writing style in a book published as *Visions of Cody*.<sup>31</sup> This supports the claim of Ann Douglas, who wrote in her critical essay that at the beginning of his writing career, Kerouac "focused on someone not himself" and therefore wrote about Cassady as well as his relationships with women.<sup>32</sup> However, later his interest and focus on characters changed. Ann Charters specifies that after finishing *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac "turned to his own life as the subject for his spontaneous prose experiments..." and his books were written in the so-called "confessional autobiographical style."<sup>33</sup> In other words, Kerouac's early intentions were to write about other people, while later, he aimed towards writing mainly about himself, for instance in works such as *Doctor Sax* or *Desolation Angels*. After the publishing of *On the Road* in 1957, Kerouac's writing could be still characterised as autobiographical and describing his own life.<sup>34</sup> In conclusion, Kerouac's slow transition to himself in his books might reflect his real life interest in his own personality and spirituality as well as a gradual loss of faith in other people and friends, along with his problems with alcohol, as already mentioned, most probably caused by the media attention.

To further support the statements regarding Kerouac's spontaneous writing, it is possible to look into his own essay "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," written in 1958. It contains nine principles that are, according to Kerouac, essential for spontaneous writing. For instance, Kerouac speaks about intentional omission or uselessness of some punctuation marks, such as full stops, colons, or commas, and advises to use dashes in order to more emphasise "measured pauses which are the essentials of our speech."<sup>35</sup> In the next point, Kerouac states that author's expressions should not be selected and should follow "free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought, swimming in sea of English with no discipline other than rhythms of rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement..."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Charters, "Introduction," xxiv–xxv.

<sup>32</sup> Ann Douglas, "Telepathic Shock and Meaning Excitement: Kerouac's Poetics of Intimacy," in *The Beat Generation: Critical Essays*, ed. Kostas Myrsiades (Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2002), 33.

<sup>33</sup> Charters, "Introduction," xxv.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* xxvii.

<sup>35</sup> Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," in George Dardess, "The Logic of Spontaneity: A Reconsideration of Kerouac's 'Spontaneous Prose Method,'" *Boundary 2* 3, no. 3 (1975): 744, accessed June 9, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/302187>.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Here Kerouac stresses the importance of unintentionally chosen words. He explains the beauty of such writing style, which consists of words chosen depending only on what would be most similar to the stream of consciousness, a writing style reflecting the flow of the author's thoughts. According to him, making a great impression on the reader is then inevitable.

Another interesting point of this essay, very similar to the previous one, deals with the issue that an author should immediately write what he or she thinks of at the moment and should not plan ahead what to write or "afterthink" in order to improve the written passage.<sup>37</sup> All in all, Kerouac's message to writers could be generally summarised as to write without stopping to think and put thoughts on the paper without hesitation about word choice or sentence composition.

Therefore, the spontaneous writing style apparently suited Kerouac perfectly and might be partly what made *On the Road* an immediate success supported by Millstein's review. In her critical essay, Ann Douglas poses her point of view about the effect of Kerouac's writing on the reader. She highlights Kerouac's willingness to share his thoughts, emotions and experiences so expressively and honestly with the reader.<sup>38</sup> Kerouac did not fear to take a step further and be emotionally open and honest about his feelings and life while writing spontaneously, which might be one of the main reasons he got so popular among the Beat authors. The presence of sincerity with the reader, as Ann Douglas mentions, and the fact that he told "the true story of what he saw and how he saw it to the bitter end,"<sup>39</sup> is what makes Kerouac's writing genuine and earned him a reputation of a phenomenal American writer.

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<sup>37</sup> Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," 744.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas, "Telepathic Shock and Meaning Excitement," 22–23.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 34.

## 2 AN INSIGHT INTO THE BEAT COUNTERCULTURE

In the previous chapter, the Beats were characterised generally as a literary movement and counter-culture, as well as in connection with the society and the media. However, the Beats were all individual minds, each one with his or her own perception of life, spirituality and religion. As has been indicated, the Beats opposed conformity and consumerism. Having said that, the question is what their lifestyle actually was like.

### 2.1 Lifestyle aspects of the Beats

The most precious value, significantly shaping the Beats' lives, was probably individualism. The Beats put individualism above everything else and, paradoxically, it is the value that all the Beats had in common. Martin Procházka makes a point that individualism as an American value reaches back to 19<sup>th</sup> century to transcendentalist authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau,<sup>40</sup> the author of *Civil Disobedience*, in which he promoted an individual protest instead of a mass protest. Additionally, since the Beat Generation is a post-war generation, their individualist and liberal attitude was affected by the post-war society conditions. Furthermore, Morgan notes that the Beats also opposed the opinion that personal success was based on financial wealth. Instead, they inclined towards "spiritual growth and intellectual freedom," and promoted equality, especially for minorities.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the Beats were a generation ready to oppose society and authority expectations and make the first step in loosening the post-war society conformity.

Speaking of the spiritual and intellectual values, some of the Beats, specifically Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder, were interested in Buddhism. Martin Putna dedicated a part of a chapter to the Beats and their interest in Buddhism. He explains that California, which was a state of Asian immigrant communes, was therefore a centre of alternative Asian religions. Since the Beats perceived the American west as pure and still not destroyed by materialistic culture, they centred mainly in California, where they searched for a new place to create poetry and meditate.<sup>42</sup> Concerning the Beat poetry, a reason to associate the Beat Generation with California is that in Six Gallery in San Francisco, the Beats started new and genuine poetry readings. Christopher Gair explains that in 1955, Allen Ginsberg and other four Beat poets set

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<sup>40</sup> Ulmanová, Roraback, "Twentieth-Century American Fiction," 280.

<sup>41</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 248.

<sup>42</sup> Martin C. Putna, *Obrazy z kulturních dějin americké religiozity* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2010), 249–252.

a new “trend in countercultural art at the time that is as much to do with form as with content,” and calls it “one of the founding moments of countercultural artistic expression.”<sup>43</sup>

In addition to that, the Beats’ journeys often ended in California because of their inclinations towards Buddhism. A fitting example is Allen Ginsberg, who admitted his devotion to Buddhism, daily meditations and connection of Buddhism to his poetry.<sup>44</sup> Another Beat that devoted his life to this religion was Gary Snyder. As Hanák puts it, Snyder was interested in studying Indian culture at first, which later brought him to studying eastern religions and living in Japan for more than a year.<sup>45</sup> Because of this, Snyder played an important role since his experience could enrich the Beats’ knowledge of Buddhism.

Concerning Kerouac’s Buddhism, it is possible to demonstrate the point of view of Joyce Johnson and Anne Waldman, both considered women Beat writers. On the one hand, Johnson thinks that Buddhism had a negative effect on Kerouac. He apparently used Buddhism to justify his vices or his inability to maintain a long-term relationship, since he did not believe in any potential meaning of life and therefore he did not try to solve his problems.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, Waldman opposes this opinion. She explains that Buddhism is supposed to enrich one’s mind and focus deeply on one’s own attitudes. In her opinion, Kerouac understood Buddhism in the right way, which enabled him to recognise his own personality and feelings better, and therefore he knew that responsibility for a family or a relationship is not in his nature. However, she admits that later, in combination with alcohol or drugs, his “Buddhist thinking” could have become “deformed.”<sup>47</sup> By this, Waldman probably means that the combination of addictive substances and Buddhism might have had a negative effect on Kerouac’s mental health.

Therefore, the interest in Buddhism or other eastern religions meant that the Beats searched for a religion that would not remind them of the materialistic, conformist culture and that would allow them to gain inspiration for their writings. Furthermore, it could be assumed that it was a great source of inspiration for the Beat literature.

The Beat Generation as a whole and also some of the Beat authors were known for a drug use in order to enhance their imagination and consciousness. David S. Will wrote an article, in which he mentions that Beat authors such as William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac and Allen

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<sup>43</sup> Christopher Gair, *The American Counterculture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>44</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> Ondřej Hanák, *Hippies: slepé rameno mrtvé řeky* (Praha: Argo, 1992), 18–19.

<sup>46</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 119.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 187.

Ginsberg all used drugs even while writing or incorporated the concept of drug use into their poems or novels. For example, Kerouac apparently used Benzedrine during the writing of *On the Road*, while in the book, he also mentions smoking marijuana.<sup>48</sup> The use of drugs could support his imagination and spontaneous writing. Moreover, Bill Morgan also mentions Timothy Leary and his, at the time legal, experiments with psilocybin. Leary administered testing of this drug on human mind with the purpose to discover treatments for mental illnesses. Via Ginsberg, who visited Leary, the drug was soon delivered to other Ginsberg's friends, including Jack Kerouac, in order to test its effects on their artistic imagination and consciousness.<sup>49</sup> Another Beat author legally experimenting with drugs was Ken Kesey, the author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Ondřej Hanák speaks of Kesey's work at psychiatric ward in the hospital, where these experiments were conducted. It gave him access to a variety of substances, including LSD.<sup>50</sup> What is also important about Kesey is his connection to Merry Pranksters, a group of tramps indulging in drugs. Together, they travelled on a psychedelically and colourfully painted bus.<sup>51</sup> Morgan describes that in 1964, they set on a journey from the west coast California to New York accompanied by drug use, specifically LSD, since Kesey was involved in legal drug use tests, also called Acid Tests.<sup>52</sup>

Undoubtedly, the substance use influenced the Beat authors and, vice versa, the Beats did not hesitate to provide drugs to each other and spread it for other subcultures. The subculture that needs to be mentioned is the Hippie movement, which was already emerging during Kesey's Acid Tests.

## 2.2 The influence on the Hippies and popular music culture

It is important to describe what the Beat Generation and the Hippies have in common and how the former influenced the latter. Even though the Beat Generation is associated with the 1950s and the 1960s, the second half of the 1960s is associated more with the Hippie movement, even though the Beats still persevered. Speaking about differences and similarities of these two subcultures, it is appropriate to mention the Beats who were still influential during the Hippie

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<sup>48</sup> David S. Wills, "Substance use," *Beatdom*, published September 14, 2010, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.beatdom.com/substance-use/>.

<sup>49</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 182.

<sup>50</sup> LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide), a hallucinogenic drug.

<sup>51</sup> Hanák, *Hippies: slepé rameno mrtvé řeky*, 31–32.

<sup>52</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 211.

era. Other topics worth mentioning are the involvement in politic issues and, lastly, the influence on musicians.

As Morgan speaks about young people from the upcoming Hippie generation, they seem to have a similar attitude to that of the Beats. Personal freedom, drug use, interest in spirituality and alternative religions and fighting for equal rights are just an example of traits that could be attributed to both subcultures.<sup>53</sup> For this reason, it could be assumed that the existence of the Hippies was dependent on the Beat Generation. However, according to Morgan, the Hippie movement would most probably exist even without the Beat Generation, but what is highly possible is that the Beats influenced the Hippies and made the upcoming subculture emerge more quickly.<sup>54</sup> For instance, as was previously mentioned, Kesey's Acid Tests might have significantly contributed to the spread of substances among the young people.

The Beat Generation still had a voice in the Hippie era thanks to certain Beat writers still actively participating and contributing to solving issues of the Hippie movement. Allen Ginsberg should be given credits for his participation in political issues. For example, Timothy S. Miller mentions that among others, Leary and Ginsberg both participated in writing a "separatist document" concerning "political repression, destruction of the environment, war, and the like."<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in San Francisco, Ginsberg attended his first political protest against the Vietnam War,<sup>56</sup> which also proves Ginsberg's political concerns. Additionally, Michael McClure's play *The Beard* had issues with censorship, similarly as Ginsberg's *Howl* had in the previous decade. In order to fight against similar possible censorship cases, Ginsberg founded the Committee on Poetry, a non-profit organization that was financed from all the Ginsberg's poetry readings money.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, Jack Kerouac put his effort into making a stand against this new counterculture. In a similar manner as with distancing himself from being "the king of the Beats," Kerouac made sure to prevent anyone from associating him with the Hippie movement. Without doubt, he had an influence on future authors. However, Kerouac might not have wanted to be an icon inspiring future writers. Audrey Lent wrote a review on Kerouac's essay "After Me, the Deluge," in which Kerouac sarcastically expressed his resentment towards the Hippie lifestyle. Moreover, Kerouac indicated his discontentment with the fact that he was an

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<sup>53</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 203.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 247.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy S. Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), xvii.

<sup>56</sup> Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy*, 204–205.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 210.

inspiration to certain authors, including Allen Ginsberg.<sup>58</sup> Despite Kerouac's sarcastic tone in this essay, it might not be a surprise since a similar attitude was presented towards the whole concept of the Beat Generation, when Kerouac did not want to be presented as a famous Beat writer.

Concerning the political interest of Hippies, it should not be assumed that the Hippies, contrary to the Beats, are more politically oriented. Miller explains that there were Hippies who actively fought for civil rights or law reforms, although, many members of this counterculture were not involved in political protests at all.<sup>59</sup> An interesting concept related to this is "dropping out." According to Miller, "dropping out" meant not being politically involved, as well as "disowning of a life oriented toward work, status, and power." However, in order to stay financially secure, most of the Hippies had to work, but "dropped out" at least psychically.<sup>60</sup> This is similar to the Beat's rejection of materialism and financial wealth, therefore both subcultures oriented on living with less materialistic possessions, while thriving spiritually.

The Beat Generation influenced many musical artists that performed since the beginning of the Hippie era. One of the most famous musicians of the time, admitting being inspired by the Beat Generation, was Bob Dylan, an American singer and songwriter. He was also a friend of Allen Ginsberg and this friendship made an important connection between the Beat Generation and the Hippies. Antonín Zita speaks about Bob Dylan's connection to the Beats and points out that Dylan was impressed and inspired by the Beat literature, which influenced his text compositions. In addition, Dylan's and Ginsberg's friendship gave them both an opportunity to artistically support each other throughout the 1960s, when the fame of the Beat authors started to fade out due to the emerging Hippie culture. Therefore, Dylan's fame and incorporation of Beat features into his music enabled Ginsberg to become a "prominent voice" of the upcoming subculture of the 1960s.<sup>61</sup> Besides Ginsberg, Dylan was also influenced by Kerouac. Laurence Coupe dedicated a chapter to the relation between Kerouac's and Dylan's work and researched the possible links of Dylan's songs to the Beat Generation. Not only Kerouac's "bebop-inspired writing," but also the way Kerouac recited some of his poems or extracts accompanied by music gave Dylan inspiration to combine folk and beat style together when composing his songs.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Audrey Lent, "After Me, the Deluge: Considering Kerouac's final statement," Beatdom, published July 5, 2018, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.beatdom.com/after-me-the-deluge-considering-kerouacs-final-statement/>.

<sup>59</sup> Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, 90–91.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 93–94.

<sup>61</sup> Zita, *How We Understand the Beats*, 45.

<sup>62</sup> Laurence Coupe, *Beat sound, Beat vision: The Beat spirit and popular song* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 85.

Moreover, it is important to mention Dylan's admiration of Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*, as Ginsberg closely described the moment when he spoke about it with Dylan. Simply put, Dylan admired Kerouac's rhythm and language expressiveness in this poem collection.<sup>63</sup>

Musical events that often connected the Beat writers and Hippies were music festivals in California. To highlight at least one important music event, it is necessary to name the Human Be-In festival held in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. As Ondřej Hanák indicates, Leary, Ginsberg and Snyder were all part of this event and gave their speeches on the stage.<sup>64</sup>

The Beat's will to be part of the new generation of young people is undeniable. An important factor was that the Hippies were not in opposition to the Beats and therefore they had an opportunity to support each other. However, it is necessary to point out that even though both subcultures had a lot in common, the existence of the Hippies was not dependent on the Beat Generation.

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<sup>63</sup> Duval, *Kerouac a Beat Generation*, 37.

<sup>64</sup> Hanák, *Hippies: slepé rameno mrtvé řeky*, 40–41.



### 3 THE CONCEPT OF A TRAMP IN *ON THE ROAD*

The main topic of this thesis is the analysis of the concept of a tramp according to Jack Kerouac. This entire chapter explores a significant aspect of the Beat lifestyle that was frequent travelling across the USA. Regardless of the distance, the Beats often set on trips from the east to the west and back, with various stops between. *On the Road* is a novel depicting such journeys of tramps and stands for a great example for the whole Beat Generation, since Kerouac's ability to express the moment precisely and put it so vividly in a text makes the reader be a part of it all. Moreover, Ann Charters points out that the book is based on Kerouac's own experience and is "a brilliant blend of fiction and autobiography," because the reality is also altered by Kerouac's own reflections and emotions.<sup>65</sup> Even though many aspects of this novel are fictionalised, it is capable of depicting Kerouac's perception of a tramp lifestyle in the mid-century USA.

Concerning the fact that being a tramp and being a Beat was often in a close relation, it should be reminded that the Beats did not seek a materialistic life, long-term job positions or buying cars and electronics. When on the road, all they needed was a rucksack and money for food and bus tickets. The first trip of Sal Paradise, the main character and the narrator of the novel, is no exception: "..., I left with my canvas bag in which a few fundamental things were packed and took off for the Pacific Ocean with the fifty dollars in my pocket."<sup>66</sup> Less responsibility enables Sal to freely travel across the USA, sleep in cheap hotels or on benches at train stations: "That night in Harrisburg I had to sleep in the railroad station on a bench; at dawn the station masters threw me out."<sup>67</sup>

Sal himself is, especially at the beginning of Kerouac's narration, dependent on other people with their own cars since he travels alone at first. Because of that, the most common way of getting a transport is hitchhiking, making for almost a phenomenon related to a tramp's life that might seem inconvenient from today's perspective. The truth is, with only a few exceptions, that Sal is lucky to stop a car most of the times and meets new people that have interesting stories to tell. From today's perspective, it should be taken into account that hitchhiking was probably perceived as a common practice of tramps and travellers and most drivers did not hesitate to take a hitchhiker with them. At least the novel makes such an impression on the reader since all these situations are great opportunities to show the solidarity of drivers that Sal

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<sup>65</sup> Ann Charters, "Introduction," in *On the Road* (Penguin Books, 2000), xx.

<sup>66</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (Penguin Books: 2000), 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

meets. One passage of the novel shows Sal's feelings about one of his rides, summarizing all the aspects that are connected to being dependent on other drivers. Besides describing the driver as a "great big tough truckdriver with popping eyes and a hoarse raspy voice who just slammed and kicked at everything and got his rig under way and paid hardly any attention to me,"<sup>68</sup> Sal admits it is nice to encounter drivers like him, since talking to drivers while being exhausted prevents Sal from resting and sleeping:

So I could rest my tired soul a little, for one of the biggest troubles hitchhiking is having to talk to innumerable people, make them feel that they didn't make a mistake picking you up, even entertain them almost, all of which is a great strain when you're going all the way and don't plan to sleep in hotels.<sup>69</sup>

Additionally, anytime the driver has to drive on in a direction that Sal does not want to go, he is ready to get off and hitchhike another drive. This time, Sal was lucky enough to change the truck in a matter of minutes and continue in his journey:

Just as we rolled into Iowa City he saw another truck coming behind us, and because he had to turn off at Iowa City he blinked his tail lights at the other guy and slowed down for me to jump out, which I did with my bag, and the other truck, acknowledging this exchange, stopped for me, and once again, in the twink of nothing, I was in another big high cab, all set to go hundreds of miles across the night, and was I happy!<sup>70</sup>

This might seem as an almost idealistic and unreal situation, but concerning the fact that drivers might be used to hitchhikers, the tramp is lucky to change in a matter of seconds or minutes. However, the life on the road has drawbacks that Kerouac does not forget to mention. Being a tramp completely dependent on hitchhiking is something that Sal experiences during his first trip. Without a doubt, it is sometimes difficult to find any transport to the desired destination and Sal often ends up in a desperate situation when trying to hitchhike:

It began to rain in torrents when I was let off there. [...] Not only was there no traffic but the rain came down in buckets and I had no shelter. I had to run under some pines to take cover; this did no good; I began crying and swearing and socking myself on the head for being such a damn fool.<sup>71</sup>

In such situations, Sal admits that it is better to move somewhere than to stay in the place, even though he might not go in the right direction. It is nicely expressed only a few moments later, when a driver advises Sal a better way to get to Chicago and Sal admits that the man "was

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<sup>68</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 14–15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 11.

right,”<sup>72</sup> and that it was Sal’s “dream that screwed up, the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes.”<sup>73</sup> Sal is then supposed to go back to New York and start his journey over again, which leaves him in a bitter mood: “... I wanted to go west and here I’ve been all day and into the night going up and down, north and south, like something that can’t get started.”<sup>74</sup>

It appears that Sal did not expect such problems to occur and admits being naïve when believing in a simple journey from New York straight to Chicago. Before travelling in a car with Dean Moriarty, Sal is completely dependent on the solidarity of other drivers or possibly buying a bus ticket. Eventually, it is gratifying to see Sal not give up and set off on other trips repeatedly, since one might think that after such a negative experience, a tramp would rather get comfortable and stay in one place.

Another drawback of the tramp life is that friendships or relationships formed on the road prove to be only temporal. Sal admits this in his own words when leaving a group of tramps he travelled with on a truck: “It was sad to see them go, and I realized that I would never see any of them again, but that’s the way it was.”<sup>75</sup> In addition, falling in love while on the road was nothing unusual for Sal. As could be expected, no relationship could last long when almost constantly on the road. When Sal meets a girl named Terry, in the first moments of seeing her, Sal remarks that he is sad to assume that she is not going the same way as he does: “I wished I was on her bus. A pain stabbed my heart, as it did every time I saw a girl I loved who was going the opposite direction in this too-big world.”<sup>76</sup> Eventually, they travel together for two weeks and make enough money to pay for hotels and food, but their relationship has to end due to the fact that Terry has a family and cannot move somewhere else with Sal. At the end of their relationship, when Sal is heading back to New York, he admits the disappointment but at the same time it seems he is prepared and expected such farewell to happen sooner or later: “She was supposed to drive to New York in a month with her brother. But we both knew she wouldn’t make it. At a hundred feet I turned to look at her. [...] I bowed my head and watched her. Well, lackadaddy, I was on the road again.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 92.

In relation to this, it can be observed that Sal, and even other characters, often stay for a very short time in their destinations even though the journey takes several days. Having said that, the journey itself might be more important than reaching the destination. When Sal is on one of his first rides with a group of other tramps, two of them are on their way to Los Angeles: “‘We’re going to LA!’ they yelled. ‘What are you going to do there?’ ‘Hell, we don’t know. Who cares?’”<sup>78</sup> This excerpt from a conversation might not seem to say much but it actually explains a lot. Perhaps it shows that they have nothing important to do there and, as previously indicated, they travel to Los Angeles only for the sake of the journey itself. For tramps, it might have been essential to enjoy the freedom of being on the road, arrive in the city and after few days or weeks set off on another trip, be it back east or further west or south. It is important to emphasise that the need and desire to travel and be almost constantly on the road might initially stem from the tramps’ opposition to consumerist society. Even on the road, a tramp was able to earn enough money for food and occasional accommodation and did not need to be tied down by the society’s expectations and make money only in order to spend them on needless gadgets.

Another question therefore is how tramps spend their time when they arrive in a city where they intend to stay for some time. “Well, what the hell are we doing in Denver?”<sup>79</sup> Options to answer this question of Sal’s seem to be countless. As Kerouac presents, one of the first concerns is to get a job to be able to pay for food and rent. In Sal’s case, his financial situation is eased by the fact that his aunt lends him money and gets it back once Sal earns enough money to pay his debts: “I had no money. I sent my aunt an airmail letter asking her for fifty dollars and said it would be the last money I’d ask; after that she would be getting money back from me...”<sup>80</sup> Because of that, Sal shows a certain amount of responsibility for repaying debts to his aunt. Dean, on the other hand, has a family and “he had to send Camille part of his pay every month for support...”<sup>81</sup> Neither Sal nor Dean therefore resist finding a job: “‘Tomorrow, Sal, I know where I can find you a job,’ said Dean, reverting to businesslike tones. ‘[...] you can begin working at once and collect a paycheck come Friday. We’re really all of us bottomry broke.’”<sup>82</sup> Even when Sal has the opportunity to sleep at his friend’s apartment, “drinking coffee and

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<sup>78</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 22.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* 50.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

scribbling,”<sup>83</sup> Sal still insists on getting a job: “I wanted a job; I had to depend on them for cigarettes. [...] He arranged to get me the same kind of job he had, as a guard in the barracks.”<sup>84</sup>

By this, Kerouac might partly prevent prejudices about tramps being lazy to work and therefore living off others. When being able to pay for his own accommodation, Sal sometimes opts for a modest and cheap hotels or motels: “We went into a motel court and bought a comfortable little suite for about four dollars – shower, bathtowels, wall radio, and all.”<sup>85</sup>

A significant part of spending their time in cities that Kerouac often mentions is going to parties and visiting bars. Because the tramp’s lifestyle might be often associated with such things, Kerouac’s depiction of Sal and his acquaintances drinking a lot of alcohol might be an expected feature of the story: “The place filled up. People began to bring bottles. We rushed out to hit the bars and rushed back.”<sup>86</sup> Or in more details, pointing out that Dean might be the one to drink the most:

..., and that night when we all left the party and repaired to the Windsor bar in one vast brawling gang, Dean became frantically and demoniacally and seraphically drunk. [...] He drank in this saloon like the ghost of his father; he slopped down wine, beer, and whisky like water.<sup>87</sup>

In conclusion, besides depicting the unconditional solidarity of drivers and the unexpected struggles on the road, it appears that Kerouac did not hesitate to incorporate rather sentimental and honest feelings about leaving people he has met on the road, leaving the reader feeling sorry for Sal and his loneliness and not belonging anywhere. As depicted in the novel, this lifestyle simply does not support a stable relationship or even a friendship. On the other hand, a tramp has the opportunity to meet new people on the road or at parties and visit new places, be responsible only for his or her own problems, all at the expense of not being settled down with a family. Therefore, showing drawbacks of the tramp lifestyle might create prejudices about such a lifestyle, but on the other hand, it might inspire people to travel or think outside the society norms. Undoubtedly, setting off on the road might be more difficult and followed by more struggles than Kerouac actually ever depicted in his novel.

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<sup>83</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 56.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 80.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 239–240.

### 3.1 Kerouac's depiction of Neal Cassady as Dean Moriarty

Since Sal Paradise stands as a character for Kerouac himself, the character of Dean Moriarty, a real-life Neal Cassady, sometimes seems to be the centrepiece of the entire story as he played a significant role in Kerouac's life. Dean's different character might confuse the readers and make them wonder about which of the two main characters is a truer depiction of a tramp.

Dean has more character flaws than a reader might expect in the beginning. Sal speaks of Dean as a hero most of the time since their first meeting and expresses the fact that thanks to Dean, his life on the road actually came true: "With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road. Before that I'd often dreamed of going West to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off."<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Sal inclines to calling Dean a "long-lost brother"<sup>89</sup> shortly after getting to know him.

Later throughout the story, Dean's vices and disregard for women and friends comes to surface. In the first place, Dean is notorious for being a women lover and although he actually has a family, he is not faithful to his wife by any chance. Dean's friends are aware of how serious his behaviour becomes:

"Dean, why do you act so foolish?" said Galatea. "Camille called and said you left her. Don't you realize you have a daughter?" "He didn't leave her, she kicked him out!" I said, breaking my neutrality. They all gave me dirty looks; Dean grinned. [...] "I think Marylou was very, very wise leaving you, Dean," said Galatea. "For years now you haven't had any sense of responsibility for anyone. You've done so many awful things I don't know what to say to you." [...] "You have absolutely no regard for anybody but yourself and your damned kicks. All you think about is what's hanging between your legs and how much money or fun you can get out of people and then you just throw them aside. Not only that but you're silly about it. It never occurs to you that life is serious and there are people trying to make something decent out of it instead of just goofing all the time." That's what Dean was, the HOLY GOOF.<sup>90</sup>

In this point, it is still notable that Sal tries to stand up for Dean as others blame him for his mistakes. Sal's loyalty to Dean is therefore present even when other people have bad assumptions about him. As Dean is facing the criticism from Galatea, his friend's wife, she emphasises to Dean that "life is serious and there are people trying to make something decent out of it,"<sup>91</sup> which should not be perceived as a critique of a tramp lifestyle in general, but rather

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<sup>88</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 175–176.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 176.

Dean's criminality and recklessness towards others. Galatea most probably only makes a stand for Camille, whom Dean was supposed to leave.

Furthermore, Dean's hobby is driving across the country in stolen cars and he is responsible for stealing hundreds of them: "Man, that's a detective's car and every precinct in town knows my fingerprints from the year that I stole five hundred cars. You see what I do with them, I just want a ride, man! I gotta go!"<sup>92</sup> In other situations, Dean is not bothered by the fact that he is a thief and that someone might desperately need a car that has been stolen from them. Dean, only caring about himself, is always excited about every car he steals: " 'This one is a beaut!' he whispered in my ear. 'The other one coughed too much – I left it at the crossroads, saw that lovely parked in front of a farmhouse. Took a spin in Denver. Come on, man, let's all go riding.' "<sup>93</sup>

One might wonder whether Sal is to become a victim of Dean's disrespectful actions. Surprisingly, the moment when Sal actually starts doubting about Dean is nearly at the end of the story, when Dean decides to leave Sal with a serious illness in Mexico City, making excuses that he has to "drive back to Inez in New York tonight if the car holds out"<sup>94</sup> and "get back to [his] life".<sup>95</sup> Sal's statement in a disappointed tone seems to give the reader a clue that the belief in a real friendship with Dean has been lost:

I didn't know who he was any more, and he knew this, and sympathized, and pulled the blanket over my shoulders. "Yes, yes, yes, I've got to go now. Old fever Sal, good-by." [...] 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.<sup>96</sup>

In the end, even Dean's character proved not to be able to remain loyal in a long-term friendship, even though his earlier actions indicated his loyalty and kindness to close friends. Dean, insisting on getting back to his life, simply relies on himself only and leaves Sal after spending weeks on the road together.

Concerning Dean's true nature and controversial character, depicting his vices might contribute to the negative reception of the Beats. The readers perceived, and maybe still perceive, Dean as a true embodiment of the Beat counter-culture. Moreover, some people also mistook Dean's

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<sup>92</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 203.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 201.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 276.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

character for Kerouac. Steve Wilson, in his critical essay “The Author as Spiritual Pilgrim,” wrote:

..., many readers assumed that free-wheeling car thief and philosopher Dean Moriarty, the king of the American road, was in fact a fictionalized version of the author. Joyce Johnson, whose *Minor Characters* recounts her life with Kerouac at the beginning of his fame, notes that Kerouac was almost immediately set upon by young people wanting to tap into Dean’s boundless energy. Men wrote to him sharing their exploits with the law. Women threw themselves at the man they thought to be the sexual dynamo represented by Dean.<sup>97</sup>

Reflecting on the fact that Kerouac admired Cassady in real life and that *On the Road* was intended to focus on Cassady, Kerouac might not have expected being mistaken for Dean, which created stereotypes about Kerouac and the whole Beat Generation. Dean’s attitude to women and friends along with his crimes, as Wilson wrote in his essay, is definitely something that could influence people in their lifestyle and attitudes. Even though Sal’s character might sometimes evoke negative assumptions about tramp lifestyle too, it is more expected of Dean’s character to leave some kind of bitterness in readers. Therefore, Kerouac’s decision to depict Dean in such a way was a decision that influenced the conception of a tramp in the American mid-century society: Careless, poor, unfaithful, but happy man with short-term jobs and joyriding in stolen cars might be one example of impression that a reader might get.

Yet, popularity of *On the Road* was inevitable, mainly because of the positive review by Millstein. As has been previously mentioned, Kerouac had to omit some parts of the story due to the censorship and yet there are still mentions of Dean stealing cars and being unfaithful to several women. If that is something allowed to be presented in a book and available for everyone, then the Beat literature really kept its position in American literature. As the novel in general is a contrast to the American society norms, it most probably encouraged a lot of people to resist these social norms. However, at the same time, the introduced lifestyle of a tramp represents at least two of the key American values – freedom and individuality. Freedom, independence, modesty and sincerity is a set of attributes that could also be perceived by a reader of the novel. Another positive effect of Dean’s character might be the fact that despite his criminality and recklessness, his enthusiasm and life energy might have inspired countless readers and help to loosen strict society norms. Therefore, even though the novel might oppose

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<sup>97</sup> Steve Wilson, “The Author as Spiritual Pilgrim: The Search for Authenticity,” in *The Beat Generation: Critical Essays*, ed. Kostas Myrsiades (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2002), 80–81.



the 1950s and 1960s American society norms, the general support of the American core values is present.

### 3.2 Tramp's opposition to consumerist society in *On the Road*

The previous chapter mentioned Kerouac's concept of a tramp and explained the lifestyle as such. In *On the Road*, it is possible to notice that certain passages carry a message about anti-consumerism and anti-materialism. They might not be noticeable at first, therefore a deeper analysis is required to see the opposition to consumerism and materialism in the text. One of the first aspects present in the novel is the description and admiration of the American western and southern landscape. Kerouac describes that the more west the tramp goes, the more beautiful the landscape is: "Now I could see Denver looming ahead of me like the Promised Land, way out there beneath the stars, across the prairie of Iowa and the plains of Nebraska, and I could see the greater vision of San Francisco beyond, like jewels in the night."<sup>98</sup> In this excerpt, there is also a possible message that the west, contrary to the heavily industrialized east, is a pure and untouched land. Moreover, describing nature phenomena with the attribute of the west such as "the warm midwest sun"<sup>99</sup> or "the western stars"<sup>100</sup> proves that Sal distinguishes between the east and the west.

Sal's weakness for the American west is also expressed by people to which Sal attributes the western spirit. For Sal, Dean Moriarty is "a sideburned hero of the snowy West".<sup>101</sup> When speaking of Dean's criminality, Sal again compares it to the west as "a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy; it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains..."<sup>102</sup> Or a cowboy that definitely impressed Sal as an embodiment of the west: "I said to myself, Wham, listen to that man laugh. That's the West, here I am in the West. [...] It was the spirit of the West sitting right next to me."<sup>103</sup>

Sal's admiration of the western cities and countries is a proof that the Beats might not only have admired the west for religious and artistic purposes, but also as a place to hide and have a rest from a consumerist society. Not only the American west, but the "magic south"<sup>104</sup> as well seems to be an attractive destination. Mexico, similarly to the American west, is presented as a place

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<sup>98</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 15.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 241.

where time and money do not control people's lives. That is why Dean and Sal feel astonished after their arrival to Mexico:

...Sal, I am digging the interiors of these homes as we pass them – these gone doorways and you look inside and see beds of straw and little brown kids sleeping and stirring to wake, their thoughts congealing from the empty mind of sleep, their selves rising, and the mothers cooking up breakfast in iron pots, and dig them shutters they have for windows and the old men, the *old men* are so cool and grand and not bothered by anything. There's no *suspicion* here, nothing like that. Everybody's cool, everybody looks at you with such straight brown eyes and they don't say anything, just *look*, and in that look all of the human qualities are soft and subdued and still there.<sup>105</sup>

Here, Dean presents his resentment towards American busy lifestyle full of concerns and admires the slow and relaxed Mexican life. Therefore, the opposition to American society norms that Beats stood for is ever-present in *On the Road*. Sal and Dean perceive the west and the south as the contrast to materialistic America and even think of the Mexico as a magical place: “We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed the extent of the magic.”<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, a certain respect to Native Americans is also expressed in the novel:

...These people were unmistakably Indians and were not at all like the Pedros and Panchos of silly civilized American lore – they had high cheekbones, and slanted eyes, and soft ways; they were not fools, they were not clowns; they were great, grave Indians and they were the source of mankind and the fathers of it. The waves are Chinese, but the earth is an Indian thing.<sup>107</sup>

By saying that “the earth is an Indian thing,”<sup>108</sup> Kerouac probably admits that the American land belongs and has always belonged to native inhabitants and that the American consumerist society destroys the land of their predecessors.

In the novel, there are also aspects of Dean's character that could be contrasted with the American society. Dean is also presented as someone living for the present moment. He does not bother with the past and is not afraid of the future. One excerpt from the book shows the absurdity of people worrying because of the future and Dean reacts to it:

They have worries, they're counting the miles, they're thinking about where to sleep tonight, how much money for gas, the weather, how they'll get there – and

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<sup>105</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 253.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 251.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 255–256.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 255.

all the time they'll get there anyway, you see. But they need to worry and betray time with urgencies false and otherwise, purely anxious and whiny, their souls really won't be at peace unless they can latch on to an established and proven worry...<sup>109</sup>

Dean apparently does not count the miles or care about money and the weather. He knows that all these things will be taken care of and having worries about it would ruin the present moment. Here, Dean's opinion contrasts with the materialistic society always striving for better days and worrying about the future, whereas Dean accepts the presence as it is. This might be one of the reasons why Dean is not bothered by the consequences of his actions.

Another depiction of Dean's attitude against materialism or consumerism is notable when Sal and Dean are together in already mentioned Mexico. Dean, without hesitation, gives his wristwatch to Mexican children that are astonished by the timepiece and exchanges it for a little crystal:

Then Dean poked in the little girl's hand for "the sweetest and purest and smallest crystal she has personally picked from the mountain for me." He found one no bigger than a berry. And he handed her the wristwatch dangling. Their mouths rounded like the mouths of chorister children. The lucky little girl squeezed it to her ragged breaststubs. They stroked Dean and thanked him.<sup>110</sup>

This act of kindness might be closely related to the previously mentioned fact that Dean lives in the present moment. Therefore, giving up his wristwatch means no bother to him, since the time it shows is of no significance to him. This passage also nicely depicts the contrast between eastern American and southern American, i.e. Mexican, lifestyle. The girls' excitement about the wristwatch might be simply explained as that it is something they rarely encounter in their lives. Even though it is a common item in consumerist America, such a wristwatch might be an unnecessary thing in their community that lives a more relaxed life than easterners do.

From the general impression of the novel, Kerouac successfully expressed the beauty of American landscape, cities and respect to westerners, southerners or Native Americans. In the novel, the resentment towards consumerism and materialism is presented non-violently and sometimes hidden so well it is hard to find and criticise such opposition. Ways to protest against the society and its norms are countless and the Beats are known to have expressed their dissatisfaction through their literature, which makes *On the Road* a demonstration of what consumerists miss by being focused on jobs, money, cars and electronics.

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<sup>109</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, Ibid. 189–190.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 272.

## 4 KEROUAC'S TRAMP LIFESTYLE ASPECTS COMPARED TO OTHER SIMILAR LIFESTYLES

Following the previous chapter that analysed the concept of a tramp that Kerouac introduced in 1957, it might be beneficial to set the tramp lifestyle into a broader context and compare it with other subcultures or cultures also carrying a feature of travelling and naming different or similar versions of a tramp. With brief definitions, a discussion is led to answer two questions: to which extent is Kerouac's concept of a tramp unique and how Kerouac's concept of a tramp influenced following similar lifestyles.

After analysing Kerouac's version of a traveller, a tramp, it could be compared with so-called hoboes. Reflecting on authors such as Jack London and his *The Road*, or John Steinbeck and his novel *Of Mice and Men*, it can be assumed that the depiction of a tramp by Kerouac is not the first occurrence of such a lifestyle in the American literature. Not only does *The Road* contain the term "tramp," but in the time of Jack London, hoboes were a more common version of a tramp. Contrary to a tramp, a hobo, as the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries describe, is "a person who travels from place to place looking for work, especially on farms."<sup>111</sup> The main difference is that a hobo travels in order to get a job, while a tramp's main intention is not to travel in order to find job. However, even Sal in *On the Road* once mentions he is willing to set off only if he is able to "come back with enough money to support [him]self in [his] aunt's house while [he] finished [his] book."<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, it might be misleading, since Sal's journeys have a completely different motive, because he could simply find a job in New York where he lives. What can be found as a common feature of London's and Kerouac's version of a tramp, is, for instance, that according to London, "the greatest charm of a tramp-life is the absence of monotony" and "the hobo never knows what is going to happen the next moment; hence, he lives only in the present moment."<sup>113</sup> It also seems that London had the same desire to quit the monotonous life in one place and rather live and work while on the road: "I went on 'The Road' because I couldn't keep away from it; because I hadn't the price of the railroad fare in my jeans; because I was so made that I couldn't work all my life on 'one same shift'..."<sup>114</sup> Or as Sal in *On the Road* similarly puts it: "I was a young writer and I wanted to take off. Somewhere along the line I knew there'd be girls, visions, everything; somewhere along the

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<sup>111</sup> "Hobo, *noun*," Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/hobo?q=hobo>.

<sup>112</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 10.

<sup>113</sup> Jack London, *The Road* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), 54.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 120.

line the pearl would be handed to me.”<sup>115</sup> The strongest motive to set off on the road in both cases seems to be the desire to leave the stereotypical tedium of everyday life.

The main characters, George and Lennie, in *Of Mice and Men* from John Steinbeck could also be considered hoboes according to the dictionary definition, even though the novel does not mention it directly: “I see hundreds of men come by on the road an’ on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an’ that same damn thing in their heads. Hundreds of them. They come, an’ they quit an’ go on...”<sup>116</sup> The same theme of constant migration for work is also expressed in one of George’s speeches to Lennie:

Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don’t belong no place. They come to a ranch an’ work up a stake and then they go inta town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they’re poundin’ their tail on some other ranch. They ain’t got nothing to look ahead to.<sup>117</sup>

The fact is that both main characters travel together across the USA and try to find a job on farms in order to earn enough money and buy a house, which, for them, seems to be a dream difficult to reach. George’s speech shares a few similarities with what Kerouac depicts in his novel: the loneliness and not-belongingness, which was already mentioned. The continuous spending of money and the inability to stay in one place are also features to be found in *On the Road*. However, Sal Paradise does not really dream of a home he would have one day and lives in the present instead, unlike Lennie and George who are focused on their future.

Besides hoboes, who preceded Kerouac’s tramp, it is possible to research features of a tramp lifestyles that followed. As the Hippie subculture was already briefly introduced in the theoretical part, the aspect of “dropping out” could be assumed as a possible common feature with the tramp lifestyle, since a part of dropping out was not to strive for a well-paid job or power. However, the Hippies are not renowned for being tramps and this kind of lifestyle is not attributed to them, perhaps only if Ken Kesey and his trips with Merry Pranksters were to be dated into the Hippie era, then they could be seen as a Hippie version of a tramp group travelling together across the USA.

Looking further into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an interesting contrast could be with the Yuppies, who emerged in 1980s. A yuppie is, according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, “a young

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<sup>115</sup> Kerouac, *On the Road*, 10.

<sup>116</sup> John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (London: Mandarin, 1996), 78.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 14.

professional person who lives in a city and earns a lot of money that they spend on expensive and fashionable things.”<sup>118</sup> As yuppies dedicate their life to earning money and spending it on expensive things, it seems that the society the Beats rebelled against became even more materialistic as the economy increased more and more during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though the economy grows and the number of people rejecting materialism diminishes, the contrast between consumerism and anti-consumerism still perseveres.

Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not difficult to find certain features of a tramp lifestyle trends. Being a so-called digital nomad enables us to combine a well-paid and stable job with travelling owing to the modern technological devices such as smartphones or laptops. To support this claim, the definition from the Urban dictionary says that a digital nomad is someone “who derives income remotely and online, rather than from commuting to an office. This enables the digital nomad to not need a permanent home base, and she/he can travel anywhere at any time.”<sup>119</sup> Digital nomads can enjoy being in motion while travelling the world as a tramp and at the same time having a secure job like a yuppie. Recalling the character of Sal in *On the Road*, it is important to mention that apart from occasional jobs on the road, Sal is a writer and therefore could in a way work remotely. The problem is that Sal is dependent on places where a typewriter is since cannot take one with him, whereas a digital nomad can carry his or her laptop almost anywhere. Sal, as a writer, also has no assurance of stable income. Digital nomads, on the other hand, usually make enough money to buy a flight or bus tickets and there is no need to hitchhike. They also have the advantage of modern technology and can maintain relationships owing to social media or calls. Eventually, the spirit of travelling remains the same. Today, similarly to the Beats, people travel in order to take a break from the office and enjoy foreign cultures.

In conclusion, what should be taken into consideration is that the presence of a tramp character was in novels already written before *On the Road*. What makes the novel, and Kerouac’s version of a tramp so unique is the combination with Kerouac’s spontaneous writing style, making for a genuine novel that brought a new point of view on the Beat literature. The Beat literature and Kerouac’s novels had the ability to influence future generations, from the Hippie movement to modern travellers wishing to escape their stereotypical life.

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<sup>118</sup> “Yuppie, *noun*,” Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/yuppie?q=yuppie>.

<sup>119</sup> “Digital Nomad,” Urban Dictionary, accessed May 25, 2020, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Digital%20Nomad>.

## 5 CONCLUSION

As the aim of the thesis was to provide a theoretical background and to research the concept of the Beat Generation, the available literature enabled to successfully explain the topic along with appropriate context and explanations.

The theoretical part provided answers to the background of the Beat Generation, whose authors expressed their opposition to consumerism and materialism of the post-war society. The ambiguity of the term “Beat” caused different opinions on who truly is a Beat or not, along with the commentary by Allen Ginsberg, who even denied the existence of the Beat Generation. Jack Kerouac was also someone who did not call himself a Beat and rather considered it a media stereotype. Nevertheless, both Kerouac and Ginsberg are essential for the Beat Generation since Kerouac was prominent in the eyes of the society and the media and Ginsberg is responsible for initiating the Beat Generation movement. The reception of the Beat Generation was mainly in hands of mass media and critics. For the post-war American society, the Beat literature presented obscene and taboo topics. Not only were the Beats called juvenile delinquents and criticised for being alien to American culture, the criticism of the Beats reached to censorship trials and them being accused of obscenity and endangering American conformist society. On the other hand, all that was not in vain since the Beats persisted and therefore shaped the society through their literature that eventually loosened strict society norms. Most attention was paid to the Beats when Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* was published or when Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* won a trial on censorship. After researching Kerouac’s writing style and writing of *On the Road*, it became clearer why Kerouac is such an acclaimed Beat author. The inspiration he tried to gain from predecessor authors was nothing in comparison to the influence that Neal Cassady had on Kerouac’s writings. Moreover, Neal Cassady played a significant role in Kerouac’s life, his enthusiasm and life energy astonished Kerouac so much that some of his novels are about Cassady himself.

As the Beats were not only a literature movement, it was also possible to characterise the Beats in terms of their values and attitude to life. The Beats, as was found out, were characterised by individualism, which contrasted with the consumerist and materialistic post-war society. Some of the Beats also inclined to alternative and eastern religions and led a hedonistic lifestyle accompanied by drug experiments. Concerning the Hippie movement existence, it was not entirely dependent on the Beat Generation, but shared certain similarities. “Dropping out” could be partly perceived as an escape from the politics and norms of the society. Surprisingly, Beat

authors such as Ken Kesey, Timothy Leary or Allen Ginsberg were still active in the 1960s and also had an effect on the music culture, namely Ginsberg's friendship with Bob Dylan proved to be one of the things that held the fame of the Beat Generation a while longer. Contrary to this, it was discovered that Kerouac, although a renowned "King of the Beats," did not want to be associated with the upcoming Hippie subculture or to be an inspiration to young writers.

The practical part analysed tramp characters in Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* and the presence of in-text opposition to consumerism and materialism. The aim was to describe what the tramp life was like according to Kerouac and to support the claims by particular excerpts from the novel. Being a tramp might be attractive because of the freedom, friendships and solidarity of people, while the feeling of loneliness and saving up the last few dollars is a harsh reality that Kerouac also depicted. Eventually, Dean's character proved to be rather controversial with a significant, both positive and negative, influence on readers. As the concept and lifestyle of a tramp proved to be mostly contradictory to consumerist society, it was possible to research the novel for passages expressing the opposition to consumerist society. Researching the presence of opposition to consumerism and materialism therefore proved that Kerouac incorporated such attitudes into actions of characters and admiration of the western American landscape, so that a careful reader is able to notice it. The last chapter briefly compared Kerouac's concept of a tramp to American novels by Jack London and John Steinbeck, which proved that the topic of a tramp in novels had already been depicted by authors before Kerouac. Comparison of the tramp lifestyle with the Hippies and the Yuppies was also illustrated. The Hippies shared at least one similar feature of a tramp life, whereas the Yuppies were a strict opposite. The end of the chapter was dedicated to consideration of digital nomads, whose lifestyle is a convenient combination of both work and travel, as they are able to pay for travel expenses and have the time to travel around the world because they work remotely.



## 6 RESUMÉ

V teoretické části je obecně představena Beatnická generace. Beatníci byli američtí spisovatelé vyznačující se tím, že vzdorovali normám poválečné společnosti, konformitě, materialismu a konzumerismu. To vše s sebou přinášel nejen ekonomický vývoj poválečné společnosti. Za začátek celé Beatnické generace bývá nejčastěji označováno setkání několika autorů s Allenem Ginsbergem v roce 1944 během jejich studií na univerzitě. Zároveň ale až v roce 1952 vydal John Clellon Holmes, také označován za autora Beatníků, svůj román *Jed'*, který bývá označován jako první román beatnické literatury. Obvykle se mezi Beatniky řadí Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Lawrence Ferlinghetti a mnoho dalších, je však nejasné, zda se některý z nich za Beatnika opravdu považoval. Ginsberg i Kerouac se od celého hnutí distancovali, přesto se však ukázali jako dvě nejdůležitější osobnosti Beatnické generace. Kerouac byl díky úspěchu svého románu *Na Cestě* považován za „krále Beatníků“ a stojí tedy za zviditelněním Beatnické generace v roce 1957. Ginsberg hrál důležitou roli naopak v počátcích Beatnické generace a v udržování přátelství mezi autory. Zároveň bylo nejasné, co tedy označení ‚beat‘ znamenalo. Každý z autorů jej vnímal odlišně, ať už v negativním smyslu „poražené“ či „zbité generace“, nebo také smyslu pozitivním, jakožto „blažené generace“. Tuto pozitivní konotaci zastával zejména Jack Kerouac, a to hlavně proto, aby se odlišil od mladých rebelů zastávajících spíše negativní význam. V závěru lze tedy říci, že toto označení sloužilo převážně pro mediální účely, a ne Beatníkům samotným.

Jedna z podkapitol se zabývá vnímáním a kritikou Beatníků v americké poválečné společnosti. Beatníci byli společností i médií vnímáni především negativně, nejen jako hnutí spisovatelů, ale také jako jakýsi sociální jev odporující společenským normám. Jeden z momentů, kdy se ukázala neochota tolerovat literaturu Beatníků, byl soudní proces Ginsbergova *Kvílení*. Kopie básní byly v nakladatelství City Lights zabaveny policií a Lawrence Ferlinghetti, majitel tohoto nakladatelství, čelil obvinění z prodeje obscénní literatury. Ginsberg nakonec soudní spor vyhrál a tato událost tak do budoucna přispěla k méně přísným nárokům na cenzuru nejen beatnické literatury. Další významnou událostí bylo vydání Kerouacova románu *Na Cestě* v roce 1957. Kerouacova kniha byla ihned proslavena díky vychvalující recenzi od Gilberta Millsteina v tisku *The New York Times*. Millstein vyzdvihl Kerouacův styl psaní a Kerouaca postavil do čela Beatnické generace. Vnímání Beatnické generace tedy bylo převážně v rukou médií a kritiků, kteří utvářeli povědomí o autorech.

Následující podkapitola nastínila vývoj Kerouacova stylu psaní spolu s psáním románu *Na cestě*. Kerouac se zpočátku pokoušel psát podle autorů, kterými se inspiroval. To ale znamenalo psát podle určitých pravidel a to Kerouacovi nesvědčilo. Nejvýznamnější událostí, která měla zásadní vliv na změnu jeho stylu psaní, byly dopisy od Neala Cassadyho, ve kterých Kerouac obdivoval Cassadyho přirozený styl psaní s důrazem na detail. Postupný vývoj psacího stylu Jacka Kerouaca měl zásadní vliv na psaní románu *Na cestě*, který byl psán v průběhu několika let. Kerouac rozpracoval několik verzí tohoto románu, a i v konečné verzi bylo zapotřebí úprav ať už kvůli členění textu nebo po obsahové stránce kvůli zneuctění jmen některých postav. Způsob, kterým Kerouac nakonec psal, se nazývá spontánní próza a podstata tohoto stylu psaní je velice podobná proudu vědomí. Kerouacův posun ve stylu psaní lze také vidět v jeho postupném uzavírání se do sebe sama. Kerouac se zprvu ve svém psaní zaměřoval na jiné osoby, zejména Neala Cassadyho zatímco později se Kerouac ve svých románech zaměřoval více sám na sebe. Jako důvod se uvádí Kerouacova neschopnost poprat se s přehnanou pozorností médií a problémy s alkoholem. Kerouac taktéž napsal i návod pro psaní spontánní prózou, jehož rady nabádají pisatele ke spontánní volbě slov. Dle Kerouaca netřeba dopředu rozmýšlet, co má být napsáno a ani netřeba se vracet k tomu, co bylo napsáno. Všechny tyto aspekty měly zásadní vliv na konečnou podobu díla *Na cestě*, které Kerouaca proslavilo. Jedním z důvodů může být právě spontánní styl psaní v kombinaci upřímností a otevřeností ke čtenáři.

Další teoretický výzkum se zaměřil na aspekty životního stylu Beatníků. Beatníci, krom svého odporu vůči konzumní společnosti, zastávali individualismus a zaměřovali se na spiritualitu a duševní vlastnictví, zatímco odporovali názoru, že osobní úspěch bývá zaručen pouze bohatstvím. Toto zaměření se na vlastní osobu Beatníky často vedlo k vyznávání Buddhismu a cestám do Kalifornie. Kalifornie byla považována za centrum východních náboženství díky imigrantům z Asie, kteří se usazovali na západním pobřeží USA. Západ zároveň pro Beatníky ztělesňoval zemi nezničenou konzumní společností. Například Allen Ginsberg byl věrně zasvěcen Buddhismu a zároveň byl jedním z básníků Beatnické generace, kteří v San Francisku citovali své básně před diváky. U Kerouaca naopak ke konci jeho života mohl mít Buddhismus na jeho myšlení spíše negativní vliv, nejspíše kvůli alkoholu a drogám. Užívání drog nebylo pro Beatnickou generaci nic neobvyklého. Krom Kerouaca a Ginsberga, například také William Burroughs užíval drogy při psaní svých děl. Timothy Leary a Ken Kesey se účastnili legálních pokusů s LSD. Jednou z významných událostí pak byl výlet psychedelicky pomalovaným

autobusem Kena Keseyho a Merry Pranksters, kde užívání drog a jejich šíření bylo jednou z hlavních náplní cest z jednoho pobřeží na druhé.

Tímto bylo navázáno na hnutí Hippies, které působilo zejména v 60. letech 20. století. Hippies sdíleli s Beatnickou generací mnoho stejných rysů, a i díky tomu byli někteří Beatnici v tomto období stále aktivní. Například Allen Ginsberg se účastnil politických protestů a pomáhal v boji proti cenzuře. Naopak Kerouac, podobně jako u Beatnické generace, nechtěl být asociován ani s nastupující generací a nerad byl vzorem pro jiné autory. Někteří Hippies zastávali tzv. „dropping out“, jehož podstatou bylo neusilovat za každou cenu o bohatství, moc a nápravu politiky. Toto je jeden ze zásadních rysů, který je velice podobný postoji Beatnické generace. Beatnická generace měla také vliv na hudební průmysl 60. let. Zmíněn byl významný americký muzikant Bob Dylan, který se inspiroval Kerouacovým dílem a Dylanovo přátelství s Ginsbergem zviditelnilo Beatnickou generaci v 60. letech.

Centrální kapitola práce zkoumá pojetí tuláka v románu *Na Cestě*. Kerouacovo ztvárnění jeho cest po USA obsahovalo jak světlé, tak stinné stránky života na cestě. Neúspěšné stopování aut, spaní na lavičce či loučení se s lidmi jsou aspekty života na cestě, se kterými se potýkal hlavní hrdina románu, Sal Paradise. Naopak ale Kerouac také vyobrazil solidaritu lidí, zejména řidičů, kteří nesčetněkrát vezli Sala na jeho cestě po USA. Kerouac ve své knize ztvárnil Neala Cassadyho jako Deana Moriartyho, jehož postava je svých charakterem odlišná od hlavního hrdiny a poskytuje zcela jiný úhel pohledu na život tuláka. Dean v *Na Cestě* představuje bezohledného rebela, zloděje aut a nevěrného muže. Přes to vše ho však Sal obdivuje pro jeho životní energii a nadšení. Dean je zároveň ztělesněním svobody, upřímnosti a nezávislosti. Zklamání z Deanovy povahy přichází až v závěru děje, kdy Dean opustí vážně nemocného Sala a vrací se zpět domů řešit své vlastní problémy. V knize je také přítomný tulákův odpor vůči konzumní společnosti. Kerouac toto ztvárnil převážně skrze obdiv západní přírody a lidí žijících na západě či jihu USA. Při cestě do Mexika označuje jih jako magický. Skrze postavu Deana je také možno sledovat důraz na to žít přítomným okamžikem, netrápit se minulostí a nestrachovat se o budoucnost. Přesně tyto neopodstatněné obavy jsou v kontrastu s Deanovým bezstarostným přístupem k životu a je to jeden z důkazů, že není otrokem materialistické a konzumní společnosti.

Závěr praktické části byl zaměřen na aspekty životního stylu tuláka dle Kerouaca v porovnání s jinými podobnými životními styly. Důležité zjištění bylo, že postavy tuláka podobné té od Kerouaca byly vyobrazovány již dříve. V dílech od Jacka Londona či Johna Steinbecka se

jednalo spíše o takzvané hoboos, kteří cestovali za prací, ale i ti mají společné rysy spolu s tulákem od Kerouaca. Ty nejdůležitější aspekty jsou pak zejména touha opustit každodenní stereotyp života a také neochota setrvat delší dobu na jednom místě. Krom hnutí Hippies, zajímavé bylo porovnání s generací Yuppies z 80. let 20. století. Ti se vyznačovali dobře placeným zaměstnáním, přičemž své peníze utráceli za luxusní zboží. Obecně řečeno, Yuppies byli materialisté a konzumeristé, přesně to, vůči čemu se Beatnici a tuláci vyhrazovali. Při hledání moderního tuláka je možno jmenovat digitální nomády. Jsou to lidé, kteří kombinují život na cestách se stabilním a dobře placeným zaměstnáním, které vykonávají vzdáleně díky práci s mobilními telefony a přenosnými počítači. V závěru lze tedy říci, že všechny výše zmíněné druhy tuláctví a cestování mají jedno společné, a to opustit každodenní stereotyp a najít svobodu na cestách.

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