A STUDY ON THE MAIN CHARACTER’S ALIENATION IN JACK KEROUAC’S ON THE ROAD

A SARJANA PENDIDIKAN FINAL PAPER

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Sarjana Pendidikan Degree in English Language Education

By
Gian Setyaningrum
Student Number: 111214073

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
YOGYAKARTA
2016
A STUDY ON THE MAIN CHARACTER'S ALIENATION
IN JACK KEROUAC'S ON THE ROAD

By
Gian Setyaningrum
Student Number: 111214073

Approved by

Drs. Concilianus Laos Mbato, M.A., Ed.D.
November 14th, 2016
A Sarjana Pendidikan Final Paper on

A STUDY ON THE MAIN CHARACTER’S ALIENATION IN JACK KEROUACK’S ON THE ROAD

By

Gian Setyaningrum
Student Number: 111214073

Defended before the Board Examiners
On December 15, 2016
and Declared Acceptable

Board of Examiners

Chairperson: Yohana Veniranda, S.Pd., M.Hum., M.A., Ph.D.
Secretary: Christina Laksmita Anandari, S.Pd., Ed.M.
Member: Drs. Concilianus Laos Mbato, M.A., Ed.D.
Member: Dr. Antonius Herujiyanto, M.A.
Member: Truly Almendo Pasaribu, S.S., M.A.

Yogyakarta, 1 December 2016
Faculty of Teachers Training and Education
Sanata Dharma University
Dean,

Rohandi, Ph.D.
STATEMENT OF WORK’S ORIGINALITY

I honestly declare that this thesis, which I have written, does not contain the work or parts of the work of other people, except those cited in the quotations and the references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, 1 December 2016

The Writer

Gian Setyaningrum

111214073

iv
LEMBAR PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN
PUBLIKASI KARYA ILMIAH UNTUK KEPENTINGAN AKADEMIS

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini, saya mahasiswa Universitas Sanata Dharma:

Nama : Gian Setyaningrum
NIM : 111214073

Demi pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan saya memberikan kepada Perpustakaan Universitas Sanata Dharma, Karya ilmiah saya yang berjudul:

A STUDY ON THE MAIN CHARACTER’S ALIENATION
IN JACK KEROUAC’S ON THE ROAD

Beserta perangkat yang diperlukan (bila ada). Dengan demikian saya memberikan kepada Perpustakaan Universitas Sanata Dharma hak untuk menyimpan, mengalihkan dalam bentuk media lain, mengelolanya dalam bentuk pangkalan data, mendistribusikan secara terbatas, dan mempublikasikannya di Internet atau media lain untuk kepentingan akademis tanpa perlu meminta ijin ataupun memberikan royalti kepada saya selama tetap mencantumkan nama saya sebagai penulis.

Demikian pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sebenarnya.
Dibuat di Yogyakarta
Pada tanggal: 1 December 2016
Yang menyatakan

( Gian Setyaningrum )
ABSTRACT

Setyaningrum, Gian. (2016). A Study on Main Character’s Alienation in Jack Kerouac's On The Road. Yogyakarta: English Language Education Study Program, Department of Language and Arts Education Faculty of Teachers Training and Education, Sanata Dharma University.

The term alienation is currently used to describe objectively observable states of separateness occurring in human groups. Until early in this century the term was used within psychiatry as a loose generic category describing various states of pathological isolation and madness. At one point, human beings can experience alienation in their environment. Alienation can happen in schools, offices, and neighborhood or even in the family. In literary works alienation can be experienced by the character. This study discussed Sal Paradise, the major character of the novel On The Road by Jack Kerouac. This study focused on analyzing the Sal’s experiences which leads him into alienation.

The problem formulation is “what dimensions of alienation are found in the major character of novel On The Road?” The objective of the study was to describe Sal’s alienation using Seeman’s theory. The object of the study is alienation of Sal Paradise. To achieve the aims of this study employed a library study. This study applied psychological approach to identify Sal’s alienation. The study used the theory character by Forster, and Seeman’s theory about five dimension of alienation.

The result of this study shows that Sal’s experiences lead him into alienation. The writer found all dimensions of alienation based on Seeman’s theory were experienced by the character.

Keywords: Alienation, Sal Paradise, Seeman
ABSTRAK


Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pengalaman-pengalaman Sal membawanya ke keterasingan. Penulis menemukan semua dimensi keterasingan berdasarkan teori Seeman dialami oleh karakter.

Kata Kunci: Alienation, Sal Paradise, Seeman

PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special gratitude and honor are dedicated to God, who makes my journey meaningful and strengthens me in finishing my final paper. In particular, I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to my advisor, Drs. Concilianus Laos Mbato, M.A., Ed.D., who patiently guided me in my writing process. I would also express my gratitude to Paulus Kuswandono, Ph.D, for supporting me in the proses of finishing my final paper. I would also like to express my gratitude to all of the lecturers and the staff of ELESP Sanata Dharma University.

My deepest thankfulness goes to my parents, Kusbandi, S.E. and Rumiyati, S.Pd., as well as, it goes to my brother, Rahma Reyhan, my cats and also my big family who never stops inspiring me to be one of their members.

I am grateful for my best friends who somehow make me grow better; Reza Raditya, Dewi N. Cahyani, *mama aerobic* (samon, dyas,ulan, tari, piwi, mege and diva) and Mbak Nadia. I also thank to dearest member of *Sosialita Lippo*: Riri, Heni, and Joko for the great times and for always supporting me no matter what.

Gian Setyaningrum
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL PAGES</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF WORK’S ORIGINALITY</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMBAR PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN PUBLIKASI</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Background of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Approach of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II DISCUSSION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Review of Related Literature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Psychological Approach</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2. Theory Character and Characterization</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3. Seeman’s Theory of Alienation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3.1. Powerlessness</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3.2. Meaninglessness</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3.3. Normlessness</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3.4. Isolation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3.5. Self-estrangement</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI*
## 2.2. Finding and Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1. Meaninglessness</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2. Self-estrangement</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3. Normlessness</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4. Isolation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.5. Powerlessness</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER III CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsection</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Conclusion</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Recommendation</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REFERENCES

- Appendix

### APPENDICES

- The Summary of *On The Road*       | 39   |
- The Biography of Jack Kerouac      | 41   |
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study and approach of the study. Background of the study provides general information about the topic discussed and the problem formulation. The topic discussed is the Dean’s alienation in the novel On The Road. The approach of study describes the approach and procedure of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

Long ago, Aristotle expressed that “man is essentially a social animal by nature”. He cannot live without society, if he does; so he is either beast or God. Man is a social animal because his nature makes him so. All his human qualities such as: to think, to enquire, to learn language, to play and work only developed in human society. Man has many needs and necessities. Society fulfills not only his physical needs and determines his social nature but has also determined his personality and guide the course of development of human mind.

Society creates human attitudes, beliefs, morals, ideals, and thereby creates individual personality. All this developed through interaction with others. One cannot be a normal being in isolation. His nature forces him to live with his fellow. But, human beings can experience alienation in their environment. Alienation can happen in schools, offices, and neighborhood or even in the
family. Alienation is widespread and can be seen everywhere, even in this university we might be ever experienced alienation. The writer has experienced it in the process of making this final paper. The writer alienated herself from her social life in order to finishing her study in this university. There are many experiences that make the writer curious this problem so that the writer chooses this topic for her final paper. The definition of alienation itself according to Keniston (1965) is the feeling of being isolated from certain aspects of one’s environment (p. 20).

Leite (2009) state that psychologists use the term alienation to refer to an extraordinary variety of psychological disorders, including loss of self, anxiety, states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, loneliness, atomization, powerlessness, isolation, pessimism and the loss of beliefs or values (p. 180). From those definitions, the writer concludes that alienation is the process which the personal and primary relations become loose. Therefore, the alienated person finds himself isolated and feels that the society where he belongs is not so much his own. The alienated person comes to believe that the group cannot fulfill expectations and ambitions any longer.

According to Seeman (1959) alienation is constituted by characteristic like powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement. These characteristics are responsible for the loss autonomy of the individual. An alienated person can express his alienation feeling in a variety of ways (p. 788).

Wellek and Warren (1956) say that literature repents life and life is social reality and this world becomes the object of literary imitation (p. 94). Literature as
a work of art is a medium to retell the reality experienced by the author using certain expression. Generally, the author represents reality with its complexity and gives perception into their artworks. One of the artwork which represents reality is novel. James (1978) says that the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life (p. 50)

Novel as one of literary works becomes one alternative for the writer to narrate his experiences. The author writes his experiences based on era and period in which he lives. In literary works, alienation can be experienced by the characters. A novel which provides alienated characters is authored by Jack Kerouac’s entitled On The Road (1957).

There are some reasons why On The Road is chosen for this study. The first one, the writer is interested in the author’s life experience. The second reason is that the writer wants to know deeper on Beat Generation lifestyle because the author is one of member of that movement. The third reason is the writer has eagerness to learn more about alienation, because the writer has experienced alienation in her lives.

Jack Kerouac’s novel On the road is about the narrator Sal Paradise; embarking on a personal journey across America in order to understand if living life is possible solely in pursuit of the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being. Set in a post-world war II scene, the exuberant yet dramatic natures of the settings are essentially used to allow an insight into Kerouac’s central idea, of “Beat”, his personal search for freedom and enlightenment in a conventional, highly conformed society. Kerouac also brings in ideas such as self-discovery and
adventure and these ideas are expressed through the way, in which the lead characters, Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise venture cross-country, attempting to escape the “repressive” East, to find the promise of freedom from Mexico and the road itself.

*On The Road* (1957) is an interesting novel because it presents an autobiography of the author. The most notable aspect of Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road* is the author’s willingness to describe his own behavior and attitudes in ways that reject traditional values, but enable him to make observation about America.

In America, things like excessive drinking and to an interest in jazz and racial mixing, which would have been viewed negatively in the 1950’s, but not today. Kerouac well known as part of literary movement—the Beats—whose reject traditional value. Because Kerouac rejected traditional values, *On The Road* was very controversial, but it was also influential.

The main theme of the novel is the search of identity and belief on the road. The act of going on the road is a kind of protest, turning against society and its conventional moral codes. This turning against society is a result of the Second World War. The world war psychologically affected the youth and they want to identify themselves somewhere, somehow. This is reflected in Kerouac’s novels. The search for self and individuality is the major theme in this novel.

According to Ligairi (2009) *On The Road* is the most vivid representation of the young generation, and the most influential book over the years to present day (p.140). The novel tells the story of Sal Paradise—Jack Kerouac’s alter ego—
in a particular time of his life (1947-1950), time. Sal Paradise, fascinated by the insatiable madness of Dean Moriarty and his journey begin from New York, Detroit, Chicago to Denver, San Francisco, Seattle and many more places until Mexico City.

Regarding the alienation theory, Seeman (1959) said that there are five dimensions of alienation; powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and self-estrangement (p. 788). This study reports an analysis of major character experiences that represent Seeman’s five dimensions of alienation. Based on that topic, the writer formulates question of this study: what dimensions of alienation are found in the major character of the novel *On The Road*?

1.2 Approach of the Study

This study belongs to a library study. In this study, the writer used two kinds of sources, the primary and secondary source. The primary source is a novel by Jack Kerouac entitled *On The Road* (1957). The secondary sources are some psychological books and journals, and articles from electronic sources.

In this study, the writer uses the psychological approach. According to Abrams (1985), the psychological criticism is an approach that focuses on the work of literature which simply shows the personality of the author (p. 240). In addition, Guerin et al., (2005) stated that in the twentieth century, a psychologist named Sigmund Freud, developed psychoanalytic theories, which then becomes the base of psychological approach (p. 155). Freud’s psychoanalytic theory
involves the study of unconscious mind and human need, which is divided into three parts; id, ego, and superego (p. 156). In the line with Guerin, Abrams (1985) stated that Freud is likely to concern on the literature work in order to find out the personality of the author, since the theory was first developed to deal with the neuroses problem (p. 248).

According to Murfin & Ray (1998) the focus of psychological approach then changed in 1950. The approach is no longer focusing on the author personality but it focuses on the text and the readers (p. 143). The purpose of doing psychological criticism helps the reader to develop a reader-response criticism which means to help reader to grasp the message from the story.

In this study, there are some procedures to undertake. First, the writer conducted a library research to choose the novel which had a theme of the story about rejection toward society value. Then the novel entitled On The Road was chosen as the primary source of this study. After deciding the novel, the writer read the novel several times to get a deeper understanding. While reading the novel, the writer also noted some important information from each chapter to get data. In this process, the writer found the specific problem to be analyzed. The writer likes to analyze which are Dean Moriarty experiences that represent Seeman’s five dimension of alienation.

After the problem was formulated, the writer collected some references related to the study which was taken from books, articles and journals. In this study, the writer used psychological approach because this study dealt with psychological approach of the main character. Thus, the psychological theories
that were used in this study included alienation theory. At last, the writer drew conclusion, and suggestions of the study.
CHAPTER II
DISCUSSION

This chapter contains two parts. The first is review of related literature and the second is findings. The review of related literature provides the explanation of theories that is used in this study. Meanwhile, the finding discusses the analyses of the problem formulations.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

This subchapter is distinguished into three subchapters. The first subchapter shows the psychological approach related to study in the novel *On The Road*. The second and the third subchapter show the theory used in this study. The first theory is a character theory by Murphy (1998) and Abrams (1985). This theory proposes some technique to find from the story. The second theory is an alienation theory by Seeman (1959). The theory focuses on characteristic of human alienation.

2.1.1 Psychological Approach

Psychological approach is an approach that uses psychological theory to explain human personality, and behavior. Rohrberger and Woods (1971) define psychological approach as an approach that concentrates on all the region of human’s mind that are reflected in the form of symbolic words, thoughts, and
actions (p. 13-14). This approach is useful to locate and examine certain patterns of human psychology in literature work like novel.

According to Geiwitz (1976), there are two bases of psychological approach. The first is the scientific method in which all disputes are taken to court in the halls of science and evidence. The second is biology which encompasses all forms of human activities, such as seeing, hearing, feeling, eating, sleeping, loving, and thinking (p. 78). In the novel, the readers can examine the characters psychological side using those two bases. Therefore, throughout a novel, the readers can understand the characters’ experiences from different sense of feeling, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting that are drawn by the author.

As Moody (1986) believes that literary work may bring us back to the reality of human’s satisfaction, problems, feelings, personality, behavior and relationship (p. 2). Using psychological approach, the writer can examine the characters personality and behavior based on the character interactions with the others in the novel. Tjahyono (1988) believes that in the psychological field, a person’s story will be told by the psychic movement from all of the characters (p. 230). Specifically, the character’s thought, feeling and behavior can be traced more profoundly.

In this study, the writer uses the psychological approach to analyze the On The Road novel. This approach is chosen because it helps the writer to analyze the psychological aspect of the main character’s alienation which will be examined.

2.1.2 Theories on Character and Characterization

One way to have a better understanding about the novel is through analyzing the character of the novel. Through analyzing the character, the readers
can find the values found by the researcher. In addition, the theme of the novel is also supporting to understand the novel.

According to Abrams (1985), character is the person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say and what they do (p. 23). Roberts (1969) states although sometimes we use the word character synonymously with “person,” “human being,” and “literary figure,” more often we use it in reference to an individual’s personal qualities and characteristics (p. 10).

Forster (1974) differentiates character into flat character and round character. A flat character is built around a single idea or quality and is presented without much individualizing detail, and therefore can be fairly adequately describe in a single phrase or sentence. This kind of character remains stable or unchanged from beginning to the end of work. A round character is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity as a real person. This character may undergo radical change through a gradual process of motivation or through a crisis that is experienced (pp. 23-24).

While Forster differentiates characters into flat character and round character, Henkle (1977) divided characters into major character and minor character. He states that major characters are the characters that are mostly observed by the readers. Their function is as the key in comprehending the story. If the reader understands them, it means that the reader understand the main issue represent in the story (p. 90).
The author has many methods to characterizing the character in the character in the narrative works. Murphy (1972), classifies nine ways an author reveals the characters’ personalities. They are:

1. Personal description
   It means that the characters can be seen from the person’s physical appearance in the story.

2. Character as seen by another
   It means that the author describe him through the opinion given by other characters in the story.

3. Speech
   Through what the characters say in their speech can give the readers clue to understand the character deeper.

4. Past life
   The clue is given by describing the characters’ past life. The author gives comment of the character thought through their dialogue or through the other characters.

5. Conversation of others
   The conversation of the characters and other characters give a description of the characters’ personality.

6. Reactions
   The author gives problems to the characters. The reactions of the character toward the problems can be a media to the readers in understanding the characters’ personality.

7. Direct comment
   This is the author’s own comment about the characters he creates.
8. **Thought**

   The readers can understand subjectively about the characters’s thought and feeling.

9. **Manners**

   The characters’ manners, habits, and idiosyncrasies can be the way of understanding their personalities. (pp. 161-173)

   According to Abrams (1985), there are two methods in characterizing character, namely “showing” and “telling” (p. 21). In showing the characters, the author describes them through actions and dialogues, but he or she does not include the characters’ motives of the actions and dialogues. In telling the characters, the author describes not only the physical appearance, but also the motives and sometimes evaluates the characters. The author, for instance, also comments on what the character says and does.

   According to Klarer (1999), the explanatory characterization is used for “telling” method and dramatic characterization for “showing” method (pp. 19-20). In explanatory characterization, the author becomes the narrator’s comment and evaluation toward the character. The dramatic characterization, places the author as an obvious narrator. It means that the author describes the character’s utterances and actions without giving any comment or intervention.

   **2.1.3 Alienation**

   Our life nowadays is commonly characterized in terms of “alienation”. There is almost no aspect of contemporary life which has not been discussed in terms of alienation. In spite of the term’s popularity, few people have a very clear idea of precisely what it means. Alienation is a term which most people
understand in terms of their acquaintance with the writings of certain philosophers, psychologists and sociologist whose uses of the term are most significant.

Hegel’s and Marx’s discussions of alienation are of considerable significance and they constitute the background of good deal of contemporary ideas on alienation. It seem to a number of contemporary social scientists who have attempted to generalize about the way the term alienation functions, that, however different the contexts in which it is employed may be, its various uses still share a number of common features. Kaufman (1965), for example, offers the following general analysis; “To claim that a person is alienated is to claim that his relation to something else has certain features which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction” (p. 140). Feuer (1962) suggests that the word alienation is used to describe the subjective tone of self-destructive experience and states, “Alienation is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behavior in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively” (p. 132). Keniston (1965) contends that “Most usage of alienation share the assumption that some relationship or connection that once existed that is natural, desirable, or good has been lost (p. 390).

Marx has defined the concept alienation as a result of the exploitations and inequalities inherent within the class structure of society. The machines of the industry owned by bourgeoisie (capitalists), required the proletariat (working class) to provide cheap labor to produce goods for bourgeoisie’ profit. As the proletariat produced goods for the bourgeoisie, they became separated from the labor. They no longer owned the goods they produced. They enslaved themselves as laborers for a wage. In doing so, they become estranged from the goods, the
work involved, and indeed themselves. In this context, Kendall, Murray, & Linden (2007) conclude that alienation is “a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from other people and from oneself”. Mancionis & Gerber (2002) have summarized Marx’s analysis, capitalism produced workers’ alienation at four different levels alienation from act of working, alienation from the products of work, alienation from the products of work, alienation from other worker and from human potential.

According to Weber (1947), alienation developed from “the stiffing regulation and dehumanism that comes with expanding bureaucracy.” For Weber (1947), modern society reduced the individual to “only a small cog in ceaselessly moving mechanism that prescribes to him an endlessly fixed routine to march” (P.199).

Marx, Weber and others viewed alienation as the result of forces acting within society at large. Seeman (1959) however viewed alienation as acting at a more personal level, from the social psychology rather than structural standpoint. He described alienation as having five dimensions: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement.

2.1.3.1. Powerlessness

Powerlessness according to Kalekin-Fihman (1996) refers to a gap existing between what a person wants to do and what that person feels capable of doing (p. 97). Seeman’s nation of powerlessness (1959) builds on Marx’s view, arguing that “the worker is alienated to the extent that the prerogative and means of decision are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs” (p.784).
However, Seeman (1966) further incorporates the insight of the psychologist Julian Rotter (1954) as cited in (Neal & Collas, 2000 p. 20) distinguishes between internal control and external control. Internal control refers to how much a person believes is attributable to intrinsic factor such as skills, effort, and personality, whereas external control refers to a high premium placed on external factors such as chance or powerful others. Since the postmodern world differs considerably from the world that produced Marx and even Seeman, Geyer (1996) argues that the nature of powerlessness has changed, "where the core problem is no longer being unfree but being unable to select from among an over choice of alternatives for action, whose consequences one often cannot even fathom" (p. xxiii). The increase in complexity has led to an acute delay in feedback; in sociology terms, accurate feedback allows a change in action in order to reach desired goal.

Geyer (1996) contends that the postmodern problem of powerlessness is one of severe delayed feedback, since the postmodern world has become so complex that the casual link between action and outcomes obscured.

Geyer (1996) writes; the more complex one’s environment, the later one is confronted with the latent, and often unintended, consequences of one’s actions. Consequently, in view of this causality-obscuring time lag, both the ‘rewards’ and ‘Punishments’ for one actions increasingly tend to be viewed as random, often with apathy and alienation as a result. (p. xxiv)

2.1.3.2. Meaninglessness

According to Seeman (1959) meaninglessness refers to a person’s ability to make sense of events in which he engaged (p.786). Mannheim (1940) says that meaninglessness happened when the individual is unclear as to what ought to believe—when the individual’s minimal standards for clarity in decision-making
are not met (p. 59). According to Frankl (1985) that meaninglessness is mental condition of a person whose life is profoundly afflicted by the sense of loss, futility, and emptiness when the person is fail to fulfill the will to meaning of life (p. 30).

2.1.3.3. Normlessness

Geyer (1996) states, that norm can be conceived as transformation rule for changing inputs into outputs; they are guidelines for action or reaction under specific conditions (p. 200). Seeman (1959) employs the term normlessness in connection with a person for whom “there is a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals” (p. 786). Neal & Collas (2000) says that normlessness derives partly from conditions of complexity and conflict in which individual become unclear about the composition and enforcement of social norms. Sudden and abrupt changes occur in life conditions, and the norm that usual operate may no longer seem adequate as guidelines for conduct (p. 122). In this sentence, the contemporary world is notorious; in the United Stated, sexual promiscuity, youth violence and binge-drinking culture are all familiar example.

2.1.3.4. Isolation

The fourth alienation type of alienation refers to isolation. Seeman (1959) view social isolation mainly as isolation from the goals or beliefs of one’s culture (p. 787). As Schacht (1971) points out, the term ‘social’ is very ambiguous and can mean both ‘interpersonal and societal’. Social isolation can therefore be
constructed both as an absence of positive intrapersonal relationships and as a dissociation from the norms – or values, or culture – of one’s society (p. 157)

Isolation based on Kalekin-fishman (1996) refers to the perception of exclusion from a particular community and rewards offered by inclusion (p.97). Neal & Collas (2000) often mention the concept is alongside atomization, where individual lack of a sense of belonging (p. 144), Ulvinen (1998) said that despite the physical proximity induced by increased the urbanization in the twentieth century, and operates both on an individual and collective level: communities and subculture often develop on the fingers of “what seen as normal and human” (p. 261).

2.1.3.5. Self-estrangement

It is commonly believed that the idea of alienation occupies a position of great importance in the thought of “the existentialists”. Heidgger (1927) distinguishes two fundamental ways of living, one of which he calls “authentic” and the other “inauthentic”. Authentic existence is a self-determined existence shaped and made in full awareness of the conditions of human life (e.g. death and responsibility). Inauthentic existence is one which is absorbed in the present, determined by impersonal social conversations and refuses to face up to the conditions mentioned above (p. 222).

Self-estrangement according to Kalekin-Fishman (1996) is “the psychological stage denying one’s own interests – of seeking out extrinsically satisfying, rather than intrinsically satisfying activities” (p. 97). As Marx (1845)
says, self-estrangement is “the alienation of man’s essence, man’s loss objectivity and his loss of realness as self-discovery, manifestation of his nature, objection and realization” (p. 173).

According to Seeman (1959) Self-estrangement is when person feels alienated from others and society as a whole. This is where a person is first alienated from his products of labor. A person might then be alienated from the processes of work, which is an alienation from creativity (p. 788). Following this, self-estrangement can be defined when a person may feel alienated from themselves as a result of these previous two circumstances. Self-estrangement also affects people feelings others and themselves making them feel alienated from all aspects of their lives.

2.2 Finding and Discussion

This section is to show what the writer finds in the analysis of alienation in Kerouac’s *On The Road*. The analysis is done in the character’s experiences found in the novel. In that analysis, the writer found five types based out of five dimensions of alienation proposed by Seeman (1959).

In the novel of *On The Road*, there are some experiences that are experienced by the character which lead him into alienation. To point the character, the writer used the theory of Abrams (1985) which says, “characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the person say and their distinctive ways of saying it, the dialogue and form what they do, the action” (p. 33).
According to Forster (1974), Sal Paradise is included as the round character because he is presented with more side that is the author portrays him in greater detail and depth. A round character is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity as a real person. This character may undergo radical change through a gradual process of motivation or through a crisis that is experienced. The readers can also enter Sal’s mind and come to know him through his own feelings, thoughts, and perceptions.

In addition, to describe the character of Sal Paradise, the writer applies a theory of characterization which is elaborated by Murphy (1972). This theory consists some ways to identify the character. Murphy believes that the term of character refers to the way the author reveals his or her characters personality. This theory helps the writer to observe the characteristic of Sal Paradise.

Taking a view from Murphy’s personal theory (1972) described by the author, Sal Paradise is a young veteran who lives with his aunt in New York. He is an intelligent writer who makes acquaintance with Dean Moriarty. At first, Sal does not believe Dean as he knows that Dean is conman and had bad reputation. However, Sal does not care about this fact because he wants to be Dean’s friend. "He was conning me and I knew it (for room and board and ‘how to write’, etc.), and he knew (this has been the basis of our relationship), but I didn’t care and we got along fine (p. 10).

Sal paradise is a very loyal friend to Dean. He was always there for Dean. In example when Sal is trying to help his friend dealing with money. Sal helps Dean and Camille; he knows that Camille hates him. Since she needs the money, she accepts the money. “Camille was a relief after Marylou; a well-bred, polite
young woman, and she was aware of the fact that the eighteen dollars Dean had sent her was mine” (p. 175).

Sal began his journey on the road in order to find out what it means to live again compared to how dead he was feeling at the start of the book. He hypothesizes that, “somewhere along the line I knew there’d be girls, visions everything; somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me” (p. 8). As a result, he feels like the road will provide him with all the answers. Kerouac shows here that the road symbolizes the epitome of freedom that; the freedom that Sal desires from responsibilities, reality and ultimately from living in a conformed society where they are bound by everything that is conventional.

According to Seeman (1959) there are five logical distinct psychological stages that encompasses person’s alienation; there are powerlessness, meaningfulness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement.

2.2.1 Meaninglessness

Meaninglessness is a term to mention the mental condition of a person whose life is profoundly afflicted by the sense of loss, futility, and emptiness when he is fail to fulfill the meaning of life. The story begins with Sal’s bad condition both physically and mentally. He is very sad because his separation with his wife and in the same time he got serious illness. Sal is tired with his life which is full of sorrow.

I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split up and my feeling that everything was dead (p. 1).
For some people, self-acceptance is an extremely difficult state to achieve. There are many who live their lives without feeling at ease with their own ways. In Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road*, the main character, Sal Paradise, experiences a similar situation. The quotation above shows that Sal feels his life has no meaning anymore; his feeling and his life were dead because his separation creates sense of loss and emptiness in his life.

At one point, Sal Paradise finds himself “wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough… I wished I were … anything but what I was so drearily, a ‘white man’ disillusioned.” He blames his sense of emptiness on the fact that “all my life I’d had white ambitions,” and concludes by “wishing I could exchange world with the … Negroes of America” (p. 180). This longing—a sort of fantasized racial version of cross-culture—tells us little, however, about that other world. Sal’s evocation of African-American life combines aspects of critique: a “ridicule of upper-class pretensions”, a fantasy of “moral permissiveness”, and a nostalgia for a life of “simplicity and happiness”.

Walking around the African American quarters of Denver at “lilac evening,” Sal feels uneasy in the lowlands of his soul. He realizes that he is simply a “‘white man’ disillusioned.” Romanticizing the life of the “Negro” and Mexicans, Sal complains about the emptiness he feels at the very core of his existence, “feeling that the best white world had offered was not enough night… it was Denver night; all I did was die.” (p. 181).
2.2.2. Self-estrangement

Self-estrangement in relation to society is essentially being something less than what one might ideally be if the circumstances in society were different, and being insecure and conforming to society’s expectations in all aspect of him. Furthermore, Seeman (1959) mentions that alienation is man’s loss of pride and satisfaction from doing their work and therefore feeling alienated.

Self-estrangement leads Sal seeking authenticity of his life. Having lived in the same city for same years, Sal wants to experience something new and genuine, escaping the harshness of his New York life. Sal claims that “all my New York friends were in negative, nightmarish position on putting down society and giving their tired bookish or political or psychoanalytical reasons…” (p. 8). He likes their judgmental behavior to a nightmare, demonstrating the horror he feels for his friends’ critical nature. Sal is fed up with his own life, he feels strange with himself and the people surrounding, and the quotation above shows that Sal experience self-estrangement. By going on the road, Sal hopes to flee from the pessimistic society he belongs to and find the authenticity of his life.

Sal’s decision to go on the road is fundamental in understanding how the road affects him. The first time he goes on the road is yearning for something new. Fresh out of college, Sal sees in Dean an opportunity to explore what he has always been curious about. At the beginning of the novel he hopefully proclaim, “A western kinsman of the sun, Dean…I could hear a new call and see a new horizon, and believe it at my young age” (p. 8). Sal’s excitement and purpose can be seen through his hopeful and eager language, mentioning a “new horizon.” Dean offers a glimpse of the excitement that lies beyond his current location.
Sal is searching for genuine lifestyle like Dean’s which he cannot find in New York. Critic Ligairi (2009) highlights that Sal is restless in his current position. Sal’s first reaction is to get moving in order to avoid the stasis of the era’s social conformity. Foremost in Sal’s desire to move across physical space of the United States is a yearning to undergo firsthand a wide range of ‘authentic’ experience”. (p. 144). Sal longs to break out his small reality to experience some newness, which he does through exploring other cultures. Going on the road is a means for Sal to explore the world and find the authenticity he is looking for.

2.2.3. Normlessness

Norm is defined as the “rule or standard of behavior shared by member of a social group. Norms guide people on how they are expected to behave. Norms are social rules rather than written and formal rules.

Neal & Collas (2000) write, normlessness derives partly from condition of complexity and conflict in which individual become unclear about the composition and enforcement of social norms. Like what the writer has mentioned before about overvalue of lifestyle that Sal did, traveling is representing some amount of Sal’s irresponsibility. The “halfway mark” (p. 9) of Sal’s novel seems to him a perfect time to leave New York to explore the country, leaving his work incomplete. He decides to take a break and continue his work in California. As critic Vopat (2000) states, “Kerouac’s characters take to the road not to find but to leave behind: emotion, maturity, change, decision, purpose, and especially, in the best American tradition responsibility” (p. 196).

Vopat (2000) points out that this abandoning of reality and escaping responsibility is not something new and un-America, calling an abandon of
responsibility like Sal’s “American tradition” (p. 194). In setting out *On The Road*, Sal is following a path of American feeling obligation through traveling the country. Kerouac seeks to connect with his American audience through Sal’s own abandonment of concern and pursuit of newness. Using road trips, a classic American escape from the tedium of everyday life, Kerouac portrays Sal’s irresponsibility in order to show the effect of carelessness.

Along his journey Sal often committed crimes like stealing car, gasoline and also stealing some food in small groceries.” I had book with me I stole from a Hollywood stall, Le Grand Meaulnes by Alain-Fournier” (p. 104), “…Dean and Marylou plying piggyback around the thanks and Dunkel went inside and stole three packs of cigarettes without trying.” (p. 139). Sal also violet the norm that society believe such as being responsible toward family, get a job, avoid promiscuity, and drug usage.

Sal violates the value that obligates man to work and become the leader of the family. He also rejects to work eight hour per day. Men, who obey the value that a man is the breadwinner, will absolutely, carry out his responsibility. They will earn money for the family. Yet, instead of working, Sal spends his days on the road with his friends. When Sal does not have money, he asks some money from his aunt. “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” (Kerouac, p. 55). Sal’s violation toward the value that requires man’s responsibility to work and become the head of the family, however, is the form of his alienation toward it. He alienates himself by rejecting and violating the value because he does not want to conform to it.
Sal also rejects the value of making a commitment with woman. Sal makes relationship with two women during his journey but he never makes commitment with one of them. The first woman is Terry. Sal meets her on the bus when he travels to Southern California. Terry leaves her house because her husband beats her. Terry is a Mexican girl with whom Sal falls in love. They spend fifteen days on the road together and have a great moment. Their journey stops in Terry’s brother house. Terry asks Sal to stay and work there. However, Sal refuses and leaves her as he wants to continue his trip. Sal prefers to travel on the road rather than to marry her. He rejects making commitment with the woman he loves.

The second woman is Lucille. She is a beautiful Italian girl whom Sal meets in New York. Sal loves Lucille and their romance around in New York. Although Sal loves Lucille, their relationship cannot last long. Lucille does not like Sal’s friends and their way of life. Lucille does not like the fact that Sal travels to many places.

I don’t like you when you’re with them’
‘Ah, it’s all right, its just kicks. We only live once. We’re having good time.
No, it’s sad and I don’t like it (p. 119).

Lucille does not like Sal to travel with his friend. She thinks that traveling around is useless and bad. Thus, she asks him to stop traveling. Lucille wants Sal to be like other people in general. However, Sal cannot do what she wants.

…Lucille would you never understand me because I like to much things and get all confused and hung up running from one falling star to another till I drop ( p. 120).

Sal thinks that life which is expected by Lucille is not appropriate for him as he likes traveling very much. He then breaks up with Luc and leaves her. Once again, Sal prefers to travel rather than making commitment with a woman in a marriage.
Beside Terry and Lucille, Sal also has sexual intercourse with some girls whom he meets in the journey. Some of them include Mexican girls whom Sal and Dean meet when they come to the whorehouse. Another woman is a lady in the club. Although Sal spends some nights with all the women above, he never intends to bind them in a relationship. Sal thinks that sexual behavior is acceptable for him. Thus, he generalizes the promiscuous that he and other people have done. "Boys and girls in America such a sad time together; sophisticated, demands that they submit to sex immediately without proper preliminary talk" (p. 56).

The quotation shows the feeling of Sal and the American youth in general. From the statement, it is known that the youth in America have a feeling of alienation that makes them commit sexual promiscuity. They demand something which old generations do not do. The youth do not want values and conformity to bind their freedom. Thus, they alienate themselves against values and conformity in the society by committing that behavior.

2.2.4. Isolation

Isolation based on Kalekin-fishman (1996) refers to the perception of exclusion from a particular community and rewards offered by inclusion. Sal feels isolated from his community because he rejects common value. In example, he does not like to work eight hours per day as he does not find his freedom and contentment there. The writer finds two indicators in the book that Sal feels isolated.
The first indicator is from the monolog below:

I didn’t know what to say; he was right; but all I wanted to do was sneak out into the night and disappear somewhere, and go and find out what everybody was doing all over the country (p. 65).

The monolog happens because Sal is too desperate with his job as a cop. Once he gets a job, Sal realizes that he simply cannot perform it because he “gulps at the prospect of making arrest” (p. 65). He cannot arrest people because of his general attitude; he does not feel that they deserve to be arrested even if they are being loud and are not following orders.

The second indicator is shown from a song which is sung by Sal in Washington. The song reflects his feeling about his unsettlement.

Home in Missoula,
Home in Truckee,
Home in Opelousas,
Ain’t no home for me,
Home in Old Medora,
Home in Wounded Knee,
Home in Ogallala
Home I’ll never be (p. 240).

From the quotation, it can be inferred that Sal thinks he does not belong to a society in any town. The word “home” means the society in any town. Thus, the song shows irony. He thinks that he will never be in any town anywhere. This indicates that Sal does not want to be bounded by anything as he considers that he is a free man. Road and traveling is the most important things in his life.

As the result, Sal changes his mind and resigns from his job. Thus, he chooses to travel on the road again. Sal prefers to continue his adventure on the road since he considers that there is no good place for him to settle down. Therefore, he never remains in one place.
2.2.5. Powerlessness

Sal lacked the direction and insight to be able to break from his past (upset the world) and to gain agency and influence over his future. His initial attempts to escape from his old life were ruinous: he was still trapped in the value system that the situations of work and family represent and this powerless feeling lead Sal to the perception of death and disease in his static existence. Sal had reached a point at which he could go no farther, and his vertical perspective prevented him from actually dropping out and taking to the road. This sentiment is evident in the line “I'd often dream of going west to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off”

As evidence above, the first page of the novel is where we find a stunted, disgruntled, and symbolically dead Sal, a man who could not find pace with himself or with the world, a man in need cultural space in which to transform. With his relationship to Dean, that pace opens up, as if Dean’s presence has the power to reorder physical as well as conceptual space.

According to Kalekin-Fihman (1996) refers to a gap existing between what a person wants to do and what that person feels capable of doing.

The American police are involved in psychological warfare against Americans who didn’t frighten them with imposing papers and threats. It’s a Victorian police force; it peers out of musty windows and wants to inquire about everything, and can make crimes if the crimes don’t exist to it satisfaction. (p. 123)

In Sal’s view, America acknowledges people with money and bureaucratic knowledge. The social minorities such as Beats are therefore more or less defenseless against a corrupt police force. It is not an overprotective society as it is an over-accusing society where the sensation of monitoring the citizens “peers
out of musty windows and wants to inquire about everything”. George (2004) comments on the matter of police brutally on the Beats:

Public outcry led to police raids on Beat hangout. Many were arrested on charges of drunkenness and vagrancy. When some protested that they were being denied their constitutional right, they were slapped with additional charges of ‘obscenity,’ ‘resisting arrest,’ or ‘interfering with justice’. Several arrests were accomplished by name-calling, shoving, handcuffing, and brutality. (pp. 222-223)

George highlights the police forces’ hunt on the marginalized and their subjective attitude toward law and order. This correlates with police corruption in On The Road, where Sal observes that the police “can make crimes if the crimes don’t exist to its satisfaction”.

PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI
CHAPTER III
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the result of this study. It consists of three parts; the conclusions, implications and recommendations. The conclusions deal with the answers of the problem formulation. The recommendation provides some suggestions intended for future researchers who might use Jack Kerouac’s On The Road to conduct the study.

3.1. Conclusion

Having analyzed the novel and referring to the title of this undergraduate final paper, the writer concludes that Sal Paradise, the main character in the novel is an alienated character. The analyzes of the descriptions of Sal Paradise as a main character in the novel reveals that Sal has many experiences in his life such as meaninglessness, powerlessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement.

Sal began his journey on the road in order to find out what it means to live again compared to how dead he was feeling at the start of the book. He hypothesizes that that, “somewhere along the line I knew there’d be girls, visions everything; somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me” (p.8). As a result, he feels like the road will provide him with all the answers. Kerouac shows here that the road symbolizes the epitome of freedom that; the freedom that Sal desires from responsibilities, reality and ultimately from living in a conformed society where they are bound by everything that is conventional.
By applying Seeman’s (1959) theory of five dimension of alienation, the writer concluded that Sal experience alienation. Based on Seeman’s (1959) five dimensions of alienation, Sal experiences alienation toward meaninglessness, self-estrangement, normlessness, powerlessness and isolation. First, Sal experience meaninglessness after he divorced with his wife. In the first paragraph of the story, Sal expresses his feeling of lost and emptiness of his life which makes him experienced meaninglessness.

His experience of meaninglessness leads him through other dimensions of alienation which is self-estrangement. Sal who tired of his life which full of sorrow and fed up with his own life, feels strange with himself and the people surrounding. By going on the road, Sal hopes to flee from the pessimistic society he belongs to and find the authenticity of his life. Sal’s decision going on the road is such a short escape to his entire problem and seeks something new in his life.

The other Sal’s experience which leads him to alienation is normlessness. By going on the road, Sal is escaping himself from all the responsibility “American tradition”, Sal also overvaluing the lifestyle. Sal rejects American tradition because his thinks that conformity in the society not suitable and binds his freedom. Sal rejection to work, settling in one place and his behavior taking drugs and sexual promiscuity make him isolated himself to society. Sal’s song about home is reflection of his feeling that he is not belongs to any society. This indicates that Sal does not want to be bounded by anything as he considers that he is a free man. Road and traveling is the most important things in his life.
3.2. Recommendations

*On The Road* is an interesting novel. This novel is written by Jack Kerouac. There are some aspects that can be analyzed by the future researcher. Although Sal Paradise is major character of this novel, the other characters can also be considered to be analyzed. The future researcher can analyze Dean Moriarty’s alienation. Since Dean has big role in the Sal’s journey on the road, he is considered experiencing alienation. If the future researcher interest about the gender studies, this novel can be used as a source of the women dehumanization.

A literary work can be a source of knowledge for lecturers to implement their activities in educating their students. The researcher recommends the novels to be taken as a possible teaching material in the class. These novels offer potential benefits in teaching English that are the language mastery and vocabulary mastery.

Relating to teaching learning activities, these novels can be a reference for lecturers to teach Prose subject. Prose is one of compulsory subjects that have to be taken by students of English Language Education Study Program in the third semester. These novels can increase students’ interest and improve their ability in reading literary works, in particular English language novels. By reading these novels, the students are able to strengthen their comprehension in reading and increase their vocabulary mastery.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix 1: The Summary of On The Road

On The Road

Sal Paradise is a young writer who lives with his aunt in New York. He has a friend who is energetic and likes womanizing named Dean Moriarty. Sal wants to visit Dean in Denver. Sal then plans to go there by taking trips. After he meets Dean, both men continue the trips across the country. There are four trips done by them.

**First trip: New York → Denver →San Francisco →Los Angeles**

Sal tries to hitchhike to Denver alone as he wants to meet Dean, but he does not get very far in his first try. He tries again, taking a bus to Chicago and hitchhiking to Denver. Sal arrives in Denver and he continues his trip with Dean. Another friend who hangs out with them is Carlo Marx. Carlo, Sal, and Dean go around Denver for a while, until Sal takes off for San Francisco to stay with his friend Remi Bencoeur. Dean promises to join him soon after. Yet, Sal finds that Remi has rotten job and a difficult girlfriend. Thus, he leaves for Southern California, where he meets Terry, a sweet Mexican girl, on a bus. He goes to work in the vineyard cotton field with Terry and her family for a while, and then returns to New York alone.

**Second trip: Virginia →New York →New Orleans →San Francisco**

Sal stays with relatives in Testament, Virginia when Dean shows up at his door. A girlfriend named Marylou and a friend named Ed Dunkle are waiting in Dean’s car. Dean leaves his wife, Camille who is still waiting for their baby’s birth. Ed Dunkle also leaves his wife in Tucson and has to pick her up at home of
Old Bull Lee in New Orleans. Sal joins their ride to Peterson and New York and then down to New Orleans to stay with Old Bull Lee and his wife. Then they go to San Francisco, where Dean decides to return to Camille and leave Marylou. Sal then decides to go back home.

The third trip: New York →Denver →San Francisco →Back to New York

Back in New York, Sal misses Dean. Finally he goes to San Francisco to find Dean at his house. Dean and Camille are having problems, and Sal’s arrival is the catalyst that breaks up their impromptu household. Dean and Sal leave the house and go to Ed Dunkle’s wife. Both then go to hear live jazz and they plan to travel to Italy. They are hitchhiking to Denver where they find somebody who needs a Cadillac driver to Chicago. This is a big mistake for the owner of the Cadillac, because Dean and Sal push the car beyond its limits and make the trip to Chicago in seventeen hours, leaving the car in less than perfect condition. They hear some more live jazz in Chicago and back to New York.

The fourth trip: New York →Denver →Mexico

Sal’s first novel has been published, but he wants to travel again. He takes off for Denver by himself and Dean finds him there. They go off to Mexico, where they spend a night in a whorehouse and meet an old Mexican grandma who sells marijuana from her backyard. Sal gets sick and finds that Dean is only good for the good times because Dean leaves him there to marry a new girlfriend in New York.
Appendix 2: The Biography of Jack Kerouac

Jack Kerouac

Born: March 12, 1922
Place of Birth: Lowell, Massachusetts
Died: October 21, 1969
Place of Death: St. Petersburg, Florida

Jack Kerouac was born Jean-Louis Kerouac, a French-Canadian child in working-class Lowell, Massachusetts. Ti Jean spoke a local dialect of French called joual before he learned English. The youngest of three children, he was heartbroken when his older brother Gerard died of rheumatic fever at the age of nine.

Ti Jean was an intense and serious child, devoted to Memere (his mother) and constantly forming important friendships with other boys, as he would continue to do throughout his life. He was driven to create stories from a young age, inspired first by the mysterious radio show 'The Shadow,' and later by the fervid novels of Thomas Wolfe, the writer he would model himself after.

Lowell had once thrived as the center of New England's textile industry, but by the time of Kerouac's birth it had begun to sink into poverty. Kerouac's father, a printer and well-known local businessman, began to suffer financial difficulties, and started gambling in the hope of restoring prosperity to the household. Young Jack hoped to save the family himself by winning a football scholarship to college and entering the insurance business. He was a star back on his high school team and won some miraculous victories, securing himself a scholarship to Columbia University in New York. His parents followed him there, settling in Ozone Park, Queens.
Things went wrong at Columbia. Kerouac fought with the football coach, who refused to let him play. His father lost his business and sank rapidly into alcoholic helplessness, and young Jack, disillusioned and confused, dropped out of Columbia, bitterly disappointing the father who had so recently disappointed him. He tried and failed to fit in with the military (World War II had begun) and ended up sailing with the Merchant Marine. When he wasn't sailing, he was hanging around New York with a crowd his parents did not approve of: depraved young Columbia students Allen Ginsberg and Lucien Carr, a strange but brilliant older downtown friend named William S. Burroughs, and a joyful street cowboy from Denver named Neal Cassady.

Kerouac had already begun writing a novel, stylistically reminiscent of Thomas Wolfe, about the torments he was suffering as he tried to balance his wild city life with his old-world family values. His friends loved the manuscript, and Ginsberg asked his Columbia professors to help find a publisher for it. It would become Kerouac's first and most conventional novel, The Town and the City, which earned him respect and some recognition as a writer, although it did not make him famous.

It would be a long time before he would be published again. He had taken some amazing cross-country trips with Neal Cassady while working on his novel, and in his attempt to write about these trips he had begun experimenting with freer forms of writing, partly inspired by the unpretentious, spontaneous prose he found in Neal Cassady's letters. He decided to write about his cross-country trips exactly as they had happened, without pausing to edit, fictionalize or even think. He presented the resulting manuscript to his editor on a single long roll of unbroken paper, but the editor did not share his enthusiasm and the relationship was broken. Kerouac would suffer seven years of rejection before 'On The Road' would be published.

He spent the early 1950's writing one unpublished novel after another, carrying them around in a rucksack as he roamed back and forth across the country. He followed Ginsberg and Cassady to Berkeley and San Francisco, where he became close friends with the young Zen poet Gary Snyder. He found enlightenment through the Buddhist religion and tried to follow Snyder's lead in communing with nature. His excellent novel 'The Dharma Bums' describes a joyous mountain climbing trip he and Snyder went on in Yosemite in 1955, and captures the tentative, sometimes comic steps he and his friends were taking towards spiritual realization.

His fellow starving writers were beginning to attract fame as the 'Beat Generation 'a label Kerouac had invented years earlier during a conversation with fellow novelist John Clellon Holmes. Ginsberg and Snyder became underground celebrities in 1955 after the Six Gallery poetry reading in San Francisco. Since they and many of their friends regularly referred to Kerouac as the most talented writer among them, publishers began to express interest in the forlorn, unwanted manuscripts he carried in his rucksack wherever he went. 'On The Road' was
finally published in 1957, and when it became a tremendous popular success Kerouac did not know how to react. Embittered by years of rejection, he was suddenly expected to snap to and play the part of Young Beat Icon for the public. He was older and sadder than everyone expected him to be, and probably far more intelligent as well. Literary critics, objecting to the Beat 'fad,' refused to take Kerouac seriously as a writer and began to ridicule his work, hurting him tremendously. Certainly the Beat Generation was a fad, Kerouac knew, but his own writing was not.

His sudden celebrity was probably the worst thing that could have happened to him, because his moral and spiritual decline in the next few years was shocking. Trying to live up to the wild image he'd presented in 'On The Road,' he developed a severe drinking habit that dimmed his natural brightness and aged him prematurely. His Buddhism failed him, or he failed it. He could not resist a drinking binge, and his friends began viewing him as needy and unstable. He published many books during these years, but most had been written earlier, during the early 50's when he could not find a publisher. He kept busy, appearing on TV shows, writing magazine articles and recording three spoken-word albums, but his momentum as a serious writer had been completely disrupted.

Like Kurt Cobain, another counter-culture celebrity who seemed to be truly (as opposed to fashionably) miserable, Kerouac expressed his unhappiness nakedly in his art and was not taken seriously. In 1961 he tried to break his drinking habit and rediscover his writing talents with a solitary nature retreat in Big Sur. Instead, the vast nature around him creeped him out and he returned to San Francisco to drink himself into oblivion. He was cracking up, and he laid out the entire chilling experience in his last great novel, 'Big Sur.'

Defeated and lonesome, he left California to live with his mother in Long Island, and would not stray from her mother for the rest of his life. He would continue to publish, and remained mentally alert and aware (though always drunken). But his works after 'Big Sur' displayed a disconnected soul, a human being sadly lost in his own curmudgeonly illusions.

Despite the 'beatnik' stereotype, Kerouac was a political conservative, especially when under the influence of his Catholic mother. As the beatniks of the 1950's began to yield their spotlight to the hippies of the 1960's, Jack took pleasure in standing against everything the hippies stood for. He supported the Vietnam War and became friendly with William F. Buckley.

Living alone with his mother in Northport, Long Island, Kerouac developed a fascinating set of habits. He stayed in his house most of the time and carried on a lifelong game of 'baseball' with a deck of playing cards. His drink of choice was a jug of the kind of cheap, sweet wine, Tokay or Thunderbird, usually preferred by winos. He became increasingly devoted to Catholicism, but his unusual Buddhist-tinged brand of Catholicism would hardly have met with the approval of the Pope.
Through his first forty years Kerouac had failed to sustain a long-term romantic relationship with a woman, though he often fell in love. He’d married twice, to Edie Parker and Joan Haverty, but both marriages had ended within months. In the mid-1960’s he married again, but this time to a maternalistic and older childhood acquaintance from small-town Lowell, Stella Sampas, who he hoped would help around the house as his mother entered old age.

He moved back to Lowell with Stella and his mother, and then moved again with them to St. Petersburg, Florida. His health destroyed by drinking, he died at home in 1969. He was 47 years old.

Jack Kerouac bibliography

Fiction

- *The Town and the City* (1950; written 1946–1949)
- *On the Road* (1957; written 1947–1951)
- *The Subterraneans* (1958; written 1953)
- *The Dharma Bums* (1958)
- *Doctor Sax* (1959; written 1952)
- *Maggie Cassidy* (1959; written 1953)
- *Tristessa* (1960; written 1955–1956)
- *Lonesome Traveler*, short story collection (1960)
- *Big Sur* (1962)
- *Visions of Gerard* (1963; written 1956)
- *Desolation Angels* (1965)
- *Satori in Paris* (1965)
- *Vanity of Duluoz* (1968)
- *Visions of Cody* (1972; written 1951–1952)

Posthumous fiction

- *Orpheus Emerged*, novella (1944–1945; published 2002)
- *The Haunted Life and Other Writings*, Novel (1944; published 2014)
- *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, with William S. Burroughs (1945; published 2008)
- *La vie est d’hommage*, edition of all previously unpublished French writings, includes some non-fiction (1950-1965; published 2016)
- "*The Unknown Kerouac: Rare, Unpublished & Newly Translated Writings*" (1951-1952; published 2016)

Poetry

- *Mexico City Blues* (1955; published 1959)
- *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity* (1956; published 1960) (meditations, koans, poems)
- *Scattered Poems* (1945–1968; published 1971)
- *Book of Sketches* (1952–1957)
- *Old Angel Midnight* (1956; published 1973)
Trip Trap: Haiku on the Road from SF to NY (1959; published 1973) (with Albert Saijo and Lew Welch)

Heaven and Other Poems (1957–1962; published 1977)

San Francisco Blues (1954; published 1991)

Pomes All Sizes (compiled 1960; published 1992)


Book of Haikus (published 2003)

Collected Poems (published 2012, volume 231 in Library of America)
ISBN 9781598531947

Old Angel Midnight (City Lights Publishers, 2016 edition)

Other work and non-fiction

Atop an Underwood: Early Stories and Other Writings (1936–1943; published 1999)

Good Blonde & Others (1955; published 1993)

Wake Up: A Life of the Buddha (1955; published 2008)

Some of the Dharma (1953–1956; published 1997)

Beat Generation, play (1957, published 2005)

Letters, journals, interviews


Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters, 1940-1956


Safe In Heaven Dead (Interview fragments)

Conversations with Jack Kerouac (Interviews)

Empty Phantoms (Interviews)

Departed Angels: The Lost Paintings

Door Wide Open (2000) (by Joyce Johnson. Includes letters from Jack Kerouac)


Discography

Poetry For The Beat Generation (1959) (LP)

Blues And Haikus (1959) (LP)

Readings by Jack Kerouac on the Beat Generation (1960) (LP)

The Jack Kerouac Collection (1990) [Box] (Audio CD Collection of 3 LPs)


Jack Kerouac Reads On the Road (1999) (Audio CD)

Doctor Sax and Great World Snake (2003) (Play Adaptation with Audio CD)