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Jack Kerouac's philosophy of resistance : configurations and potentialities of authenticity in *The Duluoz Legend*

Talal Hauchar

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Thèse

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DOCTEUR EN LANGUES, LITTÉRATURES ET CIVILISATIONS

par Talal HAWSHAR

La philosophie de la résistance de Jack Kerouac : Configurations et potentialités de l'authenticité dans *La Légende de Duluoz*

Soutenue le 16 décembre 2022 à Brno, République Tchèque

Sous la direction de Monsieur le Professeur Tomáš Pospíšil et Monsieur le
Professeur John S. Bak

dans le cadre d'une cotutelle internationale de thèse

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Jack Kerouac's Philosophy of Resistance: Configurations and Potentialities of Authenticity in *The Duluoz Legend*

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*This thesis is dedicated to my father who taught me fortitude
and to my mother who taught me the greatest lesson in life, which is that everything will be okay*

“I was an Ambitious Paranoid—Nothing could stop me from writing big books of prose and poetry for nothing, that is, with no hope of ever having them published—I was simply writing them because I was an “Idealist” and I believed in “Life” and was going about justifying it with my earnest scribblings—”

(Jack Kerouac, *Desolation Angels*)

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List of Abbreviations

Big Sur (1962): (BS)

Book of Dreams (1961): (BOD)

Desolation Angels (1965): (DA)

Lonesome Traveler (1960): (LT)

On the Road (1957): (OTR)

The Dharma Bums (1958): (TDB)

The Subterraneans (1958): (TS)

Tristessa (1960): (TR)

Vanity of Duluoz: An Adventurous Education, 1935–1946 (1968): (VOD)

Visions of Cody (1960): (VOC)

Visions of Gerard (1958): (VOG)

Notes for the Reader

Throughout the thesis, Kerouac’s narrator is referred to by a single name, “Duluoz,” despite the fact that he has other names in three of the novels: “Sal Paradise” in *On the Road*, “Ray Smith” in *The Dharma Bums*, and “Leo Percepied” in *The Subterraneans*. Neal Cassady’s character is referred to as “Dean.”

Grammatical errors and stylistic irregularities in quotations from primary sources are not corrected or changed as they often constitute part of the effect that Kerouac desired to achieve.

Introduction

Jack Kerouac wrote in an era that was characterized by social, cultural, and political instability and disorder—an “interregnum” on all fronts, which “consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born,” as Antonio Gramsci would put it.¹ In his *Duluoz Legend*, Kerouac puts the reader in confrontation with the consequences of living in this liminal state of “outblownness, cutoff-ness, snipped, blownoutness, putoutness, turned-off-ness, nothing-happens-ness, gone-ness, gone-out-ness” (*TDB*, 387). This bizarre succession of words bespeaks the magnitude of the crisis of the loss of authenticity and, at the same time, hints at Kerouac’s admission of the failure of traditional language to express it.

Kerouac’s *Duluoz Legend* is a series of interconnected novels that are emblematic of this “Beat aesthetic” and that espouse an alternative mode of being in a world that no longer accommodates authenticity. It is a mode that enables confrontation with the Real by encroaching upon the boundaries of the known and venturing into the unknown physically as well as metaphysically. It is also simultaneously a symptom of and contemplation on the societal upheaval that was in progress during the late 1940s and 1950s and that was brought forth by a set of complex and interrelated factors that are particular to the American context at the advent of postmodernism and the Information Age.

The novels of the *Legend* chronicle a writer-idealist’s gradual disillusionment with America, a country that has become in his view too hostile to hitchhikers and hobos, and has abandoned the natural and embraced the spectacle:

Ah America, so big, so sad, so black, you’re like the leafs of a dry summer that go crinkly ere August found its end, you’re hopeless, everyone you look on you, there’s nothing but the dry drear hopelessness, the knowledge of impending death, the suffering of present life, lights of Christmas wont save you or anybody, any more you could put Christmas

¹ Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London: Routledge, 2006), 99.

lights on a dead bush in August, at night, and make it look like something, what is this Christmas you profess, in this void? (*LT*, 641–42)

The America of Kerouac's narrator and alter ego Jack Duluoz is in a state of sociocultural disorder that engenders cognitive dissonance, meaninglessness and absurdism, chronic anxiety, and alienation from one's authentic desires. Duluoz's struggle also conveys the disintegration of the self and of prior convictions of historical progress, which are certainties whose locus was thought to be in Western philosophical and religious tradition. As this happens, the authentic vision of America recedes further back in his individual memory as well as the collective memory that he shares with his ancestors and the writers he so reveres.

On the one hand, Kerouac completely cut ties with white America and received backlash because of it. His affiliation with African Americans and Mexicans, for example, was seen by many either as cultural appropriation or slum tourism. On the other hand, Kerouac was never a naïve idealist and was also always wary of the new movement of left-wing intellectuals who infiltrated his subculture and claimed to fight the establishment on behalf of the oppressed masses. He often found himself in the company of these "subterraneans," as he called them, who seemed to him either not committed enough to a genuine pursuit of the truth or too ideologically radicalized to understand reality beyond the fashionable Marxist lens.

One of the few scholars to deal directly with the issue of authenticity in Kerouac, Steve Wilson observes that Kerouac's narrator rejects comfort and security for artificial desires, and values instead "the intense moment over tradition, intuition over reason shaped by education,"² and finds authenticity in the "outsider status."³ Wilson also notes that the narrator of *The Subterraneans*, just as in the one of *On the Road*, "knowingly endured the pain" that comes with being a writer "as a way to generate a book that might open up others' eyes to the realities of life in America, as well as suggest a path to understanding."⁴ The interconnectedness between authenticity and Kerouac's sacrificial aspiration to become a messenger emerges straightforwardly in Satori in Paris when the narrator admits: "I want to tell them that we dont all want to become ants contributing to the social body, but individualists each one counting one by

² Steve Wilson, "'Buddha Writing': The Author and the Search for Authenticity in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*," *The Midwest Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1999): 303.

³ Wilson, 305.

⁴ Wilson, 312.

one, but no, try to tell that to the in-an-outers rushing in and out the humming world night as the world turns on one axis. The secret storm has become a public tempest.”⁵ Also in *Big Sur*, in a scene that follows a meditation session in the woods, the narrator recalls how “I conceived of myself as a special solitary angel sent down as a messenger from Heaven to tell everybody or show everybody by example that their peeking society was actually the Satanic Society and they were all on the wrong track” (*BS*, 117).

In order to justify this aspiration, Kerouac portrays to his readers the demise of the authentic American ideal as he saw it:

I soon begin to see that things have changed in America, you cant get a ride any more ... Sleek long stationwagon after wagon comes sleering by smoothly, all colors of the rainbow and pastel at that, pink, blue, white, the husband is in the driver’s seat with a long ridiculous vacationist hat with a long baseball visor making him look witless and idiot—Beside him sits wifey, the boss of America, wearing dark glasses and sneering, even if he wanted to pick me up or anybody up she wouldn’t let him— (*BS*, 44)

The American family has replaced the natural with “ten thousand racks of drycleaned and perfectly pressed suits and dresses of all sizes for the family to look like millionaires every time they stop at a roadside dive for bacon and eggs” (*BS*, 44). In the *Legend*, the homogenization of society is in full swing and consumerism is one of the main vehicles employed to achieve it. Artificial needs were being fabricated, transforming the postwar American society into a genuine “society of the spectacle.” In Guy Debord’s words:

The economy’s triumph as an independent power at the same time spells its own doom, because the forces it has unleashed have eliminated the economic necessity that was the unchanging basis of earlier societies. Replacing that necessity with a necessity for boundless economic development can only mean replacing the satisfaction of primary human needs (now scarcely met) with an incessant fabrication of pseudo-needs, all of which ultimately come down to the single pseudo-need of maintaining the reign of the autonomous economy. But that economy loses all connection with authentic needs insofar as it emerges from the social unconscious that unknowingly depended on it.

⁵ Jack Kerouac, *Satori in Paris* (London: Penguin, [1966] 2012), 35.

“Whatever is conscious wears out. What is unconscious remains unalterable. But once it is freed, does it not fall to ruin in its turn?” (Freud)⁶

Kerouac recognized these pseudo-needs when he saw “in the paper store my God a thousand girlie books showing all the fulsome breasts and thighs in eternity—I realize America’s going sex-mad, they cant get enough, something’s wrong” (*DA*, 114), and eventually verbalized his frustration with excess: “down to everything which is so much that it is of necessity” (*BS*, 64).

Roger Bill uses Debord’s notion of spectacle in his interpretation of a brief encounter between Duluoz and a truck driver who picked him up while he was hitchhiking in *The Dharma Bums*. At one point during their conversation, the truck driver says to Duluoz:

“Here I am killin myself drivin this rig back and forth from Ohio to L.A. and I make more money than you ever had in your whole life as a hobo, but you’re the one who enjoys life and not only that but you do it without workin or a whole lot of money. Now who’s smart, you or me?” And he had a nice home in Ohio with wife, daughter, Christmas tree, two cars, garage, lawn, lawnmower, but he couldn’t enjoy any of it because he really wasn’t free. (*TDB*, 374)

Bill sees that “the truck driver’s frustration illustrates what Debord calls ‘the alienation of the spectator.’”⁷ More specifically, I would argue that it could be explained by Debord’s claim that “the alienation of the spectator, which reinforces the contemplated objects that result from his unconscious activity, works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more he identifies with the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own life and his own desires.”⁸ Ultimately, Bill recognizes that authenticity could be located in Duluoz’s road experiences, “at least a romantic American version of authenticity.”⁹

The importance of *The Dharma Bums* for the authenticity problem comes not only from the fact that it illustrates Duluoz’s Buddhist reflections on the universe but also because of the character of Beat poet Gary Snyder, Japhy, whose diagnosis of the American crisis contributes

⁶ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb (N.p: Bureau of Public Secrets, [1967] 2014), 20.

⁷ Roger Bill, “Traveller or Tourist? Jack Kerouac and the Commodification of Culture,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 34, no. 3 (Sept. 2010): 409.

⁸ Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 10–11.

⁹ Bill, 414.

significantly to the development of Duluoz's own critique. In the novel, Japhy explains to Duluoz the problem with the "suburban ideal and sex repression and general dreary newspaper gray censorship of all our real human values" (*TDB*, 301), which leads him to imagine a "rucksack revolution" of people

refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production and therefore have to work for the privilege of consuming, all that crap they didn't really want anyway such as refrigerators, TV sets, cars, at least new fancy cars, certain hair oils and deodorants and general junk you finally always see a week later in the garbage anyway, all of them imprisoned in a system of work, produce, consume, work, produce, consume. (*TDB*, 341)

Duluoz finds in Japhy an expression of his own lament for the loss of Whitman's America and confirmation of what he saw as the suburbanization and degeneration of "the middle-class non-identity which usually finds its perfect expression on the outskirts of the campus in rows of well-to-do houses with lawns and television sets in each living room with everybody looking at the same thing and thinking the same thing at the same time" (*TDB*, 307).

Despite the considerable literature on Kerouac, what Justin Thomas Trudeau expressed in 2008 remains a fact today, which is that "to date, the biographical material written about Kerouac's life greatly outweighs sustained critical investigations of his works."¹⁰ It could also be argued that even the overwhelming majority of critical investigations either rely too much on biographical data or are driven by a certain ideological framework that shapes the critique according to the ideologue's agenda, which is what Bill's study exemplifies. One could also mention Erik R. Mortenson's "Beating Time: Configurations of Temporality in Jack Kerouac's 'On the Road'" (2001) which, even though is an important analysis of non-linear temporality in Kerouac, is confined within the limitations of the Marxist approach that it adopts.

In reality, with the exception of a few unique studies,¹¹ the secondary literature on Kerouac primarily falls under four broad categories: biographical, which uses the information

¹⁰ Justin Thomas Trudeau, "Jack Kerouac's Spontaneous Prose: A Performance Genealogy of the Fiction," (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2006), 9.

¹¹ Among these we find Marco Abel's Deleuzian analysis of Kerouac—Marco Abel, "Speeding Across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac 'On the Road,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 227–56; Florence Briolais's and Michel Mesclier's Lacanian analysis of Kerouac and Joyce—Florence Briolais and Michel

available in the more than twenty-five biographies of Kerouac to establish the significance of the author within the canon of postwar America literature; stylistic, which studies the subversive impact of his “spontaneous prose” on traditional modes of narrative; contextual, which locates Kerouac within the “Beat” aesthetic so as to present him as a prototype of a subculture and/or movement; and thematic, which discusses the topics that stand out in his novels and that are emblematic of his time, most notably non-conformity, Buddhism, race relationships and transnationalism, masculinity and sexual dynamics, and jazz. Furthermore, wherever authenticity is addressed in the abovementioned studies as well as in others, it emerges by and large as a secondary concern—a passing notion that is tossed in to arrive at an objective that is unrelated to the crisis itself. In other words, with the exception of Wilson’s and Bill’s studies, both of which are brief and limited, no study has yet dealt with authenticity in Kerouac as a problem in and of itself. All of these reasons create a necessity for an objective textual approach to the problem of authenticity, especially one that employs a toolbox that adds a contemporary viewpoint to these existing analyses.

In view of the lack of comprehensive research on the problem of the loss of authenticity in Kerouac, this study aims to provide a systematic analysis of the main factors that contribute to this loss, its various existential implications, and the strategies for its retrieval and preservation that are adopted in *The Duluoz Legend*. Given Kerouac’s overall cultural impact, the “liminal”¹² position that he occupies in the history of U.S culture and literature, his profoundly felt presence on the international stage, and his being partly responsible for founding a subculture, investigating authenticity in his corpus becomes at once an ethnographic and sociological inquiry into the origin, development, and implementation of the mechanisms of social change. Furthermore, studying Kerouacian alienation, anxiety, and loss of meaning, which are markers of the absence of authenticity, is as consequential as studying the same concerns in Marx. Whereas we see in Marx the existential symptoms of the mechanization of labor and the stratification of

Mesclier, “D’une Écriture Infinie: Kerouac en-Joyce the Road,” *Psychanalyse* 27, no. 2 (2013), pp. 81–96; Erik R. Mortenson’s study of nonlinear temporality in *On the Road*—Erik R. Mortenson, “Beating Time: Configurations of Temporality in Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*,” *College Literature* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2001), pp. 51–67; and Mortenson’s study of the representation of drug use and its effect on the style of Kerouac and Ginsberg—Erik R. Mortenson, “High Off the Page: Representing the Drug Experience in the Work of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg,” in *The Philosophy of the Beats*, ed. Sharin N. Elkholy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), pp. 163–78.

¹² Refer to the section titled “Authenticity in Beat Liminality” on pages 32–36 of chapter one for the discussion about the cultural and anthropological significance of Kerouac as a “liminal” writer.

society that are peculiar to his time, in Kerouac, the technocratic transformation takes precedence. While with both thinkers living authentically is directly connected to resistance, social change, and revolution, in Kerouac, authenticity has a unique affinity with the problem of objective reality, which makes investigating it even more worthwhile. The disintegration of objective reality, which was initiated by the postmodernists and which manifests today in post-truth politics and identity politics, is a major motif in the *Legend*. Contrary to claims that Kerouac was either a proponent of such disintegration or submitted to it, this dissertation demonstrates that the authenticity quest overlaps with the *preservation* of objective reality against disintegrative mechanisms, which is why it is important to investigate the various ways these mechanisms are confronted.

Moreover, authenticity has been one of the core preoccupations of nearly every philosophical school and tradition, and for a valid reason. Humankind's quest to find meaning amidst entropy is a prime stimulator for all great achievements, especially in the arts. Alex De Jonge claims that "the quest for authenticity becomes one of the essential themes of ... twentieth-century literature. In the midst of an essentially inauthentic culture, heroes set off in various directions in pursuit of the real thing."¹³ But when entropy coalesces with systems of power that strive to transform the human being into a cog in a machine, the risk of falling into meaninglessness escalates, and preserving one's authenticity itself becomes a meaning worth living for. We find this urgency in Kerouac's narrator who gives us a blueprint for defending and asserting one's authenticity that is tailored for transitional times. While Kerouac's betwixt and between was the postwar pre-postmodern era, the recent covid pandemic and ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine have led many to believe that we might be experiencing a transitional period of our own. Other indicators that are looming on the horizon include The Great Reset, China's projected displacement of U.S economic hegemony, technological singularity, the metaverse, and the climate change tipping point. For this, it is important to look to Kerouac, first, to comprehend and contextualize the effect of transitional periods on one's sense of self and reality and, second, to understand how to navigate such periods with the least amount of damage to one's authentic integrity.

¹³ Alex De Jonge, *Dostoevsky and the Age of Intensity* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 221.

This dissertation deals with the problem of authenticity on three levels: the sociological–ethnographic, the philosophical, and the social–artistic. Each level corresponds to a specific threat to authenticity and the respective strategies adopted for resisting that threat. Part I corresponds to the sociological–ethnographic level, in which I identify *hyperreality* as the predominant threat and discuss its role in technocratizing society, homogenizing individuals, establishing deterrence mechanisms, disseminating artificial hyper-stimuli, and tacitly maintaining socioeconomic and racial segregation.

Although hyperreality has a precise definition in postmodern theory, it is used in this study as an umbrella term that covers many of the ramifications of the technocratic postwar era in America. The three chapters of Part I deal respectively with authenticity as a marker of Otherness, a marker of an alternative American identity, and a marker of adaptation to the environment. In chapter one, I define hyperreality and its manifestations in the *Legend*, as well as the liminality that characterizes Kerouac’s writing and that enables resistance through experimentation and innovation. Here, Ronna C. Johnson’s “‘You’re Putting Me on’: Jack Kerouac and the Postmodern Emergence” (2000) and Aaron Christopher Mitchell’s *Liminality and Communitas in the Beat Generation* (2017) are critical in identifying the implications of Kerouac’s peculiar literary and cultural position in history and American literature, specifically, the creative capacity that enables him to experiment with alternative modes of being. Then, I outline some of the most pertinent scholarly critiques of Kerouac’s portrayal of the Other, which include accusations of seeking authenticity by appropriating the cultures of Mexicans and African Americans. Studies such as Jon Panish’s “Kerouac’s *The Subterraneans*: A Study of ‘Romantic Primitivism’” (1994) provide significant details that are used in the analysis of the primitiveness motif, which is at the heart of the authenticity quest. Nevertheless, I dispute the majority of these accusations and, using Marie-Laure Ryan’s Possible Worlds theory as a foundation for the demarcation of narrative worlds in the *Legend*, I discuss how Duluoz constructs a private fictional world in order to reimagine the Other as a superior being and establish authenticity as a characteristic of Otherness.

Chapter two discusses the narrator’s disruption of artificial identity prototypes through a linguistic analysis of identity schemas. Primarily using Gilles Fauconnier’s and Mark Turner’s theory of conceptual blending, I recognize the American identity as a dynamic construct

composed of an aggregation of schemas in the mind. I then outline the disruption by the hyperreal of schemas or identity prototypes that are deemed authentic, as well as the counter-disruptions by Duluoz of the artificial schemas that are introduced by the hyperreal and which lead to the construction of an alternative authentic American identity. Chapter three identifies authenticity as an outcome of the adaptation to the environment. I use notions from evolutionary psychology, especially John Tooby's and Leda Cosmides', to examine the role of hyper-stimuli on the homogenization of individuals and the creation of artificial hazards to which they become adapted. Through a comparative analysis, I demonstrate how the environment of hyperreal America engenders *maladaptations* while the environment of Duluoz's private fictional world (of the Other and of alternative Americanness) showcases a calibration between the individuals' evolved mechanisms and authentic stimuli.

Aside from the sociological–ethnographic perspective, we can speak about authenticity in Kerouac from a more cosmopolitan angle, one that situates Kerouac among the great philosophers who pondered the problem of authenticity such as Sartre and Nietzsche. In fact, the *Legend* is, in its own right, a serious philosophical treatise on the questions of being in the world, nothingness, death, time, and morality, which is an aspect of Kerouac's work that is frequently overshadowed by the readerly and scholarly interest in his “adventures” with Beat hero Neal Cassady. In its existential manifestations, the crisis of the loss of authenticity engenders in Kerouac a feeling of profound alienation:

I'm just a silly stranger goofing with other silly strangers for no reason far away from anything that ever mattered to me whatever that was—Always an ephemeral “visitor” to the Coast never really involved with anyone's lives there because I'm always ready to fly back across the country but not to any life of my own on the other end either, just a traveling stranger. (*BS*, 178)

Kerouac presents us here with an assessment of the experience of the road—immortalized in the novel *On the Road*—that shatters previously held convictions that the road for the Beats was an incarnation of salvation or liberation, or as Julien Ortega puts it, “for the poets of the movement [the Beats], the road is synonymous to the quest for authenticity.”¹⁴ With Kerouac, this is a

¹⁴ Julien Ortega, “Libérer l'Écriture: Le Projet de la Beat Generation,” (PhD diss., Université de Perpignan, 2018), HAL, NNT : 2018PERP0020, tel-01930961.

misconception for, what good are illuminating ephemeral joy rides if one is battling forces that confront them as soon they reach their destination?

One of the reasons for these misconceptions comes from the fact that some readers and scholars assume that *On the Road* is a standalone story while, in fact, it is but a part of the grand narrative that constitutes *The Duluoz Legend*, as Kerouac himself maintains in the preface to *Big Sur*: “On the Road, The Subterraneans, The Dharma Bums, Doctor Sax, Maggie Cassidy, Tristessa, Desolation Angels, Visions of Cody and the others including this book Big Sur are just chapters in the whole work which I call The Duluoz Legend.” But even in *On the Road*, traces of an unfulfilled spiritual quest can be found in more than one scene such as the one in which the narrator admits that “the one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nauseas of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death. But who wants to die?” (*OTR*, 111).

Existentially, the road did not provide Kerouac with what he was searching for, primarily because of a crippling fear of death that translated to an extreme devotion to religion during the early stages of his career, which is not the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks about Kerouac. “This horrible sinister condition (of mortal hopelessness)” (*BS*, 41), as Kerouac called it, denied him the enjoyment of the present moment for the majority of his life if one takes the *Legend* to be an account of it. Kerouac was convinced that if there was such a thing as an absolute form of authenticity, it has to be beyond the perceived world, which seems a rather hopeless perspective. If, as he admits, “everyone of us [is] *born to die*” (*TR*, 579), then what is the point of life? In other words, “what does it mean that I am in this endless universe, thinking that I’m a man sitting under the stars on the terrace of the earth, but actually empty and awake throughout the emptiness and awakedness of everything?” (*TDB*, 386).

Because of the Beats’ well-known interest in Buddhism, there is an understandable tendency to refer directly and sometimes solely to Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums* whenever the author’s philosophy is the topic of discussion, the assumption being that Buddhism influenced the philosophy. But the truth of the matter is that Buddhism was merely one of the many worldviews that Kerouac developed in his attempts to make sense of the world. Through his narrator, Kerouac explored atheism, practiced Buddhism as he did Christianity, hedonism,

secular asceticism, and promiscuity, and viewed the world from the vantage point of a stoic, idealist, simpleton, mystic, prophet, solipsist, paranoiac, alcoholic, junky, and bum. All of these different explorations, shifting views, and states of mind, which are manifestations of the postwar technological development and general affluence as much as they are symptoms of despair from the threat of the Atomic Age, were tools for getting at *the* truth that would enable Duluoz to live authentically.

Mostly, however, these explorations are the symptoms of Duluoz's gradual loss of faith in Christianity as an answer to justify *entropy*, which is what I recognize as the second threat to the loss of authenticity. Part II of this dissertation outlines the effect of entropy on creating in Duluoz a distorted view of the universe by engendering uncertainties, ambiguities, and mysteries around the issues of meaning, morality, religion, death, time, and knowledge. It discusses Duluoz's search for the Real through philosophical reflections on the condition of existence as well as the evaluation of his place in the universe. Chapter four outlines the chaotic structure of the universe through the eyes of Duluoz. It analyzes the role of the major female characters in revealing to Duluoz the dichotomies inherent in issues of divinity (the sublime and the grotesque), masculinity, suffering, art, and love. Then, it distinguishes between the realm of unreality, which is identified with the illusory, perceived world, and a mysterious realm of reality where the authentic Real presumably exists and which is revealed to Duluoz through various apparitions. The chapter also discusses Duluoz's dangerous reflections on morality, specifically as pertains to the acts of murder and sinning, and employs Nietzsche's account of nihilism to discuss his misunderstanding of the notion of nothingness that he concocts to cope with his diminishing faith in the Christian God.

Duluoz's skepticism features in soliloquies such as: "Ah, Above, what you doin with your children?— ... shouldna done it, Lord, Awakener, shouldna played the suffering-and-dying game with the children in your own mind" (*TR*, 614). It also appears in addresses to his readers, especially in *Desolation Angels*: "For those who believe in a personal God who cares about good and bad are hallucinating themselves beyond the shadow of a doubt, tho God bless them, he blankly blesses blanks anyway" (*DA*, 78); "Waiting for God? And because he is not limited he can not exist. Waiting for Lefty? Same, sweet Bronx-singer. Nothing there but mind-matter essence primordial and strange with forms and names you have for it just as good" (*DA*, 115).

Despite what may appear as a gradual descent into absurdism, Kerouac's narrator discovers means of transcendence that are independent of Christianity and even Buddhism. Tanguy Harma has noticed that the writings of Ginsberg and Kerouac "offer a tangle of diverse and hardly compatible spiritual traditions (Catholicism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, among others) that combine with one another and lead to a syncretism that has more to do with an aesthetic strategy than with the establishment of a precise moral and religious framework."¹⁵ In Kerouac, there is even an attempt to fashion a new "Beat" religion that is not merely an amalgamation of the traditions that Tanguy mentions but an entirely new religion.

Chapter five analyzes the ways Duluoz employs his understanding of universal disorder in finding a philosophical solution to some of the issues that stand in the way of his quest for the Real. Using Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of *bad faith* as well as Carl Jung's discussion of the psychic condition of human functions, it demonstrates how Duluoz develops an alternative belief system that relies on dismantling the dualities and extremism of Christianity, Buddhism, and materialism, finding authenticity between *facticities* and free will. The chapter also discusses the narrator's strategies for coping with the determinism and paradoxes of death through the reconfiguration of the present and his understanding of nothingness. It interprets Duluoz's mortality anxiety as a Heideggerian dilemma, specifically, as a quest to achieve *being-toward-death*. Then, using Pia Tikka's and Mauri Kaipainen's neurophenomenological notion of *narrative nowness*, it studies the effect of a particular experience that Duluoz has on Desolation Peak on his perception of the present as a continuously evolving state of mind. Finally, offering a reading of the notion of nothingness from the experimental perspective of quantum mechanics, the chapter shows that Kerouac's advanced scientific view of the universe associates authenticity with a positive form of atheism.

Chapter six deals with the category of esoteric knowledge that is identified as "gnosis." It interprets gnosis as the knowledge of the mysteries of the Real and argues that a crucial aspect of authenticity depends on accessing this knowledge. After elaborating on the inaccessibility of noumena as per Kant, it shows that Duluoz's preoccupation with the noumenal nature of entities is a reflection of his desire to fulfill his role as a messenger–prophet through writing. After

¹⁵ Tanguy Harma, "Vers un Existentialisme Beat," in *Beat Generation: L'Inservitude Volontaire*, ed. Olivier Penot-Lacassagne (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 114. My translation.

analyzing some of his reflections on noumena, the chapter demonstrates how access to gnosis is (made to seem) possible through, first, a linguistic analysis of the “nonsensical” language in the *Legend* and, second, a narratological analysis of narrative transgressions that relies on Julian Hanebeck’s hermeneutic interpretation of metalepsis, which establishes mysticism as a reality and mystic knowledge as a possibility.

Part III recognizes *individualism* as the threat that obstructs the manifestation of the authentic social and creative self. Certainly, Kerouac’s main existential concern was to find himself a place in a world that he can understand. He wanted to find a justification for living in a synthetic and unjust world that permits suffering and cruelty and denies simple freedoms such as the enjoyment of nature. But underneath this worldly concern is a more personal one, which we find in Kerouac’s self-identification as a writer on two different levels. On the surface level, Kerouac fulfills the need of his authentic self by doing what he is supposed to be doing, his heart’s true desire, thereby becoming whom he was meant to be, what he was put on this earth to do, etc. As the reader can surmise, this is not exclusive to writing but is rather a universal aspiration and wisdom shared by humankind and found everywhere, from dense works of philosophy all the way to contemporary self-help books.

But there is a more profound and esoteric level of writerly self-identification that seems to involve Kerouac’s discovery of a new method of writing. One of the major effects of the author’s immersion in African American culture is the exposure to bebop jazz. In fact, it is impossible to know what kind of literature Kerouac would have written had he lived in an era that was dominated by a different genre of music, but is it safe to assume that it would have been radically different. Through jazz, Kerouac discovered the power of improvisation and its affiliation with the essence of life, and he strived to replicate the aesthetic of jazz improvisation in his writing. From this perspective, authenticity becomes intertwined not only with creative expression—which itself is problematic because either it entails the assumption that non-creative individuals lack certain aspects of authenticity in their lives or it imposes a redefinition of creativity—but specifically with unedited, unembellished, and unfiltered spontaneous creation.

As a strategy of resistance to individualism, Duluoz turns to modes of intersubjectivity as a means to achieving authenticity. Chapter seven outlines the major accounts of intersubjectivity while recognizing Charles Taylor’s elaboration of the dialogic nature of authenticity as the

framework for the analysis conducted in Part III. It discusses the intersubjective experiences that Duluoz establishes with two of the major characters in the *Legend*: Dean Moriarty from *On the Road* and Mardou Fox from *The Subterraneans*. The section about Dean locates Duluoz's infatuation with his friend in the latter's incarnation of anti-extremist life philosophy and demonstrates that, for the most part, Duluoz's attempts to establish intersubjective experiences with Dean are always incomplete because of a lack of reciprocity from the latter. The section about Mardou recognizes Duluoz's intersubjective experiences with her as being triggered by a series of confessions that they communicate with one another, which is why I call this specific mode of intersubjectivity "confessional intersubjectivity."

Chapter eight explores two other modes of intersubjectivity: performative and readerly. It refers to performative intersubjectivity as the result of Duluoz's interpretations of the bodily gestures, movements, and language of others and his attribution of intentions based on these interpretations. Applying Theory of Mind, the chapter traces the development of these intentional stances from initial interpretations of gestures or utterances of others to changes in the narrator's perspective of reality. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to readerly intersubjectivity, which refers to the intersubjective experience established between Duluoz and the reader or addressee. It refers back to Pia Tikka's and Mauri Kaipainen's study, specifically their recent fMRI-based experiment that reveals scenes of shared readerly attention called Shared Contexts of Reference (SCRs) and analyzes data collected from the website Goodreads to hypothesize the existence of such SCRs in scenes from the *Legend*.

Chapter nine discusses intersubjectivity in the style of the *Legend*. Specifically, it studies the effect of Kerouac's "spontaneous prose" on the evocation of intersubjective experiences. After defining Kerouac's style as non-representational, the chapter explores intersubjectivity in the portrayal of jazz performances throughout the *Legend*. Then, it shows how the improvised aesthetic of jazz is applied to the narrative, producing what is recognized as "sketches" that evoke empathetic responses from readers. Martin E. Rosenberg's neuroscientific study validates the argument that the use of jazz improvisation techniques in the narrative produces intersubjective experiences between the narrator and the readers that could contribute to internalizing many of the mystic elements of the *Legend*. The final section of this chapter discusses the "oral" features of the narrative and demonstrates how the "naturalism" that they

produce also engenders empathetic responses based on the association it creates with the readers' intuitive representational system.

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, this dissertation has benefited greatly from two book-length studies on Kerouac, which are referenced in many of its sections. First, there is Nancy M. Grace's *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (2007), which is the only available work that traces a comprehensive thematic and chronological link between Kerouac's books, and in which the problem of authenticity, whenever it surfaces, is treated as a dynamic and not a static notion. Second, there is Michael Hrebeniak's *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form* (2006), which is one of the few books on Kerouac that focuses on the various implications of Kerouac's method. Although not concerned with authenticity per se, Hrebeniak's focus on the non-traditional features in Kerouac's writing such as orality constitutes a basis for the treatment of authenticity as an emergent property of Kerouac's experimentations with form.

The dissertation also references four studies from the recent *The Cambridge Companion to the Beats* (2017) by Steven Bellato (ed.), which supplies my discussion with new and important takes on the issues of race, sexuality, artistic interdisciplinarity, and transnationalism in Kerouac. It also references five studies from *The Philosophy of the Beats* (2012) by Sharin N. Elkholy (ed.), which feature the issues of Beat utopia, anarchism, multiculturalism, the representation of the drug experience, and performativity. While none of the studies in these two anthologies addresses the issue of authenticity, they all contribute to the development of my own theories and account of authenticity by providing the relevant artistic, sociological, and cultural foundation for the research.

As can be deduced from the plan of the study, the research employs a variety of narrative theories as well as a few theories and notions that are not traditionally used for literary analysis but are indispensable to reach its objectives. Each theory serves the analysis of a specific section or chapter, creating a thematic-theoretic specificity that justifies this diversity and covers the shortcomings of many previous studies on Kerouac whose abidance by a single framework conceals rather than discloses the complexity of his reflections. Instead, this study abides by Mieke Bal's argument that narrative theory is an "analytical instrument" for "close reading or

micro-stylistic analysis”¹⁶ and should be considered as “primarily a toolbox, not a philosophy of a discursive genre, mode or attitude.”¹⁷

The comprehensive analysis of authenticity in Kerouac conducted in this dissertation explores a theme that is rarely found in the existing literature on the author. Its unique focus on the philosophy in Kerouac’s writing, particularly the philosophy of resistance, hopes to situate him among the great philosophical novelists of the twentieth century, on par with the likes of Kafka, Camus, Sartre, and Eco. His take on authenticity, as I hope will be inferred from this research, merits its own category so that one could speak of “Kerouacian authenticity” in the same manner they speak of Kierkegaardian or Nietzschean authenticity.

The in-depth textual analysis contributes to closing the large gap that still exists between similar analyses and ideological or biographical ones.¹⁸ While Kerouac’s “spontaneous prose” has been recognized as a new mode of writing, the focus on the text in this study offers insight into some of the linguistic features of this mode that have never been studied before. This enables us to look at Kerouac not only as an innovator of style, but also of stylistics, and to discover more tangible reasons behind the cultural success of his works. It also allows us to see Kerouac independently from other Beat Generation writers like Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs despite sharing with them the same “Beat” preoccupation with the emancipation of language.

With the exception of classical philosophy, none of the aforementioned tools of analysis has been used in the study of Kerouac before. The recency of many of them reveals not only new aspects of authenticity, but also novel ways of exploring well-studied themes in Kerouac such as time, mysticism, and improvisation, among others. For example, without Julian Hanebeck’s 2017 work on metalepsis, the aporia in Kerouac’s occasional nonsensical language could not have been linked to his narrator’s attempt at accessing a higher category of knowledge. Without Pia Tikka’s and Mauri Kaipainen’s 2019 neuroscientific interpretation of Husserl’s “nowness” model, the notion of the present in Kerouac would not have been viewed as a dynamic and

¹⁶ Mieke Bal, “Introduction to Volume 1,” in *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies. Vol. One: Major Issues in Narrative Theory*, ed. Mieke Bal (London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

¹⁷ Bal, 7.

¹⁸ With the exception of the first section of chapter one and occasional passing mentions that are not germane to the discussion, this study does not have recourse to Kerouac’s biographies, interviews, journals, or letters.

continuously evolving concept but would have still been interpreted as a Marxist attempt to break free of capitalist time. And without recourse to the contemporary tools of neuroscience in the studies of David Beckstead (2013) and Martin E. Rosenberg (2019), the renowned improvisational features of Kerouac's style would still have been appreciated only for their aesthetic effects.

Since Kerouac's concern with the loss of authenticity is emblematic of the anxieties of transitional or liminal periods, the study could also be considered an investigation of the effect of these periods on innovation in the form and content of artistic expression. Furthermore, because Kerouac wrote semi-biographically, the panoramic examination of themes which includes issues of identity, race, sex, religion, power and hegemony, comradeship, city life, humankind's relationship to nature, and the condition of existence, provides this study with a sociological and ethnographic scope and makes it possible to view the *Legend* as a record an era.

It should be mentioned that the study in this dissertation is limited to the ten novels that constitute *The Duluoz Legend*, with a particular focus on seven of them. The novels that may be considered parts of the *Legend* but are not included in the discussion are *The Town and the City*, *Maggie Cassidy*, and *Doctor Sax*. *The Town and the City* is excluded because it precedes Kerouac's "spontaneous prose," which is an integral component of the overall discussion. On the other hand, *Maggie Cassidy*'s focus on the teenage period of Jack Duluoz's life eliminates most of the themes that go into the analysis in this dissertation, primarily the experience of the road, the initiation into Buddhism, the writerly aspirations, and, most importantly, meeting Neal Cassady. Finally, *Doctor Sax*'s highly symbolic and phantasmic style deviates from the overall aesthetic of the *Legend* although its mythic elements would certainly constitute a great addition to the philosophical analysis of Kerouac.

Finally, because the research aims to highlight as many aspects of the authenticity problem as possible, this may occasionally come at the expense of the number of primary source references used to support each of these aspects. Also, the use of some of the more recent and experimental tools of analysis means that significant parts of the argumentation develop over uncharted territory. Some theories such as Hanebeck's hermeneutic interpretation of metalepsis or Tikka's and Kaipainen's narrative deixis have rarely been used before on account of their recency. On the other hand, quantum mechanical theories have no organic association with the

field of literature and have rarely been used for literary analysis, much less in the study of Kerouac. Finally, for lack of access to medical technology and constraints of time, the application of narrative deixis, in particular, replaces the fMRI experiments intended for it with the analysis of data collected from the website Goodreads, which risks downgrading the effectiveness of the method.

That being said, this study falls in the category of research that deviates from the traditional biography or ideology-based approaches to Kerouac. With its three levels of analysis and the diversity of its narrative tools, it offers a systematic investigation of Kerouac's resistance to the impact of the postwar existential crisis in the American as well as global context. Hopefully, it succeeds in shedding light on the relevance and uniqueness of Kerouac as a twentieth-century writer who not only eloquently and innovatively diagnosed the crisis of the loss of authenticity but was also actively engaged in retrieving it. Part I deals with hyperreality as the first major threat to authenticity and demonstrates the destructive, constructive, and adaptive strategies that Kerouac's narrator employs in his quest for authenticity.

Part I.

AUTHENTICITY AND HYPERREALITY

Chapter 1. Otherness in Kerouac's Exploration of Authenticity

Social contexts play salient roles in shaping storyworlds in life writing and it is especially the case in works that appear to display an inherent dissatisfaction with the culture that birthed them. The reflection on the lived experience in *The Duluoz Legend* yields flickers of revolt on the self as the novels that constitute it prove to embody alternative modalities that connect the life of the narrator, Jack Duluoz, to a map for future change that is to be discerned through the reading process. That being said, as dissident as Kerouac may have been, the critical consensus on his representation of the Other in his major novels, attained following a stubborn prioritizing of his autobiography over measured textual analysis, is that they expose his conformity to the discriminatory current of his times.

The decadence of America creates for Kerouac's narrator a desire to explore alternative lifestyles and identities, which is observable to readers willing to go beyond *On the Road* and explore the many other dimensions of Duluoz's experiences and revolts. However, lambasting traditions and norms does not seem sufficient to exonerate Kerouac who, for many scholars, sought to rid himself of societal malaises by exploiting the authenticity of the Other. While certainly not without merit, many of the inquiries into the heart of Kerouac's existential concerns have demonstrated either a failure to properly contextualize the experiences of his narrator or a disregard for the underlying world-making operations that transcend the level of the single novel.

This chapter examines Otherness and whiteness as regards the authenticity quest in excerpts from the *Legend*. The first section introduces the notion of hyperreality and clarifies its connection to the Beat Generation in general, and Kerouac in particular. It also presents a rationale for the discussion of Otherness and whiteness in the sections that follow. The second section reviews and principally disputes some of the most pertinent accounts of Kerouac's portrayal of the Other. It provides the full context for some of the controversial statements made by Duluoz by emphasizing the interconnectedness of the novels that constitute the *Legend* and demonstrating flaws in the arguments based on which accusations of cultural appropriation and simulation have been made. The third section outlines what Duluoz perceives as the failure of white America to harbor authentic life, especially when compared to the land of the Other where simplicity, stability, and bliss reign supreme.

The fourth and final section elaborates on the authentic features of Otherness and begins by employing Marie-Laure Ryan's typology of worlds to suggest that Otherness in the *Legend* is a fictional construct of the mind of the narrator. Viewing Otherness as a construct enables the conceptualization of their primitiveness as a symbol of non-corruption and resistance to being assimilated by the forces of the hyperreal. The last part of this section provides an analysis of the strategies of "beautification" of the character of Tristessa from the novel by the same name. It considers Tristessa as an emblem of the constructed Other and demonstrates how Duluoiz enhances the portrait of the woman that she is based on by mitigating her vices while remaining faithful to the representation of her real-life identity.

Kerouac and the Hyperreal

Authenticity in Beat Liminality

The years separating the end of World War II and the emergence of postmodernism was a necessary interval for the proper digestion and theorization of the concerns, anxieties, and hopelessness of a world exiting an era of destruction and entering the unknown. When it comes to issues of meaning and authenticity, postmodernism's account of the disorder and absurdism of the times and its bleak vision for the future could be said to have offered more questions than answers, and more despair than hope. All of what Kerouac wrote precedes any postmodern proclamation of the end of meaning and objective reality; yet, as Ronna C. Johnson observes, "in its technical innovation and deconstructions of the postwar social his work anticipated formal, artistic, and cultural phenomena that would be theorized later in post-structuralist thought."¹ Even some of the themes in his writings such as those that evoke the cultures of the fellaheen and African Americans in *On the Road* testify to "a kind of nostalgia for the vanishing American real"² as Robert Holton maintains, which could be considered a postmodern concern. That being

¹ Ronna C. Johnson, "'You're Putting Me on': Jack Kerouac and the Postmodern Emergence," *College Literature* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 23.

² Robert Holton, "Kerouac Among the Fellahin: 'On the Road' to the Postmodern," *Modern Fiction Studies* 41, no. 2 (1995): 275.

said, the fact remains that most postmodern chefs-d'oeuvre had not yet been published at the time when Kerouac was producing his work.

It is no more than a pleasantly convenient coincidence that Kerouac's final novel, *Vanity of Duluoaz*, appeared in the same year as Jean Baudrillard's first book, *The System of Objects*, one year before Kerouac's death. In truth, the significance of the year 1968 is attached to more than one culturally disrupting event. Infamous for ushering in a turning point in both American and French politics, it was a year of civil unrest in France and assassinations of icons of American liberalism in the United States. *Vanity of Duluoaz* ends on a somber note, with Kerouac's narrator declaring that "there is nothing new under the sun. All is vanity" (VOD, 258). From there, though not to imply that the two works are based on a recognizable continuation, Baudrillard's *The System of Objects* picks up, dissecting the objects of the postmodern world and critiquing their disassociation from utility and their emerging association with materiality.³

Although the Beats ardently expressed the loss of hope that many writers from the Atomic Age were preoccupied with, they preceded postmodernism, and their literary, social, and cultural position could best be described as "liminal." They opposed the ascendancy of theory and ideology as much as could have been possible amid a then-emerging New Left in the United States and a resounding deconstructionist trend among French intellectual circles. Indeed, the Beats embodied what David Savran describes as the "postwar rebel male" who was "a hybridized subject, a product of cultural miscegenation, a cross-dresser, neither completely white nor black, masculine nor feminine, heterosexual nor homosexual, working-class nor bourgeois."⁴ This view is substantiated in John Lardas's observation that "Spengler's philosophy of cultural cycles [in his *The Decline of the West*] enabled the Beats to see themselves at both the end and the beginning of an era,"⁵ both socioculturally and literarily. In addition, Erik Mortenson sees that the Beats encompass the best of both worlds in that their "exploration of individual consciousness certainly aligns them with modernism" while their commitment to "ceaselessly

³ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, [1968] 2005).

⁴ David Savran, *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 52.

⁵ John Lardas, *The Bop Apocalypse: The Religious Visions of Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 11.

exploring new avenues to personal and social alterations and testing the limits of subjectivity, agency, representation, and collectivity” is rather a postmodern one.⁶

On Kerouac’s work, in particular, Johnson judges it as being “neither fitted to modernism nor yet committed to the postmodern” but “partaking of both,”⁷ while Stephen Schryer observes that it “focuses on transitional figures who are caught midway between the stasis of the fellaheen and the Faustian ambitions of middle-class America.”⁸ But is liminality an opportunity for the (re)discovery of authenticity? Even though Ann Douglas sees in Kerouac the postmodern expression of the disintegration of the self that may deny authenticity, she seems to believe so:

Perhaps more surprisingly, in *Vanity of Duluo*, published in the later 1960s just before the first personal computers were being marketed, he [Kerouac] anticipated the deconstructionist doubts such technology would cast on the traditional understanding of authorship. People might think, as one recent letter [the] writer had, that he didn’t write his own books, that there was no “Jack Kerouac” at all, that his words “just suddenly appeared on a computer” somewhere. To Kerouac this sophistry was of a piece with a new popular phrase, one he detested, “you’re putting me on,” which seemed to rest on the assumption that everyone was more or less lying more or mess all the time, that there were no such things as truth and falsehood or an authentic self. Kerouac doesn’t use the term, of course, but, in fact, he’s describing the “postmodern” perspective and era.⁹

Because of Kerouac’s prophetic concerns about the postmodern age, Douglas does not believe that he “was sure that there was an authentic self.” But because “the beat movement took place on the cusp of postmodernity” that constitutes a “negotiating ground, the borderland between modernity and postmodernity, and Kerouac knew it,” she suspects that “at the very least,” Kerouac knew that “there is a story to be told, a story that insists on being told, even if there is no truth to find.”¹⁰

⁶ Erik Mortenson, *Capturing the Beat Moment: Cultural Politics and the Poetics of Presence* (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 4.

⁷ Johnson, ““You’re Putting Me on,”” 23.

⁸ Stephen Schryer, “Failed Faustians: Jack Kerouac and the Discourse of Delinquency,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 129–30.

⁹ Ann Douglas, ““Telepathic Shock and Meaning Excitement”: Kerouac’s Poetics of Intimacy,” *College Literature* 27, no. 1 (Winter, 2000): 12–13.

¹⁰ Douglas, 13.

Fortunately, Aaron Christopher Mitchell's recent study on the liminality of the Beats not only confirms Douglas's suspicions but also provides an anthropological justification for the "negotiating ground" that she discerns. Employing Victor Turner's notion of liminality as a characteristic of individuals during a rite of passage, Mitchell observes how "as if almost majestically, the society and day in age in which the beats lived proved to be fertile for liminality and *communitas* [Turner's term], for instance due to the war crisis of the times as well as the preference for conformity during the resulting Cold War."¹¹ Victor Turner reminds us that liminality is a "stage of reflection [where] ideas, sentiments and facts ... are, as it were, resolved into their constituents" which are then "isolated and made into objects of reflection by such processes as componental exaggeration and dissociation."¹² It is also the realm "where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence ... [and] a promiscuous intermingling and juxtaposing of the categories of event, experience, and knowledge."¹³ Mitchell explains that, because the Beats wrote primarily biographically, their work constitutes ideal archeological artifacts as motifs such as nature, movement, time, apparitions, and death can all be interpreted as markers of liminality during a rite of passage.¹⁴ This provides a strong argument that the extreme experimentation with ideas on which the Beat aesthetic is founded is the direct result of the sociocultural liminality of their time.

However one tries to associate Kerouac with or divorce him from ideologies and schools of cultural thought, and although he expounded complex philosophy himself, he was not a proponent of what he deemed as manifestations of the analytical–technocratic trend and had a particular disdain for sociologists and psychoanalysts. Observing his demeanor during an appearance on the show *Firing Line* that same fateful year of 1968,¹⁵ the spectator finds no difficulty in guessing, from his perfectly timed eye-rolls and giggles to his straightforward clash with sociologist and hippies "expert" Lewis Yablonsky, that Kerouac, though visibly intoxicated during the interview, had little tolerance for sophisticated attempts to explain or, rather, explain

¹¹ Aaron Christopher Mitchell, *Liminality and Communitas in the Beat Generation* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017), 41–42.

¹² Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 105.

¹³ Turner, 106.

¹⁴ Mitchell, *Liminality and Communitas*, 49.

¹⁵ *Firing Line* with William F. Buckley, Jr., "Firing Line with William F. Buckley, Jr.: The Hippies," interview by William F. Buckley Jr., Sept. 3, 1968, YouTube video, 50:53, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYgv7ur8ipg&t=632s>.

away the “beatitude,” as he would have called it, of the Beat moment in history. Nevertheless, Kerouac remained ambivalent about the Beat Generation and even about calling himself a Beat writer, primarily because of the unexpected mass media takeover of all things Beat.

Kerouac’s Assimilation by the Hyperreal

Umberto Eco once wrote: “Once upon a time there were the mass media, and they were wicked, of course, and there was a guilty party. Then there were the virtuous voices that accused the criminals. And Art (ah, what luck!) offered alternatives, for those who were not prisoners of the mass media.”¹⁶ While undeniably supplying the cultural space of the times with “alternatives”—the spirit of revolt, experimentation, and expansion of the self and the imagined frontier for many young Americans—the Beats confronted a backlash from anti-progressives who called for the restoration of traditional values, which explains the rise of conservatism following their heyday. What is more interesting and, as mentioned earlier, less expected was the quasi-successful assimilation by the media of Kerouac and the Beats, which I identify as assimilation by the *hyperreal*—the product of the simulation of a Real that has vanished, a copy that has become indistinguishable from the Real.

Baudrillard’s notion of the hyperreal is intertwined with his view of contemporary societies as mere simulations, a view that is especially relevant in today’s world as many anticipate the moment that humanity will be integrated into the metaverse to the point of no return. According to Douglas Kellner, Baudrillard’s “postmodern universe” is

one of hyperreality in which entertainment, information, and communication technologies provide experiences more intense and involving than the scenes of banal everyday life, as well as the codes and models that structure everyday life. The realm of the hyperreal (e.g., media simulations of reality, Disneyland and amusement parks, malls and consumer fantasylands, ...) is more real than real, whereby the models, images, and codes of the hyperreal come to control thought and behavior. Yet determination itself is aleatory in a non-linear world where it is impossible to chart causal mechanisms in a

¹⁶ Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (N.p.: Harcourt Brace, [1967, 1986] 1987), 150.

situation in which individuals are confronted with an overwhelming flux of images, codes, and models, any of which may shape an individual's thought or behavior.¹⁷

Added to this horrific vision is Baudrillard's contention that the "real" that this hyperreal came to replace never existed. In his own words:

Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—precession of simulacra—that engenders the territory.¹⁸

Kerouac's America is the producer of such "models of a real without origin," whose schematic characteristics are analyzed in chapter two of this dissertation. Recognizing the "real" in the Beat artifact, the media of the hyperreal, rather than launching a propaganda campaign against it, opted to assimilate it. Stephen Petrus remarks that "from approximately the end of 1958 through 1960, popular magazines, newspapers, television shows, and even comic strips bombarded Americans with images of the Beat Generation,"¹⁹ clearly turning it into a commodity. In a landmark study on the counterculture, Theodore Roszak notes that "whatever these things called 'beatniks' and 'hippies' originally were, or still are, may have nothing to do with what *Time*, *Esquire*, *Cheeta*, CBSNBCABC, Broadway comedy, and Hollywood have decided to make of them. Dissent, the press has clearly decided, is hot copy."²⁰

Recognizing the allure of revolt and the influence that Beat ideals had on the youth, the media did not waste any time taking advantage, and in so doing, they distorted these ideals. As Roszak indicates, the strategy was clear: "cynical smothering of dissent by saturation coverage."²¹ James F. Royce does not completely blame the media, arguing that the Beats may have brought it on themselves for having "espoused some of the same values of mass media that

¹⁷ Douglas Kellner, "Jean Baudrillard," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2019 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/ baudrillard/>, accessed 27 May 2022.

¹⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1981] 1994), 1.

¹⁹ Stephen Petrus, "Rumblings of Discontent: American Popular Culture and its Response to the Beat Generation, 1957-1960," *Studies in Popular Culture* 20, no. 1 (October 1997): 7.

²⁰ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 37.

²¹ Roszak, 37.

promulgated a consumption-based ethos” and deducing that “the Beat sensibility was not simply some clean discontinuity with the rest of American culture, but also a product of that culture.”²² While the aforementioned media strategies and Kerouac’s specifically *anti*-consumerist maxim analyzed in this dissertation disprove Royal’s claim, the fact remains that the term “Beat” became correlated with a certain character, style, or image associated with rebellion, drugs, and sexual misconduct; in short, anything that could be commercialized. Unsurprisingly, Kerouac was crowned “king of the Beatniks”²³ around the same time he was trying to disassociate himself from the Beat Generation, a movement that he was predominantly responsible for creating:

To think that I had so much to do with it [the Beat Generation], too, in fact at that very moment the manuscript of Road was being linotyped for imminent publication and I was already sick of the whole subject. Nothing can be more dreary than “coolness” (not Irwin’s cool, or Bull’s or Simon’s, which is natural quietness) but postured, actually secretly rigid coolness that covers up the fact that the character is unable to convey anything of force or interest, a kind of sociological coolness soon to become a fad up into the mass of middleclass youth for awhile. (*DA*, 358–59)

Largely the offspring of the Beat Generation, the counterculture movement was assimilated in a similar fashion, as Thomas Frank explains:

Regardless of the taste of the Republican leaders, rebel youth culture remains the cultural mode of the corporate moment, used to promote not only specific products but the general idea of life in the cyber-revolution. Commercial fantasies of rebellion, liberation, and outright “revolution” against the stultifying demands of mass society are commonplace almost to the point of invisibility in advertising, movies, and television programming.²⁴

In Baudrillardian terms, this “point of invisibility” corresponds to the process of *implosion*, which refers to the “dedifferentiation” or the “collapse’ of (the power of) distinctions.”²⁵ The

²² James F. Royal, “Buddhism and the Production of American Cool,” (PhD diss., The University of Florida, 2009), 71, ProQuest (3467709).

²³ Dennis McNally, *Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America* (N.p.: Da Capo Press, [1979] 2003), 243.

²⁴ Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 4.

²⁵ Kellner, “Jean Baudrillard.”

collapse of the distinction between the counterculture and the mainstream culture (the implosion of the counterculture) is one of the most perspicuous indicators of the hegemony of hyperreal America via its media apparatus. On the hyperreal's recruitment of media, Baudrillard writes:

The media carry meaning and countermeaning, they manipulate in all directions at once, nothing can control this process, they are the vehicle for the simulation internal to the system and the simulation that destroys the system, according to an absolutely Mobian and circular logic—and it is exactly like this. There is no alternative to this, no logical resolution. Only a logical exacerbation and a catastrophic resolution.²⁶

With its tentacles deep into the crevices of culture, the continuously updated media apparatus compiles information so rapidly and efficiently that it seems to possess the capacity to anticipate the advent of all cultural change and avant-gardism. Therein lies the difficulty of authentic social or cultural movements or happenings in resisting assimilation, which is why Baudrillard calls for a “strategic resistance [which] is that of the refusal of meaning and of the spoken word.”²⁷

Performing a clear-cut Baudrillardian dissection, Johnson looks into Kerouac's “dismissal as a writer and the ironic eclipse of his pre-post-modernism by his mass culture image,” his becoming “a writer who is famous for being famous” and ultimately, his transformation into “a simulacrum” or what she also refers to as “the image of Kerouac,” which is but “a fluctuating, indeterminate second-order signifier, a copy for which no original has ever existed.”²⁸ Johnson also scrutinizes Kerouac's failure to resist the mechanisms of assimilation during his 1959 appearance on *The Steve Allen Show* as the interviewer and the advertisers of the show deny the author any chance to claim an authentic relationship to his art:

The disparity between Allen's and Kerouac's discourses marks the erasure of a Kerouac real embodied in his texts; even when Kerouac reads his work, which instantiates his literary claim and an extant original against the celebrity copy, the commercial venue negates it, disappearing the writer into the entertainment vacuum—into the erasures enacted by his Beat fame.²⁹

²⁶ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 84.

²⁷ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 85.

²⁸ Johnson, ““You're Putting Me on,”” 24–25.

²⁹ Johnson, 26.

Finding himself forced to legitimize his writer identity and the authenticity of his art, Kerouac's failure, according to Johnson, is caused by the "vertiginous reflexivity of possessing and experiencing a historical identity while simultaneously being experienced and possessed as a simulacrum."³⁰

There is substantial evidence from the novels of the *Legend* that proves that Kerouac was indeed aware that his authentic identity as a writer was at risk of being overridden by his fame and that this jeopardizes his entire artistic legacy. One of the more straightforward examples is the narrator's reaction in *Big Sur* to an encounter with a young beatnik who was idealizing him and whom he was trying his best not to disappoint:

Because after all the poor kid actually believes that there's something noble and idealistic and kind about all this beat stuff, and I'm supposed to be the King of the Beatniks according to the newspapers, so but at the same time I'm sick and tired of all the endless enthusiasms of new young kids trying to know me and pour out all their lives into me so that I'll jump up and down and say yes yes that's right, which I can't do any more—My reason for coming to Big Sur for the summer being precisely to get away from that sort of thing— (*BS*, 109)

Instead of acting as a haven, the Big Sur forest contributes to the deterioration of the narrator's sanity as I argue in chapter three, and, toward the end of his life, he becomes so hopeless that he contemplates "the idea of burning most of what I wrote so that my art would not appear (to myself as well as to others) to be done for ulterior, or practical motives, but just as a function, a daily duty, a daily scatological 'heap' for the sake of purgation" (*VOD*, 257).

That being said, Kerouac's narrator, Jack Duluoz, finds refuge not outside of civilization but rather beyond white America where the agents of the hyperreal appear to be defused. When he meets Dean and embarks on the famous journey on the road, Duluoz does not only head westward but also deep into the foreign cultures of the Mexicans and African Americans. What he discovers there are people whose primitiveness, esoteric mysticism, and inconsequentiality from white America's vantage point play to their advantage and shield them from being assimilated by the hyperreal. As Steve Wilson remarks:

³⁰ Johnson, 35.

Kerouac sets out at mid-century to surround himself with the lives of those beyond the bounds of “normal” American society. Fictionalized in *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*, his quest leads him to live with hobos, befriend criminals and drug users, and have interracial affairs with Mexican and Native American women—all this in the confining social environment of late 1940s America, when conformity was seen as a civic good. While most Americans in the post-war decades sought comfort and security, Kerouac and his fellow Beat writers would reject those desires as artificial. The life of the outsider was for them the last place where authenticity survived in the manufactured world of America. The Beats argued that outsiders such as Mexican migrant worker Terry in *On the Road* and Mardou—mentally unstable and half Cherokee, who appears in *The Subterraneans*—could not fit into mainstream America because of their race, their criminal records, their economic status, their sexual orientations. Far from being a difficulty, though, this was a benefit to their spiritual development.³¹

Kerouac’s concern for protecting his legacy or maintaining his authenticity as a writer becomes minor as he discovers the multiple dimensions of authentic living in Otherness. It is no wonder, then, that Julien Ortega deduces that Kerouac finds authenticity “among the people on the Mexican border.”³² But for the incongruity between the world of the Other and hyperreal America to be seen, Kerouac, through his narrator, exploits the power of the semi-autobiographical genre and the capacity for creative “componental exaggeration” (Turner) inherent in his liminality to amplify Otherness, abate whiteness, and reconfigure the world of the Other.

Cultural Appropriation and Simulation in Kerouac’s Portrayal of the Other

Kerouac’s Other is a narrative invention spawned out of the degeneration of American values and the failure of rationality as a Western paradigm to meet the desires that stretch beyond

³¹ Steve Wilson, “‘Buddha Writing’: The Author and the Search for Authenticity in Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*,” *The Midwest Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (1999): 303.

³² “auprès des populations à la frontière du Mexique.” Julien Ortega, “Libérer l’Écriture: Le Projet de la Beat Generation,” (PhD diss., The University of Perpignan, 2018), 180, HAL (tel-0193096). My Translation.

humankind's materialistic and immediate needs. Despite Duluoz's obvious personal indisposition to adapt, what is remarkable in his critique of the sweeping transformation of the American ideal is the simplicity of longing for rudimentary life, that is to say, for the freedom to want less and be left alone. At first glance, this appears to be an oversimplification of the quest that he embarks on until the reader discovers that in Duluoz's America, as Alex Young points out, the "homestead dream is revealed to be a simulacrum" that invokes a "Baudrillard-like revelation [that] precipitates in Kerouac a loss of faith not only in the West, but in the possibility of a 'rational' life."³³ The marriage between the West and rationality has upheld the simulacrum so resolutely that the only possible way to retrieve the simplicity of life is to seek it elsewhere.

Criticism of this endeavor by Duluoz reveals that however pure, it transforms him into an active contributor in the maintenance of the simulacrum, the very danger he set out to escape. In an important study on the ethnographic reach of the beat generation, Todd F. Tietchen links the travels of Sal and Dean, the protagonists of *On the Road*, to a phenomenon called "slumming" which, in contemporary societies, is associated with tourism in impoverished areas, and which is "often employed as shorthand for [the] sort of arrangement, in which one travels through geographies below one's economic standing as a form of sensual and experiential adventuring thought to provide access to authenticity."³⁴ A similar position is adopted by Schryer who sees that "insofar as white men like Sal and Dean do become temporarily assimilated into the culture of the poor, it is as economically privileged outsiders, on whom poor people of color attach their own hopes of assimilation into the white middle class."³⁵ Accordingly, Duluoz (Kerouac according to the critics) is found guilty of unvirtuous attempts at connecting with those whom he believes are the downtrodden peoples of the world, convincing himself that by establishing this connection, access to an authentic life is granted via the vicarious experience of their suffering.

Eftychia Mikelli's study on the construction of identity and Otherness in Kerouac's work confirms the view that cultural appropriation coincides with the preservation of the simulacrum through the characters' lack of racial sensitivity and genuine awareness of the suffering of the Other. Mikelli sees that Duluoz's travels in *On the Road* catalyze the construction of a

³³ Alex Trimble Young, "'Let us fake out a frontier': Dissent and the Settler Colonial Imaginary in US Literature after 1945," (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2015), 56, ProQuest (10799746).

³⁴ Todd F. Tietchen, "Ethnographies and Networks: On Beat Transnationalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beats*, ed. Steven Bellato (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 215.

³⁵ Schryer, "Failed Faustians," 136.

“simulated conception of Mexico,” as the protagonist fails to understand “Mexican huts in their actual context of poverty and suffering; rather, he lets himself be absorbed into his own constructions of simulacra, rejoicing in what he perceives to be merely a lack of concern for appearances.” This failure, Mikelli claims, contributes to transforming Mexico into an idealized “promised land” that “voids Sal’s quest of authenticity and substantial meaning,” and proves that, for him, “an ‘authentic’ center cannot be traced.”³⁶

The claim that Duluoz fails to understand the suffering of the Mexicans represents a failure to understand the omnipresence of suffering in Duluoz’s Catholic and Buddhist belief systems. As a theological concept, genuine suffering is a necessary condition for the devout Catholic because it brings the individual closer to the suffering of Jesus Christ and, as a transcendental concept, suffering is a necessary experience that any Buddhist must go through on their journey to enlightenment. Inspired by both tenets, Duluoz has such a glorified view of the suffering of the Mexicans that he “sought to create real suffering in a life that seemed sheltered”³⁷ as a sign of genuine empathy and eagerness to disclose the pain of humankind and the virtues of living gracefully through adversity. In *Big Sur*, Duluoz feels that he is “pulling a hot long burden nowhere,” and as he looks at himself in the mirror, he finds a face “with its expression of unbearable anguish so hagged and awful with sorrow you cant even cry for a thing so ugly, so lost, no connection whatever with early perfection and therefore nothing to connect with tears or anything” (*BS*, 8). This scene bespeaks the struggle to find atonement or vindication for Duluoz’s own suffering, as neither the burden that he carries nor the tears that he sheds seem to be connected to an authentic source. The emotional discharge being virtually impossible to achieve, he moves in the direction of vicarious experience, attempting to get as close as possible to the suffering that he sees in the Mexicans’ primitive way of life not, as Mikelli insists, to construct “simulated images of the Fellaheen so as to satisfy his need for a rooted existence,”³⁸ but to establish an ontological basis for suffering as the root of the existence of humanity.

Kerouac has also been the target of accusations of alleged misinterpretation and misrepresentation of African Americans by confounding the origins and historical role of their art. For example, his depiction of the jazz musicians whose performance Duluoz attends in *The*

³⁶ Eftychia Mikelli, “Constructions of Identity and Otherness in Jack Kerouac’s Prose,” (PhD diss., Durham University, 2009), 35, 37, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/29/>.

³⁷ Wilson, “‘Buddha Writing,’” 305.

³⁸ Mikelli, “Constructions of Identity,” 44.

Subterraneans “obliterate[s] their off-stage lives and de-historicize[s] them,” as Jon Panish remarks, maintaining that for Kerouac, “the jazz process remains one that is not the result of a cultural development on the group level and disciplined practice on the individual level but one that is fundamental to any ‘primal’ human existence.”³⁹ Panish sees that Kerouac reduces jazz musicianship to the happenstance of being African American and associates it with some kind of barbaric primitiveness. The latter could have a basis in the notorious passage from *On the Road* in which Sal wishes he was

a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.... I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a “white man” disillusioned.... I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling in this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America. (*OTR*, 161–62)

Despite Robert A. Lee’s astute interpretation of Duluoz’s wishing he was a “negro” or “a poor overworked Jap” as a sign of the “multicultural vista” that *On the Road* espouses,⁴⁰ in this day and age, such statements are easily considered by many as clear instances of cultural misappropriation, and, by referring to himself as a disillusioned white man, Duluoz’s self-denigration could arguably be seen as a form of Lacanian *surplus-enjoyment*.⁴¹

Once again, underscoring the role of suffering, especially its connection to black art, is crucial to understanding Kerouac’s representation of jazz. Writing during the heyday of jazz in 1926, Langston Hughes shares his own understanding of the art form: “jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul—the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world, a world of subway trains, and work, work, work: the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain swallowed in a smile.”⁴² Indeed, Duluoz’s portrayal of the musicians reflects his desire to exhibit the weariness of African Americans and

³⁹ Jon Panish, “Kerouac’s *The Subterraneans*: A Study of ‘Romantic Primitivism,’” *MELUS* 19, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 117.

⁴⁰ A. Robert Lee, “Tongues Untied: Beat Ethnicities, Beat Multiculture,” in *The Philosophy of the Beats*, ed. Sharin N. Elkholy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 106.

⁴¹ Slavoj Žižek explains this as an indirect admission of superiority through self-humiliation, which he sees common among contemporary leftist political correctness. The Radical Revolution, “Slavoj Zizek – White Guilt & Victimhood Culture,” YouTube video, 6:18, Jan. 8, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_N_vesQigY&t=72s.

⁴² Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” *The Nation* 122, no. 3181 (June 1926): 693.

celebrate jazz as one of the earliest creative vehicles that brought this weariness to the forefront of American culture. Contrary to Panish's account, when Duluoz describes the eyes of Charlie Parker as "separate and interested and humane" and says that he is "the kindest jazz musician there could be while being and therefore naturally the greatest" (*TS*, 476), he does not consider the kindness emanating from his playing as a presupposition or a feature of blackness but rather a byproduct of musicianship whose origins in talent and effort are nowhere denied.

It is true that, if the notion of suffering as an enlightened state of mind is not well-grasped, the reader risks interpreting Duluoz's encounter with African Americans either from the lens of a colonial gaze or as an implicit confession of white guilt. Mikelli's analysis of the brothel scene in *On the Road*, for example, adds to the racially charged simulation claim sexist and imperialist dimensions: "Sal and Dean force their colonial gaze upon Native American women, taking no heed of the fact that they construct simulacra dictated by the social exigencies of white masculine assertion."⁴³ Setting aside Mikelli's loose use of the terms "simulation" and "simulacra,"⁴⁴ one has to consider Lee's recommendation that "any map dealing with the Beats and race needs to steer carefully between text and context, both the connections and the gaps" in order to understand that Kerouac's evocation of race is "a venture, however unexpected, fashioned in general good faith."⁴⁵ Influenced as they may have been by the society that shaped them, the protagonists in *On the Road* do not contribute, even unknowingly, to a discriminatory construct. This is because, far beyond Mikelli's crisis of simulation based on the "social exigencies of white masculine assertion," we have in Baudrillard a problematization of the project of ethnology that accentuates the grander scheme at play:

In order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being "discovered" and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it.... Thus ethnology, rather than circumscribing itself as an objective science, will today, liberated from its object, be applied to all living things and make itself invisible, like an omnipresent fourth dimension, that of the simulacrum.... As ethnology collapses in its

⁴³ Mikelli, "Constructions of Identity," 74.

⁴⁴ Mikelli's use of the terms is reductionist and even inaccurate in that she implies that a simulacrum is a kind of mental construct that one develops about things, events, or communities. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, however, Baudrillard clearly deals with the term in a broader, more complex sense, referring to it as a social construct put in place and maintained by social agents and institutions often beyond the reach of regular individuals.

⁴⁵ A. Robert Lee, "The Beats and Race" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beats*, ed. Steven Bellato (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 193, 198.

classical institution, it survives in an antiethnology whose task is to reinject the difference fiction, the Savage fiction everywhere, to conceal that it is this world, ours, which has again become savage in its way, that is to say, which is devastated by difference and death.⁴⁶

The transformation of the science of ethnology into an “antiethnology,” which is a process and a feature of postmodernism, curtails the relevance of the orientalist, romanticized, or primitivized contact with the Other, at least where simulation is involved. Instead, of paramount concern in Baudrillard’s notion of simulation is the process by which differences between the Savages and the Civilized are artificially injected—and the intrinsic indifference masked—into the social consciousness. Duluoz’s rejection of this particular difference originates, if not from the purity of his intentions, then from his commitment to the practice of Zen Buddhism to which he resorts in his pursuit to comprehend the complexity of humankind’s relationship with one another, with the other species on the planet, and with everything else in the universe. In *The Dharma Bums*, Duluoz compresses his existential concerns in a single contemplation:

What does it mean that I am in this endless universe, thinking that I’m a man sitting under the stars on the terrace of the earth, but actually empty and awake throughout the emptiness and awakedness of everything? It means that I’m empty and awake, that I *know* I’m empty, awake, and that there’s no difference between me and anything else. In other words it means that I’ve become the same as everything else.” (*TDB*, 386)

Zen Buddhism teaches Duluoz that, in order to reach true enlightenment, one has to experience not only suffering but also the dissolution of the ego through an unshakable recognition of the sameness and harmony among all beings, as well as non-beings, including what would otherwise be considered the two divergent categories of Savages and Civilized. Nothing can be more humbling and less discriminatory than the path of the true bodhisattva, especially one who, like Duluoz, expresses the selfless desire to guide others toward the same path.

To suggest that Duluoz contributes to a discriminatory construct would be inaccurate, seeing as evidence from his theological foundation outweighs any ideological assumption about race, sex, or hegemony. This is not to doubt the reality of the desire by some to construct one’s identity by exploiting and symbolically capturing the Other’s, a reality that postcolonial and subaltern studies have effectively substantiated. But as pertains to the specific problem of

⁴⁶ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 7, 8, 9.

authenticity, such a suggestion brings to mind Umberto Eco's critique of the characteristically American obsession with the reconstruction of authenticity through the erection of wax museums that "reaches the point of reconstructive neurosis,"⁴⁷ especially since what is attempted is impossible to achieve. Because "there is not even a reign of the 'human,'"⁴⁸ in primitive societies (represented by the society of Mexicans and African Americans in the *Legend*), as Baudrillard maintains, even if a simulacrum of the Other is intended, it is bound to fail. This is because, first, its survival is dependent on the preservation of the differences between the self and the Other, the destruction of which, as mentioned above, is incarnated in Duluoz's belief system, and secondly, this difference on which the simulacrum depends belongs by definition to the human domain, especially in the context of relationships of power. That being said, one has to be content to regard Duluoz's authenticity quest with a measure of purity since the attempt to reach for the primitive Other is in itself a declaration of their mystical superiority. Ultimately, the ethnological project of annihilating the primitives by rediscovering them does not apply to Duluoz who employs the experience of the suffering of the Other in the annihilation of *his own ego* and the preservation of an empathetic self.

It is also important to mention that the use of the simulation argument to corroborate the impossibility of the recovery of authenticity disregards the connectedness between *On the Road* and the other novels of the *Legend*. The fact of the matter is that to examine *On the Road* in isolation on account of its cultural impact or for any other reason would be to study an incomplete story. The search for authenticity, I would argue, does not culminate in *On the Road* but merely begins there, and many of the philosophical uncertainties and mysteries that are reflected upon in *On the Road* are revisited and disentangled in the other novels of the series. After all, it is Kerouac himself who attests to this connectedness on two separate occasions: first, in the preface to *Big Sur*, as mentioned in the introduction of this study, and second, on the opening page of *Book of Dreams* when he professes that "the characters that I've written about in my novels reappear in these dreams in weird new dream situations ... and they continue the same story which is the one story that I always write about" (*BOD*, 3). Surely, this is not meant to discredit analyses of Kerouac's novels in isolation, but when it comes to the notion of authenticity, to study only the experiences that feature in *On the Road* would risk reducing some

⁴⁷ Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 13.

⁴⁸ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 133.

of Duluoz's interactions with others to fleeting instances of discrimination that are justifiable within the confines of the novel, but are revealed to be taken out of the context of the larger narrative.⁴⁹

As a motif embedded in the archetypal structure of the *Legend*, Otherness is associated with primitiveness, which is itself associated with humankind's innate predispositions and not with some barbaric attribute as some scholars imply.⁵⁰ Not only are the components of the world of the Other vital for the authenticity quest, but they also supply the reader's meaning-making process with particular generic markers that facilitate the *narrativization*⁵¹ of the primitiveness motif. These components, such as manual labor, life in the wilderness, kindness to animals, simplified hierarchical structures, spiritual practice, folk psychology, self-sufficiency, and self-dependence signal a "re-enchantment"⁵² of society and collective rejection of Western scientific domination. As such, rather than representing some material need to appropriate their culture, the contact with the Other becomes symbolic of the contact with one's internal architecture, that of the narrator and the reader. The non-discriminatory nature of Duluoz's identification with the Other is further substantiated by his unmasking of the decadence of white America and of the superiority of the Other as shown in the following sections.

Whiteness as Decadence

One could say that Duluoz's problems are partially caused by his desire to live a double life. On the one hand, he wants to be a religious, abstinent writer living in a cabin in the woods, doing nothing but writing and praying and contemplating. On the other, he wants to possess the material world: the women, the alcohol, and the wild rides with the boys. One could also say that

⁴⁹ For example, chapter seven of this dissertation shows how, in *The Subterraneans*, Duluoz employs intersubjective analysis, which I identify as a mode of authenticity, to try to understand the origin of his occasional racist thoughts.

⁵⁰ The cognitive and evolutionary aspects of such predispositions are identified correspondingly in chapters two and three.

⁵¹ According to Monika Fludernik, *narrativization* is "a reading strategy that naturalizes texts by recourse to narrative schemata." For the full discussion, see Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 22–25.

⁵² I refer here to Richard Jenkins's use of the term "re-enchantment" that denotes the re-injection of the elements of mystery in the world. Although Jenkins admits that this process has been, in many ways, assimilated by the hyperreal society by becoming "a thoroughly rationally organized business," some aspects of it remain genuine as evidenced by the Romantic movement. See Richard Jenkins, "Disenchantment, Enchantment, and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium," *Max Weber Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 2000): 13, 19.

the alienation that he feels is caused by a failure to reconcile these two worlds and that his narrated experience is an attempt to achieve in his private fictional world what he could not achieve in real life.

The thorough chronicle of the crisis is, of course, much more elaborate, and has to take into account Duluoz's unstable mental condition, alcoholism, the unresolved past that torments him, his complex love life, and equally complex relationships with his male friends. However, the more he tries to reconcile his inconsistent desires or ruminate on his personal issues, the more he realizes that the world in which he lives does not provide the authentic basis required for his attempts to yield the desired outcome. The virus of America becomes the primary stimulus for the desire for Otherness. In *Lonesome Traveler*, for example, America during the Christmas season is portrayed as being far removed from joy and festivities and looks rather like a bleak, deserted asylum:

Ah America, so big, so sad, so black, you're like the leafs of a dry summer that go crinkly ere August found its end, you're hopeless, everyone you look on you, there's nothing but the dry drear hopelessness, the knowledge of impending death, the suffering of present life, lights of Christmas wont save you or anybody, any more you could put Christmas lights on a dead bush in August, at night, and make it look like something, what is this Christmas you profess, in this void? (*LT*, 641–42)

Duluoz recognizes the twilight of America and sees through all the desperate attempts of clinging on to the last shreds of authenticity. The personification of the country imbues it with the withering characteristics of old age—it is a body on the verge of death and total collapse and all efforts to rejuvenate it cannot stop its inevitable end.

What begins as a faint feeling of disillusion develops into an outspoken political critique that displays a refined aspect of Duluoz's loathing. When he was in Tangiers, Duluoz observed that

One look at the officials in the American Consulate ... was enough to make you realize what was wrong with American "diplomacy" throughout the Fellaheen world: —stiff officious squares with contempt even for their own Americans who happened not to wear neckties, as tho a necktie or whatever it stands for meant anything to the hungry Berbers ... Why didnt the American consul ever walk into the urchin hall where Mohammed Mayé sat smoking? ... Instead it's all private limousines, hotel restaurants, parties in the

suburbs, an endless phoney rejection in the name of “democracy” of all that’s pith and moment of every land. (*DA*, 357–58)

The critique of American democracy and diplomacy testifies to Duluoz’s awareness of the failure of America’s relationship with the Other. The representatives of America’s interests abroad seem to be too concerned with the appearance of the Other to care about who they really are: their history, their story, their “pith,” and their peculiarities. Duluoz accuses America of sustaining the simulation of the Other by demonstrating the shortcomings of the communication scheme of its institutions, which is based on approaching the Other from a position of power and a display of an artificial image of grandeur in the form of limousines and hotel restaurants.

The first link between Duluoz’s crisis and America as geography appears in *On the Road* when the narrator, “away from home, haunted and tired with travel” and “halfway across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future,” admits to not knowing who he was “for about fifteen strange seconds” (*OTR*, 15). With the entire *Legend* in mind, readers understand the expression “east of my youth” to be a reference to his childhood and adolescence as a devout Christian living with his angelic brother and less-idealized father (both of whom had been deceased at the time of writing) and his mother. “West of my future,” on the other hand, denotes the wild adventures of the beats in San Francisco, Mexico, and abroad.

Prior to the madness of the West with Dean and Carlo, Duluoz meets a Mexican girl called Terry who becomes his lover and who convinces him to live with her and her family in Sabinal. It is there, at the crossroads between Christianity and the new religion awaiting in the West, and between the writerly discipline of *The Town and The City*⁵³ and the spontaneous chaos of *On the Road* that Duluoz experiences bliss for the first time. Having no money left to continue the journey westward and wanting to experience the life of Terry’s family, Duluoz “bent down and began picking cotton. It was beautiful” (*OTR*, 87). As if describing cotton-picking as beautiful is not problematic enough given the occupation’s historical symbolism in America, Duluoz mentions a “negro couple,” and registers how “they picked cotton with the same God-blessed patience their grandfathers had practiced in ante-bellum Alabama” (*OTR*, 87). Here, one could easily offer a critique of racism along the same lines as those mentioned so far, which

⁵³ *The Town and the City* is the first novel published by Kerouac. Written in a fairly conventional style, it precedes the spontaneous method that characterizes the majority of the novels that postdate it.

would be based on foregrounding the primitivization of the cotton-pickers and neglecting keywords such as “patience” that characterize how Duluoz truly perceives the Other—a people with extraordinary patience in the face of suffering.

The time that Duluoz spends with Terry in the land of the Fellaheen could be considered one of the rarest moments of pleasurable stability in Duluoz’s journey across the *Legend*. Contrary to the anxieties of the American daily hustle, a workday in Sabinal is as close as it gets to genuine happiness:

It was Terry who brought my soul back; on the tent stove she warmed up the food, and it was one of the greatest meals of my life, I was so hungry and tired. Sighing like an old Negro cotton-picker, I reclined on the bed and smoked a cigarette. Dogs barked in the cool night. Rickey and Ponzo had given up calling in the evenings. I was satisfied with that. Terry curled up beside me, Johnny sat on my chest, and they drew pictures of animals in my notebook. The light of our tent burned on the frightful plain. The cowboy music twanged in the roadhouse and carried across the fields, all sadness. It was all right with me. I kissed my baby and we put out the lights.... Every day I earned approximately a dollar and a half. It was just enough to buy groceries in the evening on the bicycle. The days rolled by. I forgot all about the East and all about Dean and Carlo and the bloody road. Johnny and I played all the time; he liked me to throw him up in the air and down in the bed. Terry sat mending clothes. I was a man of the earth, precisely as I had dreamed I would be, in Paterson. (*OTR*, 88)

The serenity of an honest day’s work and the homely feeling with Terry and the children are antidotes to the East-West duality. The temporary residence is not only a geographical resting place between the disciplined past and the wild future, but also a symbolic escape from a macrocosm that denies the existence of the Real or what Dean keeps referring to as “IT.” The spacio-temporal liminality represented by the town of Sabinal becomes Duluoz’s America, and historical America recedes from the focal point of the narrative. Insofar as a simulation is in question, it is not a Baudrillardian one that implicates Kerouac in the exploitation of the Other, but quite the opposite: Sabinal represents an alternative universe that allows the possibility to escape being assimilated by the simulation of the hyperreal society.

Unlike the madness of the city with Dean and Carlo, the highly charged and disappointing relationships with women, the depressive and near-suicidal episodes in the

mountains, and the drawbacks of fame that Duluoz endures toward the final stage of his life, the land of the Fellaheen may very well be one of the few places where Duluoz experiences the bliss of simplicity, working with his hands to make ends meet amidst the warmth of a family life that he had not experienced since the death of his brother and father. When he thinks about Terry's family and how "they thought I was Mexican," his benevolent attachment to the land and its people elicits the resounding affirmation "of course; and in a way I am" (*OTR*, 88), which suggests that even though Duluoz eventually leaves while Terry can not, his visit to Sabinal does not constitute a slumming venture.

Authenticity as Otherness

Otherness as a Construct

Envisaging Sabinal or Mexico as an alternative universe requires a conceptualization of the relationship between the real world and the different types of textual worlds involved. In narratological terms, this means to define the *diegetic* worlds of the *Legend* and the demarcation among them. Marie-Laure Ryan's typology of worlds enables the conceptualization of Sabinal and Mexico as alternative universes where the Real exists. It also constitutes a foundation for the discussion of the demarcations of worlds throughout this dissertation, especially regarding the realms of reality and unreality in chapter four, Many-Worlds Interpretation in chapter five, and metaleptic transgressions in chapter six. Ryan's typology is explained in the glossary that she provides for her *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*:

AW The actual world, center of our system of reality. AW is the world where I am located. Absolutely speaking, there is only one AW.

APW An alternative possible world in a modal system of reality.

TRW Textual reference world. The world for which the text claims facts; the world in which the propositions asserted by the text are to be valued. TRW is the center of a system of reality comprising APWs.

TAW Textual actual world. The image of TRW proposed by the text. The authority that determines the facts of TAW is the actual sender (author).

TAPW Textual alternative possible world. An alternative possible world in a textual universe structured as a modal system. TAPWs are textually presented as mental constructs formed by the inhabitants of TAW.

NAW Narratorial actual world. What the narrator presents as fact of TRW.

Ryan also provides the “principles” that govern these different worlds, and which could be logically inferred by the reader: in nonfiction, TRW and AW are identical, in fiction, they are not; in fiction and in accurate nonfiction, TAW is an accurate representation of TRW; in inaccurate nonfiction (where there are lies and errors), TAW is not an accurate representation of TRW; in fiction told by a reliable narrator, NAW and TAW are identical; and in fiction told by an unreliable narrator, NAW and TAW are not identical.⁵⁴

Similar to the style of literary journalism, Kerouac’s work belongs to a genre that makes it difficult to abide by Ryan’s principles for two reasons: first, it is difficult to determine to what extent the America (or Mexico or France, etc.) of the text resembles the real America (at least of Kerouac’s time); therefore, it is difficult to know with certainty whether TRW and AW are identical or not—it becomes a matter of degree. Second, Duluoz’s aforementioned mental instability and proclivity to consume drugs and alcohol are counterbalanced by his dedication to the truth and his use of specific narrative strategies to demonstrate faithful reproduction of speech.⁵⁵ This second problem makes it difficult to tell whether NAW and TAW are identical or not.

Germane to the discussion of the alternative world that Duluoz creates is what Ryan calls *F-universes*. Constituting an integral part of the “textual universe,” F-universes are explained as follows:

A last type of private sphere involved in narrative semantics is formed by the mind’s creations: dreams, hallucinations, fantasies, and fictional stories told to or composed by the characters. These constructs are not simply satellites of TAW, but complete universes, and they are reached by characters through a recentering. For the duration of a dream, the dreamer believes in the reality of the events he or she experiences, and the actual world of the dream takes the place of T/AW.... A character’s knowledge is often

⁵⁴ Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), vii–viii.

⁵⁵ See, for example, the effect of the use of orality in the *Legend*, discussed on pages 320–28 of chapter nine.

made to expand into the future or into a sacred layer of reality by a dream sent from these other regions. Hallucinations can tell characters something about their real selves, as does the apparition of the devil to Ivan Karamazov.⁵⁶

As this dissertation argues, especially in Part II, most of Duluoz's reflections on the condition of existence engender an F-universe that encroaches upon the TAW. We notice this *recentering* when Duluoz sketches a distortedly pacified and sublime image of some of the characters (for example, the "sublimification" of Tristessa and the stripper discussed in chapter four or the "Gerardization" of Dean in chapter five). Furthermore, the example of the apparition of the devil to Ivan Karamazov is strikingly similar to the apparitions perceived by Duluoz, which are discussed in chapter four.

According to Ryan, the recentering of F-universes is capable of "transport[ing] the experiencer to ever new realities" while offering "escapes from TAW."⁵⁷ In the *Legend*, the resolution of the authenticity quest or the discovery of the Real depends on Duluoz's recentering of his F-universe or, in other words, transposing the reality of his private mental world unto TAW. Chapter six, for example, demonstrates how mysterious and even nonsensical language is made sensical via this process, which attests to the power of F-universes in creating new realities for the reader who would otherwise not be willing to entertain them. Ryan sees that the very notion of plot dynamics (the movements and actions within a narrative) is based on the characters' attempts at bringing their private worlds to a state of convergence with the TAW: "From the viewpoint of its participants, the goal of the narrative game—which is for them the game of life—is to make TAW coincide with as many as possible of their private worlds (F-universes excepted)."⁵⁸ Even though Ryan does not explicitly mention it, this endeavor would seem to be oriented toward the resolution of the dissonance that may arise between the characters' private worlds and TAW, as is evident in Duluoz's case. Ryan's exclusion of F-universes from the task of "coinciding" TAW with private worlds is meant to confirm the superior capacity of F-universes to completely replace TAW and create new realities. In the context of the *Legend*, not only is Duluoz's recentering of his F-universe capable of resolving his existential crisis, but also of influencing readers' perception of AW. By seeking to replace TAW

⁵⁶ Ryan, *Possible Worlds*, 119.

⁵⁷ Ryan, 119.

⁵⁸ Ryan, 119.

with his F-universe, Duluoz authenticates his mental constructs and offers his subjective view of the world as a model for the AW that he wants the reader to adopt.

For the current discussion, I would suggest that the Sabinal and Mexico of *On the Road*, as well as all the lands of the Other (including African Americans), represent Duluoz's F-universe, which is the world in which the Real exists, and where the likeness or "realism" of the Sabinal and Mexico of the AW/TAW is preserved in order to facilitate readers' identification with the constructed F-universe via the factor of familiarity. When Duluoz affirms that he is a Mexican ("of course; and in a way I am"), he sheds his whiteness and assumes an ambiguous Mexican characteristic, thereby establishing a speaker position that distances him from the author Jack Kerouac who, notwithstanding his less than privileged social status, is confined to his AW identity as a white American man from Lowell. In this view that I propose, the Mexico of the F-universe is not a "real" place (in AW) in the same way that Duluoz is not really a Mexican (in AW). Both land and identity are products of his F-universe.

Duluoz's explorations of Otherness lead to a realization that African Americans, like Mexicans, also possess the keys to authentic life. This is expressed most vividly during a stroll in Denver's colored section when Duluoz remarks "feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night" (*OTR*, 161). As a feature of TAW, whiteness is devalued by being associated with deficiency and the overall decadence of America. This explains why the flaw in whiteness becomes more salient as soon as Duluoz leaves Terry and the blissful life of Sabinal:

All my life I'd had white ambitions; that was why I'd abandoned a good woman like Terry in the San Joaquin Valley. I passed the dark porches of Mexican and Negro homes; soft voices were there ... little children sat like sages in ancient rocking chairs. A gang of colored women came by, and one of the young ones detached herself from motherlike elders and came to me fast—"Hello Joe!"—and suddenly saw it wasn't Joe, and ran back, blushing. I wished I were Joe. (*OTR*, 161–62)

The only characteristic of Denver and Mexico that Duluoz is interested in maintaining is their Otherness. Meanwhile, whiteness is disposed of as it appears inconsistent with the search for the Real and because white ambitions, in particular, become associated with the idealism that drives him out of Sabinal in pursuit of the glories of becoming an established writer. Schryer observes the same association in *Vanity of Duluoz* in which Duluoz "identifies his literary aspirations with

the figurative center of US white-collar culture.”⁵⁹ After all, it is this idealistic pursuit that forces him to abandon Terry and the potential family he could have had with her, choosing the pain of writing—“the pain which won’t be eased by the writing of this but heightened” (*TS*, 480)—over the happiness of a simple life on the farm. But even if Duluoz were to start over with the intention of being happy, he would still not be able to actualize this intention in TAW based on the fact that, for him, happiness does not depend on changing course but rather on *being someone else*—an African American called Joe, for example—which is an impossibility, and which confirms that happiness can only be attained as a mental construct in the alternative private world: the F-universe.

Otherness as Primacy and Primitiveness

Mark Richardson’s take on Duluoz’s image of himself as a “white man disillusioned” is that whiteness is “a condition of decadence—an unsoundness of mind and body”⁶⁰ that the narrator dreams of ridding himself of, wishing instead “to be vital, alive like a Negro or an Indian or a Denver Jap or a New York Puerto Rican” (*TS*, 524). Unlike the disillusioned, unsound, and decadent white American, the Other is “vital” and the source of his vitality emanates partly from the land that he inhabits. As they were entering Mexico, Duluoz declares that “it was no longer east-west, but magic *south*. We saw a vision of the entire Western Hemisphere rockribbing clear down to Tierra del Fuego and us flying down the curve of the world into other tropics and other worlds. ‘Man, this will finally take us to IT!’ said Dean with definite faith” (*OTR*, 238). Once again, the focal point of the narrative moves away from the dualities of east-west and innocence-experience, with Mexico taking center stage. As far as the Real is concerned, “IT” could very well be the most accurate depiction of it, mainly because of its indeterminate nature. We know that with Baudrillard, the Real becomes difficult to determine since the very notion of the hyperreal implies this difficulty—the Real having been replaced by a verisimilar copy that is nearly impossible to be distinguished from it. Even though this dissertation draws a correlation between “IT” and clearly defined notions such as timelessness (chapter five), noumena (chapter six), and intersubjectivity (Part III), the intensity with which

⁵⁹ Schryer, “Failed Faustians,” 132.

⁶⁰ Mark Richardson, “Peasant Dreams: Reading On the Road,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 224.

Dean chases “IT” and the curiosity that the phenomenon produces in Duluoz make it occasionally appear as a MacGuffin, having no specific meaning but existing only to sustain the quest.

Even when they cannot define it, Duluoz and Dean have a vague feeling that the Real is linked to primitiveness, so they contrast what they believe to be the Real with what is *new*.

Notice, for instance, the correlation between the primitiveness of Mexico and its serenity:

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.... people here are straight and kind and don’t put down any bull. I’m so amazed by this.... The sun rose pure on pure and ancient activities of human life. (*OTR*, 250)

The idyllic portrait of F-universe Mexico calls upon the reader to complete the implicit comparison that results in drawing a mental construct of America as a suspicious place with malicious, loud people. The phrase “pure and ancient activities of human life” introduces the primitiveness motif to the F-universe. And primitiveness stands in opposition to whiteness, which is associated with newness and the hyperreal, as well as with the notion of American exceptionalism whose deconstruction is, if not directly targeted by Duluoz, then certainly a byproduct of the enhancement of the image of the Other.

The geographical proximity between Mexico, the “Pure Land,” and America with “dry faced Arizona and Texas” (*LT*, 645) makes border crossing exhilarating since there is no time to get acclimated to an intense change that takes place very suddenly. This could explain why, upon crossing the border, enchantment is evoked as Duluoz is overtaken by a “fellaheen feeling about life, that timeless gayety of people not involved in great cultural and civilization issues—” (*LT*, 645), which suggests that culture and civilization are harmful processes. When he proclaims that “there is no ‘violence’ in Mexico, that was all a lot of bull written up by Hollywood writers or writers who went to Mexico to ‘be violent’” (*LT*, 645–46), he shows that he is more interested in protecting Mexico against a debasing narrative than restoring to America what he would perceive as great American qualities. Not only is America corrupted beyond salvation, but it has also used its media apparatus to corrupt the image of the land of the Other because the success of the simulation of a perfect, exceptional America is necessarily dependent on the construction of a dangerous place that could be considered its antipode. Consequently, Hollywood writers have

become the producers of an orientalist narrative that is fabricated to misinform Americans about exotic Mexico.

The characterization of the Other invites a reassessment of what David Herman calls “the strategies for categorization that undergird models of persons circulating in a given culture or subculture”⁶¹ by attempting to give the Other precedence over land and spirit. When on the road in the Mexican city of Gregoria, Duluoz remarks how, unlike in America, driving in Mexico felt “like driving across the world and into the places where we would finally learn ourselves among the Fellahin Indians of the world.” From the car, he notices the people and registers their demeanor:

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... As essential as rocks in the desert are they in the desert of “history.” And they knew this when we passed, ostensibly self-important moneybag Americans on a lark in their land; they knew who was the father and who was the son of antique life on earth, and made no comment. (*OTR*, 252)

The road ultimately leads to the discovery that Mexico is the world. Duluoz reduces American lore by describing it as silly, especially in comparison to that of the Indians of Mexico. The antagonism between the Real and the hyperreal is fully discernible when Mexican Indians are contrasted to “the Pedros and Panchos” of America who are but mere simulacra of Real Americans. The description of authentic Indians as “not fools,” “not clowns,” “great,” and “grave” implicitly suggests to the reader, once again, imagining the description of “fake” Americans: they are fools, clowns, not great, and not grave. The description also evokes the primitiveness motif as the Mexican Indians are seen as the source of mankind and fathers of “antique life on earth.” They are also seen as possessing knowledge of the inconsequentiality of whiteness vis-à-vis their primacy and primitiveness. The Other of the F-universe possesses a kind of mystical omniscience (“they know ... and made no comment”) that places them in a better position (narratively) than the other characters—“the self-important moneybag Americans” which, here, includes Dean and even Duluoz himself—who operate from a lower

⁶¹ David Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 203.

domain of the F-universe and who constantly aspire to achieve that which, to the authentic Other, is an intrinsic characteristic.

Case Study: The Mediation of Tristessa's Language

In order to construct the superiority of the Other in *Tristessa*, Duluoz employs a strategy of beautification of what is supposed to be fundamentally immoral in the mind of the reader, namely, a drug-addict Mexican prostitute called Tristessa. To facilitate the interpretive naturalization of Tristessa as a superior “species” of the F-universe despite her obvious shortcomings, Duluoz reimagines her as a wise goddess, the object of desire, and, most importantly, the epitome of lightheartedness and resilience: “Everything is so poor in Mexico, people are poor, and yet everything they do is happy and carefree, no matter what is—Tristessa is a junky and she goes about it skinny and carefree, where an American would be gloomy” (*TR*, 577). Here, it is important to remind the reader of the narratorial stance adopted throughout this study because it is statements like these that risk validating the accusations of misunderstanding and misrepresenting the struggles of the Other that are reviewed in the first section of this chapter. That the Mexicans know how to deal with poverty and hardship is not a naïve or superficial portrayal of the Other, but rather a reimagining of the Other as a superior species in Duluoz's private world, a species inherently calibrated to deal with the problems of the environment that they inhabit, such as the lack of resources (the poverty in Mexico) and hazardous substances (Tristessa's morphine addiction).⁶²

The beautification of Tristessa does more than portray a character with a resilient attitude in the face of adversity; it also fosters the same narrative of mystical omniscience that Duluoz initiates in *On the Road*. When he reports her utterances, Duluoz introduces wisdom that is not readily clear to the reader without some paratextual commentary: “Tristessa says ‘How is Jack,—?—’ She always asks: ‘Why are you so sad??—Muy dolorosa’ and as though to mean ‘You are very full of pain,’ for pain means dolor” (*TR*, 570). Duluoz's mediation creates the illusion that the reader would not be able to decipher the deep layers of Tristessa's language. As they are made to believe that her language is sacred and beyond the understanding of the “non-Other” (presumably the white people of America), readers are tricked into accepting that

⁶² For more on the characters' adaption to their environment in the evolutionary sense, refer to the discussion in chapter three.

Tristessa's imperfect English is not simply a sign of her being Mexican, but an indicator of the sacredness and mysticism of her knowledge.

Not wanting to defile her language by paraphrasing it, Duluoz chooses to cite Mardou's speech nuances, reproducing an allegedly exact rendition of her speech, and employing paratextual commentary as a mediating tool.⁶³ By doing so, he is not only elevating her status from prostitute to goddess, but also his own to a messenger. The narratorial mediation is done so seamlessly and rapidly that even the most critical reader has little time for a critique that may expose the fact that Tristessa's words are not as philosophical as Duluoz makes them appear. Her wisdom is reinforced by his philosophical reply to her rather simple question: "I am sad because all la vida es dolorosa" (*TR*, 570). This informs the reader of what Duluoz thinks that they have probably missed, which is that Tristessa is not asking about his momentary sadness, but rather about his general chronic condition of metaphysical sadness that could never be lessened since the entire world is full of suffering—a Buddhist principle that he later identifies as the "Number One of the Four Great Truths" (*TR*, 570).

To measure the effectiveness of the narratorial mediation, observe the following direct quotation of Tristessa's speech: "'And we are nothing, you and me'—she pokes at my chest, 'Jew—Jew—' (Mexican saying 'You') '—and *me*'—pointing at herself—'We are *nothing*. Tomorrar we may be die, and so we are nothing—'" (*TR*, 594). On its own, her statement does not appear to be wise, and, realistically, whatever "depth" that could be extracted from it is probably the result of some random and unintentional creative association of words caused by her substance abuse. That is until we add the mediation that I have delayed mentioning for the sake of the comparison:

Her enlightenment is perfect,—“And we are nothing, you and me”—she pokes at my chest, “Jew—Jew—” (Mexican saying “You”) “—and *me*”—pointing at herself—“We are *nothing*. Tomorrar we may be die, and so we are nothing—” I agree with her, I feel the strangeness of that truth, I feel we are two empty phantoms of light ghosts in old haunted-house stories diaphanous and precious and white and not-there,—She says “I know you want to sleep.” (*TR*, 594)

⁶³ As a technique, the written reproduction of the oral features of speech is discussed in more detail in the last section of chapter nine, pages 320–21.

The statement “her enlightenment is perfect” produces in the reader a *priming* effect⁶⁴ that prepares them for a wise saying, and the mediation that follows her speech subverts the *cultural meaning*⁶⁵ associated with the notion of “prostitute” or with the */prostitute/* schema that is entrenched in their mind.⁶⁶ The reader expects a certain behavior from Tristessa, say a certain roughness of manners, street intelligence, dubious trustworthiness, a preference for fleeting non-romantic relationships, a tendency to consume alcohol and drugs, etc. However, except for the latter, none of these characteristics applies to Tristessa who, in Duluoz’s F-universe, acquires angelic properties.

Even though Duluoz recognizes the strangeness in Tristessa’s saying that they are nothing since they may be dead the next day, it does not stop him from calling it a “truth” and he even attempts to explain it to himself and to the reader. He exploits his emerging narratorial authority to legitimize the ambiguity of her speech despite the inconsistencies that it engenders.⁶⁷ Narratorial mediation is employed so effectively and consistently throughout the novel that once readers get used to the style of the narrative, they begin to expect it and even require it for Tristessa’s utterances to be fully internalized, which creates a lasting dependence on Duluoz as a guide to understanding the true identity of Tristessa, as well as the reality of everything that is happening in the novel.

The narratorial mediation also affects the gap-filling aspect of the interpretive process. The literature on cognitive gap-filling from the first decade of this century has been pivotal to the understanding of how readers construct meaning from information that is either not mediated by a narrator or not present in the narrative.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, because the *Legend* seems to conform to

⁶⁴ As a political strategy, priming is used by mass media outlets to suggest “to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments.” See Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 157.

⁶⁵ In cognitive terms, “cultural meanings” are “the thoughts, feelings, and less conscious associations evoked when people’s schemas meet the world at a given moment.” See Claudia Strauss and Naomi Quinn, *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54.

⁶⁶ Throughout this dissertation, especially in chapter two, schemas are italicized and placed within slashes to facilitate discerning them. For the full discussion on the subversion of cognitive schemas (mentally held concepts, categories, identity stereotypes, etc.), see the section “Disrupting the Schemas of the Hyperreal” on pages 68–83 of chapter two.

⁶⁷ See the discussion about the legitimization of Duluoz’s mystical belief system on pages 128–29 of chapter four.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Castells’ notion of framing as an operation of gap-filling with pre-conceived schemas on page 158 of *Communication Power* or Shirley Brice Heath’s definition of meaning-making in painting as an act of reconciliation of disparities between our knowledge of the real world and the world that we see in the art piece. Shirley Brice Heath, “Dynamics of Completion” in *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*, ed. Mark Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 135.

the genre that Ryan calls “true fiction”—specifically because of the use of verifiable elements like real people and real encounters (in AW)—her genre-specific illustration of gap-filling appears to be the most suitable: “True fiction exploits the informational gaps in our knowledge of reality by filling them in with unverified but credible facts for which the author takes no responsibility (as would be the case in historiography). The textual world is epistemically accessible from the real world, insofar as everything we know about reality can be integrated into it.”⁶⁹ With this understanding of the potential of true fiction to facilitate access to TAW from the reality of AW, it becomes possible to say that, having accepted the narratorial alterations of what had been stereotypically perceived as a junky prostitute (the */prostitute/* schema)—because Tristessa is claimed to be a real person and because the encounter with her is claimed to have happened in the real world (AW)—the reader is then called upon to fill the gaps in her *unmediated* statements. I would argue that, in the quoted passage, by the time Tristessa says “I know you want to sleep,” the reader had already developed the level of meta-thinking that Duluoz is operating on, enough to understand that what she really means is “I know you want to die,” a desire that Duluoz’s infatuation with death certainly validates.⁷⁰ Ultimately, the reader may acquire the capacity to interpret Tristessa’s ambiguous statements unassisted, thereby gradually reducing their dependence on Duluoz and transitioning to a participatory role in the construction and maintenance of his F-universe.

Another pertinent example of the effectiveness of mediation is demonstrated in a scene in which Duluoz appears to struggle in maintaining his celibacy vow, which is a prerequisite to enlightenment according to his understanding of Buddhism. Duluoz recounts how every time he is tempted, he tries to remember his “place and position in eternity” and he appreciates Tristessa’s helping him by giving him his life back and “not claiming it for herself as so many of the women you love do claim” (*TR*, 572). When in the room together at Old Bull’s house (writer William Burroughs in AW), “she says: ‘I know it, a man and women iss dead,—’ ‘when they want to be dead’—She nods, confirms within herself some dark Aztecan instinctual belief, wise—a wise woman, who would have graced the herds of Bhikshunis in very Yasodhara’s time and made a divine additional nun. With her lidded eyes and clasped hands, a Madonna” (*TR*, 572). Once again, narratorial mediation occurs in the direction of the beautification of Tristessa

⁶⁹ Ryan, *Possible Worlds*, 34.

⁷⁰ See the section “Timelessness and Duluoz’s *Being-Toward-Death*” on pages 171–76 of chapter five.

and the disruption of the */prostitute/* schema. Here, Duluoz goes as far as proclaiming that, not only is she gentle and fair, but that she is also a Madonna, which is a schema that is, in many obvious ways, the exact opposite of the */prostitute/* schema. As with the Mexican Indians' "grave" and "great" nature, mentioning the wisdom of Tristessa's Mexican ancestry implicitly suggests that white Americans are separated from the wisdom of *their* ancestry.

The beautification culminates with two of Tristessa's other "vices" being mediated as virtues: her drug addiction and the fact that she has not had a child. When Duluoz thinks about how she will probably never have a child because of her addiction, he cries but, at the same time, he manages to incorporate this in his Buddhist worldview, seeing in it a sacrifice as Tristessa "will not be cause of further rebirth and will go straight to her God and He will recompense her multi-billionfold" (*TR*, 573). Preventing suffering by preventing life (birth) conforms with how Tristessa justifies her addiction when she refers to morphine as the gateway to becoming a non-seeker: "Men and women have errores— ... bot—I weeling to haff jonk—morphina—and be no-seek any more" (*TR*, 573). Even though her claim that she is willing to take drugs just so that she can become a non-seeker (as if she is sacrificing her body for something noble) is obviously just an excuse, it fuels Duluoz's mediation as it acts as an antithesis to the "white ambitions"—the idealistic pursuit of becoming a writer—that he wants to rid himself of.

Conclusion

In his quest for authenticity, Kerouac's narrator explores the dimensions of identity and territory in Otherness and whiteness. He finds in America a country that has been hijacked by the hyperreal and a people that have become separated from the essence of life and involved in vain pursuits, of which his "white ambition" of becoming a writer is emblematic. Inspired by the simplicity, bliss, and stability that he experiences in the land of the Other and during his interactions with them, Duluoz revamps their qualities and constructs a private mental world where the Other lives authentically, liberated from the domination of the hyperreal. Unlike their depiction as victims of appropriation and simulation by some critics, the Other of Duluoz's constructed world is portrayed as a superior "species" whose primitiveness is a sign of their wisdom, resilience, and primacy.

Dulouoz has a profound appreciation for the lifestyle, art, and suffering of Mexicans and African Americans as he believes that therein lies the resistance to hyperreality, and the more he lives among them, the more he realizes the imperfections of white America. As the case study of Tristessa shows, where the primitiveness of the Other leads to mystery or ambiguity in interpreting their speech or overall demeanor, Dulouoz interferes by providing paratextual commentary that subverts the stereotypical way in which they might be perceived by the reader. In so doing, he does the opposite of appropriating her Mexican culture, which is to define it as impenetrable and unfathomable by those who are not part of it and cleanse it from Tristessa's personal vices that may be erroneously associated with Otherness.

The following chapter discusses the resistance against the hyperreal through the disruption of its cognitive schemas. Living in hyperreal America (of TAW/AW) has become limited to specific identity choices imposed on individuals. These represent artificial schemas that have replaced the innately existing schemas of authentic America that have been wiped out from the collective consciousness in order to enforce the hyperreal society's interests at the expense of the authenticity of individuals. A view from the lens of conceptual blending demonstrates how Dulouoz disrupts the schemas of hyperreal America, replacing them with an alternative schema that incarnates what he believes to be a new mode of authentic life in transitional America.

Chapter 2. Reconfiguring Americanness: A Schematic Analysis

In chapter one, we have seen how Duluoz deconstructs the attempts of the media of the hyperreal to assimilate his writer's image in the same way he deconstructs the decadence and wickedness of white America. Employing the creative potential of liminality, he then constructs a superior Other by foregrounding their primacy and primitiveness, as well as mediating their language as in the case of Tristessa. As Duluoz finds authenticity in Otherness, he manifests a desire to recreate this authenticity in America, to emancipate the notion of Americanness from the stranglehold of the hyperreal, and, using the same creative potential, to create a new vision of the American identity.

This chapter discusses the same disruptive–constructive strategy that is used to disclose the authenticity of the Other to demonstrate how the disruption of the identity prototypes that are imposed by the hyperreal clears the way for a redefinition of Americanness. The first section illustrates the disruption capacity of the hyperreal and shows how, by eliminating authentic identity prototypes such as hoboism, the hyperreal could inject artificial ones into the collective American consciousness. Section two presents a schematic analysis of Duluoz's disruption of three examples of these artificial prototypes from three different novels, which are recognized as schemas. First, it introduces conceptual blending and identifies it as the overarching tool that is used to examine these disruptions. Then, it identifies the three schemas under scrutiny: the */businessman/* schema, the */expert/* schema, and the */family/* schema, which are injected by the hyperreal in order to naturalize the respective values of consumerism, technocratic expertise, and conformity. Duluoz disrupts these artificial schemas by creating new causalities that the linguistic analysis identifies in the emergent syntax of Kerouac/Duluoz's style and the mapping of antithetical linguistic units such as modifiers and the special use of punctuation marks.

The final section shows how Duluoz capitalizes on the disruption of the artificial schemas of the hyperreal to present his own vision of Americanness—the “Beatnik” identity. Two characteristics of this identity as well as their schematic construction process are analyzed in the example of the “New York Scenes” chapter in *Lonesome Traveler*: carefree childhood and contemplation. While carefree childhood relates to simplicity and the resistance to the inhibitions

of adult life, contemplation reveals what is the otherwise concealed superiority in the eccentricity of social outcasts.

“The Vanishing American Hobo” as a Metaphor for Vanishing Authenticity

In “The Vanishing American Hobo” chapter of *Lonesome Traveler*, Duluo’s lament for the disappearance of hoboism bespeaks an acknowledgment of the loss of a defining feature of Americanness:

The American hobo has a hard time hoboining nowadays due to the increase in police surveillance of highways, railroad yards, sea shores, river bottoms, embankments and the thousand-and-one hiding holes of industrial night.... In Brueghel’s time children danced around the hobo, he wore huge and raggy clothes and always looked straight ahead indifferent to the children, and the families didnt mind the children playing with the hobo, it was a natural thing.—But today mothers hold tight their children when the hobo passes through town because of what newspapers made the hobo to be—the rapist, the strangler, child-eater. (*LT*, 764–65)

The demonization of the hobo is an assault on Duluo’s romanticized portrait of America. More importantly, it represents an effort on the part of the media of the hyperreal (“newspapers”) to disassociate humankind from nature, which has always been the source of their freedom.¹ The success of this effort is shown by the changing attitudes of families: children who are naturally drawn toward the meekness, kindness, and simplicity of hobos have been indoctrinated into fearing them, which reminds us of Ed D’Angelo’s observation that the values of the Beats “included the romantic belief that children naturally possess special potentialities that are crushed by a repressive society, and that liberated children can save the world.”²

Alongside the demonization of hoboism is the demonization of wild camping as Duluo realizes that “in America camping is considered a healthy sport for Boy Scouts but a crime for mature men who have made it their vocation” (*LT*, 765). Camping has become so tightly

¹ As the elaboration of the notion of the “natural” in the final section of chapter nine shows, an argument could be made that, in America, the process of disassociating humankind from nature had been initiated with the very founding of the country through the “privatization” of nature. See pages 320–22.

² Ed D’Angelo, “Anarchism and the Beats,” in *The Philosophy of the Beats*, ed. Sharin N. Elkholy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 233.

associated with poverty and danger that Duluoz himself considers abandoning it: seeking a night's sleep in the open desert one night, Duluoz has an altercation with the police that confirms to him how little they knew about the true meaning of camping:

I myself was a hobo but I had to give it up around 1956 because of increasing television stories about the abominableness of strangers with packs passing through by themselves independently—I was surrounded by three squad cars in Tucson Arizona at 2 A.M. as I was walking pack-on-back for a night's sweet sleep in the red moon desert:

“Where you goin’?”

“Sleep.”

“Sleep where?”

“On the sand.”

“Why?”

“Got my sleeping bag.”

“Why?”

“Studyin’ the great outdoors.”

“Who are you? Let’s see your identification.”

“I just spent a summer with the Forest service.”

“Did you get paid?”

“Yeah.”

“Then why dont you go to a hotel?”

“I like it better outdoors and it’s free.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m studying hobo.”

“What’s so good about that?”

They wanted an *explanation* for my hoboining and came close to hauling me in. (*LT*, 771) Despite not being illegal, sleeping in the desert puzzles the police who find it strange that an adult man who claims to have enough money on him to rent a hotel room would still choose to sleep in the desert. Realizing their inability to fathom the need to satisfy such an innate desire, Duluoz concludes that “there’s something strange going on” because “you cant even be alone any more in the primitive wilderness (‘primitive areas’ so-called), there’s always a helicopter comes and snoops around, you need camouflage” (*LT*, 771–72). The real wilderness has

disappeared and there emerged in its place a Baudrillardian copy designated as “primitive areas,” fittingly placed between quotation marks, the access to which has become frowned upon. As such, surveillance tactics in the *Legend* have completed a transition from, as Baudrillard observes, “the panoptic mechanism of surveillance . . . to a system of deterrence”³ that has made the return to the previously idealized lifestyle of hoboism and camping highly undesirable and the idea of “simply going to another world” (*LT*, 772) appealing since, as the final line in *Lonesome Traveler* reads, “the woods are full of wardens” (*LT*, 773).

Ronna C. Johnson observes a similar process in *Desolation Angels*, referencing Michel Foucault’s “panopticon surveillance mode of carceral institutions” instead of Baudrillard’s:

Mirroring Foucault’s claim that the state transforms individuals through surveillance, *Desolation Angels* recounts the coercive power of media recognition which functions as a regulating agent analogous to the police. The novel depicts the way coercive surveillance—via the mass media—succeeds in the production of a “docile” individual who, internalizing his own surveillance, monitors himself and modifies his behavior “even when no one is watching”; the way Duluoz transforms himself from “dissident” writer to “conformist” citizen.⁴

The police or “wardens” act as agents of the hyperreal who deter people from going beyond the “civilized world” in order to create the illusion that the Real exists there and conceal the fact that it has permanently disappeared, a key notion in Baudrillard’s critique of modern societies. That being said, while Johnson sees that Duluoz “endeavors to escape the prison of scrutiny through the liberating act of narrating, ultimately to no avail,”⁵ the following section demonstrates how the act of narrating can if not offer an escape, then alter the underlying *schemas* that empower and feed the deterrence system.

Disrupting the Schemas of the Hyperreal

Conceptual Blending as Tool for Schema Refreshing

³ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (1981; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 29.

⁴ Ronna C. Johnson, “‘You’re Putting Me on’: Jack Kerouac and the Postmodern Emergence,” *College Literature* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 30.

⁵ Johnson, 30.

In the long-term, the deterrence mechanism put in place to indirectly denounce natural activities such as hoboism and wild camping leads to a significant change in the unconscious associations that these activities hold in the minds of individuals in the given society (the Americans who inhabit the *Legend's* Textual Referential World TRW). What could have been associated with an acceptable social norm could subtly but surely become associated with a deplorable one if the media employed to perform this decoupling and recoupling are effective enough. While it seems that the media of hyperreal America in TRW have succeeded in this objective, a close look at the narrative discloses a resistance to this process at the level of the readers' *schemas*. Paradoxically, this resistance is based on the same process of decoupling and recoupling; however, instead of newspapers and the police, it employs the narrative itself as a medium of disruption of the schemas of the hyperreal by providing novel schematic associations for the reader. Because the *Legend* could be categorized under the banner of life narrative, these novel schemas are considered as "narrative models" that offer to the reader new "possible lives" that are part of one's culture," and constitute an "important way of characterizing a culture," as Jerome Bruner maintains.⁶

Before proceeding with the analysis of this schema-level resistance in examples from the *Legend*, it is important to define first what schemas are and how they are related to narrative studies in general and the *Legend* in particular; second, why schemas are susceptible to disruption and how this disruption can occur; and third, how this disruption affects the reader. Various studies in narratology have defined the literary or narrative quality of a text in terms of its deviation from expectations. For example, Bruner talks about "breach of canonicity," stating that "to be worth telling, a tale must be about how an implicit canonical script has been breached, violated, or deviated from in a manner to do violence to what Hayden White calls the 'legitimacy' of the canonical script."⁷ Cognitive narratologist David Herman agrees with Bruner, adding that the extent of this breach is precisely what defines the degree of "narrativity."⁸ Herman also references the work of Bradd Shore who suggests that "the narrative representation of anomalous or atypical events can in turn reshape a culture's or community's sense of what is normal or typical, and thereby help build new models for understanding the world."⁹ In the

⁶ Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 54, no. 1 (1987): 15.

⁷ Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1991): 11.

⁸ David Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 122–23.

⁹ Herman, 239.

context of cognition, this reshaping of a “community’s sense of what is normal or typical” is understood as a reshaping of the schemas of its individuals.

Claudia Strauss defines schemas as follows:

As elaborated in psychology, linguistics (especially frame semantics) and artificial intelligence starting in the 1970s, schemas (also called “frames,” “scripts,” “scenes,” and other terms) are mental structures representing the relations among the typical elements of any type of concrete or abstract thing. We have schemas for everything we encounter or learn about, from the mundane and concrete (how to organize and use everyday objects) to the lofty and abstract (what is a desirable life course, whether there is a higher power, folk psychology, folk economics, and so on).¹⁰

Schemas, then, are mental structures that constitute a framework for actions and that could be activated by numerous forms of interactions with the world, including interactions with textual cues during the reading process. Furthermore, as studies have shown,¹¹ schemas are malleable and susceptible to being modified. This malleability drives Guy Cook to go as far as redefining the *literariness* of a text by its capacity to “bring about a change in the schemata of a reader,” a change that he calls *schema refreshing*.¹² Cook believes that during the reading process

A reader’s feelings that the text structure or linguistic choices of a given discourse are normal or deviant derives from a comparison of its text structure (T) and its language (L) with the reader’s pre-existing text schemata S(T) and language S(L). The interaction of these interactions creates the illusion of a “world” in the discourse (W), which can then be compared with the world schemata of the reader, yielding a judgment as to the normality or deviance of that illusory world.¹³

In the context of the *Legend*, the aforementioned example of hoboism could be referred to as the */hobo/* schema, with */camping/* being one of its scripts¹⁴ (an activity that people may associate hoboism with). In this view, the deterrence of hoboism represents a destruction of the

¹⁰ Claudia Strauss, “Language and Culture in Cognitive Anthropology,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Culture*, ed. Farzad Sharifian (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 391.

¹¹ See David E. Rumelhart and Donald A. Norman, “Accretion, Tuning and Restructuring: Three Modes of Learning” in *Semantic Factors in Cognition*, eds. J. W. Cotton and R. Klatzky (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1978); and Guy Cook, *Discourse and Literature: The Interplay of Form and Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹² Cook, 182, 191.

¹³ Cook, 201.

¹⁴ Even though Strauss uses the terms “schema” and “script” interchangeably, the analysis in this chapter refers to scripts as sub-schemas or the constituents of schemas.

/hobo/ schema by the hyperreal. To replace the void created by this destruction, artificial schemas are injected by the institutions of the hyperreal into the collective consciousness in TRW of the *Legend*. These disseminate the ideals that hyperreal America wishes to enforce, three of which are analyzed in the following sections: consumerism, technocratic expertise, and conformity, which respectively correspond to what shall be referred to as the */businessman/* schema, the */expert/* schema, and the */family/* schema.

Although these schemas may overlap, they are essentially different. The */businessman/* schema denotes the stereotypical image of success and includes those who believe in the American dream and who recognize material wealth and status as superior aspirations. The */expert/* schema refers to the image of expertise as it was advertised during the late 1940s and 1950s and includes those who trust that modern technology and the scientific method are answers to all humanity's problems. As for the */family/* schema, it refers to the image of the nuclear family and includes not only the traditional view of gender roles but also those who find in family life the ultimate meaning and justification for their existence. The three artificial schemas entail the dependence on external sources of gratification, as well as an acceptance of imposed restrictions on the expression of divergent individualities. Furthermore, they do not correlate with the inherent and shared mental architecture of human beings, which eliminates possibilities for intersubjective experiences that Duluoz and his friends continuously seek, as illustrated in part three of this dissertation. That being said, these artificial schemas have become widely adopted as they have successfully spread throughout society in TRW to the extent that they have become naturalized.

The following analysis detects a mechanism of disruption of the hyperreal by *refreshing* the schemas in the mind of the reader. This mechanism is called *conceptual blending* and refers to a natural cognitive operation that occurs in the mind by associating concepts that belong to different categories and creating rather unusual blends that eventually become naturalized and culturally available. The theorization of the mechanism is credited to Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner who first started studying it "systematically in 1993."¹⁵ Since then, and because conceptual blending has been shown to operate on multiple levels of scientific and artistic thought, its "empirical manifestations" have been demonstrated in "mathematics, social science,

¹⁵ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Conceptual Blending, Form and Meaning," *Recherches en communication* 19 (2003): 61.

literature, linguistics, and music.”¹⁶ “The essence of the operation,” as per Fauconnier and Turner, “is to construct a partial match between two input mental spaces, to project selectively from those inputs into a novel ‘blended’ mental space, which then dynamically develops emergent structure.”¹⁷ The authors give the excellent example of the expression “jail bait” (an attractive woman under the age of consent) to demonstrate the cultural and schema-refreshing impact of the “syntactic” emergent structures that result from conceptual blending:

“Jail” comes from the domain of human criminality, while “bait” comes from the domain of fishing or trapping. In the mapping between them, attraction to the girl corresponds to attraction to the bait, initiating sex corresponds to swallowing the bait, and ending up in jail (for sex with a minor) corresponds to being caught. The conceptual elements named in the integrated syntactic form “jail bait” are not counterparts in the conceptual mapping. Here, obviously, we are prompted to borrow the compressions and intensities of the fishing frame for the purpose of compressing the “sex with a minor” frame and intensifying many of its vital relations. For example, the causal chain in the “sex with a minor” space, which runs from perception to incarceration, can be long and diffuse, whereas the fishing frame has direct human-scale causation: a single bodily action results in immediately being caught. There is extraordinary emergent structure. *In the blend, the man is not to blame* [emphasis added]. In the space of fishing, the fish does not know that the bait is bait. In the space with the man and the minor, the man certainly does know about laws and jail and he recognizes that sex with the girl is legally forbidden. But in the blend, he is blameless for the action, indeed even the prime victim, even though he understands the law, the prohibition, the possible punishment, and the reasons for it.¹⁸

Fauconnier and Turner study conceptual blending in a variety of grammatical structures, from nominal compounds such as “boat house,” to adjective-noun compounds such as “guilty pleasures,” morphological combinations such as “Chunnel,” as well as other more complex structures, and show how the “mapping” of concepts or schemas that belong to two different domains affect the way individuals (unconsciously) perceive the properties of each of them. Now

¹⁶ Fauconnier and Turner, 61–62.

¹⁷ Fauconnier and Turner, 57–58.

¹⁸ Fauconnier and Turner, 68.

that the mechanism of schema disruption and refreshing is introduced, let us look at how conceptual blending is employed in the disruption of the above-mentioned hyperreal schemas.

Emergent Causalities and Cultural Meanings in the Disruption of Artificial Identities

“Novak” and the */businessman/* Schema in *Lonesome Traveler*

One of the evocations of the */businessman/* schema is by a character called Novak whom Duluoz recalls when strolling in New York City one day. Novak’s introduction lures the reader into a false sense of familiarity:

And wasn't this where they say Novak the real estator who used to stay up late-a-nights line-faced to become right and rich in his little white worm cellule of the nights typing up reports and letters wife and kids go mad at home at eleven P.M.—ambitious, worried, in a little office of the Island, right on the street undignified but open to all business and in infancy any business can be small as ambition’s big—pushing how many daisies now? And never made his million, never had a drink ... —never laughed and let the fly his nose use as a landing-mark—but ulcerated in the middle of the night to be rich and get his family the best. (*LT*, 712)

Novak emerges as the quintessential businessman who sacrifices his well-being in pursuit of riches. The beginning of the passage conforms to the */businessman/* schema in that Novak is portrayed as a hard-working man and the depiction of hard work seems to be heading toward emphasizing its virtues. Suddenly, however, it disconnects from the information typically contained in the schema of the reader when, instead of being associated with success, happiness, and life (as intended by the hyperreal), hard work becomes synonymous with misery, regret, and death, which are “conceptual elements” that are not “counterparts in the conceptual mapping” as per Fauconnier and Turner. In other words, instead of foregrounding the gains attained through years of sacrifice, the juxtaposition of antagonistic themes foregrounds the parts of life that are missed and not lived.

From the phrase “worm cellule of the nights typing up reports and letters,” we can deduce that working late is a feature related to the businessman; interpreted schematically, we can say that */working late/* is a script that belongs to the */businessman/* schema. Other features that are not characteristic of the businessman are domestic problems, which feature in the phrase “wife

and kids go mad at home,” and death, which features in the phrase “pushing how many daisies now?” Fauconnier and Turner remark that part of the syntax of an emergent structure does not come from either of the two blended ones but “develops specifically for the blend” as in the “causatives in French, which are formed using the verb *faire* (‘do’) [as in the example:] *Pierre fait manger Paul*” that literally translates to “Pierre makes eat Paul.” The emergent structure “*Pierre fait manger Paul*” contains an *emergent syntax* that has developed specifically to express a scene in which someone does something that causes someone else to do something, and which is different from the syntax that would be used in either of the two pre-blend structures “*Pierre fait la soupe*” (Pierre makes the soup) and “*Paul mange la soupe*” (Paul eats the soup).¹⁹

Let us now observe the conceptual blending at work which, in the above passage, is caused by punctuation manipulation. In the phrase “typing up reports and letters wife and kids go mad at home,” the reader’s text schema S(T) leads to an anticipation of either a pause in the form of punctuation or a connector before the word “wife.” The absence of the pause contributes to a sensation that resembles the “rapid and increasingly anxious, almost breathless, movement” that Elena Semino sees in the absence of punctuation, capitalization, and other expected features of text structure in Ted Hughes’s “Wodwo.”²⁰ More importantly, however, it reinforces the causality between the */working late/* script and domestic problems by denying the reader the time (that would have been provided by a pause) to infer any consequence of working late other than what directly follows it (domestic problems). The absence of the pause is an emergent syntax that establishes causality between one of the scripts of the */businessman/* schema (*/working late/*) and the domestic problems characteristic, transforming the latter into a new script of the */businessman/* schema: the */domestic problems/* script.

Kerouac’s atypical use of the mechanics of writing serves his objective to emancipate language from the conventions of traditional linguistic structure and create various effects such as movement. Indeed, in the section titled “Method” of his “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose,” Kerouac explains his atypical use of punctuation that gives rise to such emergent syntax:

No periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas — but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases) — “measured

¹⁹ Fauconnier and Turner, 81.

²⁰ Elena Semino, “Deixis and Fictional Minds,” *Style* 45, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 425.

pauses which are the essentials of our speech” — “divisions of the *sounds* we hear” — “time and how to note it down.”²¹

His particular preference for the use of the dash over other punctuation marks, which in the *Legend* is not always accompanied by “space,” means that he is disassociating the dash as well as other punctuation marks from their conventional usage. The dash, in particular, which takes on the function of accounting for all types of pauses with Kerouac, occasionally performs other functions as well.

Notice the deviation from the reader’s text schema S(T) in the question “pushing how many daisies now?” The reader here is informed that Novak’s working late causes his family to be mad. When the first dash is introduced (“—ambitious ...”), the reader’s text schemata S(T) leads to its interpretation as a signal for upcoming explanatory details, simply based on their knowledge of how this punctuation mark works. This is indeed the case and the expectation is met: the enclosed information gives the reader more insight into how Novak must have been feeling on those nights (“ambitious, worried ...”). However, right when the story or description of the man was supposed to resume at the sign of the second dash, Novak is said to be dead (“—pushing how many daisies now?”). If we remove the extraneous information (“—ambitious ... ambition’s big—”), whose extraneous quality is revealed by the use of the two dashes, the */businessman/* schema becomes disrupted even further as a new causality is created between the */working late/* script of the */businessman/* schema and the otherwise unrelated notion of death, or what could now be called the */death/* script of the */businessman/* schema.

As demonstrated, two novel associations, particularly causalities, are created in the Novak example: the first between the */working late/* script and the */domestic problems/* script, and the second between the */working late/* script and the */death/* script. If we combine the two causalities created by the emergent syntax of Kerouac’s special use of the pause (or the lack thereof) and the dash, we arrive at the formulation of the notion *working late at night creates domestic problems and leads to death*, which is a “syntactic” emergent structure that disrupts the idealization of the work ethic embedded in the */businessman/* schema.

“Mardou’s Letter” and the */expert/* Schema in *The Subterraneans*

²¹ Jack Kerouac, “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose,” (1953) in *Good Blond & Others*, ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1993), 69.

Duluoz's contempt for intellectuals could be traced back to a growing anti-intellectual and anti-professional sentiment shared among those who were, at the time, able to identify a connection between intellectualism/expertise and conformity/domestication. R.D. Laing said it best in 1967 when he professed that "we do not need theories so much as the experience that is the source of the theory."²² Two years later, Theodore Roszak pondered on the role of the counterculture in the battle against the uncontrolled ascendancy of experts and theorists by asking "what does Bohemia do when it finds itself massively infiltrated by well-intentioned sociologists ... sensationalizing journalists, curious tourists, and weekend fellow travelers?"²³ Prophetically and lethargically, Duluoz replies: "go back to the Village and stand on the corner of Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue and watch the intellectuals go by" (*LT*, 720).

In *Book of Dreams*, Duluoz's stance is more assertive and confrontational as he deduces that "dream analysis in only cause-and-condition explanation ... dream analysis is only a measurement of the maya-like and has no value— ... Freudianism is a big stupid mistaken dealing with causes & conditions instead of the mysterious, essential, permanent reality of Mind Essence" (*BOD*, 282). What is obvious in *Book of Dreams* is that, notwithstanding the impact of Buddhism on his reinterpretation of the notion of Mind Essence, Duluoz strategically rejects the analytic and technocratic tools of the scientific doctrine through the spontaneous, non-intellectual (non-analytical), self-diagnostic interpretation of his own dreams.

In *The Subterraneans*, the */expert/* schema is evoked by Duluoz's criticism of Mardou's intellectualism. Upon reading a paragraph from a letter that she had sent him, he becomes overtaken by an antithetical mixture of adoration and contempt:

so I remember admiring her intelligence even then—but at the same time darkening at home here at my desk of well-being and thinking, "But cope that old psychoanalytic cope, she talks like all of em, the city decadent intellectual dead-ended in cause-and-effect analysis and solution of so-called problems instead of the great JOY of being and will and fearlessness—" (*TS*, 513).

Even though his appreciation of her intelligence deters him from confronting her, Duluoz does not miss the opportunity to express how badly he wishes that she would drop the psychoanalytic

²² R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (London: Penguin, [1967] 1990), 15.

²³ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 37.

intellectualism that he senses in the style of her letter. The antagonism that he devises between technical solutions and the “JOY of being” brings to mind Rita Felski’s account of the enchantment of literature: “To be enchanted is to be rendered impervious to critical thought, to lose one’s head and one’s wits, to be seduced by what one sees rather than subjecting it to sober and level-headed scrutiny.”²⁴ At the same time, Duluoz’s depreciation of technocracy’s capacities unmasks what seems to be its ulterior aim which is, as Roszak remarks, to misguide the masses by creating the illusion that all problems have technical solutions.²⁵

A few days after receiving the letter, and as he was waiting for Mardou to finish her meeting with her therapist, Duluoz takes out his sketchbook and starts scribbling random ideas, including some about

the difference between men, the difference so vast between concerns of executives in skyscrapers and seadogs on harbor and psychoanalysts in stuffy offices in great grim buildings full of dead bodies in the morgue below and madwomen at windows, hoping thereby to instill in Mardou recognition of fact it’s a big world and psychoanalysis is a small way to explain it since it only scratches the surface, which is, analysis, cause and effect, why instead of what. (*TS*, 525)

Unlike his general proclivity to dismantle all kinds of dualities, especially as highlighted in *The Dharma Bums*,²⁶ Duluoz’s critique of psychoanalysis here employs the following identity antitheses: executives/seadogs and psychoanalysts/madwomen. Specific descriptions of these identity types are not provided but could be inferred via the associations between them, some that are provided and others that need to be recuperated by analyzing the conceptual blending that creates them.

First, however, it is important to mention that, within the context of Marie-Laure Ryan’s typology, the sketchbook spawns a Textual Alternative Possible World (TAPW)—it is not an F-universe because it is not developed enough to sustain an independent system of reality similar to the F-universe that Duluoz constructs around the Other and their land that we saw in chapter one. I would argue that the identity antitheses invented in the sketchbook represent Duluoz’s attempt





²⁴ Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 56.

²⁵ Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture*, 10.

²⁶ In *The Dharma Bums*, Duluoz reaches the peak of Buddhist enlightenment as he learns about the oneness of all the entities of the universe and the union between East and West, life and death, materialism and spirituality, and nature and civilization.

at recentering this specific TAPW or, in other words, making it converge with the Textual Actual World TAW by attempting to convince Mardou to adopt its reality (to change her view on psychoanalytic therapy). From the point of view of the reader, what is written in the sketchbook is an embedded narrative—a narrative (in the sketchbook) within a narrative (in the primary text of the novel or TAW), even if the narrative in the sketchbook is not a fully developed “story” and only serves a limited function.

Even if the recentering fails, which is shown by Duluo’s assertion that “when she comes out I read it to her, not impressing her too much” (*TS*, 525), the TAPW encloses a conceptual blending that has the capacity to impact the reader’s */expert/* schema. As with the */businessman/* schema, the */expert/* schema is disrupted via the creation of novel associations. Here, however, we have three interconnected levels of associations as the following illustration shows:

	<i>Identity</i>		<i>Location</i>		<i>Identity</i>		<i>Location</i>
<i>Antitheses</i>	Executives	+	Skyscrapers		Psychoanalysts	+	Offices
							
	Seadogs	+	Harbor		Madwomen	+	Windows

As we can see, the three levels of associations are identity-location associations (“executives–skyscrapers,” “seadogs–harbor,” psychoanalysts–offices,” and “madwomen–windows”), antithetical associations (“executives–seadogs,” “skyscrapers–harbor,” “psychoanalysts–madwomen,” and “offices–windows”), and same-schema associations (“executives/skyscrapers–psychoanalysts/offices,” and “seadogs/harbor–madwomen/windows”).

Studying conceptual blending in complex grammatical structures, Fauconnier and Turner analyze the “caused motion” observable in emergent structures such as “He sneezed the napkin off the table” or “I pulled him out of his depression” in which (physical or metaphorical) associations arise out of the mapping of unrelated structures—“sneeze” is not essentially a motion-causing verb but is recruited as such, and “pulled” is a motion-causing verb that is mapped unto a “complicated interpersonal causation involving a change of psychological state.”²⁷ Crucial to this kind of mapping as Fauconnier and Turner maintain, is the construction

²⁷ Fauconnier and Turner, “Conceptual Blending,” 77–78, 79–80.

of “a generic space that applies to the two inputs” such as “agent-action, object-motion, and direction” that feature in their examples.²⁸

In the passage from *The Subterraneans*, the identity-location association constitutes the generic space that enables the mapping of the antithetical identities. Observing the first two antithetical identities, we can deduce that the separation suggested between the concerns of “executives” and those of “seadogs” (abstract separation) is complemented by the physical distance implicit in their respective locations—“skyscrapers” and “harbors”—(concrete separation). The mapping between the *abstract* domain and the *concrete* domain legitimizes the former and reinforces the TAPW reality that experts (executives) and regular people (seadogs) do not share the same concerns in life.

As for the third and fourth antithetical identities, the *separation* between the concerns of “psychoanalysts” and those of “madwomen” is reinforced by the *association* made between “psychoanalysts” and “offices,” which implies book knowledge at the expense of worldly experience. At the same time, the association between “madwomen” and “windows” has two possible connotations: either that mad women are more insightful than their therapists—standing by windows could be symbolic of reflection, introspection, and deep insight, which separates the category of their wisdom from that of the therapists—or that they are contemplating suicide, which signals a failure of the therapists’ attempts at curing their patients. The inadequacy of therapists is reinforced by the “stuffy” and “grim” spaces that they occupy which, in the case of Mardou’s therapist whom Duluoz appears to be drawing his sketch about, is located atop a morgue—ironic since the morgue symbolizes the exact opposite of treating people and saving their lives.

As part of his strategy to demonstrate to Mardou that psychoanalytic therapy is not useful, Duluoz tackles the category of experts to which psychoanalysts belong by including in his sketch another identity that belongs to the */expert/* schema, which is that of executives. We can now see that */psychoanalysts/* and */executives/* are scripts of the */expert/* schema—what I call “same-schema associations” above—each of which has its respective identity antithesis (“madwomen” and “seadogs”), which could also be considered scripts of another schema. The identity-location generic space, specifically the “executives–skyscrapers” and “psychoanalysts–offices” associations, activates and primes the */expert/* schema in the mind of the reader while the

²⁸ Fauconnier and Turner, 79.

antithetical associations “executives–seadogs,” “skyscrapers–harbor,” “psychoanalysts–madwomen,” and “offices–windows” disrupt the */expert/* schema by providing novel associations.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the sketchbook as a medium has an important impact on the reader’s */expert/* schema. Even though Duluoz knew that Mardou would be with her therapist for only twenty minutes, he still chose to tell her about the “differences” that he has been contemplating by reading to her what he has written in his sketchbook instead of saying it directly to her. Because he is a writer, Duluoz probably believes that he would be better able to convince Mardou of the futility of psychoanalytic therapy if he reads to her something that he has written about it, which does not turn out to be the case as she is not impressed. But regardless of this failure, because the conceptual blending in this example takes place in the sketchbook and not TAW, the disruption of the */expert/* schema could be interpreted semiotically.

As an artificial construct of the hyperreal, the */expert/* schema corresponds to what in semiotics is referred to as *myth*, which is a second-order semiological system that distorts meaning and conceals reality. Around the same time as the publication of the novels being considered here, Barthes warned that “it is extremely difficult to vanquish myth from the inside: for the very effort one makes in order to escape its stranglehold becomes in its turn the prey of myth.” Because of this, Barthes sees that “the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an *artificial myth*.”²⁹ Duluoz exposes the truth about the futility and even danger of expertise in general and psychotherapists in particular *in the sketchbook* which, because it contains his private mental constructions, is distinguished from the world of the text (TAW). In so doing, Duluoz suggests that TAW, which coincides with the actual world (AW) as far as the reader is concerned, conceals this truth—the embedded narrative in the sketchbook “mythifies” the */expert/* schema.³⁰

A similar process of mythification is recognized by Johnson in her analysis of how Kerouac resists his assimilation by the hyperreal in *Desolation Angels*:

Kerouac intervenes in his fame at the meta-level of narration by narrativizing it: holding in *his* narrative gaze the specularizing police and media, he (re)claims the active,

²⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, [1957] 1991), 134.

³⁰ As illustrated in chapter nine, oral features also contribute to this mythification by foregrounding the “unmediated” characteristic of the *Legend*’s narrative. See pages 320–27.

masculine position of bearer of the look; in the gaze of his narrating “I” the police and the media are assigned the feminine position of bearer of (his) meaning. This maneuver turns the tables on the fame that contains Kerouac by containing fame in a Kerouac narrative, reinstating the “renegade” writer over the drunk bourgeois, achieving restoration, remasculanization—revenge.³¹

By narrativizing the assimilative process of the media of the hyperreal, Kerouac not only undermines its hold on him but also destroys the hegemony that they enjoy over the creation and communication of information. Certainly, his hyperreal image that is created by the media could be interpreted schematically: we could say, for example, that it evokes the */writer/* schema that contains all the artificial associations imposed on it by the hyperreal—the */drunk/* and */bourgeois/* scripts that Johnson mentions, but possibly many others as well. Although not part of an embedded narrative, Kerouac’s disruption of the */writer/* schema by exposing it in his narrative follows the same process that Duluoz uses in disrupting the */expert/* schema by exposing it in his sketchbook. The only difference is that the latter occurs on a lower narrative level: while Kerouac who is in the Actual World AW disrupts the */writer/* schema in TAW, Duluoz who is in TAW disrupts the */expert/* schema in TAPW.

“Hitchhiking” and the */family/* Schema in *Big Sur*

After the success of *On the Road* in TAW, Duluoz retreats to Big Sur to escape the unexpected drawbacks of fame and jump-start his long-lasting spiritual journey of self-discovery amid growing alcoholism, depression, and paranoia. Upon his return from the wilderness, and after having been completely isolated from civilization for three weeks, Duluoz attempts to hitchhike his way back to the city only to discover that hitchhiking, just like hoboism and camping, has become suspicious:

—So I confidently adjust my pack straps and start trudging down the road looking back over my shoulder to thumb.

This is the first time I’ve hitch hiked in years and I soon begin to see that things have changed in America, you cant get a ride any more ... Sleek long stationwagon after wagon comes sleering by smoothly, all colors of the rainbow and pastel at that, pink, blue, white, the husband is in the driver’s seat with a long ridiculous vacationist hat with

³¹ Johnson, ““You’re Putting Me on,”” 33.

a long baseball visor making him look witless and idiot—Beside him sits wifey, the boss of America, wearing dark glasses and sneering, even if he wanted to pick me up or anybody up she wouldn't let him—But in the two deep backseats are children, children, millions of children, all ages, they're fighting and screaming over ice cream, they're spilling vanilla all over the Tartan seatcovers—There's no room anymore anyway for a hitch hiker ... here is ten thousand racks of drycleaned and perfectly pressed suits and dresses of all sizes for the family to look like millionaires every time they stop at a roadside dive for bacon and eggs. (*BS*, 44–45)

Although here most readers can immediately grasp the connection between material possessions and obnoxious people without much profound analysis, there is, nevertheless, a subtle linguistic operation that creates this connection. Let us observe the conceptual blending that causes the disruption of the */family/* schema in this example. Each of the four descriptive phrases contains a set of modifiers: in the first phrase, we have the modifiers “sleek,” “long,” “sleering,” and “smoothly” to describe the car; in the second phrase, we have “long,” “ridiculous,” “witless,” and “idiot” to describe aspects of the husband; in the third phrase, we have “dark,” and “sneering” to describe aspects of the wife; and in the fourth phrase, we have “dry-cleaned” and “perfectly pressed” to describe the clothes. These modifiers yield four distinct scripts: */car/*, */husband/*, */wife/*, and */clothes/*.

If we look at the modifiers of the */car/* script, we notice that three of them are positively connotated (“sleek,” “sleering,” and “smoothly”) while “long” is neutrally connotated. The */husband/* script contains three negatively connotated modifiers (“ridiculous,” “witless,” and “idiot”) and the same neutrally connotated modifier (“long”). The */wife/* script contains two negatively connotated modifiers (“dark” and “sneering”), and the */clothes/* script contains two positively connotated modifiers (“dry-cleaned” and “perfectly pressed”). The */car/* and */clothes/* scripts, which are associated with objects (material possessions), are both essentially positively connotated while the */husband/* and */wife/* scripts, which are associated with the human agent or element (the owners of these objects), are negatively connotated. Consequently, we can infer that */car/* and */clothes/* are scripts of the */family/* hyperreal schema while the */husband/* and */wife/* appear to be disrupted. This is because nice cars and proper clothing belong to the hyperreal image of the suburban nuclear family of the 1950s, while the husband and the wife do not.

Instead of portraying a macho family man and breadwinner, the husband is submissive to his wife, looks “ridiculous,” and is not intelligent (“witless,” and “idiot”). On the other hand, instead of the expected portrait of a nurturing and submissive wife, we have a wife who is dominant, controlling, and evil. As “the boss of America,” she obstructs what would have been her husband’s natural reaction to aid Duluoz by offering him a ride. Similar to the identity-location generic space of the */expert/* schema, here we have an identity-*possession* generic space where the disrupted */husband/* and */wife/* identity scripts are mapped onto the */car/* and */clothes/* hyperreal possession scripts, which engenders an association between beautiful objects (connoted positively) and horrible owners (connoted negatively). Consequently, this creates a new cultural meaning for material possessions, which is not directly visible but which, nevertheless, is revealed through this mapping, which is that *nice clothes and nice cars are indicators of emasculation, stupidity, evil, and apathy*, which are all characteristics of the husband and the wife in this sketch.

The “Beatnik” Alternative Identity in the “New York Scenes” Chapter of *Lonesome Traveler*

So far, the discussion in this chapter has dealt with the narrative disruption of some of the schemas that have been fabricated by the hyperreal. The */businessman/* schema, the */expert/* schema, and the */family/* schema, as I have called them, are but examples of the effort by the hyperreal in TRW to compensate for the vacuum created by its own disruption of the */hobo/* schema and similar authentic schemas. Duluoz’s unique auto-biographical narrative authority and the “dissociation” capacity of his liminality³² enable him to perform these schematic associations and disassociations as a means to find authenticity in identity choices beyond those that are offered to the individual in hyperreal America. Having disrupted the hyperreal schemas, the schema vacuum is reinstated and an opportunity to innovate presents itself, one that Duluoz exploits by advancing a new conception of Americanness which I call “Beatnik,”³³ and which embodies what it means to live authentically in America amid the uncertainties of the transitional

³² Refer to Victor Turner’s elaboration of the creative processes of “componental exaggeration and dissociation” that characterize liminal beings on page 35 of chapter one.

³³ The use of the term “Beatnik” here is only for the schematic analysis and is not related to the popular media stereotype.

period. Even though the characteristics of this new alternative identity can be deduced from various locations in the *Legend*, the “New York Scenes” chapter of *Lonesome Traveler* constitutes a pertinent example of how the */beatnik/* schema becomes woven into the narrative. The following is a discussion of two of the characteristics that Dulouoz inscribes into the */beatnik/* schema: carefree childhood and contemplation.

The “Beatnik” and Carefree Childhood

Around the very beginning of the “New York Scenes” chapter, Dulouoz underscores how his and his friends’ experience of New York City is different from that of others:

My friends and I in New York city have our own special way of having fun without having to spend much money and most important of all without having to be importuned by formalistic bores, such as, say, a swell evening at the mayor’s ball.—We dont have to shake hands and we dont have to make appointments and we feel all right.—We sorta wander around like children.—We walk into parties and tell everybody what we’ve been doing and people think we’re showing off.—They say: “Oh look at the beatniks!” (*LT*, 713)

Reading these lines, one senses a celebration of carefree childhood and exploitation of the freedom that it offers. Dulouoz associates what we can call the */carefree childhood/* schema with the new */beatnik/* schema being constructed, an association whose objective is to give the impression that */carefree childhood/* is a script of the */beatnik/* schema or, in other words, impose an automatic association between the Beatnik and the image of an adult who engages in carefree childhood behavior. Paul Goodman, founder and pioneer of Gestalt therapy, tells us that “childish feelings are important not as a past that must be undone, but as some of the most beautiful powers of adult life that must be recovered: spontaneity, imagination, directness of awareness and manipulation.”³⁴ The */carefree childhood/* schema evokes a portrait of the Beatnik as a person who clings to their early developmental stage because they understand that it enables them to resist the inhibitions of adult life and the obligation to do things that they are not innately inclined to do.

³⁴ Frederick Perls, Ralph Hefferline, and Paul Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Delta, [1951] 1965), 297.

Beatniks are also assertive, outspoken, and resistant to self-consciousness, which is but a self-reflexive aspect of the aforementioned “cause-and-effect analysis.” They are not unaware of the outsider status that this resistance begets, but the innate need to communicate their daily experiences seems to transcend their and other people’s feelings about it. Note that when Duluoz says that he and his friends walk into parties and tell everyone what they have been doing, the assumption is that the parties are random and unplanned and the conversations rather trivial and mundane. This seems to imply that the attention is directed neither at the message nor the addressee, but rather at the very act of information sharing³⁵—the beatnik satisfies an urge and even fulfills a role once their experience is shared with others.³⁶

To appreciate the significance of child play in the Beatnik’s life, one must look for a more comprehensive context, which is found specifically in *The Dharma Bums*. In it, Duluoz asserts, in a more traditional storytelling fashion, the necessity of maintaining a childhood vantage point when navigating through adulthood. Triggered by the multitude of blissful sentiments felt after having spent a day climbing Matterhorn Peak, Duluoz is reminded of the haikus of Oriental poets: “Walking in this country you could understand the perfect gems of haikus the Oriental poets had written, never getting drunk in the mountains or anything but just going along as fresh as children writing down what they saw without literary devices or fanciness of expression” (*TDB*, 322). Later in the novel, he likens the experience of mountain-climbing to

a little girl pulling her little brother home on the sled and they’re both singing little ditties of their imagination and making faces at the ground and just being themselves before they have to go in the kitchen and put on a straight face again for the world of seriousness. “Yet what could be more serious than to follow a deer trace to get to your water?” I thought. (*TDB*, 344)

Because childhood is naturally associated with authentic, spontaneous, and truthful writing, which is considered the highest form of writing, Duluoz disassociates the */adulthood/* schema from two of its hyperreal scripts: the */sophistication/* script and the */seriousness/* script. Since

³⁵ For further explanations on the supremacy of the medium over the content in different aspects of the *Legend*, refer to pages 248–50 of chapter seven and pages 309–11 of chapter nine.

³⁶ Aside from the argument for the construction of a */beatnik/* schema advanced in this section, Duluoz believes that his personal authenticity is dependent on his role as a messenger, albeit in the context of esoteric knowledge. See the section titled “The Messenger Motif: The Role of Writing in the Transmission of Gnosis” on pages 209–15 of chapter six.

children are capable of an honest representation of the world that they inhabit without recourse to sophisticated forms—here designating the poetic form, though all media of representation are concerned—adults should *abandon* theirs and return to the “freshness” of direct, unembellished representations.

Furthermore, mountain climbing is a great expression of authenticity, specifically because it is associated with what children do without much regard for social inhibitions. Duluoiz believes that this kind of separation between children and adults—the kind that dictates that mountain climbing, writing simple poetry, wild camping, etc., are activities recommended for children but prohibited (or frowned upon) for adults—is artificially imposed by the powers of the hyperreal and maintains that maturity does not have to involve abandoning activities that do not produce immediate material results. Following a deer trace to get to a water source is, in the America of TRW, a trivial activity, but in Duluoiz’s TAPW, it is appreciated for the ancestral values of self-reliance, spontaneity, and freedom that are embedded in it. Ultimately, the novel association between the */carefree childhood/* schema and the */beatnik/* schema is only possible because of the disassociation that Duluoiz carries out between the */adulthood/* schema (the antithesis of the */carefree childhood/* schema) and the */sophistication/* and */seriousness/* scripts.

Another script-based operation that reinforces the association between the */beatnik/* schema and the */carefree childhood/* schema occurs via the evocation of the notion of simplicity. In *Big Sur*, Duluoiz reflects on the wisdom of Emerson and Whitman while up on Big Sur mountain and distills them into a newfound philosophy of “the infancy of the simplicity of just being happy in the woods” (*BS*, 33). The word “infancy” causes a deviation from the reader’s language schema S(L) because, although inducing an effective metaphor, it is inorganically imposed—which is typical of most metaphorical constructions—on the otherwise self-sufficient phrase “the simplicity of just being in the woods,” and creates the image that *adults, just like infants, could find happiness simply by being in the woods*. Moreover, Duluoiz contemplates during the same reflection “working to fix that new stream in the creek to flow through the convenient deep new waterhole near the wood platform on the bank, and losing myself in this like a kid playing” (*BS*, 34), which associates a script belonging to the */carefree childhood/* schema—let us call it the */child play/* script—with a script belonging to the */adulthood/* schema—the */work/* script or */labor/* script or similar appellation—thereby reinforcing the constructed association between the two schemas.

The “Beatnik” and Contemplation

The wisdom that Duluoz acquires after spending sixty-three days alone on Desolation Peak is important to understand the Beatnik identity in the “New York Scenes” chapter. When he descends from the mountain, Duluoz proclaims: “I knew now that my life was a search for peace as an artist, but not only as an artist—As a man of contemplations rather than too many actions, in the old Tao Chinese sense of ‘Do Nothing’ (Wu Wei) which is a way of life in itself more beautiful than any, a kind of cloistral fervor in the midst of mad-ranting action-seekers of this or any other ‘modern world’” (*DA*, 245). Duluoz (temporarily) realizes that solitary contemplation (reflection) is vital for resisting the hyperreal and he assimilates the wisdom that he acquires on the mountain to the construction of the */beatnik/* schema in the “New York Scenes.” Following the description of how he and his friends (as Beatniks) experience the city, Duluoz illustrates the importance of not being involved in its events but merely contemplating the passing of life in it:

This is the center of the greatest city the world has ever known and this is what beatniks do here.—“Standing on the street corner waiting for no one is Power,” sayeth poet Gregory Corso.

Instead of going to night clubs—if you’re in a position to make the nightclub scene (most beatniks rattle empty pockets passing Birdland)—how strange to stand on the sidewalk and just watch that weird eccentric from Second Avenue looking like Napoleon going by feeling cooky crumbs in his pocket, or a young 15-year-old kid with a bratty face, or suddenly somebody swishing by in a baseball hat (because that’s what you see), and finally an old lady dressed in seven hats and a long ratty fur coat in the middle of the July night carrying a huge Russian woolen purse filled with scribbled bits of paper which say “Festival Foundation Inc., 70,000 Germs” and moths flying out of her sleeve—she rushes up and importunes Shriners. And dufflebag soliders [sic] without a war-harmonica players off freight trains.—Of course there are the normal New Yorkers, looking ridiculously out of place and as odd as their own neat oddity, carrying pizzas and Daily Newses and headed for brown basements or Pennsylvania trains—W. H. Auden himself may be seen fumbling by in the rain—Paul Bowles, natty in a Dacron suit, passing through on a trip from Morocco, the ghost of Herman Melville himself followed by Bartleby the Wall Street Scrivener and Pierre the ambiguous hipster of 1848 out on a

walk—to see what’s up in the news flashes of the Times—Let’s go back to the corner newsstand.—SPACE BLAST . . . POPE WASHES FEET OF POOR . . .” (*LT*, 714–15)

Let us observe how the */beatnik/* schema is associated with what could be called the */contemplation/* script. The scene begins with a quote from real-life Beat poet Gregory Corso that introduces the importance of contemplation and the “Do Nothing” philosophy. After that, Duluoz proceeds to describe the kind of people one might see while standing on the sidewalk. Interestingly, to the eyes of the contemplative Beatnik appear only “weird eccentric” people who look strange and who are doing strange things. Duluoz then informs the reader that there are also “normal” people in New York; however, they are both descriptively (content) and narratively (form) isolated. Within the description, these “normal New Yorkers” are “out of place and as odd as their own neat oddity.” While the people that the Beatnik is primarily contemplating are clearly eccentric, the quality of eccentricity is also associated with normal people. However, by juxtaposition, the eccentricity of the first group of people does not seem negatively correlated at all while that of the “normal New Yorkers” does.

From the Beatnik’s point of view, the categories are reversed, at least as far as the readers’ expectations are concerned—traditionally (canonically) eccentric people are viewed as interesting while traditionally normal people are viewed as “ridiculous” and “out of place.” This reversal is reinforced by the narrative isolation induced by the dashes that contain the description of the normal New Yorkers (“—Of course there are the normal New Yorkers . . . to see what’s up in the news flashes of the Times—”). Similar to how they contribute to the disruption of the */businessman/* schema, the dashes downgrade the importance of the information that they enclose and, in so doing, the “weird eccentric” people emerge as superior to “normal New Yorkers.” This demonstrates continuity with the beautification of the Other discussed in chapter one. Although Duluoz here does not assign a particular race or culture to the eccentric people in the Beatnik’s contemplation—they could simply be white Americans—they share with the Other of Duluoz’s F-universe the attribute of eccentricity that enables them to stay at the periphery of mainstream culture and away from the control of the hyperreal. Similar to the denigration of whiteness and beautification of Otherness discussed in chapter one, the beautification of the eccentric people is done at the expense of the denigration of normal New Yorkers. This operation implies that involvement in the life of the city (“going to night clubs,” etc.) denies the opportunity to perceive

the positive attributes of eccentric people and that only through uninvolved contemplation is the individual able to notice the superiority (and Otherness) of eccentric people.

An extended feature of non-involved contemplation is the heightened capacity for vicarious experience. A couple of pages following the scene described above, Duluo mentions what Beatniks used to do or could do while contemplating from the inside of Bickford's coffee shop on Times Square:

The beatniks make the point that if you went there every night and stayed there you could start a whole Dostoevski season on Times Square by yourself and meet all the midnight newspaper peddlers and their involvements and families and woes—religious fanatics who would take you home and give you long sermons over the kitchen table about the “new apocalypse” and similar ideas:—“My Baptist minister back in Winston-Salem told me the reason that God invented television was that when Christ comes back to earth again they shall crucify Him right on the streets of this here Babylon and they gonna have television cameras pointin’ down on that spot and the streets shall run with blood and every eye shall see.” (*LT*, 717)

The “Dostoevski season” marks an expansion of the mechanisms of experiencing by insinuating that experience could come in the form of a philosophical adventure arising from encounters with strangers and engaging in their stories. This relates to involvement only insofar as it is indirect (being involved in the stories and experiences of others) and directed at the same category of eccentric people that the Beatnik contemplates while standing on the sidewalk.³⁷ The vicarious feature of the */contemplation/* script indirectly contributes to the cultivation of the superiority of the Other by postulating that their experience is valuable enough to partake in—more valuable than those of “normal New Yorkers”—probably because it is associated with authentic life, which is not yet controlled by the hyperreal.

The truth and moral values of the experience or the stories of these eccentric people do not seem to matter as much as the very quality of eccentricity embedded in them. Similar to the way that narrativity is defined by Bruner, Herman, and Cook on the basis of the deviation from the expectations of the (schemas of the) reader, the Beatnik discovers an aspect of authenticity in

³⁷ It is worth noting that contemplation, like carefree childhood, is only one of the aspects or scripts that define the Beatnik identity. As demonstrated in this dissertation and as could be inferred from the *Legend* itself, Duluo is often quite strongly involved in life and in extreme experiences.

the deviant life of eccentric people. It does not matter to the Beatnik that they themselves do not lead such a life but it is of utmost importance that they learn that other modes of experiencing exist. As ludicrous an argument that television was invented so that more people can witness Christ being crucified again can be, to a Beatnik, all sources of knowledge are valid, and even if there is no scientific or technical truth in a story told by a religious fanatic, its legitimacy lies in the very distance that it creates from the knowledge of experts of the technocratic society.

Conclusion

Dulouoz's disruption of the identity prototypes imposed by hyperreal America represents a continuation of his deconstruction of whiteness. By the same token, his construction of an alternative American identity (the Beatnik) represents a continuation of his construction of the superiority of Otherness. These continuations are revealed through the underlying disruptive–constructive mechanism that they share.

Analyzing the various schematic associations and disassociations between linguistic units in the *Legend* reveals the capacity of the narrative to influence the reader's cognitive (non)identification with certain identity prototypes. Despite the fact that contemporary American society is significantly different from that of Kerouac's time, one could argue that most of the ideals of Hyperreal America in the Textual Referential World TRW such as consumerism, conformity, and technocratic expertise remain the bedrock of today's America. Readers who share or not Dulouoz's belief that these ideals contribute to the loss of authenticity discover a resistance strategy that is directed at creating a new authentic mode of being. Assuming that the Real has disappeared—and the existence of the hyperreal implies that some synthetic elements of our lives are copies of a Real that never existed—a new Real emerges from the peculiar linguistic structure of the “resistant” narrative of the *Legend*. What I have termed “Beatnik” is an identity prototype—a construct similar to the construct of the Other discussed in chapter one—that encompasses authentic ideals of carefree childhood and contemplation, which represent the antitheses of the values of hyperreal America.

Chapters one and two have disclosed a pathway from decadent to authentic Americanness in the analyzed examples. What is important to retain from this analysis is that the construction of the Other and the Beatnik identity, both of which contribute to authentic Americanness, is

dependent on the disruption of mechanisms and prototypes that are diffused by the hyperreal so that, once the disruption takes place, the construction process can occur via the liminal capacity of innovation. In addition to disruption and construction, the following chapter examines a third aspect of Duluoz's resistance to the hyperreal, which is shown in his strategies of adaptation to the environment of TRW. An analysis from the viewpoint of evolutionary psychology of key passages from the *Legend* connects the absence of authenticity to the failure of Duluoz's Evolved Psychological Mechanisms (EPM) that enable adaptation to an environment that is contaminated with hyper-stimuli.

Chapter 3. Authenticity as Adaptation: An Evolutionary Analysis

The previous two chapters have outlined Duluoz's encounters with the hyperreal either directly through its agents such as the media and the police or by experiencing the effects of its reconfiguration of the environment and its social norms. His resistance to being assimilated by the hyperreal could be divided into two phases: disruptive and constructive-creative. During the disruptive phase, concepts such as whiteness, the nuclear family, consumption, and technocratic expertise are degraded and disassociated from prior synthetic notions that had been used to generate, promote, and culturally diffuse conformity, consumerism, dangerous work and family ethics, white supremacy, and sexual repression among others. As pertains to the constructive phase, I have argued that Duluoz's liminality confers upon him the capacity to innovate and, therefore, create alternative norms, values, and even an entire alternative reality system (as a fictional mental construct) to construct the superiority of Otherness as well as an alternative identity model that redefines Americanness.

This chapter expands the scope of the threat of hyperreality, suggesting a reading from the point of view of evolutionary psychology by interpreting Duluoz's resistance "adaptively" and defining authenticity as a consequence of the calibration between his innate dispositions and the conditions of the ancestral environment. The first section defines Duluoz's alienation as a symptom of the miscalibration between his Evolved Psychological Mechanisms (EPMs) and the environment of hyperreal America, which is an environment that is occupied by hyper-stimuli—fabricated cues that mimic the authentic stimuli that are associated with human being's EPMs. The second section deals with the effect of mass information on the production of a mass psyche (Jung), which comprises "networked" individuals (Merlin Donald) who are plugged into the hyperreal machine. The consequence of the mass psyche is the excessive exposure to cultural information that leaves the individuals in hyperreal America at the mercy of maladaptations.

While Duluoz occasionally succeeds in detaching himself from the mass psyche through his quest for silence in Buddhism and isolation, the third section discusses his fear of the natural environment and paranoia around his friends in the wilderness of Big Sur as a testament to the success of the hyperreal's deterrence mechanisms in making him internalize his own

surveillance. The final section discusses the evolutionary dimension of the disruption caused by the three hyperreal schemas discussed in the previous chapter.

Alienation as a Symptom of Miscalibration

The Beat aesthetic is widely connected to re-enchantment and the return to a primitive state that can only be experienced in pre-industrial communities and Oriental religion. In Kerouac, we have seen this state incarnated in the Other, whether in Mexicans and their territory or in African Americans and their art, as well as in his Buddhist beliefs. The disintegration of Duluoz's America that causes Duluoz to escape to the world of the Other (literally and fictionally by constructing his F-universe) could be interpreted as a symbolic escape to an environment with which his inherent dispositions are in harmony. In other words, the authenticity of the world of the Other and the inauthenticity of hyperreal America reveal the structure of these worlds that individuals may or may not be calibrated to or, in other words, may or may not be capable to adapt to. Perceiving inauthenticity, specifically its manifestation as alienation, as a consequence of the failure to adapt to the environment sheds new light on the problem of the loss of authenticity, one that is grounded in evolutionary thought instead of Marxist ideology.

Discussions about evolutionary adaptations to the environment, whether in the real world—which is what the field of evolutionary biology is concerned with—or in fictional worlds—which is what literary Darwinism and the journal of “Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture (ESIC)” are concerned with—cannot be held without a proper outline of what is called the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA). As evolutionary psychologists John Tooby and Leda Cosmides explain, the EEA “refers jointly to the problems hunter-gatherers had to solve and the conditions under which they solved them (including their developmental environment).”¹ In other words, the EEA is the environment where our adaptations are assumed to have developed, allowing us to face the environment with a predisposed toolkit for solving problems related to survival.

¹ John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, “Conceptual Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 22.

These problems are best examined from the lens of evolutionary psychology which is a field that, while not specifically tailored to the study of narratives, examines human behavior and cognition as manifestations of Evolved Psychological Mechanisms (EPM), which are processes that have developed to react to recurrent, ancestrally encountered, and survival-related problems.² Edited by David M. Buss, *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology* contains a comprehensive elaboration of the most important survival-related issues that are of concern to evolutionary psychologists, some of which are essential to the discussion in this chapter: mating strategies, navigation skills and locating safe places, the avoidance of physical threats, enhancing one's status in the hierarchy and avoiding attacks on status, parenting and kinship strategies, and strategies for cooperation and group living.

Douglas Kellner's elaboration of Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality in chapter one has mentioned the fact that the hyperreal is "more real than real." It is not very difficult to imagine the realization of Baudrillard's nightmare in today's world where virtual reality has transformed the "real" world into a banal world for many consumers. The first episode of the fifth season (2019) of the dystopian Netflix series *Black Mirror* recounts the story of two adult men who frequently play an advanced virtual reality game together. The dystopian twist of the episode occurs when the two men, playing as two different-sex avatars, become addicted to having virtual sex with one another, which severely damages their relationships with their real-life spouses. From the evolutionary perspective, this poses many questions as to, for example, the mating strategies that the men adopt and the very nature of the virtual environment that is radically different from the EEA.

The Textual Referential World TRW of the *Legend* seems to be rife with similar hyper-stimuli—though there is no mention of advanced technologies—which may invalidate Duluo's EPMS and explain his feeling of alienation. To understand the opposition between TRW and EEA, we need to understand the levels of analysis that have so far been explored as well as the one being explored in this chapter. Per Aage Brandt observes that works of art exist in the *mesoscopic world*, which is the world "in which narrative structures are inherently relevant and crucial to experiential reality"—it is the world of "what." But to obtain a comprehensive, non-ideological understanding of art, a study must consider the two other levels that are directly

² For the full explanation, see Jeffrey A. Simpson and Lorne Campbell, "Methods of Evolutionary Sciences," in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 124.

implicated by the work: the first is the *microscopic world*, which deals with the “online processes of perceptual and mental structuring involved in art perception” or the world of “how,” and the second is the *macroscopic world* which deals with the evolutionary causes and conditions of the work or the world of “why.”³ According to this distinction, we can say that the schematic analysis of chapter two corresponds to a *microscopic* analysis as it answers the question “how” (*how* schematic disruptions and associations connect to readers’ pre-existing schemas), while the “adaptationist” analysis in this chapter corresponds to the macroscopic analysis and answers the question “why.”

Whenever Duluoz undergoes long journeys or excursions into the wilderness or comes into contact with nature, he gets a nostalgic impression of ancient places that are outside the realm of the perceived world. Notice how, for example, when climbing Matterhorn Peak in *The Dharma Bums*, Duluoz feels that “there was something inexpressibly broken in my heart as though I’d lived before and walked this trail, under similar circumstances with a fellow Bodhisattva, but maybe on a more important journey, I felt like lying down by the side of the trail and remembering it all” (*TDB*, 324). Later in the novel, a similar feeling overtakes him as he reflects on how “that whole afternoon, even more than the other, was filled with old premonitions or memories, as though I’d been there before, scrambling on these rocks, for other purposes more ancient, more serious, more simple” (*TDB*, 338). Duluoz describes a world that not only predates hyperreal America but is also evocative of the primitiveness discussed in chapter one, which suggests that it could be part of his privately constructed world—the F-universe. I would argue that his recollection of memories of a place that he had never visited as well as his identification with it could be interpreted as a manifestation of the EEA.

While the EEA seems to be correlated with Duluoz’s F-universe, TRW America evokes an environment that disrupts the manifestations of EPMs. In *The Dharma Bums*, Japhy (Beat poet Gary Snyder) uses his knowledge about Oriental/Eastern religion to develop his vision of a spiritual utopia that he would like to see come into existence in America:

[In] Tibet and parts of ancient India ... there was no question of what to do about sex which is what I always liked about Oriental religion. And what I always dug about the Indians in our country ... You know when I was a little kid in Oregon I didn’t feel that I

³ Per Aage Brandt, “Form and Meaning in Art,” in *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*, ed. Mark Turner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 184–85.

was an American at all, with all that suburban ideal and sex repression and general dreary newspaper gray censorship of all our real human values but and when I discovered Buddhism and all I suddenly felt that I had lived in a previous lifetime innumerable ages ago and now because of faults and sins in that lifetime I was being degraded to a more grievous domain of existence and my karma was to be born in America where nobody has any fun or believes in anything, especially freedom. That's why I was always sympathetic to freedom movements, too, like anarchism in the Northwest, the oldtime heroes of Everett Massacre and all. (*TDB*, 301–2)

Sex in hyperreal (TRW) America remains a conundrum. Japhy implies that, unlike in Tibet and India where it retains its natural reproductive function, sex in hyperreal America appears to be associated with socio-political control and the denial of freedom. Theodore Roszak observes a link between sexual liberty and conformity during Kerouac's time, maintaining that "to liberate sexuality would be to create a society in which technocratic discipline would be impossible,"⁴ which could explain why, at the end of his speech, Japhy reasserts his love of freedom and the political movements that strive to protect it.

When he talks about the "question of what to do about sex," Japhy implies that it is an ongoing social problem, which means that, if the deterrence mechanisms used for the demonization of hoboism and camping were also used to deter people from enjoying the freedom of sex, they were not successful, as sex still constitutes a "question." Acknowledging the cleverness of the technocratic society's tactics, Roszak believes that such mechanisms were not employed because "to thwart sexuality outright would create a widespread, explosive resentment"; instead, "the strategy chosen, therefore, is not harsh repression, but rather the Playboy version of total permissiveness."⁵ Duluoz recognizes the success of this strategy in *Desolation Angels* when he remarks: "In the paper store my God a thousand girlie books showing all the fulsome breasts and thighs in eternity—I realize 'America's going sex-mad, they cant get enough, something's wrong" (*DA*, 114).

We are reminded here of Tooby's and Cosmides's observation that "people can now easily fabricate situations that concentrate cues that are completely stripped of their ancestrally

⁴ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 14.

⁵ Roszak, 14.

coupled fitness payoffs,” fittingly giving the example of adult magazines that display “perceptual cues of opportunities for fertile copulation, without the reality.”⁶ Indeed, what seems to be “wrong” from Duluoz’s perspective is that people have succumbed to hyper-stimuli (“the Playboy version of sexual permissiveness” in Roszak’s terms) because they provide the same evolutionary (sexual) stimuli but in a far more intense way (“more real than real”). Furthermore, Japhy’s metaphor of reincarnation evokes the notion of miscalibration or “mismatch” between his innate dispositions (EPMs) and the “grievous domain of existence” to which he has been cast (hyperreal America).

From the adaptationist perspective, Japhy’s and Duluoz’s alienation is the symptom of such mismatches that are caused by hyper-stimuli. A consequence of the technocratization in hyperreal America is the invalidation of one’s EPMs. Inherently acquired EPMs, which represent a toolbox for problem-solving in the EEA, are replaced by experts who claim to have a solution for everything. At one point, Duluoz admits that people “always wanted me to listen to them, they knew, I didn’t know anything, I was just a dumb young kid and *impractical* [emphasis added] fool who didn’t understand the serious significance of this very important, very real world” (*TDB*, 361). From the viewpoint of people in TRW, Duluoz does not have the practical tools necessary to deal with the world, probably referring to his interest in writing and Buddhism. Moreover, whatever hyperreal America defines as the “significance” and “reality” of the world seems to be what everyone should conform to, which is not something that Duluoz is willing to do. The justification from evolutionary psychology seems quite straightforward: “When a program is operating outside the envelope of ancestral conditions that selected for its design, it may look like a poorly engineered problem solver.”⁷ However, since it is implied that other individuals (the inhabitants of TRW) are “practical” enough to understand the “significance” and “reality” of the world, is it not more accurate to assume that there is a defect in *Duluoz*’s EPMs than in the environment of TRW or in the people that inhabit it? This question is dealt with in the third section but in the following discussion, I explore the threat of mass information and its relation to the hyper-stimuli.

⁶ John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, “The Past Explains the Present: Emotional Adaptations and the Structure of Ancestral Environments,” *Ethology and Sociobiology* 11 (1990): 407.

⁷ Tooby and Cosmides, “The Past Explains the Present,” 407.

Mass Information and the Construction of “Networked Creatures”

The barrage of information in hyperreal America tampers with the manifestation of Duluoz’s innate predispositions. According to Merlin Donald, the mind-culture co-evolution has passed through three phases: mimetic culture, mythic culture, and theoretic culture. The latter (current) phase has been accompanied by two processes: *demythologization*, which implies abandoning the myths of culture, and the dependence on external memory (the information available culturally, especially in written form) instead of biological memory as a primary source of information.⁸ The obvious adaptive advantage of the second process is that it provides rapid access to information. However, research on cultural evolution informs us that excessive dependence on cultural information leaves the individual at great risk of *maladaptations*—otherwise referred to as *susceptibilities*⁹ or *memes*¹⁰—that hyper-stimuli can exploit. Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd explain that

human maladaptation is an unavoidable byproduct of cumulative cultural adaptation. Acquiring information from others allows people to rapidly adapt to a wide range of environments, but it also opens a portal into people’s brains, through which maladaptive ideas can enter—ideas whose content makes them more likely to spread, but do not increase the genetic fitness of their bearers.¹¹

Duluoz’s resistance to demythologization is demonstrated in the primitiveness motif that characterizes the F-universe as we saw in chapter one, as well as his repudiation of the technocratic expertise that strives to eliminate “the mysterious, essential, permanent reality of Mind Essence” as discussed in the disruption of the */expert/* schema in chapter two. In *Big Sur*, Duluoz recognizes the dangers of the mass information that permeates the TRW, which he calls “the too-much-ness of the world”:

you got all these marvelous books a man aint even got time to read em all, what you gonna do in this already piled up multiple world when you have to think of the Book of

⁸ Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 340–44.

⁹ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 67.

¹⁰ Richard Dawkins, “Memes: The New Replicators,” in *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1976] 1989), 189–201.

¹¹ Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd, *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 150.

Songs, Faulkner, César Birotteau, Shakespeare, Satyricons, Dantes, in fact long stories guys tell you in bars, in fact the sutras themselves, Sir Philip Sidney, Sterne, Ibn El Arabi, the copious Lope de Vega and the uncopious goddamn Cervantes, shoo, then there's all those Catulluses and Davids and radio listening skid row sages to contend with because they've all got a million stories too Ron Blake in the backseat shut up! down to everything which is so much that it is of necessity." (BS, 64)

Whether literary, spiritual, or experiential, the overflow of information might not be intentionally designed to serve the ulterior interests of the institutions of hyperreal America but it certainly causes the individual to feel overwhelmed, which is why, in *The Dharma Bums*, Duluoz's interest in nature and Zen as potential antidotes to mass information is pertinent:

I wanted to get me a full pack complete with everything necessary to sleep, shelter, eat, cook, in fact a regular kitchen and bedroom right on my back, and go off somewhere and find perfect solitude and look into the perfect emptiness of my mind and be completely neutral from any and all ideas. I intended to pray, too, as my only activity, pray for all living creatures; I saw it was the only decent activity left in the world. To be in some riverbottom somewhere, or in a desert, or in mountains, or in some hut in Mexico or shack in Adirondack, and rest and be kind, and do nothing else. (TDB, 357)

Later in the novel, Duluoz reflects again on the nature of the silence that the individual enjoys while sleeping in the desert, saying that it is a silence "so intense that you can hear your own blood roar in your ears but louder than that by far is the mysterious roar ... reminding you of something you've seemed to have forgotten in the stress of your days since birth" (TDB, 395). From the evolutionary point of view, the silence of nature empties the mind from the excess of cultural information that leads to maladaptations, which raises to the forefront one's EPMs that "you've seemed to have forgotten in the stress of your days since birth" and substantiates the survivalist value of simple activities such as following a deer trace to get to a water source mentioned in chapter two.

The importance of minimizing the dependence on cultural information is also expressed by Carl Jung and merits consideration. In his forward to D.T. Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, Jung comments on the power of Zen to empty the consciousness in order to allow the content of the unconscious to "break through to the conscious."¹² Jung also discovered that some

¹² Carl Gustav Jung, "Forward," *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* by D.T. Suzuki (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 22.

of the most detrimental aspects of the archetype are the *isms* of society that “are only a sophisticated substitute for the lost link with psychic reality. The mass psyche that infallibly results destroys the meaning of the individual and of culture generally.”¹³ Jung’s notion of the mass psyche corresponds to Donald’s interpretation of the individual’s mind in modern societies as a node in a chain of interconnected minds that act as “networked creatures.”¹⁴ Connected to the mass psyche and enlivening it, these “creatures” that populate hyperreal America—I suggest the Latin appellation *homo magis realis*¹⁵—are connected to a central machine that supplies the network with hyper-stimuli. Duluoz sees the gradual transformation of Americans into networked creatures beginning on college campuses,

colleges being nothing but grooming schools for the middle-class non-identity which usually finds its perfect expression on the outskirts of the campus in rows of well-to-do houses with lawns and television sets in each living room with everybody looking at the same thing and thinking the same thing at the same time while the Japhies of the world go prowling in the wilderness to hear the voice crying in the wilderness, to find the ecstasy of the stars, to find the dark mysterious secret of the origin of faceless wonderless crapulous civilization. (*TDB*, 307)

Homogenization is the direct consequence of mass information and colleges and televisions, in particular, are seen as media that are used by the agents of the hyperreal to establish conformity and consent. While the *homo magis realis* is being constructed and connected in that manner, those who live outside of the reach of the hyperreal, namely the Other (chapter one), eccentric people (chapter two), and seekers of the truth like Japhy, give free rein to their unconscious, which I would argue is the Jungian equivalent to the EPMs.

Fear of Artificial Hazards in *Big Sur*

Among the dangerous effects of hyper-stimuli is the fallacious manifestation of fear, which could develop into full-blown paranoia in extreme cases. When Duluoz arrives in San

¹³ Carl Gustav Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche* (New York: Routledge, [1960] 2001), 156.

¹⁴ Donald, 382.

¹⁵ *Homo magis realis* is latin for “a more real person,” which roughly signifies “a hyperreal person.” The appellation is meant to define the individual in the *Legend*’s TRW who incarnates Jung’s notion of the mass psyche and Donald’s notion of networked creatures.

Francisco to meet with Dean and his partner Rosie, he discovers that the latter had indeed become paranoid as she starts ranting as soon as she sees him:

“The police are going to swoop down and arrest us all and not only that but we’re all going to be questioned for weeks and weeks and maybe even years till they find out all the crimes and sins that have been committed, it’s a network, it runs in every direction, finally they’ll arrest everybody in North Beach and even everybody in Greenwich Village and then Paris and then finally they’ll have everybody in jail, you don’t know, it’s only the beginning.” She kept jumping at sounds in the hall, thinking the cops were coming. (TDB, 361)

Rosie’s paranoia is sudden and neither Dean nor Duluoaz understands its origin. If we eliminate the possibility that she suffers from a chronic illness, one way to explain her paranoia is by attributing it to the success of the deterrence and surveillance mechanisms of the hyperreal that force one into “internalizing his own surveillance” as Ronna C. Johnson mentions and as we saw in chapter one. Another possible explanation is that the hyper-stimuli in TRW produce a miscalibration between individuals’ psychological-emotional reactive mechanism and the actual level of hazards present in the environment, which could develop into collective fear.

In their study of the fear module, Arne Öhman and Suzan Mineka show that “even though evolutionary fear stimuli would have an advantage, associations between arbitrary cues and fear are by no means precluded”¹⁶ and that “although most fear-relevant stimuli may have preferential access to the fear module because of their evolutionary history, some with very strong shared cultural connotations of fear may have access to the module because of a strong ontogenetic history.”¹⁷ With the understanding that arbitrary cues could elicit fear in the same manner that ancestrally encountered cues (actual physical threats to one’s survival) do, one could look at the effect of hyper-stimuli on individuals in TRW and compare their fear reactions to those of Duluoaz’s F-universe. The following discussion showcases this effect in *Big Sur*, the novel that recounts Duluoaz’s retreat to a friend’s cabin (Lorenzo Monsanto/Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti) in the woods of Big Sur in order to cope with the pressure of his recent fame, as well his declining mental health that is aggravated by his alcoholism.

¹⁶ Arne Öhman and Susan Mineka, “Fears, Phobias, and Preparedness: Toward an Evolved Module of Fear and Fear Learning,” *Psychological Review* 108, no. 3 (2001): 484,

¹⁷ Öhman and Mineka, 492.

Fear of the Wilderness

Evidence of the impact of hyper-stimuli could be observed in the animal world of the *Legend* where dogs have become so accustomed to people commuting by cars that they “[bark] at you because you pass on human feet instead of on wheels” (*TDB*, 356). Perceiving the sound of slowly treading feet as a threat indicates a successful process of conditioning to artificial hazards, which is the basis of the mismatch between the individual and the EEA. By comparison, in F-universe Mexico, a cat could be “one mass of fleas, but he doesn’t mind, he doesn’t keep scratching like American cats but just endures” (*TR*, 577). While animals in TRW have developed a fear reaction to artificial stimuli, those in the F-universe showcase a calibration between their EPMs (specifically their hazard-detection mechanism) and actual threats such as fleas.

The consequences of the miscalibration in TRW become expressly detrimental as soon as Duluoz crosses the barriers of civilization and steps into the wilderness of Big Sur where his hazard-detection mechanism immediately crashes. The road to the mountain and the ones within it appear to be far more dangerous than the one described in the journeys from East to West (Lowell and New York to San Francisco) and from North to South (The United States to Mexico) that are undertaken in *On the Road*. In fact, at Big Sur, the excitement of the unknown is replaced with a paralyzing fear as Duluoz tries to find his way to the cabin in search of solitude:

Trudging up and getting further away from the sea roar I get to feel more confident but suddenly I come to a frightening thing in the road, I stop and hold out my hand, edge forward, it’s only a cattle crossing (iron bars imbedded across the road) but at the same time a big blast of wind comes from the left where the bluff should be and I spot that way and see nothing. “What the hell’s going on!” (*BS*, 11).

The more Duluoz trudges, the more the fear intensifies as the downward road leading to the river starts to resemble a descent to hell:

There are glades down there, ferns of horror and slippery logs, mosses, dangerous plashings, humid mists rise coldly like the breath of death, big dangerous trees are beginning to bend over my head and brush my pack—There’s a noise I know can only grow louder as I sink down and for fear how loud it can grow I stop and listen, it rises up

crashing mysteriously at me from a ragging battle among dark things, wood or rock or something cracked, all smashed, all wet black sunken earth danger—I'm *afraid* to go down there—I am *affrayed* in the old Edmund Spenser sense of being *frayed* by a whip, and a wet one at that—A slimy green dragon racket in the bush—An angry war that doesn't want me poking around—It's been there a million years and it doesn't want me clashing darkness with it—It comes snarling from a thousand crevasses and monster redwood roots all over the map of creation—It is a dark clangor in the rain forest and doesn't want no skid row bum to carry to the sea which is bad enough. (BS, 12)

The monstrous characterization of nature is symbolic of a failure to adapt to the environment. Dulouoz himself suspects that there is something illogical with his perception of the Big Sur wilderness when he compares it to other people's impression about it: "when later I heard people say 'Oh Big Sur must be beautiful!' I gulp to wonder why it has the reputation of being beautiful above and beyond its *fearfulness*" (BS, 15). This implies that other people have figured out a way to navigate the environment, seeing beauty in it rather than sheer hostility, and raises an inescapable question, which was articulated at the end of the first section of this chapter: from the point of view of evolution, since Dulouoz cannot adapt to the natural environment of the modern world while others apparently can, why not infer that his internal architecture is not evolved enough to cope with environmental change and that his adaptive traits have gone extinct? After all, what is evolution if not a process of adaptation by natural selection that leads to the evolution of some traits and the extinction of others? Why not simply try to learn the skills required to adapt to the environment of TRW?

I would argue that Dulouoz's alienation is a sign of his maladaptation to the environment of TRW (hyperreal America where hyper-stimuli dominate) and his adaptation to EEA (which is the environment of authentic stimuli to which his EPMs are calibrated). In fact, we can draw an evolutionary equivalent to the anthropological argument advanced in chapter one: the primitiveness motif that is evoked by the phrase "pure and ancient activities of human life" is indicative of re-enchantment in the sense of reinjecting not only myths into society but also authentic stimuli, which are two elements that constitute Dulouoz's F-universe. By containing myths and authentic stimuli, the F-universe is a "rectified" or reconfigured version of America that excludes the interference of hyper-stimuli and other damaging effects of hyperreality. The reason why Dulouoz seems to be the only one confronting hazards in the wilderness of Big Sur is

that the ostensible calibration between individuals in TRW and their environment is inauthentic and based on automatic reactions to hyper-stimuli that are meant to resemble authentic ones (similar to the dogs' barking at the sound of slowly treading feet). This corresponds to Tooby's and Cosmides's remark about the potential of fabricated cues in general, and Öhman's and Mineka's same remark about the emotion of fear in particular.

Duluoz's fear of the natural elements also tampers with his sense of orientation as he struggles in finding the cabin that he was supposed to stay at. Öhman and Mineka explain that when the fear module is activated, no other cognitive process can interfere with it or stop it because of what is called the encapsulation characteristic of the module.¹⁸ While the skill to navigate the environment and find one's way to safety is crucial for survival in the EEA, the fear that overcomes Duluoz, and whose intensity is embodied in the word "*effrayed*," intercepts and sabotages his navigation mechanism: "The sea roar is bad enough except it keeps bashing and barking at me like a dog in the fog down there, sometimes it booms the earth but my God where is the earth and how can the sea be underground!" (*BS*, 10). Indeed, his sense of orientation becomes so compromised that he can no longer distinguish the basic geographical properties of the mountain and the ocean.

In contrast to the hazardous mountain of TRW Big Sur, the natural environment of F-universe Mexico is perceived as a secure shelter: "For the first time in my life the weather was not something that touched me, that caressed me, froze or sweated me, but became me. The atmosphere and I became the same. Soft infinitesimal showers of microscopic bugs fanned down on my face as I slept, and they were extremely pleasant and soothing" (*OTR*, 265). There is a significant disparity between the state of perfect calibration to the Mexican environment and the miscalibration to the environment at Big Sur, which foregrounds the differences in the strategies of resistance adopted in *On the Road* and *Big Sur*. The strategy of resistance in *On the Road*, which involves the construction of a fictional universe (F-universe), is successful, while the strategy adopted in *Big Sur*, because it remains in the realm of TRW—even if the wilderness of Big Sur is part of the natural world, it is still within the control of the hyperreal—is rather unsuccessful. The hyper-stimuli in TRW disrupt the navigation and hazard-detection mechanisms so that, even if the individual is in a natural setting, they misinterpret non-threatening stimuli as threatening, which would explain why Duluoz believes that Big Sur is

¹⁸ Öhman and Mineka, 484.

filled with serious hazards such as “ferns of horror,” “dangerous plashings,” “dangerous trees,” and “black sunken earth danger.”

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that surveillance tactics in hyperreal America play an influential role in maintaining the illusion of hazards in the natural environment. The encounter with the “wardens of the woods” in the desert discussed in chapter two is a perfect example of this: the deterrence machine, which is represented by the continuous probing by the police when Duluoz tells them that he plans to sleep out in the desert, sustains the illusion that there are hazards in the desert, which reminds us of Baudrillard’s interpretation of Disneyland as an entity that is “set up in order to rejuvenate the fiction of the real in the opposite camp.”¹⁹ I would argue that the difference between the wilderness in *Big Sur* and the desert in the example from *Lonesome Traveler* as well in *The Dharma Bums* is that, while the wilderness in *Big Sur* symbolizes the success of the deterrence machine that leads Duluoz to “[internalize] his own surveillance” as mentioned in the previous chapter, the desert symbolizes the authentic experience of nature before this happens—the desert is a place that evokes no fear reactions to artificial hazards and where one goes to listen to the “mysterious roar . . . of the diamond wisdom” (*TDB*, 395).

Fear of Conspecifics

Similar to Rosie’s unjustified paranoia, Duluoz has a frightening experience when he is visited by a group of friends when in the cabin at Big Sur. The visit engenders such an unbearable episode filled with mad outbursts and suspicious thoughts that at one point, Duluoz wonders ““can it be that Ron and all these other guys, Dave and McLear or somebody, the other guys earlier are all a big bunch of witches out to make me go mad?” I seriously consider this” (*BS*, 115). Later in the novel, Duluoz claims that “there’s some mad conspiracy to make me go mad anyways” only to realize later that “everybody is just living their lives quietly but it’s only me that’s insane” (*BS*, 155–56). Duluoz erroneously believes that the people in his life are out to get him even when there is no reasonable justification for holding such a belief.

¹⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1981] 1994), 10.

Notwithstanding the role of alcoholism in inducing this paranoia, from the evolutionary standpoint, social fear has its origin in the attacks from conspecifics,²⁰ which means that tracking and questioning the motives of one's friends is not entirely unjustified in the abstract. The only problem is that, in Duluoz's case, just like the fear of the natural elements of the environment of Big Sur is unwarranted, the fear of the people in it is also unwarranted. Other examples of social fear and/or paranoia from other novels include suspecting, upon first meeting Terry, that she is a hustler who lures men into hotels so that her pimp can rob them (*OTR*, 75), and imagining an artless passenger on a ship as a Russian spy (*LT*, 736). The fact that these fears occur on different occasions and in different novels supports the argument that they are not solely caused by the decline of Duluoz's mental health and his alcoholism, and that there could be something inherently pernicious in hyperreal America.

Joshua D. Duntely explains that attacks from conspecifics are motivated by conflicts over status, material resources, and mating resources.²¹ When Duluoz's friends join him at Big Sur, his paranoid mind concocts the three conflicts together during one of his fits:

From the woods I see those three shadowy heads whispering me by the stove—What's Dave saying?—And why do they look like they're plotting something further?—Can it be it was all arranged by Dave Wain via Cody that I would meet Billie and be driven mad and now they've got me alone in the woods and are going to give me final poisons tonight that will utterly remove all my control so that in the morning I'll have to go to a hospital forever and never write another line?—Dave Wain is jealous because I wrote 10 novels?—Billie has been assigned by Cody to get me to marry her so he'll get all my money? (*BS*, 199)

Duluoz wonders whether Dave is jealous of his newfound status as an esteemed writer and whether he is out to sabotage it by incapacitating him. He also fears that Dean, who in *On the Road* is portrayed to be as close as a brother, is out to steal his money. Included in this latter imagined scheme is the implicit attempt by Dean to deny Duluoz access to mating by throwing Billie at him, who is Dean's mistress, thereby eliminating him from the competition over Evelyn who, at the time, was romantically involved with both Duluoz and Dean. This last threat could be

²⁰ Öhman and Mineka, "Fears," 486.

²¹ Joshua D. Duntely, "Adaptations to dangers from Humans," in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 226.

an actual one because we know that there had been some tension between Duluoz and Dean regarding their consensual love triangle with Evelyn before the cabin gathering, as expressed by Duluoz earlier in the novel: “for a while there she had two husbands Cody and me, we were a perfect family till Cody finally got jealous or maybe I got jealous” (*BS*, 130). Hence, we see that Duluoz’s threat detection mechanism is so unbalanced that, not only does he see threats where there are none, but he is also unable to perceive a real attack on his mating resources.

As discussed in chapter one, Duluoz imagines in his F-universe a community of Others who lead different lives than those of American families. When he describes Mexicans as people who are “not involved in great cultural and civilization issues” (*LT*, 645), he contrasts them with the *homo magis realis* including his own persona in TRW, which is overtaken by “white ambitions.” It becomes clear to the reader that Duluoz’s “ambitions” (of becoming a writer) are but a reflection of his own involvement in “civilization issues” and his submission to hyper-stimuli. Lured by what he would describe as the vain idealism that characterizes the pursuit of a writing career, Duluoz spends time and energy that could have been invested in his mating strategies with Terry, which could have eventually resulted in them having a family and him making permanent the peace of mind and stability that he found with her in Sabinal.

I would argue that part of the process that leads to “civilization issues” is the transmission of the fear of others, which is but an aspect of the transmission of mass information. As mentioned in chapter two, children in hyperreal America are left in the backseat, both physically and figuratively, as they are slowly but surely indoctrinated by entities that seek to destroy their creative and explorative spirit. From a young age, they are taught to fear hobos by being fed a manipulated portrait of them as “rapists, stranglers and child-eaters” when in reality, they represent no threat at all. While cultural transmission, in general, is “expected to be especially important in cases where individual learning is particularly costly or error-prone,”²² cultural transmission in hyperreal America seems to be grounded in misleading information. Thus, the child, seeking cultural learning to avoid the risks that accompany individual learning, receives instead misinformation about the dangers of the environment, which makes them particularly vulnerable to maladaptations.

²² H. Clark Barrett, “Adaptations to Predator and Prey,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 217.

In Mexico, on the other hand, cultural learning is primarily the responsibility of the parents who employ parental strategies that are completely different from those of the family in the example quoted in chapter two.²³ As he passes by the streets, Duluoiz observes how “little children sat like sages in ancient rocking chairs” (*OTR*, 162), which refers to the wisdom of a nurturing environment. And when he sees how “one of the young ones detached herself from motherlike elders and came to me fast” (*OTR*, 162), we get an ethnographic insight into the organizational structure of their communities. That non-kin members of the community (“motherlike elders”) are willing to provide care for all children regardless of genetic relatedness is an indication that these children benefit from a surplus of parental investment, which directly reflects on their physical and social well-being as evolutionary psychology informs us.²⁴ The communal parental strategy adopted in F-universe Mexico has the potential to shield children from maladaptations because it guarantees congruent information even when derived from multiple sources within the same community. This reinforces the chances that the ideas, dogmas, principles, etc. of the community are the ones adopted by the child and not those of the hyperreal, and that the calibration to authentic ancestral conditions is maintained.

Artificial Schemas and Adaptive Problems

As discussed in chapter two, *homo magis realis* is the product of artificial schemas that have been fashioned by hyperreal America. The evolutionary angle adopted in this chapter reveals a correlation between these schemas and some of the most pertinent survival strategies recognized by evolutionary psychologists. The */businessman/* schema is correlated with the acquisition of resources, particularly status and money, as demonstrated in Novak’s desire to become “right” and “rich.” While these ambitions are naturally important, they must not, however, come into conflict with one’s parental and marital investment efforts. When Duluoiz claims that Novak’s “wife and kids go mad” while he is at work, we are led to understand that the realtor’s ambitions have failed him at home.

²³ See pages 81–82 of chapter two.

²⁴ David C. Geary, “Evolution of Paternal Investment,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 488.

In humans, most long-term mating strategies involve a preference by women for men with resources and high status and, consequently, a disposition by men to acquire these benefits in order to secure women as mating partners and provide for future children.²⁵ However, Novak's quest to acquire status and money appears to be aligned strictly with self-improvement and personal aspirations, referred to by Duluoz as "white ambitions" or "civilization issues." Furthermore, that Novak dies without having acquired either money ("never made his millions") or status (he was "undignified") and without having emotionally invested in his family means that he has, at the least, endangered the well-being of his children who require emotional investment so that they can socially thrive.

Also from the evolutionary standpoint, the */family man/* schema represents the failure to forge alliances through a display of altruistic behavior. Generally, there is a discernable discrepancy in the representation of male relationships in *Big Sur* and *On the Road*. In *Big Sur*, we observe a disruption of the adaptive mechanism responsible for the formation of alliances between male conspecifics. I have noted in chapter two the scathing account of the husband's appearance ("long ridiculous vacationist hat with a long baseball visor making him look witless and idiot"), which suggests submissiveness in comparison to his wife who seems to be in a dominant position. Her not letting him pick Duluoz up ("even if he wanted to pick me up or anybody up she wouldn't let him") interferes with his alliance formation strategies.

Denise Cummins explains that, aside from establishing resource competitiveness, "to acquire and maintain a favorable position in the hierarchy, it is also necessary to form strong alliances with others. This is best accomplished through the formation of reciprocal obligations."²⁶ The wife weakens her husband's position in the social hierarchy by denying him the possibility of an interaction that could have entailed the formation of a strong alliance with Duluoz. In *On the Road*, on the other hand, Duluoz and his friends see hitchhiking as an ideal opportunity to expand their circle of male alliances, and their relationships with women do not interfere with their willingness to capitalize on these opportunities. Even Dean who at one point gets married and has kids is never "domesticated" to the extent that he would refuse an opportunity to hit the road for a new adventure. The understanding among hitchhikers of the

²⁵ David P. Schmitt, "Fundamentals of Human Mating Strategies" in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 270–71.

²⁶ Denise Cummins, "Dominance, Status, and Social Hierarchies," in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 683.

reciprocal nature of hitchhiking is evident when Duluoz gets picked up by a man after having waited in the street for several hours:

“Where you going?”

“Denver.”

“Well, I can take you a hundred miles up the line.”

“Grand, grand, you saved my life.”

“I used to hitchhike myself, that’s why I always pick up a fellow.”

“I would too if I had a car.” (*OTR*, 21)

The last two lines of the brief interaction function as an implicit confirmation of the rules of social exchange. Studies have confirmed that in the organization of group living, humans have adaptations that are designed for social exchange based on mutual benefit.²⁷ When Duluoz says “I would too if I had a car,” he confirms his abidance by the principles of reciprocal altruism that benefit both parties involved and apologizes for delaying reciprocation for fear of being considered a cheater of the system.²⁸

As far as the */expert/* schema is concerned, I would argue that the “artificiality” in this particular hyperreal schema stems from the technocratic society’s attempt to offer a technical solution to the rather abstract problem of alienation. But to consider alienation as an adaptive problem, it is important to understand the adaptive function of emotions in general. Tooby and Cosmides recognize two general classes of emotions based on two distinct adaptive functions: *orchestration* and *recalibration*. The first category represents “adaptations that have arisen in response to the adaptive problem of mechanism orchestration.”²⁹ Fear, for example, is an orchestrational emotion because, when encountering a threat, it deactivates mechanisms that play no part in protecting the individual against the immediate threat, thereby signaling to the individual the preeminence of the threat over other adaptive problems (the encapsulation property discussed earlier). Recalibration emotions, such as guilt, grief, depression, gratitude, and shame are after-the-fact emotions that serve to evaluate a certain course of action in order to recalibrate the individual’s perception of environmental variables for future decision-making.³⁰

²⁷ Leda Cosmides and John Tooby, “Neurocognitive Adaptations Designed for Social Exchange,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 584–627.

²⁸ In the context of social exchange, a cheater is an individual who acquires benefits and resources from alliances without reciprocating. Cosmides and Tooby, “Neurocognitive Adaptations,” 591.

²⁹ Tooby and Cosmides, “Conceptual Foundations,” 52.

³⁰ Tooby and Cosmides, “Conceptual Foundations,” 58–59.

That being said, Tooby and Cosmides do not clarify the status of lingering emotions that can be explained by neither category, and alienation, in particular, has had little attention in evolutionary psychology's account of emotions for two main reasons: first, it is difficult to define beyond its classical existential-Marxist connotations, and second, it is difficult to associate with an adaptive problem. A recent study by Norman P. Li et al., however, situates alienation among the negative emotions elicited by a feeling of mismatch between the brain that is designed to interact with the EEA and the structure of the modern environment. In other words, alienation is not a specialized psychological adaptation but rather an ongoing warning signal that is characterized by estrangement from all of the material areas of one's life such as nutrition, sexuality, work, social life, and politics.³¹

The view of alienation as a mismatch indicator suggests that not only does it not possess a technical solution, but also that technocracy itself is the cause of the problem. The technocratic society's proposed solutions to "so-called problems," as Duluoz calls them, are invalid for two main reasons. First, technocracy, by definition, entails assigning one's problems to someone else. And here, we are not talking about technical problems where expertise is needed but about, as Roszak explains, "the most seemingly personal aspects of life: sexual behavior, child-rearing, mental health, recreation, etc."³² that cannot be solved by technical-technocratic means. The delegation of these kinds of problems to psychoanalysts and other "experts" means dispensing with the very predisposed mechanisms that are evolved to solve them. Secondly, the technocratic society maintains that if a problem cannot be solved by technical means, "it must not be a real problem. It is but an illusion."³³ Psychoanalysis, then, as well as other experts, are incapable of finding a solution to alienation because they operate within a system that does not even recognize it as a problem, which legitimizes Duluoz's search for authenticity and provides the quest with a genuine sense of purpose.

Conclusion

³¹ Norman P. Li et al., "The Evolutionary Mismatch Hypothesis: Implications for Psychological Science," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27, no. 1 (2018), pp. 38–44.

³² Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture*, 7.

³³ Roszak, 10.

The effects of the hyperreal extend beyond assimilating the authentic, marginalizing Otherness, and injecting artificial identity prototypes into the collective American consciousness. The adaptationist–evolutionary reading of some of the passages from the *Legend*, including those that were analyzed in chapter two, reveals that the hyperreal is also engaged in the fabrication of cues or stimuli that are devoid of any fitness benefits yet elicit immediate responses from individuals because they resemble the authentic cues found in the ancestral environment to which human beings are adapted. Duluoz’s alienation is largely caused by the failure to adapt to the hyper-stimulated environment as he is constantly visited by apparitions and memories that seem to evoke the ancestral environment, prompting him to pursue his resistance to the hyperreal.

While the acquisition of information is of primary concern to Duluoz, the institutions of hyperreal America have exploited the mechanisms of information transmission to construct “networked creatures.” The more information it generates, the more likely the individual is exposed to maladaptations in their quest to find meaning and understand reality, and the less likely they are to rely on any kind of intuitive knowledge about the world. Duluoz occasionally succeeds in resisting the influence of mass information through his quest for silence, which he discovers primarily in Buddhism and isolation and which enables him to escape being assimilated into the mass psyche.

One of the types of cues that the hyperreal fabricates is specifically concerned with generating artificial hazards. In the wilderness of TRW Big Sur, Duluoz experiences fear and paranoia that he cannot justify. His hazard-detection and orientation mechanisms crash as he only perceives hostility in nature and he misinterprets his friends’ motives as ulterior, sinister, and scheming. Individuals in hyperreal America are also victims of maladaptations as the evolutionary reading of the hyperreal schemas shows how dangerous the artificial identity prototypes are to their fitness and adaptation. Not only do they tamper with their parental investment strategies and their alliance formation, but they also deny them any solution to their alienation beyond technocratic means.

Part II deals with entropy as the second major threat to authenticity in the *Legend*. Beyond the institutionalized systems of control, entropy is the natural condition of chaos and disorder in the universe. For Duluoz, it creates ambiguity around the notion of the Real and uncertainty as to whether or not it actually exists. Because of this, the quest for a reality beyond

the hyperreal proves to be a difficult undertaking, which requires as a first step, acknowledging the illusory nature of the perceived world as well as the mystery of the notion of Real, which is what the following chapter discusses.

Part II.

**AUTHENTICITY AND ENTROPY: THE QUEST FOR THE
REAL**

Chapter 4. Mysteries of the Real: A Dialectic of Uncertainty and Skepticism

Duluoz's resistance to entropy consists of defining and constructing a stable notion of the Real. A prerequisite to this construction, however, is grasping the multiple dimensions of instability that are caused by entropy, which are delineated in this chapter. The first section outlines the dichotomies of the perceived world—recognized as the realm of unreality—that are revealed to Duluoz through his interactions with women and the reflections that they evoke in him. Specifically, it deals with the two major female characters in the *Legend*, Tristessa, and Mardou, as well as a minor female character (a stripper at a club). While the suffering of Tristessa engenders in Duluoz reflections on the dichotomy between the sublime (divinity) and the grotesque, the complicated relationship that he has with Mardou initiates a probing into the origin of his pernicious masculinity and the temptations of the flesh, as well as the nature of suffering as it pertains to art and love.

In opposition to the perceived world (of unreality) is the ambiguous realm of reality that Duluoz struggles to define or locate. The second section associates the Real with the mysterious nature of the universe and discusses the inconsistent and paradoxical ideas that Duluoz holds about it and which generate strong cognitive dissonance. It identifies a scene in *Tristessa* as one of the pertinent indicators of the illusory nature of unreality that instigate the quest for the Real in the *Legend*. On the other hand, it argues that the various apparitions that appear to Duluoz are indicators of the realm of the Real. As much as they contribute to the mystery of the Real and the cognitive dissonance that it causes, these apparitions prompt important reflections on the notions of death, silence, wisdom, and memory, which would be later used to construct a perspicuous notion of the Real.

The final section discusses the impact of entropy on the formation of a destructive nihilistic worldview. Duluoz misinterprets the value of his experiences as well as his Buddhist teachings as he accepts the absurdism of the world and uses it to justify his alienation. Furthermore, his cognitive dissonance aggravates as he simultaneously admits the futility of

Christianity in mitigating his alienation and his inability to abandon the Christian God. The section also discusses an example from *Desolation Angels* where Duluoz transforms an incident that occurs in his mountain cabin into an opportunity to question the act of sinning and the overall permissibility of human morality.

Women and the Dichotomies of the Perceived World

In the *Legend*, the nature and meaning of reality are questioned at nearly every stage of the physical and spiritual journeys undertaken by Duluoz. Articulated in the form of a poem during his Buddhist period, Duluoz wonders:

“Who played this cruel joke, on bloke after bloke, packing like a rat, across the desert flat?” asked Montana Slim, gesturing to him, the buddy of the men, in this lion’s den.
“Was it God got mad, like the Indian cad, who was only a giver, crooked like the river?
Gave you a garden, let it all harden, then comes the flood, and the loss of your blood?
Pray tell us, good buddy, and don’t make it muddy, who played this trick, on Harry and Dick, and why is so mean, this Eternal Scene, just what’s the point, of this whole joint?”
(*TDB*, 356)

The poem addresses fundamental preoccupations with life, death, reality, nihilism, and suffering, all the while preserving the notion of a God figure who remains all-knowingly responsible for everything that is and that ever was. Duluoz’s pondering on the reasons why men suffer is premature given that it predates the completion of his Buddhist initiation with Japhy on the mountain in *The Dharma Bums*. In *Tristessa*, Duluoz addresses God again, asking him “Ah Above, what you doin with your children?— ... what you doin with your stolen children you stole from your mind to think a thought because you were bored or you were Mind—shouldna done it, Lord, Awakenerhood, shouldna played the suffering-and-dying game with the children in your own mind” (*TR*, 614). The idea that humanity came into existence because God had unleashed his thoughts and that this should not have happened in the first place constitutes the seed of Duluoz’s nihilistic view of the world. The same view is iterated in various other places in

the *Legend* but is best compressed in a statement from the same novel: “everyone of us, *born to die*” (*TR*, 579).

For Duluoz, something does not seem right with the world and it feels as if things cannot go back to the way they used to be. This sentiment acquires a darker tone when he becomes convinced that there had been signs forecasting the hopelessness of the modern world, that there is “not even really any kind of commonsense animate effort to ease the soul in this horrible sinister condition (of mortal hopelessness),” and that all his “tricks laid bare, even the realization that they’re laid bare itself laid bare as a lotta bunk” (*BS*, 41). Even Duluoz’s meta-awareness—his ability to reflect on his act of reflection—is useless when it comes to making sense of the hopelessness and disorder of the world that he inhabits. In many ways, the dynamics of the storyworld seem to depend on the possibility that Duluoz will at some point disprove the fact that the meaning of life is only to suffer and die. Nevertheless, his vision of the universe, which includes the big questions stated above, is intrinsically dependent on his unstable state of mind, forming a sort of *mind-universe complex*—entropy and individual instability as an interacting and interdependent system.

Dichotomies permeate the storyworld of the *Legend*. This is, at least, what the careful reader can infer from the impression that Duluoz has of everything that he encounters, as well as from the structure of the narrative itself. When Duluoz comes into contact with nature in the wilderness of Big Sur, for example, he realizes something important about the sea, which is “that it didn’t want me there, that I was a fool to sit there in the first place, the sea has its waves, the man has his fireside, period” (*BS*, 42). Duluoz speaks of nature as a completely different entity that stands in opposition to humankind,¹ but it is humankind’s inner oppositions that are highlighted in this scene and that constitute essential sources of artistic contemplation for someone like Duluoz.

Not only are dichotomies inherent structural qualities but also socially acquired vices, which necessitate a sophisticated level of awareness if an authentic and harmonious life is ever to be achieved. Duluoz’s probing into the dichotomous nature of beings animates the narrative characterization of the people he meets. This is because contact with others seems to offer an

¹ For an elaboration of the wilderness of Big Sur as a hostile entity, see the section titled “Fear of the Wilderness” on pages 102–05 of chapter three.

insight into the binary nature of human beings and a depersonalized perspective from which to analyze the self. The minor characters in the *Legend*, that is to say, those who do not play a critical role in Duluoz's discovery of the nature of reality, are significantly more stable and more simplistic in their design than the others as they "tend toward either the sublime or the grotesque,"² as Nancy Grace observes, but hardly ever embodying both simultaneously. While these types may have an important narrative role to play,³ the true incarnation of the liminal chaotic being appears in the major male and female characters whose path toward authenticity lies in the reconciliation of dichotomies that they have cultivated, willingly or spontaneously, as a result of societal change. While this path may not always lead to the desired destination, dichotomies' disruption of the natural order of being and their inauguration of a state of disorder and disharmony with the status quo provides the best conceivable grounds from which to critique the artificiality of society. Reciprocally, then, dichotomies prompt the individual to question the sublime (in general or subjective terms) as an ideal to be aspired to and to experiment with the "grotesque," to use Grace's term, in order to make sense of the societal change at the dawn of postmodern America.

The major female characters, in particular, seem to offer direct access to the dichotomous and mysterious nature of the universe. As Grace remarks, the religious and spiritual foundation from which Duluoz observes the universe makes this discernable:

Pulled by the forces of a Catholic mentality and his study of Buddhism, his narratives resist the physicality of the body, and thus his own humanity. Of special repugnance is his sexuality which for both Jack and Leo is a prehistoric, masculine menace to themselves and others. The tendency to seek escape from the body and sexuality is channeled primarily through images of Mardou and Tristessa as the Virgin Mary. The dark woman is elevated into the realm of classical perfection where she exists as the very source of the *mysterium tremendum*, the pure and suffering Stabat Mater weeping at the sight of her crucified son. But this same fantasy also magnifies and sustains her

² Nancy M. Grace, *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 50.

³ Nancy M. Grace sees that these stock characters or "types" serve to "direct readers toward a fuller understanding of Duluoz in the greater service of revealing the fallen state of American culture, the ramifications of this condition, and the path to atonement and rebirth." Grace, *Jack Kerouac*, 50.

grotesqueness. Even in virginal glory, Tristessa and Mardou remain pastiches of female ideals holding within themselves the destruction of the sublime.⁴

Trying to remain true to his foundation, Duluoz occasionally extracts women's sexuality (and his own) and attributes to them asexual functions that are mostly constructed to fit the narratives of his religion. Either intentionally or accidentally, this process lays bare the dichotomous nature of the universe as well as the inconsistency of Duluoz's religious and spiritual views as the following sections show.

The Suffering of Tristessa: Reflections on the Sublime–Grotesque Dichotomy

The narrative structure of *Tristessa* is based on the dynamics of reconciliation of antagonisms as every mundane event becomes an opportunity to reflect on these antagonisms. The novel begins with Duluoz in the car with Tristessa, on the way to her house in Mexico City where a character referred to as El Indio is preparing her morphine injection. On the kitchen walls hung pornographic pictures of Mexican girls and an icon of the Virgin Mary, whose “resignation” Tristessa possesses according to Duluoz. Tristessa's natural beauty is counterposed by her addiction in that even when “she is so high all the time, and sick, shooting ten grams of morphine per month,—staggering down the city streets yet so beautiful people keep turning and looking at her—Her eyes are radiant and shining” (*TR*, 565).

Duluoz is interested in Tristessa's defiling the sublime with her drug use and his overall interest in women's incarnation of the tension between the sublime and the grotesque could be explained in his conceptualization of sex, which is quite eccentric and certainly different from that of Dean whose sexualization of women does nothing more than perpetuating the machismo of the times. Sex for Duluoz, on the other hand, is a tool for study and reflection and has even been recently connected to the “moving geographies the constant travelers pass through”⁵ and considered as “a gateway into spiritual fulfillment,” while his lover in *On the Road* is compared to “the beatified suffering brother of *Visions of Gerard* and is depicted with just as much

⁴ Nancy M. Grace, “A White Man in Love: A Study of Race, Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Jack Kerouac's Maggie Cassidy, ‘The Subterraneans, and Tristessa,’” *College Literature* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 57.

⁵ Polina Mackay, “The Beats and Sexuality,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beats*, ed. Steven Belletto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 182.

sentimentality.”⁶ Tristessa’s internal dichotomies are analogous to and incite the investigation into the reality–unreality dichotomy. Her mere existence forces Duluoz to hesitate to fully accept that “‘yes life’s not real,’” which is a supposition derived from his Buddhist studies. His hesitation is demonstrated further in her full description:

It’s the old question of “Yes life’s not real” but you see a beautiful woman or something you can’t get away from wanting because it is there in front of you—This beautiful woman of 28 standing in front of me with her fragile body ... and that face so expressive of the pain and loveliness that went no doubt into the making of this fatal world,— ... —the fragile and holy countenance of poor Tristessa, the tremulous bravery of her little junk-racked body that a man could throw up in the air ten feet—the bundle of death and beauty—all pure Form standing in front of me, all the racks and tortures of sexual beauty ... —Like Goethe at 80, you know the futility of love and you shrug— (*TR*, 591)

Pain and beauty associate Tristessa with the universe. The paradoxical characterization used in Duluoz’s reflection about her (“fragile and holy,” “death and beauty,” “pain and loveliness,” and “the tortures of sexual beauty”) could very well apply to the state of the world itself. Even the oxymoron “tremulous bravery” could be descriptive of the condition of humanity at large. Furthermore, the capitalization of the word “Form” implies that it is not merely the body of a woman that Duluoz is contemplating but also, and more importantly, one of the forms of the universe, as in, the material manifestation of the creative force.

Tristessa’s role as a counterforce to the supposition that “life’s not real” through the temptation of her flesh does not nullify the supposition but rather instigates its continuous questioning as a necessary activity so that neither it nor any other supposition transforms into a given. Consequently, the reality–unreality dichotomy, just like all the dichotomies in the *Legend*, is proven to be unstable as shown in Duluoz’s continuous reassessment of what reality and unreality are. It is also worth mentioning that deciphering the dichotomies of the universe appears to be an anti-intellectual act in that the desired confrontation with the Real is sought through a concentrated and dedicated study of the female body instead of being a mere consequence of some highly attuned artistic acumen or intellectual exercise.

⁶ Mackay, 183.

Following the mediation of Tristessa's language discussed in chapter one, Duluoz employs a strategy of extreme beautification, or *sublimification*, so to speak, in order to atone Tristessa for what may be considered her sins on earth. This provides her suffering, which is mostly self-induced, with a religious dimension. It also provides Duluoz with a gateway to reassess his own religious convictions and understanding of the relationship between the divine realm and the earthly realm. When he reminisces about her past conduct he remembers how "in the past year she has caused poor old Bull every kind of trouble with her drunk shenanigans—O there's been pulque and vomiting in the streets and groans under heaven, spattered angel wings covered with pale blue dirt of heaven—" (*TR*, 604). The grotesque state of drunkenness that Tristessa finds herself in evokes in Duluoz the metaphor of the fallen angel who has lost its way. Immediately afterward, however, his compassionate contemplation of her suffering leads him to exonerate her from any wrongdoing by turning into the heavens for answers: "Angels in hell, our wings huge in the dark, the three of us start off, and from the Golden Eternal Heaven bends God blessing us with his face which I can only describe as being infinitely sorry (compassionate), that is, infinite with understanding of suffering" (*TR*, 604). Duluoz wants to make God responsible for Tristessa's suffering although he initially seems reluctant to do so as shown by his elaboration of the word "sorry," which is not used in the apologetic sense.

A few pages later, however, the reluctance gives way to a fully-fledged accusation:

Ah, Above, what you doin with your children?—You with your sad compassionate and nay-would-I-ever-say unbeautiful face, what you doin with your stolen children you stole from your mind to think a thought because you were bored or you were Mind—shouldna done it, Lord, Awakener, shouldna played the suffering-and-dying game with the children in your own mind" (*TR*, 614).

As mentioned in the introduction, this rant documents Duluoz's drift into nihilism. God's compassion is questioned and, for a moment, becomes connected to ugliness as He is blamed for the very act of creating life, which Duluoz equates with suffering. Tristessa's earthly suffering also disrupts Duluoz's understanding of good and evil by suggesting that God or the Awakener—depending on which spiritual grounds he is deriving his morality from at the moment of contemplation—might not stand for what is good in the universe, and might instead possess some sadistic desire to revel in the pain of humankind. This would invalidate Duluoz's

occasional but exceptional efforts to live virtuously, at least in the Christian sense, in order to gain access to Heaven, efforts such as his vows of celibacy, having at one point “sworn off sexuality and the inhibiting impulse ... to enter the Holy Stream and be safe” (*TR*, 572). From Duluoz’s perspective, Tristessa’s situation confounds the entire notion of earthly suffering and heavenly reward, prompting him to consider in its place poorly understood, yet eloquently articulated forms of oneness as shown in chapter five.

Mardou and Labyrinthine Desire

Reflections on Masculinity and the Sublime

The Subterraneans contains a similar reflection on dichotomies. When Duluoz first meets Mardou, he is under the influence of the “puffs” that he had taken with the subterraneans, which had made him feel “extremely unself-confident, overtrying, positive she didn’t like me” (*TS*, 471). The uncomfortable moment of self-consciousness and anxiety reminds Duluoz of a previous lover who had once complimented his profile shadow, instigating in him a desire to attempt to “‘begin to make her,’ to act in that way which by her almost hypnotic suggestion now led to the first preliminary probings into pride vs. pride and beauty or beatitude or sensitivity versus the stupid neurotic nervousness of the phallic type” (*TS*, 471–72). Noticing the contrast between the ex-lover’s gentle and poetic comment about, not even his body, but his profile shadow and his sexual reaction to the comment leads Duluoz to question the very nature of the difference between men and women. He acknowledges that, unlike women’s pride, his pride emanates from a masculine “neurotic nervousness” which deprives him of attaining the feminine beatitude he so longs for, and which validates Grace’s remark about the repugnance that Duluoz has for his sexuality.

Earlier in the novel, the same repugnance emerges when he confesses to the reader that he is “crudely malely sexual and cannot help myself and have lecherous and so on propensities as almost all my male readers no doubt are the same” (*TS*, 467), and later to Mardou when he tells her that he had “male self-contained doubts about her” (*TS*, 501). It puzzles him why the first thought that crosses his mind when hearing his ex-lover’s compliment is to want to have sex with her, which could explain the reason why he temporarily decides to live a life of celibacy as

a means of desexualization to rid himself of the “neurotic nervousness.” As with *Tristessa*, Duluoz makes God responsible, this time blaming him for his sexual thoughts: “the Good Lord or whatever’s put me here to suffer and groan and on top of that be guilty and gives me the flesh and blood that is so painful” (*TS*, 553). God is not only responsible for the suffering of women, but also the suffering of men brought forth by temptation. In fact, temptation, combined with the notion of the fallen angel, completes the biblical imagery of the fall of humankind from heaven except that with Duluoz, God is as much responsible, if not wholly responsible, for the fall.

Similar to his perception of his masculinity as evil, Duluoz’s judgment of Mardou as inherently beatified, and the desire to *sublimify* her, are not as pure and permanent as in *Tristessa*. When Mardou announces to the subterraneans that she wants to be independent and not involved with anyone romantically, he construes that “her little teeth are no longer mine but probably my enemy’s lapping at them and giving her the sadistic treatment she probably loves as I had given her none” (*TS*, 472). His initial refusal to acknowledge the sincerity of her decision reflects the impulse of his masculine ego that prevents him from dealing with rejection healthily. Taking it personally, he accuses her of the same sadism that he accuses God of. For a brief moment, God and women are mutually identified with the grotesque in the sense that they deliberately invite suffering and revel in it. This is, of course, not a genuine or unshakeable conviction. Duluoz creates a temporary schism between him as a man, and God and women as lovers of suffering only as a means to understand the sublime.

The disappointment that Duluoz feels upon discovering his distance from God and being rejected by Mardou, even if the distance and rejection are temporary or even illusory, forces him to “see the great discouraged face of myself and my so-called love drooping in the lane, no good—as before it had been melancholy droopings in hot chairs . . . —as where then, before, it was the recognition of the need for my return to worldwide love as a great writer should do (*TS*, 472). The phrase “see the great discouraged face of myself,” which is an odd way of expressing his discouragement, might be indicative of depersonalization or an out-of-body experience. The self-imposed, impermanent (yet fervent) tension between himself and God/women, as well as the depersonalized view of himself, puts into question the eminence of the sublime. It seems as if there is in Duluoz a tendency to designate and alter the categorization of entities into grotesque and sublime in an aleatory way (Mardou is sometimes one, other times the other), and to create a

balance of power between the two extremities. When whatever is associated with the sublime gains too much influence over him, his ego reacts to claim some influence of its own through category manipulation. Observing the different entities (Mardou, God, himself as a lover, and himself as a writer) from an equal distance, he asserts the supremacy of his writer self by celebrating the melancholy of writing (“melancholy droopings in hot chairs”).

Reflections on Suffering and the Love–Art Dichotomy

Duluoz’s conceptualization of suffering remains unstable throughout the entire *Legend*. Given his sporadic assumptions about the implication of women and God in the sadistic enjoyment of suffering, one would expect him to develop a different understanding of the notion, yet, this is often not the case. Discussing with Mardou the necessity of the grief that Baudelaire must have suffered from in order to produce his poems, Mardou tells Duluoz that she “would have preferred the happy man to the unhappy poems he’s left us.” Duluoz agrees with her and immediately realizes that “I should have known from her original announcement to believe in the sincerity of her distaste for involvement, instead hurling on at her as if and because in fact I wanted to be hurt and ‘lacerate’ myself” (*TS*, 10). His regret for distrusting her desire not to be with a man and castigating her for it reveals to him that he too may seem inclined to enjoy suffering.

In fact, as soon as Mardou is introduced in the narrative, Duluoz makes it clear that he is well aware of the personal repercussions of getting involved with a woman like her: “but now my first crumb of information concerning this girl I was SEEKING to get involved with as if not enough trouble already or other old romances hadn’t taught me that message of pain, keep asking for it, for life” (*TS*, 468). The correlation between life and the suffering of love shows the extent to which Duluoz’s understanding of suffering is unstable. On the one hand, he suggests that the writer’s suffering (“melancholy droopings in hot chairs”) is superior to the lover’s as discussed earlier, and, on the other, he admits that suffering for love’s sake is what life should be about. And even when he eventually succeeds in having a brief romance with Mardou, his mysterious attachment to the feeling of suffering remains unresolved, as evidenced in his confession of a “great construction of jealousy which I later from a dream and for reasons of self-laceration recreated” (*TS*, 502).

As a writer, Dulouoz has an eccentric relationship with his art that further complicates what could be identified in his worldview as the dichotomy between art and life. Once again, his metaphysical contemplation is driven by the rather corporeal presence of women:

It was on a morning when I slept at Adam's that I saw her again, I was going to rise, do some typing and coffee drinking in the kitchen all day since at that time work, work was my dominant thought, not love—not the pain which impels me to write this even while I don't want to, the pain which won't be eased by the writing of this but heightened, but which will be redeemed, and if only it were a dignified pain that could be placed somewhere other than in this black gutter of shame and loss and noisemaking folly in the night. (*TS*, 480)

Dulouoz's reflection on work and love proves that not only are dichotomies themselves unstable, but they are also destabilizing. The claim that at a specific time in his life writing (or the pain of it) was the main thing that was occupying him, not love (life, or the pain of love), sets the demarcation between art and life. At the same time, Dulouoz identifies the pain induced by love as a motivation for writing, which creates an irreconcilable paradox in that life is at the same time completely separated from art and a source for it.

The complexity of Dulouoz's notion of suffering emerges in his acknowledgment that writing adds more pain to the pain of life that already exists. When Mardou asks him to stop his intermittent living with his mother, he replies by telling her: "don't you see how hard I try to spend my time, divide my time between the two of you—over there it's my writing work, my well-being" (*TS*, 505). Dulouoz alludes to the fact that, since his well-being comes from writing and not from love, being with Mardou is rather damaging to his well-being. That being said, the esteem and importance of writing are denigrated in *Book of Dreams*. In one of the many dreams described in the book, Dulouoz remembers seeing himself as an accomplished football player, which immediately drives him to regret his actual occupation as a writer, declaring how "that was another mistake leaving football because at the expense of just a little physical weariness I could have convinced everyone that my heart was in the right place instead of this writing which is so dangerous to my sanity" (*BOD*, 50). The same regret is expressed while reflecting on another dream, with the realization that "I'm writing myself to death" (*BOD*, 68). The fact that *Book of Dreams* is a purely subconscious and confessional work shows that Dulouoz's inherent

desires are in conflict with the passionate defense of his craft as well as his need for others to acknowledge that writing is actual work, and confirms the threat of his inner dichotomies that deny the possibility of living authentically.

The Dance of the Stripper as a Ritual of Extremities

Chapter sixty-eight of *Desolation Angels* represents an outstanding reflection on the sublime–grotesque dichotomy as initiated by the study of the female body. Wine-drunk at a Seattle strip club, Duluoz observes the dancing moves of a stripper, analyzing them as well as the gaze of the audience:

She immediately gets down on the floor in the coitus position and starts throwing a fit at heaven with her loinsies—She twists in pain, her face is distorted, teeth, hair falls, shoulders squirm and snake— ... How really naughty she is with her eyes, slant back, and the way she goes to the righthand box and does secret dirty things ... it's all insane ... and wow, sneer, sleer, snake, slake of sex, what are people doing in audience seats in this crashing magician's void handclapping and howling to music and a girl? (*DA*, 120–21)

Although he appreciates the beauty of the stripper, Duluoz cannot relate to the interest and excitement that men derive from the spectacle of stripping, which supports the aforementioned argument about his eccentric views on sex and sexuality. Instead of seeing an erotic dance, Duluoz sees a display of painful movements that are sadistically enjoyed by men. Either because of the inability to relate to these men's gaze or because of the guilt that he feels for participating in the spectacle by the mere fact of being in the club, Duluoz ritualizes the dance of the stripper and the entire scene is transformed into a poetic reverie:

Sarina the Naughty One is now on her back on the stage slowly moving her sweet loins at some imaginary God-man in the sky giving her the eternal works—and pretty soon we'll have pregnant balloons and castoff rubbers in the alley and sperm in the stars and broken bottles in the stars ... The whole world is roaring right there in that theater and just beyond I see files of sorrowing humanity wailing by candlelight and Jesus on the Cross and Buddha sitting neath the Bo Tree and Mohammed in a cave and the serpent and the

sun held high and all Akkadian-Sumerian antiquities and early sea-boats carrying courtesan Helens away to the bash final war and broken glass of tiny infinity till nothing's there but white snowy light permeating everywhere throughout the darkness and sun. (*DA*, 121–22)

Essential to his portrayal of the stripper is the notion of the divine that counterweights the grotesque characteristics of lustfulness. The painful twists and distorted face transform into a ritual dance performed in honor of some deity while the grotesque artifacts of the club (“castoff rubbers,” “sperm,” and “broken bottles”) become associated with the sublime and the divine (“stars” and prophets).

The strip club is a microcosm of the grotesque world that exists in opposition to the world of virtues in the beyond. Here, Duluoz sees no intermediate world that could exist between the filth of a strip club and the virtues of Gods and prophets, great ancient civilizations, and Trojan epics. It is as if the universe, in its natural state, is a universe of extremities that externalizes the extremities of the mind. Within this configuration, the way one approaches authenticity seems to be by seeking to move away from extremities and finding an intermediate state that could be attained through the obliteration of dichotomies.

Visions of the Realm of the Real: Mysteries, Uncertainties, and Inconsistencies

Aside from the fact that *Book of Dreams* seems to be an expression of Duluoz's subconscious, the work can also justifiably be considered as an intermission in the series of books that Kerouac managed to publish throughout his career. This is because even if the book is somehow part of the same big story that his narrator sets out to tell, it deviates from it in the sense that it does not forward the plot or present new events but is rather mostly dedicated to a reflection on past ones, with Duluoz sketching his incoherent dreams and commenting on them in an effort to perform what could ironically be considered as psychoanalytic exercise, the very thing that he loathes. In one particular dream, Duluoz has a vision of a drowning freighter and seamen struggling to get on lifeboats until everything disappears. Immediately after, he describes another vision of him being in Lowell, seemingly prior to the freighter event, faking drunkenness

and being carried like a baby by a stranger down the Sun Building (*BOD*, 280). The strangeness of the dream evokes in him a realization that words are “discriminative hassels of arbitrary conception—As I say, words, images & dreams are fingers of false imagination pointing at the reality of Holy Emptiness—but my words are still many & my images stretch to the holy void like a road that has an end—It’s the ROAD OF THE HOLY VOID this writing, this life, this image of regrets—” (*BOD*, 157). The reflection on the two arbitrary visions is one among many in *Book of Dreams*. They demonstrate Duluoz’s realization of the limitations of language and human faculties of perception when it comes to grasping reality and understanding the emptiness or void that characterizes the world. As words, images, dreams, and the experience of life itself will only get one so far down the road of true understanding, the visions that Duluoz has become indicative of the realm of the Real.

The “Kitchen” in *Tristessa* as Indicator of the Illusory Nature of the Perceived World

As mentioned earlier, *Tristessa* evokes in Duluoz reflections on the dichotomy between the sublime and the grotesque, which is manifested in the strange coexistence of the carnal and the pure, as well as sickness and beauty. That being said, the kitchen scene at the beginning of *Tristessa* reveals uncertainties about the reality of the perceived world. As he was about to leave her house, Duluoz is overtaken by an epiphany with regards to what had taken place:

Time to go, I’ve petted the cat, said goodbye to God the Dove, and wanta leave the heinous kitchen in the middle of a vicious golden dream—It’s all taking place in one vast mind, us in the kitchen, I don’t believe a word of it or a substantial atom-empty hunk of flesh of it, I see right through it, right through our fleshy forms (hens and all) at the bright amethyst future whiteness of reality— . . . and I see the brown corners of the dream house and remember my mother’s dark kitchen long ago on cold streets in the other part of the same dream as this cold present kitchen with its drip-pots and horrors of Indian Mexico City. (*TR*, 580)

That the kitchen scene is portrayed as a dream from the onset is a clear problematization of the nature of reality. It is not, however, the kind of problematization that would make the reader

question Duluoz's credibility, but rather one that engages them with him in the contemplative process. As Grace argues, the narrative credibility that Duluoz possesses stems from his confident and continuous "interpretation of unusual or inappropriate materials"⁷ as he fully embraces his role as a prophet-messenger, even with occasional skepticism. It is also the result of his knowledge of spiritual texts and continuous efforts at simplifying Buddhism to the reader, as well as the autobiographical claims of the *Legend*, which include references to well-known beat personalities and specific and verifiable particulars of American culture. All of this contributes to situating Duluoz as a "*Euro-American* sage and prophet" as Grace describes him, legitimizing his belief in mysticism so that "even readers who do not value mysticism find Duluoz credible within his own belief system."⁸

We take Duluoz seriously when he says that what is happening in the kitchen is more of a dream than a reality, and we share the burden of making sense of it all and of understanding the reasons behind him feeling so but, at the same time, we confront the hurdle of differentiating between what is *true* and what is *real*. This is because, having legitimized Duluoz's narratorial credibility thanks to the aforementioned factors, the reader experiences doublethink that results from simultaneously believing that the experience itself is true (Duluoz qua Kerouac was actually in the kitchen of a Mexican junky prostitute) and that what Duluoz says about the experience is also true, namely that it is not part of what he calls *reality*. Added to this confusion is the fact that this dreamlike state is not always associated with "horrors" but sometimes quite the opposite as with Duluoz's realization in *Lonesome Traveler* that "the world is permeated with roses of happiness all the time, but none of us know it. The happiness consists in realizing that it is all a great strange dream" (*LT*, 42). Furthermore, the nature of reality and the meaning of the "Void" are woven within the dichotomous fabric of *Tristessa*. Merely observing the crowds near San Juan de Letrán station in Mexico City conjures up the following association:

I pray at the feet of man, waiting, as they.

As they? As man? As he? There is no He. There is only the unsayable divine word. Which is not a Word, but a Mystery.

⁷ Grace, *Jack Kerouac*, 42.

⁸ Grace, *Jack Kerouac*, 42.

At the root of the Mystery is the separation of one world from another by a sword of light. (*TR*, 585)

The progression of Duluoz's internal thinking process showcases the complexity and ambiguity of his perception of the world. In the beginning, there is serenity and hope, then a recognition of the mysterious nature of existence, and finally, an affirmation that the origin of this mystery is the separation of the universe into two worlds, which are those of reality and unreality.

Throughout the *Legend*, Duluoz uses words like “emptiness” and “void,” often accentuated with capitalization or full uppercase letters, or enclosed within dashes to refer to an ambiguous reality that is purported as the *real* reality that ordinary human beings do not have access to. During Duluoz's initiation in Buddhism, Japhy informs Duluoz that the things that they discover up on the mountain “aren't meant to be heard by the people below” (*TDB*, 342), thereby affirming the demarcation that Duluoz had suspected exists between the mysterious realm of reality that the mountain seems to symbolize and the “human” realm of unreality.⁹ Indeed, Stephen Prothero observes that “Buddhism attracted Kerouac because it seemed to make sense of the central facts of his experience (suffering, impermanence) and to affirm his intuition that life was dreamlike and illusory.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, Duluoz does not hold this view consistently. For the most part, he is confused as to the whereabouts of the Real/reality and this confusion echoes a conundrum epitomized in Marie Laure Ryan's reference to a quote from Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno* while outlining her typology of narrative boundaries: “‘So, either I've been dreaming about Sylvie,’ I said to myself, ‘and this is reality.’ ... ‘or else I've really been with Sylvie, and this is a dream!’”¹¹ There is in Duluoz a similar confusion as his understanding of reality frequently fluctuates as seen, for example, in the difference between when he is with Dean and when he is with Japhy. With Dean, reality seems to be manifested in the experience of the wild and fast life while with Japhy, it is simply elsewhere, absolutely unattainable within the physical realm.

⁹ The claim that the mountain (or nature, in general) is emblematic of reality is not without reservation, especially after Duluoz's notoriously unsuccessful attempts at finding authentic reality in the mountains of Big Sur. Refer to the section titled “Fear of Artificial Hazards in *Big Sur*” on pages 100–08 of chapter three, in which I discuss Duluoz's wilderness-induced paranoia.

¹⁰ Stephen Prothero, “On the Holy Road: The Beat Movement as Spiritual Protest,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (Apr. 1991): 217.

¹¹ Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 177.

Added to this confusion is the question of whether what happens in Tristessa's kitchen is truly illusory. While this cannot be confirmed by the reader, it appears that confirmation is ultimately what determines whether the sought reality constitutes a worthwhile undertaking beyond what may look like overdrawn Buddhist pretense. In fact, the relevance of Ryan's quote is in providing grounds for determining the nature and whereabouts of the two worlds involved, that of reality and that of unreality, in order to account for the border-crossing required to get to reality, an issue that is discussed in chapter six.¹² It should be mentioned that the mere existence of a mysterious realm that harbors reality, be it physically or symbolically beyond the perceived world, has a monumental consequence on the reception of the narrative by engaging the reader, whose credibility Duluoz has earned, in the quest for the Real.

The Apparitions as Indicators of the Realm of the Real

Some of the strongest justifications for the existence of a realm of reality beyond the perceived world are the apparitions that appear to Duluoz throughout his journey, mostly in *On the Road*, *The Dharma Bums*, and *Lonesome Traveler*. The first mention of an otherworldly realm in *On the Road* happens as Duluoz and his companions are bar-hopping in Denver and things start to get a little rowdy when, out of nowhere, Duluoz begins to wonder

what the Spirit of the Mountain was thinking, and looked up and saw jackpines in the moon, and saw ghosts of old miners, and wondered about it. In the whole eastern dark wall of the Divide this night there was silence and the whisper of the wind, except in the ravine where we roared; and on the other side of the Divide was the great Western Slope ... We were on the roof of America and all we could do was yell, I guess—across the night, eastward over the Plains, where somewhere an old man with white hair was probably walking toward us with the Word, and would arrive any minute and make us silent. (*OTR*, 49–50)

It is not uncommon for Duluoz's mind to wander off while engaging in matters of the material world. Whether sharing a moment of sexual intimacy with a woman, being at a strip club, or, as

¹² See the sections titled "Potentialities of Access: Collapsing the Border between Phenomena and Noumena" and "Noumenal Access through Metaleptic Transgressions" on pages 206–09 and 224–33 of chapter six.

in this case, participating in chaotic drunken evenings with his comrades, Duluoz often finds himself returning to a contemplative state of mind, which supports the association suggested in chapter two between the characteristic of contemplation and the beatnik alternative identity.

With Duluoz, contemplation seems to be an automatic reaction against his involvement in excessive materialism as if his brain is wired in such a way as to calibrate itself by producing narratives of the other extremity (excessive spirituality). In the above passage, the Spirit of the Mountain balances the chaos of the bars of Denver and evokes the divide between the realms that contain the two extremities. Psychologically, the old man is a manifestation of the guilt that Duluoz feels because he is enjoying himself while there is plenty of suffering in the world. On the other hand, the archetypal way with which he describes him (“white hair,” bringing the “Word”) suggests that he conveys a kind of otherworldly wisdom that would make them all comprehend something so important that they would be left silent. Later in the novel, as Duluoz and the gang are preparing to head south in search of the elusive “IT,” the imaginary old man reappears incarnated as an actual man that Duluoz sees from a distance: “there was someone walking, walking, but we could not see; maybe that old man with the white hair I had sensed years ago up in the peaks. Zacatecan Jack” (*OTR*, 240). Although it maintains certain neutrality and ambiguity, the concrete form that the white man incarnates appears to be a reflection of whatever the current experience brings and the current state of mind is.

The apparition’s neutrality is not upheld for a long time as it becomes disrupted by Duluoz’s unstable worldview. There are two more instances where the apparition is mentioned in *On the Road*, one in the beginning and another toward the very end. The location is significant because it allows the reader to draw a meaningful inference as to the influence of the events that Duluoz experiences on his interpretation of the meaning of the apparitions. As Duluoz, Dean, and Carlo are about to embark on their adventure in the West, a strange feeling starts haunting Duluoz, a feeling that he had “forgotten something” and that it “had to do somewhat with the Shrouded Traveler.” He then explains that the Shrouded Traveler is a figure he had dreamed about and that he had thought at the time was himself wearing a shroud, only to realize “now that I look back on it, this is only death” that had been pursuing him across the desert in the dream and “that I tried to avoid; that finally overtook me just before I reached the Protective City”

(*OTR*, 111). As with the old man, the Shrouded Traveler appears to come out of the archetypal structure of Duluoz's mind, which is reinforced by the capitalization of "Protective City."

Commenting on Duluoz's and Dean's interpretation of the dream, Benedict Giomo believes that, although they "turn their backs on [its] spiritual significance," "at least for the duration of a rest stop Sal [Duluoz] managed to grip something fundamental about the alpha and omega of human existence—its mixture of bliss and mortality, joy and sorrow, and the beauty inherent in the appreciation of it all."¹³ Even if Giomo is right about the characters' lack of desire to pursue a more conclusive interpretation, the oversimplification of what Duluoz does interpret (a mere yin and yang interpretation) implies that the latter reaches a stable understanding of "existence." This, however, neglects the dynamics and interrelations between experience and impression as well as the sporadic nihilism that the dream evokes, which are two aspects that deny Duluoz any single or fixed interpretation of reality throughout the *Legend*.

There is a strong connection between the journey that Duluoz is about to make to the West in that scene and the journey that he had made in his dream in that, embedded in both, is the notion of escaping toward a safe place. Not having undertaken the journey yet, it is natural, when thinking about the apparition, that he perceives it in a negative light due to the fear and uncertainty of the unknown that it may evoke. The Shrouded Traveler is then the adverse manifestation of the old man with white hair, appearing only when Duluoz is in a state of disharmony with the universe. This disharmony manifests itself also in *Big Sur*. Struggling to connect to the aura of the mountain, Duluoz senses a feeling that "comes over me in the form of horror of an eternal condition of sick mortality in me—In me and in everyone—I felt completely nude of all poor protective devices" (*BS*, 41). Although experienced as a feeling and not an apparition, the notion of "protection" is once again evoked as Duluoz's momentary access to a higher form of knowledge leads to an esoteric realization of the universal horror of death and a total loss of protection from the inevitable fate of humanity.

Toward the end of *On the Road*, Duluoz and Dean temporarily believe that they have found in Mexico what their souls have been yearning for, which is why Duluoz's interpretation is completely altered when he sees another apparition, this time of a wild horse that "came trotting

¹³ Benedict Giomo, "Enlightened Attachment: Kerouac's Impermanent Buddhist Trek," *Religion & Literature* 35, no. 2/3 (Summer–Autumn 2003): 176.

down the road directly toward Dean ... The horse was white as snow and immense and almost phosphorescent and easy to see. I felt no panic for Dean. The horse saw him and trotted right by his head, passed the car like a ship, whinnied softly, and continued on through town” (*OTR*, 266). Here, unlike in the previous apparitions, one notices how concretely the apparition is described. In fact, Duluoz does not fail to highlight how “easy to see” the horse was as if insisting on asserting its actual existence. When the horse disappears, Duluoz tells Dean about it. The latter, who was skeptical at first, quickly “recalled faintly dreaming of a white horse” and Duluoz tells him that “it had been no dream” (*OTR*, 266). The obvious symbolism of the color white, as opposed to the darkness of the first apparition, as well as the fact that Duluoz did not feel threatened by the horse render the horse a rather agreeable manifestation of the old man with white hair.

As indicators of the realm of the Real, the apparitions take on different shapes and characteristics—from being a mere neutral thought (an old man with white hair) to an incarnation (a man walking at a distance) and an allegedly actual and concrete sighting (the horse). This demonstrates the uncertainty and instability in Duluoz’s perception of the world of the beyond (the world of the Real) that simultaneously refers to the instability of his perceiving mind, which interprets the universe based on the changes in the physical and spiritual aspects of Duluoz’s experiences (travel, solitude, hedonism, abstinence, etc.), and the instability of the universe itself (entropy).

The strong presence of religious doctrine in Duluoz’s description of his experience suggests that the three forms that the apparition takes on might be a representation of the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but even more pertinently, a representation of the Trikāya doctrine. In Mahayana Buddhism, whose teachings Duluoz periodically builds his worldview around, the Trikāya doctrine refers to the three “bodies” of the Buddha: “At the lowest level, one encounters the *nirmāṇa-kāya* or ‘apparitional body’” which is “visible to ordinary, common worldlings as an inspiration to begin the Mahāyāna Buddhist path.” At the next level appears the *saṃbhoga-kāya* or “enjoyment body,” which is “a subtle-bodied, quasi-material preacher of Mahāyāna scriptures, neither fully human nor fully absolute.” And “at the completion of the path, one attains *dharmakāya* or ‘Dharma body,’ the true nature of Buddhahood, ultimate reality

itself, an abstract resolution of all dualities, beyond any conceptualization or designation.”¹⁴ By bringing the “Word” to Duluoz and Dean—“ultimate reality” in the Mahāyāna sense—the old man with white hair represents the dharma-kāya, while the Shrouded Traveler could be seen as a representation of the nirmāṇa-kāya since, as mentioned before, he is incarnated in the shape of a human being (“apparitional body”).

The white horse, on the other hand, represents the saṃbhoga-kāya. Although not particularly portrayed as enjoying itself—even though an argument can be made that the meekness with which he is described can be reasonably connected to enjoyment—the white horse is strongly affiliated with saṃbhoga-kāya specifically because its existence is disputed between Dean and Duluoz (whether it is a dream or reality), which corresponds to the “quasi-nature” of the saṃbhoga-kāya, and because it appears when Duluoz and Dean are in the Pure Land (Mexico), the “enjoyment” of which “is of prime importance” to the saṃbhoga-kāya as per Nagao Gadjin and Hirano Umeyo.¹⁵ In fact, at the beginning of the “Mexico Fellaheen” chapter of *Lonesome Traveler*, Duluoz refers to Mexico as the Pure Land in a casual, matter-of-fact fashion when he says that “it’s a great feeling of entering the Pure Land, especially because it’s so close to dry faced Arizona and Texas” (*LT*, 645). A less direct but more vivid description of Mexico as the Pure Land appears at the end of *On the Road* as Duluoz contemplates how

the mere thought of looking out the window at Mexico—which was now something else in my mind¹⁶—was like recoiling from some gloriously riddled glittering treasure-box that you’re afraid to look at because of your eyes, they bend inward, the riches and the treasures are too much to take all at once. I gulped. I saw streams of gold pouring through the sky and right across the tattered roof of the poor old car. (*OTR*, 256)

Despite the fact that Duluoz was marijuana-high when he had this vision, the epic and majestic description of Mexico confirms the association between the white horse and the saṃbhoga-kāya. From this perspective, and as the final destination of the travelers in *On the Road*, Mexico represents the place on earth where the buddha might appear in the form of saṃbhoga-kāya,

¹⁴ Charles S. Prebish and Damien Keown, *Buddhism—The Ebook: An Online Introduction* (Journal of Buddhist Ethics Online Books, 2010), 172–73.

¹⁵ Nagao Gadjin and Hirano Umeyo, “On the Theory of Buddha-Body (Buddha-kāya),” *The Eastern Buddhist* 6, no.1 (May 1973): 32.

¹⁶ This corresponds to the argument in chapter one about Otherness being a construct of Duluoz’s F-universe.

consummating a journey of enlightenment that starts in the East (Lowell and New York), passes by the West (mostly San Francisco) and ends in the South (Mexico).

The interpretation of the apparitions from the perspective of the Trikāya doctrine does not take anything away from their mystery. Immediately after having the vision of Mexico, Duluoz felt that “for a long time I lost consciousness in my lower mind of what we were doing and only came around sometime later when I looked up from fire and silence like waking from sleep to the world, or waking from void to a dream” (*OTR*, 257). The fact that Duluoz is not able to differentiate between the realms of reality and unreality even after the effect of marijuana had worn off is evidence of the mysterious structure of the storyworld of the *Legend*. When he was working as a fire lookout and living in solitude on Desolation Peak, Duluoz conceives the mystery of the universe as an incarnation of “Avalokiteśvara.” Finding bear stool outside his cabin, Duluoz

looked down the mysterious Ridge of Starvation with its fog-lost firs and its hills humping into invisibility, and the wind blowing the fog by like a faint blizzard and I realized that somewhere in the fog stalked the bear.

And it seemed as I sat there that this was the Primordial Bear, and that he owned all the Northwest and all the snow and commanded all the mountains.— ... He continuously heard the reassuring rapturous rush of silence, except when near creeks, he was aware of the light material the world is made of, yet he never discoursed, nor communicated by signs, nor wasted a breath complaining— ... He was Avalokitesvara the Bear, and his sign was the gray wind of autumn.—

I was waiting for him. He never came. (*LT*, 731–32)

With Duluoz, the bear stool becomes a trace not of an actual bear but of some sort of ancient apparition (Primordial Bear), to which he assigns his proper Buddhist interpretation. Indeed, his description of Avalokiteśvara as a passive entity that does not interfere or communicate contradicts how the entity is perceived in Buddhist scripture. “In Buddhism the saviour-god who guides men to the reawakening of consciousness finds personification in Avalokiteśvara,”¹⁷

¹⁷ Anna Filigenzi, *Art As Landscape: Buddhist Rock Sculptures of Late Antique Swat/Uddiyana* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2015), 98.

which reflects the entity's rather active engagement in the lives of human beings. That Duluoz sees a wise yet noncaring entity in Avalokiteśvara's incarnation (he "never discoursed" and "never came") despite his knowledge of its supposed embodiment of compassion and care demonstrates that there are certain forces, perhaps things that are particularly related to the nature of the modern world (in Textual Referential World TRW), that prevent him from receiving the care from Avalokiteśvaram which would release him from suffering and uncover the mysteries of the universe.

Visions of the Ancient Realm

The realms of reality (the mysterious world) and unreality (the perceived world) that have so far been denoted could be imagined as being horizontally separated. However, there is also a vertical separation that could be drawn between the realm of unreality and another mysterious realm, which is the ancient realm or the realm of ancient wisdom. While this ancient realm might coincide with the realm of reality or the Real, Duluoz sees the separation between the realm of unreality and the ancient realm essentially as a temporal separation, marked by an immeasurably long period of time in the distant past—think of the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness (EEA) to which Duluoz's Evolved Psychological Mechanisms (EPM) are adapted—future, or at any time before birth or after death. The visions that Duluoz keeps having about this realm have consequential implications on his conceptualization of the notion of death and nothingness, even though they do not seem to provide him with a clear understanding of these notions.

If we go back to the dream of the Shrouded Traveler mentioned earlier, we notice that what this evokes in Duluoz is not the simple fear of death or mortality but a notion that is significantly more complex: what Duluoz fears is not death itself, but the paradox brought forth by the notion of death. Here is how he formulates it: "The one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nauseas of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death. But who wants to die?" (*OTR*, 111). Death engenders a double paradox: the first is that human beings desire the state of bliss that comes

after death, yet they do not want to die,¹⁸ and the second is that, while knowledge of the state of post-death and pre-birth seem to be crucial to achieving absolute authenticity, no one has access to this knowledge. What Duluoz does know, however, is that life on earth seems to interrupt a state of bliss, create the unnecessary anxiety of waiting for re-entry into that state, and separate humankind from the knowledge of what that state is. In that sense, as long as one is “trapped” by earthly life, true bliss (authentic life) will remain a mystery.

In Morocco, Duluoz encounters the Shrouded Traveler again and perceives him as an old robed Bodhisattva, an old robed bearded realizer of the greatness of wisdom came walking by with a staff and a shapeless skin bag and a cotton pack and a basket on his back, with white cloth around his hoary brown brow.—I saw him coming down the beach—the shrouded Arab by the sea.—We didn’t even nod to each other—it was too much, we’d known each other too long ago— (*LT*, 745).

A common feature between the various apparitions of the Traveler is that they appear whenever Duluoz is in a natural habitat, outside of or far away from the city, be it in a desert, forest, jungle, or beach, which suggests that such a surrounding forms an integral part of his quest to retrieve authenticity, which does not mean that authentic life is always perceived as being antagonistic to city life. Similar to Avalokiteśvara, the Morocco apparition is identified as a Bodhisattva who is an enlightened being and who, apart from pursuing his own path of enlightenment, is also preoccupied with the enlightenment of others. However, unlike Avalokiteśvara whose silence disappoints Duluoz in the mountain, the silence of the Traveler in Morocco seems welcome and anticipated. When the nod between the two becomes “too much,” it is a sign that, at that specific moment, Duluoz had reached a certain level of enlightenment that translates into an understanding that there is nothing left to say.

Also peculiar to the Morocco apparition is the fact that the silence between Duluoz and the Shrouded Traveler is a consequence of their seeming past acquaintance which readers understand to be merely figurative and poetic. The association between silence and the past appears also in *The Dharma Bums* where Duluoz describes the feeling of sleeping alone in the desert:

¹⁸ Refer to the Heideggerian dilemma discussed on page 172 of chapter five.

The silence is so intense that you can hear your own blood roar in your ears but louder than that by far is the mysterious roar which I always identify with the roaring of the diamond of wisdom, the mysterious roar of silence itself, which is a great Shhhh reminding you of something you've seemed to have forgotten in the stress of your days since birth. I wished I could explain it to those I loved, to my mother, to Japhy, but there just weren't any words to describe the nothingness and purity of it. (*TDB*, 395)

The oxymoron "the silence is so intense" reveals what in Buddhism is a well-known connotation of silence (wisdom) that reflects a maxim shared by many cultures, which is that the more a person knows, the less they need to say anything. The wisdom of silence is connected to the mystery of the past (or the mystery of the time beyond earthly life) and evokes again the notion of earthly life as a phase that denies the knowledge of that mystery. Duluoz's desire to explain the mysterious wisdom to others implies that, first, he knows what it is, and second, that there is an inconsistency between this desire and the aforementioned realization that wisdom, by definition, means that there is no need to say anything.

The end of the passage signals a transition from the failure to grasp the mystery of reality to the failure of language in communicating it. Duluoz seems to uphold the duality of simultaneously knowing and not knowing what the mystery is, which causes cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, the evocation in the previous passage of the notion of "nothingness" complicates things even further. His inability to "describe the nothingness" of the wisdom of silence stems from the obvious difficulty in explaining the notion of "nothingness" but also from a desire to protect the esoteric nature of such mystical notions. We find the same desire in Schopenhauer as Jörg Salaquarda explains:

In contrast to the objects of the empirical world, the "object" of mystical experience was, rather, nothingness. But if we could take another point of view, this nothingness might turn out to be the true reality ... However, since even our language is restricted to rendering the world as representation (the phenomenal world), we cannot adequately speak of this metaphysical "nothingness." Every attempt would falsify the core of the mystical experience.... In his [Schopenhauer's] view, the true and incommunicable

reality of mystical experience should be defended against inadequate religious formulations.¹⁹

There is here a loophole that may allow the individual to escape formulating a full understanding of “nothingness,” a notion that seems in the *Legend* to be correlated with the Real and the overall realm of reality. This is because with Schopenhauer, language, especially religious language, distorts the essence of “nothingness” as soon as it tries to describe it. But while this loophole allows Duluoz to momentarily escape defining the Real by resorting to the ambiguous jargon of Buddhism, it leaves out the question of how to replace the void left by the shadow of Christianity, a religion that must be abandoned for Duluoz to continue being ambiguous about the Real—Duluoz cannot remain a Christian and simultaneously admit Christianity’s inability to explain the Real.

Memory is also a notion that is introduced in the quoted passage and it adds another depth to the perspective from which to perceive the knowledge of mysterious wisdom. Duluoz believes that one of the consequences of earthly life is forgetting the wisdom acquired before birth (“... reminding you of something you’ve seemed to have forgotten in the stress of your days since birth”). Elsewhere, he describes his life as “a vast and insane *Legend* reaching everywhere without beginning or ending—like Samsara²⁰—A thousand memories come like tics all day perturbing my vital mind with almost muscular spasms of clarity and recall” (*DA*, 12). The memories that Duluoz has of the Real (the mystery, the silence, wisdom, etc.) come to him like tics and spasms, which suggests that, unlike memories of earthy life that could be recalled on cue, memories of the ancient realm are uncontrollable.

The distinction between earthly memories (concerning moments in a person’s lifetime on earth) and memories of the ancient realm is clarified in an important reflection on the very nature of thoughts and the intentionality of and control over one’s memory:

What content to know that when all is said and done it doesn’t matter—Woes? The piteousness I feel when I think of my mother?—but it all has to be roused and

¹⁹ Jörg Salaquarda, “Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, eds. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 97–98.

²⁰ In most Indian religions, “saṃsāra” refers to the cycle of creation (birth-death-rebirth); however, this cyclicity acquires a particularly pernicious meaning in Buddhism because it is considered the main cause of eternal suffering, hence the Bodhisattva’s quest for nirvana to attain release from saṃsāra.

remembered, it isn't there by itself, and that's because the mental nature is by nature free of the dream and free of everything—It's like those pipesmoking Deist philosophers who say "O mark the marvelous creation of God, the moon, the stars etc., would you trade it for anything?" not realizing they wouldn't be saying this at all if it wasn't for some primordial memory of when, of what, of how nothing was. (DA, 31)

Here, Duluoz shows yet again that he holds inconsistent ideas about the universe, which could potentially cause cognitive dissonance. On the one hand, he claims that mental nature is essentially free of everything and, at the same time, he asserts the existence of primordial memory, thereby contradicting the first claim. Empirically speaking, both cognitive and evolutionary psychology recognize the first claim as an outright fallacy because it erroneously suggests a tabula rasa or blank slate conception of the human mind.²¹ There is, however, some truth in the second part of the claim. Ontogenetic memories, as in, the memories acquired within one's lifetime, do not constitute part of the ancestral or phylogenetic composition of the mind. In that sense, and only in that sense, it would be possible to say that the memory of earthly woes and his mother "isn't there by itself" since it belongs to the domain of culturally acquired information.²² Even if this is what Duluoz means about the first claim, it remains unclear how the two claims, which are presented with near scientific confidence, can be compatible.

Finally, the claim that the Deist philosophers' remembrance of nothingness through their implied exclusive access to ancestral (phylogenetic, "primordial") memory leads to an appreciation of the beauty of earthly life engenders another incompatibility: On the one hand, the pre-birth state is described as a blissful and desirable one, and on the other, the nothingness of the philosopher's memories is suggested to be so bleak that they stand in awe when they compare them to the "marvelous creation of God."

²¹ See David M. Buss, "Introduction: The Emergence of Evolutionary Psychology," in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David M. Buss (New Jersey: Wiley, 2005), xxiv; and Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

²² It is necessary to separate the evolutionary meaning of primordial memory from Duluoz's claim that the philosophers' primordial memory is of a time or place where or when "nothing was"—the time or place of nothingness. This is because, while the notion of primordial (ancestral) memory is strongly grounded in empirical evidence, especially in the field of evolutionary psychology, the part about primordial memory being linked to nothingness is, if not ambiguous, then philosophical, metaphysical, and merely speculative.

Morality and Nothingness: Duluoz's Nihilism

Alienation and Duluoz's Misconstrual of Nothingness

In one of the scenes in *Desolation Angels*, Duluoz hears the moans of “Skid Row drunks” from the inside of a hotel and immediately remarks that “I don’t understand the night—I’m afraid of people—I walk along happy—Nothing else to do—If I were pacing in my mountain yard I’d be just as bad off as I am walking down the city street—Or as well off—What’s the difference?” (*DA*, 192). The noticeable fall into absurdism in these words heralds Duluoz’s eventual subjugation to nothingness. As could be inferred from some of the previously quoted passages, the condition of nothingness is expressed by many different terms in the *Legend*, especially emptiness, void, infinity, meaninglessness, neutrality, and silence. Even when at times it represents a premature interpretation of Buddhism, nothingness appears to be understood enough to be enthusiastically evoked, especially when Duluoz undergoes ecstatic experiences that reflect either a strong appreciation for being alive or a weariness from it. However, whenever he moves away from these extremities, the supposedly well-digested Buddhist interpretation of nothingness undergoes revisions that mirror the *Legend*’s overarching existential crisis.

The nothingness that characterizes Duluoz’s perception of the world exists in a feedback loop that is created by the disorder and uncertainty of the mind-universe complex. While sitting one day with a group of friends in Dean’s living room, Duluoz candidly articulates his feeling of alienation:

I’m just a silly stranger goofing with other silly strangers for no reason far away from anything that ever mattered to me whatever that was—Always an ephemeral “visitor” to the Coast never really involved with anyone’s lives there because I’m always ready to fly back across the country but not to any life of my own on the other end either, just a traveling stranger. (*BS*, 178)

The triviality of the activities that he engages in, the sense of wasted time, and the loneliness that persists despite him being with his friends outweigh the joys experienced on the road and nullify

a large part of the spiritual significance of his journey. This, in a way, breaks with the tradition of the American road novel that presumes a certain convergence between the traveler's identity and ideals of the country on the one hand, and his identity and the journey on the other. While the road certainly offers Duluoz a portal toward a genuinely different perspective on things, the *Legend's* road aesthetic does not constitute a locale for a definitive or even long-lasting identification with a sense of authentic self.

For P.J. Johnston,

one could even live one's life continually "on the road" like Kerouac's sainted *bhikkhus*, cultivating mental openness by using long-distance travel to resist the formation of any habitual identity or established sense of place. This itineracy dovetails nicely with the Mahāyāna Buddhist emphasis on nonduality and emptiness, allowing one to experience nirvāṇa in saṃsāra because one harbors an attachment to no thing (and no place) in particular, while at the same time accepting all. The religious object of Beat Buddhism pilgrimage appears to be its very indeterminacy.²³

The assumption that the road is synonymous with oneness or that oneness is achieved somewhere down the road disregards the recurrence of the undesirable emotions caused by the dichotomies that Duluoz struggles with *while* on the road in the novel *On the Road* that Johnston is analyzing, but more importantly, in the other novels as well. As shown in the passage from *Big Sur* quoted above, Duluoz's alienation borders on depersonalization when he admits that he feels separated from the things that matter to him as if he does not have the agency required to realign himself with his interests. This feeling denies authenticity seen by Charles Taylor as an ideal that requires defining one's identity "only against the background of things that matter."²⁴ Duluoz's own alienation (mind) bespeaks the alienation of the world (universe) in an ultimate admission of surrender to a nihilistic worldview:

When I look out of Cody's livingroom window just then I do see my star still shining for me as it's done all these 38 years over crib, out ship windows, jail windows, over sleepingbags only now it's dummier and dimmer and getting blurreder damnit as tho

²³ P.J. Johnston, "Dharma Bums: The Beat Generation and the Making of Countercultural Pilgrimage," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 33 (2013): 178.

²⁴ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 40.

even my own star be now fading away from concern for me as I from concern from it—
In fact we're all strangers with strange eyes sitting in a midnight livingroom for
nothing— (*BS*, 179)

Duluo's conception of nothingness appears, then, to be both a cause and a consequence of his alienation from his self (depersonalization) and others, but it also stems from a poorly understood notion of divinity and an unstable engagement in spirituality. For him, either God, Buddha, or an undefined spiritual force must be behind a (non)phenomenon as ambiguously powerful as nothingness. If integrated into one's belief system, the notion of nothingness could effect radical and even detrimental changes to one's attitude, primarily because it questions one's morality. Noteworthy is that Buddhism, as per the doctrines of the cycle of creation (*samsāra*) and the escape from the cycle of creation (*nirvana*), does not entertain a negative view of the end of the individual's life. If the individual succeeds through enlightenment in ending the cycle of creation, then they would simply cease to exist. In fact, nothingness in Buddhism is generally acknowledged as one of the ways phenomena are apprehended by the Gods in the sphere of formlessness or the second-highest of the four sub-realms of transcendence.²⁵ This means that rather than representing some dark ending of all things, nothingness is a perspective of the afterlife that the *Bodhisatva* wishes to achieve or mentally attain while still on earth through practices such as meditation.

Duluo's reflection on the condition of existence departs from both Christianity and Buddhism and denotes the formation of a nihilistic worldview that is best explored from a speculative philosophical standpoint, especially given the significant role that questions of morality occupy in Duluo's reflections.

The Death of God and the Failure of Asceticism

²⁵ In the lowest sphere of formlessness, phenomena is identified as "infinite space," in the second as "infinite consciousness," in the third as "nothingness," and in the highest as "neither perception nor non-perception" (Prebish and Keown 38–39).

Historically, God had been announced dead at least sixty years before the time of Kerouac's writings,²⁶ and the separation of Nietzsche's thoughts from the actions of German Nazism—hence, the possibility of seeing Nietzsche in a non-propagandist way in America—postdated most, if not all of the novels of the *Legend*.²⁷ Therefore, outside of Buddhism, which recreates the same Christian burden of asceticism, the culture in which Kerouac lived did not offer any replacements for the metaphysical loss of the Christian God. Consequently, the death of God exacerbated the existential crisis facing the American individual living in the late 1940s.

The crisis of the death of God is inherently paradoxical because it simultaneously represents the theological-metaphysical equivalent of Antonio Gramsci's "interregnum" that "consists precisely in the fact that the old [political order] is dying and the new cannot be born,"²⁸ which is a recipe for political chaos; and Victor Turner's "liminality," which is rather seen as a positive anthropological development because it is the phase where the person becomes "an individual rather than a social *persona*."²⁹ Since the modern American political system has mostly operated within the moralistic foundations of religion (despite its secular roots), it cannot provide a way out of the crisis. The inability to depend on political authority to provide an answer, then, accentuates the role of the individual, hence, the search for a resolution at the intersection between Nietzsche's nihilistic individualism and Turner's liminal individualism.

Suffering and asceticism are fundamental moral questions in the *Legend*. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Tristessa's suffering is just one of many instances of what Duluoz believes to be unnecessary suffering that makes him question God's compassion. Motivated by this suffering as well as his own, Duluoz expresses his desire to become abstinent "based on my feeling that lust was the direct cause of birth which was the direct cause of suffering and death and I had really no lie come to a point where I regarded lust as offensive and even cruel" (*TDB*, 300). Moreover, the passage from *The Dharma Bums* quoted in the previous chapter, which

²⁶ *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which feature Nietzsche's attack on Christian values and a calling for a reevaluation of morality altogether, were published in the early 1880s.

²⁷ The change in Nietzsche's portrayal as a Nazi thinker in the United States was primarily due to the effort of Walter Kauffmann who laid the foundation for the teaching of Nietzsche as an existentialist and secular humanist in American universities during the 1950s and 1960s. Dale Wilkerson, "Reception of Nietzsche's Thought," "Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/nietzsch/>.

²⁸ Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London: Routledge, 2006), 99.

²⁹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 108.

describes Duluoz's resistance to mass information, is also pertinent here as it demonstrates the ascetic value of this resistance:

I want to get me a full pack complete with everything necessary to sleep, shelter, eat, cook, in fact a regular kitchen and bedroom right on my back, and go off somewhere and find perfect solitude and look into the perfect emptiness of my mind and be completely neutral from any and all ideas. I intended to pray, too, as my only activity, pray for all creatures; I saw it was the only decent activity left in the world." (*TDB*, 357)

These kinds of ascetic ideals of abstinence, humbleness, and devotion to religion are seen from the Nietzschean point of view as paradoxical because "they appear to involve a lively passion for what is contrary to life."³⁰ According to Nietzsche, "to those in pain, the Christian moral worldview (and those of other ascetic doctrines) tells them that they are to blame. This produces an orgy of feelings, constructed around the sufferer's sense of guilt. Feelings of guilt reverse the feeling that one's life is declining: 'Life again became *very* interesting.'"³¹ Duluoz eventually realizes that he has erred in seeking to lessen suffering through asceticism. However, this realization deepens the crisis: how to account for the suffering of the world outside of Christianity? Or, from the Nietzschean perspective, how to account for suffering after realizing that God is dead?

Duluoz announces to the reader the failure of the politico-religious answer when he asks: "Waiting for God? And because he is not limited he can not exist. Waiting for Lefty? Same, sweet Bronx-singer. Nothing there but mind-matter essence primordial and strange with forms and names you have for it just as good" (*DA*, 115). Aside from the waning belief in the Christian God, the allusion to Clifford Odets' play displays a loss of faith in leftist ideology, probably specifically the New Left who, alongside the Beats, constituted a major force of dissent at the time. The New Left, who perceived alienation as the central problem of the day and who privileged the individual over any doctrine, even traditional Marxist doctrine,³² were

³⁰ Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins, "Nietzsche's Works and their Themes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, eds. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 50.

³¹ Magnus and Higgins, 51.

³² Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 57–58, 62.

nevertheless seen as lacking the true means to overcoming the problem that they so eloquently diagnosed.

Duluoz's impulse to justify suffering and find an answer to his existential alienation makes him, as mentioned earlier, more Schopenhauerian than Nietzschean, especially after abandoning Christianity and adopting Buddhism. However, the fact that his alienation persists even after declaring his Buddhist conception of mystical nothingness means that the new religion also fails, primarily because of his inability to fully abandon the Christian God. In fact, with Duluoz, and unlike with Schopenhauer, God seems to be present in every invocation of mystical nothingness while the justification of suffering is invalidated by the ambivalent and confused attitude toward Him. Oftentimes, we observe this confusion in the same sentence, as when Duluoz proclaims that "for those who believe in a personal God who cares about good and bad are hallucinating themselves beyond the shadow of a doubt, tho God bless them, he blankly blesses blanks anyway" (*DA*, 78). God loses some of His vital Christian characteristics, namely compassion and care for the human race, yet He appears to remain *essentially* a force of goodness. Regarding the cognitive dissonance represented here, Dan Sperber explains that "you may give up a belief and still feel its intuitive force, and feel also the counterintuitive character of the belief you adopt in its stead. You may believe with total faith in the Holy Trinity, and yet be aware of the intuitive force of the idea that a father and son cannot be one."³³ Indeed, Duluoz struggles with the intuitive pull of the Christian God and feels the counterintuitive force of his Buddhist beliefs as well as his near-atheism. This is why, no matter how hard he tries, he is never capable of fully ridding himself of what he had been taught as a child in Lowell.

The danger in having such a complicated relationship with God is that it acts as a formula for anarchy and chaos, specifically if not countered by a life-affirming position as Nietzsche does when he critiques the moral values of Christianity. In fact, by missing this aspect, as in, by neglecting the individual responsibility required to fill the gaps left by the Christian God, Duluoz invites a kind of nihilism that is based on the same Christian foundation of resentment (*ressentiment* as per Nietzsche) that results from "slave morality."³⁴ Observe the contradiction,

³³ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 149–50.

³⁴ Magnus and Higgins, *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, 49. As for what "slave morality" is, Nietzsche "suggests that master morality and slave morality are radically different in outlook. Master morality, typified by those in positions of power, involves a primary judgment of oneself as good, and a judgment of others in reference to one's own traits. Slave morality, by contrast, as the moral outlook of those who are oppressed, is primarily

for example, in Duluoz's realization that "it's only the Golden Eternity of God's Mind so practice kindness and sympathy, remember that men are *not responsible in themselves as men* for their ignorance and unkindness, they should be pitied, God does pity it, because who says anything about anything since everything is just what it is, free of interpretations" (*LT*, 734). Even though Duluoz here is seen preaching kindness, the use of italics stresses the conviction with which he exonerates humankind from any wrongdoing. According to his logic, humankind is only part of God's Mind—remember Duluoz's depiction of human beings as the children that God stole from His mind, quoted at the beginning of this chapter—which is a reformulation of the theological notion of the Divine Plan that eliminates the consequences of sinning. Simply put, Duluoz fashions a justification for anarchy where everything goes because God, although He exists, does not care, and humankind should not worry because everything is happening according to His plan anyways.

The "Murder of the Mouse": A Philosophical Inquiry into Morality

The dangers of Duluoz's nihilistic and absurdist interpretation of nothingness appear in such declarations as "it didn't matter that we sin" (*LT*, 763) and others, but most exhaustively in the contemplation on the act of murder in *Desolation Angels*. As with many trivial events that induce consequential reflections on the condition of existence, when Duluoz kills a mouse in the mountain cabin, a feeling of guilt overcomes him, which creates a moral dilemma. First, he tries to exonerate himself from responsibility the same way he exonerates the human race from the charge of "ignorance and unkindness" in *Lonesome Traveler* by stating, even if self-mockingly, that "as I hit it I almost sobbed yelling 'Poor little thing!' as though it wasn't me doing it?" (*DA*, 75). Then, he contextualizes the incident within the Buddhist cycle of creation by claiming that the way to stop the cycle is to "*stop murdering* or be forced to come back" (*DA*, 76), which is a standard Duluozean strategy of reworking what are supposed to be unshakeable beliefs based on new experiences, thereby demonstrating to what extent his belief system is unstable.

concerned with the reactions those in power might have to any contemplated act. Although slaves hate the master and everything the master represents, they still refer their behavior primarily to the master. Even self-esteem is achieved by reference to the master." Magnus and Higgins, 47.

Soon after, a feeling of culpability creeps up as Duluoz realizes that “now I had joined the ranks of the murderers ... Now I’m just a dirty murdering human being like everybody else and now I cant take refuge in heaven anymore” (DA, 76). The inconsistent views that Duluoz holds on the issue of culpability and innocence—he exonerates humankind’s sins in *Lonesome Traveler* but feels culpable for killing a mouse—paves the way for a full-blown problematization of the quality of life and permissibility of killing.³⁵ On the one hand, his guilt prompts him to humanize the mouse by using quotation marks to emphasize its “‘human’ fearful eyes” (DA, 74) and the fact that it seemed “really ‘humanly’ scared” (DA, 76) and to endow it with consciousness by emphasizing in italics that “*it didn’t know why it was being chosen to die*” (DA, 76). This humanization also serves to advance Duluoz’s incipient realization of the oneness of all sentient beings which, as explained in chapter five, constitutes part of the solution to his crisis, as well as the preordained and collective ignorance of the mysteries of nothingness (the mouse, like human beings, do not know why they suffer or die). On the other hand, he is not mindful of the dilemma caused by his admission that, though he killed a mouse, he “would never kill a deer, which dies a big death”—ironically, he was gazing at the deer from a rifle scope when he thought this—which is the dilemma of what is considered a “big death”: is it the size of the animal? The dramatic way in which it dies? Etc.

Following this, Duluoz proceeds by conjuring up a hypothetical about St. Francis whom he considers the symbol of the Christian faith. In it, he imagines a so-called intellectual critiquing the saint’s decision to isolate himself from human affairs, accusing him of hiding away from the real problems of the world: “you, *you*, think yourself so holy, farting in secret in caves, stink as much as anybody, are you trying to show you’re better than man?” and then imagines that, as a reaction, “Francis might have killed the man—Who knows?” (DA, 77). The fact that the contemplation went from feeling guilty about killing a mouse to interrogations about the sainthood of St. Francis suggests a coping mechanism in the implicit desire to deprive St. Francis of his sainthood. Indeed, by attributing to him the vile acts and aggressive instincts of normal people, he is able to justify his own descent from the superiority that preceded the act of killing.

³⁵ It is difficult to provide a convincing chronological justification for the different perceptions of culpability and innocence between *Lonesome Traveler* and *Desolation Angels* because, regardless of the fact that the latter was published five years after the former, the two novels were written almost during the same period stretching from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. One could, therefore, assume that Kerouac’s state of mind, unstable as it may have been, was relatively constant within that instability.

The hope is that the hypothetical could eventually bring comfort by suggesting that if St. Francis would consider murdering someone for having offended him, then it is acceptable that Duluoz kills a mouse that was hiding in his cabin.

The contemplative process culminates in a nihilistic verdict on morality:

Whether you murder or not, that's the trouble, it makes no difference in the maddening void which doesn't care what we do—All we know is that everything is alive otherwise it wouldn't be here—The rest is speculation, mental judgments of the reality of the *feeling* of a good or bad ... All the saints have gone to the grave with the same pout as the murderer and the hater ... and that's because nothing matters and we all know it—But what we gonna do? Pretty soon there'll be a new kind of murderer, who will kill without any reason at all, just to prove that it doesn't matter, and all his accomplishment will be worth no more and no less than Beethoven's last quartets and Boito's Requiem— ... what God is this who didn't invent justice? ... Ah but "I don't know, I don't care, and it doesn't matter" will be the final human prayer. (*DA*, 77–78)

The belief that nothing matters is repeated three times in this passage and, along with the claim that "it makes no difference," suggests what Robert A. F. Thurman recognizes as Kerouac's "nothing matters after all" sort of nihilistic misunderstanding of emptiness."³⁶ The second part of the passage follows the direction Duluoz takes in the examples analyzed so far in justifying his nihilistic viewpoint, not understanding as yet the usefulness of the notion of a common fate for saints and wrongdoers and how to utilize his Buddhist teachings in order to interpret this notion from the larger perspective of oneness.

That being said, the pessimism at the end of this observation, though adding to the overall paradoxical interpretation of morality, should not mask the Nietzschean perspectivism therein. The claim that what one deems as good or bad derives solely from their subjective assessment of their experience and not from some ultimate truth is a step toward Nietzsche's notion of "active nihilism."³⁷ Spinks relays Nietzsche's position on the issue of the creative constitution of truth:

³⁶ Robert A. F. Thurman, "Introduction," *Wake Up: A Life of the Buddha* by Jack Kerouac (New York: Penguin, [2008] 2009), xviii–xix.

³⁷ There are three important points to note here: First, the subjective assessment of experience does not imply a denial of objective reality but an association between it and experience. Part III of this dissertation argues that a crucial step

we create the truth of our experience by an “active determining” of the process of becoming into a *version* of reality that cannot be discovered in the “world itself.” This determination or fixing of the world varies according to the *perspective* from which we view it ... The measure of our strength, Nietzsche argues, is defined by the “extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely *apparent* character” of the world and our constitutive role in projecting values upon it. This self-conscious emphasis upon the perspectival and creative character of our experience of the world has the potential to transform the nihilistic revelation of a world without an essential truth into a positive and rewarding event. For while the weak discover in this revelation only a feeling of worthlessness and loss, the strong individual acknowledges the merely apparent nature of experience in order to create a version of history that allows it to live productively and transform the world according to its own needs. This positive or *active* nihilism is a mode of existence that accepts our creative role in constituting the “truth” of the world and the function of violence and force in promoting a strong and ascending form of life.³⁸

The glimmer of hope in Duluoz’s contemplation emerges precisely with the realization of the artificiality of the world in which he lives. His various thought experiments, though for the most part producing a paradoxical worldview, represent a gateway toward a potentially positive reorientation of his perception of nothingness, one that involves employing a constructivist engagement with the world so as to change how it is perceived. In other words, only when the determinism of his mind-universe complex is integrated into an *individualistically constructivist* engagement with the world, could Duluoz deal with the havoc and disorder that it creates.

Conclusion

towards the discovery of objective reality is through intersubjective experiences with others. Secondly, as far the the “subjective” view of the truth goes, and as Nietzsche claims, this is the logical approach when it comes to understanding aspects of reality that cannot be understood in the perceived world or through intersubjective experiences. Finally, at issue here is not the totality and meaning of objective reality, but merely the moral values associated with it.

³⁸ Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 2003), 106.

In seeking the realm of reality, Duluoz expresses his doubts on whether such a realm even exists. His study of the perceived world, especially through his relationships with women, reveals to him that it is rife with dichotomies. The malevolence in his masculine desire toward Mardou as well as the injustice he discovers in his suffering and the suffering of Tristessa shake the foundation of his Christian faith. Beyond the perceived world, his suspicions about the existence of the Real are confirmed as he contemplates the significance of the apparitions that keep following him throughout his journeys in the *Legend*. Far from satisfying his urge to unravel the mysteries of the realm of reality, these contemplations reveal to Duluoz the issues preventing him from grasping a concrete and unambiguous understanding of the Real such as death and religion, two issues that are discussed in the following chapter. The notion of nothingness becomes a staple of Duluoz's contemplation of the condition of existence, primarily due to his exposure to Buddhism. Instead of eliciting a positive outlook and ways to cope with the ineffectiveness of Christianity, the notion of nothingness is misunderstood and directs Duluoz to a Buddhist form of asceticism, which is an erroneous way of seeking the Real. Furthermore, nothingness also begets a nihilistic and anarchic view of morality where sinning becomes permissible.

The following chapter outlines the strategies that Duluoz employs to stabilize his worldview. Having grasped the mysterious nature of the Real, Duluoz sets out to reconfigure his understanding of transcendence beyond the scope of Christianity and Buddhism by developing, through the creative capacity of his liminality, a new religion that could sustain a mode of authentic existence despite the entropy of the universe. Death and nothingness are also notions that are revisited in the following chapter. Indeed, as the multidisciplinary analysis of the notion of nowness and timelessness shows, Duluoz discovers the potential of the present as an antidote to the paradoxes of death and the absurdism of nothingness.

Chapter 5. Configurations of the Real: Strategies for Transcendental Authenticity

The uncertainties outlined in the previous chapter reveal Duluoz's misunderstanding of the universe and the condition of existence amid the historical, existential, and sociocultural transitional period. As per what I termed the *mind-universe complex*, Duluoz's identity is a reflection of what he perceives as the mysterious nature of the universe, and his attempts to reconcile its dichotomies and extremities seem to be to no avail. At times, his only successful resistance against entropy is the realization that the Real is not a component of the perceived world. Several experiences, physical and spiritual, reassure Duluoz of this realization but do not provide a blueprint on how to experience the authentic Real. On the contrary, they further alienate him and put him in confrontation with the nothingness and absurdity of the world that he is trapped in. He develops strong suspicion that neither Christianity nor Buddhism is the answer to his crisis, but is incapable of abandoning his spiritual and religious maxims, especially his Christian God. Thus, he finds himself in a strange love-hate, gratitude-blame relationship with God, which shakes his moral foundation and further distorts his conception of the authentic Real.

This chapter suggests that Duluoz's study of the dichotomous, mysterious, and absurdist nature of the universe is but a first phase toward a genuine understanding of the Real, as the inconsistencies and uncertainties are confronted through a reevaluation of some of his most impactful past experiences. The first section discusses religion and (self)transcendence as the first set of configurations of the Real. It begins by introducing Nietzsche's notion of *eternal recurrence* and its importance to the quest for the Real and follows it with a philosophical discussion on the possibility of attaining an absolute form of authenticity despite the inevitability of what Sartre calls *bad faith*. To do so, Duluoz embarks on an introspective mission to dismantle two extremities, that of materialism vs. religion/spirituality on the one hand, and that of Christianity vs. Buddhism on the other.

The second section deals with the second set of configurations of the Real, namely death and timelessness. The first section addresses the Heideggerian dilemma that Duluoz faces in the

Legend, which is linked to the interconnectedness between absolute authenticity and the embodied experience of death, and whose resolution is dependent on the reinterpretation of the present. The second section presents a neurophenomenological interpretation of the *Legend*'s nonlinear temporality. It introduces to the discussion of time the notion of the *retentive perspective*, which allows us to understand the reinterpretation of past experience as a reconstructive work of continuously redefining the present—which transforms into a set of evolving *nowness*—in relation to its distance from the past. Duluoz's summer stay at Desolation Peak is selected as the model case for this analysis because it is recounted on two different occasions in two different novels, making it easier to measure the dynamics of the narrator's perspective of the past. The final part of this section analyzes timelessness and narrative omniscience from the point of view of quantum mechanics and suggests a roadmap for the use of theories of quantum mechanics in analyzing other aspects of the *Legend*. Because quantum theories' take on reality is partly philosophical and partly scientific, they constitute an ideal framework for the study of Duluoz's contemplations of timelessness and offer a novel understanding of authenticity in a godless universe.

Modes of Secular Transcendence

Sanctifying Dean: Duluoz's Christian Atheism

Japhy's Buddhist teachings in *The Dharma Bums* include a unique understanding of materialism that he imparts on Duluoz: "The closer you get to real matter, rock air fire and wood, boy, the more spiritual the world is. All these people thinking they're hardheaded materialistic practical types, they don't know shit about matter, their heads are full of dreamy ideas and notions" (*TDB*, 432). Japhy's affirmation that true materialism is the materialism of the elements suggests that he adopts a firm position against the materialism of technocratic city life. Although at times Duluoz retains much of Japhy's dogma, he recognizes in Dean quite a different engagement in material life that he vehemently defends: "He is a *believer* in life and he *wants* to go to Heaven but because he loves life so he embraces it so much he thinks he sins and will never see Heaven— ... You could have ten thousand cold eyed Materialistic officials claim they

love life too but can never embrace it so near sin and also never see Heaven— ... They sin by lifelessness!” (*DA*, 405).

The comparison between Dean and the officials—as opposed to, say, regular law-abiding citizens—is not arbitrary but is one among many manifestations of religious and philosophical extremism in the storyworld. In a sense, officials are those who are supposed to be looked upon as a moral compass (model of virtue), whereas “delinquents” like Duluoz and Dean are models of sin. The notion of heaven that features in this passage represents a complete departure from typical religious or spiritual conceptualizations. While Christianity and Buddhism prompt strict adherence, at times up to the point of celibacy and complete isolation from material life, Duluoz’s defense of Dean’s materialism evokes a synergy between material life and divinity. The biblical context of sinning becomes synonymous with the embrace of life in such a subversive way that *not* sinning in this re-established context becomes a sin in the original biblical sense.

Duluoz’s defense of what seems as Dean’s hedonism and self-indulgence gives rise to a central question: why does Duluoz allow Dean certain transgressions that he denies others and even himself? To answer this question, the discussion must include another important character who, in many respects, could be regarded as the antithesis of Dean: Gerard, Duluoz’s deceased brother. To begin with, Duluoz’s account of Dean is not always as favorable as it appears in the previous passage from *Desolation Angels* or from his overall impression of him in *On the Road*. In *Visions of Cody*, Duluoz writes that Dean “was dishonest looking, a thief, a car thief, and that’s exactly what he was, he had already stolen over five hundred cars (and served time for some of it); not only a thief, maybe a real angry murderer in the night” (*VOC*, 338). On the other hand, his memory of Gerard is always consistently associated with sainthood, humbleness, and idealism: “Saintly Gerard, his pure tranquil face, the mournful look of him, the piteousness of his little soft shroud of hair falling down his brow ... the world was his face, the flower of his face, the pale stooped disposition, the heartbreakingness and the holiness and his teachings of tenderness to me” (*VOG*, 1–2). The mere fact that Duluoz accepts Dean into his life and allows him to sway him is itself strange given Duluoz’s idealization of Gerard and, hence, his acute judgment of character. I would argue that the pacification of Dean that Duluoz is so eager to

move toward at every chance he gets is heavily influenced by the memory of Gerard and that this influence, in turn, reconfigures his stance on materialism.

Because Duluoz sees Dean as a big brother who often fills a psychological void, a reasonable assumption is that Duluoz defends Dean's ways because he wants him to be more like the actual brother whom he had lost. Indeed, because Gerard and Dean are inherently nothing alike, Dean's identity undergoes a transformation and becomes modeled according to how Gerard is remembered in Duluoz's mind. One possible hypothesis that could explain this transformation is that Duluoz wishes to reconstruct and preserve the memory of his brother, using Dean as an avatar that could be configured. This would be especially true if Duluoz has difficulties remembering Gerard, given that the latter died when he was nine years old and when Duluoz was only four. This also brings to mind the character of Tamina in Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* who uses the bodies and faces of strangers whom she sits across as canvas to draw the mental image of her deceased husband, an exercise she performs regularly so as not to forget his appearance.¹

However, the mere existence of an entire novel revolving around Gerard (*Visions of Gerard*) eliminates this hypothesis because it demonstrates Duluoz's exceptional memory that requires no "exercises" or special strategies.² The "Gerardization" of Dean, so to speak, has to be motivated, then, by another purpose. Jesse Menefee sees Kerouac's "equating criminals like Dean Moriarty with saints like Gerard" as an attempt "to obliterate not only dualistic thinking, but all of the arbitrary distinctions of Self and Other that Buddhism holds to be the source of the world's suffering."³ Menefee bases her argument on the similarity that she observes between Kerouac and Dostoevsky and the fact that Kerouac "consciously follows Dostoevsky's example in this regard" because he mentions in his journals how much he appreciates the fact that Dostoevsky does not have villains in his novels.⁴ With that being said, if an obliteration of the sort that Menefee talks about occurs, it does so not in compliance with Buddhism, which does

¹ Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. Aaron Asher (London: Faber and Faber, [1978] 2000), 116.

² Allen Ginsberg lauds Kerouac's memory in a piece that he wrote in 1974. Allen Ginsberg, "The Visions of the Great Rememberer," in *Visions of Cody* by Jack Kerouac (New York: Penguin, [1960, 1970] 1993), pp. 399–430.

³ Jesse Menefee, "Dostoevsky and the Diamond Sutra: Jack Kerouac's Karamazov Religion," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 448–49.

⁴ Menefee, 449.

not tolerate a lifestyle such as Dean's—though it certainly *is* against dualistic thinking—but rather by *transcending* Buddhism.

Among the many things that Duluoz remembers about his brother, he particularly remembers him saying “things to me about a *reverence* for life, no, at least a reverence of the *idea* of life, which I translated as meaning that life itself is the Holy Ghost” (*DA*, 256). This “translation” coincides with Slavoj Žižek's recent materialist reading of Christianity based on Hegel and G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, which identifies the Holy Ghost as the divine gift of life. Interestingly, Žižek calls this interpretation *Christian atheism* and elaborates by identifying Christ's final moment at the cross (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?) as the liberation of humankind from the God of the beyond and the responsibility that this liberation entails. In this view, the Second Coming does not represent the actual future return of Christ since he/God has indeed died on the cross, but the gift of living without God (the Holy Ghost).⁵

After admitting that the reason he writes is to honor his brother's message, Duluoz contemplates the idea of the Christian fall of Man: “What is the *Light* that bears us down—The Light of *Falling*—The Angels are still *Falling*—Some kind of explanation like that ... kept me up so I could *fall* with man, with Lucifer, to Buddha's eccentric humility ideal” (*DA*, 257). There is in Duluoz's admiration of Buddhism a sense of fear that abandoning Christianity may have been a fall instead of a progression, similar to the fall of Adam into sin, and that Buddhism is a distraction from the embrace of the Holy Ghost in Žižek's sense. Even during his short life, Gerard has symbolized the message of life as a gift left by God to the human race before His death. Gerard becomes the incarnation of the Christ of Christian atheism and of the materialism that Duluoz sees in Dean.

Assuming the Responsibility of Godless Freedom

Setting aside whatever cosmological interpretations it may engender, Nietzsche's notion of *eternal recurrence* denotes two things from the existential standpoint: first, the acceptance of the responsibility of living without God, that is, without the prospect of an afterlife and, second, the willingness, upon serious consideration and projection, to relive one's life without changing

⁵ OxfordUnion, “Professor Slavoj Žižek | Full Address and Q&A | Oxford Union,” Oxford University, YouTube video, 1:15:07, Jan. 1, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=545x4EldHlg&t=3386s>.

any of the circumstances and happenings of the life one presently lives. The mental fortitude and courage required for such willingness define what Nietzsche calls the *Overman*.⁶

One of the first steps taken by Duluoz to reconfigure his worldview is to reinterpret his life history so that nirvana, the deliverance from the suffering of *samsāra*, becomes dependent on accepting the responsibilities of eternal recurrence, which means becoming an Overman. He accomplishes this by transforming the classical understanding of nirvana as a path and/or destination into a neo-Buddhist formulation of nirvana as a natural occurrence that merely requires discovering and sustaining. In Duluoz's words: "Yes, so to try to attain to Nirvana when you're already there, to attain to the top of a mountain when you're already there and only have to stay—thus, to stay in the Nirvana Bliss, is all I have to do, you have to do, no effort, no path really, no discipline but just to know that all is empty and awake, a Vision and a Movie in God's Universal Mind" (*LT*, 733). Even though God persists in this new understanding of emancipation, He does so as a completely transmuted entity that is, itself, released from the responsibility for the suffering of humankind. The idea that transcendence is a path, which had once been considered with high regard, now becomes too daunting a mission as it involves sacrificing the experiential realm. This is why Duluoz rethinks his position in the universe as a "being-in-waiting" and prefers to think of himself as someone who is already living in bliss. This new conception involves an embrace of the responsibility of transposing Heaven and Nirvana from the conditional realm of the divine (accessible to beings upon fulfilling certain conditions on earth) to the earthly realm, thereby fully adopting the characteristics of the Nietzschean Overman.

Although initially tainted with a slightly forced and self-serving bent, the responsibility required to reconfigure the meaning of past life is hinted at by Dean who, while discussing the "goodness and joy of life" in the car with Duluoz and the others, reminds them of the responsibility that their freedom presupposes: "Now dammit, look here, all of you, we all must admit that everything is fine and there's no need in the world to worry, and in fact we should realize what it would mean to us to UNDERSTAND that we're not REALLY worried about ANYTHING" (*OTR*, 120). Reinforced by the use of uppercase letters for keywords, Duluoz relays the firmness in Dean's wise interpretation of the emancipation from religion as not merely an opportunity for self-indulgence, but a genuine realization of the responsibility incurred by

⁶ Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 2003), 115–32.

transcending the religious matrix of morality. This challenges the misconceptions of individualistic hedonism that the Beats were often associated with and brings to mind Charles Taylor's defense of the moral foundation of authenticity, which is independent of religion. Arguing against Allan Bloom's claim that "survivalism has taken the place of heroism as the admired quality," Taylor claims that "what gets lost in this critique is the moral force of the ideal of authenticity," and that many individuals who have noble pursuits are still primarily driven by an inward sense of duty as they "feel *called* to do this."⁷ Duluoz agrees with Dean as his "orderly advancing sense of work and duty" (*TS*, 479) clearly attests to this. However, accepting this responsibility entails a continuously ongoing revision of what the self is in relation to entropy, and here is where release from *bad faith* becomes a necessity.

In his magnum opus *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre admits that a transcendent self (the "for-itself" or *pour soi*) can exist only alongside its deterministic nature or its "facticities" (the "in-itself" or *en soi*) and that living inauthentically or in *bad faith* is the natural condition of the being because of the tension between the unfathomable freedom of transcendence and the self that is determined by facticities.⁸ This pessimistic view originates from his observation that bad faith is a "permanent threat to every project of the human being ... because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. The origin of this risk is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is."⁹ Even though he gives a thorough account of bad faith, genuine authenticity or "good faith" does not appear in Sartre's treatise except only in a footnote:

If it is indifferent whether one is in good or in bad faith, because bad faith apprehends good faith and slides to the very origin of the project of good faith, that does not mean that we cannot radically escape bad faith. But this supposes a self-recovery of being which was previously corrupted. This self-recovery we shall call authenticity, the description of which has no place here."¹⁰

Even in his later work, Sartre accepts the possibility of authenticity only in the Nietzschean sense of acquiring the responsibility discussed earlier: "Authenticity, it is almost needless to say,

⁷ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 16–17.

⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, [1943] 1956), 131.

⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 116.

¹⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 116.

consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate.”¹¹ Although the percipience demanded by the “true and lucid consciousness of the situation” appears in Dean’s beseeching that his friends “UNDERSTAND that we’re not REALLY worried about ANYTHING,” conceiving of a possibility for an absolute kind of authenticity requires looking into Duluoz’s reimagining of his past from a different outlook, one that represents the true meaning of Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence.

Duluoz’s mind cannot handle the meaninglessness of a world without a religious axis. The discussion of the relationship between the mind and the meaning of experience (what I have referred to as the *mind-universe complex*) needs to take into consideration contemporary knowledge of how the mind interprets and creates meaning. Referencing the results of five decades of research on the neural basis of the mind of one Michael Gazzaniga, Jonathan Gottschall asserts that “the storytelling mind is allergic to uncertainty, randomness, and coincidence. It is addicted to meaning. If the storytelling mind cannot find meaningful patterns in the world, it will try to impose them. In short, the storytelling mind is a factory that churns out true stories when it can, but will manufacture lies when it can’t.”¹² Gottschall’s conclusion is in harmony with Monika Fludernik’s observation that “the well-known topos of appearance vs. reality resolves an irreconcilable dichotomy by downgrading appearance as illusion (the Buddhist version), or as deliberate deception, dissimulation and duplicity in ontological (Christianity) or psychological (secular humanism) form.”¹³

Far from propagating secular humanism, once the Christian story that had acted as the grand meaning for Duluoz breaks down, he indeed adopts the Buddhist model as an instinctive reaction against disorder and meaninglessness. Among the examples of his “downgrading appearance as illusion,” one can cite his declaration that “happiness consists in realizing that it is all a great strange dream” (*LT*, 657), his realization that “no matter where I am, whether in a little room full of thought, or in this endless universe of stars and mountains, it’s all in my mind” (*LT*, 732), and his attempt at alleviating Rosie’s paranoia by reminding her that she’s “getting these

¹¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, [1944] 1948), 65.

¹² Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 103.

¹³ Monika Fludernik, *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 24.

silly convictions and conceptions out of nowhere, don't you realize all this life is just a dream? Why don't you just relax and enjoy God? God is you, you fool!" (*TDB*, 361).

Emancipation from the Extremism of Religion

The "Do Nothing" Philosophy

The Buddhist doctrine developed in *The Dharma Bums* and adopted in *Lonesome Traveler* and other novels eventually fails. Perhaps nowhere is this failure more evident than in Duluoz's summer stay at Desolation Peak working as a fire lookout, which is recounted at the end of *The Dharma Bums*, in the "Alone on a Mountaintop" chapter in *Lonesome Traveler*, and again in the "Desolation in Solitude" part of *Desolation Angels*. Even though probably unintentional, the sentiment that each of the latter two titles conveys (loneliness and desolation) is symbolic of the evolution of the perspective of each telling. Indeed, the opening lines of Book Two of *Desolation Angels* demonstrate a reevaluation of the merit of the mountain experience and the values acquired from it:

And now, after the experience on top of the mountain where I was alone for two months without being questioned or looked at by any single human being I began a complete turnabout in my feelings about life—I now wanted a reproduction of that absolute peace in the world of society but secretly greedy too for some of the pleasures of society (such as shows, sex, comforts, fine foods & drinks), no such things on a mountain—I knew now that my life was a search for peace as an artist, but not only as an artist—As a man of contemplation rather than too many actions, in the old Tao Chinese sense of "Do Nothing" (Wu Wei) which is a way of life in itself more beautiful than any. (*DA*, 245)

Ingrained in this reevaluation is the realization that perceiving earthly reality as an illusion requires an unnecessary (and possibly unhealthy) sacrifice of material things and so he opts for a mode of living that is different from either the spiritualism that forces him to live constantly in his own mind and pushes him toward asceticism or the material reality that leads one to hedonistic self-indulgence. Instead, he transcends these two extremes and adopts what he calls a "Do Nothing" mentality that requires interpretation beyond the implied simplistic escapism of meaninglessness. It entails looking closely into how "Do Nothing" is applied in the world which means, paradoxically, looking into the change that "Do Nothing" leads to.

The first interpretation of “Do Nothing” is related to the retreat from the world of actions, which is marred with chaos, in order to embrace trance-like mental states. The reveries that Duluoz often resorts to represent a good example of this. In *Desolation Angels*, the consequences of entropy are epitomized in the notion of “bottomless horror,” which is a state of despair so profound that it infects everything and every place, from city lights, televisions, streets, and apartments in places like New York, Mexico City, Lowell, San Francisco, North Carolina, and even Paris, to firs, rivers, the moon, and the sky, wrecking the lives of everyone from children to Gypsies, Italians, “negroes,” and intellectuals. The two-page rumination leads to the following inference:

I resign from the attempt to be happy. It’s all discrimination anyway, you value this and devalue that and go up and down but if you were like the void you’d only stare into space and in that space though you’d see stiffnecked people in their favorite various displaytory furs and armors sniffing and miffed on benches on this one-same ferryboat to the other shore you’d still be staring into space for form is emptiness, and emptiness is form— ... Let me be void still—Like a happy child lost in a sudden dream and when his buddy addresses him he doesn’t hear, his buddy nudges him he doesn’t move; finally seeing the purity and truth of his trance the buddy watches in wonder— (*DA*, 49–50)

Here, “Do Nothing” is manifested in the momentary non-spiritual means of finding happiness through complete detachment from the world of appearances and immersion in the simplicities of the world—notice at the beginning the resignation from the “attempt” to be happy, not from happiness. Unlike Christianity or Buddhism, the happiness derived from this passive position does not presuppose intellectual conceptions of rewards and punishments, heavens and nirvana, requirements, prayers, meditations, or paths, but the simple return to the experience of childlike wonder that does not seem to have a place in adulthood—think of the “carefree childhood” characteristic of the Beatnik discussed in chapter two.

The second interpretation of “Do Nothing” entails the emancipation from “facticities,” the first step of which is the realization of their immutability. An early manifestation of this philosophy, albeit subtle, appears in *On the Road* when Duluoz asks his friend Ed what he is going to do with himself, to which Ed replies: “I don’t know,” he said. “I just go along. I dig life.” (*OTR*, 123). In *The Dharma Bums*, Duluoz learns that there is something valuable in Ed’s premature view of life when, confronted with the inescapable burden of existence and the frailty

of the body, he realizes that “‘there is no answer.’ I didn’t know anything any more, I didn’t care, and it didn’t matter, and suddenly I felt really free” (*TDB*, 458). Noteworthy is the fact that the realization that he did not know anything occurs at the very end of the novel, which means that it represents the result of his Buddhist initiation. Seen in a positive light, it would be possible to claim that Buddhism for Duluoz had always been about teaching him how little he knew, a realization that had not been clear to him at the beginning.

By admitting that he does not know anything (about the horror of existence), Duluoz is able to momentarily bask in happiness, which is the happiness of not knowing, that is, of genuine understanding that there are unknowns—what are referred to as “mysteries” in chapter four—that one is *not supposed* to know and not supposed to spend a lifetime actively seeking to unravel, which is not a sign of ignorance, but true wisdom. Once this realization sets in,¹⁴ a new pathway for altering his perception of his position in the universe becomes perceivable as he admits to:

suddenly realizing “it’s me that’s changed and done all this and come and gone and complained and hurt and joyed and yelled, not the Void” and so that every time I thought of the void I’d be looking at Mt. Hozomeen (because chair and bed and meadowgrass faced north) until I realized “Hozomeen is the Void—at least Hozomeen means the void to my eyes.” (*DA*, 3)

A look at the thought process at work here evokes the notion of *hindsight bias*, which is one of the staples of recent cognitive explorations of the unconscious in literature. Blakey Vermeule reminds us that hindsight bias is not only “the tendency to detect a pattern in light of the most recent turn of events”; it carries with it a deeper implication which she explains by quoting psychologist Daniel Kahneman: “A general limitation of the human mind is its imperfect ability to reconstruct past states of knowledge, or beliefs that have changed. Once you adopt a new view of the world (or of any part of it), you immediately lose much of your ability to recall what you

¹⁴ It is important to mention that any chronological juxtaposition of events contained in different novels of the *Legend* is deduced. As pertains to this example, the fact that the realization in *Desolation Angels* is chronologically linked to another realization in *The Dharma Bums* is deduced, albeit based on sound argumentation, and not meant to represent Kerouac’s own intention. That being said, the author’s own claim that the novels all represent one big story (see page 21 of the introduction) justifies such logical connections of ideas from separate novels.

used to believe before your mind changed.”¹⁵ Despite the dangers of this shortcoming,¹⁶ it proves to be helpful to Duluoz in the same way that forgetting a traumatic past incident is helpful to a patient. Not only does he realize that personal change, especially in the face of the immutability of facticities (of which Mt. Hozomeen is emblematic), is an essential part of existence, but he also recognizes, and quite abruptly, that he had always been constantly changing. Here, readers of this dissertation may raise a concern about personal will with regards to the human agency *as seen in hindsight*: does Duluoz’s realization mean that the ever-changing nature of the self is independent of his will, or has there always been some unconscious will driving this change? This question is addressed in the following section.

The Psychic Condition of Authenticity

Addressing the question of change vis-à-vis free will necessitates a return to Jung’s examination of the psyche, specifically his thesis about human agency and determinism. In *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Jung expands the French psychologist Pierre Janet’s “view of the ‘partie supérieure et inférieure d’une fonction’” by exploring the transformative potential of the dual aspects of human functions: one that is determined by instinct and is automatic, and another that is detached from such constraints and is generally guided by free will:

The psychic condition or quality begins where the function loses its outer and inner determinism and becomes capable of more extensive and freer application, that is, where it begins to show itself accessible to a will motivated from other sources.... If we delimit the psyche from the physiological sphere of instinct at the bottom, so to speak, a similar delimitation imposes itself at the top. For, with increasing freedom from sheer instinct *partie supérieure* will ultimately reach a point at which the intrinsic energy of the function ceases altogether to be oriented by instinct in the original sense, and attains a so-called “spiritual” form.¹⁷

¹⁵ Blakey Vermeule, “The New Unconscious: A Literary Guided Tour,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 475.

¹⁶ Kahneman cautions that hindsight bias could have a negative impact on decision making especially when the latter is conducted based on a wrongful evaluation of past outcome. This is the case, for example, of individuals who are so fearful of their decisions being judged in hindsight that they prefer to “play it safe” and not take risks that would have otherwise incurred significant benefits. See Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 204.

¹⁷ Carl Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge, [1960] 2001), 108–109.

With regards to free will, a substantial analogy can be drawn between Sartre's philosophical notion of *en soi* (facticities) and *pour soi* (transcendence) and the psychological notion of *partie inférieure* and *partie supérieure*. In fact, Jung's elaboration of the dynamic nature of and the relationship between the two aspects of human functions seems to address Sartre's marginal mention of genuine authenticity. What Jung calls "psychic condition" should be considered as a property of authenticity or rather, as a necessary condition for its manifestation as it allows movement from facticities to free will. Biological constraints aside, ephemeral experiential turning points or epiphanies in the narrative of the *Legend* such as the untriggered reevaluation of the mountain stay could be seen as instances that activate the psychic condition because they provide just the right amount of introspective reflection. By comparison, full-blown, organized, and long-term practices such as Buddhism are so detached from facticities that they no longer direct the individual's free will toward matters of practical and useful nature but are rather seen as mere fuel for rumination (the harmful "spiritual form" of *partie supérieure*) which, although might be intellectually or spiritually rewarding, they ought not to occupy the majority of one's experience on earth.

According to this view, authenticity, should be emancipated from the belief that the entirety of an individual's life (past, present, future, and beyond) is predetermined by insurmountable facticities, which is what Christianity helps reinforce in Duluoz's mind to present itself as the sole source of meaning. On the other hand, it should also be emancipated from the Buddhist tendency to completely abandon the instincts that ground the individual in realities that ought to be acknowledged. These two extremities occupy Duluoz's early thinking process and give birth to a defective feedback loop:

It's gloom as unpredicted on this earth, I realize all the uncountable manifestations the thinking-mind invents to place wall of horror before its pure perfect realization that there is no wall and no horror just Transcendental Empty Kissable Milk Light of Everlasting Eternity's true and perfectly empty nature—I know everything's alright but I want proof and the Buddhas and the Virgin Marys are there reminding me of the solemn pledge of faith in this harsh and stupid earth where we rage our so-called lives in a sea of worry.

(*TR*, 568)

As Duluoz eventually discovers, pretending that facticities ("wall of horror") do not exist is not a sustainable strategy because it goes beyond liberating the human function from the stern

stranglehold of the instincts and into the spiritual realm of futile rumination. In this sense, escaping facticities through Buddhism could be compared to live-streaming an event on one's phone despite being in attendance at the venue where it is taking place. The evidence of the futility of such self-deceptive strategies is found in Duluoz's immediate confession that his realization of the inexistence of facticities is dubious as he still requires validation (that "everything's alright") from his religious and spiritual points of reference.

Duluoz's commitment to a life of solitude, abstinence, and desolation, even if intermittent, proves to be counterproductive and counterintuitive. Benedict Giomo believes that "Jack Duluoz falls short of the Buddhist ideal" and coins the term *enlightened attachment* to describe the middle ground between the two extremities in which Duluoz is most at ease: "Enlightened attachment is an acknowledgment of spiritual struggle between noumena and phenomena and the difficulties of cultivating complete and enduring detachment in solitude. It admits rather than annihilates our humanity, that is, our immersion in the experience and language and consciousness of the phenomenal world."¹⁸ Giomo's assessment that Duluoz "falls short of the Buddhist ideal" is inaccurate because the failure of Buddhism should rather be attributed to the exploitation of its darkest extreme, as this section has so far argued. However, his notion of enlightened attachment perfectly complements Sartre's *en soi-pour soi* and Jung's elaboration of Janet's *partie inférieure-partie supérieure* dyads. More specifically, the struggle that Giomo refers to is inscribed within the very notion of Sartre's bad faith, understood as an ongoing tension between facticities and transcendence.

On the other hand, the second part of the definition of enlightened attachment can be considered a direct reaction against the tendency to "devalue life in order to transcend life,"¹⁹ which is the root cause of nihilism as per Nietzsche. Giomo believes that, to achieve this middle ground, Duluoz "needs to constantly revise, in fact, to downsize, the nature of his spiritual quest,"²⁰ which enables the emergence of a new kind of religion—what Luke Ferretter recognizes as a "new, eclectic, American religion" that the Beats created, which exceeds Buddhism and "incorporates many other discourses and traditions, including Native American

¹⁸ Benedict Giomo, "Enlightened Attachment: Kerouac's Impermanent Buddhist Trek," *Religion & Literature* 35, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn, 2003): 196.

¹⁹ Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, 103.

²⁰ Giomo, "Enlightened Attachment," 197.

religion, anarchism, and love of the wild.”²¹ This is the same religion that Stephen Prothero deems as a mixture of “gnosticism, mysticism, native American lore, Aztec and Mayan mythology, American transcendentalism, [and] Hinduism.”²² This hybrid religion has value beyond Duluoz’s coming to terms with the limitations and realities of his world and his justification of his indulgence in its pleasures—it may represent an actualization of absolute authenticity.

Duluoz’s alienation and absurdism partly result from the cognitive dissonance experienced at the liminal phase in which Duluoz finds himself constantly ricocheting from one extreme to the other, one foot in the bar with women, alcohol, and drugs, and another on a mountaintop meditating and praying for the salvation of the world. The notion of eternal recurrence becomes, then, synonymous with the psychic condition of authenticity in the sense that, in order to truly be at peace with the idea of infinitely re-experiencing one’s life, one has to perceive the past in hindsight as having been lived partly by blindly following the guide of the instincts and partly by exerting free will. This becomes the dual narrative with which the disorientation of the liminal phase is to be confronted.

Jung warns about the dangers of blind adherence to organized religious bodies as a source of meaning because “once Mother Church and her motherly Eros fall into abeyance, the individual is at the mercy of any passing collectivism and the attendant mass psyche. He succumbs to social or national inflation, and the tragedy is that he does so with the same psychic attitude which had once bound him to a church.”²³ This is precisely what happens to Duluoz whose all but addictive adherence to Christianity contaminates his practice of Buddhism. Thus, what is supposed to be an instrument of release from dissonance and dualities becomes a worshipped dogma in itself²⁴—what Jung refers to as “isms,” which is “only a sophisticated substitute for the lost link with psychic reality”²⁵ (the loss of the psychic condition of authenticity).

²¹ Luke Ferretter, “Religious Pluralism and the Beats,” in *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, ed. Mark Knight (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 414.

²² Stephen Prothero, “On the Holy Road: The Beat Movement as Spiritual Protest,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (Apr. 1991): 216.

²³ Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, 155.

²⁴ It is worth mentioning that Jung himself wrote quite favorably of Buddhism in the forward to D.T. Suzuki’s *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, praising its potential to bring to consciousness unconscious content, thereby decreasing limitations and allowing “‘total exhibition’ of potential nature.” Carl Gustav Jung, “Forward,” *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* by D.T. Suzuki (New York: Grove, 1964), 21–22.

²⁵ Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, 156.

Jung also mentions that

The ego keeps its integrity only if it does not identify with one of the opposites, and if it understands how to hold the balance between them. This is possible only if it remains conscious of both at once. However, the necessary insight is made exceedingly difficult not by one's social and political leaders alone, but also by one's religious mentors.

They want decision in favour of one thing, and therefore the utter identification of the individual with a necessarily one-sided "truth." Even if it were a question of some great truth, identification with it would still be a catastrophe, as it arrests all further spiritual development. Instead of knowledge one then has only belief, and sometimes that is more convenient and therefore more attractive.²⁶

Jung's characterization of the battle against "isms" is an accurate depiction of the psychological struggle of the individual in the liminal period. The postwar state of Godlessness exposes the individual whose faith has been shaken to all kinds of ideologies—for example, the Marxism of the New Left whom Duluoz despised, or the Buddhism that he and the Beats adopted. I would argue that preserving the ego's "integrity" is Jung's way of referring to genuine authenticity through the resistance against the "isms." Once institutionalized and blindly adhered to, religious and spiritual doctrines work against the quest to find or retrieve authenticity. In *The Dharma Bums*, Japhy, who is recognized by Duluoz as "the number one Dharma Bum of them all" (*TDB*, 285), inadvertently emerges as a spiritual mentor who appears to be, at least from what one understands from Duluoz's depiction, the kind that Jung warns about. His teachings validate Duluoz's extremist proclivities and adherence to one-sided truths as evident in his answer to Japhy about his views on death: "I think death is our reward. When we die we go straight to nirvana Heaven and that's that," which is, on the one hand, a "one-sided truth,"²⁷ and on the other, a refurbished demonstration of his inability to truly rid himself of the Christian influence—the expression "nirvana Heaven" confirms the inseparability between Buddhism and Christianity in Duluoz's mind.

Duluoz's near-addictive adherence to Christianity constitutes an obstacle to a legitimate embrace of Buddhism—which has its shortcomings as discussed above—or any other spiritual

²⁶ Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, 153.

²⁷ Note that Buddhism, in general, is much more reluctant in offering a final truth; however, it is Duluoz's subjective interpretation of Buddhism that sometimes gives the impression that it does.

doctrine. The fact that his Buddhism is always a hybrid compound that cannot shed its Christian component is explained by Dan Sperber's notion of the pull of the intuitive force.²⁸ That being said, the transition to Buddhism in the first place is motivated by the need to reconcile his deep-seated Christian beliefs with the newfound lifestyle of the subterraneans. Sperber's notion of the *epidemiology of beliefs*, which in some ways is an expansion of Jung's views, differentiates between the categories of knowledge and beliefs with the observation that "unlike everyday empirical knowledge, religious beliefs develop not because of a disposition, but because of a susceptibility."²⁹ More specifically, Sperber classifies religious beliefs in the category of *reflective beliefs* which, unlike *intuitive beliefs*, are always half-understood by the individual holding them:

Here is a belief [the belief that God is everywhere] which, like most religious beliefs, does not lend itself to a final, clear, interpretation, and which therefore will never become an intuitive belief. Part of the interest of religious beliefs for those who hold them comes precisely from this element of mystery, from the fact that you are never through interpreting them. While the cognitive usefulness of religious and other mysterious beliefs may be limited ... it is not too difficult to see how their very mysteriousness makes them "addictive."³⁰

Applying the epidemiological view to Duluoz's case, one gets at an entirely different understanding of the narrator's obsession with the mysteries analyzed in chapter four. Even his request for evidence cited above ("I know everything's alright but I want proof") demonstrates how methodically and studiously he is interested in *maintaining the continuity of the process* of unraveling mysteries, less so concluding this process. Part of Duluoz's struggle, then, emerges from him spending a significant part of his life trying to validate what subliminally appear to him as ideas that are incompatible with his intuitive beliefs such as the notion of Heaven, the virtue of suffering, and the compassion of God. Since Buddhism allows for more philosophical inquiries, it becomes a tool to question the Christian God, who never really disappears from Duluoz's belief system and the eclectic religion that fashions.

²⁸ See page 147 of chapter four.

²⁹ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 74.

³⁰ Sperber, 90.

Modes of Timelessness

The previous discussion has briefly touched upon the concept of time in the *Legend*, especially with the notion of eternal recurrence that associates the awareness of constant change with the reinterpretation of one's past. Independent of Nietzsche's ideas, time is a critical component of authenticity and, in the *Legend* specifically, time does not follow a standard configuration. Erik R. Mortenson's study of atypical temporality in *On the Road* is exemplary in showcasing how Duluoz and Dean manage to subvert the notion of clock time. Mainly interested in the novel's resistance to capitalism's hijacking of time and the retrieval of authentic time, Mortenson applies Georg Lukács's Marxist interpretation of the relationship between time and alienation by referencing his notion of *reification*. According to Lukács, Mortenson explains, capitalism has produced "clock time" which has two essential features: first, the "quantification of time," which indicates the process through which "the period of time necessary for work to be accomplished ... is converted, as mechanization and rationalization are intensified, from a merely empirical average figure to an objectively calculable work-stint that confronts the worker as a fixed and established reality"; and second, "the conversion of time into space" whereby "time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature ... in short, it becomes space."³¹ Relating this to the novel, Mortenson observes how Duluoz and Dean are often "unconstrained by schedule or routine," how "very few actions in this novel are ever repeated exactly. Kerouac seldom gives the exact dates and times of his travels, referring only to months of the year or seasons," and finally, how "many of the most important events in the novel, for instance, take place in the spaces between, while moving from one location to another."³² Mortenson also argues that temporality, especially for Dean, is dependent on movement, and that authentic time belongs to the domain of the Other (Mexicans and African Americans), an observation that is in line with my main argument in chapter one about the authenticity of the Other.

Many other studies have noted the nonlinear temporality in Kerouac's work. For example, while Daniel Belgrad deduces that nonlinear time is an "important theme of Beat

³¹ Erik R. Mortenson, "Beating Time: Configurations of Temporality in Jack Kerouac's 'On the Road,'" *College Literature* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 52.

³² Mortenson, 53.

writing,” especially Kerouac’s,³³ Tim Cresswell observes that *Visions of Cody* “dispensed entirely with all spatial and temporal linearity” and that *On the Road* “starts to explore the possibility of breaking out of the linear mode while retaining a temporally linear plot structure.”³⁴ That being said, there has been a stagnation in the study of Beat temporality and a need to incorporate contemporary conceptions of time which is why, for example, the theme of the most recent annual conference of the European Beat Studies Network (September 2022) was “Beat Times: Temporalities in Beat Writing.” The following discussion offers two new conceptions of nonlinear temporality in the *Legend* that demonstrate an understanding of and engagement with reality that transcends the distinction between clock time and natural time. However, there is a need first to revisit an important philosophical interpretation of temporality, which is that of Heidegger, and which Mortenson touches upon only in passing when he describes Dean’s escaping Heideggerian *inauthentic temporality* by living in the present moment through his Beat lifestyle.³⁵

Timelessness and Duluoz’s *Being-Toward-Death*

Duluoz and the other characters demonstrate a willingness to go out of their way, sacrificing relative mental and financial stability, in search of ways to stretch the euphoria of the experience of the present moment which is, to Duluoz, “the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows” (*OTR*, 173). However, whereas Dean embodies timelessness organically, Duluoz only experiences it in fleeting glimpses and even struggles to sustain it, mainly because of his infatuation with death. Michael D’Orso observes how in *On the Road*, Duluoz “comes to realize that the only way to actually escape time is to die.”³⁶ The same view is shared by Mortenson who tries to locate authenticity in Duluoz’s metaphysical preoccupations. Seeing as these preoccupations distract him from being in the present moment that he so often yearns for, Mortenson argues that

³³ Daniel Belgrad, “The Transnational Counterculture: Beat-Mexican Intersections,” in *Reconstructing the Beats*, ed. Jennie Skerl (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 35–36.

³⁴ Tim Cresswell, “Mobility as Resistance: A Geographical Reading of Kerouac’s ‘On the Road,’” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18, no. 2 (1993): 256.

³⁵ Mortenson, “Beating Time,” 57.

³⁶ Michael D’Orso, “Man Out of Time: Kerouac, Spengler, and the ‘Faustian Soul,’” *Studies in American Fiction* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 24.

Throughout *On the Road* there exists a tension between Dean and Sal's conceptions of timelessness. Dean's is a life-affirming philosophy, a belief that life should be lived to the fullest in every moment. Though Sal seems to desire this idea, his notions remain firmly entrenched in Christian ideals that display temporal transcendence in terms of annihilation. Where Dean sees an infinity in the moment, Sal sees infinity in the beyond.³⁷

I would argue that the problem of temporal transcendence exceeds the theological underpinnings of Mortenson's analysis. Let us contemplate the issue from a phenomenological standpoint: if Mortenson is right, that is, if Duluoz's only solution to his existential crisis comes only after death, does this mean that achieving absolute authenticity during one's lifetime is impossible?

Based on the previous discussion of the fall of Duluoz's religious axis—and with it, the dissolution of any belief in an afterlife—the dilemma can be phrased differently: how can one achieve absolute authenticity knowing that *experiencing* or *embodying* death, which implies the awareness of being dead, is simultaneously a necessary part of this form of authenticity and an experience that is denied human beings? In Heideggerian terms, the problem is that “what we don't have, then, is phenomenological access to the loss of Being that the dead person has suffered.”³⁸ However, the answer lies in the notion of *being-toward-death*, which is especially relevant to the current discussion because it draws a connection between being and the notion of nothingness discussed in the previous chapter.

To begin with, a brief elaboration of Heideggerian authenticity is necessary.³⁹ According to Heidegger, *being-in-the-world* is an aspect of existence that characterizes the individual's openness to and interaction with the world—the “totality of involvements” with its entities. It is best understood “by way of an interconnected pair of three-dimensional unitary structures” which are, in turn, interpreted “in terms of the three temporal dimensions: past (thrownness/disposedness), future (projection/understanding), and present

³⁷ Mortenson, “Beating Time,” 60–61.

³⁸ Michael Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2020 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/>, accessed 25 May 2022.

³⁹ The explanation of Heidegger's account of authenticity, including the featured paraphrased and direct quotations, correspond to Michael Wheeler's entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* cited in the previous note. For the original discussion, refer to: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, [1927] 1962).

(fallenness/fascination).” While *thrownness* and *projection* coincide with determinism and freedom discussed in the previous section, in Heidegger’s view, *Dasein* (existence, of which *being-in-the-world* is an aspect) “emerges as a delicate balance” between the two. *Dasein*, then, is in perfect harmony with Jung’s *psychic condition*, Giamo’s *enlightened attachment*, Duluoz’s hybrid religion, and all the theories that stipulate a middle ground and detachment from all forms of extremities.

Fallenness, however, is a condition of inauthenticity:

“Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the world.” Such fallen-ness into the world is manifested in *idle talk* (roughly, conversing in a critically unexamined and unexamining way about facts and information while failing to use language to reveal their relevance), *curiosity* (a search for novelty and endless stimulation rather than belonging or dwelling), and *ambiguity* (a loss of any sensitivity to the distinction between genuine understanding and superficial chatter). Each of these aspects of fallen-ness involves a closing off or covering up of the world (more precisely, of any real understanding of the world) through a fascination with it. What is crucial here is that this world-obscuring process of fallen-ness/fascination, as manifested in idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity, is to be understood as Dasein’s everyday mode of Being-with.⁴⁰

Many of the excerpts examined so far demonstrate these aspects of fallenness, notably the failure of language to refer to the meaning of experience, the “curiosity” manifested across the extremes of materialism and Buddhism, and the “ambiguity” in the interpretation of godless freedom, which strongly suggests that fallenness is indeed the dimension of existence that Duluoz is caught in. Given that a wholesome actualization of being-in-the-world necessitates defining one’s connection to death, fallenness is redefined as a condition of inauthenticity because it confirms the inability to conceptualize the certainty of one’s death.

When it comes to death, in so far as Duluoz *throws* himself into the past or *projects* himself to the future, he is able to achieve authenticity as long as he manifests the *authentic* states that correspond to thrownness and projection, which are *anxiety* and *anticipation*—as

⁴⁰ Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger.”

opposed to *fear* and *expectation*—which make death a conceivable possibility to him. As for the state of fallenness that Duluoz strives to escape, Heidegger claims that, for it to transform into a condition of authenticity, fallenness needs to become *discourse*,⁴¹ one of the most practical meanings of which is *resoluteness* or the “individual commitment to (and thus individual ownership of) one of the possible ways to be that one’s socio-cultural embeddedness makes available.” This should not be interpreted as a submission to institutionalized identity choices, which Duluoz disrupts as discussed in chapter two, but rather as a commitment to an available project. Such commitment is itself freedom from the dictated modes of being (what Heidegger calls *they*).

To recap, the notion of being cannot be apprehended without defining its relationship to death, this is because “Dasein has an internal relation to the nothing.”⁴² Authentic being can be materialized within three spheres: the past (thrownness, anxiety about death), the future (projection, anticipation of death), and the present (resoluteness, commitment to a mode of being available throughout the socio-cultural structures). Finally, it should also be mentioned that Heidegger sees every event in existence as constituted by thrownness (past), projection (future), and fallenness/discourse (present) in a “co-realizing” instead of a successive, chronological way.

Consider the dream that Duluoz has about “a strange Arabian figure that was pursuing me across the desert; that I tried to avoid; that finally overtook me just before I reached the Protective City” (*OTR*, 111). While Duluoz recognizes the figure as being symbolic of death, the dream itself symbolizes avoidance from and resistance to death and denial of Heideggerian *anxiety* and *anticipation*. Upon reflecting on the dream, Duluoz realizes that

the one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nauseas of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death. But who wants to die? ... I told it to Dean and he instantly recognized it as the mere simple longing for pure death. (*OTR*, 111)

⁴¹ The Heideggerian term *discourse* is ambiguous and has been opened to multiple interpretations, some of which have to do with the linguistic aspect that the term implies.

⁴² Duluoz’s infatuation with nothingness validates this. See the discussion in the section titled “Morality and Nothingness: Duluoz’s Nihilism” on pages 142–51 of chapter four.

It seems that both Dean and Duluoz recognize death as an object of desire. However, this state of “pure death” that is longed for denies *being-toward-death* because, though it manifests *thrownness* (remembrance of the bliss of death) as well as *projection* (the yearning for death), it leaves no place for *resoluteness* or the genuine commitment to a mode of being outside of these states. This degrades the present as somehow inferior to the two other temporalities of existence where “bliss” or authenticity belong or used to belong. The question “But who wants to die?” reveals that Duluoz is trapped in the trifecta of the Heideggerian dilemma: he desires authenticity, he recognizes that authenticity is achieved only in death, yet he fears death.

That being said, *Big Sur* discloses a sophisticated manifestation of the authentic present that signals a transition from *fallenness* toward a genuine understanding of death—*understanding* being a property of Heideggerian *projection*⁴³—which is revealed on the mountain where Duluoz is overcome by a sudden feeling of despair:

it comes over me in the form of horror of an eternal condition of sick mortality in me—
... I see myself as just doomed, pitiful—An awful realization that I have been fooling
myself all my life thinking there was a next thing to do to keep the show going ... All my
tricks laid bare, even the realization that they’re laid bare itself laid bare as a lotta bunk—
... God isn’t asking us to mope and suffer and sit by the sea in the cold at midnight for the
sake of writing down useless sounds, he gave us the tools of self reliance after all to make
it straight thru bad life mortality towards Paradise maybe I hope—But some miserables
like me don’t even know it, when it comes to us we’re amazed. (*BS*, 41–42)

Despite the fact that the passage is overwhelmingly bleak, it contains a *moment-of-vision* that is considered an authentic manifestation of *fallenness*⁴⁴ or, at least, a moment of genuine clarity that touches on a meta-level of understanding.

The world reveals itself to Duluoz as a constant reminder that he is bound to perish, prompting a double reaction of helplessness and anxiety, both of which could yield a positive interpretation of the function of the *present*, depending on how one understands the meaning of “show” in the phrase “to keep the show going.” Understood as a reference to the technocratic machine that has become America, Duluoz’s realization is of the insignificance of his role in the

⁴³ Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger.”

⁴⁴ Wheeler.

spectacle. Mortenson's reference to the capitalist mechanization of individuals in America, which challenges Duluoz's authentic being, is at the heart of this interpretation of helplessness because, considered as a mere cog plugged into the machinery of production, the individual is easily replaceable and, therefore, has no real value to add. Understood as a reference to life, however, the realization is that there is nothing that he can do to prevent death, that is, the interference of death in the present. He demonstrates meta-awareness (a meta-representational level of *understanding*) when he admits that even the realization of the fact that his tricks were laid bare—probably the tricks that he uses to keep the idea of death at bay—is itself laid bare. These realizations combine to constitute a reorientation toward the present that becomes the only temporal dimension that can be controlled by being actively engaged in a project (*resoluteness*).

Evolving “Nowness”: Perspectives on the Present in the Desolation Peak Experience

In the *Legend*, timelessness is often associated with Kerouac's writing style which he famously referred to as *spontaneous prose*,⁴⁵ and which incorporates the aesthetic of improvisational (free) jazz. Conducting an exhaustive study of jazz in Kerouac's work by drawing on the history and development of the genre and its formal structure, Michael Hrebaniak echoes Mortenson's view that in Kerouac “jazz challenges the dominant notion of time, creating instead its own internal temporality,”⁴⁶ and observes how improvisation “inspires Kerouac's disconnection from systematized chronology.”⁴⁷ However, there is also in Hrebaniak a conceptualization that transcends non-chronological time. Commenting on the structure of *The Subterraneans*, Hrebaniak sees that

Kerouac's sentences jettison frameworks of a distinct past, present, or future in order to embrace the dislocations of memory, perception, and vocabulary. The inconsistent tenses shuffle temporalities and stretch and contract the action, giving the curious sensation of a narrator who is simultaneously in the past and the present. Even when the text pursues an

⁴⁵ Jack Kerouac, “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose,” (1953) in *Good Blond and Others*, ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1993), pp. 69–71.

⁴⁶ Mortenson, “Beating Time,” 63.

⁴⁷ Michael Hrebaniak, *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 221.

ostensibly linear course, the language is released from causal prescription into a new set of conversational controls.⁴⁸

Abandoning the notion of timelessness and the ambiguity that it engenders, Hrebniak sees jazz as a means to unify the temporalities of existence, especially the past and the present, an interpretation that departs from the Heideggerian perception of the past and the future as configurations for the present. Jazz transforms time into a continuum, an argument shared by Douglas Malcolm who, in his analysis of *On the Road*, cites Stephen Nachmanovitch's study of improvisation in which the acclaimed musician and musicologist remarks that during an improvised performance, "the time of inspiration, the time of technically structuring and realizing the music, the time of playing it, and the time of communicating with the audience, as well as ordinary clock time, are all one.... Memory and intention (which postulate past and future) and intuition (which indicates the eternal present) are fused."⁴⁹ Notable in this outline of improvisation is the use of the notion of clock time in a way that deviates from Mortenson's view; while Mortenson suggests that Duluoz escapes clock time to liberate himself from the hold of capitalism, Malcolm sees in the improvisational process a synthesis of clock time and authentic time.

There is in Duluoz's Buddhism as well as in Eastern philosophy and religion in general the same inclination to talk about time as a continuum. Widely known as the spiritual mentor who popularized Buddhism in the West, Alan Watts explains that:

when we talk about different events, we're looking at different sections or parts of one continuous happening. And therefore, the idea of separate events which have to be linked by a mysterious process called cause and effect is completely unnecessary. But having thought that way, we think of present events as being caused by past events. And therefore, we tend to regard ourselves as the puppets of the past, as driven along by something that is always behind us.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Hrebniak, 134–35.

⁴⁹ Douglas Malcolm, "'Jazz America': Jazz and African American Culture in Jack Kerouac's 'On the Road,'" *Contemporary Literature* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 105–106.

⁵⁰ Alan Watts, "The Essential Lectures of Alan Watts – Time," 1972, Internet Archive, August 24, 2019, video, <https://archive.org/details/02.theessentiallecturesofalanwattsego/06.+The+Essential+Lectures+of+Alan+Watts+Time.mp4>, accessed 4 June 2022.

Watts's reference to cause and effect as a "mysterious process" reminds us of Duluoz's critique of cause-and-effect analysis in *The Subterraneans* mentioned in chapter two.⁵¹ In Watts's view, emancipation from clock time necessitates breaking the underlying causality between the three temporal dimensions so that, in conjunction with Nietzsche's eternal recurrence, time could be perceived as one flowing continuum and the past no longer appears deterministic, which liberates the individual from facticities. A good example of this is when Duluoz realizes that "everything is possible. I am God, I am Buddha, I am imperfect Ray Smith, all at the same time, I am empty space, I am all things. I have all the time in the world from life to life to do what is to do, to do what is done, to do the timeless doing, infinitely perfect within" (*TDB*, 369).

Watts's interpretation could be used more as a roadmap for altering time perception than an actual explanation of temporality in the *Legend*. In fact, there has not been any theoretical discussion of narrative temporality as a continuum except very recently. *Narrative Complexity: Cognition, Embodiment, Evolution* (2019) includes research at the cutting edge of narrative theory, which proposes experimental and interdisciplinary approaches that treat, as the title suggests, complex issues in narrative. Concerning the issues of narrative time and time as it is experienced during the improvisational moment, two monumental essays stand out: Martin E. Rosenberg's "Jazz as Narrative," which is discussed in chapter nine, and Pia Tikka's and Mauri Kaipainen's "Intersubjectivity, Idiosyncrasy, and Narrative Deixis," both of which build on Francisco Varela's neurophenomenological interpretation of Edmund Husserl's view on temporality and intersubjectivity.

Tikka's and Kaipainen's model of *narrative nowness* represents a perspective on the experience of time that is based on a neuroscientific understanding of Husserl's *nowness*. According to this model, "moments of nowness are primed by temporal contexts in terms of backward-looking *retention* and oriented with respect to the future in terms of *protention*,"⁵² with *nowness*, *retention*, and *protention* being terms that are coined by Husserl—*retention* and *protention*, in particular, correspond to Heidegger's *thrownness* and *projection*. The authors expound on the notion of *retentive perspective*, which is central to their model:

⁵¹ See pages 76–77 of chapter two.

⁵² Pia Tikka and Mauri Kaipainen, "Intersubjectivity, Idiosyncrasy, and Narrative Deixis: A Neurocinematic Approach," in *Narrative Complexity: Cognition, Embodiment, Evolution*, eds. Marina Grishakova and Maria Poulaki (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 319.

The self-referential narrative ontospace allows the specification of different perspectives to itself. It allows the definition of perspectives in which the narrative elements appear similar or different. This ideal construct includes all potential meaningful relations within the narrative, constituting in that sense the ontology of the story. In this case, an event's temporal distance to another is interpreted as a narrative coordinate, determining its position in the narrative ontospace, and thereby an estimate or a default value of the extent to which the previous primes the latter, the shorter distance the stronger priming.... each individual experience is regulated by a subjective prioritization among the dimensions, termed *retentive perspective* ... [which] can be regarded as a continuously evolving set of experience-grounded mental explanations of the nowness using a subjectively prioritized set of narrative dimensions.... A retentive perspective can lift past events to an explanatory role only partially relative to the temporal distance between them and the present. The retentive perspective is highly subjective and varies across time, owing to the unfolding of narrative events, autobiographical associations as well as embodied and enactive factors.⁵³

In this view, narrative time is not a horizontal chain of interlinked and causal events but could be seen rather as a vertical set of selectable dimensions. Here also, time becomes space, not in the Marxist reification sense in which "time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature," but in quite a different sense: narrative coordinates, which refer to the temporal distance from one event to another, activate the retentive perspective in such a way as to allow more fluidity, more dynamic interaction between events and more ways to locate oneself within the present moment.

Looking at eternal recurrence as a continuously evolving set of retentive perspectives allows for a new way of viewing the experience-reevaluation process that Duluoz is so invested in. It could be argued that the retentive perspective as defined by Tikka and Kaipainen is itself one of the themes in the *Legend*. We often encounter revisions of the meaning of the present moment in several locations in the novels. The apparent randomness of these revisions is but a triggered selection of prior events used as explanations for the present moment (Tikka's and Kaipainen's narrative nowness). In order to account for the changes in Duluoz's nowness, key events must be considered as narrative dimensions that provide context for selection. Consider,

⁵³ Tikka and Kaipainen, 320.

once again, the summer stay at Desolation Peak, where Duluoz worked as a fire lookout. The sixty-three days spent on top of that mountain were so influential in Duluoz's life and so consequential to the narrative that the events that occurred there were recounted in three different novels: *Lonesome Traveler*, *The Dharma Bums*, and *Desolation Angels*, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This means that the same experience has a distinct signification to and effect on completely different parts of the narrated life history. Let's call the Desolation Peak experience "Narrative dimension 1" (ND1).

The eight chapters of *Lonesome Traveler* represent events happening in eight different locations in America (the mountain, the city) or abroad (Mexico, Morocco, and France), which highlights the geographical significance of the events. The chapters are also so loosely connected that each could constitute an independent novella, which suggests that the events of the novel are not connected temporally but rather spatially-geographically. This autonomy and independence from chronology imply that separate events in different chapters could be viewed as selectable narrative dimensions, the association between which gives rise to retentive perspectives. In *Desolation Angels*, specifically, the "Desolation in Solitude" part, ND1 (the mountaintop experience) is evoked or "lifted," as Tikka and Kaipainen prefer to say, in order to make sense of nowness as a state of desolation (the feeling of desolation in the present). The second part has the misleading title "Desolation in the World" because it gives the impression that it examines desolation in the "civilized" world in the same manner that part one examines it in nature. In reality, the juxtaposition of the titles of the two parts merely manifests the dichotomous structure of the *Legend* (discussed in chapter four) in the same way that Kerouac's first novel *The Town and the City* presupposes a sharp dichotomy between life in Lowell and that in New York. Titles that are more representative of the content (yet, surely less creative) and that highlight the emerging retentive perspective would be along the lines of "The Experience of Desolation" for part one, and "Reflections on the Experience of Desolation" for part two.

The first retentive perspective generated by ND1 appears as soon as Duluoz realizes that his mountain stay has come to an end and that they are coming up to get him. Let's call the retentive perspective acquired at the very end of the mountain stay and right before the descent from the mountain "Retentive Perspective 1" (RP1). Duluoz's perception/explanation of his present condition in RP1 is strongly primed by ND1 because the temporal distance that defines

its narrative coordinate is rather short. Upon realizing that he is soon about to come down from the mountain, he rejoices because “it seems as though the six weeks of lonely bored solitude on Desolation Peak has come to an end ... I’m down off the mountain and the whole bloody mess of boredom done—” (*DA*, 41). RP1 is clearly one of desolation as the explanation of the nowness is heavily impacted by the extreme feeling of loneliness and the immediate urge to go back to civilization. As the temporal distance increases, however, the explanation of the nowness alters.

Tikka’s and Kaipainen’s justification for the existence of multiple retentive perspectives is that no individual “is capable of an omniscient experience—namely, such that would take into account all narrative dimensions to an equal extent,”⁵⁴ which applies to all “experiencers” of narrative, including the reader and the narrator. Most of part two of *Desolation Angels* (“Desolation in the World”) represents the cognitive processing of the experience that had occurred in the immediate past, which mostly involves a readjustment of expectations (protention): “Funny how, now the time (in timelessness) has come to leave that hated rock-top trap I have no emotions, instead of making a humble prayer to my sanctuary as I twist it out of sight behind my heaving back all I do is say “Bah—humbug” (knowing the mountain will understand, the void) but where was the joy?—the joy I prophesied ... ?” (*DA*, 79). The present of the specific narrative coordinate that features here is no longer characterized by desolation, but neither by joyfulness. Within this explanation of nowness, the desolation of RP1 gives way to a second Retentive Perspective RP2, which is characterized by neutrality (“I have no emotions”). Neutralization occurs because, at that precise moment, the high expectations of some groundbreaking change in worldview and extreme serenity in protention are canceled out by the recent experience of extreme desolation in retention. This does not take away the significance of the experience of “oneness” that Duluoz claims to have on the mountain but rather demystifies it by explaining it as a consequence of a specific retentive perspective that neutralizes the extremities of (past) desolation and (future) expectations of radical change.

Not only do the emotionally grounded extremities of desolation and expectation of serenity dissolve in RP2, but religious ones as well. On noticing a beautiful sight of haze on a lake during the descent from the mountain, Duluoz deduces that “whatever happens to me down that trail to the world is all right with me because I am God and I’m doing it all myself, who

⁵⁴ Tikka and Kaipainen, 320.

else? While meditating, I am Buddha—Who else?” (DA, 80). Godlessness seems to have become a feature of that specific moment in the present; yet, it is not a stable feature. Notice, for example, how, while descending the same trail, Duluoz suddenly wonders “how can the universe be anything but a Womb? And the Womb of God or the Womb of Tathagata, it’s two languages not two Gods—And anyway the truth is relative, the world is relative—Fire is fire and isn’t fire—‘Don’t disturb the sleeping Einstein in his bliss’” (DA, 88). Due to the cognitive dissonance it generates, there is some resistance to accepting the religious neutrality of RP2. The reader is treated to a negotiation happening inside Duluoz’s mind, where the narrator is trying to find meaning for the state of neutrality and oneness of RP2 within his established religious axis. On the one hand, there is the ongoing conflict between Christianity and Buddhism, and, on the other, there is a secular understanding of oneness acquired on the mountain. Interestingly, adopting RP2 turns out to be a possible temporary resolution to the conflict even though getting completely rid of the Christian–Buddhist conception of desolation—namely that desolation, like suffering, is a justified necessity—proves to be difficult, confirming Sperber’s notion of the pull of the intuitive force.⁵⁵ This is demonstrated when Duluoz tries to unify both tenets, saying first that God and Buddha are not separate gods but two expressions of the same god, followed immediately by hesitation and a proclamation that, either way, it does not matter since truth is relative.⁵⁶

As the temporal distance separating the present from the mountain experience widens even further, RP2 begins to destabilize and a new retentive perspective takes over. Let’s call RP3 the Retentive Perspective adopted at the beginning of Book Two of *Desolation Angels*. Lifting ND1 again, Duluoz determines that “after the experience on top of the mountain ... I now wanted a reproduction of that absolute peace in the world of society but secretly greedy too for some of the pleasures of society” (DA, 245). Whereas RP2 defines the present as a state of neutrality and oneness, RP3 recognizes solitude as a rather positive aspect of oneness. Duluoz’s yearning for “a reproduction of that absolute peace” means that his expectation of an enjoyable

⁵⁵ See page 147 of chapter four.

⁵⁶ The attachment to Christianity also appears when Duluoz, desiring to continue receiving God’s bliss despite his indulgence in material pleasures, implores Him: “‘May I wear Your cross in this world as it is [without abandoning material pleasures]?’ No matter what happens, may I wear your cross?—are there many kinds of purgatories not?” (DA, 169). His desperation shows in his question about whether there are specific kinds of purgatories for those who have indulged in material pleasures to redeem themselves and be eventually allowed to rejoin heaven if they had kept their belief in God alongside their indulgence.

future state (protention) overrides the negative consequences of loneliness to such an extent that his nowness vis-à-vis the mountain experience becomes characterized by joy. Reconfiguring the present by overriding the negative aspects of past experiences in favor of the actualization of possible prospects is a practical application of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. By adopting RP3, Duluoz can see himself returning to the mountain and having the experience again in another lifetime despite the initial feeling of desolation that it had induced in him in RP1—he becomes an Overman.

The evolving nowness that results from adopting several retentive perspectives demonstrates the importance of time (temporal distances or narrative coordinates) in making sense of experiences and incorporating these experiences in defining the meaning of the present. It also demonstrates that in the *Legend*, the perspective of reality is contingent on time and movement. Unlike regular situations where the passing of time also induces a reevaluation of experience, narrative temporality from the viewpoint of the retentive perspective evokes a continuous reevaluation of what *reality* is from Duluoz's viewpoint. Even though the different explanations of nowness emerging from each retentive perspective are directly linked to the experience of the mountain, their collective outcome is not different interpretations of the experience, but different views of reality in such a way that the Real presents itself differently each time, especially when authenticity itself is regarded as a condition of the present: in RP1, authenticity necessitates the experience of desolation and suffering; in RP2, authenticity is found in something similar to the Buddhist notion of oneness; and in RP3, authenticity is related to joyfulness.

As the reader can infer, other narrative dimensions could lead to different explanations of nowness and interpretations of reality. This would require broader research that does not fit within the scope of this dissertation but that would no doubt lead to other interpretations stemming from other narratorial experiences and involving the many other aspects of reality that are outside of the desolation–joyfulness spectrum. What is certain is that the search for these narrative dimensions should take into consideration observable evocations or “lifting” by Duluoz of key experiences from the past (retention) that induce reassessments of the present time, always in connection to future expectations (protention). Whereas the mountain experience constitutes an important narrative dimension for the above-mentioned reasons, others might

include the mountain climb with Japhy described in *The Dharma Bums*, the trip to Mexico in *On the Road*, and the childhood in Lowell described in *The Town and the City*. Crucial to this type of analysis is to avoid treating the novels separately but as one long story because experiences had in one novel tend to be evoked in Duluoz's consciousness and reflections in other ones. Also, the selected experiences must be seen by Duluoz as having an impact on his present, and the importance of the temporal distance between the retentive perspective being theorized and the narrative dimension of the experience must be highlighted.

Timelessness and Nothingness from a Quantum Mechanical Viewpoint

There are manifestations of temporality in the *Legend* that defy Tikka's and Kaipainen's no-omniscience rule, particularly, in scenes where timelessness becomes fused with the notion of oneness. Duluoz's preoccupation with oneness is evident across *The Legend* as, from the onset, the word "beat" itself denotes the fusion of the states of distress and bliss, which happen to be incarnated in the image of Jesus Christ: the poor and the blissful. Drawing on Duluoz's religious foundation, Douglas Anderson infers that "to be fully a desolation angel or a grievous angel, one must be both beat and beatific."⁵⁷ Nancy Grace expands the interpretation of oneness at the end of her discussion of *On the Road* by drawing attention to the fact that "there resides [in Duluoz's quest] the eternal need to recognize that which is both possible and not possible." This is evidenced in the struggle to reconcile the conflict that she sees between desire and unattainability, notably apropos issues of fundamental importance to his quest such as "eschatological knowledge," "the road of excess," and human relationships.⁵⁸ Grace also sees in the mysterious apparitions an incarnation of the paradoxes that cloud Duluoz's understanding of reality:

the Shrouded Stranger is the alienated light within the dark (humans on earth and the transcendent's emissaries of knowledge) and the alienated dark within the light (the evil part of humans and the material universe itself that exists within the unnamable ALL). As knowledge of humans' origins in darkness and the human inheritance of the light, the

⁵⁷ Douglas R. Anderson, *Philosophy Americana: Making Philosophy at Home in American Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 232.

⁵⁸ Nancy M. Grace, *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 102.

Shrouded Stranger signifies human beings as their doom and their savior—knowledge that one must shed and must seek.⁵⁹

The narrative function of the Shrouded Traveler is similar to that of Dean's IT in that both are manifestations of oneness and timelessness. The similarity is expressed in Hrebeniak's observation that IT represents the moment where "the antitheses of ecstasy and desolation are rendered simultaneous, corroborating the twofold nature of the 'Beat' signifier as 'played out' and 'beatific.'"⁶⁰

Although the merger between oneness and timelessness may help dismantle dangerous dualities, it remains largely a metaphysical undertaking. From a "physical," material, or concrete perspective, it remains unclear what it means for Duluo to "recognize what is both possible and not possible," for him to want to seek knowledge and shed it at the same time, or even for the states of ecstasy and desolation to coexist. Even though the fictional aspect of the storyworld of the *Legend* may allow such illogical transgressions to be grasped by the reader without too much resistance, the factual (autobiographical) aspect demands that one treats them as if they were properties of the actual world (AW). The most fitting theory that could account for these paradoxes would be one that oscillates between the philosophical and the scientific, to legitimize claims of oneness and timelessness by grounding them in empirical research and at the same time maintain their philosophical dimension. I would argue that Many-Worlds Interpretation (MWI) is a theory that fulfills that role as the following brief analysis hopefully clarifies.

MWI is one of the best contemporary quantum-mechanical explanations of reality whereby a superposition of events is not only possible but is the suggested explanation of how everything in the universe exists. Contemplation around MWI began with Erwin Schrödinger's famous thought experiment in 1935 where a cat is placed inside a box with a radioactive source that has an uncertain probability of emitting a particle, along with a Geiger counter and cyanide poison. If the Geiger counter detects radioactive emission, it clicks, dropping a hammer, breaking the bottle of cyanide poison, and killing the cat. The following is an illustration of the experiment:

⁵⁹ Grace, 78–79.

⁶⁰ Hrebeniak, *Action Writing*, 41.

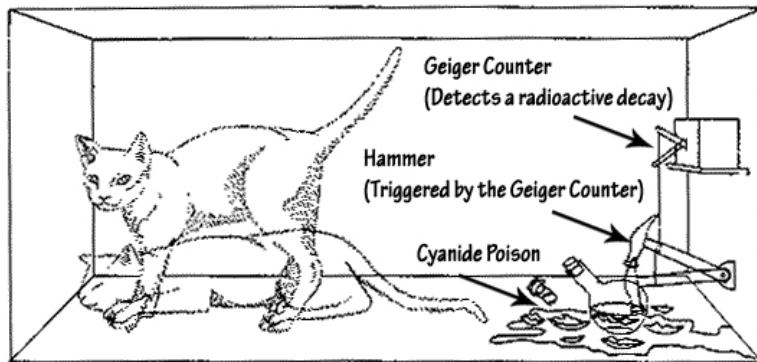


Figure 1. Schrödinger's cat.

While classical mechanics and basic probability would have one believe that there is a fifty-fifty chance that the cat is either alive or dead when one opens the box, the rules of quantum mechanics suggest that the cat is in a state of superposition, *both alive and dead*.⁶¹ According to what is called the *Copenhagen interpretation*, the reason why the observer can never see the cat as alive and dead at the same time is that, as soon as one opens the box to observe or *measure* the results, the *wave function*⁶² collapses and the individual can see the cat in only one state, either alive or dead, as if measurement or observation itself interferes with the wave function and causes it to collapse.

That being said, in his 1957 Ph.D. dissertation, Hugh Everett would challenge this predominant view, suggesting that when the observer opens the box, they get *entangled* with the cat, the instruments, and the entire environment in the box. Therefore, instead of causing the wave function to collapse, the observer becomes part of the quantum system, resulting in the rise of two distinct worlds: one in which the observer sees a dead cat and another in which they see a cat that is alive. Initially rejected by the scientific community, Everett's interpretation, which would be called Many-Worlds Interpretation, would be vindicated by the subsequent discovery of quantum *decoherence* which suggests that, instead of collapsing, measurement (observation) causes the wave functions to decohere because all the entities (the observer, the cat, the instrument, and the environment) belong to the same quantum realm. In this view, the reason

⁶¹ Ironically, Schrödinger invented the experiment in order to put to rest the seeming absurdity of this prediction of quantum mechanics because it interfered with his wave function equation.

⁶² A wave function is a visual wave-like description or illustration of the location of a particle at a given time.

why we can only observe or experience only one of the states, alive cat or dead cat, is because the two worlds can never meet.⁶³

What may initially appear as mere science fiction is today one of the most plausible mathematically supported explanations of the paradoxes of reality. The philosophical possibilities that emerge from MWI allow for a reinterpretation of temporal oneness as a *superposition of events* that could account for some of the paradoxes and mysteries discussed in chapter four. While the previous discussion explains nowness as evolving perspectives based on the “lifting” of past events, here, nowness could be seen as all the possible perspectives that can be adopted at a time. MWI is especially useful in the search for meaning within the paradox embedded in the desire for religious bliss and material pleasures, where the reader could imagine Duluo as two separate individuals existing in two separate worlds, one in which he is a mindful, devout, religious, monk living in the mountains, and another in which he is a wild abuser of alcohol, chaser of women, and driver in the fast lane.

MWI can also be evoked to explain paradoxes generated from other experiences of logically impossible narrative omniscience. Consider, for example, one of Duluo’s cannabis-infused experiences:

I got out of the house and walked along and didn’t know which way to go, my mind kept turning into the several directions that I was thinking of going but my body kept walking straight along Columbus altho I felt the sensation of each of the directions I mentally and emotionally turned into, amazed at all the possible directions you can take with different motives that come in, like it can make you a different *person*—I’ve often thought of this since childhood, of suppose instead of going up Columbus as I usually did I’d turn into Filbert would something happen that at the time is insignificant enough but would be like enough to influence my whole life in the end?—What’s in store for me in the direction I *don’t* take? (*TS*, 482–83)

The spatiotemporal complexity in this scene is represented by the unnatural time that enables the experience of “the sensation of each of the directions” that Duluo “mentally and emotionally

⁶³ The entire description of MWI, including the illustration, is taken from a conference talk by theoretical physicist and philosopher Sean Carroll. *New Scientist*, “Sean Carroll: The many worlds of quantum mechanics,” June 24, 2020, YouTube video, 55:47. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7XIdFbCQyY&t=2266s>.

turned into.” Being “the strongest they’d ever had” (*TS*, 482), cannabis induces in Duluoz a state of contemplation of the radical changes that different directions—life choices if considered symbolically—are capable of effecting, which is not uncommon among drugs that entail alterations, expansions, or concentrations of certain states of consciousness.

As Duluoz admits to himself, his childhood curiosity about the possibilities that he does not explore may have oriented his drug experience toward omniscience so as to fulfill this unconscious and dormant desire. Aside from unverified speculations, the most intriguing of which being mycologist Paul Stamets’ drug-induced multiverse experience,⁶⁴ there is no scientific justification for the correlation between powerful hallucinogenics and the experience of omniscience. However, from the MWI point of view, it seems that drugs have given Duluoz access to different states at the same time (the “sensation of each of the directions”) experienced as different versions of himself in different universes. As mentioned before, MWI does not allow for the world in which Duluoz chooses to walk on Columbus and the world(s) where he chooses a different path to ever meet. This is why it would be interesting at the very least to analyze the role of external stimuli such as hallucinogenics as narrative props in creating narrative omniscience and anxiety-infused reflections by characters such as Duluoz’s “what’s in store for me in the direction I *don’t* take?”

In many respects, the *Legend* could be considered a philosophical treatise on the nature of existence as well as the nature of time itself, and the religious and spiritual tenets that Duluoz explores are but ways to tackle these issues from different angles. Aside from hallucinogenics, the different “isms” that Duluoz attaches himself to, most notably as pertains to religious and spiritual institutions, also constitute stimuli that enable the experience of narrative omniscience. At the end of the “Mexico Fellaheen” chapter in *Lonesome Traveler*, Duluoz goes to a church in Mexico to pray and experiences a psychic state that could be described as one that combines reverie, epiphany, serenity, and oneness:

I pray on my knees so long, looking up sideways at my Christ, I suddenly wake up in a trance in the church with my knees aching and a sudden realization that I’ve been listening to a profound buzz in my ears that permeates throughout the church and

⁶⁴ JRE Clips, “Joe Rogan Is Stunned By Paul Stamets Stories About the Multiverse,” Nov. 11, 2017, The Joe Rogan Experience, YouTube video, 11:36. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01mKyn_Gwcs.

throughout my ears and head and throughout the universe, the intrinsic silence of Purity (which is Divine). I sit in the pew quietly, rubbing my knees, the silence is roaring.—

Ahead is the Altar, the Virgin Mary is white in a field of blue-and-white-and-golden arrangements—it's too far to see adequately, I promise myself to go forward to the altar as soon as some of the people leave.—The people are all women, young and old, and suddenly here come two children in rags and blankets and barefooted walking slowly down the right hand aisle with the big boy laying his hand anxiously holding something on his little brother's head, I wonder why—they're both barefooted but I hear the clack of heels, I wonder why—they go forward to the altar, come around the side to the glass coffin of a saint statue, all the time walking slowly, anxiously, touching everything, looking up, crawling infinitesimally around the church and taking it all in completely.—At the coffin the littler boy (3 years old) touches the glass and goes around to the foot of the dead and touches the glass and I think “They understand death, they stand there in the church under the skies that have a beginningless past and go into the never-ending future, waiting themselves for death, at the foot of the dead, in a holy temple.”—I get a vision of myself and the two little boys hung up in a great endless universe with nothing overhead and nothing under but the Infinite Nothingness, the Enormousness of it, the dead without number in all directions of existence whether inward into the atomworlds of your own body or outward to the universe which may only be one atom in an infinity of atomworlds and each atom world only a figure of speech—inward, outward, up and down, nothing but emptiness and divine majesty and silence for the two little boys and me. (*LT*, 656)

In this contemplation, the church transforms from a place of worship to a place of study. Although the word “divine” persists, it takes on a different meaning as soon as Duluoz perceives the people around him. Everything in the setting around the church seems to be intertwined: the church itself, the sounds (the profound buzz and the roaring silence), and the existents (Christ, the Virgin Mary, the women, the children) as if everything belongs to a singular domain. In MWI terms, everything in the scene that the reader is witnessing appears to belong to the same quantum system and can thus be referred to in terms of quantum *entanglements* whereby it is impossible to understand one entity without the other. Nevertheless, the children seem to cause a

perturbation to Duluoz's otherwise silent prayers to such an extent that they appear to break away from the scene, which makes it possible to divide the church scene into a world prior to Duluoz's waking up from his trance and his observation or *measurement* of the children in the church, and a world after it. Quantumly, the children could be said to represent *decoherence* whereby the entanglement of the unified quantum system is broken. In accordance with MWI, the mere fact of observing the children entangles Duluoz with the quantum system that includes the children, causing decoherence and the emergence of two worlds: one where Duluoz is observing the suspicious movements of the children, and another one (the world that the vision is referring to) where no such movements were ever initiated.

The Buddhist cycle of creation (Saṃsāra) is represented by the boys in the church who are “waiting themselves for death, at the foot of the dead” because the church is at the same time the place where dead saints are buried (“coffin of a saint statue”) and where one anticipates death through prayer for salvation in the afterlife. Duluoz's interpretation of the beginninglessness of Saṃsāra is symbolic of the Hawking-Hartle no-boundary proposal (HH), which is another way of thinking about Duluoz's vision that also takes into account theories of quantum mechanics and the MWI. Offering an explanation of the state of existence prior to the Big Bang, the relevance of HH to the analysis of the *Legend*, in particular, is that it provides mathematical justifications (although within the limitations of *theoretical* physics) for notions that are either explicitly stated or implied by Duluoz, notably the notions of *nothingness*, *beginninglessness*, *timelessness*, and *godlessness*. Technical details aside, HH postulates “the possibility that space-time was finite but had no boundary, which means that it had no beginning, no moment of Creation.”⁶⁵ Duluoz's mentioning of an “atomworld” is a direct reference to quantum systems, and the terms “beginninglessness,” “endlessness,” “infinite nothingness,” and “enormousness” that Duluoz uses to describe the way he sees the universe are not only Buddhist jargon but also accurate descriptions of the quantum mechanical state of the universe, with the notion of nothingness, in particular, designating the HH state that precedes the existence of time itself.

HH could also be used to account for the well-known passage in *On the Road* where Duluoz recalls stepping “across chronological time into timeless shadows” (*OTR*, 155). Important here is the context of the experience that occurs right before. Triggered by the sight of

⁶⁵ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, [1988] 2017), 120 .

a woman having a hard time managing a hot dog stand by herself, Duluoz starts having memories from 1750 England as if he had been alive back then. The woman becomes a character in the memory, incarnating his “strange Dickensian mother” and addressing him from eighteenth-century England, calling him “son” and showing disapproval for the way he has chosen to live (*OTR*, 155). Although the words of the imagined ancestor incarnated in the woman at the hot dog stand are disparaging up to the point of renunciation of her offspring, Duluoz nevertheless experiences quite a blissful state immediately afterward:

And for just a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness, the potent and inconceivable radiancies shining in bright Mind Essence, innumerable lotuslands falling open in the magic mothswarm of heaven. I could hear an indescribable seething roar which wasn't in my ear but everywhere and had nothing to do with sounds. I realized that I had died and been reborn numberless times but just didn't remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy, a magical action for naught, like falling asleep and waking up again a million times, the utter casualness and deep ignorance of it. I realized it was only because of the stability of the intrinsic Mind that these ripples of birth and death took place, like the action of wind on a sheet of pure, serene, mirror-like water. (*OTR*, 155–56)

The vision of the Dickensian mother is the catalyst of the “point of ecstasy” that Duluoz experiences in this scene. By claiming that it made him feel as if he is “in San Francisco now only in another life and in another body,” he wants to legitimize the vision as a conceivable reality, perhaps similar to his childhood contemplations of the possible consequences of taking different directions in life, which is actualized during the drug experience. Timelessness here can be interpreted as a realm that precedes the cycle of creation and where existence is not measured by life and death since these are mere time-contingent “ripples,” in other words, they exist only because time does. The ambiguity in the terms “Mind Essence” and “intrinsic Mind” leaves room for two different interpretations: either they are descriptions of mental dispositions that

allow for the conceptualization of a world with no boundaries, no beginning, and no temporality, or that “Mind Essence” and “intrinsic Mind” are themselves representations of that world, which is also the world of “uncreated emptiness.” Either way, the reader witnesses Duluoaz occasionally thinking about the universe in a quantum way, which showcases the Beats’ mindfulness of the implications of the Atomic Age, as well as the anxiety that it engenders. This kind of quantum thinking changes Duluoaz’s perception of the notions of God, heaven, life, and death, as well as the dualities and paradoxes discussed in this dissertation, where only a single duality remains, which is the duality of the temporal universe vs. the pre-temporality universe where time, the cycle of creation, and thought itself do not exist—only space.

The interpretation of the vision of the Dickensian mother scene as an evocation of the HH state can be replicated to account for *silence*, which is also one of the ambiguous notions that Duluoaz often refers to.⁶⁶ One could, for example, interpret the following as a description of the silence of the pre-time universe that Duluoaz claims to have such a vivid imagination of: “silence itself is the sound of diamonds which can cut through anything, the sound of Holy Emptiness, the sound of extinction and bliss, that graveyard silence which is like the silence of an infant’s smile, the sound of eternity, of the blessedness surely to be believed, the sound of nothing-ever-happened-except-God” (*LT*, 733). It would be especially interesting to pursue this reasoning in light of the theological implications of HH that have engendered heated debate on whether the theory accepts or denies the existence of a creator,⁶⁷ which is one of the key questions that confront Duluoaz throughout the *Legend*. In fact, in one of the scenes where Duluoaz is most doubtful of the existence of God, he provides what could be seen as the most scientifically flavored poetic description of the universe in the *Legend*:

Churches will fall, Mongolian hordes will piss on the map of the West, idiot kings will burp at bones, nobody’ll care then the earth itself’ll disintegrate into atomic dust (as it was in the beginning) and the void still the void wont care, the void’ll just go on with that maddening little smile of its that I see everywhere, I look at a tree, a rock, a house, a

⁶⁶ For example, refer to the significance of silence in the section “Visions of the Ancient Realm” on pages 137–41 of chapter four.

⁶⁷ See William Lane Craig, “‘What Place, Then, for a Creator?’: Hawking on God and Creation,” *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 41, no. 4 (Dec. 1990), pp. 473–91; and Józef M. Życiński, “Metaphysical and Epistemological Presuppositions in Stephen Hawking’s Interpretation of the Creation of the Universe,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne / Annales de Philosophie / Annals of Philosophy* 50, no. 3 (2002), pp. 109–33.

street, I see that little smile—That “secret God-grin” but what a God is this who didn’t invent justice? ... Meanwhile in all directions, in and out, of the universe, outward to the neverending planets in never ending space (more numerous than the sands in the ocean) and inward into the illimitable vastnesses of your own body which is also never ending space and “planets” (atoms) (all an electromagnetic crazy arrangement of bored eternal power) meanwhile the murder and the useless activity goes on never endingly, and all we can know, we with our justified hearts, is that it is just what it is and no more than what it is and has no name and is but beastly power. (*DA*, 77–78)

The description abounds with scientific accuracy, especially about the end and beginning of the universe (“earth itself’ll disintegrate into atomic dust (as it was in the beginning)”) with the “void” that remains referring to the HH state of timeless nothingness. Duluoz also seems to insist on including other very specific information, namely about the size of the universe (“never ending space) as well as the comparison that is today common knowledge made to excite students about the cosmos, which is that there are more planets in the universe than grains of sand on earth. In the end, he makes another comparison between the composition of the universe and that of human beings, which is also today considered common knowledge and which predates Carl Sagan’s famous proclamation that “we are made of star-stuff.”⁶⁸

Duluoz seems at times reluctant to articulate what he knows to be true scientific aspects of reality in proper scientific language, which is shown in the poetic packaging that often accompanies such descriptions. Nevertheless, the interference of scientific knowledge about the universe in Duluoz’s understanding of reality is undoubtedly present. This new understanding represents a departure from Nietzsche so that, as the German tabloid *Stern* put it, “not that God is dead: God never existed.”⁶⁹ Duluoz incarnates this transition while simultaneously manifesting the anxiety and freedom that the scientific reality generates: if there truly is such a thing as a secular, non-Buddhist timeless beginning and end of all things, then perhaps one ought to quit the terrible search for meaning since “all we can know, we with our justified hearts, is that it is just what it is and no more than what it is and has no name and is but beastly power.”

⁶⁸ Carl Sagan, *Carl Sagan’s Cosmic Connection*, prod. Jerome Agel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1973] 2000), 190.

⁶⁹ Życiński, “Metaphysical and Epistemological Presuppositions,” 110.

Conclusion

Duluoz's resistance to entropy depends on stabilizing some of the dimensions of reality that appear in his visions and through his studies as inherently destabilized and ambiguous. Two of these dimensions are incarnated in the notions of transcendence and timelessness. One of Duluoz's essential preoccupations is dealing with the cognitive dissonance that results from the inconsistencies between the religion that he was brought up with (Christianity), the new religion that he discovers with the Beats (Buddhism), and the universal state of nothingness which, although seems to be addressed by Buddhism, invalidates both religious approaches with regards to the issue of transcendence.

Duluoz finds in Dean the missing link—a path toward transcendence that neither involves sticking to one of the tenets nor completely abandoning them, which he cannot do even if he wants to. Instead, Duluoz learns from Dean something that he does not find in Japhy's teachings, which is how to live in a Godless universe. Even if he is not willing to accept the idea that God is dead or that He does not exist, Duluoz reconfigures his notion of Christianity and his understanding of what God wants from human beings. Dean's insistence that everybody understands what it really means to be absolutely free induces in Duluoz the realization of the responsibility that this freedom incurs. It is the responsibility of accepting the facticities of life, removing oneself from extremism (especially religious extremism), and committing oneself to the present through a kind of genuine and noble work that would give meaning to oneself within a meaningless world.

Duluoz's conception of timelessness develops out of his incapability to deal with the paradoxes of death. His dilemma is that he seems to believe that only through the embodiment of death that authenticity is genuinely achieved; yet, neither does he believe that he can ever experience this embodiment, nor does he want to. To resolve this dilemma, Duluoz continuously revises his perception of the present vis-à-vis past experiences. Instead of believing that being alone in a mountain is rigidly attached to a particular reality (loneliness, wisdom, freedom, boredom, etc.), he conceives of the true function of time, which is that it allows him to

reconfigure the value of past experiences according to the sudden changes that may occur due to entropy. The present as a dynamic notion becomes an antidote for death as it occupies Duluoz with this process of continuous reconfiguration, which simultaneously keeps death at bay and him away from the danger of a “one-sided truth” as Jung would say.

Duluoz’s scientific understanding of the world which he demonstrates through his quantum descriptions departs substantially from his religious foundation. His portrayal of omniscience and of the beginningless state of nothingness and timelessness can be interpreted as a recognition that genuine transcendence lies in the acknowledgment and acceptance that the universe came from nothing and will return to nothing. This would suggest that Duluoz borders on outright atheism and that his understanding of reality is much more aligned with the scientific worldview than one would have imagined, and, possibly, that Kerouac himself found solace in atheism once confronted with universal entropy.

The following chapter discusses authenticity in terms of access to esoteric knowledge. Realizing the illusory nature of the perceived world, Duluoz becomes infatuated with understanding the noumenal nature of entities, as in, entities as they are in themselves independently from the sensory faculties of perception. He is immediately confronted with the inherent inaccessibility of this quality but feels as if he were called upon to access it and transmit it to people in order to fulfill his role as a writer and messenger.

Chapter 6. Knowledge of the Real: Strategies for Noumenal Authenticity

Chapter five has outlined strategies for identifying the Real which are associated with the metaphysical–philosophical questions of religion and transcendence on the one hand, and death and timelessness on the other. Reacting against the uncertainties of reality and existence, Duluoz rejects Christianity and Buddhism in favor of a religion that corresponds to the socio-cultural transitional period and that he fashions after realizing the inconsistencies, dichotomies, and extremities of both Christian and Buddhist doctrines, which stand in the way of genuine transcendence. As with Christianity and Buddhism, death presents an obstacle to the attainment of absolute authenticity, one that Duluoz resolves by continuously updating his perspective on past experiences and realizing possibilities of timelessness within a quasi-scientific framework of reality and conditions of existence.

Whereas these configurations of the Real represent Duluoz’s redefining his position in the universe in order to cope with the chaos of the transitional period, knowledge of the Real as a realm that does not depend on the movements and actions of beings is another crucial condition for achieving authenticity. This chapter deals with the esoteric knowledge of the Real; in particular, it deals with the noumenal—as opposed to the phenomenal—nature of beings and objects and the possibilities of grasping an intuitive understanding of noumena through specific epistemological and narratological strategies. Based on Kantian-Chomskyian insight, the first section defines noumena as inherently inaccessible but recognizes in Duluoz a tendency to bypass the limitations of the human mind in an attempt to not only access noumena but also transmit allegedly acquired knowledge of it.

A by-product of the uncertainties recounted in chapter four is the porous nature of the narrative of the *Legend* which enables the collapse of the border between phenomena and noumena and the increase of the interpretive possibilities that govern the understanding of beings and objects. The second and third sections of this chapter are primarily concerned with the stylistic features that enable the seemingly impossible access to noumena. Nonsensical language

and structures, believed to be descriptive of noumena, are mediated through their synthesis with canonical ones, as well as through the interplay between the factual and the fictional as seen in an example from *The Subterraneans*. The poem “Sea,” which appears at the end of *Big Sur*, is also an attempt at transmitting knowledge about noumena through the transcription of the sounds of nature, a strategy that is comparable to the poetics of James Joyce in the Proteus episode of *Ulysses*. The application of the recently theorized hermeneutic function of metalepsis demonstrates in examples from *The Subterraneans* and *The Dharma Bums* how special types of narrative transgressions are also indicative of noumena. The collapse of temporal dimensions, the use of free indirect discourse, and narratorial metalepsis substantiate the interplay between the factual and the fictional and, more importantly, between reality and unreality, which facilitates the internalization of the possibility of grasping the noumenal nature of entities and acquiring knowledge of the authentic Real identified in this chapter as *gnosis*.

Accessibility and Transmission of Esoteric Knowledge as Conditions for Authenticity

Gnosis as Knowledge of the Authentic Real

For Duluoz, the authentic Real depends on the acquisition of a special form of knowledge that could account for the mysteries of the universe. This is especially because the kind of knowledge that exists in the perceived world is associated either with the hyperreal (Part I) or with the non-Real/inauthentic. Duluoz dismantles the institutionalized knowledge that is associated with systems of power as shown in the scene where he explains why he does not like visiting the graves of his father and brother:

I know better than that—God must be a personal God because I’ve known a lot of things that weren’t in texts. In fact when I went to Columbia all they were trying to teach us was Marx, as if I cared. I cut classes and stayed in my room and slept in the arms of God. (This is what the dialectical materialists call “cherubim tendencies,” or the psychiatrists

call “schizoid tendencies.”) Ask my brother and my father in their graves about tendencies. (*DA*, 318)

Duluoz’s observation here confirms what is argued in chapter two about his anti-intellectual stance and the two previous chapters about his attachment to and defense of Christianity, specifically, the Christian notion of the immortality of the soul. By imagining how the dialectical materialists and psychiatrists would describe his tendency to isolate himself, Duluoz shows that his defensive stance comes from a real understanding of the then mainstream socio-cultural and economic models (Marx–Engels) and theories of the mind (psychoanalysis).

Aside from occasional (but very significant) moments of doubt, Duluoz attributes the source of the knowledge about the authentic Real primarily, though not exclusively, to the divine. However, since the divine itself remains largely an inconsistent notion as explained in chapter four, knowledge systems in the *Legend* have been linked to certain prevalent schools of thought. Stephenson, for example, observes that “the Cassady figure is an embodiment of transcendental primitivism—the American response to the cultural-spiritual crisis of Western civilization to which such movements as dadaism, surrealism, and existentialism have been the European response.”¹ More recently, Tanguy Harma has compared what he sees as Kerouac’s “existentialism” with that of the French and has concluded that, though sharing some ideological features with Sartre, Kerouac’s beat existentialism is rather Emersonian. This is in the sense that it goes one step further than engaging with the highest potential of the being to include also the universal spirit—the incarnation of the “*principe créateur universel*” as a form of ultimate “*authenticité existentielle*.”²

The root of Kerouac’s “existential authenticity,” according to Harma, is a creative force emanating from the divine—itself understood as an entity that is derived from contact with nature—and which manifests in individuals through the desire to accomplish one’s most profound intuition. And we know that, for Duluoz, nature means more than a mere physical milieu. Reflecting on his stay at Desolation Peak, Duluoz admits that “‘it’s me that changed and done all this and come and gone and complained and hurt and joyed and yelled, not the Void’

¹ Gregory Stephenson, *The Daybreak Boys: Essays on the Literature of the Beat Generation* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 170.

² Tanguy Harma, “Vers un Existentialisme Beat,” in *Beat Generation: L’Inservitude Volontaire*, ed. Olivier Penot-Lacassagne (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 116

and so that every time I thought of the void I'd be looking at Mt. Hozomeen (because chair and bed and meadowgrass faced north) until I realized 'Hozomeen is the Void'—at least Hozomeen means the void to my eyes” (DA, 3). Hozomeen mountain can be seen here as a point of reference, a divine standard, and the source of knowledge, but most importantly, as a kind of affirmation that essence precedes existence, as Harma correctly points out,³ and that the source of knowledge, though not necessarily unattainable, exists undeniably elsewhere.

Duluoz indeed espouses Emersonian philosophy in more than one aspect. For starters, his vision of oneness combines as many features of Eastern and Western religions as Emerson's notion of the *over-soul*:

within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.”⁴

Many similarities could be drawn between Emerson's elaboration here and Duluoz's life philosophy, from the reference to “beatitude” to the notions of “the eternal ONE” and the wisdom of silence. However, concerning the source of knowledge, in particular, the concurrence between the philosophies of Duluoz and Emerson is most evident in the latter's emphasis in his 1837 speech, “The American Scholar,” that true knowledge emerges from three “influences”: nature, books, and experience.⁵

Nancy Grace, on the other hand, associates Kerouac's belief system with a category of “pragmatic” knowledge defined by William James as “states [that] correspond with sensation rather than conceptual thought.”⁶ The narrativization of this particular kind of knowledge quickly becomes a central concern when taking into consideration James's following remark that “reports of mystical knowledge can open nonreceivers [those who are not willing to accept this

³ Harma, 116.

⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson's Essays: The First and Second Series Complete* (N.p.: Adansonia Press, [1841] 2018), 93.

⁵ Kenneth S. Sacks, *Understanding Emerson: “The American Scholar” and his Struggle for Self-Reliance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 15.

⁶ Nancy M. Grace, *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 42.

kind of knowledge uncritically] to the possibility that forms of knowledge other than the rational exist.”⁷ Grace employs this function of narrativization to hypothesize that “what Kerouac effects beautifully in the creation of Duluoz is to write out of absolute belief in mysticism as legitimate, if not superior to the rational. Consequently, even readers who do not value mysticism find Duluoz credible within his own belief system.”⁸ Grace’s observation⁹ reinforces the assumption that, for Duluoz, knowledge about the authentic Real exists on the opposite side of the perceived world.

Keeping in mind Sperber’s distinction between *intuitive beliefs* and *reflective beliefs*,¹⁰ as well as the demarcation highlighted in chapter four between reality and unreality and the analysis of the so-called mysteries therein, I would argue that the *Legend* exhibits a domain of mystical or sacred knowledge that shall be referred to as *gnosis* (ancient Greek for “knowledge”), the access to which *and* transmission of which are essential to the actualization of authenticity. I use Kurt Rudolph’s interpretation of the term *gnosis* specifically because it evokes the notion of “a deliverance (‘redemption’) of man precisely from the constraints of earthly existence through ‘insight’ into his essential relationship, whether as ‘soul’ or ‘spirit,’—a relationship temporarily obscured—with a supramundane realm of freedom and of rest.”¹¹ Because for the majority of his journey Duluoz seeks this insight in the never-ending search for authenticity (enlightenment, nirvana, timelessness, nothingness, silence, experience, divine bliss, transcendence, etc.), *gnosis* in the *Legend* presupposes an inherent bond between esoteric knowledge and the authentic state achieved through deliverance—in the *Legend*, *gnosis* is the knowledge of the authentic Real.

Defined as such, one of the exigencies of *gnosis* is a return from the counterintuitive view of the world to an intuitive one that reduces the reliance on scientific reasoning.¹² Following an enduring interest in looking “at the history of cognitive concepts of the ‘intuitive’ and

⁷ Grace, 42.

⁸ Grace, 42.

⁹ Grace’s comment is also mentioned on page 129 of chapter four.

¹⁰ See page 169 of chapter five.

¹¹ Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. P.W. Coxon and K.H. Kuhn, ed. Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Fransisco: Harper, [1977] 1987), 2.

¹² While this might seem contradictory to the quasi-scientific worldview established in the final section of the preceding chapter, the philosophical and theological dimensions of quantum mechanics do not contradict Duluoz’s anti-intellectual stance, which is primarily a stance against the technocratic society of postwar America.

‘counterintuitive,’”¹³ Mary Thomas Crane’s recent attempt at providing a serious framework for cognitive historicism outlines the growing evidence in support of the notion that “meaning is not produced, as Saussure argued, by a system of differences within a linguistic system but along a gradient of resemblance to a prototypical example and with reference to what Taylor [John R.] calls extralinguistic ‘patterns of knowledge and belief.’” Crane goes on to mention the work of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio who “has established that even rational thought is crucially dependent on emotion,” as well as cognitive linguist George Lakoff whose main thesis is that “meaning is fundamentally metaphorical” since thought is dependent on “spatial experiences of embodiment.”¹⁴ This is consistent with two other fundamental principles: Kant’s belief that “some knowledge, the really important kind of knowledge, comes to man independently of any sensory experience: it is inherent in the nature of the mind,”¹⁵ and with the innate principles that govern Chomsky’s notion of universal grammar.¹⁶ In sharp opposition to the rationalist and empiricist trends, Kant and Chomsky postulate that the mind is not an empty vessel but comes equipped with a priori knowledge or conditions that must interact with the elements that exist in the world in order for language or knowledge to be possible. The underlying implication of the Kantian–Chomskyian view is that reality conforms to the limitations of the mind and the way it is evolved, that is to say, language and knowledge cannot transcend the invariants of the mind from which they emerge, which is today a widely accepted premise especially because it is rooted in the evolutionary explanation of the structure of the mind.

The Inherent Inaccessibility of Noumena

One way by which to make sense of gnosis is to look at Kant’s notion of the *noumenon* which the philosopher identifies as “a thing that is not to be thought of as an object of the senses but rather as a thing in itself (solely through a pure understanding)” and also as “a boundary concept [required] in order to limit the pretension of sensibility.”¹⁷ Interestingly, Duluoz himself

¹³ Mary Thomas Crane, “Cognitive Historicism: Intuition in Early Modern Thought,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

¹⁴ Crane, 17.

¹⁵ Homer W. Smith, *Man and His Gods* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952), 141.

¹⁶ James Higginbotham, “Noam Chomsky’s Linguistic Theory,” *Social Research* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 151.

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1781] 1998), 350.

showcases Kantian insight when he outlines the difference between noumena and phenomena: “noumena is what you see with your eyes closed, that immaterial golden ash, Ta the Golden Angel—Phenomena is what you see with your eyes open, in my case the debris of one thousand hours of the living-conception in a mountain shack” (*DA*, 37). Duluoz seeks the mountains because of his Buddhist conviction that solitude and detachment will bring about an enlightened state of existence. In other words, he perceived noumena in the Kantian “positive” sense, which implies that there exists “a special kind of intuition, namely intellectual intuition” that may allow him to grasp the knowledge of noumenal objects. As Kant maintains, such intuition, presuming it exists, “is not our own, and the possibility of which we cannot understand” since the mere fact of using the senses to understand an object makes it a phenomenon, not a noumenon.¹⁸ This reminds us of the condition of the cat in Schrödinger’s experiment prior to the measurement/observation (the opening of the box)¹⁹ which, although essentially dealing with a different notion, is similar in that both deal with a state of existence that is independent of our experience of it. Echoing the claim about the limitations of the mind derived from Chomsky, noumena, then, exist in a pure state that is inaccessible to human understanding yet, Duluoz seems to come into conflict with this elementary fact.

Central to the enlightenment that Duluoz seeks in Zen Buddhism is the idea of accessing sacred truth but not noumena. Naturally, “Zen in America resisted institutionalization, and thus appealed to the anti-conformism of the time,”²⁰ but in the words of D.T. Suzuki, whom Kerouac read, met, and idolized, the power of Zen is much more profound: “The answer is simple. Zen wants us to acquire an entirely new point of view whereby to look into the mysteries of life and the secrets of nature. This is because Zen has come to the definite conclusion that the ordinary logical process of reasoning is powerless to give final satisfaction to our deepest spiritual needs.”²¹ Buddhism implies that these mysteries are attainable through other means such as the rigorous and disciplined practice of Zen, a supposition that deviates substantially from Kant’s unattainability of “intellectual intuition” by which noumenon could be grasped. Zen goes as far

¹⁸ Kant, 361.

¹⁹ Refer to pages 186–87 in chapter five.

²⁰ Erik Mortenson, “Keeping Vision Alive: The Buddhist Stillpoint in the Work of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg,” in *The Emergence of Buddhist American Literature*, eds. John Whalen-Bridge and Gary Storhoff (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 127.

²¹ D.T. Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, [1934] 1969), 59.

as suggesting that there is a precise moment in one's lifetime when, after having been a longtime faithful practitioner of the Zen way of life, enlightenment can be achieved. This is called "Satori" and is defined as "an experience which no amount of explanation or argument can make communicable to others unless the latter themselves had it previously,"²² and which Duluoz claims to have had near the end of his journey in *Satori in Paris*.

That being said, attaining mysteries and *grasping* them are two different things in Buddhism. In *Tristessa*, while praying to the Buddha, Duluoz finds himself disputing what in Buddhism is the ungraspability of conceptions:

"Not one of the vast accumulation of conceptions from beginningless time, through the present and into the never ending future, not one of them is graspable."

It's the old question of "Yes life's not real" but you see a beautiful woman or something you can't get away from wanting because it is there in front of you. (*TR*, 591)

The passage recited by Duluoz is in line with Kantian unattainability of noumena and one can refer to the complete Sutra to better understand the context. Before addressing the ungraspable nature of all conceptions, Lord Buddha, in the Vajracchedika Prajna-paramita Sutra, specifies that "Within these innumerable Buddha-lands there is every form of sentient beings with all their various mentalities and conceptions, all of which are fully known to the Tathagata [an honorific title of a Buddha], but not one of them is held in the Tathagata's mind as an arbitrary conception of phenomena. They are merely thought of."²³ This confirms the idea that, even during the peak of enlightenment, one can never acquire an intuitive understanding of noumena.

One of the most important revelations in *The Dharma Bums* occurs in Newtonian fashion when Duluoz, "suddenly under the tree at night ... had the astonishing idea: 'Everything is empty but awake! Things are empty in time and space and mind'" (*TDB*, 385). Duluoz gets excited and rushes to tell his family about it whom all laugh at him, obliging him to explain the reasoning behind his idea:

"Whattayou mean, empty, I'm holding this orange in my hand, ain't I?" ...

²² Suzuki, 92.

²³ Pram Nguyen, *The Ultimate Theory of the Universe* (N.p.: Xlibris, 2003), 203.

“Your mind makes out the orange by seeing it, hearing it, touching it, smelling it, tasting it and thinking about it but without this mind, you call it, the orange would not be seen or heard or smelled or tasted or even mentally noticed, it’s actually, that orange, depending on your mind to exist! Don’t you see that? By itself it’s a nothing, it’s really mental, it’s seen only of your mind. In other words it’s empty and awake.” (*TDB*, 386)

The contemplation on the nature of the orange reveals Duluoz’s solipsistic stance whereby objects of the material world are there only because they are perceived by the senses. In *Tristessa*, his solipsism emerges as a consequence of the realization of the inherent limitations of the human mind that stand in the way of the intuitive understanding of things: “I realize all the uncountable manifestations the thinking-mind invents to place wall of horror before its pure perfect realization that there is no wall and no horror just Transcendental Empty Kissable Milk Light of Everlasting Eternity’s true and perfectly empty nature” (*TR*, 568).

What Duluoz calls “wall of horror” is the accumulation of all the preconceptions and perceptions that one brings to the understanding of objects and that prevent the possibility of intuitive understanding. The word “empty” that is used to describe the orange and eternity is used very loosely,²⁴ but in Buddhism, *emptiness* is unrelated to inexistence. In the Mahāyāna scriptures specifically, “to argue that all dharmas are empty does not mean that they do not exist, but rather identifies them as appearances which should not be perceived as objects of grasping.”²⁵ From this viewpoint, when Duluoz talks about the empty nature of the orange, he acknowledges its noumenal property that *cannot* be grasped.

During another revelation, Duluoz experiences a “transcendental visit” that follows a recent metaphysical confrontation with his existential crisis, which he describes as a state of “outblownness, cutoff-ness, snapped, blownoutness, putoutness, turned-off-ness, nothing-happens-ness, gone-ness, gone-out-ness”:

The warm wind made the pines talk deep one night when I began to experience what is called “Samapatti,” which in Sanskrit means Transcendental Visits. I’d got a little drowsy in the mind but was somehow physically wide awake sitting erect under my tree when suddenly I saw flowers, pink worlds of walls of them, salmon pink, in the *Shh* of silent

²⁴ Another example of the ambiguous use of the word “empty” is mentioned on page 128 of chapter four.

²⁵ Charles S. Prebish and Damien Keown, *Buddhism—The Ebook: An Online Introduction* (N.p.: Journal of Buddhist Ethics Online Books, 2010), 157–58.

woods (obtaining nirvana is like locating silence) and I saw an ancient vision of Dipankara Buddha who was the Buddha who never said anything, Dipankara as a vast snowy Pyramid Buddha with bushy wild black eyebrows like John L. Lewis and a terrible stare, all in an old location, an ancient snowy field like Alban (“A *new* field!” had yelled the Negro preacherwoman), the whole vision making my hair rise. I remember the strange magic final cry that it evoked in me, whatever it means: *Colyalcolor*. It, the vision, was devoid of any sensation of I being myself, it was pure egolessness, just simply wild ethereal activities devoid of any wrong predicates ... devoid of effort, devoid of mistake. “Everything’s all right,” I thought. “Form is emptiness and emptiness is form and we’re here forever in one form or another which is empty. What the dead have accomplished, this rich silent hush of the Pure Awakened Land.” (*TDB*, 387–88)

In his interpretation of the state of egolessness described in this passage, Mortenson misses its greater significance because he interprets it *indirectly*: Instead of analyzing the passage, he only quotes a small part of the “transcendental visit” and goes on to discuss the experience of “Samapatti” that Kerouac describes in one of his letters to Carolyn Cassady, and concludes that

Kerouac’s achievement of egolessness allows for a reconfiguration of the past placement of objects in the room²⁶ and the causal connections generally established between them. The vision does not create anything new. Rather, it provides Kerouac with a new means of understanding the old. Everyday objects like a rub bottle and round white flowers gain a new significance as they are dislodged from ordinary thought patterns, and potentialities.²⁷

The manipulation of temporality is only of secondary relevance here, although one would agree with Mortenson that ordinary objects do acquire a new significance during Duluoz’s experience of “Samapatti.” The state of egolessness that Duluoz achieves during the vision signifies the suspension of the senses with which objects of the material world could be perceived as phenomena and a recognition of their noumenal nature. Corroborating his solipsism, Duluoz

²⁶ The objects that Mortenson refers to are the ones that Kerouac mentions he had a vision of in the letter: “On March 12 my birthday my mother had a bad insistent sneeze-cough that finally got her throat all sore ... I resolved to sit up in my bed ... and hypnotize myself to find out what was wrong. Immediately there came a vision of a ‘Heet’ rub bottle, and of a brandy bottle, and finally of round white flowers.” Mortenson, “Keeping Vision Alive,” 126.

²⁷ Mortenson, 126.

asserts the existence of all the elements, objects, beings, “forms,” and “activities” independent of human judgment (“predicate”) or conceptualization. The emptiness of form, which in *Tristessa* is encapsulated in the declaration that “everything is nothing” (*TR*, 578), means that everything is essentially noumenal. The discovery that emptiness (as noumena that cannot be grasped) exists in everything becomes to Duluoz the truth that is worth seeking and transmitting. Ultimately, only the *truth* about the noumenal existence of all things can be transmitted, not the *intuitive understanding of noumena*, which no human being is capable of grasping.

Potentialities of Access: Collapsing the Border between Phenomena and Noumena

Despite Duluoz’s Kantian–Buddhist views of the unattainability of noumena, the line from *Tristessa* quoted above (“it’s the old question of ‘Yes life’s not real’...”) suggests that the strong and lustful desire that he sometimes displays for women seems to accentuate their “graspability” in his mind in such a way that it almost seems as if acquiring their flesh somehow gives him intuitive access to their noumenal nature. Duluoz’s circumstances are undeniably peculiar: his alcohol and drug abuse, traumatic childhood, and the extreme fluctuations between hypomania and depression all suggest that he suffers from some form of mental illness.²⁸ One could argue that this intensifies his connection with the material world to the extent that his entire belief system can be perturbed by the mere feelings that he develops toward someone. If this is the case, then one could say that Duluoz has come to *intuitively know and grasp* the noumenal nature of *Tristessa*, at least in his own mind.

Shigenori Nagatomo has observed a unique feature in Buddhist reasoning, which is condensed in the subtitle of his article “The Logic of the Diamond Sutra: A is not A, therefore it is A,”²⁹ and which is one of Japhy’s main Buddhist axioms. When Japhy explains to Duluoz why frontiersmen are his heroes, he tells him that it is because “they’re constantly on the alert in the realness which might as well be real as unreal, what difference does it make, Diamond Sutra says ‘Make no formed conceptions about the realness of existence nor about the unrealness of

²⁸ In their psychoanalytic (specifically Lacanian) study of Kerouac and Joyce, Briolais and Mesclier deduce that Kerouac displayed schizophrenic tendencies and suffered from bipolar disorder. Florence Briolais and Michel Mesclier, “D’une Écriture Infinie: Kerouac en-Joyce the Road,” *Psychanalyse* 27, no. 2 (2013): 94–95.

²⁹ Shigenori Nagatomo, “The Logic of the Diamond Sutra: A is not A, therefore it is A,” *Asian Philosophy* 10, no. 3 (2000), pp. 213–244.

existence,' or words like that" (*TDB*, 350). Duluoz uses Japhy's teachings to configure the Sutra's logic based on his own experience in the world, which we see in novels other than *The Dharma Bums* and which, therefore reinforces the interconnectedness between the novels of the *Legend*. In *Desolation Angels*, for example, Duluoz acknowledges that his first true awakening is the knowledge that "there are no awakeners and no awakening" (*DA*, 32) and deconstructs the notion of God by suggesting that "because he is not limited he can not exist" (*DA*, 115). This same deconstruction is also noticeable in *Lonesome Traveler* when Duluoz claims that "what exists is God in His Emanation, what does not exist is God in His peaceful Neutrality, what neither exists nor does not exist is God's immortal primordial dawn of Father Sky (this world this very minute)" (*LT*, 733).

The logic of the Diamond Sutra provides a hermeneutic leeway that Duluoz certainly exploits. Since "A" is both "not A" and "A," the boundary that separates the realms of reality and unreality, as well as the one that separates phenomena and noumena collapse. The epistemological consequences of this collapse are manifested in the possibility of accessing what is *perceived* as noumena and which Duluoz believes to be beyond Christianity and Buddhism—"truth that is realizable in a dead man's bones and is beyond the Tree of Buddha as well as the Cross of Jesus" (*TDB*, 380). The *mentally constructed* access seems to be complemented by such a strong and sometimes conflicted desire to transmit the knowledge of the authentic Real that individual authenticity becomes dependent on this transmission. The messenger archetype reciprocally justifies the existence of different realms of knowledge (noumena–phenomena/reality–unreality) by implicitly denoting the boundary between them. Furthermore, the journey motif is another indication of the demarcation between the realms. While the one that is undertaken in *On the Road* is the most well-known representation of the merging of the physical and spiritual quests, other journeys in other novels are just as consequential (if not more) to the understanding of the *Legend's* separation of realms. The trip to Paris portrayed in *Satori in Paris*, as well as those in *Lonesome traveler* (in which the Paris trip is also referenced), offer similar representations of the binary nature of Duluoz's quest.

In *The Dharma Bums*, the Buddhist initiation is symbolic of a border-collapse that enables access to noumena and attainment of gnosis as the ascent to the top of the mountain represents the departure from the world of phenomena to that of noumena. Considered "the first

novel set in America with a Buddhist protagonist,”³⁰ and credited with “triggering the ‘Zen boom’ in America”³¹ and with “[launching] a ‘postwar Buddhist revival’ in America,”³² *The Dharma Bums* contains the purest introspective journey due to the strong link between noumena and the state of enlightenment that is sought therein. In it, the separation between the realms of knowledge can be observed in Duluoz’s subjective interpretation of Japhy’s teachings such as in his contention that he had learned “that you can’t fall off a mountain. Whether you can fall off a mountain or not I don’t know, but I had learned that you can’t. That was the way it struck me” (*TDB*, 343) and later when he says “What’d I care about the tower of ghouls, and sperm and bones and dust, I felt free and therefore I *was* free” (*TDB*, 381).

One senses in Duluoz a desire to concretize the rather abstract nature of Japhy’s Buddhist teachings that contain obvious illogical fallacies: surely, he is not saying that he has learned that you *literally* cannot fall off a mountain, and surely a sophisticated introspective writer does not believe that one becomes free, at least not in the broader sense, simply by experiencing freedom on top of a mountain. Yet, this is a strategy that Duluoz often resorts to when asserting the validity of the abstract ideas that result from his study of the world. His preference for intuitive, as opposed to rational induction, is clear when he admits that regardless of the scientific fact of the real possibility that one could fall off a mountain, he would rather subscribe to the anti-scientific and abstract idea that one can never fall off a mountain. This concretization serves to reinforce the notion that there are otherworldly sources of knowledge that could be as legitimate as the ones that belong to the perceived world and is a reason why, as Grace mentions, “even readers who do not value mysticism find Duluoz credible within his own belief system.”³³

Strategies of validating mysteries are manifestations of Duluoz’s exceptional meta-representational capacity. Sperber asserts that meta-representation is the ability to mentally represent not just environmental and somatic facts, but also ... own mental states, representations and processes [and] is essential to human acquisition of knowledge

³⁰ Kyle Garton-Gundling, “Rewriting Eastern Wisdom: Buddhism and Hinduism in American Literature from Jack Kerouac to Maxine Hong Kingston” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2013), 29, DRUM (Digital Repository at the University of Maryland).

³¹ Steve Odin, *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 582.

³² Michael Barber, “The Unravelers: Rasa, Becoming, and the Buddhist Novel,” (PhD diss., University of Roehampton, 2017), 428, <https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/portal/en/studentTheses/the-unravelers>.

³³ Grace, *Jack Kerouac*, 42.

... [because] first, it allows humans to doubt and to disbelieve.... Secondly, meta-representational abilities allow humans to process information which they do not fully understand.³⁴

Sperber supports his inference by explaining that “rational constraints on half-understood ideas are not very stringent,”³⁵ which justifies Duluoz’s susceptibility to anti-scientific propositions—think of the notion of “maladaptations” discussed in chapter three—and his desire to meta-represent them,³⁶ as well as the *readers’* susceptibility to Duluoz’s propositions. This substantiates the hypothesis of the collapse of boundaries between the realms of reality and unreality, and phenomena and noumena by revealing the fluidity and arbitrariness in the interpretation of ideas as “rational,” and therefore suggests that claims of esoteric knowledge can indeed be naturalized if effectively meta-represented. Even deductions such as “everything is possible. I am God, I am Buddha, I am imperfect Ray Smith, all at the same time, I am empty space, I am all things” (*TDB*, 369) could carry more weight than the spiritual metaphors that they imply when the mysteries therein become anchored in a credible belief system. In this case, they transform into what Sperber calls *relevant mysteries*: representations that “on the one hand are closely related to the subject’s other mental representations, and, on the other hand, can never be given a final representation.”³⁷

The Messenger Motif: The Role of Writing in the Transmission of Gnosis

Duluoz learns from Japhy that he must give meaning to his preoccupation with the study of nature, the self, existence, and reality as seen in the latter’s urgent assertion:

“I *know* somethin good’s gonna come out of all this!”

“All what?”

³⁴ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 71.

³⁵ Sperber, 72.

³⁶ According to Sperber, we meta-represent what we do not fully understand so that ideas that are inconsistent with scientific logic become legitimate (religious ideas are the best examples of this). Furthermore, it is worth noting that a significant and dangerous byproduct of meta-representation is the emergence of susceptibilities. As Sperber notes: “The obvious function served by the ability to entertain half-understood concepts and ideas is to provide intermediate steps towards their full understanding. But it also creates the possibility of conceptual mysteries, which no amount of processing could ever clarify, invading human minds.” Sperber, 72.

³⁷ Sperber, 73.

“I dunno—out of the way we feel about life. You and I ain’t out to bust anybody’s skull, or cut someone’s throat in an economic way, we’ve dedicated ourselves to prayer for all sentient beings and when we’re strong enough we’ll really be able to do it, too, like the old saints. Who knows, the world might wake up and burst out into a beautiful flower of Dharma everywhere.” (*TDB*, 435)

Japhy impresses on Duluoz the idea that their devotion to the introspection on the condition of being in the world, as well as their reflection on the status of reality, is not useless overthinking. In fact, the importance of their intellectual dedication is found in their perceived messenger role which to Duluoz is mainly connected to his role as a writer.

Similar to his encounter with the suspecting policemen who were wondering why he wants to sleep in the desert,³⁸ Duluoz recounts a brief conversation with “old boys” at a country store:

“What you do in those woods?”

“Oh I just go in there to study.”

“Ain’t you kinda old to be a college student?”

“Well I just go in there sometimes and just sleep.”

... I knew they secretly wanted to go sleep in the woods, or just sit and do nothing in the woods, like I wasn’t too ashamed to do. They never bothered me. How could I tell them that my knowing was the knowing that the substance of my bones and their bones and the bones of dead men in the earth of rain at night is the common individual substance that is everlastingly tranquil and blissful? Whether they believed it or not makes no difference, too. (*TDB*, 381–82)

Even though there is prejudice in his assumption of what they “secretly” wish to do, as well as condescension in his refusal to explain to them what he really meant by “study,” the fact that Duluoz cannot relay to them his “knowing” (of the oneness of the substance of his and their bones) elevates it to the status of gnosis. But why would he even consider the idea of telling them about it if he thinks that their knowing it and believing it, as in, their subscribing to his belief system, makes no difference?

I would argue that the function of the passage here is the mere revelation of the category of esoteric knowledge (gnosis). The “knowing” that Duluoz talks about is the very Kantian

³⁸ See chapter two, pages 66–67.

“intellectual intuition” of noumena that simply cannot be transmitted no matter how much he wants to fulfill his messenger role. His complaint about the inability to explain to them the oneness of their substances is an acknowledgment that no matter what he says—a simple sentence like “we all have the same substance,” for example—they will never *intuitively* understand that they all have the same substance. This dovetails with the assumption that language, specifically verbal communication, is not a medium that can meaningfully transmit gnosis and, at the same time, that there is something in the narrative representation of gnosis that *can*, which provides meaning and purpose for Duluoz’s writing.

A key question preoccupies Duluoz’s contemplation of noumena, which is whether or not it should be transmitted in the first place. First, it is interesting to note that none of Duluoz’s closest companions, especially those who have a major influence on him (namely, Irwin/Carlo, Dean/Cody, and Japhy) ever express a desire to enlighten others for the others’ sake. Anticipating their imminent literary success, Irwin tells Duluoz that “it’s time for the poets to *influence* American civilization,” to which Duluoz answers: ““Irwin if you’d really seen a vision of eternity you wouldn’t care about influencing American Civilization”” (*DA*, 282–83). Unlike Irwin, who seems to understand his role as a writer in terms of mass influence (therefore, one would argue, indirectly about himself and his legacy) and not of the enlightenment of others, Duluoz is completely detached from his writer persona (fame/influence) and considers writing as a duty towards mankind.

Describing a horrific moment of revelation in the cabin at Big Sur, Duluoz contemplates: At dawn also I’ve almost dimmed into sleep three times but I swear (and this is something I remember that makes me realize I don’t understand what happened at Big Sur even now) the little boy somehow thumped his foot just at the moment of drowse, to instantly wake me up, wide awake, back to my horror which when all is said and done is the horror of all the worlds the showing of it to me being damn well what I deserve anyway with my previous blithe yakkings about the sufferings of others in books.

Books, shmooks, this sickness has got me wishing if I can ever get out of this I’ll gladly become a millworker and shut my big mouth. (*BS*, 211)

The revelation of the horror of the world to Duluoz, which he does not ask for, is not only dreadful because of the despair it induces in him, but also because it engenders the duty and burden of transcribing it to humankind. This resembles the story in a song by the band Tool

called “Rosetta Stoned” in which the protagonist is abducted by aliens and shown an important truth about humanity (gnosis), so he becomes so overwhelmed by the urgency and responsibility of relaying this truth to humankind, which is beyond his capacity of understanding, that he ends up cracking under pressure. It is true that many revelatory scenes in *Big Sur* could be attributed either to alcohol, drug intoxication, or delirium tremens. Nevertheless, the vision that Duluoiz describes seems to endure beyond the singular moments of substance abuse or withdrawal, to such an extent that transmission becomes crucial for his own well-being if not for the enlightenment of others. Also interesting is the fact that Duluoiz believes that the revelation is somehow a punishment for his writing and that he is willing to put his career as a writer to rest if the vision would stop haunting him, which suggests a paradoxical function of writing as both a cause for visions (blissful or horrific) and a medium to transmit them.

Unlike Carlo, Japhy, who is also a great poet, seems to regard gnosis as a form of knowledge that the enlightened should not attempt to transmit. Complimenting his yodel on the mountain, Duluoiz says to him: “Dammit that yodel of triumph of yours was the most beautiful thing I ever heard in my life. I wish I’d a had a tape recorder to take it down.” Japhy answers with a serious tone: “Those things aren’t made to be heard by the people below” (*TDB*, 342). For Japhy, the yodel represents the celebration of the attainment of gnosis that would not be understood outside the context of the experience of mountain climbing that the two men have shared with one another. For Dean, on the other hand, there is no question that material life is more important than Japhy’s spirituality because life *is* spirituality, and he does not feel the need to climb mountains, write haikus, or yodel to attain gnosis.

Life is also more important than writing, which implies a distinction that Duluoiz does not always subscribe to. Riding together one night “to a specific somewhere, nothing nowhere about it whatever,” Duluoiz shares with Dean an experience that is in nature very similar to the one that he has with Japhy on the mountain:

Mighty genius of the mind Cody whom I announce as the greatest writer the world will ever know if he ever gets down to writing again like he did earlier—It’s so enormous we both sit here sighing in fact—“No the only writing I done,” he says, “a few letters to Willamine, in fact quite a few, she’s got em all wrapped in ribbons there, I figgered if I tried to write a book or sumptin or prose or sumptin they’d just take it away from me when I left so I wrote her ’bout three letters a week for two years—and the trouble of

course and as I say and you've heard a million times is the mind flows the mind rises and nobody can by any possible c—oh hell, I dont wanta talk about it”—Besides I can see from glancing at him that becoming a writer holds no interest for him because life is so holy for him there's no need to do anything but live it, writing's just an afterthought or a scratch anyway at the surface—But if he could! if he would! (BS, 140–41)

Duluoz praises Dean's writing skills not from any actual writing that he has done but from the life that he has lived. His anti-intellectual stance is foregrounded by the implicit suggestion that “non-intellectuals” like Dean can produce writing that is just as good if not far superior to more skilled or experienced writers. Dean's preference for writing letters addressed to one person as opposed to long novels shows a certain unconcern for enlightening others. He uses writing for practical purposes, just like a regular non-writer would, and does not seek the glory of influencing society. Unlike a regular person, however, his letters are a tool that helps him maintain the bonds that allow him to continue living his fast, reckless, and spontaneous life. Also pertinent is the sentence that is cut short (“the mind flows the mind rises and nobody can by any possible c—”), which could be explained as Dean's way of confirming, like Japhy, that even though the mind “rises” to sublime ideas (gnosis)³⁹ and even if he manages to transcribe them in long-form sophisticated prose, readers would still not be able to have an “intuitive” understanding of what he would write about. A common point between Duluoz's experience with Dean and his experience with Japhy is that they both reveal the collective characteristic of gnosis, regardless of its accessibility. Scenes that could be descriptive of gnosis access are more frequent and more intense when Duluoz is with Dean or Japhy, which suggests that access fundamentally relies on the negotiation of the meaning of shared lived experiences, or what Part III of this dissertation identifies as *intersubjective experiences*.

For Duluoz, transmitting gnosis through writing as a means to enlighten others is a necessary condition to achieve individual authenticity. Moreover, it is simultaneously an obligation and a wish: it is an obligation when identified with the paradoxical function of writing mentioned earlier (duty–burden), which is primarily linked to the transmission of the visions that he does not ask to be shown. It becomes a wish in the context of his selfless and unprompted desire to enlighten others. Examples of the first can be seen in the visions that immediately follow some of his meditation sessions, such as when he declares hearing “Avalokitesvara the

³⁹ Dean's experience of gnosis is demonstrated by his alleged understanding of “IT.”

Hearer and Answerer of Prayer,” who in Buddhism is a Bodhisattva who “aids all people who call upon him in need,”⁴⁰ say to him: ““You are empowered to remind people that they are utterly free”” (*TDB*, 456). Following another meditation session, this time in the woods of Big Sur, Duluoz recalls how “I conceived of myself as a special solitary angel sent down as a messenger from Heaven to tell everybody or show everybody by example that their pecking society was actually the Satanic Society and they were all on the wrong track” (*BS*, 117).

As for the “pure,” inherent, and unbeholden desire to enlighten others, this can be seen as a direct consequence of his study of the natural elements (flora and fauna) as the following two examples demonstrate:

There were now early spring mornings with the happy dogs, me forgetting the Path of Buddhism and just being glad; looking around at new little birds not yet summer fat; the dogs yawning and almost swallowing my Dharma; the grass waving, hens chuckling. Spring nights, practicing Dhyana under the cloudy moon. I’d see the truth: “Here, this, is It. The world as it is, is Heaven, I’m looking for a Heaven outside what there is, it’s only this poor pitiful world that’s Heaven. Ah, if I could realize, if I could forget myself and devote my meditations to the freeing, the awakening and the blessedness of all living creatures everywhere I’d realize what there is, *is* ecstasy.” (*TDB*, 383)

Being relatively still under the influence of Japhy’s teachings, this passage shows one of the rare scenes in *The Dharma Bums* where Duluoz contemplates the possibility of reaching nirvana beyond the disciplined path of Buddhism. Other than the realization that there is no need to *seek* heaven anymore, there is the more significant realization that devoting oneself to the enlightenment of others is itself heaven (ecstasy) understood as individual authenticity. At the roots of this realization is his study of the elements (dogs, grass, hens) that also features in *Tristessa* where Duluoz, observing a Chihuahua and imagining “her own reflections on the subject of Nirvana and death and mortals biding time till death,” develops a wish to “communicate to all these creatures and people, in the flush of my moonshine good times, the cloudy mystery of the magic milk to be seen in Mind’s Deep Imagery where we learn that everything is nothing” (*TR*, 578). With this form of authenticity, we return to Harma’s “existential authenticity” mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, which always emanates from the contact between the natural elements and the divine. Revising the notion, one could

⁴⁰ Prebish and Keown, *Buddhism—The Ebook*, 164–65.

conceive of existential authenticity as the state that Duluoz reaches upon studying nature and realizing a sense of fulfillment in the transmission of its noumenal properties.

Noumenal inaccessibility and non-transmissibility are challenged by the porous structure of the *Legend's* narrative. The following section inquires into noumena from a textual–narratological viewpoint that mostly builds on two recently initiated narratological discussions: first, the renewed factual/fictional debate and the research led by Monika Fludernik and colleagues on *narrative factuality* (2019), and second, the hermeneutic function of metalepsis as theorized by Julian Hanebeck (2017), who, not only offers significant additions to previously recognized types of metalepses (from Genette to Marie Laure Ryan) but also, and more importantly, recognizes the role of metalepsis in accounting for the paradoxes contained in what he refers to as the *impossible narration* of certain narratives.

The Language of Noumena: Mediation and Transmission

The Mediation of Nonsensical Language in *The Subterraneans*

Among the many things that the Samāpatti vision contains is the word “Colyacolor” that Duluoz feels compelled to yell as he senses the dissolution of his ego. The mysterious word belongs to some otherworldly language, yet it seems to force itself into Duluoz’s mind and demand to be legitimized as part of his mysterious belief system, defying the limitations of the adapted human capacity for language as per Chomsky. Numerous examples disclose bizarre language that Duluoz neither asks to be shown nor claims to invent or figure out by himself—the analogy of the alien abduction in Tool’s song serves the argument here as well—but is rather revealed to him as an expression of that which is inexpressible or humanly unfathomable.

In one of the signature digressions from the diegesis in *The Subterraneans*, Duluoz and his lover, Mardou, are having a conversation about their plans: Duluoz wants to get a job to be able to buy a typewriter and necessities so that he could better take care of Mardou. The conversation is interrupted and the narrative transitions to a reflection fittingly placed in between parentheses:

(And Charles Bernard, the vastness of the name in the cosmogony of my brain, a hero of the Proustian past in the scheme as I knew it, in the Frisco-alone branch of it, Charles Bernard who’d been Jane’s lover, Jane who’d been shot by Frank, Jane whom I’d lived

with, Marie's best friend, the cold winter rainy nights when Charles would be crossing the campus saying something witty, the great epics almost here sounding phantom like and uninteresting if at all believable but the true position and bigburn importance of not only Charles but a good dozen others in the light rack of my brain, so Mardou seen in this light, is a little brown body in a gray sheet bed in the slums of Telegraph Hill, huge figure in the history of the night yes but only one among many, the asexuality of the WORK—also the sudden gut joy of beer when the visions of great words in rhythmic order all in one giant archangel book go roaring thru my brain, so I lie in the dark also seeing also hearing the jargon of the future worlds—damajehe eleout ekeke dhdkdk dldoud,—d, ekeoou dhhdhkehgyt—better not a more than lther ehe the macmurphy out of that dgardent that which strangely he doth mdodudltk dip—baseeaatra—poor examples because of mechanical needs of typing, of the flow of river sounds, words, dark, leading to the future and attesting to the madness, hollowness, ring and roar of my mind which blessed or unblessed is where trees sing—in a funny wind—well-being believes he'll go to heaven—a word to the wise is enough—“Smart went Crazy,” wrote Allen Ginsberg.) (TS, 500)

The first part of this reflection signals the existence of gnosis, not through the demarcation of realms as before, but through the odd way that the compartmentalization of Duluoz's mind is described. At first, it seems as if he has fashioned a strategy that would allow him to deglamorize Mardou in order to focus on his writing. He notices how the epic events of his past, notably those related to a man named Charles Bernard, have become less significant in the present moment. The memory of Charles, who is here emblematic of the glorious past, is used as an analogy to contextualize Mardou within the temporal frame: in the same way that Charles was once considered by (a particular “rack” of) Duluoz's brain as emblematic of the epic but now is insignificant, the grandiosity with which Mardou is perceived is also bound to change.

The reflection on the workings of the mind that leads to this transposition showcases exceptional cognitive self-awareness. Nevertheless, it also suggests the existence of another “rack” or compartment that is specialized in dealing with information that belongs to a different order than the one that encompasses the momentary, ephemeral “epics” and grandiosities of Charles and Mardou. Duluoz deglamorizes Mardou not only to be able to get back to his writing work—her de-sexualization is particularly important in order to concentrate on writing which is

“asexual” work—but also to deactivate the part of the mind that deals with phenomena and concentrate on the understanding of noumena. The two compartments are given distinct functions, not in the scientific sense of each part of the brain being dedicated to specific types of tasks, but in the sense that each part is dedicated to processing information belonging to a separate realm of knowledge. The first dash that follows the word “WORK—” signals a sharp transition between the two realms, as evidenced by the nonsensical language that follows it. I would argue that what Duluoz claims to be “the jargon of future worlds” is better described as the language of noumena, which an instrument designed to transcribe the language of phenomena cannot convey.⁴¹ Because they are produced by a typewriter (which might as well be a computer or a pen and paper), the specific nonsensical words that appear in this reflection are “poor examples” of noumenal language, and seem like products of the “madness” of his mind, although in reality, they only appear as such because of the broken link between noumenal language and its externalization, which reveals the inadequacy of the medium of transmission.

There are two devices through which this noumenal language is made to fit Duluoz’s belief system or, in other words, made to appear sensical. The first one is stylistic and concerns the way recognizable words and canonical style are fused with noumenal language. This is especially evident in the last part (“—better not a more than lther ehe the macmurphy out of that dgardent that which strangely he doth mdodudltk dip—baseeaatra—”). Even though the recognizable words that are thrown in still do not make a lot of sense (the three chunks “better not a more,” “the macmurphy out of that,” and “that which strangely he doth”), they legitimize the accompanying incomprehensible parts by suggesting to the reader that there is a certain meaning–structure puzzle that could be deciphered. This is in part because of the words that are chosen which, as random as they are, denote a person or at least a being (macmurphy) who is doing something (doth). In fact, the choice of the word “doth” is intriguing: it is an *archaic* word used to describe what Duluoz believes to be a *future* world. This creates a temporal paradox that confuses the readers and at the same time affirms the separation between them and the realm being described. The dashes play another part in the structural legitimization of the language by strategically emulating its stylistic use in *The Subterraneans* and the other novels as well. For

⁴¹ Surely, it is impossible to know why Duluoz believes that the words that he sees in his vision belong to a future world, but the suggestion that they are representative of a language that could describe noumena is in line with the belief system that he develops and with the claim in this dissertation about the failure of (sensical) language to grasp and explain reality. See, for example, pages 128 and 139–40, chapter four.

example, the fact that “—baseeaatra—” is enclosed within dashes, similarly to “—in a funny wind—” or “—a word to the wise is enough—” which are in proximity, sets it apart from the other noumenal words and suggests that it has a special significance.

The second legitimization device concerns the interplay between the factual and the fictional. The real-world person on whom the character Charles Bernard is based is unknown, although there are some speculations.⁴² However, easier to recognize are the characters of Frank and Jane, who refer to none other than beat writer William S. Burroughs and his wife Joan Vollmer, simply because of the infamous story of Burroughs’s allegedly accidental shooting of his wife in Mexico City. Duluoz adds another verifiable fact from the real world at the end of the digression by quoting a line from the poem “Bop Lyrics” by Allen Ginsberg. Of course, it is no secret that Kerouac, Burroughs, and Ginsberg represented the backbone of the beat generation, and any time there is mention of Burroughs and Ginsberg in the *Legend*, readers are reminded of the supposed factuality of the events being recounted. However, it is interesting to note that, while Burroughs is referred to by his character name Frank Carmody, Ginsberg is referred to by his real-world name and not by the character name attributed to him in *The Subterraneans* (Adam Moorad). Regardless of the reason behind this choice, the use of the real name Allen Ginsberg creates a metaleptic transgression whereby the extradiegetic world interferes in the diegetic world (the storyworld of the *Legend*). This collapses the border between the two worlds and enables the possibility to perceive nonsensical language as being part of the extradiegetic realm as well—the two realms share the same context—as it acquires aspects of factuality. Furthermore, seeing that the “madness” of the nonsensical language is juxtaposed with the creative madness celebrated in Ginsberg’s poem, Duluoz implicitly suggests that his mad language is also the kind that could be interpreted creatively.

The two devices used in the transmission of noumenal language transform it from pure noumena that cannot be grasped to a language that belongs to an intermediate realm. In a recent

⁴² The website beatbookcovers.com mentions that Charles Bernard refers to a John Kingsland who was a student at Columbia University, while the website everything2.com says that he refers to an Ed Stringham. The latter suggestion is more plausible given the fact that *The New Yorker* has a piece about an Edward Stringham who used to be a collator at the magazine for forty years, who befriended Kerouac, and who is speculated to have been referred to in *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums*. See Dave Moore, “Character Key to Kerouac’s Duluoz *Legend*,” [beatbookcovers](http://www.beatbookcovers.com/kercomp/), accessed 16 June 2022, <http://www.beatbookcovers.com/kercomp/>; RoguePoet, “Jack Kerouac character reference key,” [everything2](http://everything2.com), Nov. 10, 2002, accessed 16 June 2022, <https://everything2.com/title/Jack+Kerouac+character+reference+key>; and Mary Norris, “The Archives of an Unfulfilled Genius,” *The New Yorker*, December 27, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-archives-of-an-unfulfilled-genius>.

conference talk on narratology (February 2022), Monika Fludernik presented some of the key research in *Narrative Factuality: A Handbook* that she edited alongside Marie Laure-Ryan.⁴³ In her talk, Fludernik outlined some of the contemporary problems that concern the distinction between fact and fiction, beginning with the terminology itself, to the existence or absence of universals, referentiality, and the truth value in religious texts and ancient myths. On the latter topic, and of particular relevance to gnosis and noumena, Fludernik referenced Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber's and Luitgard Soni's research conducted on Buddhist narratives. For the authors, when it comes to "reality" and "factuality," many of the stories that may seem fantastic from a Western perspective are, in fact, the only kind of (pseudo)historical tradition available,⁴⁴ and many still fall under the category of "semi-real" narratives that blend factual records with fantastic elements.⁴⁵ Fludernik also summarizes the classical conceptualizations of the realm that exists between fictionality and factuality, specifically the one from antiquity and the one from the Middle Ages, appearing respectively in the research of Margalit Finkelberg and Eva Von Contzen. Finkelberg reminds the reader of Plato's definition of "the corpus of traditional myths as 'what is commonly believed' (*to nomizomenon*),"⁴⁶ while Von Contzen points out "the ancient rhetorical distinction between *fabula*, *argumentum*, and *historia*" where *argumentum* refers to "events that did not happen, but might have."⁴⁷

The nonsensical language that Duluoz introduces could be identified with these classical categories of intermediate realms. While the autobiographical facts assert the factuality of the narrative, the Buddhist themes therein, including the visions, paradoxes, as well as mysterious ideas, language, or structure, are primarily responsible for the fictional elements, regardless of whether Duluoz's metaphysical contemplations have actually been experienced. This fusion situates the *Legend* within the category of "semi-real" Buddhist narratives, and could be said to (aspire to) represent that which is commonly believed (by the reader) (*nomizomenon*), as well as that which did not happen but might have (*argumentum*). In fact, Sperber's argument that half-

⁴³ Monika Fludernik, "Factual Narrative Cross-Culturally and Diachronically" (presentation, Séminaire "Recherches contemporaines en narratologie": année universitaire 2021-2022/Performativités narratives, online, February 15, 2022).

⁴⁴ Fludernik, "Factual Narrative."

⁴⁵ Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber and Luitgard Soni, "Reality and Factuality of Classical Indian Narratives," in *Narrative Factuality: A Handbook*, eds. Monika Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 689.

⁴⁶ Margalit Finkelberg, "The Factual in Antiquity," in *Narrative Factuality: A Handbook*, eds. Monika Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 618.

⁴⁷ Eva Von Contzen, "Diachrony: The Factual in the Middle Ages," in *Narrative Factuality: A Handbook*, eds. Monika Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 627–28.

understood beliefs are accepted despite their truth value or “factuality” validates the suggested cognitive internalization on the part of the reader of nonsensical language through its filtering into the intermediate realm that exists between the factual and the fictional.

Joycean Poetics and the Transmission of Noumenal Language in the Poem “Sea”

As mentioned earlier, the previously quoted passage is not the only case where nonsensical language is employed. James J. Donahue has recently analyzed Kerouac’s exploitation of run-on sentences in *Visions of Gerard*, remarking that their seeming formlessness sometimes touches on the nonsensical. In his study of a particular eight-line sentence in which Duluoz tries to deal with the tragic death of his brother,⁴⁸ Donahue sees that

This sentence demonstrates Kerouac’s inability to rein himself in, or give syntactic form to the emotions he needs to express.... Kerouac is subtly but decisively using alliteration to suggest a narratological development, moving from the author, through the characters, and finally to the readers.... words that may at first blush appear to be nonsensical, but are granted meaning through the poetic effect of alliteration ... In other words, Kerouac is creating meaning for these words based on a consciously aural method of composition.⁴⁹

Although not explained in terms of noumena, Donahue meticulously identifies the failure of traditionally structured language to convey the desired emotion, as well as Kerouac’s production of meaning through sound effects instead of content. That being said, a discussion about nonsensical language would not be complete without mentioning the twenty-three-page poem at the end of *Big Sur* titled “Sea.”

In conjunction with Harma’s notion of “existential authenticity,” which attests to the convergence of nature and the divine, what can now be considered as *intermedial language* is always wholly or partially the language of nature. Even in the previous quotation, the incapability to transcribe the language of the visions is represented by the image of the inability of the typewriter to transcribe “the flow of river sounds.” The poem “Sea,” given the practical subtitle “Sounds of the Pacific Ocean at Big Sur,” contains a collection of onomatopoeias that

⁴⁸ For the full discussion, see James J. Donahue, “Tonal Poetry, Bop Aesthetics, and Jack Kerouac’s *Visions of Gerard*,” *European Journal of American Studies* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 7.

⁴⁹ Donahue, 7–8.

are meant to represent exactly what the subtitle foretells. These are often accompanied by descriptions that facilitate their identification such as in the verses “Shoo—Shaw—Shirsh— / Go on die salt light / You billion yeared / rock knocker” (*BS*, 219) or “Ah Ratatatatatat— / the machinegun sea, rhythmic / balls of you pouring in” (*BS*, 240). These descriptive elements, along with the use of stream of consciousness (specifically the rapid and seamless transitions between mental reflections and physical observations that often blur the line between the two), and the numerous allusions that sometimes require diligent scrutiny to be uncovered, make the poem highly Joycean. Moreover, its personification of the sea through language presents a striking similarity to Joyce’s preoccupation with the sounds of the sea at the end of the Proteus episode in *Ulysses* where the narrator ponders: “Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, oos. Vehement breath of waters amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks. In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap: bounded in barrels. And, spent, its speech ceases.”⁵⁰ In both novels, the narrators are interpreting to the reader a language that seems to be esoterically beyond the simplicity of onomatopoeic reproduction. For comparison, one line in “Sea” reads “no human words bespeak / the token sorrow older / than old this wave / becrashing smarts the / sand with plosh” (*BS*, 223), which is a confirmation of the esoteric quality of the language of the sea. Another one reads “parle, parle, boom the / earth—Arree—Shaw, / Sho, Shoosh, flut, / ravad, tapavada pow, / coof, loof, roof” (*BS*, 225), which sees Duluoz egging on the sea to speak (“parle”).

The style of Joyce is manifest in “Sea” also through word-merging. Similar to the words “fourwarded,” “wavespeech,” and “seasnakes” in *Ulysses*, “Sea” is abundant with words such as “seabirding,” “doublelegged,” “undershoes,” and “mouthroof” (*BS*, 219, 228) that accentuate the sensation of the crashing of the waves into the rocks, as well as the blurring of the line between the internal (reflections) and the external (observations). That being said, Joyce and his interpretation of the language of the sea are literally referenced in “Sea”: “No Monarc’h ever Irish be? / Ju see the Irish see? / Green winds on tamarack vines— / Joyce—James—Shhish— / Sea—Ssssss—see / —Varash / —mnavash la vache / écriture—the sea dont say / muc’h actually—” (*BS*, 227). This is followed by a reference to actual events from *Ulysses*, which creates a horizontal metaleptic transgression from one diegesis into another: “Gosh, she, / huzzy, tow, led men / on, Ulysses and all them / fair headed moin— / Terplash, & what difference /

⁵⁰ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, [1922] 2000), 62.

make! One little white / spark of light! / Hair woven hands / Penelope seaboat / smeller—
Courtiers in / Telemachus's guise" (*BS*, 227).

Commenting on the Joycean characteristics of the poem, Christopher Gair has recently noticed that

in *Ulysses*, hearing "his boots crush crackling wrack and shells," Stephen Dedalus mulls upon the poetic qualities of the sea:

Won't you come to Sandymare,

Madeline the mare?

Rhythm begins, you see. I hear. A catalectic tetrameter of iambs marching.

No, agallop: *deline the mare*.

Joyce's play on mare's aural resemblance to "mer" (and, perhaps, too, to *mère*) anticipates Kerouac's own punning in "Sea,"⁵¹ while the twinned play on sea/see suggests the process that moves from hearing the sounds of the sea to transforming them into poetry "agallop" with "iambs marching" that anticipates Kerouac's own methodology in "Sea."⁵²

Even though neither *Big Sur* nor *Ulysses* are essentially poetic works, the interpretation of the sounds of the sea seems to necessitate the experimental freedom to juggle with words that prose language lacks and that is rather characteristic of poetic language. But aside from the linguistic acrobats, there is a deeper issue that links the two works, and which is interestingly related to the notion of solipsism discussed earlier. Patrick Hastings remarks that in the first pages of the "Proteus" episode,

Stephen opens his monologue with philosophical musings on Aristotle's notion that ideas originate from sensory experience of the external world, deriving "thought through [his] eyes." He examines the relationship between sight, object, and color, then closes his eyes to walk blindly as he ponders sound, time, and space.... When he reopens his eyes, he

⁵¹ This is a reference to the following lines in "Sea": "'*On est toutes cachez, mange / le silence,*' dit les poissons de la / mer—Ah Mar—Gott / Thalatta—Merde—Marde / de mer—Mu mer—Mak a vash— / The ocean is the mother—" (*BS*, 231) where Thalatta is the Greek word for sea and a reference to "Thalatta! Thalatta!" in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

⁵² Christopher Gair, "'Thalatta! Thalatta!': Xenophon, Joyce, and Kerouac," in *Hip Sublime: Beat Writers and the Classical Tradition*, eds. Sheila Murnaghan and Ralph M. Rosen (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2018), 51–52.

betrays a shade of solipsism as he confirms that the world was “there all the time without” him.⁵³

Stephen and Duluoz share a preoccupation with the noumenal nature of objects and the limitation of regular modes of language when it comes to its transmission. Standing at the threshold of the intuitive understanding of the noumenal (the essence of objects which exists “without” them, as in, without their perception), they are aware of their exceptional position as interpreters as they create a hybrid medium that combines prose and poetry as a vehicle of transmission.

“Sea” also contains language that is not introduced as or could not be interpreted as being representative of the sounds emitted by the sea/ocean, and which is highly abstract and experimental. An example of this is the following stanza:

Too much short——Where
Miss Nop tonight?
Wroten Kerarc’h
in the labidalian
aristotelian park
with slime a middle
——And Ranti former
who pulled pearls by
rope to throne
the King by
The roll in the
forest of everseas?
Not everseas, *be* seas
———Creep
Crash⁵⁴ (*BS*, 223)

The first two lines are written as if by a child who is yet to have a grasp of the English language or by someone with inadequate English skills while the one that follows is written in archaic/old

⁵³ Patrick Hastings, *The Guide to James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2022), 35.

⁵⁴ The formatting peculiarities of the stanza are reproduced as they appear in the novel to highlight the arbitrariness of some of the choices, such as the slightly decreased indentation at the third, sixth, seventh, and thirteenth lines, the slightly increased indentation at the tenth line, the long dashes, the placement of the word “Crash” at the center of the last line, and the odd capitalization (or lack of required capitalization) of some of the words.

English (not only the past of the verb “write,” but also the name Kerouac). Regardless of what the first two lines actually mean, the fact that they are said to be quoted from Kerouac (“Wroten Kerarc’h”) creates a temporal paradox similar to the one that emerges from the use of the word “doth” when speaking about future worlds. This is because it gives the impression that a speaker from an ancient time is quoting Kerouac, a modern-day author who uses modern-day English. The temporal dimension that collapses due to this transgression, which is the first scale of diegetic transgressions as per Hanebeck,⁵⁵ represents a metalepsis in which the real-world (historical) author Jack Kerouac moves from the world of the *telling* into that of the *told*. In other words, the diegetic (storyworld) narrator of *Big Sur* (in the Textual Actual World TAW), Jack Dulooz, has evoked his own creator, the extradiegetic (real-world) Jack Kerouac (in the Actual World AW), which sets the stage for a logical impossibility that only makes sense within the context of a metaleptic narrative. The following section provides more examples of metalepses in the *Legend* and illustrates their role in the interpretation and legitimization of noumena.

Noumenal Access through Metaleptic Transgressions

The Hermeneutic Function of Metalepsis

It is now time to provide a narratological framework for what I termed *intermedial language*, especially since the notion of metalepsis has been so far used a few times without a proper definition. Although metalepsis proper is yet to be explored in Kerouac’s oeuvres, there have been some studies that evoke narrative border-crossing without directly referring to metalepsis as the device initiating it. A good example is Michael Hrebaniak’s interpretation of “IT” in *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*: “‘IT’ surfaces in passages where Cassady’s speech rhythms are internalized within the narrator’s own thought patterns,”⁵⁶ which demonstrates a classic case of a metaleptic leap from the extra-diegetic level to the diegetic level of narration. The most pertinent indirect reference to metalepsis, however, is Grace’s analysis of the merger between historicity and fiction in *Desolation Angels*. Grace mentions two examples as markers

⁵⁵ Julian Hanebeck, *Understanding Metalepsis: The Hermeneutics of Narrative Transgression* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 41.

⁵⁶ Michael Hrebaniak, *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac’s Wild Form* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 47.

of this merger: the first is the “parenthetical asides, such as ‘(or I guess she said, I don’t remember)’”⁵⁷ from the scene where Duluoz is greeting a girl that he knows:

“Ruth Heaper?” I say when introduced. “Ruth who heaped the heap of corn?”

“The same,” she says (or I guess she said, I don’t remember). (*DA*, 294)

The second example she gives is “the pseudonyms of historical figures [that] are occasionally replaced temporarily by the individuals’ real names”⁵⁸—similar to the aforementioned use of Allen Ginsberg’s real name in *The subterraneans*.

Grace also sees some ambiguity in what appears to her to be the occasional use of the “omniscient persona” instead of first-person narration in some of the characters’ comments such as the one in the narration of Raphael’s (Beat poet Gregory Corso) criticism of Duluoz’s intellectualism: “‘Shelley didnt care about theories about how he was to write “The Skylark.” Duluoz you’re full of theories like an old college perfesser, you think you know everything.’ (‘You think you’re the only one,’ he added to himself)” (*DA*, 313). Grace wonders: “How is a reader to understand Raphael’s parenthetical comment? As an aside spoken under his breath and overheard by Duluoz, or as a silent thought privy only to an omniscient narrator? The phrase ‘he added to himself’ is sufficiently ambiguous to encompass both possibilities.” She concludes that “this and other features of *Angels* confound the divisions between memoir as truth based and fiction as imagination based.”⁵⁹

The unattainability of noumena, which is issued from the Kantian–Chomskyan limitations elaborated at the beginning of this chapter, is echoed in Julian Hanebeck’s affirmation of “the complexity and limitation of human understanding” and even “the limitation of a narratological analysis”⁶⁰ itself, prompting the need for narratology to enter the realm of hermeneutics which begins with “the acknowledgment of the situatedness [and therefore limitations] of narratological analyses.”⁶¹ The hermeneutic view of metaleptic transgressions recognizes that “the recipient [reader] ontologically belongs to what is understood: a narratological understanding is made possible by an interpreter who belongs to a history,

⁵⁷ Grace, *Jack Kerouac*, 35.

⁵⁸ Grace, 35.

⁵⁹ Grace, 35.

⁶⁰ Hanebeck, *Understanding Metalepsis*, 122.

⁶¹ Hanebeck, 143.

(narratological) tradition, *Wirkungsgeschichte*, etc., that make interpretation possible; moreover, according to Gadamer, as a reader, the interpreter ‘belongs to the text he is reading.’”⁶²

Julian Hanebeck’s recent book *Understanding Metalepsis: The Hermeneutics of Narrative Transgression* is a groundbreaking study in contemporary narratology. In it, Hanebeck theorizes the hermeneutic effect of metalepsis, which is a notion first explained by Gérard Genette in 1972 as a device that accounts for “any violation of the boundary that separates the world of the narrating from the world of the narrated.”⁶³ To Hanebeck, “narratives do not have functions independent of a necessarily historical hermeneutic situation,”⁶⁴ and “the hermeneutic effect of metalepsis is connected to the fact that in understanding metaleptic transgressions readers (possibly) become aware of the (transgressed) representational logic on which the conception of narrative (understanding) usually relies: (narrative) representations communicate what is not present itself.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, and contrary to Marie Laure Ryan’s belief that metalepsis is restricted to the storyworld, Hanebeck believes that “one possible effect of metaleptic transgressions is the denial of the epistemological conditions with which we distinguish fiction and non-fiction.”⁶⁶ Once these conditions are denied, canonical categories of knowledge no longer guide the reader’s interpretation of the text, which becomes an instrument of legitimization of half-understood beliefs (Sperber) through what I termed intermedial language. To explain how this is possible, Hanebeck draws on what exactly is at stake and what is laid bare during a metaleptic transgression:

metalepses have the capacity to foreground the ‘impossibilities’ that emerge, albeit mostly unnoticed or bracketed, in very conventional attempts to understand narrative.... the metaleptic dynamic questions the very foundations of narration—which are inevitably connected to human epistemological conditions and hermeneutic capabilities.... The foundations highlighted and questioned by metalepsis are the forms of knowledge and perception which “conventionally condition our access to ‘reality’”; these (linguistic, perceptual and cognitive) forms, which ‘support’ fictional narrative and the narrative

⁶² Hanebeck, 145.

⁶³ Hanebeck, 1.

⁶⁴ Hanebeck, 109.

⁶⁵ Hanebeck, 111.

⁶⁶ Hanebeck, 116.

construction of ‘reality’ alike, become visible if ‘reality’ is represented unconventionally and, as in the case of metalepsis, ‘impossibly.’ Metalepsis is, in this sense, not only part of a tradition that ‘defamiliarizes’ familiar ways of making sense. The metaleptic defamiliarization, I would argue, potentially uncovers aporetic configurations that come into being in human mediations of ‘reality.’ In other words, a detailed analysis of the element of negativity that is part of the metaleptic dynamic potentially highlights and reflects the fact that the representational logic of ‘habitual modes of representation’ involves aporia and ‘paradoxical impossibilities’ which are indebted to human limitations (of knowledge).⁶⁷

What could be deduced from this elaboration is that the most crucial implication of the hermeneutic effect of metalepsis is the fact that, as a device, metalepsis accounts for all the paradoxes discussed here as well as in chapters four and five, such as the paradox of noumenal access/unattainability, the paradoxes of death, and the paradox engendered by the interplay between fact and fiction. This perspective enables us to see metalepsis not only in the classical-narratological sense of border-crossing between diegetic levels, which has a minimal, rather playful effect but as a gateway into the “paradoxical impossibilities” that govern narrative acts *as well as* the “human limitations of knowledge” simultaneously. In this view, the reader is an integral part of the metaleptic process in that, while reading, metaleptic narratives unveil to them the paradoxes and limitations of their understanding of reality: it is not that they discover that metalepsis is a device of fiction, but that *the Real is also governed by mysterious processes of interpretation*. To better understand this effect, the following discussion illustrates two of Hanebeck’s categories of *impossible narration* as applied to the narrative of the *Legend*.

The Collapse of Temporal Dimensions in *The Dharma Bums*

Central to the first category of impossible narration is the collapse of temporal dimensions between the narrative levels. “Sea” manifests this type of collapse as induced by the two words “Wroten Kerarc’h”; however, because it is only minimal and temporary, it could thus be considered as a mere “figurative metalepsis,” as per Hanebeck’s typology.⁶⁸ During Duluoz’s attempt to explain to his family the nature of objects by using the example of the orange (quoted

⁶⁷ Hanebeck, 154–55.

⁶⁸ Hanebeck, 83.

above), his mother and sister become tired of hearing his philosophical elaboration and tell him “You and your Buddha, why don’t you stick to the religion you were born with?” to which Duluoz replies “Everything’s gone, already gone, already come and gone” (*TDB*, 385). Here, Duluoz’s commitment to his Buddhist belief in Saṃsāra (the cycle of creation) collapses the temporal dimension and foregrounds noumenal existence. The realization that “everything’s gone” is preceded by the following reflection:

Alvah went to bed and I sat and closed my eyes and thought “This thinking has stopped” but because I had to think it no thinking had stopped, but there did come over me a wave of gladness to know that all this perturbation was just a dream already ended and I didn’t have to worry because I wasn’t “I” and I prayed that God, or Tathagata, would give me enough time and enough sense and strength to be able to tell people what I knew (as I can’t even do properly now) so they’d know what I know and not despair so much. (*TDB*, 304)

As is the case with most of his visions and moments of realization, the desire to actualize his destiny as a messenger is always present. Here, however, what he wishes to relay to people is paradoxical and beyond logical comprehension, which is that the present is the past. This “impossible narration,” to use Hanebeck’s term, contains a layer of complexity that could be articulated in a question posed by Genette in 1988, which is the question of “which comes first in the temporal and logical sequence of story and narration [that] depends on the narrative’s ‘real or fictive genesis.’”⁶⁹ If Duluoz is recounting something that had actually happened (pure autobiography), then story (the *told*) comes before the narration (the *telling*), but if Duluoz is inventing a story as he writes (pure fiction), then it is the other way around. Since the narrative is at an intermediary position between the factual and the fictional, as this chapter has argued, it is difficult to know which came first, the *told* or the *telling*. In other words, it is difficult to specify whether the events came before the *telling* or are created by it.⁷⁰ But when the *told* is itself a declaration that it had happened *independently of the telling* as the sentence “all this perturbation was just a dream already ended” implies, what does this say about the *telling* and the need for it?

⁶⁹ Hanebeck, 158.

⁷⁰ Typically, the more the genre of the work approaches history (supposedly pure non-fiction), the more the *told* can be said to have preceded the *telling*, and vice versa with pure fictional works. Hanebeck talks about how in *Tristram Shandy*, the aporia that is foregrounded by the metaleptic narrative is the fact that, in some passages, the events seem to come before the *telling*, yet are, at the same time, created by the *telling*. Hanebeck, 160.

In one of the scenes in *Desolation Angels*, Duluoz wonders: “Here I sit upside-down on the surface of the planet earth, held by gravity, scribbling a story and I know there’s no need to tell a story and yet I know there’s not even need for silence—” (*DA*, 74). On the one hand, there is a conflict between the desire to reveal esoteric knowledge to people, and on the other, there is a realization that there is no real necessity for this beyond the inexplicable, uncontrollable urge to do it. For Duluoz, then, the *told*, which is the narratological equivalent of the totality of all things (“all this perturbation”), represents an independent entity that does not require *telling* to become an entity. Furthermore, it is always something that belongs to the past, and therefore, can never be conceived in the present of a reader/recipient. The independence of the *told* from the *telling* and from the reader’s present is reinforced by the annihilation of the self that Duluoz asserts with relief when he says “I wasn’t ‘I,’” which is a reiteration of the state of egolessness discussed earlier. Hanebeck sees that the most extreme forms of metalepses have the potential to project a “madness that annihilates the self; for truly becoming the other amounts to the annihilation of the self.”⁷¹ Here, Hanebeck is referring to the manifestation of “unmediated experience,” which is the effect of metalepsis when it “approaches unmediated knowing or experiencing, as some narrator or character, some narrative entity comes closer to knowing ‘from the inside out.’”⁷² This is precisely the effect of the temporal transgression in question: with the non-dependence on *telling*, on a temporal present, or on an experiencing self, the *noumenal* quality of the totality of all things is revealed. It is the quality of things as they exist in their pure, “unmediated” state, grasped intuitively as things in themselves and unperturbed by human time and prejudiced perception.

The Realist Aporia in *The Subterraneans*

In “Sea,” the migration of extradiegetic (real-world) authors Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac to the diegetic level of the storyworld addresses the reality/unreality dichotomy discussed in chapter four. In fact, the metaleptic passages of the *Legend* confuse the very understanding of the reality of the world referred to. This is in part related to the connection between reality and the question of reference which Tilmann Köppe recently addressed by offering more questions than answers and proving that there is still a large dispute within

⁷¹ Hanebeck, 120.

⁷² Hanebeck, 119.

narratological circles as to the existence, reality, nature, and definition of the world outside the text that narratives refer to⁷³—what this study has referred to as the Textual Referential World TRW.

Let us consider the example of a metaleptic passage in *The Subterraneans* in which Mardou is telling Duluoz about an experience she had and that she suspects to have been stimulated by drug use:

“I wandered around with my brooch.”—She went into some kind of gift shop and there was a man in a wheel chair there. (She wandered into a doorway with cages and green canaries in the glass, she wanted to touch the beads, watch goldfish, caress the old fat cat sunning on the floor, stand in the cool green parakeet jungle of the store high on the green out-of-this-world dart eyes of parrots swivelling witless necks to cake and burrow in the mad feather and to feel that definite communication from them of birdy terror, the electric spasms of their notice, s q u a w k, l a w k, l e e k, and the man was extremely strange.)—“Why?”—“I dunno he was just very strange, he wanted, he talked with me very clearly and insisting—like intensely looking right at me and at great length but smiling about the simplest commonplace subjects but we both knew we meant everything else that we said—you know life—actually it was about the tunnels, the Stockton Street tunnel and the one they just built on Broadway, that’s the one we talked of the most, but as we talked this a great electrical current of real understanding passed between us and I could feel the other levels the infinite number of them of every intonation in his speech and mine and the world of meaning in every *word*—I’d never realized before how much is happening all the time, and people *know* it—in their eyes they show it, they *refuse* to show it by any other—I stayed a very long time.” (*TS*, 490)

First, given that the sentence “she went into some kind of gift shop and there was a man in a wheel chair there” has a similar semantic structure to the first phrase in the parenthetically enclosed material (“she wandered into a doorway with cages and green canaries in the glass”), they both ought to be considered as parts of the regular indirect discourse. However, the use of the parentheses suggests a demarcation of sorts, which appears here to be representative of a transition into the narratorial voice (Duluoz’s thoughts or commentary on Mardou’s story). At

⁷³ Tilmann Köppe, “Reference in Literature/Literary Studies,” in *Narrative Factuality: A Handbook*, eds. Monika Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 259–66.

the same time, the last enclosed phrase “and the man was extremely strange” suggests another transition, this time to Free Indirect Discourse FID (Mardou’s speech presented as if it is Duluoz’s voice).⁷⁴ Fludernik has suggested that cases of FID should be considered metaleptic since “the mixing of narrator’s and character’s voices seems to occur precisely on a level where it is forbidden (in heterodiegetic narrative these voices are, after all, located on different ontological planes), and the invented discourse in the free indirect mode creates precisely the kind of ‘blend’ that is so typical of metaphoric projection [of the concept of metalepsis].”⁷⁵ Itself a special type of metalepsis, the FID transgression is reinforced through the communication established between the FID inside the parentheses (“the man was extremely strange”) and the direct discourse outside of them (“Why?”) which, as Fludernik mentions, are “located on different ontological planes.” This odd communication alters the very function of the parentheses as the enclosed material can no longer be considered as mere additional information to the principal narrative but is rather part of it, despite being stylistically secluded.

The FID metalepsis prompts a reconsideration of the rest of the material enclosed within the parentheses. The part that starts with “she wandered” and ends with “sunning on the floor” is easily identifiable as (regular) indirect speech, which is characteristic of third-person narration. However, it is highly unlikely that the phrase that starts with “stand in the cool green” belongs to the same category or represents what Mardou told Duluoz *she wanted* to do. In other words, it is highly unlikely, having learned about her character and knowing the poetic prose characteristic of Duluoz’s writing style, that Mardou could have told Duluoz that she wanted “to feel that definite communication from them [the parrots] of birdy terror.” In fact, the phrase “stand in the cool green ... and the man was extremely strange” could be considered a *narratorial metalepsis* as per Hanebeck’s classification:⁷⁶ it represents a transgression from Mardou’s speech to

⁷⁴ Monika Fludernik defines FID as follows: “While still representing the contents of an utterance in a narrative context, it [FID] draws stylistically and syntactically on the expressive power of direct speech ... Free indirect discourse is called ‘free’ because the introductory verbs of saying (He claimed that...) are dispensed with; ‘indirect’ because the utterances represented are referentially aligned and tenses shifted in accordance with the surrounding narrative discourse.” Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, trans. Patricia Häusler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik (Oxon: Routledge, [2006] 2009), 67.

⁷⁵ Monika Fludernik, “Scene Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode,” *Style* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 395.

⁷⁶ According to Hanebeck, *narratorial metalepsis* or *first-person metalepsis* is a subtype of *immersive metalepsis* (itself a type of *ontological metalepsis*) which happens to be mediated by the same entity that undergoes the transgression (in this case, Duluoz). As for *immersive metalepsis*, it “designates the narrative phenomenon which triggers the construction of a narrator, existent, event or utterance that ‘literally’ moves from the domain of the signified to the domain of the signifier (or vice versa) in a negation of the logic of the act of narrative representation.” Hanebeck, *Understanding Metalepsis*, 94, 96.

Duluoz's thoughts while simultaneously blending the two realities and creating an oscillation between them. This "impossibility" describes the "realism" of the storyworld which, instead of foregrounding its fictional nature, foregrounds a paradox or the "aporia" related to the understanding of the real world.

Hanebeck writes that:

Because the schemata of "generic realism" are so ingrained, because the world-as-accessible-to-us is intuitively (and conventionally) conceptualized in terms of independence from the structuring process of language, the aporias of realism are hidden in a dichotomy that considers represented entities either as artifice (fiction) or "reality" (fact). Metalepsis highlights the "impossibility" that lies hidden in realist narratives, an impossibility that mirrors the aporias of philosophical realism: We cannot understand narrative without the construction of a "world" that is distinct from the telling—ultimately, this schema cannot be avoided, not even when reading *Alphabetical Africa*—yet we have no access to this "world" apart from the telling.⁷⁷

The narratorial metalepsis prompts a reconsideration of the *telling* of the passage that follows the parentheses. Because Mardou's speech and Duluoz's commentary are blended, the metalepsis creates ambiguity surrounding the identity of the speaker and the truth value of the quoted material after the parentheses. What presumably appears as Duluoz quoting with fidelity how Mardou is describing her interaction with the man in the store suddenly becomes devoid of a stable world of *telling*. The metalepsis has made it difficult to ascertain the identity of the speaker from the standpoint of the realism of the narrative: is it an exact rendering of Mardou's experience using direct discourse or is it Mardou's experience mediated and transfigured by a narrator who, if not unreliable, then certainly with his subjective intentions and motives as to what he wants his narratee to understand? Added to this is the already-existing blurring of the lines between the narrator Jack Duluoz and the writer Jack Kerouac, established by the (semi)autobiographical nature of the *Legend*.

The ambiguity of the speaker in the world of the *telling* generated by the metalepsis increases the independence of the world of the *told* from that of *telling*, in other words, its

⁷⁷ Hanebeck, 180.

independence from the linguistic capacities that create it (it is there without the need to *tell* it). But in this particular case, the world of the *told* that the reader constructs (the unavoidable schema that Hanebeck refers to) happens to contain a description of the accessibility of this world. Even though the conversation between Mardou and the man at the store is about something as trivial as the Stockton Street tunnel, the claim that they “meant everything else” than what they said, and that there was “a great electrical current of real understanding” between them and a “world of meaning in every *word*” could be perceived as a description of noumenal access. While this does not resolve the aporia detailed by Hanebeck—metalepses are not supposed to resolve the aporias of realism but foreground them—the metaleptic transgression contributes to the naturalization of the possibility that such a world could be accessed. In a way, both the FID metalepsis and the narratorial metalepsis transcend and challenge the human representational capacities at play because the thoughts of two different people (or the thoughts of one and the speech of another) cannot naturally merge, at least not without the aid of some modern-day technology. They enable the reader to naturalize the passage about the intuitive understanding of noumena in the same way that they naturalize the previous “impossibility,” especially (but not exclusively) because it is presented within the context of the realism of the storyworld: access to noumena becomes a possibility for the reader.

Conclusion

The hegemony of the institutionally maintained hyperreal over all the facets of life has sent Duluoz on a physical–spiritual quest to uncover the Real. In the material domain, he seeks out unconventional experiences with Dean and the subterraneans and has profound relationships with women. In the spiritual domain, he tries to hold on to his Christian faith and, finding no satisfactory answers to his crisis, adopts an extreme form of Buddhism which, at times, removes him completely from the concerns of the material world. He recognizes that one way of finding the Real is by accessing the essence of objects and beings—their noumenal nature—and conceives of writing as a responsibility which, even in its paradoxical aspects of duty and

burden, he must assume in order to relay to others that one can transcend the phenomenal world and develop an intuitive understanding of how things are in themselves.

Nevertheless, Duluoz is confronted with the shortcomings of the written language as a medium of transmission of this knowledge which, similar to the shortcomings of verbal communication, is a result of the biological limitations of the human mind. These shortcomings simultaneously cause and are caused by reflections and discussions with Japhy and Dean about the need to transmit knowledge of the Real in the first place. That is until Duluoz realizes that this transmission is not only directed toward the enlightenment of others but is also a necessary condition for his personal authenticity.

In order for Duluoz's writing to transcend the limitations of language and become a vehicle for the transmission of noumena, special narrative devices are employed, which a close narratological analysis helps reveal. Duluoz facilitates such an analysis by postulating the existence of a compartment of the brain that is designed for the reception of esoteric forms of knowledge which, far from being an elitist claim, exists in all of us. The juxtaposition of nonsensical and canonical language, the fusion of the fictional and the factual, and the use of the poetic form are examples of these devices that transform the alleged language of noumena into a form of sensical, intermedial language. Another device used to achieve Duluoz's objective is metalepsis. The merging of different narrative temporalities, of characters and their real-life identities, and of narratorial reflection and the characters' speech are the effects of the metaleptic transgressions that contribute to the transmission of noumena. By foregrounding the malleability of language, Duluoz invites the reader to question all the limitations (imposed or imagined) on all facets of reality and incorporate within their belief systems the possibility that an alternative and more profound understanding of entities exists upon suspension of prejudice and sensory experience.

Part III of this dissertation follows Duluoz's quest for authenticity beyond his metaphysical and mostly individual explorations of the Real. In particular, it looks at the dialogism of authenticity that Duluoz manifests as a strategy against the individualism of postwar American society. It discusses how, in order to arrive at an understanding of objective reality and even aspects of his identity, Duluoz must establish intersubjective experiences both as a social member of his subculture and as an artist.

Part III.

THE DIALOGISM OF AUTHENTICITY

Chapter 7. Intersubjectivity and Relationship Dynamics

The analysis of the last cited passage in the previous chapter has revealed FID and narratorial metalepses that contribute to the naturalization of otherwise complex aporia. However, what was interpreted as a description of noumenal access, namely, Mardou's talk of "a great electrical current of real understanding" between her and the man in the store, is also a description of an *intersubjective* connection that was established between the two. Despite being stimulated by drug use—this chapter cites and comments on a study of the effect of drugs on intersubjectivity in Kerouac—Mardou's interaction with the man constitutes one among many intersubjective experiences that leads one to conclude that intersubjectivity is a major theme in the *Legend* and that it must have a strong connection to the authenticity quest.

The first section of this chapter represents a brief overview of some of the most pertinent accounts of intersubjectivity and identifies it as a requirement for authenticity, especially in the context of Charles Taylor's *ideal of authenticity*. The rest of the chapter examines intersubjective experiences between Duluoz and two of the major characters in the *Legend*: Dean (specifically in *On the Road*) and Mardou in *The Subterraneans*. The second section discusses the empathy that Duluoz desires toward Dean despite the latter's lack of interest in establishing empathetic bonds. Once initiated, intersubjective experiences with Dean are harnessed and explored, and they become conduits for his worldview. Dean's experience of the mundane and rather apathetic but systematic interactions with others prove to be crucial for the construction of Duluoz's identity and his understanding of objective reality.

Also crucial for the same objectives are Duluoz's intersubjective experiences with Mardou, two of which are analyzed in the third section. The confessions that Mardou and Duluoz agree to reveal to one another turn out to be key to Duluoz's understanding of the dynamics of race, sex, and romance between them. This exercise, which is inspired by Dean and which I call *confessional intersubjectivity*, is also performed collectively with the subterraneans, whose participation in interpreting one of Duluoz's dreams exports it from the subjective-fictional to the intersubjective-factual domain. In so doing, not only does Duluoz attempt an understanding

of the complexity of his feelings toward Mardou, but he also commences a reevaluation of the dynamics that govern the relationship among the subterraneans as an in-group.

Intersubjectivity and Taylor's Malaises

According to philosopher Charles Taylor, there is a problem with the postmodern view of authenticity which, I would argue, is still the dominant view in today's Western culture:

Briefly, we can say that authenticity (A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality, and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality. But it is also true, as we saw, that it (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance (for otherwise the creation loses the background that can save it from insignificance) and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue. That these demands may be in tension has to be allowed. But what must be wrong is a simple privileging of one over the other, of (A), say, at the expense of (B), or vice versa. This is what the trendy doctrines of "deconstruction" involve today. They stress (A.i), the constructive, creative nature of our expressive languages, while altogether forgetting (B..i). And they capture the extremer forms of (A.iii), the amorality of creativity, while forgetting (B.ii), its dialogical setting, which binds us to others.¹

Although in his book Taylor does not specifically refer to the notion of *intersubjectivity*,² his treatment of authenticity and his critique of deconstruction's neglect of its dialogism surely evoke the notion. Daniel Belgrad observes that, as a hallmark of postwar American art, intersubjectivity characterized a trend that sought to oppose the objectivity of corporate liberalism. It presented "an alternative metaphysics embodied in artistic forms ... in which reality was understood to emerge through a conversational dynamic."³ In its most fundamental sense, "intersubjectivity comes in when we undergo acts of *empathy*. Intersubjective experience

¹ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1991] 2003), 66–67.

² The word "intersubjectivity" appears only one time in the book, specifically on page 63.

³ Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5.

is empathic experience; it occurs in the course of our conscious attribution of intentional acts to other subjects, in the course of which we put ourselves into the other one's shoes."⁴ If Christian Beyer's explanation of Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity appears too restricting a definition, then the entry in Oxford's *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* surely provides a more encompassing one: Intersubjectivity is

the process and product of sharing experiences, knowledge, understandings, and expectations with others. A key feature of social constructionism, symbolic interactionism, and phenomenological approaches generally. The existence, nature, and meaning of things is not entirely up to the individual but subject to social and linguistic constraints within a culture or subculture.... Cultural identity is experienced through intersubjectivity.⁵

Establishing contact with the Other and the subjective explorations of reality are two of the prerequisites of authenticity that this dissertation has so far discussed. In fact, the novels of the *Legend* are so predominantly structured around the spiritual journey that Duluoze undergoes that not all readers are able to realize the significance of the interactions between him and the other characters (primarily Dean, Carlo, the women in his life, and the so-called subterraneans) in forging a genuine understanding of "the existence, nature, and meaning of things," and that attaining an intuitive understanding of noumena relies profoundly on such interactions. Christopher Adamo believe that "to the extent that ... classical utopian visions were collective, the Beats, including Kerouac, align with this anti-utopian sentiment, suspicious that any collective (political) answer to the question, 'How are we to live?' threatens to rob man of his individuality, freedom, and dignity."⁶ What Adamo fails to mention is that, while the Beats were certainly not in favor of a political hijacking of the idea of a utopia, they nevertheless did believe strongly in it—Kerouac's idealism is proof—and did believe strongly that a utopia can be erected through specific forms of collectivism as the three chapters in Part III of this thesis demonstrate.

⁴ Christian Beyer, "Edmund Husserl," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2020 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/husserl/>. Accessed 1 July 2022.

⁵ Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), s.v. "Intersubjectivity."

⁶ Christopher Adamo, "Beat U-topos or Taking Utopia on the Road," in *The Philosophy of the Beats*, ed. Sharin N. Elkholy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 33.

As a necessary instrument of resistance against, not only “the objectivity of corporate liberalism” as Belgrad observes, but also extreme forms of individualism, intersubjectivity is an attempt to seize the domain of objective reality from, as the postmodernists might say, power structures which, in the specific American model, are represented by the institutions of the technocratic society. The discussion of intersubjectivity can be traced back to Husserl’s extensive elaboration of the notion in his phenomenological studies. As Christian Beyer explains, “on Husserl’s view, ‘the crucial further step’ in order to answer this question [of how to conceive of an objective reality beyond the solipsistic perspective] consists in disclosing the dimension that opens up when the epistemic justification, or ‘motivation,’ of intersubjective experience, or empathy, is additionally taken into account and made explicit.”⁷ In other words, one can have a grasp of objective reality when another person experiences that same reality, in relatively similar ways. The elaboration of this view leads to Husserl’s “thesis of transcendental idealism,” a part of which states that “a nature without co-existing subjects of possible experience regarding it is unthinkable.”⁸

One of the recent accounts of intersubjectivity that also emphasize the dialogical character of reality is by Alex Gillespie and Flora Cornish. The authors continue the tradition of Hegel, Mead, and Bakhtin when they assert that “knowledge, society and subjectivity are all dynamic and contextual phenomena which can be theorised in terms of dialogues between different (real and imagined) perspectives.”⁹ In agreement with this view, Klarina Priborkin reminds the reader of Jessica Benjamin’s theory of intersubjectivity, according to which

human beings construct their identity through recognition by another independent subject: “recognition is that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions and actions of the self. It allows the self to realize its agency and authorship in a tangible way. But such recognition can only come from an other whom we, in turn, recognize as a person in his or her own right.”¹⁰

⁷ Beyer, “Edmund Husserl.”

⁸ Beyer.

⁹ Alex Gillespie and Flora Cornish, “Intersubjectivity: Towards a Dialogical Analysis,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 40, no.1 (2010): 33.

¹⁰ Klarina Priborkin, “Cross-Cultural Mind-Reading; or, Coming to Terms with the Ethnic Mother in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*,” in *Towards a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Frederick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 168.

That being said, as pertains to the notion of authenticity, the theoretical foundation of the following discussion is best described as being based on Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*. The book opens with an outline of "three malaises" that, broadly speaking, have stood in the way of achieving authenticity in modern times, all of which characterize important aspects of Duluoz's crisis as this dissertation has shown.

The first malaise is the disenchantment of the modern world, which is characterized by the reality that "people lost the broader vision because they focused on their individual lives." Taylor believes that "the dark side of individualism is a centring on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others or society."¹¹ The second malaise is what Taylor calls "the primacy of instrumental reason" which is translated by "maximum efficiency [and] the best cost-ratio,"¹² and is mostly "evident in the prestige and aura that surround technology, and makes us believe that we should seek technological solutions even when something very different is called for."¹³ This echoes Theodore Roszak's remarks about the technocratic society's efforts to convince people that all problems have technical solutions.¹⁴ The third malaise is "soft despotism," a notion that Taylor adopts from Tocqueville. Taylor believes that "what we are in danger of losing" is what Tocqueville calls "political liberty,"¹⁵ which is the moment individuals no longer "participate actively in self-government. They will prefer to stay at home and enjoy the satisfactions of private life, as long as the government of the day produces the means to these satisfactions and distributes them widely."¹⁶

What Taylor proposes is a "work of retrieval" to restore the "ideal of authenticity"¹⁷ through the recognition and embodiment of the dimensions of authenticity, the most important of which is its dialogical nature. Taylor elaborates that

the general feature of human life that I want to evoke is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence

¹¹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 4.

¹² Taylor, 5.

¹³ Taylor, 6.

¹⁴ See page 77, chapter two.

¹⁵ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 10.

¹⁶ Taylor, 9.

¹⁷ Taylor, 23.

of defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression.... No one acquires the languages needed for self definition on their own. We are introduced to them through exchanges with others who matter to us—what George Herbert Mead called “significant others.”¹⁸

As discussed in the first part of this dissertation, Duluoz’s critique of America encompasses Taylor’s malaises as his anxiety and alienation are, in many ways, consequences of his inability to cope with them, and the “language of expression” that he requires for his self-identification is tied to his exchange with others and inscribed in his relationship with them.

Duluoz and Dean: Intersubjective Brotherhood in *On the Road*

Origins of Duluoz’s Infatuation with Dean

Belgrad states that “the beats relied on an intersubjective epistemology that arrived at truth through honest dialogue”¹⁹ and that “the spontaneous ‘sketching’ technique developed by Jack Kerouac aimed at a form of intersubjective communication that integrated conscious and unconscious experience.”²⁰ While the intersubjective characteristics of Kerouac’s technique are discussed in detail in chapter nine, readers of the *Legend* can easily identify in Duluoz an unusually strong bond that ties him to his circle of acquaintances, especially Dean, Carlo, and Japhy, as well as the women that come into his life.

Dean is introduced in *On the Road* as a less than reputable character who, nevertheless, manages to capture Duluoz’s interest immediately: “He was conning me and I knew it (for room and board and ‘how-to-write,’ etc.), and he knew I knew (this has been the basis of our relationship), but I didn’t care and we got along fine—no pestering, no catering; we tiptoed around each other like heartbreaking new friends. I began to learn from him as much as he probably learned from me” (*OTR*, 6). As unhealthy as the foundation of their relationship may

¹⁸ Taylor, 32–33.

¹⁹ Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, 208.

²⁰ Belgrad, 12.

be, Duluoz had been yearning for a long time to meet a person like Dean. The way he describes him and the things that he is willing to sacrifice and put up with for his sake makes it seem as if every person that Duluoz had ever met before Dean was irrelevant, inconsequential, or simply not worth the same effort. This attachment is, however, one-sided. Whereas Duluoz is willing to defend Dean whenever put in a situation that requires it, Dean's care for Duluoz is much less genuine and often suspicious. In one of the scenes, Galatea Dunkel, one of the women in the group, reprimands Dean for his decision to abandon his family and go to Italy with Duluoz. She starts criticizing his overall reckless lifestyle and ends up saying that the sooner he dies the better. Duluoz, realizing that "she spoke officially for almost everyone in the room," gets agitated and, even though admits the truth in Galatea's words, interferes and says "'very well, then,' I said, 'but now he's alive and I'll bet you want to know what he does next and that's because he's got the secret that we're all busting to find and it's splitting his head wide open and if he goes mad don't worry, it won't be your fault but the fault of God'" (*OTR*, 176).

The admiration that Duluoz has for Dean seems to stem from something that he sees in him and that no one else does. And the fact that Duluoz admits from the beginning that he knows that Dean is a con man eliminates the possibility that he is being manipulated by him, at least not without his knowledge. As Andrew Vogel remarks, "promising to prove Dean was not a fool and keep faith in him, the best Sal can do is dub him the 'HOLY GOOF,' the saintly idiot-clown who might save them all if only they could understand him. Yet this canonization bolsters him only so much as Dean destroys more and more in his wake."²¹ Duluoz sees in Dean's way of life, especially his quest to stretch the present moment beyond its normal boundaries and his idealization of movement as a way to achieve this, a missing piece in the puzzle of his own identity. By comparison, when Duluoz falls terribly ill in Mexico, Dean abandons him without any remorse or concern for his friend's well-being. Even when this happens, Duluoz still finds a way to justify Dean's behavior: "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. 'Okay, old Dean, I'll say nothing'" (*OTR*, 273).

²¹ Andrew Vogel, "The Dream and the Dystopia: Bathetic Humor, the Beats, and Walt Whitman's Idealism," *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 58, no. 3 (2013): 400.

Duluoz's continuous readiness to justify Dean's mistreatment of him and to defend him at all times is contrasted with Dean's self-concerned approach to their relationship. One cannot say that either does not show genuine care for the other at times (even though Duluoz's care is evidently purer and more profound), but I would argue that Duluoz's care for Dean is primarily motivated by, as the dialogic function of intersubjectivity suggests, a desire to complete the construction of his own identity and understand the reality of the universe. After Dean is introduced in *On the Road*, Duluoz recounts him meeting Carlo and he reflects on their first interaction:

And Dean told Carlo of unknown people in the West like Tommy Snark, the clubfooted poolhall rotation shark and cardplayer and queer saint. He told him of Roy Johnson, Big Ed Dunkel, his boyhood buddies, his street buddies, his innumerable girls and sex-parties and pornographic pictures, his heroes, heroines, adventures. They rushed down the street together, digging everything in the early way they had, which later became so much sadder and perceptive and blank. But then they danced down the streets like dingedodies, and I shambled after as I've been doing all my life after people who interest me, because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes "Awww!" (*OTR*, 7)

The wild stories that Dean tells Carlo should not only be considered as part of his (Dean's) past but also part of Duluoz's identity in that they constitute what he would like to experience vicariously through Dean's life. In that sense, Duluoz's friendship with Dean is an attempt to simulate the feeling or outcome of the wild experiences without having to experience them himself. This is not because he could not experience them but because, knowing Duluoz's highly artistic and studious approach to every facet of life's experiences,²² he does not *want* them for himself. This, however, begs the question of why *does* he want to simulate them and why does he claim to be interested, almost exclusively, in people who have these kinds of experiences?

²² See, for example, Duluoz's views on sex on pages 118–19, chapter four.

Even as recent as 2019, some scholars still fail to realize the depth of the relationship that ties Duluoz and Dean, believing that Duluoz is merely “interested in Dean because of his rebellious and spontaneous nature and youthful spirit,” because Dean “does what he wants in any given moment, supposedly not being bound to any laws or social norms,” and “because he sees Dean as the paradigmatic example of new youth.”²³ While these are certainly accurate descriptions of Dean, they do not represent the reasons why he becomes the object of Duluoz’s interest. First, it is very possible that, because of the strong influence that Dean has on Duluoz, his claim that he “shambled after as I’ve been doing all my life after people who interest me” could be a statement from hindsight bias.²⁴ In other words, Duluoz could have convinced himself that he had always been interested in the type of people that behave like Dean, even if it was not true. If this is the case, then this would grant the intersubjective connection with Dean a very significant role in the construction of Duluoz’s identity, one so strong that it even overrides his past life. This is supported by the fact that, as mentioned above, Dean appears as an iconoclast who creates such a whirlwind that he induces in Duluoz a near-obsessive desire to access him intersubjectively. Secondly, the quest for this access has a deeper dimension that shows as Duluoz develops an interest not only in Dean’s behavior and stories (what he could see and hear) but also in the things that Dean does *not* share. A striking example of this is when, one evening, Duluoz decides to take a stroll down the streets of Denver where Dean used to live just so he could imagine what the latter’s childhood *might have been like*, what his father might have been like, and to visit places where he knew he used to spend time (*OTR*, 52).

As much as it might seem counterproductive, one of the reasons why Duluoz seeks intersubjective access to Dean’s life is to avoid the extremities that are the source of universal disorder. The section titled “Sanctifying Dean: Duluoz’s Christian Atheism” of chapter five has refuted the categorization of Dean and Gerard (Duluoz’s brother) as classical representations of extremities, arguing instead for a more dynamic approach to understanding the reasons for Duluoz’s continuous “Gerardization” of Dean. Duluoz recognizes in Dean the manifestation of excessive behavior that he justifies: “Only a guy who’s spent five years in jail can go to such maniacal helpless extremes; beseeching at the portals of the soft source, mad with a completely

²³ Drew Baker, “The Mountain of Youth: Converting American Buddhism and the Authority of the Monk–Convert Paradigm,” *Horizontes Decoloniales / Decolonial Horizons* 5 (2019): 141.

²⁴ For the interpretation from hindsight bias, see the discussion on pages 163–64, chapter five.

physical realization of the origins of life-bliss; blindly seeking to return the way he came” (*OTR*, 118). Despite the inner extremities that shape his personality—in clinical terms, “maniacal extremes” is generally associated with bipolar disorder—Dean possesses the solution to Duluoz’s existential crisis precisely because he is not identified with the extremities of materialism and spirituality.

Elaborating on the foundation of their relationship, Duluoz confirms that “it wasn’t only because I was a writer and needed new experiences that I wanted to know Dean more ... but because, somehow in spite of our difference in character, he reminded me of some long-lost brother” (*OTR*, 9). Duluoz’s explicit rejection of the assumption that his interest in Dean is solely motivated by a desire to exploit the latter’s wild life for artistic reasons shows his concern for the truth, as well as awareness and anticipation of possible pushbacks from readers. As a writer, Duluoz is always at risk of having the totality of his experience downgraded into mere fuel for narrative. Here, Duluoz lets the reader know that there is another and perhaps more important reason for his friendship with Dean. Notice that Duluoz does not say that Dean reminds him of his brother (his actual deceased brother), but of “some long-lost brother,” which is to say that Dean has come to be associated with the mysterious structure of the universe and not with Duluoz’s actual life. He proceeds to proclaim that

all my other current friends were “intellectuals”— ... or else they were slinking criminals.... But Dean’s intelligence was every bit as formal and shining and complete, without the tedious intellectualness. And his “criminality” was not something that sulked and sneered; it was a yea-saying overburst of American joy; it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming (he only stole cars for joy rides). (*OTR*, 9)

As extreme as Dean personally is, Duluoz sees that, on the scale of intellectualism and criminality, he is detached from either of the extremes. Rather, because he does everything with so much passion and dedication, he incarnates the best of both worlds. Duluoz sees in Dean a truer and more genuine kind of intellectualism, which is the intellectualism that is based on experience and not on books and college education. However, it strikes the reader as rather odd that his *criminality* also seems to be of a better kind because, not only does he understate it by placing it between scare quotes, but he also implies that there is a *good* kind of criminality.

This brings us back to the issue of morality discussed at the end of chapter four. Duluoz's justification of Dean's criminality resembles his exoneration of the sins of humankind after finding God culpable. However, the exoneration of Dean happens because Duluoz believes that he is the one who has access to noumena and who can share it with others. His thefts are decorated with words such as "ode," "joy," and "prophecy," which gives the impression that, with Dean, the act of stealing becomes heroic, and this is because Dean does not want the cars as material possessions but because they are the vehicles (literally and metaphorically) that transport both men to wherever authentic life exists. As mentioned before, Dean does not represent any of the extremes that Duluoz's other friends are identified with; however, he does not seem to stand for the middle way either. In a way, Dean is the ultimate incarnation of both intellectualism and criminality: his ability to access noumena, an ability also represented by his exclusive knowledge of "IT" and "Time"—which may as well be one and the same—suggests that he experiences intellectualism and criminality simultaneously, yet, experiences each one very differently from anyone else.

Duluoz's interest in Dean, specifically the latter's embodiment of intellectualism and criminality, springs from the same desire to access noumena. Dean's criminality originates from the absolute permissibility entailed by the death of God; however, this criminality becomes a desirable moral quality only because of Duluoz's belief that if permissibility is to lead to sinning, then sinning must be done in a way as to target a higher cause. So, we transition from an exoneration of criminality without basis to an exoneration that presupposes the somewhat paradoxical notion of sinning for a good cause or, at least, what is perceived by Duluoz as a good cause, which is what could be found in the formula *joy rides equals finding authenticity*.

Dean's stealing habits emerge as particularly sublime when compared to those of Remi Boncoeur, a Frenchman and old friend of Duluoz's. When Duluoz reprimands Remi for always getting them into trouble because of his stealing, Remi answers that "the world owes me a few things, that's all" (*OTR*, 62). Duluoz then realizes that "somewhere in his past, in his lonely schooldays in France, they'd taken everything from him; ... He was out to get back everything he'd lost; there was no end to his loss; this thing would drag on forever" (*OTR*, 63). According to Duluoz, Remi's stealing is motivated by a sickly desire to take revenge on a world that he believes had betrayed him. Although he sympathizes with him, Duluoz is not prepared to justify

Remi's misbehavior in the same way he does Dean's because he does not see any moral good that comes out of Remi's exploitation of the freedom to sin. It is, after all, Dean who teaches everyone about the importance of realizing that the freedom that they enjoy must be translated into responsibility, as argued in chapter five.

Dean's Experience of the Mundane

Dean's intuitive experience of life sets him apart from almost everyone else that Duluoz meets, perhaps with the exception of Japhy who, in *The Dharma Bums*, embodies Buddhist authenticity that Duluoz fails to replicate. It also creates in Duluoz a desire to discover the same mode of experiencing in others. In one scene, he describes a conversation he struck with an eighteen-year-old girl, during which he desperately tries to extract from her answers that she simply does not have:

She was dull. She spoke of evenings in the country making popcorn on the porch. Once this would have gladdened my heart but because her heart was not glad when she said it I knew there was nothing in it but the idea of what one should do. "And what else do you do for fun?" I tried to bring up boy friends and sex. Her great dark eyes surveyed me with emptiness and a kind of chagrin that reached back generations and generations in her blood from not having done what was crying to be done—whatever it was, and everybody knows what it was. "What do you want out of life?" I wanted to take her and wring it out of her. She didn't have the slightest idea what she wanted. She mumbled of jobs, movies, going to her grandmother's for the summer, wishing she could go to New York and visit the Roxy, what kind of outfit she would wear—something like the one she wore last Easter, white bonnet, roses, rose pumps, and lavender gabardine coat. "What do you do on Sunday afternoons?" I asked. She sat on her porch. The boys went by on bicycles and stopped to chat. She read the funny papers, she reclined on the hammock. "What do you do on a warm summer's night?" She sat on the porch, she watched the cars in the road. She and her mother made popcorn. "What does your father do on a summer's night?" He works, he has an all-night shift at the boiler factory, he's spent his whole life supporting a woman and her outpoppings and no credit or adoration. "What does your

brother do on a summer's night?" He rides around on his bicycle, he hangs out in front of the soda fountain. "What is he aching to do? What are we all aching to do? What do we want?" She didn't know. She yawned. She was sleepy. It was too much. Nobody could tell. Nobody would ever tell. It was all over. She was eighteen and most lovely, and lost.

Duluoz unsuccessfully tries to locate in the girl Dean's intuitive understanding, believing that it naturally exists in everyone, like a heart or a limb. The change that Dean has induced in Duluoz is evident when the latter mentions how he *could* have been interested in the girl, her life, and the answers that she was giving him, had her "heart been glad" when she spoke, and had there not been a sense of obligation in her words. I would argue that this is caused by the intersubjective bond that had been established between him and Dean prior to him meeting the girl which, in turn, supports the hindsight bias argument stated above. The consequence of the intersubjective relationship with Dean is so monumental that it creates a rupture with the very mechanism and purpose that govern Duluoz's encounters and conversations with people, which ultimately intensifies his judgment of them.

Even though he knows that the girl is only eighteen and is, therefore, justifiably lost, Duluoz is not able to use this knowledge to control himself. Instead, he goes on a rapid and aggressive probing into her very soul. Interestingly, his questions to her are not in themselves about so-called deep issues, but rather about the mundane details of her life. Having understood the failure of the human linguistic capacity to express the language of noumena as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Duluoz does not seek spelled-out answers but wants instead to pursue the mental construction of an objective reality through the intersubjective knowledge of how people experience their mundane lives. Here, it is not a question of Buddhist interpretations of oneness and nothingness—especially when considering the imminent discovery of the failure of Buddhism in providing answers for the existential crisis—but of the *intensity* with which the girl, and people in general, live their lives.

Once he had empathized with Dean, Duluoz measures the intuitiveness of his (Dean's) experiences by the intensity of his experience of the mundane. Aside from his road aesthetic and his overall philosophy based on movement and spontaneity, "Dean just raced in society, eager for bread and love; he didn't care one way or the other, 'so long's I can get that lil ole gal with that lil sumpin down there tween her legs, boy,' and 'so long's we can *eat*, son, y'ear me? I'm

hungry, I'm starving, let's eat right now'—and off we'd rush to eat, whereof, as saith Ecclesiastes, 'It is your portion under the sun'" (*OTR*, 9–10). The crescendo observed in Dean's speech (*I'm hungry, I'm starving, let's eat right now*) is comparable to the one in Duluoz's interrogation of the girl, which suggests that Duluoz tries to imitate the way Dean talks because he realizes something in the mechanism of interrogating life and the overall way of getting at truths that is far superior to what the words themselves are capable of expressing. This reminds us of McLuhan's well-known observation that "the medium is the message," as well as its important implications as relayed by Martin Lister et al.:

The difference between the view we have of the world when slowly walking, open on all sides to a multisensory environment, or when glimpsed as rapid and continuous change through the hermetically sealed and framing window of a high-speed train, is a change in sensory experience which did and continues to have cultural significance. It is this broadening of the concept of a medium to all kinds of technologies that enabled McLuhan to make one of his central claims: that the "medium is the message." In understanding media, it matters not, he would claim, why we are taking a train journey, or where we are going on the train. These are irrelevant side issues which only divert us from noticing the train's real cultural significance. Its real significance (the message of the medium itself) is the way it changes our perception of the world.²⁵

We notice with Duluoz the same prioritization of the medium, specifically the medium of language. The cultural significance of Dean's "*I'm hungry, I'm starving, let's eat right now*" is in the insinuation that the truth is found in movement and the now. Duluoz's questions to the girl also have a cultural significance, which is hidden behind the façade of getting to know her. Not only does the message subside in favor of the medium, but the addressee as well. Looking closer at the questions in isolation, one gets the following succession: And what else do you do for fun? What do you want out of life? What do you do on Sunday afternoons? What do you do on a warm summer's night? What does your father do on a summer's night? What does your brother do on a summer's night? What is he aching to do? What are we all aching to do? What do we want? The set of questions reveals that Duluoz is not really addressing the girl in front of him; rather, he is critiquing American suburban life and simultaneously confirming to himself that

²⁵ Martin Lister et al., *New Media: A Critical Introduction* (Oxon: Routledge, [2003] 2009), 84.

Dean's approach to life (the intense experience of the mundane) is closer to authentic existence than any other.

Duluoz's failure to reach an intersubjective connection with a stranger is reproduced in his relationship with Mardou. It shows in one of the conversations during which the couple is discussing some trivialities and trying to come up with plans for the future:

“you never do what I ash you t’do.”—“Aw I’m sorry—I love you—do you love me?”—
“Man,” laughing, “what do you mean”—looking at me warily—“I mean do you feel
affection for me?” even as she’s putting brown arm around my tense big neck. “Naturally
baby.”—“But what is the—?” I want to ask everything, can’t, don’t know how, what is
the mystery of what I want from you, what is man or woman, love, what do I mean by
love or why do I have to insist and ask.” (*TS*, 498–99)

Although less intrusive than the questions that he asks the country girl, Duluoz's inquiry here follows the same pattern. Interestingly, his stream of consciousness reveals his meta-awareness: he knows that there is something abnormal with his continuous inquiries but does not know the reason for his overthinking. Granted, Duluoz is an inquisitor by nature; however, his specific inquiry about the nature of the bond that connects him to Mardou suggests that here also, he seeks to replicate the relationship that he has with Dean. The claim that he wants to ask everything but does not know how demonstrates his desire for noumenal knowledge through intersubjectivity, which conflicts with the failure of language as a medium of expression of said knowledge. The contemplation of “the mystery” of what he wants from her transforms into an inquiry about the very nature of men and women as beings, as well as the bonds that are supposed to govern their relationships.

In perfect agreement with the asexuality of his desire for women, Duluoz seems to want (to know) Mardou on an intersubjective level. However, her inability to understand what he is asking her, as well as her naïve answer show that there is a substantial difference in how they see their relationship. For her, what you see is what you get, as she does not entertain the possibility that there might be deeper layers to his questions. This supports the sublimification argument discussed in chapter four, in that the “depth” of Mardou and Tristessa is but a construction by Duluoz meant to fill in certain gaps in his search for identity, authenticity, and truth.

Dean's Transactional Relationships

Dean's perspective on life includes not only the intensity with which he goes about experiencing everything but also the peculiar way he perceives his relationships with other people. Even if Duluoiz reassures himself and his reader that Dean's experiences are not mere material for writing, they certainly constitute material for study and reflection as everything else is for Duluoiz (women, nature, religion, etc.). Ironically, the reflection on Dean's perspective and experience puts into question the mechanism of reflection itself and its usefulness. In the search for reality and authenticity, the question "why do I have to insist and ask?" becomes as important as all the others ("What is the mystery of what I want from you? What is man or woman? Love? what do I mean by love?"). It is the question that suggests the possibility that studying (curiosity) and overthinking might just be the antitheses of both reality and authenticity. In other words, the question that Duluoiz sets out to answer is whether or not seeking out intersubjective connections with the universe and its beings is a useful pursuit.

As discussed above, there is a differential governing the relationship between Duluoiz and Dean. Whereas Duluoiz develops a nearly obsessive interest in Dean, his life, and his past, Dean, being the conman that he is, always has an ulterior motive for spending time with Duluoiz, which the latter knows and does not mind. When Duluoiz rejoins Dean in Denver, he goes to the "rooming house" where Dean was staying with his lover Camille. When Dean opens the door, he reacts as if he was not expecting the visit at all, even though they had agreed to meet: "'Why, Sa-a-al!' said Dean. 'Well now—ah—ahem—yes, of course, you've arrived—you old sonumbitch you finally got on that old road. Well, now, look here—we must—yes, yes, at once—we must, we really must!'" (*OTR*, 39). Regardless of whether Dean expected Duluoiz or not, he was always going to feel startled by anyone or anything that interrupts the spontaneity of the present moment. Duluoiz, on the other hand, and as much as he would like to believe that he lives in and for the moment, has an orientation toward the (perceivable) *future*, as vague and rudimentary as it is: he plans trips, entire seasons in the East and the West, travels over several weeks, etc. As for Dean, he does not even attempt to plan that far ahead. The arrival of Duluoiz reconfigures Dean's schedule in a very systematic way as he looks at Camille, introduces Duluoiz, and lays down the changes that are about to take place:

“Sal is here, this is my old buddy from New Yor-r-k, this is his first night in Denver and it’s absolutely necessary for me to take him out and fix him up with a girl.”

“But what time will you be back?”

“It is now” (looking at his watch) “exactly one-fourteen. I shall be back at exactly *three-fourteen*, for our hour of reverie together, real sweet reverie, darling.... So now in this exact minute I must dress, put on my pants, go back to life, that is to outside life, streets and what not, as we agreed, it is now *one-fifteen* and time’s running, running—”

“Well, all right, Dean, but please be sure and be back at three.”

“Just as I said, darling, and remember not three but three-fourteen. Are we straight in the deepest and most wonderful depths of our souls, dear darling?” (*OTR*, 39–40)

The first thing that one notices here is Dean’s use of clock time to describe and plan his leaving and returning to the apartment, which contradicts most of what has been said about Dean’s embodiment of timelessness.²⁶ This suggests that Dean lives in at least two different temporal realities: the timeless reality of spontaneous experiences (jazz time, “IT,” etc.) and the reality of everybody else. While his supposed access to the intuitive understanding of noumena requires the first, his regular communication with people (for example, his “real sweet reverie” with Duluoz) needs to follow the second, which is a reality that is governed by a strict system whereby everything is allotted a very specific time frame (“exactly *three-fourteen*,” “in this exact minute”) up to a point where even reveries have a specific time frame or, as Duluoz says, “There was always a schedule in Dean’s life” (*OTR*, 38).

Dean’s answer to Camille when she innocently reminds him to be back at three o’clock suggests a schism in the way that they see reality in general, which is similar to the aforementioned schism between Duluoz and Mardou that is revealed in his question “do you love me?” Whereas Camille understands Dean’s “three-fourteen” as indicative of a time *roughly* around three o’clock, Dean finds her misunderstanding strange and is almost annoyed that he needs to explain to her how he operates. His insistence that he will come back at *exactly* (not *roughly*) three-fourteen shows that they are in fact living two different realities, as his question to

²⁶ See chapter five, page 170.

her (“Are we straight ... dear darling?”) is partly condescending and partly a confirmation of this difference, and coded in a polished style that is probably meant to impress Duluoz, his writing mentor. Furthermore, for Dean, space is also bound to specific frames and is also divided into multiple realities, to such an extent that leaving the apartment for a few hours resembles stepping into another reality. The way he describes the outside world (“streets and what not”) gives the impression that he sees it as a set of structures devoid of any inherent sentimental value: whereas other people could get attached to certain places because they are evocative of memories or history, they mean nothing to Dean who has gotten rid of the constraints of geography in the same way he has gotten rid of the constraints of time.²⁷

Dean’s peculiar perspective on time and space/geography seems to be related to the transactional way with which he interacts with people. When they leave the apartment and are joined by Carlo, Dean reiterates his intention of finding Duluoz a girl and even states that he is going to find him a job, which Duluoz notices is spoken in “businesslike tones” (*OTR*, 41). Instead of taking the time to welcome his friend, Dean immediately wants to fix him up with a girl and a job, which suggests that paying his dues for the things that Duluoz had helped him with is a priority—primarily, introducing him to the world of writing and writers or, simply, fulfilling the obligations that are inscribed into their relationship as if they had been a burden that needs to be gotten rid of before he could interact with Duluoz properly. In *Big Sur*, Duluoz notices the same tone when Dean is planning the schedule of the day:

“ ... then we go rubbin shoulders into that City and go poppin right up to my sweet little old baby Willamine that I want you to meet inasmuch and also I want you go dig because she’s gonna dig YOU my dear old sonumbitch Jack, and I’m gonna leave you two little lovebirds together for days on end alone, you can live there and just enjoy that gone little woman because also” (his tone now businesslike) “I want her to dig as much as possible everything you got to tell her about what YOU know, hear me? she’s my soulmate and confidante and mistress and I want her to be happy and learn.” (*BS*, 134)

²⁷ It is worth mentioning that, even when Dean is operating on “clock time” like everybody else, the seriousness with which he insists on leaving and arriving at specific minutes demonstrates that even within the reality of clock time, he maintains a peculiar view of time in general.

Dean blatantly and nonchalantly objectifies his mistress, believing it to be unnecessary to even ask her if she would accept to be with Duluoz while he is away. Nevertheless, Duluoz successfully unveils the businesslike way Dean offers him his mistress in the same way he successfully identifies the businesslike nature of his proposition to help him find a girl and a job; yet, he misinterprets both propositions as a show of brotherly affection. Duluoz's desire for an intersubjective connection with Dean, which is met with a mechanical, unemotional, and transactional interaction by him, leads Duluoz to falsely project onto Dean his own affection, convincing himself that Dean feels the same way about him as he feels about Dean. Duluoz incorrectly assumes that Dean's offering his mistress is just "another of a long line of occasions when Cody gets me to be a sub-beau for his beauties so that everything can tie in together," thinking that Dean does this because "he really loves me like a brother" (*BS*, 134). The reality is that Duluoz has become so infatuated with Dean that he is willing to alter his predominantly asexual views of women, humor Dean, and engage with his rather hypersexuality by accepting his offer uncritically and as casually as the way Dean proposes it: "What's she look like?" (*BS*, 134).

Aside from satisfying the sexual fantasy of wanting to know what his mistress is like with another man, Dean has an ulterior intention for offering her to Duluoz, which shows in his desire for her to "learn." While the proposition to find Duluoz a girl and a job could be inscribed within the aforementioned payment of dues, it is difficult to tell why Dean would insist on the importance that his mistress learns from Duluoz everything that he knows. One could speculate that it is *Dean* who wants to learn (vicariously, through her) since he does not have enough time to spend with Duluoz—he is always on the move, splitting his time between his wife and kids, mistress, the jazz bars, the road, work, and friends—and sharing a mistress with him is just a way of accessing Duluoz's intellect without having to spend time with him. Or, it could simply be Dean's way of expressing his sexual interest in Duluoz.²⁸ But regardless of the true reasons, knowing Dean's personality, the least likely possibility is that he genuinely wants his mistress to be educated by Duluoz for her own good. Also, the fact that Duluoz himself does not even

²⁸ Although not germane to the argument here, it is well-known that many of the Beats were either homosexuals or bisexuals. Neal Cassady (Dean) was notorious for his sexual relationship with Allen Ginsberg while Kerouac (Duluoz), who was probably heterosexual, did have sexual experiences with men as documented in Ellis Amburn's biography. Ellis Amburn, *Subterranean Kerouac: The Hidden Life of Jack Kerouac* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 73, 257.

attempt a single interpretation and does not ask Dean what he means by wanting her to learn from him is another indication that he is so under the influence of Dean that he forgoes his usual questioning, doubting, and reflecting self.

Having agreed on the mistress transaction, Duluoz ruminates on what he believes to be a strong brotherly bond between him and Dean and, in a full-blown metaleptic and metafictional mode, remembers that he had forgotten to mention a detail about Dean in *On the Road* (the novel in the Textual Referential World TRW):

in the book I wrote about us (“On The Road”) I forgot to mention two important things, that we were both devout little Catholics in our childhood, which gives us something in common tho we never talk about it, it’s just there in our natures, and secondly and most important that strange business when we shared another girl (Marylou, or that is, let’s call her Joanna) and Cody at the time announced “That’s what we’ll be old buddy, you and me, double husbands, later on we’ll have whole Harreeem and reams of Hareems boy, and we’ll call ourselves or that is” (flutter) “ourself Duluomeray, see Duluoz and Pomeray, Duluomeray, see, hee hee hee” tho he was younger then and really silly but that gives an indication of the way he felt about me: some kind of new thing in the world actually where men can really be angelic friends and not be homosexual and not fight over girls. (*BS*, 135)

The reflection in this passage substantiates even further the hindsight bias argument. Duluoz wants to contextualize Dean’s offer and convince and be convinced that there is a pattern that governs his relationship with him. This is not to say that the two men had not “shared another girl” before and that this is completely imagined. However, the desire to empathize with Dean triggers a search for a pattern in the latter’s perception of certain aspects of objective reality. Furthermore, Duluoz justifies his attachment to Dean by claiming that the two men have been raised as devout Catholics as if this is somehow uncommon among young boys during that time.

The memory of the previous arrangement that they had with Marylou is also triggered by his desire to, once again, exonerate Dean from what may be perceived (by himself and the reader) as inappropriate since, at the time, Dean had justified the threeway relationship, at least to him, in a more morally acceptable way (sharing a girl is a portal to strengthening the relationship between the two men who become “double husbands,” something that Duluoz had

probably interpreted as an intersubjective bond). It is worth mentioning that, as a narrative strategy, this is a strong marker of factuality: Duluoz could have easily mentioned that Dean spoke about them being “double husbands” when proposing to him his mistress in *Big Sur*, but the fact that he mentioned that the “double husband” remark is associated with another, earlier experience and in a different book (*On the Road*), validates the truth value of the events that had occurred in both novels, as well as the entire *Legend*, for that matter.

There is in Duluoz a conflict between recognizing the absurdity and silliness of what Dean says and the desire to think about his silliness in a serious way, which reflects the urgency of establishing the intersubjective relationship. He misinterprets Dean’s sexual fantasies as some kind of new mode of being only because he wishes it to be so. He wishes he and Dean would care for each other as much as lovers do but without the homosexual implications that may accompany the term “double husbands.” He wants this kind of arrangement to be normalized not because he is convinced that it really is “some kind of new thing in the world,” but simply because it would justify how he feels about Dean and the extent to which he would like to empathize with him.

Duluoz and Mardou: Confessional Intersubjectivity in *The Subterraneans*

Intersubjectivity and the Confessional Mode

In the context of literary studies, the term “confessional” usually refers to a style of poetry that flourished during the 1950s and 1960s. Often connected to the work of Sylvia Plath and notably, Allen Ginsberg, as well as others, the self-diagnostic pouring out of intimate and painful details about one’s life is seen as a direct product of the early postmodern era. In the specific American context, it has been associated with “the awareness of the emotional vacuity of public language in America and the insistent psychologizing of a society adrift from purpose and meaningful labor.”²⁹ While Kerouac’s poetry certainly contains confessional elements, his

²⁹ Charles Molesworth, “‘With Your Own Face On’: The Origins and Consequences of Confessional Poetry,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 22, no. 2 (May 1976): 163.

confessional style emerges mainly in his prose and has been studied by various scholars. For example, Erin Mercer sees in the writer's "'evisceration'" in *On the Road* "a shattering disillusionment shared by many of his generation,"³⁰ while Nancy Grace argues that he departs from "the Aristotelian heritage" in *Visions of Cody* to such an extent that "he was working almost solely with forms of confession, autobiography, songs, poems, prayers, and meditations."³¹ Moreover, Ann Charters, Kerouac's most prominent biographer, reminds the reader that "Kerouac himself stressed two essential qualities in the various books he wrote about his life: first, that they were picaresque narratives based on 'true life' events; and second, that they were told in a confessional manner that heightened the emotional content of what he was saying."³²

While most accounts of the confessional in Kerouac primarily refer to what he as an author "confesses" to his readers, the following discussion proposes a different treatment of the *Legend's* confessional features: it identifies the confessional mode not as a style of writing (of Kerouac the author) but as a mode of intersubjectivity that defines Duluoz's interactions with others in the storyworld. The function of the confessional mode here is not associated with emotional release, nor with the commitment to authentic writing; however, it is related to authenticity in the dialogic sense of retrieving objective reality as is being discussed in this chapter. In the *Legend*, what I propose to call *confessional intersubjectivity* first appears shortly after Duluoz introduces Dean and Carlo to one another. When Duluoz asks Carlo about what they had been up to lately, Carlo answers "'Dean and I are embarked on a tremendous season together. We're trying to communicate with absolute honesty and absolute completeness everything on our minds. We've had to take Benzedrine'" (*OTR*, 38). Studying the impact of drug use on intersubjectivity in Kerouac's writing, Erik Mortenson comments on this specific proclamation by Carlo, deducing that "unfortunately for the amphetamine user, however, there never seems to be enough time"³³ because "while marijuana use expands the present to allow the "digger" to understand an Other more fully, amphetamine use creates an intense desire for

³⁰ Erin Mercer, *Repression and Realism in Post-War American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 181.

³¹ Nancy M. Grace, *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 39.

³² Ann Charters, ed., *The Portable Jack Kerouac* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995), 9.

³³ Erik Mortenson, "High Off the Page: Representing the Drug Experience in the Work of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg," in *The Philosophy of the Beats*, ed. Sharin N. Elkholy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 172.

personal revelation that finds expression in the hurried pace of the narrative itself.”³⁴ Despite not being able to achieve intersubjectivity due to the drug-induced sensation of the slippage of time, as Mortenson observes, the confessional “pact” (season) between Dean and Carlo would become the basis for the dialogic probing of reality that Duluoz adopts and attempts to recreate in his encounters with the other characters in the *Legend*.

We know that Dean is likely the one who proposed to embark on this “season,” especially once we follow the compulsive patterns that characterize his conversations with everyone. Another one of his invitations for honest and open conversations occurs when they all realize that they have a “long way to go” on the road, so they decide to share their stories. Before they begin, Dean lays down the rules of the process of storytelling in the same mentorlike manner that he used when he laid down the plans of the day when Duluoz came to his apartment unexpectedly: ““you must take every indulgence and deal with every single detail you can bring to mind—and still it won’t be all told. Easy, easy,’ he cautioned Stan, who began telling his story, ‘you’ve got to relax too”” (*OTR*, 241). Dean is in full control of the mechanism of confessions, which seems to be governed by the same exactitudes that characterize the other aspects of his life, which is why he demands that storytelling be carried out slowly and with great attention to detail. As the following two examples show, Duluoz finds himself engaged in confessional intersubjectivity with Mardou, first when he and she alone attempt to understand the problematic configurations of their relationship, and then when Duluoz expands the probing to include the subterraneans.

The Blackness of Mardou and Duluoz’s Inquiry into his Racism

The confessional mode occupies a large part of the relationship between Duluoz and Mardou in *The Subterraneans*. From the point of view of drug use, Mortenson’s overall impression of the novel’s intersubjective effect is that it “offers a frantic cataloging of doubt which triggers a parallel sensation of acceleration in the reader, while Kerouac’s letter to Cassady and *Visions of Cody* slow the reader down into a world constantly expanding with

³⁴ Mortenson, 171.

minute detail.”³⁵ The difference that Mortenson draws between the two novels is based on his association of each one of them with a particular kind of drug that Kerouac allegedly used during writing. He chiefly contrasts the narrative temporalities of each novel and their potential effect on the reception by the reader by reflecting on the difference between marijuana, used for *Visions of Cody*, and Benzedrine, used for *The Subterraneans*. Three fundamental problems immediately emerge with this analysis: first, the effect of drugs on writing and reception, to be taken seriously, needs to be empirically verified, which is not what Mortenson does—understandable since, although there are plenty of studies on the relationship between drugs and creativity, there is no study that draws a link between certain types of drugs and any aspect of style (narrative temporality, sentence structure, etc.). Secondly, the argument suggests that the entirety of the novels maintain the same temporality (*The Subterraneans* is entirely “fast” whereas *Visions of Cody* is entirely “slow”), which is an inaccurate generalization. Most importantly, however, is that Mortenson’s treatment of intersubjectivity as a drug-induced state implies that intersubjectivity in the *Legend* is perhaps *necessarily* dependent on stimulation, which is contrary to the argument of this chapter that maintains that intersubjectivity is a naturally occurring state of authenticity, albeit masked and in need of retrieval.

A week into the relationship, Mardou suggests to Duluoz that they reveal the secrets that they have been hiding from one another “in order to see and understand,” to which Duluoz obliges and begins his confession by describing what he felt the first time he saw her: “‘I thought I saw some kind of black thing I’ve never seen before, hanging, like it *scared* me’ (laughing)” (*TS*, 503). The comment about her body (a marker of confessional intersubjectivity) and the following insensitive laughter (a marker of confessional writing in the conventional sense—confession to the reader, not to Mardou) reveal Duluoz’s struggle to articulate his love for Mardou and genuine appreciation for the African American culture amid the confines of his conventional upbringing—hence the latent contextual racism. It also produces an empathetic understanding of her feelings, which is expressed in his awareness that “it seemed to me I felt some kind of shock in her being at my side as she walked as I divulged this secret thought” which, in turn, prompts an important inquiry: “later in the house with light on we both of us childlike examined said body and looked closely and it wasn’t anything pernicious and pizen

³⁵ Mortenson, 172.

juices but just bluedark as in all kinds of women and I was really and truly reassured to actually see and make the study with her” (*TS*, 503).

Even though studying the blackness of Mardou’s body is itself a racist undertaking, especially by today’s standards, it nevertheless represents a study of the origins of Duluoz’s racist thoughts. Duluoz realizes that there is no inherent reason or justification for him to have “doubts galore too about her body itself” (*TS*, 503). The confessional intersubjectivity initiated by the confession about the fear of the blackness of Mardou’s body and the empathy that her reaction to the confession invokes in Duluoz represent an attempt to solve Sperber’s paradox whereby individuals remain hostages to half-understood beliefs that have been imparted on them since childhood years,³⁶ which, in Duluoz’s case, are beliefs imparted on him by his “really but sweetly but nevertheless really tyrannical ... mother” (*TS*, 504) who objects to his relationship with an African American woman with the same intensity she objects to his friendship with a Jew (Carlo).

Duluoz wants to please Mardou and give her the confessions that she is seeking but, more importantly, he wants to get at a certain aspect of reality, which is the objective reality of (his beliefs about) the racial (in)differences between individuals. While certainly “childlike” as he himself admits, the “examination” of Mardou’s black body leads to the eventual realization that it is no different from any other body (a white woman’s). The fact that they would even consider the examination seriously and that Mardou would accept it and agree to be part of it shows that she herself had “doubts” about her blackness and her position as equal among the subterraneans. The most important aspect of the realization, however, is its intersubjective nature, which is detected in Duluoz being “really and truly reassured to actually see and make the study with her,” suggesting that her participation in the eventual realization—the objective reality about the sameness of the female body—is crucial since it could not have been reached without her input and contribution to the “study.”

The Intersubjective Study of the “Jealousy Nightmare”

³⁶ Refer to page 169, chapter five.

In another confession, Duluoz reveals to Mardou how Adam, one of the subterraneans, truly thinks about her: “‘He said it was just a social question of his not now wanting to get hung-up with you lovelise because you’re Negro’—feeling again her telepathic little shock cross the room to me, it sunk deep, I question my motives for telling her this” (*TS*, 528). Aside from the fact that Adam indirectly becomes part of the intersubjective “examination” of Mardou’s blackness and its implication on the objective reality of racial (in)differences, the confessional mode evoked here also carries with it an investigation into the non-traditional relationship arrangement that Mardou and Duluoz have. By questioning his own motives behind this confession, Duluoz suggests that there might be something hidden beyond the mere desire to please her by giving her what she wants. In fact, the answer to this question lies in a dream that Duluoz has prior to this confession in which Mardou is with one of the other subterraneans, a young poet called Yuri. Duluoz shares this with Mardou and expresses that it made him “so jealous—I was sick” (*TS*, 519).

It is not uncommon for dreams about infidelity to have an impact on the dreamer’s perspective of their actual relationship, especially for Duluoz who, in *Book of Dreams*, attempts to understand many aspects of reality through the self-diagnosis of his dreams. Here, however, the attempt to understand the dream’s impact on reality is conducted through *intersubjective* dream analysis. Failing to convince him not to overthink the significance of the dream, Mardou admits to Duluoz that “there’s something different now—in you—I feel it in me—I don’t know what it is,” which prompts the following reflection from him:

I knew very well what it was and pretended not to be able to articulate with myself and least of all with her anyway—I remembered now, in the waking from the jealousy nightmare, where she necks with Yuri, something had changed, I could sense it, something in me was cracked, there was a new loss, a new Mardou even and, again, the difference was not isolated in myself who had dreamed the cuckold dream, but in she, the subject, who’d not dreamed it, but participated somehow in the general rueful mixed up dream of all this life with me. (*TS*, 519)

Here, Duluoz speaks not only about a change in the relationship or in his perception of Mardou, but also about a change in the self (“something in me was cracked”) and, more importantly, about a change in Mardou. The dream has taken a life of its own and, through the confessional

mode, it has changed the separate lives of the individuals involved, even the one who is a passive participant. Duluoz's meticulous wording implies that the "new Mardou" is not a new perception of Mardou by Duluoz but an entirely new Mardou as an independent entity in the objective reality, irrespective of perception: confessional intersubjectivity contributes to establishing the *noumenal* presence of Mardou.

Assuming from his strong feelings about Mardou that the jealousy nightmare is not a mere rationalization to end the relationship, the nightmare reveals Duluoz's jealousy, which disrupts the dynamics of the relationship. Similar to the internal struggle around the issue of race, there is a struggle between the relationship's non-conventional nature and the desire for a rather conventional one whereby Duluoz could "take her for my long wife here there anywhere" (*TS*, 504). And similar to his desire to unravel his deep-seated racism, he employs confessional intersubjectivity to unravel his jealousy, only here, he does so through dream analysis. As with the visions and apparitions, dreams are an integral part of the storyworld of the *Legend*, proven by the fact that Kerouac dedicates an entire book (*Book of Dreams*) to their analysis and interpretation, which is partly the result of his belief in mysticism as a superior force. In the context of noumena, dreams become portals to the intuitive understanding of entities as their association with the mysterious realm is due to their spontaneous and unprompted nature.

That being said, there is in the dream about Mardou's infidelity something beyond the simple matters of love and jealousy. Refusing to let it go, the dream consumes him entirely:

and so the dream, the dream, I kept harping on it, desperately I kept chewing and telling about it, over coffee, to her, finally when Carmody and Adam and Yuri came (in themselves lonely and looking to come get juices from that great current between Mardou and me running, a current everybody I found out later wanted to get in on, the act) I began telling them about the dream, stressing, stressing, stressing the Yuri part, where Yuri "every time I turn my back" is kissing her—naturally the others wanting to know their parts, which I told with less vigor— ... when I saw Mardou for fun wrestling with Adam (who was not the villain of the dream tho now I figured I must have switched persons) I was pierced with that pain that's now all over me ... Even somehow the presence of Yuri, whose personality was energized already in my mind from the energy of the dream, added to my love of Mardou—I suddenly loved her. (*TS*, 519–20)

There is a clear connection between Dean's insistence on respecting the mechanisms of sharing stories and Duluoz's urgent desire to share his dream with the others. This desire suggests a tendency toward liberating personal experiences from the confines of the subjective realm and transforming them into intersubjective experiences that every participant can gain from. This brings us to the notion of *distributed cognition*, which may provide a novel perspective on confessional intersubjectivity as a communicative act.

Originating in the work of Andy Clark at the turn of the last century, distributed cognition refers to the fact that "some kinds of knowledge can be conceived of as being distributed over a community of individuals, rather than being represented in individual brains." According to this view, "human cognition is said to be based on on-line intelligence, 'generated by complex causal interactions in an extended brain-body-environment system.'"³⁷ The interest that Carmody, Adam, and Yuri are said to have in the "current" that exists between Duluoz and Mardou can be framed in the context of distributed cognition: what is gained from the collective discussion and interpretation of Duluoz's dream is the construction of meaning, not of the dream itself, but of the relationship that ties the subterraneans together as an in-group. Through their participation, they actualize the dream and transform it into reality. Discussing the narrative properties of dreams, Richard Walsh observes that lucidity, in particular, "strongly correlates with immersion in the sense of a participatory involvement in the dream environment, rather than detached observation of it—or in narratological terms, homodiegesis rather than heterodiegesis."³⁸ While Walsh refers here to the effect of lucid dreams on the dreamer, the resulting immersion that moves such dreams from the heterodiegesis to the homodiegesis is analogous to the effect of the intersubjective dream interpretation that occurs with the subterraneans.

Not only does the dream engender a transition from the subjective to the intersubjective domain, but also from the fictional to the factual. The curiosity and intensity with which the subterraneans engage with the dream ("naturally the others wanting to know their parts") suggest that Duluoz's dream has actual consequences on real life. This happens primarily due to the unwilling nature of the dream—Duluoz does not voluntarily "create" the dream—as well as

³⁷ Philip Carr, "Philosophy of Phonology," in *Philosophy of Linguistics*, eds. Ruth Kempson, Tim Fernando, and Nicholas Asher, *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: North Holland, 2012), 438.

³⁸ Richard Walsh, "Dreaming and Narrative Theory," in *Towards a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 150.

everybody's trust in the fidelity of Duluoz's relaying of its details, and their collective belief in the superiority of the mysteries of dreams. If the mechanism of storytelling that Dean dictates is taken seriously enough by everybody involved, a dream that involves all of them as characters is given twice as much attention. Notice how, when Duluoz sees Mardou wrestling with Adam, he immediately considers that he may have "switched persons" in the dream, implying that it may have been Adam with whom Mardou was having an affair, and not Yuri.

Adam's and Mardou's real-life flirtation makes Duluoz rethink the dream, suggesting that Duluoz had actually expected the dream to play out in reality. The direct consequence of the dream is also felt in the mental image that Duluoz has of Yuri. The latter's personality became "energized" from the energy of the dream, which means that Duluoz has developed an impression of him based on what he did in the dream. Consequently, the intersubjective telling and the "stressing, stressing, stressing" of his transgressions in the dream intend to change how he is permanently perceived by the subterraneans in real life. The reality of the dream or its transformation from Duluoz's heterodiegesis to his homodiegesis is noticed again when, as they were later all getting in a car, Duluoz leaves room beside him for Mardou but she instead jumps in the backseat to sit next to Yuri, which makes Duluoz feel "afraid to look back and see with my own eyes what's happening and how the dream ... is coming true" (*TS*, 537).

For Hollan et al., "the ethnography of distributed cognitive systems retains an interest in individual minds, but adds to that a focus on the material and social means of the construction of action and meaning. It situates meaning in negotiated social practices, and attends to the meanings of silence and the absence of action in context as well as to words and actions."³⁹ This confirms the importance of dreams in the storyworld of the *Legend*, especially as demonstrated in *Book of Dreams* where Duluoz dreams about a party with the subterraneans:

The people, the friends are powerful, intimate composites instead of actualities, for the poor brain yearns—Everybody arrives—it is quiet, polite hubbubs as befits the beginning of a party—But does everybody recall my saying "Something that was supposed to happen just didn't happen?"—(I'm a writer, a sad figure)—and without a warning the

³⁹ James Hollan, Edwin Hutchins, and David Kirsh, "Distributed Cognition: Toward a New Foundation for Human-Computer Interaction Research," *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction* 7, no. 2 (June 2000): 179.

party begins to crumble—no laughter—bad sign—the Subterraneans just sit embarrassed not talking to anybody—Garden is trying to talk—Cody is stony silent— (*BOD*, 24)

Noteworthy is the fact that the “silence and the absence of action” that dominate this dream are associated with the characters who, in almost all the novels of *Legend*, are known to always have something to say, namely Garden (Carlo/Allen Ginsberg), and Cody (Dean/Neal Cassady). They are also the two characters who were at one point “embarked on a tremendous season” of honest confessional conversations with one another. Their silence, as well as the sad atmosphere of the party in general, suggests that what Duluoz believes to be “something that was supposed to happen [but] just didn’t happen” is the intersubjective “current” between the subterraneans. From the perspective of Hollan et al.’s cognitive ethnography, the failure of the communicative act in the dream reflects the inability to transform the multiple subjectivities, which are all “powerful” in their own rights, into social meaning via intersubjective experience.

Conclusion

One of the major configurations of authenticity in the *Legend* is the dialogism that is manifested through Duluoz’s intersubjective experiences with others. In order to maintain a sense of self as well as an understanding of objective reality in the face of entropy, Duluoz’s search for authenticity is dependent on establishing empathetic bonds that far exceed regular intimacies between friends and lovers. Despite the fact that his attempts at intersubjective access are not always successful and are sometimes one-sided (as is the case with Dean), the aspects of objective reality that reveal themselves through intersubjective experiences are always worthwhile. For example, Duluoz is able to understand the philosophical implications of extremes such as intellectualism and criminality, hypothesize a possibility for their simultaneous existence, and even find in criminality a moral justification all based on his empathy toward Dean.

The attempts to access Dean intersubjectively also lead to the discovery of a mode of experiencing that employs the mundane in the construction of a sublime, instead of inquiring into a sublime that may or may not exist out there, and which some of the subterraneans search for in

books and intellectual gatherings. Duluoz remains largely influenced by the charm and mystery of Dean, something that keeps him blind to the latter's excessively selfish intentions and, through hindsight bias, causes false and potentially harmful revisions of aspects of their shared history, as they ultimately reflect on Duluoz's reconstruction of his past. Nevertheless, through these intersubjective attempts, he develops the capacity to question the very mechanism of reflection and "study" that has constituted a large part of his identity. Duluoz also strives for intersubjective experiences with Mardou as demonstrated in a special arrangement that they have with one another and which is based on honest confessions, a process that is initially developed by Dean. Through confessional intersubjectivity, Duluoz examines three major aspects of objective reality: the racial difference between him and Mardou, the romantic and sexual dynamics of their relationship, and the dynamics that govern the group of subterraneans.

The strategies developed by Duluoz to resist assimilation by the institutions of the hyperreal (Part I) and the adjustments he makes to his view of reality (Part II) are complemented here by the rather active engagement with the existents of the perceived world. As the third and final step in the process of the recovery of authenticity, intersubjectivity becomes the most viable means of resolving some of the paradoxes and mysteries of the universe. Through empathy and confessions, Duluoz is able, even if somewhat fragmentarily, to construct significant aspects of his identity in harmony with the abrupt changes of the transitional period, while simultaneously arriving at a satisfactory understanding of the meaning of this change and learning how to experience it authentically.

The following chapter proceeds with the study of the intersubjective mechanism of understanding and (re)constructing identity and reality by treating two other modes of intersubjectivity in the *Legend*: performative and readerly intersubjectivity. Focusing on Duluoz's exceptional, yet distorted Theory of Mind mechanism, it studies his attempts at recovering the ideal of authenticity in the body and language of other characters. The chapter also treats intersubjectivity among the readers of the *Legend* by studying some of the possible moments in the narrative toward which readers' attention is collectively oriented.

Chapter 8. Performative and Readerly Intersubjectivity

Chapter seven has examined the intersubjective experience between Duluoz and Dean on the one hand, and Duluoz and Mardou on the other. It has outlined distinct modes by which the narrator strives to achieve empathetic bonds with two of the most important people in his life in order to make sense of certain unresolved, misunderstood, or mysterious aspects of his identity and objective reality. Through Dean, he explores the origin, ubiquity, and dangers of extremities, as well as the principle of reflection that animates his entire quest for authenticity. Through Mardou, specifically through the confessional mode of intersubjectivity, he tackles matters of race, sex, and group dynamics. This chapter resumes the analysis of the modes of intersubjectivity and studies what I refer to as “performance/performative” intersubjectivity, as well as intersubjectivity between the narrator and the reader.

As its title suggests, the first section explores aspects of performance and performativity that contribute to establishing intersubjective experiences, whereby performance refers to the body and performativity to language. Both performance and performativity are externalized corporeal expressions through which characters, willingly or unwillingly, signal to Duluoz the adoption of intentional stances about them (their thoughts, movements, speech, etc.) via a meta-representational capacity called Theory of Mind. Examples from three novels feature Mardou and Dean once again, as well as another minor character called Lazarus. The defect in Duluoz’s Theory of Mind, as the section demonstrates, results from a relentless tendency to perceive his identity and aspects of objective reality from the lens of the mind-universe complex, which influences the accuracy of his interpretation of the externalized expressions of the three characters.

Unlike the modes of intersubjectivity studied in the previous chapter and section one of this chapter, the second section looks at intersubjectivity between Duluoz and the reader of his narrative or his addressee. In so doing, the discussion enters the field of reader-response theories; however, unlike traditional views of readerly empathy, this section advances a new model called narrative deixis, which is based on a recent cognitive approach to intersubjectivity that studies

the focal points of collective attention to certain locations in a narrative called Shared Context of Reference. Based on data collected from the website Goodreads,¹ it analyzes Shared Contexts of Reference primarily in *On the Road*, but in selections from other novels as well, and identifies the content biases that may have played a role in their evocation. The goal is to locate what could be considered universals that substantiate the cross-generational and even cross-cultural nature of some of the themes or motifs incarnated in Duluoz's crisis and demonstrate the collective cognitive and evolutionary dimensions of Duluoz's authenticity quest.

Performance/Performative Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity and Theory of Mind (ToM)

In addition to the different accounts outlined in chapter seven, intersubjectivity has received significant attention from cognitive literary theorists at least since the turn of the century. In particular, it has been associated with the study of Theory of Mind (ToM), the application of which is mainly credited to the work of Lisa Zunshine, whose *Why We Read Literature: Theory of Mind and the Novel* presents the strong case that “the novel, in particular, is implicated with our mind-reading ability to such a degree that ... in its currently familiar shape it exists because we are creatures with ToM.”² Zunshine explains that ToM is

a term used by cognitive psychologists ... to describe our ability to explain people's behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires. Thus we engage in mind-reading when we ascribe to a person a certain mental state on the basis of her observable action ...; when we interpret our own feelings based on our proprioceptive

¹ The use of data from Goodreads in bibliometrics has been increasing in the last few years. Among the recent studies that look into its reliability as a tool for empirical analysis are: Gali Halevi, Barnaby Nicolas, and Judit Bar-Ilan, “The Complexity of Measuring the Impacts of Books,” *Publishing Research Quarterly* 32 (2016): 187–200; Suman Kalyan Maity et al., “Understanding Book Popularity on Goodreads,” *GROUP '18: Proceedings of the 2018 ACM Conference on Supporting Groupwork*, Jan. 2018, pp. 117–21; and Kadiresan Nagarattinane and Mangkhollen Singson, “Examining the Relationship between Academic Book Citations and Goodreads Reader Opinion and Rating,” *Annals of Library and Information Studies (ALIS)* 67, no. 4 (Dec. 2020): pp. 215–21.

² Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Literature: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), 10.

awareness ...; when we intuit a complex state of mind based on a limited verbal description ...; when we compose an essay, a lecture, a movie, a song, a novel, or an instruction for an electrical appliance and try to imagine how this or that segment of our target audience will respond to it; ... Attributing states of mind is the default way by which we construct and navigate our social environment, incorrect though our attributions frequently are.³

Thus, ToM, used in psychology to refer to individuals' mind-reading capacity, is applied to literary analysis essentially to hypothesize the mind-reading capacity of readers (their capacity to ascribe mental states to characters), which could reveal important information about this capacity, as well as the narrative structures and devices that enable it.⁴

ToM is closely related to humankind's meta-representational capacity, whose manifestation by Duluoz is mentioned in chapter six.⁵ In fact, the meta-representational module is considered a “‘theory of mind module,’ and its proper domain is that of the beliefs, desires and *intentions* [emphasis added] that cause human behaviour,” as Dan Sperber maintains.⁶ It is important to mention that Sperber also considers meta-representation “an essential adaptation” that could be used “to forming intentions to alter the mental states of others” by exploiting “the meta-representational abilities of one's audience” and “helping her [the communicator's] addressee to infer the content of the mental representation she wants him to adopt.”⁷ This means that a strong knowledge of intention-suggesting features of speech or narrative could be used as a tool for control, not least due to its adaptional advantages as evolutionary psychology suggests.⁸

Another notion that is closely related to ToM is the notion of the *intentional stance* which, as far as function is concerned, can be interchangeable with ToM. The term comes from philosopher and cognitive–evolutionary scientist Daniel Dennett who explains it as follows:

³ Zunshine, *Why We Read Literature*, 6.

⁴ Zunshine references the work of leading cognitive literary scholars Paul Hernadi, Mark Turner, and Patrick Colm Hogan to affirm that readers consider fictional characters exactly as real-life human beings when they construct a mental image of them and ascribe to them mental states. Zunshine, *Why We Read Literature*, 166.

⁵ For more on Duluoz's meta-representational capacity, see chapter six, pages 208–09.

⁶ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 147.

⁷ Sperber, 147.

⁸ Pascal Boyer and H. Clark Barrett, “Domain Specificity and Intuitive Ontology,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David M. Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 105–106.

Here is how it works: first you decide to treat the object whose behavior is to be predicted as a rational agent; then you figure out what beliefs that agent ought to have, given its place in the world and its purpose. Then you figure out what desires it ought to have, on the same considerations, and finally you predict that this rational agent will act to further its goals in the light of its beliefs. A little practical reasoning from the chosen set of beliefs and desires will in many—but not all—instances yield a decision about what the agent ought to do; that is what you predict the agent *will* do.⁹

Similar to the adaptive value that Sperber gives to meta-representations in general, the intentional stance clearly puts the individual at an adaptive advantage from the point of view of survival.¹⁰ The intentional stance has become a staple of the cognitive analysis of literature. While confirming the evolved adaptive function of the capacity to attribute mental states and dispositions to others,¹¹ cognitive narratologist David Herman recommends that “the analyst must situate storytelling practices within a broader ecology of sense-making activities that entail ascriptions of intentions and other reasons for acting,”¹²

Furthermore, Ellen Spolsky believes that ToM “is one in a series of cognitive hypotheses about the way we feed our cognitive hunger. It holds out the possibility of deduction from form to meaning—the hope that you will be able to decode what you see in a straightforward way,” even if this “hunger” is never really satisfied “because cognition is an embodied, biological, and thus context-specific and flexible process, allowing inference but not deduction.”¹³ Spolsky’s observation is in perfect agreement with the Kantian–Chomskian thesis of the unattainability of noumena: we can never know with an absolute degree of certainty the intentions of the other in the same way that we can never have an intuitive understanding of them and for the same biological limitations (despite Duluoz’s attempt to transcend these limitations via special narrative techniques).¹⁴

⁹ Daniel C. Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), 17.

¹⁰ Sperber, *Explaining Culture*, 147.

¹¹ David Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 34.

¹² Herman, 25.

¹³ Ellen Spolsky, “Narrative as Nourishment,” in *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Fredrick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 49.

¹⁴ See the last two sections of chapter six.

(Mis)Reading Performance and Performativity

Lazarus' "Side Glance" as Catalyst for the Reconstruction of Duluoz's Past in *Desolation Angels*

Two important aspects of ToM are *performance* and *performativity*.¹⁵ As pertains to performance, Zunshine points out that

because we are drawn to each other's bodies in our quest to figure out each other's thoughts and intentions, we end up performing our bodies (not always consciously or successfully) to shape other people's perceptions of our mental states. A particular body thus can be viewed only as a time-and-place-specific cultural construction—that is, as an attempt to influence others into perceiving it in a certain way.¹⁶

In the context of ToM, "performing the body" is the essential cue that triggers in Duluoz *intentional stances* about other characters, and engenders at the same time interpretations of identity and reality. A great example of inter-character ToM in *Desolation Angels* occurs between Duluoz and one of the minor characters called Lazarus (the brother of Simon, who is based on real-life Beat poet Peter Orlovsky). A notable characteristic of Lazarus is his silence, which represents for Duluoz a challenge when it comes to establishing an intersubjective connection with him because, unlike Dean and Carlo, he barely talks and is an introvert who does not participate in intersubjective investigations of reality and identity.

Lazarus's silence attracts Duluoz because, despite the fact that in *On the Road* the latter claims that "the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk" (*OTR*, 7) as mentioned in chapter seven, he is, nevertheless, also interested in Lazarus whom he admits reminds him of his brother Gerard as well as himself as he too used to be "an innocent introverted monster" (*DA*, 261–62). When Duluoz first introduces Lazarus, he refers to him as a "15-year-old weirdy who never speaks" (*DA*, 260), yet he also explains that "when you ask him

¹⁵ In this chapter, I distinguish between the terms *performance* and *performativity*, a distinction that Zunshine does not make clear. I maintain that *performance* is related to the body (Zunshine's definition linked to this note), but I use *performativity* as it is "coined by J.L. Austin in the 1960's to convey language's ability not just to communicate information but also to bring about or effect actions." Henry McDonald, "The Performative Basis of Modern Literary Theory," *Comparative Literature* 55, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 57.

¹⁶ Lisa Zunshine, "Theory of Mind and Michael Fried's Absorption and Theatricality: Notes toward Cognitive Historicism," in *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Fredrick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 186.

‘Hey Laz, are you okay?’ he just looks up with innocent level blue eyes ... and doesn’t need to reply” (DA, 261). Because of Duluoz’s profound (yet often distorted and fluctuating) understanding of silence,¹⁷ he interprets the silence of Lazarus as a sign of wisdom, saying that he does not *need* to reply instead of saying that he does not reply. His silence, then, becomes comparable to Japhy’s and the Buddha’s in *The Dharma Bums*, which is more powerful and effective than their speech.

Although Lazarus “was on the verge of catatonia,” as Duluoz says, he is a brilliant writer whose paintings and letters that he wrote when he was just 14 years old impress Duluoz. His art leads Duluoz to believe that Lazarus “was really a great young artist pretending to be withdrawn so people would leave him alone” (DA, 262). This inference is primarily deduced from Duluoz’s ToM as demonstrated in the following passage:

Because often I’ve seen the strange side glance he gives me which is like the look of a fellow or a brother conspirator in a world of busybodies, say—

Like the look that says: “I know, Jack, that you know what I’m doing, and you’re doing the same thing in your way.” For Laz, like myself, also spent whole afternoons staring into space, doing nothing whatever, except maybe brush his hair, mostly just listening to his own mind as tho he too was alone with his Guardian Angel. (DA, 262)

Despite Lazarus’s silence, Duluoz is able to establish an intersubjective experience with him via his ToM, which unfolds in three steps: first, the awareness and internalization of Lazarus’s performance (the side glance); second, the development of an intentional stance based on the performance; and third, the construction of fragments of Lazarus’s past life following the first two steps.

For the reader, there is no way of validating the accuracy of Duluoz’s intentional stance (his interpretation of Lazarus’s intention deduced from the side glance), but for Duluoz, it constitutes a critical factor in the (re)construction of Lazarus’s identity. The little background information that he knows about him, added to his meticulous Duluozean observations of him supply the side glance with a sense of familiarity and identification that guides the construction of Lazarus’s identity for Duluoz and his development as a character from the reader’s

¹⁷ Refer to the discussion in chapter four, especially the section “Visions of the Ancient Realm” on pages 137–41.

perspective. Of course, there is always the possibility that the intentional stance adopted here might be erroneous and that the side glance could be a hostile signal (of warning, etc.), for example. Also at risk of being erroneous is the privileged place that Duluoz believes he holds in Lazarus's mind. Lazarus does not speak because he wants to be left alone but, for some reason, he treats Duluoz differently, giving him a side glance that insinuates that he recognizes in Duluoz the same desire. The weak support for this supposition reinforces the argument that the objective for establishing intersubjectivity is indeed the uncovering of identity and reality: Duluoz's intentional stance is motivated by the implicit (ulterior or unconscious) desire to enhance his status as a protagonist in his own life narrative so that the reconstruction of Lazarus's identity becomes an instrument for the reconstruction of Duluoz's past, given the similarity that Duluoz alleges exists between the two (spending afternoons staring into space, etc.).

The Failed “Pivotal Point” of Intersubjectivity with Dean in *On the Road*

Another good example of Duluoz's use of his ToM emerges in a scene in *On the Road* where Duluoz offers Dean a trip to New York and then to Italy using money that he was expecting to get from his publisher. The offer represents a turning point in the relationship between the two as Dean seems to understand, for the first time, the genuine care that Duluoz has for him and that he, as demonstrated in chapter seven, does not reciprocate:

“Italy?” he said. His eyes lit up....

“Why yass,” said Dean, and then realized I was serious and looked at me out of the corner of his eye for the first time, for I'd never committed myself before with regard to his burdensome existence, and that look was the look of a man weighing his chances at the last moment before the bet. There were triumph and insolence in his eyes, a devilish look, and he never took his eyes off mine for a long time. I looked back at him and blushed.

I said, “What's the matter?” I felt wretched when I asked it. He made no answer but continued looking at me with the same wary insolent side-eye.

I tried to remember everything he'd done in his life and if there wasn't something back there to make him suspicious of something now. Resolutely and firmly I repeated what I said—"Come to New York with me; I've got the money." I looked at him; my eyes were watering with embarrassment and tears. Still he stared at me. Now his eyes were blank and looking through me. It was probably the pivotal point of our friendship when he realized I had actually spent some hours thinking about him and his troubles, and he was trying to place that in his tremendously involved and tormented mental categories. Something clicked in both of us. In me it was suddenly concern for a man who was years younger than I, five years, and whose fate was wound with mine across the passage of the recent years; in him it was a matter that I can ascertain only from what he did afterward. He became extremely joyful and said everything was settled. "What was that look?" I asked. He was pained to hear me say that. He frowned. It was rarely that Dean frowned. We both felt perplexed and uncertain of something. (*OTR*, 170)

Norman Podhoretz's infamous attack on the Beats in his 1958 article "The Know-Nothing Bohemians" features a reading of this specific passage from *On the Road* in which the conservative critic blames the interpretative obstacles seen here between Duluoz and Dean on Kerouac himself, specifically his "poverty of [linguistic] resources," which is revealed through his failure to "handle a situation involving even slightly complicated feelings. His usual tactic is to run for cover behind cliché and vague signals to the reader."¹⁸

While Podhoretz's analysis is clearly opinionated,¹⁹ another early reading of the same passage by George Dardess relates the communicative obstacles to Duluoz's sudden "assuming responsibility for what he now calls Dean's 'burdensome existence'" which "brings out unexpected responses both in himself and his friend" that "begin to affect almost immediately

¹⁸ Norman Podhoretz, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians" (1958), in *Us Vs. Them: American Political and Cultural Conflict from WW II to Watergate* by Robert J. Bresler (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 169.

¹⁹ Aside from the fact that the title of the article itself is a sweeping generalization, the suggestion that Kerouac lacks the linguistic capacity to express a complicated emotion is invalidated by the overwhelming majority of Kerouac scholars, as well as by the study in this dissertation. These kinds of critiques emanate more from a sense of politico-cultural partisanship as in the case of Podhoretz who was well-known for his conservative views, or from a competitive standpoint of contemporaneous writers, than from objective analysis. An example of the latter is Norman Mailer who famously saw that Kerouac "lacked 'discipline, intelligence, honesty and a sense of the novel' and was 'as pretentious as a rich whore, as sentimental as a lollypop.'" Rachel Donadio, "Art of the Feud," *The New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/19/books/review/Donadio.t.html>.

the way both of them see the world.”²⁰ More recently, Michael Hrebeniak has commented that the “pivotal point” that Duluoz believes he has attained through this interaction is imperfect, specifically because Dean abandons Duluoz in Mexico, proving that “permanent male bonding” between the two is “unavailable.”²¹ Offering a more sound and objective reading than Podhoretz, Dardess and Hrebeniak still neglect the micro-cognitive mechanism at play here.

The proposition takes Dean by surprise since, as mentioned in chapter seven, he does not share the same compassion that Duluoz has for him. Here, we detect in Duluoz the same ToM mechanism patterns that unfold when detecting Lazarus’s side glance. Nevertheless, Dean’s “performance” (his look), appears to be much more ambiguous and difficult to interpret, not only because it projects a bizarre mixture of emotions (“triumph and insolence”) but also because it surprises Duluoz with the same intensity that the proposition surprises Dean. Unlike Lazarus’s side glance, Dean’s performance resists an interpretation through the adoption of an intentional stance, leading to an initial failure of ToM and forcing Duluoz to resort to speech and ask the question “what’s the matter?” Not receiving an answer, Duluoz uses ToM again, this time by abandoning the search for Dean’s intention and, as a consequence, the reconstruction of Dean’s past. Instead, Duluoz projects the failure of his own ToM unto Dean by claiming that the stare is a representation of *Dean’s* inability to understand the meaning of the travel proposition, thereby transforming the failure of his (Duluoz’s) ToM into a failure of Dean’s ToM. Ultimately, the mutual failure of ToM is signaled as a fundamental problem through the acknowledgment that *both* men “felt perplexed and uncertain of something.”²²

Mardou’s Conduct and Language: Overinterpretation as Intersubjective Desire in *The Subterraneans*

²⁰ George Dardess, “The Delicate Dynamics of Friendship: A Reconsideration of Kerouac’s *On The Road*,” *American Literature* 46, no. 2 (May 1974): 204.

²¹ Michael Hrebeniak, *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac’s Wild Form* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 114.

²² We cannot disregard the possibility that Dean’s astonishment is caused by the sexual tension between him and Duluoz. The “pivotal moment” could be, for example, the moment when Dean realizes that Duluoz is sexually attracted to him and/or that the invite implies a quid pro quo. For more on the homoerotic argument, refer to note 28 in chapter seven.

ToM can also be seen in action at the beginning of *The Subterraneans* when Duluoz first meets Mardou at one of the subterraneans' houses. Observing her from a distance, Duluoz notices Mardou extending her hand to a man called Adam Moorad to introduce herself, but she does not do the same with him, which gets him to surmise that it "should have been my first inkling of the prophecy of what was to come" (*TS*, 469), referring to the dream that he will later have about her infidelity with Adam, who was thought to be Yuri at first.²³ Duluoz, then, deduces that

she really wanted Adam Moorad, she had just been rejected coldly and subterraneanly by Julien—she was interested in thin ascetic strange intellectuals of San Francisco and Berkeley and not in big paranoiac bums of ships and railroads and novels and all that hatefulness which in myself is to myself so evident and so to others too—though and because ten years younger than I seeing none of my virtues which anyway had long been drowned under years of drugging and desiring to die, to give up, to give it all up and forget it all, to die in the dark star—it was I stuck out my hand, not she—ah time. (*TS*, 469)

As with the previous examples, Mardou's "performance" (the handshake with Adam and lack thereof with Duluoz) makes him infer that she does not want to be with him. Here, it should be mentioned that while the "performances" of Lazarus, Dean, and Mardou all lead to the deduction of an intention, they vary in the degree to which each deduced intention was actively projected by the agent. If Duluoz is right, Lazarus's side glance contains the strongest evidence of this kind of active projection, which means that, among the three, it is understood that Lazarus actually wanted to influence Duluoz's image of him, as in, he wanted him to adopt the idea that they were alike. Although it is difficult to ascertain, Dean's stare and Mardou's handshake are less the results of active projection and more of the physical expression of surprise in the case of Dean, and attraction in the case of Mardou.

Mardou is least likely to have wanted to influence Duluoz's image of her because her "performance" is not even directed at Duluoz. Nevertheless, her *indirect* "performance" activates the renegotiation of Duluoz's identity, as well as reconfigurations of aspects of reality, through

²³ See the section "The Intersubjective Study of the "Jealousy Nightmare" in chapter seven, pages 260–65.

what he perceives to be an initial rejection from her, and which comprises a genuine contemplation of idealism versus reality. At display here, beyond the discernible self-pity, are men–women power dynamics and new insecurities that Duluoz senses emerging from the inside. He realizes that the idea that the nobility of his idealistic pursuits, represented by his ambitions to become a writer, would somehow put him ahead of someone like Adam in the competition for Mardou’s attention is naïve. Even if Duluoz had been published or at least had a draft of a novel circulating among the subterraneans at the time,²⁴ neither his fame nor his work as a sailor—he had just returned from the sea in this passage—is enough to beat the age factor. That Mardou might be more interested in Adam simply because he is closer to her age is a simple and expected reality that, although recognized, is overshadowed by the tendency to exaggerate the situation and blame it on other factors. Duluoz’s ToM is shown here to be influenced by an idealism that pushes him in the direction of perceiving as a defeat the fact that he was the one who had to extend his hand first. The failure of ToM to produce an accurate representation of Mardou’s intention is, therefore, caused by problems inherent in the mind-universe complex that influence and disrupt the mechanism of ToM.²⁵

After Mardou’s initial lack of show of interest in him, Duluoz continues to attentively study her performance at the subterranean gathering. When she goes to sit by herself in the corner, he interprets this as her “being ‘separated’ or ‘aloof’ or ‘prepared to cut out from this group’ for her own reasons” (*TS*, 470). Similar to his use of capitalization to mystify certain elements of the perceivable world, visions, or dreams, the use of quotation marks around the three descriptions suggests that they are physical actualizations of the *intentions* of her “performance”: her standing up, leaving the group, and going to the corner signify that she wants to separate herself, in the broader sense (ideologically, etc.), from the group.

Before proceeding with the analysis of Duluoz’s ToM in this example, it is worth noting that the intentional stance adopted here may stem from Mardou’s later announcement that she does not want to be with any man. Therefore, the interpretation of her going to the corner as

²⁴ This could be the case because there is mention that one of the subterraneans was looking at a book written by Duluoz. However, it is unclear at this point in the *Legend* whether Duluoz had published a book yet. If he had, it would have to be one of the two novels preceding *The Subterraneans*, which means either *The Town and the City* or *On the Road* (in Textual Actual World TAW), despite the fact that later scenes in the novel suggest otherwise, especially those that include conversations about him buying a typewriter and pursuing a writing career.

²⁵ For an elaboration of what I term the mind-universe complex, refer to page 117, chapter four.

symbolic of her decision to be separated from the group could be a reflection of Duluoz's knowledge of this decision while producing the narrative, which would mean that there is no ToM at work here. But assuming that this is not the case and trusting in the brief chronological sequence presented to the reader here, Duluoz's intentional stance about Mardou is, once again, a demonstration of the occasional failure of his ToM mechanism.

Duluoz's impression of the subterraneans is constantly proven to be ambivalent due to his disagreement with their general demeanor. To him, they represent the radical manifestation of intellectualized San Franciscan society and discourse and espouse an excessive form of Buddhism and New age beliefs. However, part of the cognitive dissonance that he experiences comes from his simultaneous disdain for them and desire to be accepted among them. Sociologically, this is reflected in Stephen Schryer's remark that the "autobiographical protagonists [in the *Legend*] are alienated from the cultural attitudes of both the traditional working and new middle class."²⁶ But if the "new middle class" is a reference to the subterraneans, if there is one thing that Duluoz does share with them, it is his passion for the arts.²⁷

As deduced from a letter that she sends him and from her desire for Adam (the "strange intellectual of San Francisco"), Duluoz associates Mardou with this intellectual trend, which he can spot in her language and which he refers to as

the cultured funny tones of part Beach [North Beach], part I. Magnin model, part Berkeley, part Negro highclass, something, a mixture of *langue* and style of talking and use of words I'd never heard before except in certain rare girls of course *white* and so strange even Adam at once noticed and commented with me that night—but definitely the new bop generation way of speaking ... charming but much too strange. (*TS*, 470)

Similar to the intensity of his relationship with Dean, Duluoz's attraction to Mardou becomes obsessive to the extent that he is willing to revise his criticism of what he deems intellectualized

²⁶ Stephen Schryer, "Failed Faustians: Jack Kerouac and the Discourse of Delinquency," *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 124.

²⁷ This is part of the overall dissonance caused by the desire to preserve the rather conservative past and, at the same time, become part of the new movement of change (see also page 169, chapter five). Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter seven (pages 244–45), the main reason Duluoz gets so attached to Dean is due to the fact that the latter represents an antidote to these two extremes.

language. Desperate to find common points with her, Duluoz sees that her language has in part a resemblance to his own (“part I”), which is not at all the case in his critique of the letter.²⁸ By adopting an intentional stance regarding her language (accent, use of special words), he does not interpret her “performance” (performing the body through physical gestures and movement) but her “performativity” (language as means of social construction), which reveals his strong intersubjective desires. His affection overcomes what he would have otherwise considered an obnoxious way of speaking: her language is not purely “Beach” or “subterranean,” but a mixture of styles that make her charming. Finally, it should also be mentioned that, by claiming that her language is that of a “Negro highclass” or a “white girl,” Duluoz’s intersubjective desires carry, even if inadvertently, racist undertones that risk effacing Mardou’s true identity.

The intentional stance related to Mardou’s performance and performativity, which stems from the intersubjective desires that he has for her, produces an “outcast among outcasts” narrative. While her attitude, speech, behavior, desires, and interests clearly qualify her to be a subterranean par excellence, she emerges in his mind as someone who is different from the others. He *wants* to see this difference so strongly that his ToM becomes a slave to his desire in the same way it is a slave to his idealism. Having (erroneously) established Mardou’s difference and separation from the group, Duluoz rethinks the foundation of his relationship with them. Once he has interpreted her language, his “heart sank” as he remembers that

the Beach has always hated me, cast me out, overlooked me, shat on me, from the beginning in 1943 on in—for look, coming down the street I am some kind of hoodlum and then when they learn I’m not a hoodlum but some kind of crazy saint they don’t like it and moreover they’re afraid I’ll suddenly become a hoodlum anyway and slug them and break things and this I have almost done anyway and in my adolescence did so. (*TS*, 470)

Similar to Mardou’s handshake to Adam, Duluoz’s interpretation of the subterraneans’ feelings about him is not the result of a direct intentional stance but an *indirect* one because it is not associated with their performance or performativity but with Mardou’s: what *she* does indirectly influences Duluoz’s image of the subterraneans.

²⁸ Refer to page 76, chapter two.

Notwithstanding the valid reasons that Duluoz has for disliking them—mainly their intellectualism—there does not appear to be direct evidence for the hatred that he assumes *they* have for *him*. All of it is part of a narrative that he constructs in order to position himself as an “outcast among outcasts” to have something in common with Mardou whose “performance” at the party (her going to the corner) bestows upon her the same position. Duluoz believes that the subterraneans hate him either because he is a hoodlum or a saint. This is an erroneous assumption because, aside from the fact that it emerges from an erroneous intentional stance about Mardou, it is not very likely that the subterraneans would collectively hate the two very different identity types that Duluoz incarnates. Furthermore, Dean, who could be considered as the ultimate incarnation of the hoodlum–saint dualism,²⁹ is often perceived as a hero by the subterraneans and a muse to many of them,³⁰ which demonstrates again the influence of the mind-universe complex on Duluoz’s ToM.

Readerly Intersubjectivity

Shared Contexts of Reference (SCRs): Definition and Relevance

While the previous section analyzed instances of ToM between Duluoz and some of the other characters, ToM has mostly been seen as a way for cognitive literary analysts to gauge the capacity of narratives to generate *readers’* empathy and intersubjective engagement with texts.³¹ In proposing a new way of looking at non-linear temporality in the *Legend*, chapter five has referenced Pia Tikka’s and Mauri Kaipainen’s notions of *narrative dimension* and *retentive perspective* to analyze the effect of revisions of experience on the present or *nowness*. The

²⁹ See the discussion about Dean’s simultaneous incarnation of intellectualism and criminality on pages 245–46, chapter seven.

³⁰ Duluoz’s criticism of the subterraneans ignores the distinction between the different members of the group. There are those who have legitimate artistic ambitions or are artists and writers in their own right, are mostly men, and look up to Dean as a source of inspiration. On the other hand, there are those who only pretend to be intellectuals, and others who are lovers or spouses of subterraneans. For example, Galtea Dunkel, who reprimands Dean for his reckless behavior belongs to the latter group. See page 242, chapter seven.

³¹ There are, of course, studies that contain good examples of inter-character ToM analysis such as Klarina Priborkin’s “Cross-Cultural Mind-Reading; or, Coming to Terms with the Ethnic Mother in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*” in *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Fredrick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), pp. 161–78.

following discussion focuses on intersubjectivity as the second aspect of the researchers' modernization of Husserl's views.

Tikka and Kaipainen consider intersubjectivity from the point of view of the “experiencers” of a narrative, which substantially deviates from all classical–narratological and even most postclassical–narratological models of narrative agents—though, by privileging the narrative experience (not the plot), their view agrees with Monika Fludernik's interpretation of narrativity as experientiality³²—in that, by “experiencers,” they designate everyone involved in the narrative process: “those who design and stage stories to others and those who are deliberately guided through life-simulating cultural narrative artifacts by a narrator, as well as those struggling to understand their situation in the midst of internal and external events by ‘telling stories to oneself.’”³³ The authors seek to explain how subjective first-person narratives translate to intersubjective experiences that could extend to the readers. In so doing, they suggest a continuum that exists between ToM and what is called the Mirror Neuron System (MNS).

The MNS has provided interdisciplinary art and literary scholars with empirically supported evidence of the effect of art on the mind of the receiver (reader, observer, or spectator), bringing them closer to Edward O. Wilson's prophecy of the “consilience” between science and the humanities.³⁴ This small revolution within the larger revolution of the cognitive interpretation of art owes its birth to the discovery of mirror neurons, which was documented in a groundbreaking article by Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman in 1998,³⁵ and which has impacted the study of empathy in literature, the ToM approach, as well as reception studies, and has led to the emergence of new and exciting fields of study such as neuroesthetics.

Illustrating the results of the experiments on mirror neurons, David Freedman and Gallese remark that “when the MNS is activated, the observation of an action—in particular, a goal-oriented action—leads to the activation of the same neural networks that are active during

³² Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 19.

³³ Pia Tikka and Mauri Kaipainen, “Intersubjectivity, Idiosyncrasy, and Narrative Deixis: A Neurocinematic Approach,” in *Narrative Complexity: Cognition, Embodiment, Evolution*, eds. Marina Grishakova and Maria Poulaki (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 316.

³⁴ Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred Knoff, [1998] 2000), 12.

³⁵ Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman, “Mirror Neurons and the Simulation Theory of Mind-reading,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2, no. 12 (Dec. 1998), pp. 484–501.

its execution.”³⁶ This means that empathy toward the other is the result of a kind of *embodied simulation* whereby vicarious experience is quite corporeally similar to the experience of the other. Embodied simulation is identified as “a functional mechanism through which the actions, emotions or sensations we see activate our own internal representations of the body states that are associated with these social stimuli, as if we were engaged in a similar action or experiencing a similar emotion or sensation.”³⁷ Although the mechanism is automatic, it is the result of considerably meticulous observation of said “actions, emotions or sensations” that would enable the activation of the mechanism.

Tikka and Kaipainen see in the MNS a first step at “implicit unconscious imitation” and in ToM a second step at the manifestation of “culturally inherited skills of understanding other people’s behavior.”³⁸ They follow this observation by proposing their theory of *narrative deixis* which, though not without its limitations as the authors themselves admit, represents a very detailed cognitive–evolutionary understanding of embodiment and experientiality in literature, and therefore merits elaboration:

Essentially, the concept of shared indexicality implies that narrativity is a sociocultural phenomenon, beyond the story to self.... deixis is a way of two or more individual points of view at a shared context of reference, while assuming the individual points of view. Thus, despite the subjectiveness of narrative experience, deixis allows for intersubjectively shared experiences of narrative.... We assume that the shared reference relies primarily on embodied associations common to experiencers as biological beings and secondarily on learned cultural, behavioral, or linguistic semantics. Among the first are basic affective reactions associated with social encounters ... while examples of the latter include spatio-situational experiences that, as shown by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), allow building shared language through metaphoric relations. In terms of our model we suggest that the shared aspects of narrative perspectives resulting from, for instance, guided causal chains of inference or emotional manipulation implied by the story events, may allow sharing in the same manner. Augmenting the narrative nowness

³⁶ David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese, “Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Esthetic Experience,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11, no. 5 (May 2007): 200.

³⁷ Freedberg and Gallese, 198.

³⁸ Tikka and Kaipainen, “Intersubjectivity,” 317.

model, deixis can be described as a partial coevolution of the narrative perspectives of coexperiencers; that is, a subset of the narrative perspective is pointed at and focused on by the narrator, addressing prior autobiographical or evolutionary contexts that the experiencers may share as biological, cognitive, and cultural beings.³⁹

Starting from a very important reinterpretation of narrativity, the authors subscribe to the coexistence of innate information (“embodied associations”) and socio-culturally acquired information (“learned semantics”), which is a critical principle of evolutionary psychology,⁴⁰ and substantiate the significance of this coexistence in evoking a shared reference among the experiencers of narrative. What is more, they underline the importance of the mediating role of the narrator in creating the cognitive and evolutionary association between the narrative experience and the experience of the real world.

Both embodied associations and learned semantics coalesce with the “content biases” that enhance the appeal of certain passages in a given narrative. Richard E.W. Berl et al.’s 2021 study represents one of the most recent attempts at determining the role of content biases in the transmission of narrative. In it, the authors conduct an experiment through which they demonstrate that “prestige bias,” which is the bias that readers may have toward the prestige of the storyteller (Kerouac, for example), is only part of the success of narratives while another, and sometimes more effective, part is content biases. The authors focus on

the most frequently cited content biases from the cultural evolution literature. This includes content linked to the following six types of information: (i) social, either in the sense of everyday basic social interaction or of “gossip” about third parties; (ii) survival, for environmental contexts relevant to individual fitness; (iii) emotional, that elicits strong positive or negative responses such as amusement or disgust; (iv) moral, regarding acceptable behavior and social norms; (v) rational, describing cause-and-effect connections; and (vi) counterintuitive, which defies ontological expectations in biological, physical, mental, and other domains.⁴¹

³⁹ Tikka and Kaipainen, 322–23.

⁴⁰ John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, “Conceptual Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. by David Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 31–32.

⁴¹ Richard E.W. Berl et al., “Prestige and Content Biases Together Shape the Cultural Transmission of Narratives,” *Evolutionary Human Sciences* 3, e42 (2021): 2.

As an empirical method of identifying SCRs that are evoked by narrative, narrative deixis takes it for granted that the MNS induces in readers empathetic responses toward fictional characters—in powerfully evocative scenes, readers could literally embody the same experience as the characters. Even though Tikka’s and Kaipainen’s experiment is conducted on viewers of the 2000 film *Memento*, they confirm that in a 2018 study, the same results were obtained when individuals were confronted with “the same sequence of narrative events as text,”⁴² which means that the results are independent of the medium, and which validates the following analysis of narrative deixis in the *Legend*. The objective here is to locate potential “embodied associations” and “learned semantics” in selected passages that could generate SCRs among readers. If the motifs related to the authenticity quest in the *Legend* are evocative enough, then the SCRs should converge, one way or another, into Duluoz’ existential crisis based on the assumption that it is emblematic of a cross-generational and cross-cultural one.

Before proceeding with the analysis, three caveats must be introduced. First, whereas Tikka and Kaipainen conduct their experiment on physical spectators, the analysis in this section relies on data collected from the website Goodreads. As mentioned in footnote 1, recent studies have shown that the use of Goodreads as a tool for empirical analysis is starting to become more and more legitimate in the context of scientific research. This is especially the case in today’s world if we consider Goodreads as the other social media platforms where users or media consumers could “like,” “comment,” and show reactions via visual means (such as emojis). In fact, the instantaneousness of users’ reactions, who in many cases react without even consuming the full content, is more connected to their *intuitive* beliefs than their *reflective* ones because it reveals the “natural” aspects of their uncritical minds.⁴³ Consequently, while a critical evaluation of a novel or a passage (which characterizes the work done in this dissertation) requires minute scrutiny, studying the automatic responses of the shared cognitive reception mechanisms of readers requires the exact opposite.

Secondly, whereas Tikka’s and Kaipainen’s experiment involves spectators whose intersubjective brain activity is monitored through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) (which means that they are able to detect the specific moments when the spectators’

⁴² Tikka and Kaipainen, “Intersubjectivity,” 326.

⁴³ Compare the evocation of intuitive beliefs deduced from Goodreads with the one generated by improvisation, discussed on pages 316–17, chapter nine.

attention is directed toward a shared reference), the following analysis, while supported by established research on empathy, evolutionary psychology, and cognitive biases, is only speculative. Finally, neither this nor Tikka's and Kaipainen's analysis could lead to conclusive results because of the obvious differences in each individual's life story and experience, as the authors admit.⁴⁴ While "embodied associations" may refer to our common evolutionary architecture and adaptations, socio-cultural variants may affect how each individual interprets the metaphoric relations that constitute the so-called shared language. Nevertheless, even with all these caveats, the approach is still far more accurate in detecting SCRs than any traditional reader-response theory due to the fact that it is grounded in socio-cultural and evolutionary justifications of readers' interaction with texts.

Duluoz's Crisis as SCR in *On the Road*

With 377,869 ratings, *On the Road* is by far the most popular of Kerouac's novels on Goodreads.⁴⁵ The top-ranked ("liked") quote is one that is referenced in chapter seven of this dissertation:

the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes "Awww!" (*OTR*, 7)

Evaluating the *literariness* or *narrativity* of this passage, we notice a substantial deviation from the reader's *world schemata*.⁴⁶ Duluoz's proclamation that he prefers "mad" or wild people resonates precisely because it contradicts, challenges, and defamiliarizes not only American traditional social structures of the 1940s and 1950s but universal and contemporary ones as well. The passage connects with readers' *counterintuitive bias* because its transmission success relies

⁴⁴ Tikka and Kaipainen, "Intersubjectivity," 327.

⁴⁵ Data retrieved on 25 May, 2022, same as the date of access. "On the Road Quotes," *Goodreads*, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1701188-on-the-road>, accessed 25 May 2022.

⁴⁶ Refer to Guy Cook's discourse deviation theory and related notions of canonical breach, especially the notions of *literariness* and *world schemata*, on pages 69–70, chapter two.

on the breach of folk knowledge about expected behavior. In other words, there would be nothing appealing about a passage in which Duluoz mentions how he likes orderly, well-behaved, lustless, norm-conforming, and balanced people.

The expression “mad ones,” as well as the overall description of madness as a desirable quality, generates the implicit conceptual metaphor *madness is authenticity*, combining the two unrelated conceptual categories that correspond to madness and authenticity, namely, mental health and abstract notions of existence. Duluoz’s credibility as a narrator⁴⁷ reinforces the metaphor and enables the reader to empathize with his conception of authenticity as madness and potentially creates a desire in them for mad people. An embodied association can also be detected here, which is the one related to the benefits incurred from having “mad” people in one’s life, especially since a reasonable assumption about the average profile of the readers in question is that, as implied above, they themselves are not “mad.” Readers, then, imagine a situation where, just like Duluoz, they too can, would, or should, do the sort of bargaining with a person like Dean where they could provide them with something in exchange for the “madness,” similar to Duluoz’s teaching Dean how to write.

Of the most “liked” quotes, there is the eighth top-liked, which is thematically related to the top one, and which describes a scene where Duluoz observes Ed Dunkel and Galatea taking pictures and contemplates:

I realized these were all the snapshots which our children would look at someday with wonder, thinking their parents had lived smooth, well-ordered, stabilized-within-the-photo lives and got up in the morning to walk proudly on the sidewalks of life, never dreaming the raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives, our actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road. All of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness. (*OTR*, 228)

The SCR in this passage is also connected to the “mad” life. However, what is distinctive about this one is the concern for the interpretation of the present experience from the vantage point of the future. In terms of the narrative nowness discussed in chapter five, this means that there is a concern for the preservation of the Retentive Perspective (evolving explanation of nowness)

⁴⁷ Refer to the discussion about the factors of narratorial credibility on page 129, chapter four.

adopted here, which is an RP associated with a view of life as being wild or “mad.” The scene in which Duluoz observes the others taking pictures becomes an SCR because it is triggered by the concern for losing the RP or, in other words, the fear of having one’s life or mode of living misrepresented or misinterpreted by others, which resembles the fear of one’s intentional stance being misinterpreted.

Here, readers of this dissertation might have an understandable objection: why should readers collectively exhibit the emotion of fear that is related to the loss of the RP of the mad life given that, as explained in chapter five, the RP is by definition “evolving” (it changes as the distance between the present and the past of a given event grows)? While this is certainly true about the nature of the RP, it is also true that some RPs are stronger than others in that they may evoke a tendency to immortalize them. Although Duluoz passes through many RPs that evoke many different and sometimes contradictory views of life, his desire to be remembered as having lived a “mad” life trumps all the others, and readers share the same concern because they too might want certain RPs to be immortalized in the same way.

The photography scene could be seen as an SCR for a more profound reason, which is found in the implications of the photos as a medium. Duluoz’s concern with media and their cultural significance has been highlighted in chapter seven and has been linked to Marshall McLuhan’s thesis, “the medium is the message.”⁴⁸ Martin Lister et al. remind us that, for McLuhan, the true power of the medium is in “altering the ‘ratio’ between the range of human senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell) and this has implications for our ‘mental functions’ (having ideas, perceptions, emotions, experiences, etc.).... For McLuhan, the real “message” of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs.”⁴⁹ Readers may empathize with Duluoz’s fear that the medium of photography would change the perception of Duluoz’s life, which is primarily characterized by *movement*. Because movement is the essence of the “mad” life and pictures cannot reproduce movement, Ed’s and Galatea’s pictures are erroneous, if not exact opposite, representations of the legacy that Duluoz strives to maintain.

⁴⁸ See page 249, chapter seven.

⁴⁹ Martin Lister et al, *New Media: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 84.

The seventh top-ranked quote from *On the Road* has a tag that says “sex” and, in a way contradicts the two previous SCRs: “Boys and girls in America have such a sad time together; sophistication demands that they submit to sex immediately without proper preliminary talk. Not courting talk—real straight talk about souls, for life is holy and every moment is precious” (*OTR*, 51). Instead of being related to “madness,” the SCR here reveals a rather conventional aspect of social life. The content bias that enables it is *moral bias* whereby, contrary to *counterintuitive bias*, the appeal of the quote comes from its confirmation of a stereotypical belief about love and romantic feelings.

Duluoz sees that the new model of “sophistication” that his subterranean friends probably endorse entails a sort of free engagement in sexuality that degrades intimacy and personal (possibly intersubjective) connections between individuals. To begin with, judging the type of sexual arrangements that Duluoz and Dean often have, one would not necessarily think that Duluoz is the right person to advise on the romantic aspects of relationships. Secondly, the quote does not mention the full context where Duluoz has sex with a woman who was “tremendously frightened of sex” because he wanted to show her how beautiful it was. Failing to prove it to her because he was “too impatient,” he regrets it and contemplates going to “get Rita again and tell her a lot more things, and really make love to her this time, and calm her fears about men” (*OTR*, 51). Certainly, if the full context was provided for this quote on Goodreads, it would garner far fewer “likes” because, regardless of the nobility of his intentions (if he really cares about making her feel less frightened), Duluoz’s assumption that he could “calm her fears about men” by having sex with her in a more “patient” way would surely be met with criticism. Nevertheless, because the SCR is local (as in the specific scenes in the film *Memento* in Tikka’s and Kaipainen’s experiment), the full context matters less than the instantaneous and automatic reactions of readers.

The assumptions deduced so far suggest that readers are drawn to aspects of the narrative of the *Legend* that both diverge from the norm (canonical expectations or folk knowledge, as in the first two quotes) *and* confirm and maintain the norm, as in the third quote. The fact that readers’ attention might be drawn to opposing SCRs validates the fact that, in so far as Duluoz’s crisis is related to the dichotomies and extremities discussed in this dissertation, particularly in chapter four, the crisis is cross-cultural and cross-generational. Readers probably identify more

with Duluoz than with Dean, agree with Duluoz that “madness” is a desirable characteristic, and long to have someone like Dean in their life to experience the madness vicariously since they prefer a rather conventional life for themselves.

Because the method used in this section is based on a system of rankings, it is important to mention at least the top five quotes, otherwise, the analysis could appear selective and/or evasive. As mentioned, the highest ranked quote corresponds to Duluoz’s interest in “mad” people. The second most “liked” quote in *On the Road* is: “Nothing behind me, everything ahead of me, as is ever so on the road,” which is only found in the original scroll.⁵⁰ The third most “liked” is: “What is that feeling when you’re driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing?—it’s the too-huge world vaulting us, and it’s good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies” (*OTR*, 140). These passages are related to RP2 (the retentive perspective that defines the present or nowness as a state of neutrality)⁵¹ as both are characterized by retention (defined by a negative or nostalgic view of an immediate past experience), and protention (positive expectations for the future) without establishing any function for the present (resoluteness). The fourth most “liked” quote is: “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” (*OTR*, 73). It reveals an SCR via *emotional bias*, specifically the emotion of pain that readers empathize with. Finally, the fifth most “liked” quote is: “The best teacher is experience and not through someone’s distorted point of view.” This maxim is misattributed to Kerouac as the quote does not appear in any of his novels.

SCRs in Other Novels

With 89,192 ratings,⁵² *The Dharma Bums* is Kerouac’s second most popular novel on Goodreads. The top-ranked quote, “one day I will find the right words, and they will be simple,” is a misquotation of the original, which does not actually belong to *The Dharma Bums* but *Some of the Dharma*, a work by Kerouac that was published posthumously (in 1997) and that is a

⁵⁰ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road: The Original Scroll* (New York: Viking, [1957] 2007), 183.

⁵¹ See page 181, chapter five.

⁵² Data retrieved on 25 May, 2022, same as the date of access. “The Dharma Bums Quotes,” *Goodreads*, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/827497-the-dharma-bums>, accessed 25 May 2022.

collection of reflections about Buddhism written between 1953 and 1956. The correct sentence as it appears in the book is this: “Soon I’ll find the right words, they’ll be very simple.”⁵³

Although incorrectly attributed to *The Dharma Bums*,⁵⁴ the SCR here is evoked by the anti-intellectual stance discussed in this dissertation and is closely related to *survival bias*. As John Tooby and Leda Cosmides remind us, “the single most limiting resource to reproduction is not food or safety or access to mates, but what makes them each possible: the information required for making adaptive behavioral choices.”⁵⁵ Having this in mind, and because people generally tend to search for mental shortcuts when processing information,⁵⁶ the “simplicity” of the “right words” (the answer, wisdom, the ultimate truth) that Duluoz hopes to find could be associated with this tendency. As for the second quote, “it all ends in tears anyway” (*TDB*, 439), despite the fact that it is too short, it evokes an SCR that is triggered by readers’ *emotional bias*, specifically the emotion of sadness and even despair associated with mortality and the deterministic fate of humankind.

In *Big Sur*,⁵⁷ the top-ranked quote is: “It always makes me proud to love the world somehow—hate’s so easy compared” (*BS*, 141). The third most liked quote is: “I feel guilty for being a member of the human race” (*BS*, 166). The SCR in each of these quotes could be considered as evoked by readers’ *emotional bias* since there is in both the projection of strong emotions, namely love and guilt, both of which have been suggested to have significant adaptational value.⁵⁸ However, I would suggest that the first quote also corresponds to *moral bias* because it confirms a commonly felt emotion (worldly love), while the second also

⁵³ Jack Kerouac, *Some of the Dharma* (New York: Penguin, [1997] 1999), 280.

⁵⁴ Written around the same time as the novels being considered in this dissertation, there is no reason to assume that quotes from *Some of the Dharma* do not belong to the same category of concerns and ideals as the others. This is supported by the semi-autobiographical elements of the novels that close the gap between them and *Some of the Dharma* (which is primarily nonfiction), at least in terms of the genre, which validates its addition to the discussion.

⁵⁵ John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, “The Past Explains the Present: Emotional Adaptations and the Structure of Ancestral Environments,” *Ethology and Sociobiology* 11 (1990): 408.

⁵⁶ Martie G. Haselton, Daniel Nettle, and Paul W. Andrews, “The Evolution of Cognitive Bias,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David M. Buss (New Jersey: Wiley, 2005), 727.

⁵⁷ Data retrieved on 25 May, 2022, same as the date of access. “Big Sur Quotes,” *Goodreads*, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/92349-big-sur>, accessed 25 May 2022.

⁵⁸ For the adaptational function of love, which is connected to reproductive success in humans, see Lorne Campbell and Bruce J. Ellis, “Commitment, Love, and Mate Retention,” in *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, ed. David M. Buss (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 419. For guilt, which “functions as an emotion mode specialized for recalibration of regulatory variables that control trade-offs in welfare between self and others,” see John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, “Conceptual Foundations,” 59.

corresponds to *counterintuitive bias* because it demonstrates a transgression of expectations since feeling guilty for being part of the human race is not a common emotion.

SCRs evoked by *social bias* are found in the fourth most “liked” quote in *Big Sur* and the third most “liked” quote in *The Subterraneans*.⁵⁹ The quote from *Big Sur* is: “‘It’ll take you eternities to get rid of me,’ she adds sadly, which makes me jealous, I want her to say I’ll never get rid of her—I wanta be chased till eternity till I catch her” (*BS*, 130). The quote from *The Subterraneans* is: “ah, you always go for the ones who don’t really want you” (*TS*, 469). Interestingly, both of these quotes concern rather odd relationship dynamics. Whereas in the first, Duluoz implies that he does not love Evelyn but wants her to keep chasing him until he does,⁶⁰ the second suggests that the desire for suffering or “self-laceration”⁶¹ could be a universal one. Aside from *social bias*, these two passages could also correspond to *emotional bias* (namely the feelings of jealousy and pain).

In *Lonesome Traveler*,⁶² the SCRs in the first and fourth most “liked” quotes are related to the unreality/illusory nature of the perceived world that Duluoz arrives at during his reflections. The first is: “Thinking of the stars night after night I begin to realize ‘The stars are words’ and all the innumerable worlds in the Milky Way are words, and so is this world too. And I realize that no matter where I am, whether in a little room full of thought, or in this endless universe of stars and mountains, it’s all in my mind” (*LT*, 732). The second is: “Everything is perfect on the street again, the world is permeated with roses of happiness all the time, but none of us know it. The happiness consists in realizing that it is all a great strange dream” (*LT*, 657). The SCRs here are evoked by a *counterintuitive bias* that resists objective reality in the favor of a mysterious view of the perceived world. This means that the mysticism motif discussed in this dissertation, especially Duluoz’s solipsistic worldview and, by extension, the noumenal nature of things and beings, could be considered universal.

⁵⁹ Data retrieved on 25 May, 2022, same as the date of access. “The Subterraneans Quotes,” *Goodreads*, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2696001-the-subterraneans>, accessed 25 May 2022.

⁶⁰ Missing in the quote is the full context that makes the relation dynamics even more eccentric, which is the fact that Evelyn is Dean’s wife.

⁶¹ See page 125, chapter four.

⁶² Data retrieved on 25 May, 2022, same as the date of access. “Lonesome Traveler Quotes,” *Goodreads*, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/656190-lonesome-traveler>, accessed 25 May 2022.

The third most “liked” quote in *Lonesome Traveler* is: “After all this kind of fanfare, and even more, I came to a point where I needed solitude and to just stop the machine of ‘thinking’ and ‘enjoying’ what they call ‘living,’ I just wanted to lie in the grass and look at the clouds” (*LT*, 722). The SCR here is evoked by *survival bias* and is related to Tooby’s and Cosmides’s observation about the adaptive importance of the acquisition of information. More specifically, it relates to an adaptive problem that faces this acquisition, which is information overload. Duluoz’s overall interest in “silence” (discussed in chapter four) and the meditation and solitude of his Buddhist practice could be interpreted as an anticipated reaction against the then-looming age of information. His talk about thinking and enjoying life as being related to a machine suggests that these acts, without which there is no life for the individual, have been dominated by the hyperreal. In that sense, escaping the simulacra of thinking and enjoying life becomes synonymous with the retrieval of authenticity, which would add another reason why readers are attracted to the quote.

Conclusion

The previous chapter has outlined the importance of intersubjective experiences in the (re)construction of identity and reality. The liminal postwar period’s embrace of technocracy and consumerism as ideals entails an extreme form of individualism whereby the significance of the individual far exceeds that of any collective or community to which they may belong. Intersubjectivity, which is at the heart of the primitiveness motif discussed in Part I, becomes part of the quest to establish an ideal of authenticity that resists the ideals of hyperreal, consumerist, and technocratic America.

An essential mechanism for achieving intersubjectivity is Theory of Mind and the ensuing intentional stances about the bodily (performance) and linguistic (performativity) expressions of others. As a meta-representational module, Theory of Mind enables Duluoz to (attempt to) interpret others in order to simultaneously understand and (re)construct aspects of his identity and reality. Duluoz’s ToM is exceptionally creative because it is honed by years of meticulous and near-obsessive study of the universe and the condition of existence. While this

may seem an advantage, it is, in fact, more of an inconvenience because his mechanism of detection of behavior is so dependent on the outcome of his reflections that it becomes perturbed. In other words, Duluoz's interpretations of the behavior and utterances of others are sabotaged by his personal view of the world—specifically what I have termed the mind-universe complex, which represents the interconnectedness between universal entropy and Duluoz's unresolved internal problems.

We observe the manifestation of this perturbation when Duluoz fails to accurately read the intentions of Dean, Mardou, and Lazarus, as his desire for intersubjectivity is overcome by a more powerful and subliminal desire to maintain his often erroneous and/or extremist view of the world. Similar to his failure to establish intersubjective bonds with Mardou and with the eighteen-year-old girl in the previous chapter, Duluoz's ToM mechanism fails in all the examples studied in this chapter. Despite this failure, what we have so far seen in chapters seven and eight is an active effort on the part of the narrator to resist individualism by experimenting with modes of intersubjectivity whose main objective is to open up ways for the negotiation of identity and reality. In so doing he refutes the postmodern negation of objective reality and, at the same time, the reality that is dictated by technocracy and the establishment. Regardless of the truth of his inferences about Lazarus, Dean, Mardou, or the subterraneans as a group, Duluoz's ToM exceeds its adaptive function in that it is employed in the understanding of the realities of socio-cultural change.

Certain passages in the *Legend* possess factors of attraction that potentially lead to moments of intersubjectivity among readers, which are moments when readers are drawn to or collectively display empathy towards Duluoz in certain predicaments. The analysis of these factors showcases that, by and large, readers share the same complex views on social, survivalist, and emotional concerns as Duluoz does. On more than one occasion, they manifest the same cognitive dissonance that often engenders contradictory views such as confirming established social norms and simultaneously desiring to break them. Most of the Shared Contexts of Reference that reflect the data collected from Goodreads demonstrate that readers' attention collectively points to aspects of Duluoz's crisis that this dissertation has so far discussed.

Thematically, most of the SCRs studied in this chapter are related to the alternative lifestyle that Duluoz recounts, whether he himself experiences it or sees it in others. Whereas

some readers subscribe to the alternative lifestyle (Dean's wild life), others confirm a more conventional one (for example, a desire for conventional relationships where romance, love, and stability reign supreme). That being said, the SCRs translate to moments of intersubjectivity among the readers because they collectively engage them in the negotiation of identity and reality at specific moments in the narrative, which are mainly moments that evoke the alternative lifestyle.

The cognitive biases evoked in the reading process correspond to Fludernik's naturally occurring "cognitive parameters" that are automatically deployed by readers upon identification with the SCRs. Similar to the unfamiliar aspects of the *Legend* analyzed in chapter two, some of the SCRs studied in this chapter are "unnatural" and require effort on the part of the reader to identify and display empathy with, while others appear to be more "natural" because they inherently boast cognitive and evolutionary associations that correspond to the structure of the mind. The following chapter focuses on the style of Kerouac's "spontaneous prose," discussing intersubjectivity in terms of improvisation and the "natural" elements of the *Legend's* narrative.

Chapter 9. Intersubjectivity in the Style of the *Legend*

Intersubjective experiences, whether between Duluoz and the other characters or between Duluoz and the reader, are essential for establishing individual authenticity through the negotiation of the meaning of selfhood and the shared objective reality. While the two previous chapters have primarily focused on the substance of these negotiations (content), this chapter deals with how the peculiar style of the narrative (form) is equally evocative of intersubjectivity. Scholars interested in Kerouac's writing style usually turn to his two-page essay called "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose,"¹ which he wrote in 1953 at the request of fellow Beat writers Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs in an attempt to formalize his style in a document that could one day be presented as a manifesto for Beat writing. While the discussion in this chapter certainly references Kerouac's essay, its main concern is the way improvisation and orality as features of style evoke intersubjective experiences.

The first section outlines two special elements of Kerouac's style: anti-representation and "surrogation." It foregrounds the author's interest in liberating his thoughts from the constraints of representation by employing the techniques of jazz improvisation as a surrogate in its place. The second section presents a breakdown of some of the jazz performance scenes in the *Legend* and demonstrates how the techniques of bebop create intersubjective experiences between musicians and their audience in the storyworld. On the one hand, it also shows how the description of some of the techniques of jazz acts as a reference to the style of the narrative. On the other, it indicates how these techniques inspire the rupture from conventional uses of language, which ultimately leads to intense experimentations with the medium of writing, such as the use of fragmented and incoherent sentences and even drawings.

¹ Example of these are: Justin Thomas Trudeau, "Jack Kerouac's Spontaneous Prose: A Performance Genealogy of the Fiction," (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2006); Michael Hrebaniak, *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006); Tim Hunt, *The Textuality of Soulwork: Jack Kerouac's Quest for Spontaneous Prose* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014) and; Hassan Melehy, *Kerouac: Language, Poetics, & Territory* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

The third section illustrates the application of jazz improvisation in Kerouac's writing, which is referred to as "sketching." It analyzes two examples from *Desolation Angels* and *The Subterraneans* and demonstrates how improvisation on the condition of existence of the characters in question engenders empathy towards them, especially through the fusion between the memory of actual events, imagination, and Duluoz's personal crisis. The fourth section offers a neuroscientific validation of improvisation as a mode of intersubjectivity. First, it shows how improvisation is connected to Duluoz's and the reader's intuitive beliefs, and second, it shows how it contributes to the legitimization of Duluoz's belief system. The final section analyzes intersubjectivity as an outcome of the orality of the narrative. In addition to improvisation, orality or the use of the characteristics of oral speech is an essential feature of Kerouac's style. After clarifying the relationship between orality and the notion of the "natural," this section demonstrates how techniques such as the transcription of audio recordings and the reproduction of certain nuances of oral speech contribute to establishing intersubjectivity via recourse to first-order representations as well as the mythic heritage and natural cognitive frames that are shared with and among readers.

Anti-Representation and Surrogation in Kerouac's Jazz Writing

In chapter six, I have identified gnosis as the esoteric knowledge of the authentic Real that is sought by Duluoz in the *Legend*. I have also identified metaleptic transgressions as the means through which the experiencers of the narrative are able to conceive of the accessibility of this knowledge. The malleability of the narrative that enables this process is partly caused by the peculiarities of Kerouac's method, which came to be known most commonly as "spontaneous prose," but also "jazz writing" and "sketching," and which has been said to subvert the representational function of narrative.

Michael Hrebeniak describes Kerouac's method as a "rhetorical trajectory that sheds representation or imitation for the performative act: a discovery of form and the world in the

process of writing,”² while Marco Abel’s Guattari-Deleuzian interpretation of it leads to the following appraisal:

Rejecting the standard interpretive approaches to Kerouac based on critical paradigms such as psychobiography, history, or ideology—all of which frame a text on the level of “representation” and search for “meaning”—Deleuze conceives of Kerouac’s work as productive and is instead interested in what it does. Asserting together with Guattari that “no art is imitative,” Deleuze responds to Kerouac’s spontaneous prose as constituting a literary machine that produces affects, not a signifying, representational system that requires an interpretive search for hidden meanings.”³

If by “hidden meanings” Abel includes the noumenal, mysterious, and nonsensical language analyzed in chapter six or the textual cues and readerly strategies required to understand it, then this dissertation disputes his assumption that such meanings do not exist in the *Legend*. It certainly agrees, however, with the anti-biographical and anti-ideological approach that leads to his view of Kerouac’s method as being grounded in the anti-representational. It also agrees with his assessment that Kerouac’s

jazz-like, energetic composition forces his language to such an extreme that it leaves behind the level of representation—the classic sense of writing. Instead, it gives the impression of writing akin to the itinerative sound of the jazz saxophone, of the “go, go, go” of Dean’s mad cheering—and of the incessant and speedy clicking and clacking sounds of the typewriter.”⁴

For Abel, Kerouac’s language references the dynamics and movements, and, most importantly, the spontaneity of everyday life. The method is not spontaneous for the sake of spontaneity or for creating a new writing style; it is spontaneous because life is. This conclusion is also arrived at by Ovidiu Matiú who saw that Kerouac “believed in bridging the liminal space between art and life, between Roman-Catholicism and Buddhism, between himself and the world. Negotiating

² Hrebeniak, *Action Writing*, 24.

³ Marco Abel, “Speeding Across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac On the Road,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 228–29.

⁴ Abel, 237.

boundaries was one of his main concerns, in the attempt to create life, not artistic artifacts or representations of life.”⁵

The discussion of timelessness in chapter five has referenced this jazz aesthetic as well as the connection between it and the narrative’s non-linear temporality as highlighted in pertinent studies. In jazz, improvisation is the aspect of the music that is responsible for establishing this connection as the authentic present, which is so passionately celebrated by Dean and the Beats in general, seems to unfold most vividly during improvised performances, perhaps as a reminder of the transience of the moments of the present that “never extend beyond a flash,” as Hrebeniak remarks.⁶

In his study of temporality in *On the Road*, Erik Mortenson shows that not only does jazz improvisation provide access to the present moment because “it reminds everyone that everything must end” but it also creates spaces for intersubjective links via “access to a community within the moment.”⁷ Mortenson believes that Dean’s “‘IT’ is a connection between the musician, the audience, and individual members of the audience all coming together as a whole.” He also quotes Daniel Belgrad who, in *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*, notes that “the structure of bebop ‘suggests an intersubjective dynamic, one in which the individual and the community empower one another.’” Ultimately, Mortenson deduces that “such an idea of community is emblematic of Kerouac’s novel” and that “like a jazz musician, Kerouac too is trying to catch ‘IT’ through his work, trying to catch the words and phrases that will let ‘everybody know it’s not the tune that counts but IT.’”⁸ The semblance between jazz improvisation and Kerouac’s writing is also observed by Tim Hunt who pinpoints exactly what he believes to be the elements of jazz that are manifested in the novels, namely “melody and chord patterns” and “the vocabulary of the musician”:

The role of melody or theme in jazz ... is roughly equivalent to the role of “image object” in Spontaneous Prose.... In Kerouac’s Spontaneous Prose quirks of syntax, favored sounds, meters, and individual words ... that are used and reused in different contexts

⁵ Ovidiu Matiu, “Jack Kerouac and Beat Spirituality: The Vehicle(s) to Enlightenment,” *Revista Transilvania* (Dec. 2018): 88.

⁶ Hrebeniak, *Action Writing*, 40.

⁷ Erik R. Mortenson, “Beating Time: Configurations of Temporality in Jack Kerouac’s ‘On the Road,’” *College Literature* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 63.

⁸ Mortenson, 64.

parallel the jazz musician's vocabulary and make Kerouac's performances as instantly recognizable.⁹

Justin Trudeau's 2006 Ph.D. dissertation is a dissection of the performance aspects of Kerouac's writing method, which is outlined in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." Commenting on the most important steps of the method, Trudeau remarks:

To begin his subject of "Essentials," Kerouac writes of the "Set-Up" that "The object is set before the mind, either in reality, as in sketching (before a landscape or teacup or old face) or is set in the memory wherein it becomes the sketching from memory of a definite image-object." This first section relates the author's affinity for direct observation and immediacy between the writer and subject. The "image-object" is later referred to in the "Center of Interest" section where he writes, "Begin not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from jewel center of interest in subject of image at moment of writing." Approaching his "image-objects" or "jewel centers" in the now via spontaneous sketching allowed Kerouac to produce meaning on more than one level, documenting multiple lines of thought as they happen between himself and the object of his sketches. Such an approach allowed Kerouac to distinguish himself from other writers by abandoning established a priori analytical approaches to the novel (for instance, by outlining plot development). For Kerouac, the immediacy of sketching dictated the flow of language as it was happening, not beforehand.

Kerouac's approach to performative timing is not communicating an already discovered reality; it is offering a record of the discovery of a reality.¹⁰

I would argue that Kerouac's designation of "jewel centers" refers to the noumenal nature of entities described in chapter six—things as they are in themselves, not as perceived by the senses—that many parts of the *Legend's* narrative are dedicated to expressing. I would also argue that what Trudeau sees in Kerouac's "Set-Up" as an "affinity for direct observation" is analogous to what has so far been suggested about Duluoz's reflections in this dissertation, namely that they exploit entities of the perceivable world as objects of "study." These range from the people he knows (for example, the performance and performativity of Dean, Lazarus,

⁹ Tim Hunt, *Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1981), 146.

¹⁰ Justin Thomas Trudeau, "Jack Kerouac's Spontaneous Prose," 29.

Mardou described in chapter eight and Tristessa described in chapter four), to flora and fauna (for example, the mouse described in chapter four and the cats of Mexico and vegetation of Big Sur described in chapter three), stars and planets described in chapter five, places (for example, the church scene described in chapter five), and random passersby (for example, the newspaper peddlers described in chapter two and the woman at the soda fountain described later in this chapter).

Trudeau sees in spontaneous sketching possibilities for the manifestation of numerous realities and his remark that Kerouac's technique allows him to document "multiple lines of thought" corresponds to the potentialities of narrative omniscience outlined at the end of chapter five. The "online" or write-as-you-go characteristic of improvisation expands the possibilities of what a thing is and could be and relays to the reader the very important and unique reality of the authentic Real, which is that the experience that one has of a thing is primarily governed by time-based subjective impressions. Where spontaneous sketching is concerned, the narrative of the *Legend* is as close as it gets to the way the reader experiences things in the real world. Passages that feature this technique transmit the very cognitive mechanism of interpreting the world and thinking about things—what Trudeau calls "a record of the discovery of a reality"—and, as with jazz improvisation, they reflect the emotions felt at the time of contact with a given entity. By not having a "preconceived idea" of what to say about an object, Kerouac gives rein to the moment in the same way that the jazz improviser's selection of notes is partly influenced by the emotional situation that they find themselves in and/or the environment surrounding the performance.

In his study of Kerouac's jazz writing, Richard Quinn comments on the cultural significance of the transfer of the features of improvisation from music to prose:

Improvisational processes motivate Kerouac's writing even during those periods when Kerouac's self-interest or religious anxieties dominated his individual psyche.

Improvisation, then, occupies the obverse position of postwar conformity, isolation, and segregation. Like conformity, improvisation dissolves the individual personality, though not as a means of segregating and manufacturing suburban hyper-consumers. Rather, improvisational processes subvert the organizing self in order to further intersubjectivity. Improvisational activity removes the process of meaning-making from the isolated

individual and hands it to an interactive collectivity.... This collectivity is defined less by its members' identities than by its affinity for the very improvisational processes that form the collectivity in the first place.¹¹

Quinn distinguishes between, on the one hand, a harmful dissolution of the self through complete assimilation by the technocratic–consumerist society—what I group under the umbrella term “hyperreal” in the first part of this dissertation—and, on the other, a rather advantageous dissolution produced by the transition from the domain of the subjective to that of the intersubjective, which parallels the state of egolessness that results in the recentering of the senses around the conceptualization of noumena.¹² In the first, the self yields to the dominion of the technology of production and the objects that it creates; in the second, it finds itself connected to other selves as part of a community. In the first, authenticity emerges as a product that is manufactured by a centralized authority and is associated with the pursuit and acquisition of objects and/or the idealization and unwavering adoption of certain defined life paths; in the second, authenticity acquires a collective social meaning whereby each member of a community, having played a participatory or creative part in the improvised process, enjoys full access to the fulfilled enterprise.

Trudeau also talks about “surrogation” when explaining Kerouac’s borrowing of the time-controlling and time-manipulating functions of jazz improvisation: “Surrogation, or the symbolic transfer of one commodity for another, provides the link by which Kerouac’s use of bop musical form can be understood as performative within his use of spontaneous prose.” He also cites Joseph Roach in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, wherein he writes: “I believe that the process of trying out various candidates in different situations—the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins—is the most important of the many meanings that users intend when they say the word performance.” Trudeau then infers that “Kerouac’s prose functions as a performance of bop (sometimes referred to as spontaneous bop prosody) as it both aspires to imitate and replace the musical genre in the form of literature.”¹³ What Trudeau describes as a “symbolic transfer” is actually more literal than one may think as

¹¹ Richard Quinn, “Jack Kerouac, Charlie Parker, and the Poetics of Beat Improvisation,” *Reconstructing the Beats*, ed. Jennie Skerl (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 156–57.

¹² Refer to pages 205–06, chapter six.

¹³ Trudeau, “Jack Kerouac’s Spontaneous Prose,” 40.

the narrative frequently succeeds in its aspirations to “replace the musical genre.” As the following sections demonstrate, the jazz musicians’ “auditioning stand-ins” is successfully replicated by Dulouoz, whose auditioning of ideas during his “sketches” of people’s lives generates intersubjective experiences with them in the same way that the jazz performers generate intersubjective experiences with their audience.

Intersubjectivity in Jazz Performance

Studying the performative aspect of the writings of Beat poet and musician Bob Kaufman, Tom Pynn writes:

The influence of the African American jazz tradition, especially bebop, coincides with the Beat project in general and with Kaufman’s work in particular when jazz emphasizes spontaneous improvisation and integrating the subjective experience of the musician with the soundscape; thus, moving the poet from an isolated, or naïve subjectivity, toward a mature or intersubjective interplay with world and others.... The uniqueness of the Beat idea of an individual was to place all human beings within an intersubjective context, a co-arising with others and the world through performance. In so doing, the expressive performative self would liberate the individual from all forms of conformity and death-in-life habits. It would release, as Kerouac wrote, “the true blue song of man.” In order to attain release into the freedom of intersubjectivity, a co-arising with others and the world through performance, the urge to invincibility has to be replaced with vulnerability, a willingness to encounter and engage all forms of life on their respective terms without desiring to coerce, consume, or conquer.¹⁴

The Beats’ interest in jazz is primarily stimulated by a search for intersubjectivity in performance. As Pynn reveals, jazz performance triggers a transition from the domain of the subjective—thereby forgoing the ego that is sculpted by individualism and that begets “conformity,” “death-in-life habits,” and the illusion of invincibility—to the domain of the

¹⁴ Tom Pynn, “‘I Am Not I’: Performative (Self)Identity in the Poetry of Bob Kaufman,” in *The Philosophy of the Beats*, ed. Sharin N. Elkholy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 80–81.

intersubjective where, as part three of this dissertation has been arguing, reality and identity could be constructed collectively. Consequently, not only does improvisation influence the self by contributing to the state of egolessness but also society by extenuating the cultural practices dictated by the hyperreal (“death-in-life habits”) such as consumerism and the domination of one group by another, which is entrenched in the desire to “coerce” and “conquer.”

In one of the scenes in *On the Road*, Duluoz and Dean attend a performance by jazz musician and singer Slim Gaillard. The description of the scene demonstrates the surrogation effect by powerfully relaying the feeling inside the club and, at the same time, showing the reader what Kerouac/Duluoz wants to achieve in his writing:

But one night we suddenly went mad together again; we went to see Slim Gaillard in a little Frisco nightclub. Slim Gaillard is a tall, thin Negro with big sad eyes who’s always saying, “Right-orooni” and “How ’bout a little bourbon-orooni.” In Frisco great eager crowds of young semi-intellectuals sat at his feet and listened to him on the piano, guitar, and bongo drums. When he gets warmed up he takes off his shirt and undershirt and really goes. He does and says anything that comes into his head. He’ll sing “Cement Mixer, Put-ti Put-ti” and suddenly slow down the beat and brood over his bongos with fingertips barely tapping the skin as everybody leans forward breathlessly to hear; you think he’ll do this for a minute or so, but he goes right on, for as long as an hour, making an imperceptible little noise with the tips of his fingernails, smaller and smaller all the time till you can’t hear it any more and sounds of traffic come in the open door. Then he slowly gets up and takes the mike and says, very slowly, “Greatorooni . . . fine-ovauti . . . hello-orooni . . . bourbonorooni . . . all-orooni . . . how are the boys in the front row making out with their girls-orooni . . . orooni . . . vauti . . . oroonirooni . . .” He keeps this up for fifteen minutes, his voice getting softer and softer till you can’t hear. His great sad eyes scan the audience.

Dean stands in the back, saying, “God! Yes!”—and clasping his hands in prayer and sweating. “Sal, Slim knows time, he knows time.” Slim sits down at the piano and hits two notes, two Cs, then two more, then one, then two, and suddenly the big burly bass-player wakes up from a reverie and realizes Slim is playing “C-Jam Blues” and he slugs in his big forefinger on the string and the big booming beat begins and everybody

starts rocking and Slim looks just as sad as ever, and they blow jazz for half an hour, and then Slim goes mad and grabs the bongos and plays tremendous rapid Cubana beats and yells crazy things in Spanish, in Arabic, in Peruvian dialect, in Egyptian, in every language he knows, and he knows innumerable languages. Finally the set is over; each set takes two hours. (*OTR*, 158-59)

Slim controls musical time by selecting the appropriate moments to decrease and increase the tempo and intensity of his playing. Regardless of the factors that influence these selections—they may be completely random or affected by outside factors such as the venue, the auditory and visual settings, the reaction of the audience, outside noise, etc.—Slim literally controls the crowd: when he slows down, “everybody leans forward breathlessly to hear” and when he speeds up, “everybody starts rocking.” A lot of emphasis is given to these rhythmic fluctuations so that the form (the musical wave or tornado, so to speak) overtops the content (what is actually being played), as the haphazard mixture of instruments, beats, melodies, and even languages and dialects attest to this. It is no wonder, then, that Dean thinks that “Slim knows time.” Any person who has witnessed an improvisational performance, especially (but not exclusively) jazz, can confirm this: the improviser knows time well enough to capture it, freeze it, blow on it (improvise) for as long as they like or simply as long as they can sustain the audience’s engagement. They increase and decrease in order to break the monotony before they return to the starting point or a familiar melody, similar to what Kerouac does when he “returns to that image-object—or melody—once his improvisation has run its course,”¹⁵ as Fiona Paton observes.

From the perspective of the audience, a Shared Context of Reference (SCR) is formed around the performance of Slim Gaillard whose soft playing on the bongos draws their attention and makes them all “lean forward breathlessly to hear.” The members of the audience, including Duluoz and Dean, become intersubjectively linked via the SCR. In another scene, the group hears a tenor saxophone player blowing across the street, so they go inside the saloon where he is playing and, immediately, Duluoz captures a moment of deep intersubjectivity between the audience and the musician:

¹⁵ Fiona Paton, “Reconceiving Kerouac: Why We Should Teach Doctor Sax,” in *The Beat Generation: Critical Essays*, ed. Kostas Myrsiades (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 127.

Uproars of music and the tenorman *had it* and everybody knew he had it. Dean was clutching his head in the crowd, and it was a mad crowd. They were all urging that tenorman to hold it and keep it with cries and wild eyes, and he was raising himself from a crouch and going down again with his horn, looping it up in a clear cry above the furor.... Everybody was rocking and roaring.... Groups of colored guys stumbled in from the street, falling over one another to get there. “Stay with it, man!” (*OTR*, 177)

For the participants in the improvised moment, namely the musicians and the audience, “IT” is no longer an elusive phenomenon; it becomes emblematic of the intersubjective bond that connects them to one another and of the feeling of empathetic belonging to the human race that they want to stretch for as long as possible.

Being caught in that moment physically affects the audience, who reaches a state of ecstatic frenzy. However, the one who is the most impacted by the performance is Dean, as seen in the following passage when the saxophone player reaches the climax of his improvisation:

The tenorman jumped down from the platform and stood in the crowd, blowing around; his hat was over his eyes; somebody pushed it back for him. He just hauled back and stamped his foot and blew down a hoarse, baughing blast, and drew breath, and raised the horn and blew high, wide, and screaming in the air. Dean was directly in front of him with his face lowered to the bell of the horn, clapping his hands, pouring sweat on the man’s keys, and the man noticed and laughed in his horn a long quivering crazy laugh, and everybody else laughed and they rocked and rocked; and finally the tenorman decided to blow his top and crouched down and held a note in high C for a long time as everything else crashed along and the cries increased and I thought the cops would come swarming from the nearest precinct. Dean was in a trance. The tenorman’s eyes were fixed straight on him; he had a madman who not only understood but cared and wanted to understand more and much more than there was, and they began dueling for this; everything came out of the horn, no more phrases, just cries, cries, “Baugh” and down to “Beep!” and up to “EEEEEE!” and down to clinkers and over to sideways-echoing horn-sounds. He tried everything, up, down, sideways, upside down, horizontal, thirty degrees, forty degrees, and finally he fell back in somebody’s arms and gave up and everybody

pushed around and yelled, “Yes! Yes! He blowed that one!” Dean wiped himself with his handkerchief. (*OTR*, 177–78)

If one wants to specify the highest moment of intersubjectivity or locate the exact stretch of seconds where “IT” is found in this passage, it would have to be when the saxophone player “held a note in high C.” As Duluoz recounts, the player knew that this moment was established between him and the audience, specifically between him and Dean, who “cared and wanted to understand more and much more than there was.” Once again, the notes being played (the content) are superseded by all the other factors that go into sustaining the moment, which is why it does not matter that the player stopped playing phrases and just stuck with “cries.” Even though Dean is not a musician, there is an intersubjective dialogue or “duel” that takes place between him and the saxophone player, which is facilitated by the latter via the medium of music and by the full concentration tendered by Dean.

Time-manipulation is also a feature of the saxophone player’s playing, which rises and falls in the same way Slim Gaillard’s playing does. As soon as the ecstatic number finishes, the player alters the mood by playing a song called “Close Your Eyes,” during which

his mouth quivered, he looked at us, Dean and me, with an expression that seemed to say, Hey now, what’s this thing we’re all doing in this sad brown world?—and then he came to the end of his song, and for this there had to be elaborate preparations, during which time you could send all the messages to Garcia around the world twelve times and what difference did it make to anybody? because here we were dealing with the pit and prunejuice of poor beat life itself in the god-awful streets of man, so he said it and sang it, “Close—your—” and blew it way up to the ceiling and through to the stars and on out—“Ey-y-y-y-y-es”—and staggered off the platform to brood. (*OTR*, 179)

Duluoz registers the euphoric intersubjective moments that are associated with the fast and chaotic playing between the musicians and the audience but is not inclined to participate in the frenzy himself. For him, slower pace and more concentrated playing are what constitute the peak of the intersubjective experience which, in a way, sums up and foregrounds the main differences between him and Dean—while Dean revels in the chaos of the present that the intersubjective moment offers, Duluoz exploits its potential in engendering reflections on the condition of existence. This crucial difference shows that for Dean, everything that is to know about the

authentic Real is found in the present moment, whereas for Duluoz, although living in the present moment is desirable (but virtually impossible for him to achieve), the authentic Real is always one rumination away. Even though he does not realize it, in his own private and silent way, Duluoz experiences “IT” when he shares the intersubjective moment with the saxophone player that culminates in his interpretation of the player’s singing as an inquiry about the absurdism of existence: “what’s this thing we’re all doing in this sad brown world?”

In many ways, Duluoz’s description of the jazz performances is an illustration, however underdeveloped and unconscious, of his writing style. David Herman remarks that certain narratives have a reflexive capacity to describe their own “mechanisms of narrative worldmaking” by calling “attention to the structures and functions of storytelling itself,” which enables them to “recalibrate previous (or ongoing) attempts to use stories to construct models of the world.”¹⁶ On metafiction, in particular, Herman says that “narrative worldmaking reaches a new level of complexity, and becomes more deeply (and widely) imbricated with human sense-making efforts in general, when stories begin to be used to gauge and potentially refine the world-modeling capacity of narrative itself.”¹⁷ The making of the storyworld of the *Legend* involves this very act of gauging its own mechanisms by calling attention to the way music improvisation scenes are descriptive of the style of writing. This process is “imbricated” with readers’ “sense-making efforts” in that, by laying bare the technique used in making sense of the world and resolving his crisis—here, through “surrogation”—Duluoz intersubjectively reaches out to readers who are themselves trying to make sense of the crisis of the Textual Actual World (TAW) and the Actual World (AW) simultaneously.

Trudeau makes the important observation that “Improvising, or blowing on the subject image as Kerouac calls it, actually refers to a complex intersubjective approach to artist and subject through the use of calculated combinations,”¹⁸ although he fails to clarify this reference. I would argue that the “calculated combinations” that are responsible for some of the intersubjective moments are represented by small variations on ideas, which are similar to variations on musical notes in jazz performance. During the same wild night of jazz and alcohol,

¹⁶ David Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 144.

¹⁷ Herman, 159.

¹⁸ Trudeau, “Jack Kerouac’s Spontaneous Prose,” 39.

the group kept bar-hopping and ended up at a club called Jamson's Nook where they attended a performance by an alto saxophone player who was

very simple in his ideas. What he liked was the surprise of a new simple variation of a chorus. He'd go from "ta-tup-tader-rara . . . ta-tup-tader-rara," repeating and hopping to it and kissing and smiling into his horn, to "ta-tup-EE-da-de-deraRPP! ta-tup-EE-da-de-dera-RUP!" and it was all great moments of laughter and understanding for him and everyone else who heard. (*OTR*, 181)

We can discern in the alto player's performance a technique that is based on maintaining the simplicity of the musical ideas being introduced and creating the desired effect from the small variations added to them. Once again, the differences between Duluoz and Dean are put in the spotlight, this time, with respect to technique: whereas Duluoz finds the gist of the performance in the alterations between simple ideas and small variations, Dean finds it in the crescendo that we can now associate with the manner in which he speaks ("I'm *hungry*, I'm *starving*, let's *eat right now*") and that Duluoz tries to emulate during his conversation with the 18-year-old girl in *On the Road* and with Mardou in *The Subterraneans*.¹⁹

Even if their perception of the essence and intersubjective effect of the performance differs, Dean's understanding of improvisation constitutes a blueprint for Duluoz's writing technique as seen in the former's commentary on the alto player's performance:

Dean and I sat alone in the back seat and left it up to them and talked. "Now, man, that alto man last night had IT—he held it once he found it; I've never seen a guy who could hold so long." I wanted to know what "IT" meant. "Ah well"—Dean laughed—"now you're asking me impon-de-rables—ahem! Here's a guy and everybody's there, right? Up to him to put down what's on everybody's mind. He starts the first chorus, then lines up his ideas, people, yeah, yeah, but get it, and then he rises to his fate and has to blow equal to it. All of a sudden somewhere in the middle of the chorus he *gets it*—everybody looks up and knows; they listen; he picks it up and carries. Time stops. He's filling empty space with the substance of our lives, confessions of his bellybottom strain, remembrance of ideas, rehashes of old blowing. He has to blow across bridges and come back and do it

¹⁹ See the section "Dean's Experience of the Mundane" on pages 247–50, chapter seven.

with such infinite feeling soul-exploratory for the tune of the moment that everybody knows it's not the tune that counts but IT—" Dean could go no further; he was sweating telling about it. (*OTR*, 185–86)

Dean defines "IT" as something so heroic, ephemeral, and rare that it becomes urgent for those whom "it is up to" to try to capture it and sustain it for as long as possible. It is the role of the alto player and, as Duluoz understands it, the role of the writer as well, to harness the power of improvisation in order to create intersubjective moments that reveal the authentic Real to a community of people. It could be argued that Dean's comments constitute the groundwork for the "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" or the "surrogation" that Trudeau describes. Notice, for example, the resemblance between Dean's comments about the musician's filling empty space either with "confessions" or with "remembrance of ideas" and Kerouac's "Set-Up" section where "the object is set before the mind, either in reality ... or is set in the memory."²⁰ Dean's view of jazz and Kerouac/Duluoz's illustration of his writing technique share the same insight into the core of what improvisation is: an anti-representational mode of spontaneous expression that randomly sketches the surroundings and blends these sketches with ideas ("vocabulary," as per Hunt) in order to create intersubjective experiences.

Furthermore, Dean's belief that in the moment of peak intersubjectivity "everybody knows it's not the tune that counts but IT" resembles Kerouac's suggestion for writers in the "Center of Interest" section to "blow! — now! — your way is your only way — 'good' — or 'bad' — always honest"²¹ in that, during that specific moment, the intersubjective bond established between the participants or experiencers (audience or readers) far exceeds the actual content. The independence of the intersubjective moment from the content echoes the discussion about noumenal language in chapter six that demonstrated how nonsensical language could be made sensical via special narrative techniques, as well as McLuhan's "the medium is the message" thesis referred to in chapter seven, which shows that a shift in the medium of transmission may be more culturally consequential than the content of the information being transmitted. Duluoz finds intersubjectivity within the technique of improvisation that allows him to explore the effect of experimentations on the medium. This is why, for example, he does not

²⁰ Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" (1953), in *Good Blond & Others*, ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1993), 69.

²¹ Kerouac, "Essentials," 70.

appear so excited when the group goes to a poetry reading by Merrill Randall (Pulitzer Prize poet James Merrill), stating that “it might be interesting to hear him converse spontaneously but I will not sit thru his crafty productions on a typewriter dedicated as they are usually to the imitation of the best poetry hitherto written, or at least the approximation—I’d rather hear Raphael’s new bombs of words, in fact I’d rather hear Lazarus write a poem—” (DA, 205).

Duluoze sees Randall’s poetry as a dull, mechanical imitation that lacks variations of medium and prefers to listen to the incoherent poetry of his less skilled friends because it possesses the element of spontaneity. At times, his search for medium-centered intersubjectivity inspires him to abandon the alphabet altogether and take his improvisation to the next level, which is what he does during his rant on the condition of existence in chapter thirty-seven of *Desolation Angels*:

Enough I’ve said at it all, and there’s not even a Desolation in Solitude, not even this page, not even words, but the prejudiced show of things impinging on your habit energy—O Ignorant brothers, O Ignorant sisters, O Ignorant me! there’s nothing to write about, everything is nothing, there’s everything to write about! ... come, now, children, wake up—come, now is the time, wake up—look closely, you’re being fooled—look close, you’re dreaming—come, now, look—being and not being, what’s the difference?—Prides, animosities, fears, contempts, slights, personalities, suspicions, sinister forebodings, lightning storms, death, rock, WHO TOLD YOU THAT RADAMANTHUS WAS ALL THERE? WHO WRITES WRONG ON THE WHO THE WHY THE WHAT WAIT O THING I I I I I I I I I I I O MODIIGRAGA NA PA RA TO MA NI CO SA PA RI MA TO MA NA PA SHOOOOOOO BIZA RIII ————— IOOOO—MMM—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO—SO



WHO WHAT WHY WHEN ITIBTO RAT

superven
... ..
... ..

After that there never was

That's all there is to what there's not—

Boom (*DA*, 57–58)

Duluoz's frustration at the failure of language as a medium of expression (of noumena and the authentic Real) spills out of the page. He metaleptically degrades the writing of his own creator (Kerouac) when he claims that there's not even a "Desolation in Solitude," which is the title of the section that contains this passage. When he says that all that is left is "the prejudiced show of things impinging on your habit energy," he describes the takeover of the hyperreal that denies understanding the noumenal nature of entities. In a Dean-style crescendo, Duluoz's rant goes from relatively coherent phrases to fragmented ones, and then to isolated words that give the sensation of a frantic rhythm that eventually leads to capitalized words which, in turn, lead to mere capitalized letters that mimic the sensation of losing control to the point of pulling one's hair out and randomly pounding on a keyboard out of irritation. The rant culminates with triangle drawings that may or may not be symbolic of something, accompanied by scribbles that are simultaneously a visual representation of the failure of language and a triumph of the (variations of the) medium over the message, reminding the reader of the time James Agee "wished he could dispense with words and paper altogether" and rely merely on photographs to express the complexity of experience.²²

Intersubjectivity and Sketching

Empathy and Entropy in the "Soda Fountain" scene in *Desolation Angels*

During one of his reflections or "studies," Duluoz confronts the apathy that he sees in others and associates it with the inauthentic condition of the universe. This happens in a scene where he is observing a beautiful 38-year-old blond woman running a soda fountain, who seems

²² Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "The Borderlands of Culture: Writing by W.E.B. Du Bois, James Agee, Tillie Olsen, and Gloria Anzaldúa" in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Sims (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 149.

to be overworked. Seated in front of the woman are two teenagers and a drug clerk who are waiting for their orders and who are either completely unaware of or unempathetic toward the woman's distress. As she searches for the ketchup, she reaches a tipping point and almost breaks down, saying "I cant find the catsup!" to which the clerk insensitively replies "Is that a fact" while turning over a page of the newspaper. This interaction prompts Duluoz to investigate the man and the woman: "I study him—the cold neat white-collar nihilistic clerk who doesn't care about anything but does believe that women should wait on him!—She I study, a typical West Coast type, probable ex-showgirl, maybe even (sob) ex-burlesque dancer who didn't make it because she wasn't naughty enough." After profiling the characters, Duluoz concludes that, even though the woman is "very attractive, works very hard, very good hearted ... somehow something's wrong and life deals her a complete martyr deck I don't know why—" (DA, 127).

The woman is a product of the overall absurdity and randomness of the world. On the face of it, the reason why Duluoz is immediately able to empathize with her is that he himself has spent a large portion of his adult life trying to find a sense of justice within this absurdity and randomness—think of his accusations to God for having created suffering in the world cited in chapter four. To him, her suffering at the soda fountain must be emblematic of the more profound suffering that she experiences on a daily basis, and what may have been an isolated and unique incidence at the soda fountain becomes emblematic of the condition of the world. Duluoz imagines that the woman will

age with all that beauty in that selfsame rockingchair by the potted-flower window (O West Coast!)—and she'll complain, she'll say her story: "All my life I've tried to do the best I could"—But the two teenagers insist they want the catsup ... One, an ugly kid, takes his straw and to pop it out of its paper wrapper stabs viciously at the counter, as tho stabbing someone to death, a real hard fast death-stab that frightens me— ... Her hair is falling over one eye, she's almost *weeping*—Nobody cares because nobody notices— ... An angel of a woman— And yet a bum like me, with no one to love her tonight— That's the way it goes, there's your world— Stab! Kill!—Don't care!—There's your Actual World Face—exactly what this empty universe holds in store for us, the Blank—Blank Blank Blank! (DA, 127–28)

Observe the construction of the scene: Duluoz first contemplates the situation before him from an objective standpoint, noting and recording everything, and ultimately identifying apathy as an obstacle hindering the manifestation of authenticity. Once registered, Duluoz “improvises” a backstory for the woman on the spot as a reaction against the apathy that he witnesses towards her. Because of the imbalance that he finds between her helplessness and innocence, and the insensitivity of the customers, he magnifies her situational suffering and transforms it into an existential crisis. He also magnifies the apathy of the customers, transforming the benign act of removing a paper wrapper into an act of murder. At the end of the improvisation is the realization of the “emptiness” of the universe—one of the major motifs in the *Legend* as can be deduced from this dissertation—which could be considered an intersubjective realization via the universal characteristic of emptiness that Duluoz derives from the construction of parts of the life of the woman at the soda fountain. By creating an SCR around (what becomes) the existential plight of the woman, readers are prompted to empathize with her and grasp a sense of what she might be feeling during the moment of observation.

Retrieved Empathetic Opportunities in Mardou’s Letter in *The Subterraneans*

In the discussion about Duluoz’s critique of intellectualism, chapter two has outlined a “sketch” that Duluoz creates in his sketchbook, which he intends to use to change Mardou’s view on therapy and psychoanalysis.²³ The sketch is constructed by registering the situation of the moment of writing (Mardou’s visit to her therapist) and recalling from memory the content of a letter that she had sent him. This merger is a feature of the sketching technique in which observation and improvisation are essential components. In the context of *The Subterraneans*, the letter itself comes rather as a surprise because of the events that had taken place a few nights before. As the group was bar-hopping in the city, Mardou asks Duluoz if they could go back to the place that they were staying at as it was getting late. Preferring to stay with Dean and the others, Duluoz refuses and sends Mardou home in a cab, promising to follow her shortly, which he does not do. When she returns to her own place a few nights after, Mardou writes Duluoz an

²³ See pages 77–78, chapter two.

affectionate letter that becomes a vehicle for the intersubjective exploration of identity and reality through the written form. The letter begins as follows:

DEAR BABY,

Isn't it good to know winter is coming— ... —and that life will be a little more quiet— and you will be home writing and eating well and we will be spending pleasant nights wrapped round one another—and you are home now, rested and eating well because you should not become too sad— (*TS*, 510–11)

Duluoz explains to the reader that the reason why Mardou mentions that he “should not become too sad” could be because one time she witnessed him being overwhelmed by a feeling of sadness while the two of them were with Yuri. Realizing the importance of emphasizing it, Duluoz reproduces the phrase “because you should not become too sad” twice, supplementing each repetition with a reflection on the mismatch between his mistreatment of her and her continuous “forgiving, forgetting” (*TS*, 512). The letter evokes in Duluoz a sense of empathy with Mardou that would not have otherwise been evoked: While the events were taking place that night, all Duluoz cared about was spending the night in the hotel room of a famous writer that they had met, but the affection that he finds in the letter, specifically in her wishing that he does not become sad, especially after he had abandoned her, changes something in him.

More important than guilt-induced empathy is the development of the character of Mardou through Duluoz's construction of crucial aspects of her background and upbringing, which is stimulated by the content of her letter. A particular line initiates this construction: “*I am full of strange feelings, reliving and refashioning many old things*” (*TS*, 512). Similar to his clarification of the underlying reasons for her concern about his sadness, Duluoz attempts to explain what she means by “strange feelings.” However, the explanation here is a synthesis of his imagination (as improvised fiction) and (allegedly) actual things that Mardou had told him about her past. Immediately after the line is quoted, Duluoz draws the following sketch:

when she was 14 or 13 maybe she'd play hookey from school in Oakland and take the ferry to Market Street and spend all day in one movie, wandering around having hallucinated phantasies, looking at all the eyes, a little Negro girl roaming the shuffle restless street of winos, hoodlums, sams, cops, paper peddlers, the mad mixup there the

crowd eyeing looking everywhere the sexfiend crowd and all of it in the gray rain of hookey days—poor Mardou— (*TS*, 512)

It is possible that Mardou has an ulterior motive for mentioning her “strange feelings” in the letter, which reminds us of Dan Sperber’s warning that some tactics may be used by a person to make the other “infer the content of the mental representation she wants him to adopt” as mentioned in the previous chapter, which, in this case, could be to prompt Duluoz to imagine the hardships of her life growing up as an African American woman in a rough neighborhood. Furthermore, Mardou benefits from the time and tranquility of a meaningful rumination that the letter provides for Duluoz (more on the effect of the medium on intersubjective experiences in the following section). This does not mean that the sketch is not spontaneous or that it betrays Duluoz’s commitment to the non-revision of ideas, which is echoed in Kerouac’s “Essentials” and *Desolation Angels*²⁴; it simply suggests that improvisation could be triggered by certain media. The prevalence of improvisation in the sketch is proven by the fact that each time Duluoz repeats the same line from the letter, he contemplates a different idea or aspect of Mardou’s life—think of Roach’s comment on “auditioning stand-ins” and the variations on musical ideas that Kerouac witnesses in the alto saxophone player.

Following the sketching of what her life might have been like at 13 or 14, Duluoz uses quotation marks to signal an actual confession that Mardou once made about strange dreams that she had, one of which was about her father leaving her, which strangely gave her an orgasm, and another one that was filled with the anxiety accumulated from movies that she had seen. Consequently, Duluoz finds himself reacting again to the line about the strange feelings: “‘Honey’ (*out loud*) [emphasis added] ‘wished I could have seen you walking around Market like that—I bet I DID see you—I bet I did—you were thirteen and I was twenty-two—1944, yeah I bet I saw you, I was a seaman, I was always there, I knew the gangs around the bars—’” (*TS*, 512–13).

The remembrance of Mardou’s confession, which is triggered by her writing about her “strange feelings,” causes Duluoz to react “out loud” to something that she had told him in the

²⁴ In *Desolation Angels*, Duluoz reflects on his “spontaneous” style, seeing it as a discovery of “a new way of writing about life, no fiction, no craft, no revising afterthoughts, the heartbreaking discipline of the veritable fire ordeal where you cant go back but have made the vow of ‘speak now or forever hold your tongue’ and all of it innocent go-ahead confession” (*DA*, 256).

past as if she were sitting in front of him. The letter activates the construction of missing or missed communication opportunities between the two. Like a hologram, it projects a version of Mardou at the time of speaking and provides Duluoz the opportunity to say to her what he would and probably should have said to her at the time. Missed empathetic and communicative opportunities continue with the repetition of the second part of the line (“*reliving and refashioning many old things*”) which enables the improvisation of another sketch based on the same original idea. This time, Duluoz remembers Mardou telling him about a darker period of her childhood when her aunt “hysterically beat her,” her sisters “giving her a bad time,” and “men trying to make her” (*TS*, 513). Here, the reader gets the impression that when this particular confession took place, Duluoz did not empathize and probably not even sympathize with her or console her in any way, and that the evocation of the confession functions as a means for him to make up for the lost empathetic opportunity.

Improvisation as a Mode of Intersubjectivity in the *Legend*: An Empirical Validation

In the context of intersubjectivity, improvisation reveals an SCR that establishes possibilities for empathy among a community of participants: the improvisers and the audience. David Beckstead observes that there is an interesting cognitive mechanism underlying the improvisation process: the lateral portions of the prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain that has to do with planning and organizing learned information) are deactivated. In their place, medial portions of the prefrontal cortex, which are said to be “associated with meditation, daydreaming, and complex, long-term multitasking,” are activated.²⁵ The deactivated parts are correlated with Dan Sperber’s *reflective beliefs*, which are mainly culturally and institutionally acquired—and, therefore, vulnerable to being manipulated by the hyperreal—while the activated ones are correlated with *intuitive beliefs* that contain “basic concepts,”²⁶ which are mainly evolutionary,

²⁵ David Beckstead, “Improvisation: Thinking and Playing Music,” *Music Educators Journal* 99, no. 3 (Mar. 2013): 70.

²⁶ Sperber maintains that “basic concepts” are developed according to our innate schemas and dispositions: “our concept of living kinds tend to be taxonomic; our concept of archetypes tend to be characterized in terms of function; our concept of colour tend to be centered on focal hues; and so on. Concepts which conform to these

innate, and related to Duluoz's anti-intellectual stance and his counterintuitive view of the world.²⁷

When Michael Hrebeniak suggests that Kerouac "assigns a function to the improviser that is instinctive rather than cultural-historical,"²⁸ and when Nancy Grace characterizes him as one of the "neoromantics who tap a collective unconscious linking all human minds" and whose readers "may be unable to translate or paraphrase what the author is saying, but one will 'know' intuitively what the text means,"²⁹ they are referring to the manifestation of intuitive beliefs. The relationship between intersubjectivity and improvisation discloses the link between the latter and our ancestral belief system, which is composed of information, principles, ideals, and ideologies that are most emblematic of our authentic selves.

Chapters five and eight have incorporated the research of Pia Tikka and Mauri Kaipainen, which is included in the recently published *Narrative Complexity: Cognition, Embodiment, Evolution*. There is in the same collection another important essay by Martin E. Rosenberg, which is titled "Jazz as Narrative: Narrating Cognitive Processes Involved in Jazz Improvisation" and in which the author assimilates findings from neuroscientific research of the last two decades to explain what exactly goes on during the process of improvisation. To begin with, Rosenberg defines improvisation as a "method of shared storytelling" during which "stories can become conversations or contests, collaborative in the sense of responding to one another's motifs as if building themes and variations of a single melody."³⁰ Based on the analogy that Rosenberg draws between improvised music and storytelling, it is not difficult to see how his comment about "building themes and variations of a single melody" also applies to Duluoz's sketching that features variations of ideas based on on-the-spot, unrefined, real-life reactions to situations that he encounters, as opposed to scenes that are constructed to suit the demands of the narrative form.

schemas are easily internalized and remembered." Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 69.

²⁷ Refer to pages 200–01, chapter six.

²⁸ Michael Hrebeniak, *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 253.

²⁹ Nancy M. Grace, *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 28.

³⁰ Martin E. Rosenberg, "Jazz as Narrative: Narrating Cognitive Processes Involved in Jazz Improvisation," in *Narrative Complexity: Cognition, Embodiment, Evolution*, eds. Marina Grishakova and Maria Poulaki (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 349.

Referring to the results of an illuminating 2008 fMRI study conducted by Charles J. Limb and Allen R. Braun, Rosenberg remarks that “the performance of jazz improvisation activates a region of the brain associated with the production of autobiographical narrative (medial prefrontal cortex), interesting since both are implicated in bottom-up creative self-expression, as in the spontaneous construction of narratives.”³¹ Available only since the 1990s and applied to the study of improvisation only recently, fMRI technology has shown that improvisation and autobiographical narratives share a common processual origin in the mind. If we also consider Lee Higgins’s and Roger Mantie’s argument that there is “no difference between human experience and the act of improvisation” because “human existence [itself is] the condition of improvisation,”³² we could then establish a neuroscientific basis for the argument that intersubjective moments created by the surrogation in the *Legend* (the use of jazz improvisation techniques in the narrative) are directly responsible for legitimizing truths that are otherwise difficult to internalize by the reader, such as his peculiar belief system³³ and the possibility of accessing noumena.³⁴

Upholding Beckstead’s neuroscientific analysis, Rosenberg proceeds to relay another aspect of Limb’s and Braun’s discoveries, which is that:

Another region of the brain activated during improvisation, the frontal polar cortex, has been identified partially as a form of a central circuit node, “combining multiple cognitive operations in the pursuit of higher behavioral goals.” In contrast, deactivated regions have been identified with top-down “goal-directed behaviors” that are “monitored, evaluated and corrected” and thus can be equated with repressive, inhibitive behaviors modulated with self-awareness of social norms.³⁵

The brain mechanisms governing the improvisational process vastly correspond with Duluoz’s anti-intellectual and anti-analytical stance which refutes the cultural as well as linguistic restrictions standing in the way of authenticity. The deactivation of behaviors that are “monitored, evaluated and corrected” and “modulated with self-awareness of social norms” is

³¹ Rosenberg, 349.

³² Lee Higgins and Roger Mantie, “Improvisation as Ability, Culture, and Experience,” *Music Educators Journal* 100, no. 2 (Dec. 2013): 41.

³³ See page 129, chapter four, and pages 199–200, chapter six.

³⁴ See the discussion in chapter six.

³⁵ Rosenberg, “Jazz as Narrative,” 349.

precisely what readers notice in Duluo's interest in simplistic haikus in *The Dharma Bums* and his comments on Yuri's writing, saying that "I would say rather it was great if you'd written it suddenly on the spur of the moment" (TS, 535). It also shows when he ridicules himself for writing a reply to Mardou's letter in an embellished style, which includes phrases like "the invisible world is too beatific to have to be dragged before the court of social realities," calling it "twaddle" (TS, 532) that he only wrote to match the style of Mardou's letter.

Although the activation and deactivation of brain parts are for the most part unconscious, improvisation requires the partly conscious effort of "relinquishing intentionality, the self-conscious control over one's own story so that a subconscious, embodied response becomes stimulated by the sound of the other performers in the ensemble in such a way that novel pathways might suddenly appear."³⁶ Seen as an improvised performance, numerous parts of the *Legend* are direct manifestations of the state of egolessness that demands letting go of creative control and authority that Duluo, as a writer, has to do in order to facilitate the emergence of "novel pathways."³⁷ Despite the surrogation, improvised sketching and improvised music have a very obvious and crucial dissimilarity, which is that writing, at least as done traditionally and specifically as done by Duluo, is an individual endeavor, while jazz improvisation is primarily a group performance, which begs the following question: could intersubjectivity in the *Legend* be achieved in the same manner that it is achieved in jazz where performers manipulate the audience by capturing, suspending, reorienting, and recentering their attention? Could readers bask like Dean in the ecstasy of the moment ("IT") when he watches the performances?

To answer the question, we must go back to Charles Taylor's notion of authenticity and his argument for its dialogic character illustrated in chapter seven. Taylor recognizes perfectly well that defining one's identity or sense of self *in relation to others* implies the dependence on others for authenticity, which might seem to some people "a limitation, from which one might aspire to free oneself."³⁸ To solve this dilemma, the philosopher considers the very convenient examples of the hermit and the solitary artist who seek to detach themselves from society and other people, and explains that there is within this detachment "a certain kind of dialogicality. In

³⁶ Rosenberg, 343.

³⁷ This corresponds to the gap-filling that is facilitated by the narratorial mediation and that sees Duluo relinquishing some control over the construction of his F-universe. See page 62, chapter one.

³⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 34.

the case of the hermit, the interlocutor is God. In the case of the solitary artist, the work itself is addressed to a future audience, perhaps still to be created by the work itself. The very form of a work of art shows its character as *addressed*.”³⁹

As an occasional hermit and solitary artist himself, Duluoz’s “ideal of authenticity,” as Taylor would prefer to call it, is dependent occasionally on his relationship with God, but certainly and endlessly on his perceived relationship with his readers, a relationship that is solidified by the improvised aspect of his art. This justifies the importance of the messenger motif and the suggestion put forward in chapter six that “for Duluoz, transmitting gnosis through writing ... is a necessary condition to achieve individual authenticity.”⁴⁰ Through the dialogism afforded by improvisation, the narrative of the *Legend* can no longer be viewed as the product of a solitary practice but is rather like jazz, dependent on an audience whose attention is intersubjectively captured by shared intuitive beliefs.

Intersubjectivity and Orality: The *Legend* as “Natural” Narrative

Orality and the Concept of the “Natural”

A significant marker of the spontaneous improvisation employed in the *Legend* is the use of a conversational style that renders the narrative more “natural.” Before drawing the link between intersubjectivity, authenticity, and the natural, an explanation of the latter is in due. Monika Fludernik’s account of the natural is important because it links the themes of the first and third parts of this dissertation (hyperreality and intersubjectivity), ties in many of its parts, and brings it to a conclusion. Fludernik sets her cognitive interpretation of the “natural” in relation to Stephen Greenblatt’s account of the notion, which happens to be in line with Jean Baudrillard’s hyperreal that is outlined in chapter one:

³⁹ Taylor, 35.

⁴⁰ For the quoted statement, refer to page 213 in chapter six, and for the entire discussion, refer to the section “The Messenger Motif: The Role of Writing in the Transmission of Gnosis” on pages 209–15 in the same chapter.

The colonial background [of America] invokes a definition of the wilderness in which possession and exploration are crucially at stake. Whereas Native Americans saw the earth as belonging in equal measure to all creatures (including mankind) and therefore believed nature to be sacrosanct from human appropriation, the colonists' ideology, on the contrary, was one of private property and the civilizing mission of Manifest Destiny. Greenblatt's characterization of the wilderness as designated symbolically, i.e. linguistically, by the intensification of demarcational and behavioural rules therefore seems to mirror Nature's complete subjection to the code of civilization. In Yosemite, Nature appears to be part of, or an inset within, civilization and is therefore suitably conceptualized in purely symbolic terms: prohibitions against trespassing, in the institutionalized language of authority; ... The wilderness proper, although labelled, depicted and interpreted for the viewer, eludes *physical* appropriation and thereby constructs the natural as signified within the symbolic realm of civilization. The natural signifies the privileged experience of that which has been lost irretrievably and now has to be called into existence by fictional means: through symbolic denomination and, non-coincidentally, by means of poetic invocation.... The intensification of the rules as one approaches the heart of the wilderness is therefore motivated not so much by the *preservation* of nature as by the (benevolent but prohibitive) attempt to evade its dangers, dangers which apparently require symbolic and institutional overkill. As Baudrillard puts it: "it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them."⁴¹

Fludernik's concern for the disappearance of the Real and the methods of its retrieval not only introduces her narratological model, which is conveniently titled "natural narratology," but also justifies, equally conveniently, the narratological analysis employed in this dissertation to reveal the Real/natural. Greenblatt's research, as Fludernik explains, points to the fact that the history of America has always been tied to the "unnatural" since the very initial attempts at colonizing the land are associated with the privatizing of nature. The example of Yosemite, along with the "prohibitions against trespassing," the "language of authority," and the "intensification of the rules," has a striking resemblance to Duluoz's encounter with the "authority" when he was

⁴¹ Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5–6.

trying to camp in the desert.⁴² Fludernik also mentions Baudrillard's take on the demarcation between nature and civilization, stating that it is but an illusion maintained by the forces that be in order to give the impression that the Real exists beyond the civilized world. As demonstrated in chapter three,⁴³ Duluoz reaches the same conclusion when he seeks nature for peace of mind at Big Sur, only to discover that it is as hostile as the civilized world. He also has a similar inference at the end of his long stay at Desolation Peak, when he admits that he could not wait to go back to civilization.⁴⁴

The view that the natural is "lost irretrievably" and that, even if one can speak of it, they can never grasp it because it "eludes *physical* appropriation" also has a resemblance to the discussion in chapter six about the simultaneous existence and unattainability of noumena. Here, an important association could be drawn between the Real as has been discussed in this dissertation (especially in Part II), and the two notions of the *natural* and *noumenal*, all of which are different articulations of the same feature of authenticity. The textual (especially narratological) tools applied in this dissertation have attempted to unveil the authentic natural and noumenal that are "called into existence by fictional means" and that are otherwise irretrievable. They demonstrate that what has forever disappeared or is on the verge of disappearing in Kerouac's America is retrieved in Duluoz's F-universe.

Having aligned her approach with Greenblatt's and Baudrillard's quasi-postmodernist view of the natural, Fludernik explains how this view is incorporated into her cognitive narratological model. To her, "the term '*natural*' is not applied to texts or textual techniques but exclusively to the cognitive frames by means of which texts are interpreted by readers."⁴⁵ Whereas chapters two and six identify some "unfamiliar" aspects of the narrative,⁴⁶ the *Legend* also manifests familiar "natural" language that Fludernik mainly associates with "oral narratives (more precisely: spontaneous conversational storytelling) [because they] cognitively correlate with perceptual parameters of human experience."⁴⁷ Fludernik also mentions that "in so far as structural patterns typical of oral types of narration can be observed to survive in written texts, I

⁴² See page 67, chapter two.

⁴³ See the section "Fear of the Wilderness" on pages 102–05 in chapter three.

⁴⁴ See the discussion about "Retentive Perspective 1" on pages 180–81 in chapter five.

⁴⁵ Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, 9.

⁴⁶ See the conceptual blending analysis in chapter two and the narrativization of nonsensical language in chapter six.

⁴⁷ Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, 9.

will suggest that they can then legitimately be called reflexes of oral structures of storytelling”⁴⁸ and that “full-blown natural narrative is characterized by the feature of turn-taking and the accompanying dynamic between on-plot and off-plot levels of discourse.”⁴⁹

In the 2017 Spanish movie *El Autor*, the protagonist is a writer who struggles to find his narratorial voice, so he comes up with the idea of secretly recording his neighbors’ conversations and transcribing them as they are, with a minimal degree of editing, so that the narrative turns out to be a genuine representation of reality. This is similar to the technique used to transcribe conversations recorded on tape between Duluoz and Dean in one of the passages in *Visions of Cody*. Commenting on the passage in question, Hassan Melehy observes that “the conversation starts in medias res and meanders in the fashion of a real-life conversation, hindering the imposition of narrative. It incorporates pauses, circumlocutions, backtracks, abrupt changes of subject, the kind of verbosity that often accompanies marijuana smoking, and at times sheer incoherence and effectively cacophony.” Melehy attributes the use of these nuances to “Kerouac’s quest for an autonomy of language, that is, its liberation from the finitude of representation, by means of machinery from which subjective intervention is removed.”⁵⁰

Showcasing the maturation of Kerouac’s method by comparing *On the Road* with *Visions of Cody*, Hunt deduces that “Kerouac’s desire to recuperate the dynamics of speech and speaking and enact them within the process of writing—to reimagine writing in the image of speaking—needs to be recognized as nothing less than an attempt to subvert his era’s paradigm for textuality and reinvent the category of literature as an expression of what might be termed secondary literacy.”⁵¹ Notwithstanding the importance of Hunt’s observation, the desire “to reimagine writing in the image of speaking” appears to be more an expression of a *primary* literacy, first, in the semiotic sense because it is concerned with first-order representations and, second, in the evolutionary sense since because it is a component of what Merlin Donald calls “Mythic Culture.”

⁴⁸ Fludernik, 40.

⁴⁹ Fludernik, 53.

⁵⁰ Hassan Melehy, *Kerouac: Language, Poetics, & Territory* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 112.

⁵¹ Tim Hunt, *The Textuality of Soulwork: Jack Kerouac’s Quest for Spontaneous Prose* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 23.

In the first place, the realism of conversational storytelling is, in a sense, the opposite of Barthes's notion of "myths" which, if we go back to chapter two, is introduced as "a second-order semiological system that distorts meaning and conceals reality." In fact, the oral features of written narratives have the capacity to "mythify"⁵² myths by reversing the process by which, according to Barthes, they have "shifted the formal system of the first significations sideways," transforming "that which is a sign ... in the first system ... [to] a mere signifier in the second."⁵³ Orality represents an "unmediated" language that does not go through a process or filter (the exigencies of form) and does not signify anything other than what it genuinely is. Because of this, it has the capacity to recalibrate the semiological system of the narrative of the *Legend* back to its initial first-order position with recourse to the natural.

Orality is "primary" also in the sense that it represents, even if symbolically, the "mythic" stage of the co-evolution of culture and cognition.⁵⁴ Designating the period preceding the invention of writing, Merlin Donald explains that "mythic culture is based on spoken language, and especially on the natural social product of language, storytelling." As for our current culture, Donald calls it "theoretic" and explains that "theoretic culture is symbol-based, logical, bureaucratic, and heavily dependent on external memory devices, such as writing, codices, mathematical notations, scientific instruments, books, records, and computers."⁵⁵ Even though it is the invention of writing that signaled the transition toward the theoretic culture, the Beats used the medium of writing to repudiate the scientific worldview that is characteristic of it. This repudiation does not entail, as some may infer, a denial of the progress of the scientific age, but merely a resistance to the process of "demythologization" that is encapsulated in it, and which Donald explains as being "the first step in any new area of theory [during which] things and events must be stripped of their previous mythic significances before they can be subjected to what we call 'objective' theoretic analysis."⁵⁶ As discussed in chapter one, the *Legend's* primitiveness motif represents a strong tendency toward "re-enchantment," which is precisely the kind of demythologization that strives to protect myths from disappearing (for example, the myth

⁵² Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, [1957] 1991), 134.

⁵³ Barthes, 113.

⁵⁴ See page 98, chapter three.

⁵⁵ Merlin Donald, "Art and Cognitive Evolution," in *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*, ed. Mark Turner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8.

⁵⁶ Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 275.

of the American hobo discussed in chapter two). Ultimately, Duluoz's authenticity quest entails dismantling Barthes's myths—dangerous and truth-concealing second-order representations—and, at the same time, preserving Donald's myths—mimetic, natural, ancestral, and heritage-preserving stories and cultural artifacts.

Orality in *Visions of Cody* and *The Subterraneans*:

The *Legend* is abundant with examples of the use of the oral features of conversational speech or “reflexes,” as Fludernik calls them, including the passage cited earlier in this chapter in which Dean attempts to explain to Duluoz the meaning of “IT.” In fact, most of Dean's speech in the novels represents a paradigm of the orality of the *Legend*. Take, for example, another scene in which Dean tries to explain “IT” to Duluoz, this time in *Visions of Cody*. Observing how the jazz musician is able to capture “IT,” embody it, and transmit it to the audience, Dean says:

“He's the kind who sleeps all day in his grandmother's,” yelled Cody above the fury, “he learned to play in the woodshed, dig him? see his kind? he's Tom Watson that's who he is, Tom Watson learned to blow and go continually and cast off the negatives and completely relaxed, though not hung, in, or behind, bumkicks of any kind, realizing, also, as, for instance, there's what I'm saying, but, no wait, Jack and listen to me, now I'm gonna lay down on you the truth—but listen to *him*, listen to *him*. *It*, remember? *It! It!* He's got *it*, see? That's what *it*—means, or I mean to explain, earlier, see, and all that and everything, Yes!” (*VOC*, 352)

Commenting on the spontaneity of the style of this passage, Melehy sees that

Kerouac conveys the sound and rhythm of Cody's voice. In its manner of creating texture and meaning, this voice resembles both the jazz improvisation that it describes and the prose that it is part of and supports: tentative, multidirectional, stopping and restarting, it conveys less through clarity of syntax and meaning than through motion, assembly, and gaps—as such it expresses a definition of IT at least as much as it states one.... He saw Cassady [Neal] as in many ways an embodiment of authentic Americanness, but this

authenticity subsists primarily in a use of language that allows for an openness of expressivity.⁵⁷

Melehy highlights the nuances and characteristics that normally accompany spontaneous oral speech, which is unlike what one traditionally finds in written texts. Even many of the narratives that use features of orality to depict realistic conversations between characters fail to achieve the realism that emerges in Dean's speech which, even if it is not purported to be recorded on tape as in the previous example, appears as if it indeed has been. Notice, for instance, the depiction of the exact moment Dean loses his train of thought due to overexcitement: "... behind, bumkicks of any kind, realizing, also, as, for instance, there's what I'm saying, but, no wait, Jack and listen to me." Also, notice the depiction of the moment Dean thinks that he has something concrete to say to Duluoz about "the truth," only to return to the illusiveness of his description of "IT" that he just can not seem to clarify: "now I'm gonna lay down on you the truth—but listen to *him*, listen to *him*. *It*, remember? *It! It!* He's got *it*, see? That's what *it*—means, or I mean to explain, earlier, see, and all that and everything, Yes!" By reproducing with a high level of accuracy "tentative, multidirectional, stopping and restarting" speech patterns, the narrative connects to readers' natural cognitive frames through the absence of, or at least the minimal presence of, narrative mediation.

Another pertinent example could be extracted from a passage analyzed in chapter six, and that recounts Mardou's encounter with a man in the store in *The Subterraneans*. Responding to Duluoz's question about why she considered the man "strange," Mardou says: "I dunno he was just very strange, he wanted, he talked with me very clearly and insisting—like intensely looking right at me and at great length but smiling about the simplest commonplace subjects but we both knew we meant everything else that we said—you know life—actually it was about the tunnels ..." (*TS*, 490). Notice the following markers of spontaneous orality: "he wanted" and "insisting" represent interruptions and/or deviations within/from the thought process, which signals digressions and losing track of one's thoughts (thinking about saying something, starting by uttering a word, then stopping and saying something else). On the other hand, the phrase "actually it was about tunnels" signals a sudden remembrance of what appears to be extraneous detail about the conversation with the man, but which could also indicate that the previous

⁵⁷ Melehy, *Kerouac*, 111.

statements might have been merely for stalling until Mardou remembered what the conversation was actually about (the tunnels). These peculiarities of orality, notably the hesitation in Mardou's speech and her abrupt forgetting and remembering of her thoughts, contribute to establishing the narratorial credibility and reliability, which are two features that are constantly contested by readers and scholars, as well as in this dissertation.

Even at the expense of occasional incoherence and strangeness as seen in the reproduction of the speech of Dean and Mardou, the features of oral speech establish intersubjectivity via the realism that they generate. They reveal the natural in the unmediated and primal language, which does not strive to employ narrative to represent how people talk in real life, but rather minimizes the interference of narrative even if it has to sacrifice some of its most crucial elements such as plot or character development. By reading the thinking process of characters, readers reflect on their own, developing empathy through the common cognitive process that manifests itself on the page and which, if accurate and not processed through the filter of the imagination, itself transforms into a Shared Context of Reference.

Conclusion

In addition to the confessional and performance/performative modes, Duluo's quest to find a sense of selfhood and an objective reality through intersubjective experiences is facilitated by the style of the narrative of the *Legend*, which comprises elements from other modes of expression. This "surrogation" targets the very nature of the narrative, separating it from the traditional representative function that corresponds to the subjective view of the world and grants it the unique function of mirroring life as it happens—its "prunejuice" in Duluo's words or "IT" in Dean's. The two forms of surrogation studied in this chapter—the use of elements from jazz improvisation and oral speech—divulge an intersubjectivity that occurs without narrative mediation and, therefore, is natural and inherently linked to human empathy, characters' and readers' alike.

Observing the jazz performances and studying Dean's interpretation of them, Duluo identifies in improvised bebop certain techniques that he can emulate in this writing. Indeed, his

scene construction becomes a mixture of recording real-life situations, exploring these situations through improvised imagination, and constructing identities and past lives of characters that produce the meaning of selfhood and reality through empathetic interactions with the hybrid models thus constructed. The effort that goes into the observation–recording part of the process is essentially what is behind its success since there is no improvisation without knowledge of the “vocabulary” required to initiate it. Kerouac mastered the art of observation that allowed him to record everything that he sees and hears down to the most minute detail, which is how he was also able to capture the nuances of oral speech and use them as further means to break free of the constraints of narrative conventionalities and discover intersubjectivity by experimenting with form. In the words of David Sterritt:

Jack Kerouac was keenly attuned to the sounds and structures of modern jazz, which provided the basis for his spontaneous writing and his conviction that in-the-moment intuition is the best route to authentic creativity. His musical attachments were paired with visual ones, since he felt that words must grow organically from concrete images held continuously in consciousness, and woven into memory as well.... He described his method as “blowing (as per jazz musician) on subject of image,” thus linking sound and picture in a proto-cinematic manner. In this way Kerouac regarded himself as the verbal equivalent of a visual artist, using words to capture and convey the images that swarmed in his mind’s eye, but doing so with a musical sensibility that transforms static images into dynamic flows. Equally cinematic was Kerouac’s capacity for recording the sights and sounds of the cultural environment in which he worked. Like an anthropologist or journalist, he didn’t so much originate as chronicle the linguistic tenor of the current scene. He imagined making a movie in which his friends would appear as both real-life people and fictional characters, much as they do in his autobiographical novels.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ David Sterritt, “The Beats and Visual Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beats*, ed. Steven Bellato (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 266.

General Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to discuss the loss of authenticity in Kerouac's *Duluoz Legend* by demonstrating the different threats to authenticity that his narrator faces, as well as the strategies of resistance that he adopts in facing them. No matter how one looks at Kerouac, whether as a sexist, alcoholic, mediocre writer who appropriated the culture of the Other or as an innovator of style whose place in the American canon is preserved, the philosophical breadth and ethnographic sensibility with which he explored the condition of existence is unparalleled. It is no doubt that the extraordinary factors of the transitional period in which Kerouac lived played a significant role in the development of his exploratory insight and curiosity, namely postwar chaos, the rapid transformation of the American society and its ideals, and the emergence of subcultures, their interracial connection, and their experimentation with hallucinogenics. That being said, Kerouac creatively exploited these factors to capture the chaos of his times in an effort to do what he as an idealist believed to be his purpose in life.

Kerouac despised fame, and because of it, he became weary of the whole Beat phenomenon, even to the extent that it would seem at times as if he were writing exclusively out of an "orderly advancing sense of work and duty" (*TS*, 479), "a daily duty, a daily scatological 'heap' for the sake of purgation" (*VOD*, 257). Kerouac truly conceived of himself as a messenger, the kind who has "really seen a vision of eternity" but not "[caring] about influencing American civilization" or "[having] a voice in the supermarket" (*DA*, 283) as Allen Ginsberg did. What he strived for, through his narrator, was to leave the chronicle of his experience as a record and guide for self-emancipation. When Kerouac became mature enough to understand that there was something wrong with the world, his instinct immediately drove him toward the Mexican Fellaheen, the African Americans, and the Bums of New York City and San Francisco. Those were the people with whom he hung around the most even before he developed a sophisticated grasp of their authenticity. In fact, Kerouac was courageous enough to trust his intuition about them which, as the dissertation has shown, is not a mere gut feeling, but a domain

that is correlated with humankind's instincts, shared ancestral environment, and automatic cognitive response system.

The fact that the starting point of his quest for the retrieval of authenticity was among the Other does not emerge out of certain compassion that he felt towards them, and certainly not out of a desire to appropriate their culture. Kerouac saw in the Other and their land the embodiment of primitiveness that connects individuals with one another either intersubjectively or via the recreation of the ancestral environment that precedes corruption by the synthetic artifacts of the modern world. When Duluoz experiences working in the land of the Mexican fellaheen, he is overcome by a feeling of being connected to an ancestral activity that feels right and gives him joy. It is the same feeling that he gets when he is camping in the desert, immersing himself in the silence of the beyond, on a mountain following deer tracks to get to a water source, or simply climbing a mountain to reach its top. Duluoz yearns for the simplicity of these "ancient" activities, but at the same time he wants to reveal the wisdom of the Other in the only way he can, so he concocts an imagined world whose purpose is the preservation of the immaculateness of their Otherness.

Through this concocted world, Kerouac is able to show that there are two different versions of America, one in which inauthentic activities prevail ("civilization issues"), which is the factual America of Kerouac's time, and one that exists in visions, apparitions, and encounters with eccentric people. In this latter America, which to Kerouac is the authentic yet fictional America, we also find African Americans whose authenticity is primarily associated with their art. Just as he portrays Mexico as Eldorado, Kerouac uses his sketching prowess to portray African American musicians as manipulators of time and holders of the key to "IT"—the intersubjective moment in time where the attention of the musician or writer and spectator or reader is unified in empathetic experience. By drawing this demarcation, this study has foregrounded the change in America by compressing the time that, in Kerouac's mind, separates what was believed to be authentic America from artificial America. It has also contributed to separating the fictional from the factual in Kerouac's portrayal of white America, the American slums, and Mexico, suggesting that the authenticity of the Other was more of a construct than a reality. An analysis using the tools of the recently explored field of narrative ethnography

(2021)¹ could yield a greater understanding of the culture(s) portrayed in the *Legend* and provide details on how the sociocultural context may or may not have influenced Kerouac's exploration of the authenticity of the Other.

Kerouac fought the homogenization of the average American as much as he fought the marginalization of the Other. He saw that the disintegration of the American ideal is largely caused by the new identity models that people in the late 1940s and the 1950s were exposed to and strove to attain. As the vision of the nuclear family with “ten thousand racks of drycleaned and perfectly pressed suits and dresses” (*BS*, 45) started to emerge, Americans lost their link with nature and authentic activities; men wanted to become businessmen and women housewives, and everybody blindly trusted in experts seen on the television, college campuses or in psychiatric offices. Fear of the Other grew and fear of the natural was imposed through media and surveillance, which functioned as deterrence mechanisms. Once again motivated by a sense of duty, Kerouac disrupts these emerging American ideals, as the schematic analysis in chapter two has shown, and fills the void of the vanishing Real by constructing a new vision of the American identity. Indeed, the “Beatnik” identity possesses the quality of Otherness and is characterized by a new aesthetic that is based on contemplation, carefree childhood, and the rediscovery of silence among other characteristics that contribute to detaching the individual from the mass psyche of the technocratic machine.

Kerouac shows in *The Duluoz Legend* that the individual in the postwar transitional period in America also suffers from the exacerbating threat of entropy, a part of which was revealed to his narrator through the women that he was romantically involved with and who also embodied Otherness—Mardou, the African American; and Tristessa, the Mexican prostitute. Beyond the world of Other (the slums, Mexico, etc.), Kerouac saw the perceived world as an illusion—a cluster of meaningless activities and structural dichotomies that do nothing more than widen the schism between individuals and distance them further from the Real. He critically examines the suffering of people and even animals and questions God's intentions toward humankind. As a longtime idealist and newfound skeptic, he concludes that reality must be

¹ Denise Saint Arnault and Laura Sinko, “Comparative Ethnographic Narrative Analysis Method: Comparing Culture in Narratives,” *Global Qualitative Nursing Research* 8 (Jan. 2021), pp. 1–8.

elsewhere and strives to access that mysterious realm through a systematic study of dreams and visions.

By writing “out of absolute belief in mysticism as legitimate,”² as Nancy M. Grace puts it, Kerouac often departs from the storyworld of the *Legend* and fully assumes the role of a philosopher. The narratological analysis has shown that the narrative transgressions that emerge from Kerouac’s style, intentional or otherwise, facilitate our acceptance of this departure. His extended and profound ruminations that largely do not contribute to furthering the plot or revealing details about certain characters demonstrate that he uses his experiences as a tool for serious study, enabling a reading of *The Duluoz Legend* as a philosophical treatise. A good example of this is the murder of the mouse scene in *Desolation Angels* discussed in chapter four, which becomes an opportunity to inquire into the nature of sin, culpability, and anarchism.

Kerouac’s narrator is emblematic of an individual whose religious and moral foundation is shaken as a consequence of entropy and the institutionalization of all the natural functions of life. Alienated by this morality void, Duluoz seeks to rebuild his belief system from scratch as he oscillates between Christianity and Buddhism, trying to find reasons for living in an illusory world of artificiality and suffering and not succumbing to outright nihilism and despair. Kerouac’s brotherhood with Beat hero Neal Cassady has always been the subject of critical curiosity among Kerouac scholars, especially with Neal’s incarnation of the road aesthetic and his notorious notion of “IT.” What this dissertation has argued is that Neal’s existence through the character of Dean serves a far more important function, which is that of a breaker of extremities. Unlike what his personality and lifestyle imply, in the *Legend*, Dean inspires Duluoz not only to abstain from the asceticism of religions, but also from the hedonism that may be permissible after one has lost faith in God.

In conjunction with his resistance to being assimilated into the mass psyche, Kerouac resists being assimilated into the isms of religious doctrines. He creates an alternative religion for Beatniks, whose foundation is the belief in God as a form of universal energy that mostly manifests in nature and in visions and dreams, which explains the seriousness with which he goes about studying them. The Beatnik’s God is also a God that refutes *processes* such as paths

² Nancy M. Grace, *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 42.

and sacrifices as a means for transcendence and demands only that one be guided by their intuition. It is also a god of spontaneity who requires taking part in the splendors as well as atrocities of life as they happen and when they happen as long as transcendence is the foreseeable outcome. In lieu of an afterlife, the Beatnik religion resolves the anxiety of mortality by a hyper-engagement in the present, its projects, people, and happenings, with the same foreseeable outcome in mind. With that much significance associated with it, the present becomes a state of mind, an opportunity to update and revise one's life history in accordance with experience, so as not to be attached to a "one-sided truth," as Jung would say.³ As per the Beatnik religion, "nothingness" prevails beyond the dynamic present, which is not the nothingness that engenders nihilism and absurdism but the nothingness that is part of the universe itself and that is associated with its energy. While this study has argued for transcendental authenticity in the new form of religion that it inferred from the *Legend*, its primary concern has not been Kerouac's belief system. That being said, the breadth and complexity of this system merit a proper theological study that could shed light on its development, its moral basis, the scope of its influence, and its effects on the Beats themselves.

Kerouac's legitimization of mysticism enables him to confidently suggest to the reader the possibility of knowing the truth of the authentic Real that no language, college, priest, or God can relay. The textual-narratological analysis in chapter six has demonstrated Kerouac's belief that esoteric knowledge could be accessed through writing. His peculiar *intermedial language*, which is a product of the innovative capacity of his liminality, the semi-autobiographical genre, and his legitimization of mysticism as a credible source of knowledge, exists between the factual and the fictional, constituting a sort of "semi-real" narrative, as Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber and Luitgard Soni would call it.⁴ The exact cognitive and cultural effects of this language are unknown and would certainly constitute an invaluable project for future research. However, what this dissertation has argued is that intermedial language has transformed the mysteries that define the authentic Real and that Kerouac claims exist in the world of the beyond into *relevant*

³ Carl Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (1960; repr., London: Routledge, 2001), 153.

⁴ Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber and Luitgard Soni, "Reality and Factuality of Classical Indian Narratives," in *Narrative Factuality: A Handbook*, eds. Monika Fludernik and Marie-Laure Ryan (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 689.

mysteries, as Dan Sperber would say,⁵ which means that they become regarded with the same legitimacy as traditional religious ideas which, in turn, justifies the quest of seeking them.

Aside from portraying Kerouac as more of a philosopher than a fiction writer, one of the objectives of this dissertation was to demonstrate that his search for authenticity is largely an ethnographic investigation into Otherness and the subculture to which he belonged. In fact, one of the broad conclusions that could be drawn from this study is that Kerouac's blueprint for authenticity relies on the co-existence of individual reflection and social immersion. However, Kerouac had a very distinct mode of achieving the latter. According to him, for authentic socializing to take place, relationships between people should exceed traditional levels of intimacy that bind them together. Infamously attributed to LSD and similar drugs, the intersubjective experiences that the Beatniks achieved are shown in Kerouac's work to be the product of a conscious (clean and sober) effort to seek out empathy with others as a means to get at objective reality and construct missing aspects of one's identity.

In the *Legend*, Duluoz's intersubjective experiences with Dean confirm to him the supremacy of the mundane, which represents ample material for the exploration of reality, while the confessions that he and Mardou share with one another constitute a venue for self-diagnosis that is more efficient and more in touch with reality than the psychoanalytic therapy that he so loathed. Through his narrator, Kerouac inquires into the deepest and darkest aspects of his psyche, confronting his racist thoughts and jealousy and discovering the dynamics of the relationship that govern his subculture. However, the analysis of performance and performativity has demonstrated Kerouac's candid admission of the shortcomings of intersubjectivity which, although reveals the dialogic authenticity of the individual, is always flawed, especially if the individual is not able to dissolve their ego and subjectivity.

That being said, if the social domain of dialogic authenticity is imperfect, near perfection is reached in the creative domain. Kerouac's exploration of Otherness induces in him such an appreciation for bebop jazz that he strove to dissect the art form and recreate it in his writings. The last chapter in this study has revealed an association between Kerouac's "jazz writing" and dialogic authenticity by demonstrating how during the improvised moment—the "sketch" in the

⁵ Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 73.

Legend—opportunities are created for establishing empathetic bonds, not only in the present but also in the past through the retrieval of events where empathy should have been aimed at.

Kerouac also succeeded in establishing intersubjective experiences with his readers through the incorporation of the features of conversational oral speech. One of the contributions of this study was to show that Kerouac's interpretation of the failure of language to capture the meaning of experience, which is evident in the works of many of the Beats—most notably William S. Burroughs—was not passive and entirely pessimistic. On the contrary, his approach was highly constructivist, even with the occasional despair about the condition of existence. Just as he saw in the disintegration of Americanness an opportunity to create the Beatnik identity, and in the failure of Christianity and Buddhism an opportunity to create a new religion, he used the failure of language to construct a new one. When common English failed as an expression of thoughts, he resorted to intermedial language, but when the medium of writing itself failed, Kerouac resorted to orality, recording conversations and nature sounds, drawings, and even scribblings to demonstrate the complexity of thoughts by comparison to the limitations of the media of their transmission.

Intersubjectivity enabled Kerouac to reveal the dialogic nature of authenticity by concentrating readers' attention on specific improvised scenes in the *Legend* in the same way that a jazz musician does when he finds "IT" and concentrates the attention of his spectators. Part of what chapter eight attempted to do was to locate these scenes and thematically justify their intersubjective nature; however, the methodology used lacks the fMRI-based experimentation that could measure the emotional reactions of readers to these scenes (and other ones). This is still an area to be explored, and its relevance stems from the sociocultural impact of Kerouac's work. If Kerouac was truly responsible for not only initiating a subculture but also inspiring the counterculture, as some scholars suggest,⁶ and even international movements of revolt, then studying the motifs that the cognitive mechanisms of a large portion of the population converge to would be an important endeavor.

⁶ See Maria Bloshteyn, "Dostoevsky and the Beat Generation," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 28, no. 2/3 (June–Sept. 2001): 218; and John Tytell, *Naked Angels: Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs: The Lives and Literature of the Beat Generation* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1976), 23.

Abstract

Jack Kerouac's Philosophy of Resistance: Configurations and Potentialities of Authenticity in *The Duluoz Legend*

Jack Kerouac's narrator in *The Duluoz Legend* is emblematic of the disoriented, alienated, and anxious being experiencing the loss of authenticity during the late 1940s and 1950s socio-political liminal phase. This study discusses the loss of authenticity in the *Legend* on three levels of analysis, each of which corresponds to a specific threat to authenticity and specific resistance strategies that the narrator adopts to face it. First, it examines the threat of hyperreality from the sociological–ethnographic angle and discusses the means of resisting assimilation to the hyperreal, which primarily involves establishing the supremacy of the Other, reconfiguring Americanness, and resisting the domination of artificial stimuli. From the philosophical angle, it surveys the effects of entropy on distorting the narrator's view of reality and the conditions of existence and analyzes his conception of an alternative religion that dissociates transcendence from the existence of a god and admits humankind's ability to access the mysterious noumenal nature of entities. Finally, it explores from the social–creative level the modes of intersubjectivity employed in the resistance against individualism, which consist of a unique mode of confessions between the characters, the interpretation of performance and performativity, and establishing empathetic experiences with and among readers through the use of orality, improvisation, and shared points of attention. *The Duluoz Legend* encloses a blueprint for resisting the consequences of the loss of authenticity whose significance lies in its liminality, a feature that characterizes contemporary times.

Résumé

La philosophie de la résistance de Jack Kerouac : Configurations et potentialités de l'authenticité dans *La Légende de Duluoz*

Le narrateur de Jack Kerouac dans *La Légende de Duluoz* est emblématique de l'Être désorienté, isolé et anxieux qui fait l'expérience de la perte d'authenticité pendant la phase socio-politique liminale de la fin des années 1940 et des années 1950. Cette étude aborde la perte de l'authenticité dans la *Légende* sur trois niveaux d'analyse, chacun correspondant à une menace spécifique à l'authenticité et à des stratégies de résistance spécifiques que le narrateur adopte pour y faire face. Tout d'abord, il s'agit d'examiner la menace de l'hyperréalité sous l'angle sociologique-ethnographique et de discuter des moyens de résistance à l'assimilation à l'hyperréel, qui consistent principalement à établir la suprématie de l'Autre, à reconfigurer l'américanité et à résister à la domination des stimuli artificiels. Du point de vue philosophique, l'étude examine les effets de l'entropie qui déforment la vision de la réalité et des conditions d'existence du narrateur et analyse sa conception d'une religion alternative qui dissocie la transcendance de l'existence d'un dieu et admet la capacité de l'Homme à accéder à la mystérieuse nature nouménale des entités. Enfin, l'étude vise à explorer, d'un niveau socio-créatif, les modes d'intersubjectivité employés dans la résistance à l'individualisme, qui consistent en un mode unique de confessions entre les personnages, l'interprétation de la performance et de la performativité, et l'établissement d'expériences empathiques avec et entre les lecteurs par l'utilisation de l'oralité, de l'improvisation et de points d'attention partagés. *La Légende de Duluoz* renferme un plan de résistance aux conséquences de la perte d'authenticité dont la signification réside dans sa liminalité, un trait qui caractérise l'époque contemporaine.

Résumé de thèse

Dans *La Légende de Duluoz*, Jack Kerouac explore les dimensions de l'authenticité pendant la phase de transition pré-postmoderne de l'après-guerre. Son narrateur, Jack Duluoz, affronte trois obstacles essentiels qui s'opposent à une vie authentique et qui sont principalement causés par la phase de transition : l'hyperréalité, l'entropie et l'individualisme. Le récit de la *Légende* est moins représentatif des expériences et des aventures de Duluoz que de la manifestation de ces obstacles, les tentatives de les comprendre et de découvrir les moyens d'y résister. Il est intéressant de noter que la phase de transition anime cette quête et contribue à son succès parce que la liminalité historique dans laquelle Kerouac a produit son œuvre est juxtaposée à une liminalité anthropologique et sociale qui lui a conféré, ainsi qu'aux Beats en général, une capacité situationnelle spéciale pour innover non seulement dans le style d'écriture mais aussi dans les idées alternatives proposées pour ériger de nouveaux systèmes de croyances et de modes d'être à la place de l'ordre social institutionnalisé alors émergent.

Premier obstacle, l'hyperréalité confronte Kerouac à partir de son engin médiatique en tentant de l'assimiler avec l'ensemble du projet Beat. Pour résister à l'hyperréalité, le narrateur se tourne d'abord vers le monde de l'Autre, notamment les Mexicains et les Afro-Américains, leur culture, leur art et leur identité même. Néanmoins, sa recherche de l'authenticité dans l'altérité se heurte à de sévères critiques à l'encontre de Kerouac, accusé de s'approprier la culture de l'Autre, incapable de faire preuve d'une compréhension adéquate de ses nuances et de ses particularités raciales. La plupart de ces critiques ont en commun un manque de compréhension de la signification de la notion de souffrance dans la philosophie de vie de Kerouac. Pour lui, la souffrance authentique, celle qu'il voit matérialisée dans les activités quotidiennes des Mexicains et des Afro-Américains, est une caractéristique de la divinité, une prémisse qui lui est inculquée par son apprentissage catholique et bouddhiste.

La *Légende* associe l'Amérique blanche à la décadence, à la corruption et à l'inauthenticité et, à bien des égards, les voyages de Duluoz représentent littéralement une fuite de la condition dans laquelle il est né en tant qu'Américain blanc. Au cours de ses voyages,

Duluoze rencontre une jeune Mexicaine, Terry, qui devient son amante et qui le convainc de rester avec elle dans la ville de Sabinal. Au cours de ce bref séjour, Duluoze se salit les mains en travaillant dans les champs et fait l'expérience directe de la vie des Mexicains, même si c'est pour une très courte période, ce qui lui confirme la séparation qu'il soupçonnait exister entre l'Amérique blanche inauthentique et l'Autre authentique. Sabinal, le Mexique et les fellaheen qu'il rencontre font partie de l'idéal d'authenticité de Duluoze, à tel point qu'il se construit un monde privé mental où les caractéristiques de l'altérité sont exagérées. La capacité créative de la liminalité de Kerouac, juxtaposée à la liminalité représentée par le pays des fellaheen, facilite l'érection d'un monde fictif au sein de la *Légende* où les allégations autobiographiques sont exploitées pour promouvoir les caractéristiques exagérées de l'altérité, facilitant ainsi leur naturalisation et leur croyance par les lecteurs.

Les principales caractéristiques de l'altérité que Duluoze souhaite mettre en avant et protéger sont la primauté, la primitivité, le mystère et la sagesse. Il estime que l'Autre est le père du monde et que les activités auxquelles il se livre en sont la preuve, surtout si on les compare aux « problèmes de civilisation » dans lesquels les Américains blancs sont impliqués et qui les empêchent d'atteindre l'authenticité. Un excellent exemple du processus de mise en avant et d'embellissement de l'Autre se trouve dans la médiation du langage de Tristessa par Duluoze. Dans *Tristessa*, la narration inclut ce qui semble être une restitution exacte des nuances du discours de Tristessa, y compris les particularités de son accent mexicain, ainsi qu'un commentaire paratextuel qui transmet au lecteur la sagesse dont, selon Duluoze, il a pu manquer ou qu'il n'est pas capable de saisir. Cette médiation confère à Tristessa des propriétés angéliques, subvertissant ainsi les attentes des lecteurs à son égard, une toxicomane et prostituée mexicaine. La médiation du narrateur affecte également les aspects de comblement des lacunes qui entrent dans l'interprétation du langage non médiatisé de Tristessa : Le lecteur acquiert la capacité d'interpréter ses déclarations ambiguës sans aide, réduisant ainsi sa dépendance à l'égard de Duluoze et passant à un rôle participatif dans la construction et le maintien de sa conception mentale privée de l'altérité.

Les explorations de Duluoze sur l'authenticité dans l'altérité inspirent son désir de reconfigurer l'identité américaine. Dans le chapitre « Le vagabond américain en voie de disparition » de *Le Vagabond solitaire*, il se montre particulièrement affecté par la diabolisation

des activités naturelles telles que le vagabondage et le camping et y voit un indicateur fort de la perte d'authenticité, les agents de l'Amérique hyperréelle (la police) mettant en place un état de dissuasion autour de tout ce qui est naturel. Schématiquement, cette diabolisation correspond à la destruction du schéma */vagabon/* par l'hyperréel, qui crée un vide qui est rempli en injectant des schémas artificiels dans la conscience collective. Parmi ces schémas artificiels, on trouve le schéma */businessman/*, le schéma */expert/* et le schéma */famille/*, qui correspondent respectivement au consumérisme, à l'expertise technocratique et au conformisme, idéaux que l'Amérique hyperréelle veut imposer et que Duluoz veut perturber.

Une analyse des mélanges conceptuels (« conceptual blending ») dans *Le Vagabon solitaire*, *Les Souterrains* et *Big Sur* montre comment de nouvelles causalités et significations culturelles émergent de la perturbation des trois schémas artificiels par Duluoz. Dans *Le Vagabon solitaire*, l'une des évocations du schéma */businessman/* est par le personnage de Novak qui apparaît comme la quintessence de l'homme d'affaires qui sacrifie son bien-être à la poursuite de la richesse. Au lieu de mettre en avant les gains que Novak a obtenus grâce à des années de sacrifice, la juxtaposition de thèmes antagonistes dans la description que Duluoz fait de lui met en avant les parties de sa vie qui sont manquées et non vécues. La description comporte également un usage particulier du tiret cadratin et une absence significative de pause qui représentent une syntaxe émergente établissant une causalité entre l'idéal de travailler tard d'une part, et les notions de problèmes domestiques et de mort d'autre part. Si l'on combine les deux causalités ainsi créées, on arrive à la formulation de la notion *travailler tard le soir crée des problèmes domestiques et conduit à la mort*, ce qui constitue une structure émergente « syntaxique » qui perturbe l'idéalisation de l'éthique du travail inscrite dans le schéma */businessman/*.

Dans *Les Souterrains*, le schéma */expert/* est évoqué par la critique de Duluoz sur l'intellectualisme de Mardou qu'il déduit d'une lettre qu'elle lui envoie. Comme pour le schéma */businessman/*, le schéma */expert/* est perturbé par la création d'associations inédites ; cependant, cette perturbation fait également appel à des antithèses identitaires. Dans l'un des extraits du roman, nous pouvons observer une association entre les identités et les lieux, qui constitue un « espace générique » (Fauconnier et Turner) permettant la mise en correspondance entre les antithèses identitaires. Plus précisément, la mise en correspondance entre le domaine abstrait et

le domaine concret légitime le premier et renforce la réalité selon laquelle les experts et les gens ordinaires ne partagent pas les mêmes préoccupations dans la vie et renforce l'insuffisance des experts. Quant au schéma /*famille*/ dans *Big Sur*, il est évoqué dans la scène où Duluoz, descendant de la montagne, tente de rentrer en ville en auto-stop. La perturbation du schéma /*famille*/ se produit dans la description d'une famille que Duluoz dépeint comme le prototype de la famille américaine qui passerait à côté de lui sans envisager de le prendre en stop. C'est une perturbation qui se produit au niveau des modificateurs et qui crée une nouvelle signification culturelle pour les possessions matérielles, à savoir que *les beaux vêtements et les belles voitures sont des indicateurs d'émasculatation, de stupidité, de méchanceté et d'apathie*, qui sont toutes des caractéristiques du mari et de la femme de la famille américaine blanche prototypique.

L'autorité narrative autobiographique unique de Duluoz et la capacité de « dissociation » de sa liminalité lui permettent d'effectuer des associations et des dissociations schématiques comme moyen de trouver l'authenticité dans les choix identitaires au-delà de ceux qui sont offerts à l'individu dans l'Amérique hyperréelle. Ayant perturbé les schémas hyperréels, le vide des schémas est rétabli et une opportunité d'innover se présente, une opportunité que Duluoz exploite en avançant une nouvelle conception de l'américanité que j'appelle « Beatnik » et qui incarne ce que signifie vivre authentiquement en Amérique au milieu des incertitudes de la période de transition. Même si les caractéristiques de cette nouvelle identité alternative peuvent être déduites de divers endroits de la *Légende*, le chapitre « Scènes new-yorkaises » de *Le Vagabon solitaire* constitue un exemple pertinent de la manière dont le schéma /*beatnik*/ se tisse dans le récit. Deux des caractéristiques inscrites dans le schéma /*beatnik*/ sont l'enfance insouciant et la contemplation.

Duluoz associe ce que nous pouvons appeler le schéma /*enfance insouciant*/ au nouveau schéma /*beatnik*/ en cours de construction, association dont l'objectif est de donner l'impression que /*enfance insouciant*/ est un script du schéma /*beatnik*/ ou, en d'autres termes, d'imposer une association automatique entre le Beatnik et l'image d'un adulte qui adopte un comportement d'enfance insouciant. Cette association inédite n'est possible que grâce à la dissociation que Duluoz opère entre le schéma /*âge adulte*/ (l'antithèse du schéma /*enfance insouciant*/) et les scripts /*sophistication*/ et /*gravité*/. Duluoz se rend également compte que la contemplation (réflexion) solitaire est vitale pour résister à l'hyperréel, en associant ce qu'on pourrait appeler le

script /contemplation/ au schéma /beatnik/ par l'attribution inversée de la caractéristique d'excentricité, du moins en ce qui concerne les attentes des lecteurs. Comme pour le dénigrement de la blancheur et l'embellissement de l'altérité, l'embellissement des excentriques se fait au détriment du dénigrement des New-Yorkais normaux. Cette opération implique que l'engagement dans la vie de la ville prive l'individu de la possibilité de percevoir les attributs positifs des personnes excentriques et que seule une contemplation non engagée lui permet de remarquer la supériorité (et l'altérité) des personnes excentriques.

Une lecture de la résistance de Duluoz à l'hyperréel du point de vue de la psychologie évolutionniste définit l'authenticité comme une conséquence de la calibration entre ses dispositions innées et les conditions de l'environnement ancestral. Chaque fois qu'il entreprend de longs voyages ou des excursions dans les régions sauvages ou qu'il entre en contact avec la nature, il éprouve une impression nostalgique de lieux anciens qui sont hors du domaine du monde perçu et sa réminiscence de souvenirs d'un lieu qu'il n'a jamais visité évoque la primitivité de l'Autre et est identifié comme une manifestation de l'environnement ancestral. Du point de vue de l'Amérique hyperréelle, Duluoz n'a pas les outils pratiques nécessaires pour faire face au monde car il s'intéresse à des activités « non pratiques » comme l'écriture et le bouddhisme. De plus, ce que l'Amérique hyperréelle définit comme la signification et la réalité du monde semble être ce à quoi tout le monde devrait se conformer, ce que Duluoz n'est pas prêt à faire.

Le déluge d'informations dans l'Amérique hyperréelle perturbe la manifestation des prédispositions innées de Duluoz. Qu'il s'agisse de textes littéraires, spirituels ou d'expériences, le trop-plein d'informations n'est peut-être pas conçu intentionnellement pour servir les intérêts ultérieurs des institutions de l'Amérique hyperréelle, mais il provoque certainement un sentiment d'accablement chez l'individu. C'est pourquoi, dans *Les Clochards célestes*, l'intérêt de Duluoz pour la nature et le zen comme antidotes potentiels à l'information de masse est pertinent. Du point de vue de l'évolution, le silence dont il fait l'expérience dans la nature vide l'esprit de l'excès d'informations culturelles qui conduit à des inadaptations, ce qui met en évidence ses Mécanismes Psychologiques Évolués (MPÉ) et justifie la valeur de survie d'activités simples comme suivre la trace d'un cerf pour atteindre une source d'eau.

Connectés à la psyché de masse et l'animant, les individus de l'Amérique hyperréelle ressemblent à ce que Merlin Donald appelle des « créatures en réseau » (networked creatures).

Pour Duluoz, la transformation progressive des Américains en créatures en réseau commence sur les campus universitaires, et l'homogénéisation est la conséquence directe de l'information de masse. Les universités et la télévision, en particulier, sont considérées comme des médias utilisés par les agents de l'hypperréel pour établir la conformité et le consentement. Pendant que les créatures en réseau sont construites et connectées de cette manière, ceux qui vivent hors de la portée de l'hypperréel, à savoir l'Autre, les excentriques et les chercheurs de vérité comme Japhy (le personnage du poète Gary Snyder), donnent libre cours à leur inconscient, qui est l'équivalent jungien des MPÉ.

Parmi les effets dangereux des hyper-stimuli diffusés par l'hypperréel, il y a la manifestation de la peur, qui peut se transformer en une véritable paranoïa, comme le montre *Big Sur*. Dans le roman, un personnage appelé Rosie manifeste cette paranoïa, qui pourrait être attribuée au succès des mécanismes de dissuasion et de surveillance de l'hypperréel qui forcent l'individu à intérioriser sa propre surveillance. Une autre explication possible de la paranoïa est que les hyper-stimuli dans le monde de l'histoire produisent un déséquilibre entre le mécanisme de réaction psychologique-émotionnel des individus et le niveau réel des dangers présents dans l'environnement, ce qui pourrait se développer en une peur collective. Ceci étant dit, la manifestation de la peur dans *Big Sur* se divise en deux catégories : la peur de la nature sauvage et la peur des congénères.

Les conséquences de ce mauvais calibrage deviennent expressément préjudiciables dès que Duluoz franchit les barrières de la civilisation et pénètre dans la nature sauvage de Big Sur où son mécanisme de détection des dangers s'effondre immédiatement : la caractérisation monstrueuse de la nature est le symbole d'une incapacité à s'adapter à l'environnement. En outre, la peur des éléments naturels altère également son sens de l'orientation, qui devient si compromis qu'il peine à trouver la cabane où il était censé séjourner et n'arrive plus à distinguer les propriétés géographiques de base de la montagne et de l'océan. La peur des congénères, quant à elle, se manifeste dans une expérience effrayante que vit Duluoz lorsqu'il reçoit la visite d'un groupe d'amis alors qu'il se trouvait dans la cabane. La visite engendre un épisode tellement insupportable, avec des accès de folie et des pensées suspectes, qu'il se demande si ses amis ne conspirent pas tous contre lui.

L'entropie est pour Duluoz le deuxième obstacle majeur à l'authenticité. Dans un premier temps, la résistance de Duluoz à l'entropie consiste à définir et à construire une notion stable du réel. Cependant, une condition préalable à cette construction est l'appréhension des multiples dimensions du désordre engendré par l'entropie. L'une de ces dimensions est constituée par les dichotomies qui imprègnent l'univers narratif de la *Légende*. Les personnages féminins majeurs, en particulier, semblent offrir un accès direct à la nature dichotomique et mystérieuse de l'univers, notamment Tristessa du roman du même nom et Mardou de *Les Souterrains*. La structure narrative de *Tristessa* est fondée sur la dynamique de la réconciliation des antagonismes, chaque événement banal devenant une occasion de réfléchir à ces antagonismes. Les dichotomies internes de Tristessa sont analogues à la dichotomie réalité-irréel et incitent à l'investigation de cette dernière. Duluoz emploie une stratégie d'embellissement extrême, ou de « sublimification », pour ainsi dire, afin d'atténuer ce qui peut être considéré comme les péchés de Tristessa sur terre. Cela confère à sa souffrance, qui est essentiellement auto-induite, une dimension religieuse. Elle fournit également à Duluoz une occasion de réévaluer ses propres convictions religieuses et sa compréhension de la relation entre le monde divin et le monde terrestre. La souffrance terrestre de Tristessa perturbe également la compréhension de Duluoz du bien et du mal en suggérant que Dieu ou l'Éveilleur pourrait ne pas défendre ce qui est bon dans l'univers, et pourrait au contraire posséder un certain désir sadique de se délecter de la douleur de l'humanité.

Les Souterrains contient une réflexion similaire sur les dichotomies. Cependant, le jugement de Duluoz sur Mardou comme étant naturellement béatifiée ainsi que le désir de la « sublimer » ne sont pas aussi purs et permanents que dans *Tristessa*. Le refus initial de Duluoz de reconnaître la sincérité de la décision de Mardou de ne pas avoir de relation amoureuse avec un homme reflète l'impulsion de son ego masculin qui l'empêche de gérer sainement le rejet, c'est pourquoi il l'accuse du même sadisme que celui dont il accuse Dieu. Pendant un bref instant, Dieu et les femmes s'identifient mutuellement au grotesque dans le sens où ils invitent délibérément la souffrance et s'en délectent. Duluoz crée un schisme temporaire entre lui en tant qu'homme, et Dieu et les femmes en tant qu'amants de la souffrance, uniquement comme moyen de comprendre le sublime. De plus, son regret de s'être méfié de son désir de ne pas être avec un homme et de l'avoir fustigé pour cela lui révèle que lui aussi peut sembler enclin à jouir de la

souffrance. Et même lorsqu'il réussit finalement à vivre une brève idylle avec Mardou, son mystérieux attachement au sentiment de souffrance reste non résolu.

Le royaume illusoire du réel est évoqué dans trois exemples pertinents de la *Légende* : la scène de la cuisine dans *Tristessa*, les apparitions et les visions de l'ancien royaume. La scène de la cuisine est dépeinte comme un rêve, dans une problématisation claire de la nature de la réalité : Bien que sa réalité ou son irréalité ne puisse être confirmée par le lecteur, il semble que la confirmation soit en fin de compte ce qui détermine si le réel recherché constitue une entreprise valable au-delà de ce qui peut sembler être une prétention bouddhiste exagérée dans le récit global de Kerouac. Ceci étant dit, la simple existence d'un royaume mystérieux qui abrite la réalité, qu'elle soit physiquement ou symboliquement au-delà du monde perçu, a une conséquence monumentale sur la réception du récit en engageant le lecteur, dont Duluoz a gagné la crédibilité, dans la quête du Réel.

Les apparitions qui surgissent tout au long du voyage de Duluoz constituent l'une des plus solides justifications de l'existence d'un royaume de réalité au-delà du monde perçu. Dans *Sur la route*, l'apparition prend trois formes : un vieil homme aux cheveux blancs (une manifestation des pensées neutres de Duluoz), un voyageur voilé (une incarnation imaginaire) et un cheval blanc (une apparition prétendument réelle et concrète). Les différentes formes démontrent l'incertitude et l'instabilité de la perception du monde du réel par Duluoz qui renvoie simultanément à l'instabilité de son esprit percepteur, qui interprète l'univers en fonction des changements dans les aspects physiques et spirituels des expériences (voyage, solitude, hédonisme, abstinence, etc.), et à l'instabilité de l'univers lui-même (entropie).

Les visions du royaume ancien sont également des indicateurs du royaume illusoire du réel. Ces visions ont des implications conséquentes sur la conceptualisation de Duluoz de la notion de mort et de néant, même si elles ne semblent pas lui fournir une compréhension claire de ces notions. En ce qui concerne la mort, les visions engendrent un double paradoxe : le premier est que les êtres humains désirent l'état de béatitude qui vient après la mort, mais ils ne veulent pas mourir, et le second est que, alors que la connaissance de l'état de l'après-mort et de l'avant-naissance semble être cruciale pour atteindre l'authenticité absolue, personne n'a accès à cette connaissance. Ce que Duluoz sait, cependant, c'est que la vie sur terre semble interrompre un état de félicité, créer l'anxiété inutile d'attendre le retour à cet état, et séparer l'humanité de la

connaissance de ce qu'est cet état. En ce sens, tant que l'on est « piégé » par la vie terrestre, la vraie félicité (la vie authentique) restera un mystère. En outre, la sagesse du silence que décrit Duluoz est liée au mystère du passé (ou au mystère du temps au-delà de la vie terrestre) et évoque à nouveau la notion de vie terrestre comme une phase qui nie la connaissance de ce mystère.

L'effet de l'entropie se fait également sentir dans le nihilisme de Duluoz. Le néant qui caractérise sa perception du monde existe dans une boucle de rétroaction qui est créée par le désordre et l'incertitude du monde de l'histoire. La banalité des activités auxquelles il se livre, le sentiment de perte de temps et la solitude qui persiste malgré la présence de ses amis l'emportent sur les joies éprouvées sur la route et annulent une grande partie de la signification spirituelle de son voyage. D'une certaine manière, cela rompt avec la tradition du roman de route américain qui suppose une certaine convergence entre l'identité du voyageur et les idéaux du pays d'une part, et le voyage d'autre part. En fin de compte, la conception du néant de Duluoz semble être à la fois une cause et une conséquence de son isolement par rapport à lui-même et aux autres, et elle découle également d'une notion mal comprise de la divinité et d'un engagement instable dans la spiritualité.

En dehors du bouddhisme, qui recrée le même fardeau chrétien de l'ascétisme, la culture dans laquelle vivait Kerouac n'offrait aucun remplacement à la perte métaphysique du Dieu chrétien. Par conséquent, la mort de Dieu a exacerbé la crise existentielle à laquelle était confronté l'individu américain vivant à la fin des années 1940. Le fait que l'isolement de Duluoz persiste même après avoir déclaré sa conception bouddhiste du néant mystique signifie que la nouvelle religion échoue également, principalement en raison de son incapacité à abandonner complètement le Dieu chrétien. En fait, chez Duluoz, Dieu semble être présent dans chaque invocation du néant mystique alors que la justification de la souffrance est invalidée par une attitude ambivalente et confuse à son égard. Le danger d'une relation aussi compliquée avec Dieu est qu'elle agit comme une formule d'anarchie et de chaos, surtout si elle n'est pas contrebalancée par une position affirmant la vie, comme le fait Nietzsche lorsqu'il critique les valeurs morales du christianisme.

Confronté aux incertitudes, aux ambiguïtés et aux dichotomies de l'univers, Duluoz cherche à élaborer des stratégies pour une sorte d'authenticité transcendante, qui exige, comme

étape initiale, de résoudre l'énigme religieuse. Alors que le christianisme et le bouddhisme exigent une adhésion stricte, allant parfois jusqu'au célibat et à l'isolement complet de la vie matérielle, la défense par Duluoz du matérialisme de Dean dans *Sur la route* évoque une synergie entre la vie matérielle et la divinité. La pacification de Dean vers laquelle Duluoz est si désireux de tendre dès qu'il en a l'occasion est fortement influencée par le souvenir de Gérard (son frère décédé) et cette pacification, à son tour, reconfigure sa position sur le matérialisme. Même durant sa courte vie, Gérard a symbolisé le message de la vie comme un cadeau laissé par Dieu à la race humaine avant sa mort : Gérard devient l'incarnation du Christ de l'*athéisme chrétien* (Žižek) et du matérialisme que Duluoz voit en Dean.

L'une des premières mesures prises par Duluoz pour reconfigurer sa vision du monde est de réinterpréter l'histoire de sa vie de sorte que le nirvana, la délivrance de la souffrance du saṃsāra, devienne dépendant de l'acceptation des responsabilités de « l'éternel retour » (Nietzsche). Il y parvient en transformant la compréhension classique du nirvana comme un chemin et/ou une destination en une formulation néo-bouddhiste du nirvana comme une occurrence naturelle qu'il suffit de découvrir et de maintenir. Duluoz se rend compte que percevoir la réalité terrestre comme une illusion exige un sacrifice inutile (et peut-être malsain) des choses matérielles. Il opte donc pour un mode de vie différent du spiritualisme qui l'oblige à vivre constamment dans son propre esprit et le pousse à l'ascétisme, ou de la réalité matérielle qui conduit à l'indulgence hédoniste. Au contraire, il transcende ces deux extrêmes et adopte ce qu'il appelle une mentalité de « Ne rien faire » (Do Nothing), qui a deux significations : le retrait du monde des actions, qui est entaché de chaos, pour embrasser des états mentaux de transe ; et l'émancipation des « facticités » (Sartre), dont la première étape est la réalisation de leur immuabilité.

Les tournants expérientiels éphémères ou les épiphanies dans le récit de la *Légende* pourraient être considérés comme des instances qui activent la « condition psychique » (Jung) parce qu'ils fournissent juste la bonne quantité de réflexion introspective. En comparaison, les pratiques à part entière, organisées et à long terme, comme le bouddhisme, sont tellement détachées des réalités qu'elles n'orientent plus le libre arbitre de l'individu vers des questions de nature pratique et utile, mais sont plutôt considérées comme un simple carburant pour la rumination qui, bien qu'elle puisse être intellectuellement ou spirituellement enrichissante, ne

devrait pas occuper la majorité de l'expérience d'une personne sur terre. Selon ce point de vue, l'authenticité doit s'émanciper de la croyance que la totalité de la vie d'un individu (passée, présente, future et au-delà) est prédéterminée par des facticités insurmontables, ce que le christianisme contribue à renforcer dans l'esprit de Duluoz en se présentant comme la seule source de sens. D'autre part, l'authenticité doit aussi s'émanciper de la tendance bouddhiste à abandonner complètement les instincts qui ancrent l'individu dans des réalités qui doivent être reconnues. La notion d'éternel retour devient alors synonyme de la condition psychique de l'authenticité dans le sens où, pour être vraiment en paix avec l'idée de revivre infiniment sa vie, il faut percevoir le passé a posteriori comme ayant été vécu en partie en suivant aveuglément le guide des instincts et en partie en exerçant son libre arbitre. Cela devient le double récit avec lequel la désorientation de la phase liminale doit être confrontée.

L'entropie exige également que Duluoz cherche à échapper aux contraintes du temps et à reconfigurer sa compréhension du présent, au cours de sa quête d'authenticité. Sa conception de l'intemporalité se développe à partir de son incapacité à faire face aux paradoxes de la mort. Son dilemme est qu'il semble croire que seule l'incarnation de la mort permet d'atteindre l'authenticité ; pourtant, il ne croit pas qu'il pourra jamais faire l'expérience de cette incarnation, et il ne le veut pas. Pour résoudre ce dilemme, Duluoz révisé continuellement sa perception du présent par rapport aux expériences passées. Au lieu de croire qu'être seul sur une montagne est rigidement attaché à une réalité particulière (solitude, sagesse, liberté, ennui, etc.), il conçoit la véritable fonction du temps, qui est de lui permettre de reconfigurer la valeur des expériences passées en fonction des changements soudains induits par l'entropie. Le présent, en tant que notion dynamique, devient un antidote à la mort, car il occupe Duluoz avec ce processus de reconfiguration continue, qui éloigne simultanément la mort et lui évite le danger d'une « vérité unilatérale », comme dirait Jung.

La compréhension scientifique du monde par Duluoz, qu'il démontre à travers ses descriptions quantiques, s'écarte considérablement de son fondement religieux. Sa description de l'omniscience et de l'état sans commencement du néant et de l'intemporalité peut être interprétée comme une reconnaissance du fait que la véritable transcendance réside dans la reconnaissance et l'acceptation du fait que l'univers est né du néant et retournera au néant. Cela suggère que Duluoz frise l'athéisme pur et simple et que sa compréhension de la réalité est beaucoup plus

alignée sur une vision scientifique du monde qu'on ne l'aurait imaginé, et, peut-être, que Kerouac lui-même a trouvé du réconfort dans l'athéisme une fois confronté à l'entropie universelle.

Pour Duluoz, le réel authentique dépend aussi de l'acquisition d'une forme spéciale de connaissance qui pourrait rendre compte des mystères de l'univers. Ceci d'autant plus que le type de connaissance qui existe dans le monde perçu est associé soit à l'hyperréel, soit au non-réel/inauthentique. Essentiellement, les enseignements bouddhistes transmettent à Duluoz que, même au sommet de l'illumination (Satori), on ne peut jamais acquérir une compréhension intuitive des noumènes en raison des limitations de l'esprit humain qui font obstacle à la compréhension intuitive des choses. Néanmoins, Duluoz croit qu'il peut surmonter ces limitations grâce à une marge de manœuvre herméneutique dans le bouddhisme qu'il exploite et qui lui permet d'accéder à *ce qui est perçu comme* le noumène et qui, selon lui, se trouve au-delà du christianisme et du bouddhisme. Cet accès *construit mentalement* semble être complété par un désir si fort et parfois conflictuel de transmettre la connaissance du réel authentique que l'authenticité individuelle devient dépendante de cette transmission. L'archétype du messenger justifie réciproquement l'existence de différents domaines de connaissance (noumène-phénomène/réalité-irréalité) en dénotant implicitement la frontière entre eux. L'effondrement des frontières entre les phénomènes et les noumènes qui permet d'accéder à ce dernier est démontré dans de nombreux romans de la *Légende*, notamment dans *Les Clochards célestes*, où l'ascension au sommet de la montagne représente le départ du monde des phénomènes vers celui des noumènes.

Pour Duluoz, le langage, et plus particulièrement la communication verbale, n'est pas un moyen qui peut transmettre de manière significative la connaissance ésotérique du réel. En même temps, il y a quelque chose dans la représentation narrative de la connaissance ésotérique qui le peut, ce qui est une possibilité qui donne un sens et un but à l'écriture de Duluoz. Une question clé préoccupe la contemplation du noumène par Duluoz, à savoir si la connaissance de celui-ci doit être transmise en premier lieu. Tout d'abord, il est intéressant de noter qu'aucun des plus proches compagnons de Duluoz, en particulier ceux qui ont une influence majeure sur lui (à savoir Irwin/Carlo, Dean/Cody et Japhy) n'exprime jamais le désir d'éclairer les autres pour le bien des autres. Contrairement à Irwin, qui semble comprendre son rôle d'écrivain en termes d'influence de masse (donc, pourrait-on dire, indirectement de lui-même et de son héritage) et

non d'illumination des autres, Duluoz est complètement détaché de son personnage d'écrivain (célébrité/influence) et considère l'écriture comme un devoir envers l'humanité. Pour Duluoz, la transmission de connaissances ésotériques par l'écriture comme moyen d'éclairer les autres est une condition nécessaire pour atteindre l'authenticité individuelle.

Dans *Les Souterrains*, Duluoz utilise un langage insensé, qui pourrait être interprété comme le langage du noumène. Parce qu'ils sont produits par une machine à écrire (qui pourrait aussi bien être un ordinateur qu'un stylo et du papier), les mots insensés spécifiques qui apparaissent dans l'une de ses réflexions sont considérés comme de pauvres exemples de langage nouménil qui semblent être des produits de la folie de l'esprit de Duluoz, bien qu'en réalité, ils n'apparaissent comme tels qu'en raison du lien brisé entre le langage nouménil et son extériorisation, qui révèle l'inadéquation du moyen de transmission. Kerouac utilise deux procédés pour faire correspondre ce langage nouménil au système de croyances de Duluoz ou, en d'autres termes, pour le faire paraître sensé. Le premier est stylistique et concerne la manière dont les mots reconnaissables et le style canonique sont fusionnés avec un langage insensé, et le second concerne l'interaction entre le factuel et le fictif. En outre, le poème « Sea », qui apparaît à la fin de *Big Sur*, comporte également un langage insensé comparable à celui de l'épisode de Protée dans *Ulysse* de James Joyce et dont la médiation repose sur l'utilisation de la forme poétique qui révèle certaines connaissances que la prose du reste du roman ne peut révéler.

Un autre dispositif utilisé pour transcender les limites du langage et transformer l'écriture de Duluoz en véhicule de transmission du noumène est la métalepse. La fusion des différentes temporalités narratives, des personnages et de leurs identités réelles, de la réflexion narratrice et du discours des personnages sont les effets des transgressions métaleptiques qui contribuent à la transmission du noumène. En mettant en avant la malléabilité du langage, Duluoz invite le lecteur à remettre en question toutes les limitations (imposées ou imaginées) de toutes les facettes de la réalité et à intégrer dans son système de croyances la possibilité qu'une compréhension alternative et plus profonde des entités existe en suspendant les préjugés et l'expérience sensorielle.

La troisième menace à l'authenticité à laquelle Duluoz est confrontée dans la *Légende* est celle de l'individualisme, à laquelle il résiste en explorant les possibilités d'expériences intersubjectives, notamment avec les personnages de Dean dans *Sur la route* et de Mardou dans

Les Souterrains. L'attention que Duluoz porte à Dean est principalement motivée, comme le suggère la fonction dialogique de l'intersubjectivité, par le désir d'achever la construction de sa propre identité et de comprendre la réalité de l'univers. L'amitié de Duluoz pour Dean est une tentative de simuler le sentiment ou le résultat des expériences sauvages de ce dernier sans avoir à les vivre lui-même. Même si cela peut sembler contre-productif, l'une des raisons pour lesquelles Duluoz cherche un accès intersubjectif à la vie de Dean est d'éviter les extrémités qui sont la source du désordre universel. Malgré les extrémités intérieures qui façonnent la personnalité de Dean, celui-ci possède la solution à la crise existentielle de Duluoz précisément parce qu'il n'est pas identifié aux extrémités du matérialisme et de la spiritualité.

Aussi extrême que soit Dean personnellement, Duluoz constate que, sur l'échelle de l'intellectualisme et de la criminalité, il est détaché de l'un ou l'autre des extrêmes. Au contraire, parce qu'il fait tout avec tant de passion et de dévouement, il incarne le meilleur des deux mondes. Duluoz voit en Dean un type d'intellectualisme plus vrai et plus authentique, c'est-à-dire un intellectualisme basé sur l'expérience et non sur les livres et les études universitaires. Duluoz justifie la criminalité de Dean car il estime que ce dernier est celui qui a accès au noumène et qui peut le partager avec les autres. Les vols de voitures de Dean sont agrémentés de mots tels que « ode », « joie » et « prophétie », ce qui donne l'impression que, chez lui, l'acte de voler devient héroïque, notamment parce qu'il ne désire pas les voitures comme des possessions matérielles mais parce qu'elles sont les véhicules (littéralement et métaphoriquement) qui les transportent, lui et Duluoz, là où la vie authentique existe.

L'expérience intuitive de la vie de Dean le distingue de presque toutes les autres personnes que Duluoz rencontre, à l'exception peut-être de Japhy qui, dans *Les Clochards célestes*, incarne l'authenticité bouddhiste que Duluoz ne parvient pas à reproduire. Cela crée également chez Duluoz un désir de découvrir le même mode d'expérience chez les autres. En réalité, la conséquence de la relation intersubjective avec Dean est si monumentale qu'elle crée une rupture avec le mécanisme et le but même qui régissent les rencontres et les conversations de Duluoz avec les gens, ce qui intensifie finalement son jugement sur eux. Après avoir éprouvé de l'empathie pour Dean, Duluoz mesure l'intuitivité de ses expériences (celles de Dean) à l'intensité de son expérience du banal. De plus, il essaie d'imiter la façon dont Dean parle parce qu'il se rend compte que le mécanisme d'interrogation de la vie et la façon générale d'obtenir des vérités

sont bien supérieurs à ce que les mots eux-mêmes sont capables d'exprimer, ce qui nous rappelle la célèbre observation de Marshall McLuhan selon laquelle « le médium est le message ».

Duluoz reste largement influencé par le charme et le mystère de Dean, ce qui le rend aveugle aux intentions excessivement égoïstes de ce dernier et, par un biais rétrospectif, provoque des révisions erronées et potentiellement nuisibles de certains aspects de leur histoire commune, car elles se répercutent finalement sur la reconstruction par Duluoz de son passé. Néanmoins, à travers ces tentatives intersubjectives, Duluoz développe la capacité de remettre en question le mécanisme même de réflexion et d' « étude » qui a constitué une grande partie de son identité. Duluoz s'efforce également de vivre des expériences intersubjectives avec Mardou, comme en témoigne l'arrangement particulier qu'ils ont l'un avec l'autre et qui est basé sur des confessions honnêtes, un processus qui est initialement développé par Dean. Grâce au mode confessionnel qui permet l'étude intersubjective de la négritude de Mardou, Duluoz peut atteindre un certain aspect de la réalité, à savoir la réalité objective des indifférences raciales entre les individus. Le mode confessionnel permet également d'étudier l'arrangement relationnel non traditionnel entre Mardou et Duluoz, ainsi que la relation qui lie les souterrains en tant que groupe interne (endogroupe).

Un autre mode d'intersubjectivité est la performance et la performativité intersubjective, qui indique l'utilisation de la Théorie de l'Esprit (TdE) (Theory of Mind) dans le développement des perspectives intentionnelles (intentional stances) à partir de la performance du corps et du langage des autres. Trois exemples pertinents démontrent l'utilisation (le plus souvent ratée) de la Théorie de l'Esprit par Duluoz : l'exemple de Lazare dans *Les Anges de la désolation*, de Dean dans *Sur la route* et de Mardou dans *Les Souterrains*. Une caractéristique notable de Lazare est son silence, qui représente pour Duluoz un défi lorsqu'il s'agit d'établir une connexion intersubjective avec lui car, contrairement à Dean et Carlo, il parle à peine et est un introverti qui ne participe pas aux investigations intersubjectives sur la réalité et l'identité. Néanmoins, en raison de la compréhension profonde (mais souvent déformée et fluctuante) que Duluoz a du silence, il interprète le silence de Lazare comme un signe de sagesse. Son silence devient comparable à celui de Japhy et du Bouddha dans *Les Clochards célestes*, qui est plus puissant et efficace que leur discours.

Malgré le silence de Lazare, Duluoz est capable d'établir une expérience intersubjective avec lui via sa TdE, qui se déroule en trois étapes : premièrement, la prise de conscience et l'intériorisation de la performance de Lazare (son regard en biais) ; deuxièmement, le développement d'une perspective intentionnelle basée sur la performance ; et troisièmement, la construction de fragments de la vie passée de Lazare suite aux deux premières étapes. La perspective intentionnelle de Duluoz est motivée par le désir implicite (ultérieur ou inconscient) de renforcer son statut de protagoniste dans le récit de sa propre vie, de sorte que la reconstruction de l'identité de Lazare devient un instrument pour la reconstruction du passé de Duluoz, étant donné leur similitude alléguée par Duluoz.

Un autre bon exemple de l'utilisation par Duluoz de sa TdE apparaît dans une scène de *Sur la route* où Duluoz offre à Dean un voyage à New York puis en Italie en utilisant l'argent qu'il s'attendait à recevoir de son éditeur. Cette offre représente un tournant dans la relation entre les deux hommes, Dean semblant comprendre, pour la première fois, l'intérêt sincère que lui porte Duluoz, et provoquant un regard ambigu de la part de Dean. En effet, la performance de Dean (son regard), semble être beaucoup plus ambiguë et difficile à interpréter que le regard en biais de Lazare, non seulement parce qu'il projette un étrange mélange d'émotions mais aussi parce qu'il surprend Duluoz avec la même intensité que la proposition surprend Dean. Contrairement au regard en biais de Lazare, la performance de Dean résiste à une interprétation par l'adoption d'une perspective intentionnelle, ce qui conduit à un échec initial de la TdE et oblige Duluoz à recourir à la parole et à poser la question « que se passe-t-il ? ». Duluoz projette l'échec de sa propre TdE sur Dean en affirmant que le regard fixe est une représentation de l'incapacité de Dean à comprendre la signification de la proposition de voyage, transformant ainsi l'échec de sa propre TdE en un échec de la TdE de Dean. En fin de compte, l'échec mutuel de la TdE est signalé comme un problème fondamental par la reconnaissance que les deux hommes « se sentaient perplexes et incertains de quelque chose ».

On peut également voir la TdE en action au début de *Les Souterrains*, lorsque Duluoz rencontre Mardou pour la première fois dans l'une des maisons des souterrains. En l'observant de loin, Duluoz remarque que Mardou tend la main à un homme appelé Adam Moorad pour se présenter, mais qu'elle ne fait pas de même avec lui, ce qui lui fait déduire qu'elle ne veut pas être avec lui. La performance de Mardou active la renégociation de l'identité de Duluoz, ainsi que les

reconfigurations des aspects de la réalité, à travers ce qu'il perçoit comme un rejet initial de sa part, qui comprend une véritable contemplation de l'idéalisme contre la réalité. Au-delà de l'apitoiement perceptible, il s'agit ici de la dynamique du pouvoir entre hommes et femmes et des nouvelles insécurités que Duluoz sent émerger de l'intérieur. Il se rend compte de la naïveté de l'idée selon laquelle la noblesse de ses aspirations idéalistes, représentées par ses ambitions de devenir écrivain, lui permettrait de devancer quelqu'un comme Adam dans la compétition pour l'attention de Mardou.

La TdE de Duluoz se révèle ici influencée par un idéalisme qui le pousse à percevoir comme une défaite le fait d'avoir été le premier à tendre la main. La perspective intentionnelle liée à la performance et à la performativité de Mardou, qui découle des désirs intersubjectifs qu'il éprouve pour elle, produit un récit de « paria parmi les parias ». Alors que son attitude, son discours, son comportement, ses désirs et ses intérêts la qualifient clairement de souterraine par excellence, Mardou émerge dans l'esprit de Duluoz comme quelqu'un de différent des autres. Il désire tellement voir cette différence que sa TdE devient l'esclave de son désir de la même manière qu'elle est l'esclave de son idéalisme. Ayant établi (à tort) la différence et la séparation de Mardou par rapport au groupe, Duluoz repense le fondement de sa relation avec eux.

Certains extraits de la *Légende* possèdent des facteurs d'attraction qui conduisent potentiellement à des moments d'intersubjectivité parmi les lecteurs, c'est-à-dire des moments où les lecteurs manifestent collectivement de l'empathie envers Duluoz dans certaines situations difficiles. L'analyse de ces facteurs montre que, dans l'ensemble, les lecteurs partagent les mêmes points de vue complexes sur les préoccupations sociales, survivalistes et émotionnelles que Duluoz. À plus d'une occasion, ils manifestent la même dissonance cognitive qui engendre souvent des points de vue contradictoires tels que la confirmation des normes sociales établies et le désir simultané de les briser. La plupart des Contextes de Référence Partagés (CRP, Shared Contexts of Reference – Tikka et Kaipainen) qui reflètent les données recueillies sur Goodreads montrent que l'attention des lecteurs se porte collectivement sur les aspects de la crise de Duluoz qui sont directement liés au problème de l'authenticité.

Sur le plan thématique, la plupart des CRP étudiés dans cette thèse sont liés au mode de vie alternatif que Duluoz raconte, qu'il en fasse lui-même l'expérience ou qu'il l'observe chez les autres. Alors que certains lecteurs adhèrent au mode de vie alternatif (la vie sauvage de Dean),

d'autres confirment un mode de vie plus conventionnel (par exemple, un désir de relations conventionnelles où la romance, l'amour et la stabilité règnent en maître). Cela dit, les CRP se traduisent par des moments d'intersubjectivité entre les lecteurs car ils les engagent collectivement dans la négociation de l'identité et de la réalité à des moments précis du récit, qui sont principalement des moments évoquant le mode de vie alternatif.

Le style d'écriture de Kerouac, connu sous le nom de « prose spontanée », mais aussi d'« écriture jazz » et de « croquis », est également évocateur de l'intersubjectivité, dont on a dit qu'il subvertissait la fonction de représentation de la narration. La caractéristique « en ligne » ou « écrire au fur et à mesure » de l'improvisation, en particulier, élargit les possibilités de ce qu'une chose est et pourrait être, et transmet au lecteur la réalité très importante et unique du réel authentique, à savoir que l'expérience que l'on a d'une chose est principalement régie par des impressions subjectives basées sur le moment de l'expérience. Lorsqu'il s'agit de croquis spontanés, le récit de la *Légende* se rapproche le plus possible de la manière dont le lecteur vit les choses dans le monde réel. Les extraits qui font appel à cette technique transmettent le mécanisme cognitif même de l'interprétation du monde et de la réflexion sur les choses et, comme dans l'improvisation jazz, ils reflètent les émotions ressenties au moment du contact avec une entité donnée. En n'ayant pas d'idée préconçue de ce qu'il faut dire sur un objet, Kerouac donne libre cours à l'instant, de la même manière que la sélection des notes par l'improvisateur de jazz est en partie influencée par la situation émotionnelle dans laquelle il se trouve et/ou l'environnement qui entoure la performance.

L'intérêt de Kerouac pour le jazz est principalement stimulé par une recherche d'intersubjectivité dans la performance. En observant les performances de jazz, Duluoze enregistre les moments d'euphorie intersubjective qui sont associés au jeu rapide et chaotique entre les musiciens et le public, mais il n'est pas enclin à participer lui-même à cette frénésie. Pour lui, un rythme plus lent et un jeu plus concentré constituent le sommet de l'expérience intersubjective, ce qui, d'une certaine manière, résume et met en évidence les principales différences entre lui et Dean—tandis que Dean se délecte du chaos du présent qu'offre le moment intersubjectif, Duluoze exploite son potentiel pour engendrer des réflexions sur la condition de l'existence. Cette différence cruciale montre que pour Dean, tout ce qu'il faut savoir sur le réel authentique se trouve dans le moment présent, alors que pour Duluoze, bien que vivre dans le moment présent

soit souhaitable (mais virtuellement impossible à réaliser pour lui), le réel authentique est toujours à une ruminantion près. Une autre différence entre les deux, qui est mise en évidence par les performances improvisées, est le fait que, alors que Duluoz trouve l'essentiel de la performance dans les altérations entre les idées simples et les petites variations, Dean le trouve dans le crescendo qui est associé à la manière dont il parle et que Duluoz essaie d'imiter.

Tel un musicien improvisant, Duluoz comprend que le rôle de l'écrivain est d'exploiter le pouvoir de l'improvisation afin de créer des moments intersubjectifs qui révèlent le réel authentique à une communauté de personnes. Il trouve l'intersubjectivité dans la technique de l'improvisation qui lui permet d'explorer l'effet des expérimentations sur le médium. Comme le montre l'exemple du chapitre trente-sept de *Anges de la Désolation*, la recherche par Duluoz d'une intersubjectivité centrée sur le médium l'incite à abandonner complètement l'alphabet et à pousser son improvisation à un niveau supérieur, ce qu'il fait lors de son délire sur la condition d'existence où il passe de phrases relativement cohérentes à des phrases fragmentées, puis à des mots isolés qui donnent la sensation d'un rythme effréné qui finit par aboutir à des mots en majuscules qui, à leur tour, mènent à de simples lettres en majuscules qui imitent la sensation de perte de contrôle au point de s'arracher les cheveux et de taper au hasard sur un clavier par irritation. Le délire culmine avec des dessins en triangle qui peuvent ou non symboliser quelque chose, accompagnés de gribouillis qui sont à la fois une représentation visuelle de l'échec du langage et un triomphe (des variations) du médium sur le message.

Un marqueur significatif de l'improvisation spontanée employée dans la *Légende* est l'utilisation d'un style conversationnel qui rend le récit plus « naturel ». Même au prix d'incohérences et d'étrangetés occasionnelles, comme on le voit dans la reproduction du discours de Dean et Mardou, les caractéristiques du discours oral établissent l'intersubjectivité par le réalisme qu'elles génèrent. Elles révèlent le naturel dans le langage non médiatisé et primitif, qui ne cherche pas à employer la narration pour représenter la façon dont les gens parlent dans la vie réelle, mais plutôt à minimiser l'interférence de la narration même s'il doit sacrifier certains de ses éléments les plus cruciaux comme l'intrigue ou le développement des personnages. En lisant le processus de pensée des personnages, les lecteurs réfléchissent sur le leur, développant de l'empathie à travers le processus cognitif commun qui se manifeste sur la page et qui, s'il est

exact et n'est pas traité par le filtre de l'imagination, se transforme lui-même en un Contexte de Référence Partagé.

Outre le fait de dépeindre Kerouac comme un philosophe plus qu'un écrivain de fiction, l'un des objectifs de cette thèse était de démontrer que sa recherche d'authenticité est en grande partie une enquête ethnographique sur l'altérité et la sous-culture à laquelle il appartenait. En réalité, l'une des conclusions générales que l'on pourrait tirer de cette étude est que le projet d'authenticité de Kerouac repose sur la coexistence d'une réflexion individuelle et d'une immersion sociale. Cependant, Kerouac avait une façon très distincte de réaliser cette dernière. Selon lui, pour qu'une socialisation authentique ait lieu, les relations entre les gens doivent dépasser les niveaux traditionnels d'intimité qui les lient. Notoirement attribuées au LSD et à d'autres drogues similaires, les expériences intersubjectives que les Beatniks ont réalisées sont présentées dans l'œuvre de Kerouac comme le produit d'un effort conscient (propre et sobre) pour rechercher l'empathie avec les autres comme moyen d'accéder à la réalité objective et de construire les aspects manquants de son identité.

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