

A Specific Elsewhere: Locating Masculinity  
in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.

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For my parents.

## ABSTRACT

In travelling across the postwar United States, Jack Kerouac hoped to revive what he perceived as the lost essence of America. Kerouac's travels – many of which were shared with his friend Neal Cassady – represented a resistance to the postwar social ideal, an exchange in spatial systems that mobilised him beyond the confines of suburban conformity to experience the more marginalised aspects of American society. This dissertation offers an interpretative exploration of the ways in which Kerouac's chronicling of his travels in *On the Road: The Original Scroll* presents images of, and the search for, a subjectively authentic experience of white American masculinity.

Drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources, I establish a chronology of American political and cultural responses to the American male self, offering examinations of relevant discourse from the Revolutionary period to the twentieth century. I explore the role of gender in the formation of the presented ideals and identity of the United States, and offer discussion of the entwining of masculinity with the ethos and protocols of the American Frontier, a theatre of experience on which Kerouac's prose explicitly draws in its presentation of American masculinity. In exploring Kerouac's work directly, I address the literary presentation of Neal Cassady as the personification of subjectively revered masculine archetypes, highlighting a range of paradoxes, contradictions, and purported binary distinctions that position the white American male outside of a definitive and sustained performance of masculinity in the text. My discussion examines Kerouac's prose against concurrent social expectations of gender, considering the ways in which the intersection of Cold War tensions, wider literary and philosophical tradition, and American popular culture all come to bear on both his presentation of white American masculinity, and his own authorial voice.

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**INTRODUCTION**

In his introduction to a 1959 television interview with Jack Kerouac, host Steve Allen noted that America had “recognized in its midst, a social movement called ‘Beat Generation’”. As the interview began, Kerouac, touted by Allen as “the embodiment of this new generation”, was quizzed about the nature of his writing. “When I write narrative novels”, responded Kerouac, gesturing into the distance, “I don’t want to change my narrative thought. I keep going...for narrative it’s good. Keep going”. Discussing Kerouac’s novel *On the Road* (1957), Allen then pressed him to define the word “Beat”, to which Kerouac responded with a single word: “sympathetic”.<sup>1</sup> The interview had been scheduled following the success of Kerouac’s novel, the original unedited and hitherto unpublished version of which comprised a single paragraph, typed on a continuous spool of teletype paper. Having received what Adam Gussow terms “precious little editorial sympathy”, a revised version of the original text was deemed publishable by Viking Press in 1957, and this was the version to which Kerouac’s interview pertained. To Viking Press editor Malcolm Cowley, Kerouac’s narrative reflected the author’s experiences of “swinging back and forth across the United States like a pendulum”, from east to west, west to east, and eventually to Mexico, chronicling a series of postwar journeys.<sup>2</sup> In 2007, Kerouac’s original, unedited prose became publically available for the first time, spreading the original single paragraph across some six hundred and forty regular pages and reinstating the real names of individuals in place of the alter egos used in *On the Road*. In this dissertation, it is on this 2007 version – herein referred to as *The Scroll* – that I focus my discussion.

In comparison to *On the Road*, *The Scroll* offers a minimally modified historical record of physical and authorial experience, reflecting one American male’s perspectives on postwar America, its people, and its processes while subjectively interrogating the nature and authenticity of male selfhood. Given Kerouac’s quest for the seminal and the authentic, as

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<sup>1</sup> The Steve Allen Show, “Interview with Jack Kerouac,” *The Steve Allen Show*, feat. William Bendix, Pam Garner (NBC, November 1959), <<https://vimeo.com/77423799>> (accessed September 4, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Adam Gussow, “Bohemia Revisited: Malcolm Cowley, Jack Kerouac, and ‘On the Road,’” *The Georgia Review* v. 38, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 293.

well as my engagement with gender, I argue that a more accurate reading of Kerouac is facilitated by the use of *The Scroll*, particularly when a comparative reading of *The Scroll* and *On the Road* reveals the presentation and positioning of gender as a casualty of the editing process. *The Scroll* opens with Kerouac's declaration that he "first met Neal not long after my father died", identifying the death as a catalyst for a long personal illness and the nihilistic feeling that "everything was dead"; this establishes – as I discuss throughout this dissertation – an important connection between the paternal and the fraternal, and the experience of loss.<sup>3</sup> However, *On the Road* swerves the mention of this death, instead opening with a matter-of-fact reference to marital separation: "I first met Dean [Neal's alter ego] not long after my wife and I split up."<sup>4</sup> Without acknowledging the significance of fatherly absence, and instead opting for a comparatively matter-of-fact account of marital separation, *On the Road* fails to establish the connection between loss and masculinity that is so central to Kerouac's original work, and which, as I shall show, was significant in his formative years. Further discrepancies between the two texts also relate to gender. In one section of *On the Road*, the narrator's admiration of a woman fuels his desire "to jump down from a mast and land right in her" (169), a dilution from the same account in *The Scroll*, in which the desire is "to jump down from a mast and land right in her cunt" (175). These sections alone have a resounding impact on both the male voice and the presentation of the feminine, with the narrator responsible for *The Scroll*'s crude and physical depiction divorced from the less explicit voice of *On the Road*. In *The Scroll*, Kerouac's exploration of loss encompasses the loss of guidance, both familial and political; the loss and absence of a definitive sense and example of the male self; and the loss of a definitive image of American nation. With the connection between masculinity and loss diluted from the outset in *On the Road*, and given my focus on gender in this dissertation, these brief examples alone offer sufficient evidence that *The Scroll* provides the opportunity for a more authentic reading of Kerouac and his relationship with the American male self.

Prior to his travels and engagement with the Beat circle, circumstance conspired to haul the young Kerouac through a series of peaks and troughs that exposed him to the capriciousness of life from an early age. When he was just four, his older brother Gerard – just five years his senior – died from rheumatic heart disease, "marring", as James T. Jones puts it, an

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<sup>3</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road: The Original Scroll* [2007], ed. Howard Cunnell (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 109. Subsequent page references in text.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), iBooks edition, part one.

“otherwise happy childhood with a tragic memory of his brother’s wasting death.” Kerouac’s early life was peppered with polarising images and experiences of masculinity. Kerouac’s father, Leo, ran a printing business to support the family, succeeding in keeping it afloat in the turbulent seas of the Depression until “the great spring flood of 1936 inundated his shop”, forcing him into foreclosure.<sup>5</sup> Leo Kerouac died of stomach cancer in 1946, the removal of another male role model from Kerouac’s life having a significant effect, evidenced by the very first sentence of *The Scroll*. Just two years prior to this, Sebastian Sampas, Kerouac’s best friend, was killed during the Allied landing at Anzio in Italy.<sup>6</sup> As I shall show in this dissertation, echoes of Kerouac’s early experiences of manhood resound in the pages of *The Scroll*, with presentations of masculinity navigating and existing in the razor sharp polarities of success and failure, appreciation and resentment, presence and absence, strength and weakness, and fact and fiction. Characterised more by decline rather than immediate eradication, Kerouac presents loss more as a process than an event, with a transition from the revered to the maligned evoking concurrent images of celebration for that which has faded, and contempt for that which has come to be. As I shall show, Kerouac’s engagement with masculinity attempts a resurrection of the images of manhood for which the author grieves, a poignant autobiographical response to the loss of his brother, his father, and his best friend before the end of his twenty-fourth year.

My discussion adopts a sociocultural rather than biological standpoint, interchangeably using the terms ‘masculinity’, ‘manhood’, ‘masculine identity’, ‘masculine self’, and ‘male self’ to denote the social, ontological, ideological, and behavioural condition(s) of being male; summarily, my discussion engages far more with gender than it does with sex. I position masculinity as a cultural product, shaped by national and personal history, sociocultural influence and expectation, sociopolitical agenda, and physical and cultural geography. However, this is not to say that I ignore the physiological component of personhood completely, as on occasion I address the way in which the physical body – both male and female – is implemented in relevant discourse. I offer a reading of *The Scroll* that positions the novel as an artefact of postwar American masculinity in crisis, and as a record

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<sup>5</sup> James T. Jones, *Jack Kerouac's Duluoz Legend: The Mythic Form of an Autobiographical Fiction* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Miles, *Call Me Burroughs: A Life* (Hachette Book Group, 2013), Google Books edition. <[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cbKoAgAAQBAJ&pg=PT132&lpg=PT132&dq=death+of+kerouac's+best+friend&source=bl&ots=\\_tjNVJHLms&sig=NN4zj7bAR2b8pslUG-kpHEVC\\_wQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi0o6vR78HRAhUhlMAKHTpwCcYQ6AEISjAG#v=onepage&q=Sebastian%20Sampas&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cbKoAgAAQBAJ&pg=PT132&lpg=PT132&dq=death+of+kerouac's+best+friend&source=bl&ots=_tjNVJHLms&sig=NN4zj7bAR2b8pslUG-kpHEVC_wQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi0o6vR78HRAhUhlMAKHTpwCcYQ6AEISjAG#v=onepage&q=Sebastian%20Sampas&f=false)> (accessed December 9, 2016).

of an attempt to find, and/or to instate – to *locate* – American manhood in a society in which personal history, and a centrifuge of political, social, and cultural shifts had displaced and/or nullified the sense of male self experienced and perceived by Kerouac. Although my discussion adopts a necessarily contextual approach to present *The Scroll* as a broad sociocultural signifier, it also accommodates a more focused exploration of Kerouac as an author. I argue that Kerouac's attempts to locate a definitive sense of masculinity draw closely on a broad range of American iconography and western literature, facilitating an osmotic dialogue between high and low culture, myth and reality, mind and body, intrinsic and extrinsic, and selfhood and 'otherness'. Further, I address content, form, and philosophy to demonstrate how *The Scroll* reflects not only the invocation of the masculine other, but also the authorial other, with Kerouac drawing inspiration from a range of authors and thinkers in the construction of his prose. Ultimately, I argue that Kerouac's search for a definitive male self is impeded by the mutual toxicity between goal and method, with his perpetual attempts to locate selfhood in notions and images of 'otherness' exponentially widening the gap between Kerouac's idealisation and realisation of masculinity. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that my argument draws attention to frequent contradictions in both Kerouac's literary presentation of the male self, and between the philosophies I propose are implemented by Kerouac in the formation of his prose.

In Chapter One, I establish a social and literary backdrop against which to stage my close reading of *The Scroll* in Chapter Two, referring to Kerouac at relevant points to bind my historical reading to the central arguments which are to follow. I use the word 'America' in various inflectional forms throughout my discussion, and the reader should be aware that my use of the word pertains exclusively to the post-Revolutionary United States of America, rather than Central or South America; further, I employ 'America', 'American government', and 'state' as inclusive terms for the various policy-making bodies of that nation. I begin by offering a necessarily brief overview of cultural and literary representations of American masculinity as provided by American authors, referring, alongside this, to relevant American sociopolitical discourse, exploring the engendering of American national identity. My study of masculinity leads me, at times, to address the use of femininity in fiction and non-fiction texts, and, to maintain the focus of this dissertation within the available space, my treatment of the feminine is more referential than rigorous. It is not my intention to claim an absolute binary distinction between the masculine and the feminine; rather, to address the ways in which cultural profiling and the performance of gender identity have shaped the presentation

of the masculine and the feminine via a purported and ostensibly inevitable mutual opposition. I offer a necessarily truncated chronology of masculinity in American history and literature, beginning in the 1940s with the star spangled, comic book heroics of Captain America to address the relationship between masculinity and American nation. With this connection established, I then rewind to the Declaration of Independence to begin a more chronological study, exploring the ways in which the document was to shape engendered ideals of American nation that were as prescriptive as they were to be enduring. In accordance with this, I use the term “National Imaginary” to denote the ideals, behaviours, and identities presented as central to American national identity in the Declaration and similar sociopolitical rhetoric of the period. Moving forward through history, and with particular attention paid to the role of the American west and the Frontier in the formulation and performance of American gender identity, my discussion eventually arrives in the landscape of postwar America that played host to Kerouac’s prose. My chronology identifies a range of masculine (and at times, feminine) tropes and identities, addressing the processes of codification, sanctification, modification, and vilification that have accompanied their (re)emergences. I also address how tensions between the physical and the emotional have characterised images of masculinity, drawing attention to the dynamics of self-articulation and self-formation within these two arenas.

Chapter Two builds on the foundations of Chapter One to provide a close reading of *The Scroll*. I first contextualise the Beat subculture within the sociocultural terrain of postwar America, drawing on comment from within and beyond the movement to identify its broadly countercultural nature. My discussion then develops to focus on Kerouac’s presentation of American manhood in *The Scroll* and selected other works. I explore the ways in which Neal is iconised and then finally maligned in the first person narration of *The Scroll*, drawing on my discussion of masculinity from Chapter One to interrogate the presentation of Neal’s masculinity in relation to my established sociohistorical context. I then move to examine the ways in which spatial systems are entwined with notions of manhood, drawing particular attention to the interplay between the American road, the car, and the ways in which masculinity is affirmed and undermined via the dialogues of fraternity in the relationship between Neal and Jack (Kerouac’s avatar within the pages of *The Scroll*). Following this, I then examine Kerouac’s prose in light of the Romantic imagination, as well as the philosophies of Ralph Waldo Emerson. By considering Kerouac’s prose in light of Emerson’s approach to selfhood, I endeavour to explain the fundamental futility of



Kerouac's search for a subjectively authentic masculinity, with *The Scroll*'s reliance on such a wide and anachronistic range of cultural discourses negating the formation of any definitive, reliable, and enduring image of the American male.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **RED, WHITE, AND WHO: AMERICAN NATION AND THE MALE SELF**

There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed.<sup>7</sup>

- William James

In March 1941, American comic book house Timely Publications introduced Steve Rogers, a young and patriotic American man whose physical frailty renders him ineligible for military enlistment in the eyes of his government. Undeterred, Rogers volunteers for a clandestine and federally sanctioned eugenics programme designed to produce “a corps of super-agents” at a time when “the ruthless war-mongers of Europe focus their eyes on a peace-loving America”. Immediately before the procedure, which involves the injection of a mysterious serum into Rogers’s body, chief scientist Professor Reinstein proclaims “Don’t be afraid son...you are about to become one of America’s saviors!” The procedure is successful, transforming Rogers into the powerful and muscular superhero Captain America. However, only moments later, an infiltrating Gestapo official guns down Reinstein, shattering the only existing vial of serum. Captain America swiftly incapacitates the assailant, who then stumbles into a tangle of power cables and is theatrically electrocuted. With the serum gone, all hope of continuing the programme dies along with Reinstein, leaving the formerly flimsy Steve Rogers reimagined as the powerful and muscular Captain America. Clad head to toe in star spangled red, white and blue attire, he is the first and last super soldier to emerge from the programme.<sup>8</sup>

The creation of Captain America, a persona described by Christopher J. Hayton and David L. Albright as embodying “the transcendent American ideals of liberty and justice”, represents the fictional American government’s proactive response to the likelihood of

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<sup>7</sup> William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life’s Ideals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1899), 70-71.

<sup>8</sup> Jack Kirby, *Captain America Comics #1* (New York: Timely Publications, 1941), 1-7.

American involvement in World War II.<sup>9</sup> Kirby's portrayal is undeniably political, seeking to present America as an innocent victim, geographically and ideologically separated from Europe and left with no option but to defend itself. To this end, alongside his emotive polarisation of "the ruthless war-mongers of Europe" and "peace-loving America", Kirby arms Captain America with simply a shield, symbolising defence and preservation rather than attack and aggression. Kirby also presents American involvement in the war as a predominantly domestic affair, with the need to battle internal sabotage by spies prioritised over transcontinental conflict. Confining America's war to its own soil enables Kirby to avoid any aggressive, expansionist, and decentralising implications brought about by American military involvement overseas, enforcing the image of a victimised nation united in the preservation of its population and ideals. Given what G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash describe as America's "well-known policy of pursuing all options 'short of war'", I argue that Captain America represents the intermediacy between American action and inaction.<sup>10</sup> In his role of domestic defender he is the personified compromise between the desire for a detached and isolationist position, and the reluctant acceptance of the need to militarise in response to the global political climate of the time.

As a hyperbolised personification of the very ideals he strives to protect, Captain America is the masculine embodiment of all that Kirby considers to be 'American'. Drawing on classical ideals of masculine strength, Kirby is able to enshrine Captain America within a performative aesthetic that positions him as a national benchmark for masculinity, with the comparatively meagre stature of Rogers providing a counterpoint of inadequacy. To say that war, physical conflict, and the acts of retention and acquisition by force have been viewed throughout history as predominantly masculine domains is no exaggeration.<sup>11</sup> Robert Bly notes how "Warriors, mythologically, lift their swords to defend the king", invoking images of Arthurian legend with brave knights ensuring the safety of the realm through resilience

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<sup>9</sup> Christopher J. Hayton and David L. Albright, "O Captain! My Captain!" in *Captain America and the Struggle of the Superhero: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert G. Weiner (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2009), Google Play edition. <<https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=gQD0WX6czQAC>> (accessed October 28, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash, *The United States and the Second World War: New Perspectives on Diplomacy, War, and the Home Front* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 71.

<sup>11</sup> Melissa T. Brown, *Enlisting Masculinity: The Construction of Gender in U.S. Military Recruiting Advertising during the All-Volunteer Force* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and heroism.<sup>12</sup> Kirby's narrative explores the role of strength in the formation of masculinity against a backdrop of impending physical conflict, with the government-induced transformation of the physically weak Rogers into the celebrated and muscular Captain America representing a fast-track to a contextually 'ideal' American masculinity in the eyes of the state: strong, patriotic, and immune to fear. Given the comic book's reliance on what Bradford W. Wright describes as "sheer thrill and accessibility", it is hardly surprising that Kirby's work offers unapologetic and necessarily simplified representations of both the American ideological climate and the American man within it.<sup>13</sup> However, the origins of the principles that underpin Kirby's presentation of American manhood can be located in the Revolutionary period and the culturally revered ideals of the Declaration of Independence. For Larry R. Gerlach, the Declaration represented "not only the creation of the republic, but also the formulation of the nation's fundamental political and social creeds", containing the "Revolutionary principles...that profoundly influenced the course of events for the next 200 years."<sup>14</sup> Alexander Tsesis also acknowledges the Declaration's enduring resonance, noting how at "every stage of American history, the Declaration of Independence provided a cultural anchor for evaluating the legitimacy of legal, social, and political practices".<sup>15</sup>

In the Declaration, national politics are specifically linked to the masculine, its claim that "rights" are only secured when "Governments are instituted among Men" demonstrating clear engendering by the employment of the proper noun. Additionally, the list of charges levied against King George identifies the "manly firmness" with which Americans have resisted "his invasions on the rights of the people".<sup>16</sup> For sociologist Michael Kimmel, "the reigning metaphor of the American Revolution was that of the sons overthrowing the tyrannical father, as in the Sons of Liberty in their protests against King George, and their

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Bly, *Iron John: Men and Masculinity* (London: Rider/Random House, 2001), iBooks edition, chap. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), x.

<sup>14</sup> Larry R. Gerlach et al., *Legacies of the American Revolution* (Utah: Utah State University Press, 1978), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Tsesis, *For Liberty and Equality: The Life and Times of the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Jefferson et al., *The Declaration of Independence* (Pennsylvania, 1776).

Note: for discussion of the Declaration's creation and authorship, see:

- Julian P. Boyd, *The Declaration of Independence: The Evolution of the Text*, ed. Gerard W. Gawalt (Washington: Library of Congress, 1999).

resolve, in the Declaration of Independence, to resist tyranny”.<sup>17</sup> The connection between masculinity and American nation is also evident in the personal correspondence of Abigail Adams, wife of former American Vice President, and then President, John Adams. Writing to her husband in late 1777, Adams states “If men will not fight and defend their own particular spot, if they will not drive the enemy from their doors, they deserve the slavery and subjection that awaits them.”<sup>18</sup> This perspective extends to her husband’s responses, John Adams noting how he and the American political policy makers “know better than to repeal our masculine systems”.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to noting the masculine overtones of the Revolution, Kimmel identifies that the conflict had a profound and lasting effect on American masculinity, identifying the emergence of three masculine archetypes in the years leading up to and following its end: the “Genteel Patriarch”, defined by the ownership of large amounts of land and a position of sociopolitical authority and influence; the “Heroic Artisan”, disciplined, honest and central to national and local community in his business of farming, commerce or the provision of a service; and the “Self-Made Man”, an individual lacking the permanence of land ownership or employment and plagued by the nagging compulsion to prove himself in relation to other men. Kimmel’s Self-Made Man is entrepreneurial, but unsettled and insecure; he is simultaneously freed and unsupported by his detachment from the institutions around him. This socially dislocated self is also at the mercy of the “evaluative eyes of other men”, producing an anxiously competitive nature (19). Writing in the 1830s, and having studied American society during a research trip from his native France, Alexis de Tocqueville observed similar social anxieties in the minds of the American man, noting how the sociopolitical climate intimidated and threatened him, nullifying his faith in both himself and his individual peers:

At periods of equality, men have no faith in one another, by reason of their common resemblance; but this very resemblance gives them almost

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), xii. Subsequent page references in text.

<sup>18</sup> Abigail Adams, “20 October 1777,” in *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (London: Penguin Group, 2004), 317.

<sup>19</sup> John Adams, “14 April,” in *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (London: Penguin Group, 2004), 154.

unbounded confidence in the judgment of the public...when [a man] comes to survey the totality of his fellows, and to place himself in contrast with so huge a body, he is instantly overwhelmed by the sense of his own insignificance and weakness. The same equality which renders him independent of each of his fellow citizens, taken severally, exposes him alone and unprotected to the influence of the greater number.<sup>20</sup>

The American man's identity is viewed by de Tocqueville as twofold. Firstly, he is measured by his individuality, separate from others though at the same time resembling them. Secondly, he is defined by his level of investment in the National Imaginary. This tension highlights a problem of masculine self orientation and location to which I continually refer in this dissertation, with conflict between the personal and the social, and the intrinsic and extrinsic resulting in the same instability of the male self that I explore in relation to Kerouac and *The Scroll* in Chapter Two.

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<sup>20</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* [1835], ed. Bruce Frohnen (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2002), 399.

## FICTION, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE FEMININE: CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

Expectedly, a body of post-Revolutionary American literature soon emerged following American independence. This met with some resistance, notably from those loyal to the National Imaginary. Carl Van Doren identifies how as “novel reading began to increase with great rapidity, and native novelists appeared in respectable numbers”, tensions between experimentation with literary content, and the functional, masculine asceticism of America’s roots emerged:

The moralists were aroused and exclaimed against the change – their cries appearing in the magazines of the day side by side with moral tales. Nearly every grade of sophistication applied itself to the problem. The dullest critics contended that novels were lies; the pious, that they served no virtuous purpose; the strenuous, that they softened sturdy minds; the utilitarian, that they crowded out more useful books; the realistic, that they painted adventure too romantic and love too vehement; the patriotic, that, dealing with European manners, they tended to confuse and dissatisfy republican youth.<sup>21</sup>

Thomas Jefferson, an individual personifying Kimmel’s archetype of the Genteel Patriarch, feared the novel’s social influence. Writing to Nathaniel Burwell in March 1818, the former president labeled it a “mass of trash”, and as “poison”, which produced “a bloated imagination, sickly judgment, [and] disgust towards all the real businesses of life.” In fact, the only branch of novel approved by Jefferson was that based “on the incidents of real life”, a quality which rendered such writings “useful vehicles of a sound morality.”<sup>22</sup> Such philosophy was in direct opposition to the emotionally driven and provocatively sensationalist prose popular with many American readers during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, particularly the sentimental novel, with examples such as William Hill Brown’s *The Power Of Sympathy: Or, The Triumph Of Nature* (1789), Maria Cummins’s *The Lamplighter* (1854), and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) being of particular note. Julia A. Stern notes the ways in which such conflicting perspectives on literature aligned with the dialogues of gender:

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<sup>21</sup> Carl Van Doren, *The American Novel, 1789-1939* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “To Nathaniel Burwell, March 1818,” in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson Volume X 1816-1820*, comp. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1899), 104.

These tales envision and give voice to the otherwise imperceptible underside of republican culture in the age of reason, offering their newly constituted American audience a gothic and feminized set of counternarratives to read against the male-authored manifest accounts of national legitimation.<sup>23</sup>

Stern's account engenders the conflict between reason and emotion, with the latter positioned as a 'feminine' counterpoint to 'masculine' culture. Glenn Hendler notes how, during the period, "sentimentality was simply gendered female", perhaps going some way to explaining Thomas Jefferson's dislike for the novel, its opposition to masculine ideals seen as a challenge to all that he defined as 'American'.<sup>24</sup> Carolyn Johnson discusses gender roles in the period, noting how "the Revolution did little to alter the status of the majority of American women", and that "since women's primary responsibility was believed to be their families, they were generally thought to have no legitimate place in the political community".<sup>25</sup> Of course, not all women were content with such expectations. Writing to her husband, Abigail Adams criticised the ways that "you are proclaiming peace and goodwill to men, emancipating all nations, [but] you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives." Poignantly, she then provided a succinct, domestic reframing of the Revolution to edge her message with a wry potency, stating "[women] have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and, without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet".<sup>26</sup> Adams's desire for greater equality was shared by Judith Sargent Murray, an individual described by Sheila L. Skemp as "someone whose views on women's rights were far more advanced and wide-ranging than those held by any of her

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<sup>23</sup> Julia A. Stern, *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Questia online edition, 32, <<http://www.questia.com/read/106680962/public-sentiments-structures-of-feeling-in-nineteenth-century>> (accessed January 13, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Johnston, *Sexual Power: Feminism and the Family in America* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1992), Questia online edition, 11, <<http://www.questia.com/read/58603119/sexual-power-feminism-and-the-family-in-america>> (accessed January 14, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Abigail Adams, "7 May 1776," in *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (London: Penguin Group, 2004), 168.



more well-known contemporaries”.<sup>27</sup> Writing in *The Massachusetts Magazine* (also known by the title of *Monthly Museum of Knowledge and Rational Entertainment*) in 1790, Murray made one concession in her promotion of female capability by recognising the physiological disposition of men as better suited to the theatre of physical conflict. “But in one respect, O ye arbiters of our fate!”, she wrote, “we confess that the superiority is indubitably yours; you are by nature formed for our protectors; we pretend not to vie with you in bodily strength; upon this point we will never contend for victory.” This aside, Murray addressed what she perceived to be an unjust imbalance of power between the sexes, a result of the culturally sustained performance of gender rather than biological disposition. Murray asked “Is it upon mature consideration we adopt the idea [that men are superior], that nature is thus partial in her distributions? Is it indeed a fact, that she hath yielded to one half of the human species so unquestionable a mental superiority?” Noting that American women had been “crowned undoubted sovereigns of the regions of fancy”, recognised for their “talent for slander”, she then queried “what a formidable story can we in a moment fabricate merely from the force of a prolifick [sic] imagination?”, a potent acknowledgement of female creativity wrapped in satirical self-deprecation.<sup>28</sup> The cultural binary of the masculine and the feminine aligned imagination and emotion with the latter, separating the pragmatics of emotionally austere physicality from an increasingly emergent body of countercultural values that were more progressive and egalitarian in nature. Such shifts drew focus away from the authority of the National Imaginary and other institutions and towards the power of the individual, facilitating the growth of a more emotional and philosophical mindset that sought to locate the self intrinsically, rather than in relation to the consensus of society and nation. Speaking at Harvard University in 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson cited the individual as the true agent of social reform. In Emerson’s philosophy, which I address briefly here before offering a closer reading in relation to *The Scroll* in Chapter Two, it is the individual’s obligation to “honesty” in both thought and deed, alongside a deep appreciation for nature and a rejection of “work that does not confirm a deep calling”, that produces positive change, prioritising

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<sup>27</sup> Sheila L. Skemp, *First Lady of Letters: Judith Sargent Murray and the Struggle for Female Independence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), Questia online edition, x, <<http://www.questia.com/read/124243917/first-lady-of-letters-judith-sargent-murray-and>> (accessed November 11, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes,” in *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray*, ed. Sharon M. Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4-11.

personal truth over social obligation.<sup>29</sup> In his address at Harvard, Emerson made his views quite clear:

The so-called “practical men” sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing. I have heard it said that the clergy – who are always, more universally than any other class, the scholars of their day – are addressed as women; that the rough, spontaneous conversation of men they do not hear, but only a mincing and diluted speech...Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth...Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action.<sup>30</sup>

Similar importance is placed on the role of the individual in Henry David Thoreau’s largely autobiographical *Walden* (1854), which offers a social critique of American society from the perspective of an individual living a self-imposed exile in a cabin in the woods. Although the narrator’s self-made woodland dwelling is, in the words of Philip Cafaro, “only one and one-half miles from downtown Concord”, the studious and philosophical tone of Thoreau’s writing greatly exaggerates the narrator’s sense of isolation, detaching the prose from social pressures and protocols.<sup>31</sup> The novel’s depiction of an emotionally literate individual dwelling alone in the woods – reminiscent of the European Romantic image of the Hermit – laments society’s “blind obedience to a blundering oracle” and enables the narrator to criticise the way in which “Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life”.<sup>32</sup> For Thoreau, the exchange of urban and domestic space for that of the natural world revitalises the American man, liberating him from the stifling effects of society.

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<sup>29</sup> David M. Robinson, “Transcendentalism and Its Times,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (address to the Harvard Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 31, 1837), <[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16643/16643-h/16643-h.htm#THE\\_AMERICAN\\_SCHOLAR](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16643/16643-h/16643-h.htm#THE_AMERICAN_SCHOLAR)> (accessed January 9, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Philip Cafaro, *Thoreau’s Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue* (Georgia: Georgia University Press, 2004), 107.

<sup>32</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), 6.

Thoreau's spatial exchange echoes that of Washington Irving's eponymous *Rip Van Winkle* (1819), a hapless parody of Kimmel's Heroic Artisan who embraces the natural world as he flees from the "sharp tongue" of his wife, "the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use".<sup>33</sup> Rip is a farmer – a respected and functional social role in the eyes of the National Imaginary – but he is work shy, his disposition combining with circumstance to undermine and emasculate him. In Irving's sympathetic portrayal of the character, Rip is well liked by the village children, as well as the "good wives of the village, who, as usual, with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle" (10-11). Rip's "only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods" with his dog Wolf, enjoying "the still solitudes", "rich woodland" and "lordly Hudson...on its silent but majestic course" (25-29). Rip is emasculated by the dominance of his wife, whose expectations emphasise his failure to live up to the values and behaviours of the National Imaginary. Dame Van Winkle's assertive and pragmatic dominance upends traditional models of womanhood, her power over Rip asserting a feminine challenge to masculinity through the performance of that which traditionally defined it. Rip, cast into the realm of the oppressed by an inversion of the gender hierarchy, chooses flight over fight as his course of action, a response which exchanges the traditionally feminine domestic arena for wild space in an attempt to glean a valid experience of gender through physical environment. James B. Twitchell endorses this connection between space and gender identity, noting that "whether we like it or not, understanding the sex of space might help us understand the often paradoxical and even testy uses of territory as a way of marking off privacy boundaries, edges of the self."<sup>34</sup> As my discussion in Chapter Two will show, this same dynamic can be applied to Kerouac's use of spatial systems in the formation of the masculine self. In much the same way as Rip, Jack and Neal dismiss the National Imaginary of their time (the middle class, postwar suburban ideal of conformity and community) in favour of the physical and social 'wilds' of postwar America, their journeys exposing them to a range of physical American geographies as diverse as the people who inhabit them. Also significant is the way in which the travels of both Rip, and Jack and Neal occur under a banner of fraternal

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<sup>33</sup> Washington Irving, *Rip Van Winkle* (Philadelphia: David McKay Company, 1921), 20. Subsequent page references in text.

<sup>34</sup> James B. Twitchell, *Where Men Hide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 236.

companionship: Rip shares his experience with Wolf, Jack shares his with Neal. As I reveal in Chapter Two, both the performance of masculinity, and the employment of spatial systems in the staging of it, are central to Kerouac's presentation of American manhood in *The Scroll*, as Jack and Neal's travels span the breadth and depths of postwar America.

## MEN IN MOTION: MASCULINITY AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

In hard times, Americans have often turned to the Western to reset their compasses. In very hard times, it takes a very good Western.<sup>35</sup>

- Roger Ebert

In *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1894), Frederick Jackson Turner notes how “American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development”. According to Turner, institutions have been “compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people – to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress, out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier, the complexity of city life.”<sup>36</sup> Turner’s frontier is most distinctly characterised by mobilisation, a sense of perpetual movement in the pursuit of a constantly retracting destination. The Frontier concept is an important aspect of this dissertation, and it is appropriate at this point to define my use of terms. I employ the term as a proper noun (Frontier) to refer to what can be broadly termed as the cultural and historical acts relating to the colonisation of the American west, encompassing all its experiential and connotative associations. However, on occasion I apply the term to the social, behavioural and psychological boundaries perceived and either adhered to, or transgressed by, the individual. In these cases, I suspend the use of the term as a proper noun (frontier). The westward migration of American people, the gold and land rushes of the mid and late nineteenth century, the war with Mexico between 1846 and 1848, and clashes with native Americans all positioned the Frontier as a stage for the performance of gender normative masculinities, with the pioneer image attempting to justify aggressive

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<sup>35</sup> Roger Ebert, review of *3:10 to Yuma*, dir. James Mangold, *Roger Ebert’s Movie Yearbook 2010* (Missouri: Andrews McMeel Publishing).

<sup>36</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Everett E. Edwards (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), Questia online edition, 186, < <https://www.questia.com/read/91480871/the-early-writings-of-frederick-jackson-turner> > (accessed January 22, 2015).

territorial expansion very much at odds with earlier Revolutionary ideals of defence.<sup>37</sup> Fuelling narratives such as Clarence E. Mulford's *Hopalong Cassidy* series (first instalment 1904), and Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), in which the first person narrator keenly studies a group of Frontiersman and notes how "the romance of American adventure had drawn them all alike to this great playground of young men", the pervasive masculine iconography of the Frontier – specifically that of its fictional sidekick the Western – has been assimilated into the mindset and vocabulary of popular culture.<sup>38</sup> As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, the role of Frontier imagery in Kerouac's characterisation cannot be overstated. If, as John Lomax and Alan Lomax note, the longevity of Frontier imagery is due to "that unique and romantic figure in modern civilization: the American cowboy", it is perhaps unsurprising that Kerouac draws so heavily on this image in his celebratory presentations of Neal, attempting to reinstate a revered example of American manhood in what he perceived as the desolate social plains of postwar America.<sup>39</sup> Significantly however, Jacqueline M. Moore is quick to question the verisimilitude of the glorified cowboy image, balancing mythology against reality. While the narrator of Louis L'Amour's *Shalako* (1962) observes how "A man in the Western lands was as big as he wanted to be, and as good or as bad as he wished", Moore claims that the reality of cowboy masculinity was subject to a stricter behavioural code.<sup>40</sup> Moore identifies the real world cowboy by his "brand of masculinity" that "emphasized responsibility, and restrained behavior within proper boundaries", developing her argument to then present the mythologised counterpart who, much like L'Amour's, is seemingly immune to consequence. Moore's fictional paradigm of the cowboy fuses extreme ideological and behavioural autonomy with a revered social isolationism, his human interactions bisected into displays of physical aggression, and classically chivalric defence:

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<sup>37</sup> Note: there is insufficient space here to discuss the complexities of the conflicts between white/native Americans, and also the America-Mexico war. For discussion, see:

- Jaime Javier Rodriguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War: Narrative, Time, and Identity* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2010).
- Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War: 1846-1848* (New York: Macmillan, 1974).
- Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (Massachusetts: Berwick & Smith Co., 1906), 66.

<sup>39</sup> John Lomax and Alan Lomax, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 25.

<sup>40</sup> Louis L'Amour, *Shalako* (New York: Bantam Dell/Randomhouse, 1962), 9.

The iconic cowboy is independent, unaffected by society's suffocating rules and etiquette; free to go where he wants, when he wants; and answers to no man but himself. His is a life of high adventure on the trail, fighting off Indians and desperadoes, performing physically daring feats on a daily basis, and protecting women and children from harm.<sup>41</sup>

Supporting the enduring appeal of the image, Tom R. Sullivan claims that “Cowboy truth prevails even as time goes by, on a train, in automobiles, on airplanes, or carried by microchips”.<sup>42</sup> Sullivan’s summary is intriguing, in that it implies an infinite transferability of the image, both within the immediate physical world and along the timeline of culture, a transferability embraced with vigour by Kerouac in his employment of Frontier iconography and its connotations.

Contextualising the Frontier within wider historical events, C. Merton Babcock views the westward migration of Americans as an extension of the “spirit of adventure and exploration” that had originally brought Europeans to settle on American soil.<sup>43</sup> Lucy Lockwood Hazard identifies how the Frontier afforded men the opportunity to exercise a “pioneering spirit; a spirit of determination, of endurance, of independence, of ingenuity, of flexibility, of individualism, of optimism”.<sup>44</sup> By chasing the unreachable, and in much the same way as Jack and Neal chase their next experiential high, the American man was attempting to define his masculinity in relation to a physically unattainable objective defined by its condition of perpetual flux; in the eloquent phrasing of John V. H. Dippel, the Frontier “beckoned like a shimmering phantasmagoria, irresistibly alluring yet forever retreating into the mists as one came closer and hesitantly reached out to touch it.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently, I argue that the instability of the Frontier contributed to an instability of manhood, providing a fluid set of parameters against which the American man sought to locate a sense of the male self.

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<sup>41</sup> Jacqueline M. Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 2-3.

<sup>42</sup> Tom R. Sullivan, *Cowboys and Caudillos: Frontier Ideology of the Americas* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990), 19.

<sup>43</sup> C. Merton Babcock, *The American Frontier* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Lucy Lockwood Hazard, *The Frontier in American Literature* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1927), Questia online edition, xviii, <<https://www.questia.com/read/6077014/the-frontier-in-american-literature>> (accessed July 28, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> John V. H. Dippel, *Race to the Frontier: “White Flight” and Westward Expansion* (New York: Algora, 2005), 1-2.

The Frontier, the Frontiersman, the cowboy, and all related connotations were as much intoxicating, abstract models of aspiration as they were mythologised, metonymic labels and physically unattainable goals. Additionally, and despite its overtly masculine facade, the Frontier represented a reframing of hegemonic gender dialogues, with the landscape frequently presented as a feminine entity. For Jane Tompkins, the domination of ‘feminine’ terrain by the masculinity of the Frontiersman is a key consideration. Tompkins describes the Frontiersman’s relationship with the land as somewhat turbulent: “He courts it, struggles with it, defies it, conquers it, and lies down with it at night. It is nothing so much as the figure the Western casts out at the start: the woman.”<sup>46</sup> As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, Kerouac, employing the Frontier imagery characteristic of his prose in *The Scroll*, draws on this dialogue, engendering the American road as submissively feminine beneath the wheels of the masculine space of the automobile.

As Frontiersmen competed to dominate the land, they competed to dominate the feminine. However, Annette Kolodny notes the metaphor of a feminine landscape in American history prior to the westward expansion associated with the Frontier. In *The Lay of The Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, Kolodny’s third chapter – entitled “Laying Waste Her Fields of Plenty” – explores how, during the American Revolution, “the image of a feminine landscape threatened by invading British had become a rallying cry for patriotism”, a discourse simultaneously and paradoxically presenting the feminine as both sacrosanct and conquerable.<sup>47</sup> Tompkins and Kolodny both identify a dialogue between man and nature, and by extension masculinity and femininity. To Kolodny, masculinity is empowered as both protector and aggressor, with the archetypal American defender protecting the feminine from an opposing British masculinity that would seek to harm or conquer it. Tompkins’s account, which most explicitly implies the progressive familiarity bred by a sustained human relationship, sequences the interactions to suggest a power struggle in which gender tensions appear resolved only in masculine triumph, at least from the perspective of the Frontiersman. Providing another perspective, Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci offer a feminist account of the dialogue, condemning the imposition of man (explicitly as gender rather than species) on natural space:

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<sup>46</sup> Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81.

<sup>47</sup> Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 26.



In patriarchy, Nature, animals and women are objectified, hunted, invaded, colonized, owned, consumed and forced to yield and to produce (or not). This violation of the integrity of wild, spontaneous being is rape. It is motivated by fear and a rejection of Life and it allows the oppressor the illusion of control, of power, of being alive.<sup>48</sup>

In Collard and Contrucci's unflinching argument, the industry of Frontier existence constitutes a brutal, sexual violation, the consumption of natural resources an act of totalitarian masculine conquest. Less extreme but concurrent views are present in James Fenimore Cooper's *Wyandotté or The Huttet Knoll* (1848). Cooper's narrator, a Frontiersman, reflects on the colonisation of the American wilderness, bisecting the act into process and outcome:

There is a pleasure in diving into a virgin forest and commencing the labours of civilization, that has no exact parallel in any other human occupation. That of building, or laying out grounds, has certainly some resemblance to it, but it is a resemblance so faint and distant as scarcely to liken the enjoyment each produces. The former approaches nearer to the feeling of creating, and is far more pregnant with anticipations and hopes, though its first effects are seldom agreeable, and are sometimes nearly hideous.<sup>49</sup>

Given the identity of his narrator, it is unsurprising that Cooper presents the colonisation of wild space far more favourably than Collard and Contrucci. However, the same sense of violation is evident, as the "virgin" forest is forcefully penetrated by the masculine endeavor of physical construction. This act is diluted by Cooper's euphemistic phrasing, as the presumed felling and uprooting of trees – the "rape" of the former – is presented as an accepted necessity: the "labours of civilization". Despite their differing perspectives, both presentations frame the feminine landscape as consumed by the masculinity of the Frontier ethos. This opposition exemplifies how representations of the American Frontier rely on a range of interdependent binary tensions: the imagined and the material; the cyclic processes

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<sup>48</sup> Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 1.

<sup>49</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Wyandotté or The Huttet Knoll* (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1849), Google Play online edition, 37, <<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=y3YXAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR2>> (accessed January 17, 2015).

of mobility and stasis, migration and settlement; the respective destruction and construction of natural and human realms; and a metaphorical gender binary against which hegemonic gender dialogues could be reimagined, reframed, and performed.

**CONFLICT, COMPULSION, AND CAUSE:  
THE PUBLIC FACE OF AMERICAN MANHOOD**

“Leading a different life with his friends than what his parents suspected”, writes Paul Maher in his biography of Kerouac, “Jack cruised the streets of downtown Lowell, ever the romanticist.” The adolescent Kerouac was a curious mix. On the one hand, he was a gifted athlete, and would later play American football for Columbia University in New York. On the other, he was a keen and very capable scholar who “sometimes displayed his intelligence with astute, articulate answers, but most times he kept to himself”. Kerouac’s academic and athletic competence produced something of a collision of masculinities, embodying the tension between philosophy and practicality to which Emerson referred in his 1837 Harvard lecture. “This polarity would be a distinct aspect of his personality”, continues Maher, “one part of his world profoundly intellectual while the other, indoctrinated by the rabble-rousing rites of adolescence, embracing an appreciation for loose girls and exciting swing bands.”<sup>50</sup> Caught between the archetypal American masculinity of the sports star or ‘jock’, and the sensibilities of his love for philosophy and writing, Kerouac experienced first hand the conflicting gravities exerted by the self and by society, gravities which, as I have shown and continue to show throughout this dissertation, engage closely with American masculinity, and Kerouac’s inconsistent portrayal of manhood in *The Scroll*. Despite showing promise, Kerouac’s sporting career was cut short; during his first season, and having caught the opposing team’s punt, he attempted to twist loose from the tackle he had received. His efforts resulted in a broken leg. The injury provided Kerouac with a considerable amount of free time in which to convalesce, time which he invested in leisurely and social pursuits, and on which he reflects in *Vanity of Duluoaz* (1968):

Because that’s one good thing that came out of it, with my broken leg in a cast, and with two crutches under my good armpits, I hobbled every night to the Lion’s Den, the Columbia fireplace-and-mahogany type restaurant, sat right in front of the fire in the place of honor, watched the boys and girls dance, ordered every blessed night the same rare filet mignon, ate it at leisure with my crutches athwart the table, then two hot fudge sundaes for dessert, that whole blessed sweet autumn.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Maher, *Kerouac: The Definitive Biography* (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2004), 44.

<sup>51</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Vanity of Duluoaz* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), iBooks edition, VII.

Despite this initial period of enjoyment, Kerouac's sporting prospects soon soured; dropped from the team, he dropped out of Columbia, enlisting in the military before being discharged for psychiatric reasons. In 1944, Kerouac returned to New York, and it was here that he was to meet Allen Ginsberg, "a companion who shared his love for a romanticized America and a desire to achieve greatness in writing", forging a friendship that would shape the development of his personal and literary identity, as well as the Beat subculture.<sup>52</sup> During his early adult life then, Kerouac's masculinity was pushed and pulled between a varied and contradictory selection of identities, with the dynamics of loss and decline integral to these tussles. From the culturally revered and physically dynamic American sports star emerged the fallen and forgotten hero, cast aside once he was of no more use to the institution he previously served; the same dynamic then defined Kerouac's military career, his enlistment ultimately rewarded with dismissal once he was no longer 'fit for purpose' when judged against the value systems of American nation (a narrative not wholly dissimilar to that of Steve Rogers with which I open this chapter). As I shall show in Chapter Two, themes of loss and decline resonate within *The Scroll*, bringing with them corresponding notions of mourning and nostalgia that greatly influence Kerouac's approaches to the presentation of masculinity.

Images and experiences of injury, loss, decline, and subjective inadequacy are also tightly entwined with masculinity in the fiction of Ernest Hemingway. Jacob "Jake" Barnes, narrator of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), is a veteran of the First World War, and, due to wounding in the conflict, is sexually impotent. Paradoxically, the theatre of war is responsible for both the masculination of Barnes in accordance with the traditional male doctrines of defence and combat, and also his emasculation by sexual impotence, a dynamic similar to the way in which Kerouac's engagement with the normatively masculine (the physicality of American football) ultimately detaches him from it through his injury. This dynamic is put into simple terms by Barnes himself, who, confessing only to the reader in a face-saving catharsis, filters an emotional literacy through a direct style of speech to note how "It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing."<sup>53</sup> Barnes's impotence prevents him from properly consummating his

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<sup>52</sup> Matt Theado, *Understanding Jack Kerouac* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>53</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (Libros Publishing, 2015), eBooks edition, book one. Subsequent references in text.

relationship with female love interest Brett, whom he describes as being “damned good-looking...built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht” (book one). Brett’s sexual and romantic appeal generates a rivalry – the “*racing yacht*” [my italics] an apt allusion to competition – between the white male characters, affording the resources for a bolstering of male selfhood in fraternal competition. Competition for Brett simultaneously facilitates the potential validation of manhood by the outperformance of other men and the ‘conquest’ of the feminine, and the threat of social emasculation through homosocial ridicule and heterosexual romantic dismissal, reframing the risk/reward dynamic characteristic of the Frontier into a binary of subjective victory and defeat. The dynamics of contest and challenge also manifest in anti-Semitic comments directed to Barnes’s friend Robert Cohn, one of several men who vie for Brett’s affection.<sup>54</sup> Though Cohn successfully consummates his feelings for Brett, to Barnes, her sexual allure ultimately provides nothing more than a nagging reminder of his impotence and reduction to something less than his peers, producing a sense of social detachment that is evident in the narrative voice. Barnes observes Brett’s adoration of Pedro Romero, a young Spanish bull fighter whom she subsequently seduces:

Romero was the whole show. I do not think Brett saw any other bull-fighter...I had her watch how Romero took the bull away from a fallen horse with his cape, and how he held him with the cape and turned him, smoothly and suavely, never wasting the bull. She saw how Romero avoided every brusque movement and saved his bulls for the last when he wanted them, not winded and discomposed but smoothly worn down. She saw how close Romero always worked to the bull, and I pointed out to her the tricks the other bull-fighters used to make it look as though they were working closely. She saw why she liked Romero's cape-work and why she did not like the others (book two).

Hemingway presents a dual voyeurism, with Barnes and Brett both admiring the unattainable (at least, with respect to Brett, hitherto). Barnes focuses on Brett, who is in turn captivated by Romero. Despite his desire for Brett, Barnes’s tone is devoid of aggression or bitterness; he vicariously observes Romero through Brett’s eyes, with underlying jealousy masked by a focus on her admiration of the aesthetic within the bullring. Barnes attempts to counter the sense of invalidation he experiences by presenting himself as a facilitator of Brett’s observations, boasting how “I had her watch how Romero took the bull away” and

<sup>54</sup> Note: for discussion of race in Hemingway’s work, as well as that of several of his contemporaries, see:

- Keith Gandal, *The Gun and the Pen: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and the Fiction of Mobilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

how “I pointed out to her the tricks the other bull fighters used”, as if extracting some dull pride from his minor role in the provision of the joy Brett gains from the admiration of another man. The sense of unquenchable aspiration underpinning this section of the novel is galvanised on the subsequent page as Hemingway transposes the dynamic into the bullring, Barnes observing how Romero “dominated the bull by making him realize he was unattainable” (book two).

This sense of loss and subjective inferiority in relation to an ‘other’ is recurrent in Hemingway’s wider work. Hemingway commonly impedes his male characters, assigning immovable and uniquely personal obstacles that relegate personal growth and aspiration to the realm of fantasy. For Harry in *The Snows Of Kilimanjaro* (1936), gangrene brought about “because he had not used iodine two weeks ago when a thorn had scratched his knee” transforms a safari from a potent masculine playground into a ruminative demise.<sup>55</sup> A mortar strike during *A Farewell To Arms* (1929) sees the injured narrator Frederic Henry consigned to a military hospital, and his comrade Passini killed after his legs are “smashed above the knee” and “held by tendons” while “the stump twitched and jerked as though it were not connected.”<sup>56</sup> Hemingway frames his writing within traditionally masculine domains of conflict, competition, and geographical exploration, yet it is his characters’ inability to successfully perform in these arenas that separates them from the masculinities to which they aspire. Through impedance, Hemingway is able to negate the realisation of male aspiration, defining the manhood of his characters by their detachment from their subjective ideals. Consequently, I argue that the identities of Hemingway’s injured male characters are defined by their deficiencies, and in relation to that which is lost or inaccessible. Ultimately, their masculinities are consigned to the ontological purgatory between obligation, ambition, and capability.

This sense of latent ambition and personal male shortfall is prominent in John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* (1937), which chronicles the exploits of fictional migrant workers on a ranch in the California dust bowl. With many male characters typifying “the brawny masculinity of the salt-of-the-earth proletarian” that James L. Penner cites as “the imaginary norm” of

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<sup>55</sup> Ernest Hemingway, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” in *Ernest Hemingway: The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 13.

<sup>56</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), iBooks edition, chap. 9. Subsequent references in text.

the 1930s, it is perhaps unsurprising that the dynamics of opposition and competition take centre stage.<sup>57</sup> The character of Slim notes how “Maybe ever’body in the whole damn world is scared of each other”, while Curley’s characteristic hostility is a constant catalyst for unrest.<sup>58</sup> Curley’s Wife, the only female who appears directly in the novel, mockingly and bemusedly aligns competition and tension with the masculine:

She regarded them amusedly. “Funny thing,” she said. “If I catch any one man, and he’s alone, I get along fine with him. But just let two of the guys get together an’ you won’t talk. Jus’ nothing but mad.” She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips. “You’re all scared of each other, that’s what. Ever’ one of you’s scared the rest is goin’ to get something on you” (Steinbeck).

Surfacing repeatedly throughout the novel is the concept of the American Dream.<sup>59</sup> The term “American Dream” was first coined by James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America* (1931), in which he hyperbolically describes it as “that dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank” and as “the greatest contribution we have as yet made to the thought and welfare of the world.”<sup>60</sup> Even in the context of the 1930s, I would suggest that the creation of a vague, subjective, and fluid abstract ideal falls considerably short of “the greatest contribution” America had made to the world. Nonetheless, the tone and ideals of Adams’s dream still resonate historically, sustaining the American doctrines of aspiration that began with the Declaration, and later characterised the Frontier and its inherent paradoxes; “always vaguely present but never clearly defined”, writes Frederic I Carpenter, “[the dream] has been one of the motivating forces of American civilization.”<sup>61</sup> Steinbeck interprets the dream variously in his male characters, their aspirations remaining poignantly

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<sup>57</sup> James L. Penner, *Pinks, Pansies and Punks: The Rhetoric of Masculinity in American Literary Culture* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>58</sup> John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), iBooks edition. Subsequent references in text.

<sup>59</sup> Note: for discussion of dreams, society, corresponding notions of utopia, and their representations, see:

- Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922).
- Jörn Rüsen, Michael Fehr and Thomas W. Rieger, ed. *Thinking Utopia: Steps into Other Worlds* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> J.T. Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1931), viii.

<sup>61</sup> Frederic I. Carpenter, *American Literature and the Dream* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), Questia online edition, 5, <<https://www.questia.com/read/165475/american-literature-and-the-dream>> (accessed February 16, 2015).

abstract throughout the novel in the face of the socio-economic climate, and the physical and social impedances Steinbeck assigns: George's self-imposed obligation to care for Lennie, Lennie's diminished intellect, Candy's age and severed hand, Crooks's spinal injury and, due to the social climate of the 1930s, his race.

If the Great Depression undermined the masculinity of American men by impeding their traditional function as the breadwinner, the outbreak of World War II would certainly provide the opportunity for the assertion of normative models of American manhood through the traditional male theatres of combat and the defence of nation. However, the protocols of modern enlistment served to sustain the lack of autonomy and individuality experienced by men who had been forced to locate a sense of self alongside and within the unemployed masses of the Depression. Following his relegation to the collectivity of unemployment lines in the 1930s, in the 1940s, the American man now became the GI (Government Issue or General Issue), described by Michael D. Gambone as “a term that wryly recognized the transformation of a civilian into a soldier and the disappearance of everything an individual had held dear in the past.”<sup>62</sup> This transition, a romanticised hyperbolisation of which underpins the *Captain America* narrative that begins this chapter, is also identified by Katherine I. Miller, who notes the way in which the “inductee had to shed the identity of civilian – the comforts of family life – and take on the mind-set and attitudes of the military.”<sup>63</sup> Gambone examines how the antithetical natures of combat theatres and the home front led many soldiers to first define each by its mutual exclusivity, only to then transpose domestic images onto unfamiliar objects and individuals in order to rationalise the military environment. “In the absence of fathers and mothers”, Gambone claims, “new figures emerged to govern the soldiers’ new home...the sergeant was the core of their life”. Moreover, soldiers sought temporary comfort in alien surroundings, superimposing domestic topographies onto the landscapes of the battlefield and longing for the day when they returned home (16). As I discuss in Chapter Two in relation to *The Scroll*, this process of superimposition is central to Kerouac’s prose, with the aesthetic of the subjectively revered projected onto the quotidian to bolster the image and experience of male selfhood. This

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<sup>62</sup> Michael D. Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home: The Veteran in American Society* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), Questia online edition, 15, <<https://www.questia.com/read/122815614/the-greatest-generation-comes-home-the-veteran-in>> (accessed January 13, 2015). Subsequent page references in text.

<sup>63</sup> Katherine I. Miller, *War Makes Men of Boys: A Soldier’s World War II* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 8.



tendency relies on the suppression of reality in favour of an ‘other’, with the experience of loss and deficiency rationalised through the resurrection and installation of that which has been rendered absent from the moment. In relation to American GIs, Gambone develops his argument to consider the longer term implications of this behavior, noting how, with the projected images drawn from nostalgia, the ultimate outcome of the process was to exacerbate the sense of dislocation experienced by American men. He identifies how “as the war progressed, the perception of home altered with it”, with soldiers’ memories of America based on outdated pre-war social structures and gender roles. Summarily, the abstract fantasy of life at home was exaggerated “far out of proportion to reality” (18).

At the end of the war, the male soldier’s reintegration into an America for which “cultural notions of masculinity had changed” to suit “the corporate capitalist socioeconomic order”, called for the revision of the nostalgic parameters by which American men defined their sense of self; “pursuing a hobby, engaging in recreation, expressing an interest in sexuality or self-gratification, or developing a pleasing personality”, writes Tom Pendergast, “were all presented as viable ways for men to express their masculine identity.”<sup>64</sup> Such behaviours suggest a redirection, suppression, and dilution of traditional American masculine doctrine, the same doctrine that fuels the traditional and mythologised masculinities which Kerouac frequently attempts to superimpose onto the realities of postwar America in *The Scroll*. Pendergast’s account reflects the curdling of ostensibly noble values into a performance of routine affability: “pursuing a hobby” and “engaging in recreation” accommodate the broadening of horizons through a moderated form of mobility and proactive dynamism; “an *interest* in sexuality or self-gratification” [my italics] detaches the American man from promiscuity while still acknowledging his virility; and his quest for a “pleasing personality” implies a need to be a functional and recognised social agent, suppressing masculine autonomy. The impotency of such masculine models stems from what Abigail Cheever dubs “a time of fundamental uncertainty”, the early years of a Cold War characterised on the domestic front by “emergent consumerism, the perceived threat to liberal and democratic

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<sup>64</sup> Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 2.

institutions posed by totalitarian regimes, and new omnipresent mass cultural forms”, a period in history which I now move to discuss.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Abigail Cheever, *Real Phonies: Cultures of Authenticity in Post-World War II America* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2010), Questia online edition, 6, <<http://www.questia.com/read/122396041/real-phonies-cultures-of-authenticity-in-post-world>> (accessed May 18, 2015).

**COOKIE CUTTERS AND COMMUNISM:  
MANHOOD AND POSTWAR COLLECTIVISM**

The tyranny of an object, he thought. It doesn't know I exist.<sup>66</sup>

- Philip K. Dick

Locating the origins of the Cold War in World War II, Andrea Carosso notes how the “uneasy wartime alliance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, often referred to as a ‘shotgun marriage’, quickly deteriorated into an economic and military standoff which rapidly brought the two former allies against Nazism to cast themselves in stark opposition to one another.”<sup>67</sup> Although these tensions were exacerbated by American and Soviet involvement in the Korean War, it is the ideological impact of the Cold War on American society that is of greatest significance here.<sup>68</sup> As the American government “recognized the threat of international Communism and of Communist subversion in the media”, writes Anthony Fellow, it sought to fortify the ideology of the American people against such threats.<sup>69</sup> Following the accommodation of a traditional military masculinity by World War II, the conformist, suburban passivity of the promoted postwar social model emerged as its very antithesis; Lynn Spigel notes how “the white middle-class family, living in a suburban tract home, was a government sanctioned ideal”, “a potent utopian fantasy.”<sup>70</sup> The rapid postwar growth of mass produced suburban housing stemmed from the need to house some sixteen million returning veterans and their rapidly growing families. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 provided veterans with a tailored mortgage program to support their purchase of such “Levittown” accommodation, enabling veterans, in the words of

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<sup>66</sup> Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (London: Orion Publishing Group Ltd, 2010), iBooks edition, chap. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Andrea Carosso, *Cold War Narratives: American Culture in the 1950s* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 15.

<sup>68</sup> Note: for discussion of the Korean War, see:

- Carter Malkasian, *The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Oxford: Osprey Club, 2001).
- Robert Leckie, *Conflict: The History of the Korean War, 1950-1953* (New York: Putnam, 1962).

<sup>69</sup> Anthony Fellow, *American Media History* (Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2013), 210.

<sup>70</sup> Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 33-34. Subsequent page references in text.

Kenneth T. Jackson, to “return to civilian life with a home of their own.”<sup>71</sup> Although such houses were, in terms of property deeds, a “home of their own”, the homogenous, cloned appearance of such communities ultimately served to perpetuate the loss of individual identity experienced by the male veteran during his military service. A further challenge to masculine individuality was the postwar rise in consumer culture. Noted above by Abigail Cheever, and described by Gary S. Cross as “a saturnalia of spending”, this growth was in no small part a reaction to wartime austerity, as the “post-1945 crop of babies created instant markets for everything from toys and layettes to larger cars and new houses.”<sup>72</sup> Social engagement with mass produced goods, described by Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean as a central aspect of “the American media boom of the postwar era”, functioned as a metaphor for investment in the sociopolitical ideals of the period, with the ownership of identical material goods evidence of financial and ideological subscription to sociocultural trend.<sup>73</sup> The period reflected something of a paradox for masculinity, as the bullish and suspicious political culture of McCarthyism focused its aggressive stare on the comparatively sedate existence of men living what Neil A. Wynn terms “the suburban ideal of companionate, child-centred marriages with little scope for careerism”.<sup>74</sup> The postwar suburban ideal imposed a cultural homogeneity, producing a physical and aspirational stasis that negated the mobilisation of men in thought and deed and suppressed the individualism, physicality, practicality, and independence long held in American culture as benchmarks of manhood. The journeys and behaviours chronicled by Kerouac in *The Scroll* are, broadly speaking, at odds with these ideals of stasis and conformity, yet it would be deeply myopic to simply cast Kerouac’s work as a binary counterpoint to dominant American values of the period. For one, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter Two through my close reading of the presentation of Neal Cassady, and my brief discussion of Kerouac’s *Visions of Gerard* (1963), Kerouac’s approach to the formation, experience, and presentation of masculinity relies heavily on the examination and admiration of the performance of gender by other males. This aspect of

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<sup>71</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), Questia online edition, 233, <<http://www.questia.com/read/98214476/crabgrass-frontier-the-suburbanization-of-the-united>> (accessed June 2, 2015).

<sup>72</sup> Gary S. Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 88.

<sup>73</sup> Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 273.

<sup>74</sup> Neil A. Wynn, “‘The Good War’: The Second World War and Postwar American Society,” *Journal of Contemporary History* v. 31, no. 3 (July 1996): 475.

Kerouac's prose is so strong that his attempts to define and present the masculinity of his own literary avatar(s) are characterised by relativity: his own selfhood is defined by his proximity to, and engagement with, the identities of those around him. Ultimately, I argue that while Kerouac can justifiably be considered autonomous and as an 'outsider' in relation to wider American sociocultural discourse of the period, in literary and philosophical terms, his presentation of masculinity and selfhood are greatly dependent upon the experiences and performances of that which is socially or intellectually fraternal.

For sociologist David Riesman, a contemporary of Kerouac, collectivity is the defining quality of an "other-directed" society. In *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950), Riesman identifies and classifies salient American social trends to produce a tripartite behavioural schematic for American social history. He notes that the historically dominant social model was the "tradition-directed" society in which relations had "endured for centuries and are modified but slightly, if at all, by successive generations", and in which "the culture, in addition to its economic tasks, or as part of them, provides ritual, routine, and religion to occupy and to orient everyone". Suggesting an increase in autonomy, Riesman then moves to note the emergence of the "inner-directed" society, characterised by "increased personal mobility, by a rapid accumulation of capital...and by an almost constant expansion...in the production of goods and people, and extensive expansion in exploration, colonization, and imperialism". The final model offered by Riesman is the "other-directed", in which "contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual [and in which] "keeping in touch with others permits a close behavioral conformity, not through drill in behaviour itself, as in the tradition-directed character, but rather through an exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others". Chronologically, Riesman's observations reflect a progression, with notions of selfhood orientated against nation, then against personal desire, then against behavioural proximity to others, a narrative which my discussion in this chapter has shown through its interrogation of the Revolutionary period, the Frontier, and then postwar America.<sup>75</sup> Unlike the individuals of Riesman's "inner-directed" society, whose autonomy broadly engages with the traditional and pioneering American spirit, "the other-directed man simply does not seek power; perhaps, rather, he avoids and evades it" (275). In the postwar context, this shunning of "power" reflects a

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<sup>75</sup> David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 26-38. Subsequent page references in text.

subscription to the “other-directed” collectivity of the milieu, with the traditional American notions of freedom and independence – the values for which American soldiers and Captain America are said to have factually and fictionally battled – superseded by suppressive conformity. Riesman’s observations echo those of Alexis De Tocqueville, positioning social homogeneity and collectivity as weakening forces on the individual’s self image, his inclinations, and his capabilities.

Addressing the tensions between autonomy and conformity, Frank Capra’s film *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946) explores the challenges that the experience of American manhood presents for one small town individual. Capra’s work, based on Philip Van Doren Stern’s short story *The Greatest Gift* (1943) and branded unfairly as “sentimental” by Wheeler Winston Dixon, explores the struggles to reconcile the American Dream with the realities of American masculinity in the postwar period, the same struggles which influence Kerouac’s prose in *The Scroll*. Unlike Kerouac however, whose work shows Jack and Neal responding through constant mobilisation, Capra’s film offers an account of protagonist George Bailey attempting to navigate his personal crisis within the social and physical spaces of the small town of Bedford Falls.<sup>76</sup> As a young adult, Bailey’s lack of interest in working alongside his father is clear, his denunciation of the perceived experience of stasis he aligns with routine employment leading him to state how he “couldn’t face the rest of his life being cooped up in a shabby little office”, and how he would “bust” if he “didn’t get away”. After circumstances draw the reluctant Bailey into this very lifestyle, he displays symptoms of frustration, his usually mild-mannered self reacting adversely to any suggestion of permanence or status quo. Capra relies on a disharmonious dialogue between Bailey and the social and physical spaces he inhabits to convey this tension, with actions and dialogue showing resistance to any notion of routine or prescription. Upon leaving his home, Bailey playfully asks his mother to “point me in the right direction”, which she physically does, only for his about-face and departure to leave her with a look of surprise and concern. Immediately after, his encounter with Violet renders her dumbfounded and him a public laughing stock as he dispenses with social convention to suggest that the pair “go out in the fields and take off our shoes and walk through the grass.” Mary’s house provides no reprieve as he tussles aggressively, and, at his expense, somewhat comically with the pristine

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<sup>76</sup> Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Film Noir and the Cinema of Paranoia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 38.

white picket gate of her idyllic suburban home, eventually kicking it open in a rebuke of the domestication it represents. In his frustrated state, Bailey performs a model of American masculinity that substitutes the traditional qualities of emotional reticence and physicality for a childlike vulnerability and articulate intelligence, a performance which positions the audience as wholly sympathetic to his situation. There are no suggestions that his dreams of individualism and mobility will ever truly materialise, and in the reality of the film, his middle class upbringing and politely considerate character seem well suited to the social amicability of Bedford Falls, a lifestyle to which he eventually and happily surrenders.

The response of American masculinity to such a ‘softening’, and the wide accessibility of moving image provided by the period’s thriving cinema industry compels me to address the significance of gender in the construction of film noir, a genre for which Paul Schrader claims “almost every critic has his own definition”.<sup>77</sup> Mark T. Conard offers what he considers to be a broad blueprint for film noir, noting its “constant opposition of light and shadow, its oblique camera angles, and its disruptive compositional balance of frames and scenes, the way characters are placed in awkward or unconventional positions within a particular shot.”<sup>78</sup> There is insufficient space here to perform the fine dissections necessary to explore and define the specific conventions and tendencies of film noir, or indeed to consider the implications that its roots in European expressionism have on the extent to which it can be considered truly ‘American’; nonetheless, the “particular ‘dark’ style and mood” identified by Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo as central to its aesthetic provides a unique framing of the cultural climate in 1940s and 1950s America, with tensions between masculinity and femininity at the core.<sup>79</sup> These tensions, and the connection between sex and danger dominate Anthony Mann’s *Raw Deal* (1948), in which the love triangle between escaped convict Joe, his existing partner Pat, and Ann (a woman whose kidnap leads to Joe’s death) is presented so as to implicate the feminine as a threat to the masculine. The theatrical release poster foregrounds the volatility of male/female discourse, with Joe – apparently shot and brandishing a smoking gun – collapsing into the shadows in the wake of

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Schrader, “Notes on Film Noir,” *FILM COMMENT*, Spring 1972, 9.

<sup>78</sup> Mark T. Conard, *The Philosophy of Film Noir* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), Questia online edition, 1, <<http://www.questia.com/read/122274144/the-philosophy-of-film-noir>> (accessed September 21, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo, *Noir Anxiety* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), Questia online edition, 1, <<http://www.questia.com/read/119053286/noir-anxiety>> (accessed September 29, 2015).

strong, unflinching, and ascendant gazes from the more strongly illuminated Pat and Ann. Despite the mortally wounded Joe, a strong, assertive, and capitalised typeface still fights the good fight for masculinity, offering a tagline of “Bullets! Women! -- Can’t hold a man like this!”<sup>80</sup>

The destabilisation of social and cinematic convention within film noir is indicative of the underlying sense of unrest and paranoia in 1940s and 1950s America, its apogee arguably manifesting in Robert Aldrich’s *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), a hedonistic intersection of nuclear fear, hyper-masculine brutality, and stark social commentary. Aldrich’s film is an adaptation of the novel of the same title by Mickey Spillane (1952), and maintains the bullish style of the original. Spillane’s collective literary output, and its celebration of brutal, hard-boiled protagonist Mike Hammer, responds to the contextual ‘softening’ of masculinity discussed above, hyperbolising traditionally hegemonic male traits and behaviours into a compensatory booster shot for a postwar male audience dislocated from its social function by the shift to peace time life. “Many of Spillane’s first million readers”, writes Robert L. Gale, “were veterans returning to civilian life after World War II...Most had known violence up close and were freed by it...They found Hammer’s guns, fists, and lusts exciting, even enviable.”<sup>81</sup> It seems viable that the essence of Spillane’s work lies in the intersection of the stark realities of the combat veteran with the escapist invulnerability afforded by literature, his work straddling a binary of the real and the unreal in a similar manner to Kerouac’s. Spillane’s reader is complicit in acts of violence yet detached from both them and any repercussions they generate, enshrining the performance of the hypermasculine in a consequence-free fantasy. Writing within the realm of fiction, Spillane is able to engineer his prose precisely, presenting a society in which masculinity, however inapplicable its presented form may be to the real world, is immortalised and celebrated. As I discuss in Chapter Two, Kerouac attempts to apply the same principle to his work. However, unlike Spillane, whose fictional terrain is entirely within his control, the semi-autobiographical nature of *The Scroll* ensures that the fantasies of Kerouac’s work are undermined by reality, with the mutual ingress of fact and fiction ultimately nullifying, rather than celebrating and affirming, the images of masculinity he presents.

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<sup>80</sup> Theatrical release poster for *Raw Deal*, dir. Anthony Mann, feat Dennis O’Keefe, Claire Trevor, Marsha Hunt (Reliance Pictures, 1948), <<http://www.bestmoviesbyfarr.com/movies/raw-deal/1948>> (accessed November 5, 2015).

<sup>81</sup> Robert L. Gale, *A Mickey Spillane companion* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), ix.



It was never my aim in this chapter to claim or identify a finite and absolutely autonomous model of American masculinity. In accordance with the positioning of gender as a cultural construct, I do hope to have gone some way towards demonstrating that the experience and presentation of American masculinity in literary and moving image texts has been shaped by cultural history and mythology, and the opposing and overlapping confluences of sociocultural and political tides. With the ideals outlined in the Declaration providing such a firm engendering of national identity, and with a corresponding masculine doctrine manifesting more in hypothesis than proven actuality, it is perhaps unsurprising that endeavours to meet the purported demands of nation have repeatedly undermined – rather than affirmed – the American man’s experience of the male self. The presentation of American manhood as an interstitial condition has been frequently identified in my readings, and, in Chapter Two, I address the way in which this aspect is central to the presentation of American masculinity in *The Scroll*. Difficulties in the act of male self-location have been compounded by attempts to define the individual’s experience of manhood not by its present condition, but by its detachment from that which is presented as surpassing or undermining it; simply put, American masculinity has been defined as much by that which *it is not*, as by that which *it is*. This separation highlights the prominent role of opposition in the formation of images of manhood, whether pertaining to the separation of the immediate from the elsewhere, of the mobile from static, of the individual from the collective, or of the masculine from the feminine. As far as these oppositions have exerted a dislocating influence on American masculinity, the same tensions have provided American men – and their fictional avatars – with the desire and resources to attempt to construct, validate, and sustain a sense of self. To this end, the political engendering of nation has corresponded to the cultural engendering of behaviour, with a commonly presented bisection of the feminine and the masculine leading more gender normative masculinities to attempt to assert a sense of self through their suppression of the feminine. This suppression has manifested in multiple forms: the geographical metaphors of colonisation and the Frontier; explicit derision in sociopolitical, philosophical, and literary discourse; and the experience and psychological segregation of spatial systems. The reduction of the feminine has long been employed as a catalyst for the bolstering of masculinity, as if manhood exists as a relative and reactive – rather than absolute – condition. Of course, this dynamic does not begin to tell the entire story of this chapter, as the advocacy and employment of the traditionally ‘feminine’ has provided a set of contrapuntal ideologies which influential thinkers and

authors have employed in the formation of an American literary and philosophical identity and canon. Consequently, American masculinity has proven to be evolutionary, crossing the presupposed gender binary in response to both domestic and global concerns, attempting to assert and justify its function(s) as a social and autonomous entity.

My discussion in this chapter has terminated in the landscape of 1940s and 1950s America, a period and place of substantial social change in which Jack Kerouac was to write and publish the original *On the Road*. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter Two during my close reading of *The Scroll*, Kerouac's presentation of American masculinity extends the narrative of American men in American culture, sustaining and attempting to resurrect archetypal models of masculinity from personal, as well as American literary, philosophical, and cultural history in an effort to locate a sense of the male self in postwar America.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **BEAT UP, BEAT DOWN, BEAT IT: POSTWAR MANHOOD AND THE COUNTERCULTURE OF KEROUAC**

Suppose we suddenly wake up and see that what we thought to be this and that, ain't this and that at all?<sup>82</sup>

- Jack Kerouac

The “Beat Generation” label was first attributed to his chronological and intellectual contemporaries by Kerouac himself during a conversation with John Clellon Holmes – Kerouac’s friend and author of *Go* (1952) – in 1948.<sup>83</sup> Clarifying the meaning of the term “Beat” to describe the generation of Americans that “went through the last war, or at least could get a drink easily once it was over”, Holmes, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* in November 1952, expanded on Kerouac’s use of the term, explaining how “the meaning is only too clear to most Americans. More than mere weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself”.<sup>84</sup> Holmes’s account of a disaffected generation that had, in the words of Jonah Raskin, “come of age in the wake of World War II and the atomic bomb” testifies to something of an existential crisis, with the individual experiencing a sense of inner turmoil when confronting the (un)realities of selfhood.<sup>85</sup> Identified with eager anticipation by Kerouac in *The Scroll* as it was “rising from the underground, the sordid hipsters of America, a new beat generation that I was slowly joining”, the subculture of the Beats and its collective literary output was not immune to criticism in both popular and academic circles (156).<sup>86</sup> Contemporary criticism of the Beats targeted what it perceived to be an inherent pessimism, the antithesis of the traditional American doctrines of potential, aspiration, and growth. Writing in 1958 for the popular

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<sup>82</sup> Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007), eBooks edition, chap. 28.

<sup>83</sup> Gregory Stephenson, *The Daybreak Boys: Essays on the Literature of the Beat Generation* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>84</sup> John Clellon Holmes, “This is the Beat Generation,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 16 November 1952, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Jonah Raskin, *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg’s Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation* (California: University of California Press, 2004), xi.

*Life Magazine*, staff writer Paul O’Neil identified the way in which “the Beat finds society too hideous to contemplate and so withdraws with it. He does not go quietly, however, nor so far that his voice is inaudible, and his route of retreat is littered with old beer cans and marijuana butts.” In his article, O’Neil does not criticise the act of rebellion itself, but rather the latent method of protest that he views the Beats as implementing: “arguing, sulking and bad poetry”. O’Neil makes no effort to justify his views, offering a volley of personal complaint more than an insightful and evaluative commentary. Nonetheless, his criticism of reactive, emotional behaviour and its degrading influence upon the written word is reminiscent of the culture of masculine restraint that characterised the immediate post-Revolutionary politics of America, as I discuss early in Chapter One. At odds with traditional masculine doctrines of emotional austerity, the Beats’ uninhibited vocalisations reflected a rejection of that which was – at least to O’Neil’s neoconservative outlook – traditionally and quintessentially “American”. O’Neil continues his complaint, mourning how an America which he bombastically describes as “the biggest, sweetest and most succulent casaba ever produced by the melon patch of civilization” could have spurned the “hairiest, scrawniest and most discontented specimens of all time”. Identifying strongly with the notions of cultural collectivism so prominent in postwar America, O’Neil summarises what he perceives as the Beats’ perspective on contemporary society:

The industrious square, he cries, is a tragic sap who spends all the juices and energies of life in stultifying submission to the “rat race” and does so, furthermore, with no more reward than sexual enslavement by a matriarchy of stern and grasping wives and the certainty of atomic death for his children. Thus, say the Beats, the only way man can call his soul his own is by becoming an outcast.<sup>87</sup>

Similar reaction can be found in the academic work of Norman Podhoretz, who, upon reading *On the Road*, was quick to brand the Beats as proponents of “a revolt of the spiritually underprivileged and the crippled of soul.” For Podhoretz, the movement was an almost pagan regression, an assault on all that is socially wholesome. “The Bohemianism of the 1950s”, he claims, “is hostile to civilization; it worships primitivism, instinct, energy, blood.”<sup>88</sup> Writing in *Playboy* the following year however, Kerouac’s presentation of the

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<sup>87</sup> Paul O’Neil, “The Only Rebellion Around,” *Life Magazine*, 30 November 1959, 115.

<sup>88</sup> Norman Podhoretz, “The Know-Nothing Bohemians,” *Partisan Review* 25 v. 25, no. 2 (Spring 1958): 307-316.

Beats took on a far less primal physicality. Tucked unassumingly in monochrome, amidst full colour advertisements for mass produced Vespa scooters and dinner jackets, and light hearted popular fiction, Kerouac's article placed the reinstatement of autonomy high in the Beat agenda, mourning the loss of an America that was previously "invested with a selfbelieving individuality [that] had begun to disappear around the end of World War II with so many great guys dead". As a proponent of the movement, Kerouac was keen to play down the reactivity of his authorial voice, stating how he wanted "to speak *for* things" rather than "*against*" them. For "the crucifix I speak out" he wrote, "for the star of Israel I speak out, for the divinest man who ever lived who was a German (Bach) I speak out, for sweet Mohammed I speak out, for Buddha I speak out, for Lao-tse and Chuang-tse I speak out".<sup>89</sup> Kerouac's proposed agenda subverts material culture and collectivism not through explicit criticism, but through endorsement of the binary opposites, his polytheistic approach celebrating diversity over homogeneity to define the Beat not by O'Neil's physical dereliction or Podhoretz's moral corruption, but by a search for spiritual elevation. The conflicting accounts are of course unsurprising, with O'Neil and Podhoretz vocalising the dominant "other-directed" standpoint to which Kerouac's individualist philosophy was, by his own declaration, opposed. It is important here to note that I do not suggest that the Beat ethos is, by its opposition to the "other-directed", "inner-directed", as the optimistic accumulation and expansion of material wealth and personal status central to David Riesman's "inner-directed" model is at odds with the Beats' broad rejection of material culture, the "experience of no-money" noted by James Campbell as being central to their philosophy.<sup>90</sup> For Kerouac and the Beats, aspiration pertained to the experience of the individual, and enlightenment could be achieved only via the inward study of self, rather than through participation in the routines and rituals of postwar social hierarchy and materialism.

Much like Kerouac's previous novel *The Town and the City* (1950), *The Scroll* serves both narrative and autobiographical functions. *The Scroll* documents a series of events in Kerouac's life between 1947 and 1950, primarily a series of journeys across North America and finally to Mexico. The text presents a clear shift in Kerouac's authorial voice, a departure from the steady, precise, and reverential voice of his previous work, a style most

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<sup>89</sup> Jack Kerouac, "The Origins of the Beat Generation," *Playboy*, June 1959, 31-32.

<sup>90</sup> James Campbell, "Kerouac's Blues," *The Antioch Review* v. 57, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 363.

likely influenced by Kerouac's love for the work of Thomas Wolfe, who, in Kerouac's own words, "woke me up to America as a Poem instead of America as a place to struggle around and sweat in."<sup>91</sup> Chronologically, *The Scroll* is a sequel to *The Town and the City*, the former making early reference to the death of Kerouac's father and the latter concluding with it. In *The Town and the City*, Kerouac recalls the experiences of his formative years in the town of Galloway (a pseudonym for his real home town of Lowell), before time and circumstance lead him to Columbia University, New York, and the social melting pot of the Beat experience. Unlike in his later works, in *The Town and the City*, Kerouac narrates the events of his own life through the detachment of third person narration, facilitating a disconnection from the experiences of loss which defined his early years. The significance of loss is apparent from the novel's start, as is the interrogation of male selfhood through the medium of both extrinsic and intrinsic spatial and ideological systems, a central consideration of my discussion of *The Scroll* later in this chapter. The opening of *The Town and the City* stretches considerations of self and space across the timeline of maturation, contextualising and contrasting the dialogues which childhood identity and adult identity share with physical surroundings:

The little children of Galloway sit on the banks of the Merrimac and consider these facts and mysteries. In the wild echoing misty March night, little Mickey Martin kneels at his bedroom window and listens to the river's rush, the distant barking of dogs, the souging thunder of the falls, and he ponders the wellsprings and sources of his own mysterious life.<sup>92</sup>

By infusing the narration with a sense of wide-eyed wonderment, Kerouac envelops Mickey Martin's experience in a protective paternal embrace, involving the character in a deep act of introspection while at the same time shielding him from the harsh discoveries such an act can yield. The narrator equates aspects of Mickey's existence with natural forms which connote generation and rejuvenation, "the wellsprings and sources" baptising the character with a sense of purity and innocence. Almost immediately however, this same process of introspection is then interrogated against the experience of adulthood, as an unnamed man –

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<sup>91</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Vanity of Duluoaz* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), iBooks edition, book four, ix.

<sup>92</sup> Jack Kerouac, *The Town and the City* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), iBooks edition, chap. 1. Subsequent references in text.

itself calling into question the issue of identity – partakes in a similar act of contemplation to Mickey:

If a man goes out to the woods surrounding Galloway, and stands on a hill, he can see it all there before him in a broad panorama: the river coursing slowly in an arc, the mills with their long rows of windows all a-glow, the factory stacks rising higher than the church steeples. But he knows that this is not the true Galloway. Something in the invisible brooding landscape surrounding the town, something in the bright stars nodding close to a hillside where the old cemetery sleeps, something in the soft swishing treeleaves over the fields and stone wall tells him a different story (chap 1).

While the account of Mickey's self-reflection is broadly heartwarming, that of the man is shrouded in a restless uncertainty and sense of insidious decline and corruption. While Mickey appears to enjoy a harmonious – albeit awe-inspiring – dialogue with the extrinsic, the process and outcomes of the man's engagement are quite different. The positivity of the initial natural aesthetic soon dissolves to reveal an anxiety, embodied in the faceless and formless "something" that is present yet intangible. This dynamic, to which I return in my later discussion of *The Scroll*, presents the condition of adulthood as complicit in both the loss of childhood wonder, and the onset of suspicion and doubt, providing a bisection of male selfhood between the two cultural identities of 'boy' and 'man'. This contrast serves as a potent example of how the experiences and processes of loss and decline are central to Kerouac's treatment of masculinity in much of his work, with his reliance on regression – both personal and cultural – providing a medicinal nostalgia through which he aims to rationalise and valorise the condition and function of adult masculinity within his contemporary physical and cultural landscapes.

A poignant example of this is provided in Kerouac's aforementioned *Visions of Gerard*, in which the titular character – Kerouac's brother – is presented as a spiritual guide, leading the young Kerouac through the world in a quasi-religious manner that borders on fraternal sainthood. "For the first four years of my life", notes the narrator at the beginning of the text, "I was not Ti Jean Duluo [the nickname attributed to Kerouac by his family], I was Gerard, the world was his face, the flower of his face, the pale stooped disposition, the

heartbreakings and the holiness and his teachings of tenderness to me”.<sup>93</sup> Given that he was only four years old at the time of Gerard’s death, it is important to consider the extent to which Kerouac’s accounts of Gerard rely more on familial myth and retrospective embellishment than personal recollection, the mention of “various pictures of him we had, one in particular in front of me now” adding weight to the idea that Kerouac’s memories of his brother are perhaps as imaginative as they are experiential (472). Regardless, the role of Gerard in Kerouac’s literary formulation and location of self is significant, as the dynamics of fraternity (both biological and platonic) facilitate an idolisation and celebration of the masculine through a nostalgic lens, as well as a performance of identity that is located in the ‘other’, evidenced by the claim that “I was Gerard”. Kerouac’s presentations of Gerard – much like those of Neal in *The Scroll* – elevate the male individual to almost superhuman status, cocooning him within a subjective idolatry in which quotidian human behaviour becomes heroic gesture. As I show later in this chapter, Kerouac’s presentations of Neal in *The Scroll* foreground physicality and bodily dominance in the assertion and performance of a subjective masculine ideal, with classical images of male strength and power wrung from an assortment of situations and interactions. While employing a similar hyperbolisation, *Visions of Gerard* sees the projection of a gentler and more benevolent masculinity onto the celebrated character of Gerard, his repeated love and affection for animals a central motif in the text. A depiction of Gerard caring for an injured mouse foregrounds and admires the delicacy with which the act is carried out, all the while maintaining a focus on the mouse as the beneficiary of the action:

The hungjawed dull faces of grown adults who had no words to praise or please little trying-angels like Gerard working to save the mouse from the trap – But just started or gawped on jawpipes and were silly in their prime – The little mouse, thrashing in the concrete, was released by Gerard – It went wobbling to the gutter with the fishjuice and spit, to die – He picked it tenderly and in his pocket sowed the goodness – took it home and nursed it, actually bandaged it, held it, stroked it, prepared a little basket for it, as Ma watched amazed...(473).

The attention given to Kerouac’s account of Gerard’s actions mirrors the attention that Gerard affords the injured mouse, with the asyndetic listing reflecting a controlled sequencing and careful methodology. The mouse is repeatedly implemented as recipient,

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<sup>93</sup> Jack Kerouac, “Visions of Gerard”, in *Visions of Cody, Visions of Gerard, Big Sur*, ed. Todd Tietchen (New York: The Library of America, 2015), 469. Subsequent page references in text.



with Gerard's warmhearted actions explicitly transitive and performed solely for the benefit of "it" (the mouse). This section highlights Kerouac's tendency to respond to masculinity via the implementation of physical and social space, a trope which I later discuss in relation to *The Scroll*. Gerard's dialogue with physical space – providing sanctuary from the harsh realities of "the concrete" and "the gutter" via the sanctuary of his "pocket" – reflects an interplay between masculinity and location which underpins much of my discussion in this dissertation, with the literary male self defined by the dialogue between self and context. As with the presentation of Mickey Martin in *The Town and the City*, Kerouac's narration enshrines Gerard's presented identity in childhood innocence, his detachment from the 'otherness' of the "grown adults" guaranteeing the purity of his actions, much like the narrative of Mickey Martin's experience of introspection is separated from that of the "man".

I now turn my attention more directly towards *The Scroll* to explore the ways in which Kerouac presents the male self, exploring my interpretations in relation to the terrain covered so far in this chapter and in Chapter One, and challenging the view held by some authors that Kerouac's work is an assured product of joyous rebellion, "a celebration of life and youth" as claimed by Omar Swartz.<sup>94</sup> While I acknowledge (and have already begun to show) the significance of youth – and indeed childhood – in Kerouac's prose, the deployment of such imagery is far from celebratory. Instead, it is the loss rather than the experience of youthful condition that most greatly defines masculinity in Kerouac's work, with regression to a younger state providing a medicinal and nostalgic counterpoint to the realities of adulthood. Much like the impulsive and carefree psychological standpoint of youth, *The Scroll* reflects a style of narration that is characterised most distinctly by its spontaneity and immediacy, with Kerouac's raw, stream of consciousness prose presenting a torrent of ephemeral experiences driven by restless activity, by momentum, by the process of forward movement, and by the corresponding rejection of the binary opposite: stasis. The resulting sense of propulsion renders the reader's engagement with the characters' observational, philosophical, and social experiences as largely fleeting, with each literary and semantic fragment serving primarily as a precursor and functional stepping stone to the next. Consequently, the essence of both the content of *The Scroll*, and the reader's engagement with the experiences documented within

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<sup>94</sup> Omar Swartz, *The View from on the Road: The Rhetorical Vision of Jack Kerouac* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), Questia online edition, 18, <<https://www.questia.com/read/34208193/the-view-from-on-the-road-the-rhetorical-vision-of>> (accessed December 17, 2015).

it, lie in process, rather than outcome, in journey, rather than destination. As the narrator states with excitement in the text, “we all realized we were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time, move” (234).

Given the Beat opposition to the mainstream, it is unsurprising that *The Scroll* stands as a conceptual and aesthetic counterpoint to the dominant culture of postwar America; its advocacy of mobility serves as a challenge to suburban stasis, its unparagraphed form as a rejection of more conventional prosaic structures, and its celebration of marginal behaviours and social groups as an alternative to the conformist consensus of postwar America. Given the (auto)biographical nature of the roman-à-clef, and the significance of the male voice to my discussion, it is crucial at this point to address a distinction between Kerouac the author, referred to in this dissertation as “Kerouac”, and his literary avatar in *The Scroll*, the narrator and character referred to as “Jack”. My intention here is not to polarise the voices of author and character/narrator absolutely, but simply to acknowledge the differences in their natures and functions. Kerouac’s ‘spontaneous prose’ reflects the search for a dialogue of immediacy similar to that of face to face spoken discourse; it is an authorial reflex, responding to the formation of an idea, and aimed at homogenising the speaker’s/writer’s conception and the listener’s/reader’s reception of meaning as far as possible, avoiding the crosstalk and distortion symptomatic of retrospection. Regardless, it is important to note that Kerouac’s attempts to convey any immediate experience of his travels will, first and foremost, convey the immediate experience of his authorship, the lack of contemporaneity between that about which Kerouac writes, and the moment in which he writes it introducing the inevitable caveats of retrospection and nostalgia. As characters in *The Scroll*, the presented identities of Jack and Neal are approximations, their identities retrospectively embellished by the proclivities of Kerouac’s authorial self, and the sociocultural landscape of postwar America. It is this retrospection, and the corresponding mutual ingress between fact and fiction, and self and ‘other’ that explain Kerouac’s tendency to romanticise the realities of the physical and social landscapes presented in *The Scroll*, his fondness for popular culture, nostalgic regression, and Frontier iconography strongly influencing his presentation of masculinity throughout the novel.

In addition to reflecting a search for a definitive sense of American manhood, *The Scroll*, while glossed with a veneer of carefree and youthful abandon, ultimately serves as a lament for the falsities of the American Dream, an epitaph for those who are lost amidst the

maelstrom of postwar capitalist growth and state-endorsed sociocultural homogeneity. Kerouac's presentation of American masculinity reflects an attempt to remedy the loss of a definitive male self through the exploration, authorial invocation, and performance of a diverse and anachronistic cross section of masculine models, with their corresponding behaviours, social functions, and social profiles brought to bear on the characters within the novel. I suggest that in an attempt to validate the masculine self, Kerouac fuses regressive, traditional and mythologised notions of American manhood with a broad spectrum of cultural, literary, and philosophical dialogues to form a complex network of mutually referential images and identities. The narrator is positioned at the epicentre of this network, serving as a mouthpiece through which these heterogeneous and often contradictory dialogues are vocalised. The resulting narrative voice is one of varied diction and character, its instability and indefinability reflecting both the loss of, and search for, a definitive masculine self in postwar America. In accordance with this, I propose that the highly fluidised and unstable presentations of masculinity in *The Scroll* are a product of the anachronistic and contradictory literary and philosophical voices that influence Kerouac's prose, the complex intertextuality producing a collision of fact and fiction, past and present, material and abstract, self and 'other'. Jack's perpetual invocation of different and often conflicting masculine models and voices ultimately defines American manhood in *The Scroll* as a condition of discordance, contradiction, and instability that responds dynamically to social and physical contexts. This notion of the malleable self aligns closely with the sociological work of Sheldon Stryker, specifically his concept of Identity Salience. Stryker's theory posits that the individual functions as a dynamic component in an equally dynamic social system, echoing and greatly developing Alexis De Tocqueville's structural approach to identity formation that I discuss in Chapter One. Stryker claims that the "reality of the self is phenomenological, and is based on reflexive activity; it has no physical or biological location". Further, Stryker proposes that identity is not a singular entity synonymous with self, but that the self is constructed from an array of identities, each of which is a self-designated behavioural model formed in response to social and physical contexts, and their perceived behavioural requirements. These identities are subjective, yet socially referential, and do not exist in mutual exclusivity; rather, the individual invokes each identity to the extent which he or she determines to be auspicious to the fulfilment of the social function he or she has self-designated in a given social situation. Identities can be co-existent, both harmoniously and disharmoniously, and they comprise a dynamic salience hierarchy from which the individual invokes a specific identity in response to the changing

requirements of the situation. As Stryker puts it, “To the degree that one’s relationships to specified sets of other persons depend on being a particular kind of person, one is committed to being that kind of person.”<sup>95</sup> Clearly, Stryker does not suggest that the self is an inflexible entity and, correspondingly, some variation in Kerouac’s presentation of Jack, and Jack’s presentation of himself and other characters in *The Scroll* is to be expected and is broadly unremarkable. What is significant however, is the way in which Kerouac’s salience hierarchy appears to be constructed not from prior personal exchanges, and social and spatial interactions, but from a hazy intersection of popular culture, literary experience, nostalgia, and imagination. I therefore argue that Kerouac strives to validate the masculinities of his characters not against the social realities and requirements of postwar America and its people, but against wider cultural and mythologised notions of American manhood and American iconography, ultimately exposing the extent to which the presented identities are in fact simulacra: idealised and redundant representations of masculinity that are hybrid abstractions, with little or no tangible point of reference in the materiality of postwar America. It is this disparity between the material and the abstract that serves to dislocate the masculinity of the individual from the environment into which he is cast in the text, reflecting the sense of social maladjustment experienced by Kerouac and his Beat contemporaries in the realities of postwar America.

In the presentation of my arguments, my reading of *The Scroll* revolves around three key considerations: the tensions between the material and the abstract, the physical and the imagined, the self and the ‘other’; Kerouac’s interpretation and invocation of cultural, literary, and philosophical discourse as a basis for the creation of masculine identity; and the search for the unattainable, embodied in Kerouac’s prose as “IT”, an amorphous and transitory manifestation of subjective authenticity which, through its fleeting manifestations and the relativity of its location, shares many characteristics with the Frontier (304). Kerouac presents “IT” as a quasi-religious and experiential narcotic, a definition endorsed by Ben Giomo as he defines “IT” as “a form of ecstasy, [spinning] on the wheels of free, spontaneous, fleeting, hedonistic existence [and] blurring the lines of our mortality.”<sup>96</sup> Of

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<sup>95</sup> Sheldon Stryker, *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version* (Menlo Park, California: Benjamin Cummings, 1980), 59.

<sup>96</sup> Ben Giomo, *Kerouac, the Word and the Way: Prose Artist as Spiritual Quester* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), Questia online edition, 23, <<https://www.questia.com/read/65658940/kerouac-the-word-and-the-way-prose-artist-as-spiritual>> (accessed December 19, 2015).

course, my reading of *The Scroll* is not trisected absolutely. As I will show, Kerouac's presentation of American masculinity relies on the intersection of these three arenas, with his authorial search for a definitive sense of the masculine self paralleling Jack and Neal's ongoing search for "IT" within the narrative. My discussion opens with an examination of the talismanic manhood of Neal, before broadening to address Kerouac's alignment of social and spatial systems with the performance of masculinity and the identity of Jack. In the latter stages, I address the ways in which Kerouac's prose draws explicitly on the Romantic tradition, as well as exploring how Ralph Waldo Emerson's approach to mind/body dualism influences Kerouac's attempt to locate masculinity in the postwar context. Ultimately, my study of the text will demonstrate that Kerouac's presentation of American masculinity in *The Scroll* is extensively fluidised and referential, the seeming inability to locate a definitive masculine identity and voice reflective of a postwar masculinity in crisis. Mirroring the dynamic of the Frontier, both Kerouac's attempts to locate a sense of the male self, and Jack and Neal's attempts to locate "IT" experience only fleeting periods of fruition before circumstance, restlessness, and insecurity perpetually relocate the goal of their subjective quest to the abstract realm of that "specific elsewhere" (375).

## NEAL BEFORE ME: THE ICONISATION OF CASSADY

Writing in 1957 for American periodical *The Atlantic*, Phoebe Lou Adams was less than impressed with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, noting how it "disappoints because it constantly promises a revelation or a conclusion of real importance and general applicability, and cannot deliver any such conclusion because Dean is more convincing as an eccentric than as a representative of any segment of humanity."<sup>97</sup> The Dean of which she spoke was Dean Moriarty, the literary embodiment of Neal Cassady. Referred to as Neal in *The Scroll*, Cassady's introduction to the Beat circle of Kerouac, Burroughs, and Ginsberg in 1946 provided an added and powerful catalyst for the animation of the group's philosophies, inspiring what Alan Bisbort terms "action in these more bookish big-city bohemians".<sup>98</sup> Neal is strongly foregrounded in Kerouac's work, his most notable appearances being in *The Scroll/On the Road* and *Visions of Cody* (1972). In *The Scroll*, Neal serves as a focal point for much of the narration, with his actions presented as a performative benchmark for masculinity and his social disposition a barometer by which the mood of any given moment is both created and defined. Adams's response to *On the Road* is intriguing, not least because her disappointment revolves around the text's refusal to provide that which is broadly expected: a conventional denouement providing closure and satisfaction for the reader. Most significantly for this dissertation however, it is the way in which her response to the text – much like Kerouac's creation of it – places such emphasis on Dean (Neal). For Adams, the ultimate failure of the novel stems from Dean's failure to perform a hegemonic and recognisable masculinity, suggesting that the novel serves primarily as a character study of a socially marginal American male identity. Neal is featured prominently in my discussion throughout this chapter. Of course, this is not the result of a personal endorsement or advertisement of the model(s) of masculinity he represents. Rather, it is a response to the ways in which Kerouac's exploration of masculinity corresponds to an overwhelming focus on Neal, a focus that at times borders on the obsessive. Kerouac employs Neal as a substrate into which he attempts to anchor and sustain subjectively revered images of American manhood, images which are fluidised, contextually responsive, and often contradictory. For the most part, Neal is presented as dynamic, charismatic, and

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<sup>97</sup> Phoebe-Lou Adams, "Ladder to Nirvana," review of *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1957, 180.

<sup>98</sup> Alan Bisbort, *Beatniks: A Guide to an American Subculture* (California: Greenwood, 2010), Questia online edition, 4, <<https://www.questia.com/read/123852490/beatniks-a-guide-to-an-american-subculture>> (accessed January 5, 2016).

with a gravity of character that is irresistible. While the embellished literary presentation of a real world individual may appear the prerogative of the roman-à-clef style, the charisma and magnetism of Neal transcends the pages of Kerouac's prose, with testimony from the Beats' wider social circle framing him in a similar light. In *Off the Road: Twenty Years with Cassady, Kerouac and Ginsberg* (1990), Carolyn Cassady, Neal's former wife and an individual heavily involved in the Beat movement, discusses her relationship and experiences with Neal. Cassady's accounts are of course retrospective, yet the memory of Neal's magnetism and social profile clearly endures. Speaking of their first meeting when the pair were introduced by mutual friend Bill Tomson, Cassady speaks of how she "could only stare, unhinged at seeing the myth materialize." While appearing tongue in cheek, Cassady's use of the term "myth" proves to be less hyperbolic than expected. I shall demonstrate Kerouac's tendency to frame Neal within pseudo-mythological social and physical landscapes in *The Scroll*, and in *Off the Road*, Cassady's accounts of him take on a similar character, noting how "the advance publicity of this man had already made him unique" as she marvels at how, at their first meeting, he "sat transfixed, emitting an empathy and dignity that made me feel special."<sup>99</sup> Much like Kerouac's accounts of Neal in *The Scroll*, and of Cody Pomeray (yet another alter ego for Neal) in *Visions of Cody*, *Big Sur* (1962), *Book of Dreams* (1960), and *Desolation Angels* (1965), Neal's masculinity is presented as existing on the threshold between fact and fiction, where rumour, reputation and reality intersect in the experience and subsequent literary presentation of the man. Again, like Kerouac, Cassady appears powerless to resist aligning Neal with the iconography and imagery of cultural fiction and mythology, superimposing romanticised abstractions onto the realities of his person. Tracing a path from presumed fact through to fiction, Cassady reflects on her limited knowledge of Neal's younger years:

The chronology of this patchy history confused me, but a grim picture emerged of living off and on with a wino father in skid row, being treated sadistically by his older half-brothers and running away from a Catholic orphanage. To me it was a tale rivalled only by the orphans in stories by Dickens, which naturally added an unrealistic, romantic touch (13-14).

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<sup>99</sup> Carolyn Cassady, *Off the Road: Twenty Years with Cassady, Kerouac and Ginsberg* (London: Black Spring Press, 1990), 2. Subsequent page references in text.

In the presentation of Neal, Cassidy demonstrates an inclination to blend reality with fiction, nudging Neal's masculinity into the realms of fantasy, myth, and legend to separate him from normative models of the American male, even in childhood. Significantly though, Cassidy displays an awareness of the flaws in this process, noting the "unrealistic" nature of the image on which she draws. In *The Scroll*, these processes of superimposition and transposition are employed similarly by Kerouac to explore and present Neal's masculinity. However, Kerouac's commitment to the outcomes of these processes is far more absolute than Cassidy's, with his promotion and celebration of Neal's actions and identity failing to reflect an awareness of the unrealistic nature of such an approach.

As noted in Chapter One, *On the Road* begins with reference to Jack's separation from his wife, while *The Scroll* opens with Jack stating that he "first met [sic] Neal not long after my father died...I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about except that it really had something to do with my father's death and my awful feeling that everything was dead" (109).<sup>100</sup> By juxtaposing the death of his father with the emergence of Neal, Kerouac foreshadows not only the prominent theme of loss, but also the sense of cyclic replenishment and passage that underscores the experience of the novel, as that which *is* lost or left behind is replaced by that which inevitably *will be*, paralleling both the episodic nature of the journeys that Jack and Neal take and the relationships they forge during them. There is, understandably, a strong suggestion that the loss of Kerouac's father corresponds to a loss of personal orientation, anchorage, and guidance, as if the presence of a male role model provides a stabilising influence. This focus on the paternal is extended via the constant references to Neal's absent father in the text, who is remembered as "a wino, one of the most tottering bums of Larimer street...[who was once] a very respectable and hardworking barber" (140). The purported search for Neal's father is mentioned repeatedly, often appearing as little more than a flimsy veil behind which the characters' wanderlust is hidden as if to provide an ostensibly noble pretext to Jack and Neal's travels. The experience of waywardness in the absence of definitive paternal guidance serves as a poignant metaphor for an uneasy postwar America, a society seeking security and reassurance from its government in what Robert Wuthnow dubs the "cultural landslide" of "feverish talk, conjecture, commentary, speculation" that defined the sociopolitical character

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<sup>100</sup> Note: on this occasion, ellipses are a feature of the original text, which is quoted exactly; they do not indicate the omission of content.



of the early nuclear age.<sup>101</sup> By simultaneously introducing the absence of his father and the presence of Neal, Kerouac is able to establish the latter as a surrogate masculine role model against whom Jack measures himself in an attempt to replenish a subjective reference point for the performance of his own masculinity. As I shall later show, Jack's initial iconisation of Neal ultimately bows to the encroachment of reality, the process mirroring a maturing son's realisation of his own father's identity and humanity. Much like the celebration of Gerard tending to the injured mouse, Jack's early references to Neal reflect a subjective iconisation of the individual. A significant difference however, is that while Gerard is revered for his tenderness and benevolence, Neal's everyday actions are hyperbolised within a highly physical and aggressive aesthetic, with dominance and power the most celebrated traits. Kerouac frames Neal's actions within a somewhat clichéd paradigm of American mythology, most notably the iconography of the Frontier. The point of reference for the presentation of Neal's masculinity is a fuzzily demarcated intersection of personal memory, popular culture, and fantasy, providing a subjective landscape in which he is able to supplant the reality of Neal's character with an aggrandised abstraction. This abstraction takes the form of the Hollywood cowboy, casting Neal as a mythical and marginal (anti)hero who begins the text as "a young jailkid shrouded in mystery" and whose work as a parking lot attendant elevates him to the title of "wrangler" as he guides, coerces, and drives his 'cattle' (the cars) into place (109-114). The account of Neal's work in the parking lot reflects Kerouac's fondness for Frontier imagery, providing a microcosm of the restless mobility and frenetic shifts of focus and purpose that characterise both Kerouac's prose, and the activities of its central characters:

the most fantastic parkinglot attendant in the world, he can back a car forty miles an hour into a tight squeeze and stop on a dime at the brickwall, and jump out, snake his way out of close fenders, leap into another car, circle it fifty miles an hour in a narrow space, shift, and back again into a tight spot with a few inches each side and come to a bouncing stop the same moment he's jamming in the emergency brake; then run clear to the ticket shack like a track star, hand a ticket, leap into a newly arrived car before the owner is hardly out, leap literally under him as he steps out start the car with the door flapping and roar off to the next available parking spot: working like that without pause eight hours a night, (113-114)

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *Be Very Afraid: The Cultural Response to Terror, Pandemics, Environmental Devastation, Nuclear Annihilation, and Other Threats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Questia online edition, 30, <<https://www.questia.com/read/121435201/be-very-afraid-the-cultural-response-to-terror>> (accessed November 8, 2013).

The energy of Kerouac's prose creates a frenzied yet ultimately efficient sense of momentum, its impetuosity mirroring the rhythms of the bebop music by which Jack and Neal are seduced during their journeys; as David Hopkins puts it, Kerouac's objective was to "reform fiction along the lines of avant-garde jazz, where immediacy of expression and technical fluency combine".<sup>102</sup> Unlike the methodical and measured account of Gerard's interactions with the mouse, the impetus of this section creates a feeling of performance, with Jack engaged in a visual dialogue by which he is inspired, yet over which he has no influence. This is in no small part due to Kerouac's shift into present tense, a shift which, much like the spontaneity of bebop, exchanges considered recollection for the immediacy of live experience, presenting Neal's abilities and actions as highly performative, and contemporaneous with the reader's experience. Kerouac's account of Neal's actions is grounded in the aesthetic rather than the functional, with the permanent outcomes of Neal's work (safely parked cars resting in stasis) dismissed in favour of a celebration of the temporary kinetic processes that precede them. Neal's imposed identity of the "wrangler" is presented to invoke the spectacular aesthetic of a cattle drive, with the cars – mass produced artefacts of a postwar consumer society – serving as mechanised cattle. Writing in 1897, after having witnessed a real life cattle drive by a group of men in the Old West, Emerson Hough describes the "handling of the horse herd" as offering "some of the most picturesque features of the round-up", as he marvels at the "thrilling bits of action at the horse corrals when the men are roping their mounts, pulling them unwilling forth and cinching the great saddles firmly upon their bulging and protesting sides".<sup>103</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, iconisation and celebration of the American man's control and dominance of the natural world is a pervasive image in American literature, an extension of classical notions of physicality, conflict, and expansion that stretches from fact to fiction, from film to folklore. Neal's work as a parking attendant provides a blank canvas onto which Kerouac projects the romanticised iconography of the Frontier, with the ingress of boyish fantasy and the subjectively revered masculine identity of the "wrangler" masking the everyday reality of the employee and his tasks via the superimposition of a pseudo-heroic grandeur.

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<sup>102</sup> David Hopkins, "To Be or Not to Bop: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and the culture of bebop and rhythm 'n' blues," *Popular Music* v. 24, no. 2 (2005): 279.

<sup>103</sup> Emerson Hough, *The Story of the Cowboy* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1897), Questia online edition, 159, <<https://www.questia.com/read/77257498/the-story-of-the-cowboy>> (accessed January 18, 2016).

Kerouac later extends the use of this technique beyond the aggrandisement of the mundane to justify the socially and legally marginal behaviours and identities of his peer group, as further Frontier identities are attributed to Neal, Jack, William Burroughs, and Louanne Henderson (Neal's first wife) during a cross country trip. In addition to Neal being "one of those crazy-kick-outlaws galloping across the plains and shooting up saloons", Jack as "the son of a newspaper publisher" who would "every now and then...go mad and ride with the wildbuck gang for kicks", and "Bill Burroughs" filling the role of "a retired Confederate colonel", Louanne is allocated the identity of the "dancing hall beauty" who will later "inherit the dance hall" and become a "madame and a power in the town" (261-262). Jack's repeated attempts to validate the real world identities of his peers by contextualising them within the largely patriarchal Frontier reflects a crisis and dislocation of masculinity within the perceived feminisation of postwar America, the playful, boyish, and celebratory charm with which the identities are assigned doing little to mask their attempted reinstatement of traditional masculine images and patriarchal authority. As far as "wrangler" Neal dominates the connotative femininity of the parking lot's landscape and its mechanised cattle, and "outlaw" Neal asserts his masculinity through physical aggression, Louanne's presentation as the "dancing hall" girl and "madame" most distinctly defines her as a masculine convenience, her status as a "power" achieved not through personal industry, but through the fortune of her inheritance and her provision of male sexual gratification. While the fictional identities of Jack, Neal, and Bill are testament to traditional and mythological images of American proactivity and dynamism, Louanne's role is essentially one of passivity. The gender dialogues inherent to the Frontier provide Kerouac with a frame of reference against which to sustain not only popularly celebrated and colourful images of American manhood, but also the authority of traditional patriarchal structures, a process shrouded by the glossy Hollywood facade of Frontier imagery. Jacqueline M. Moore attests to the common hyperbolisation of the cowboy image, and to the intertextual employment of the Frontier as a tool for masculine affirmation. Moore notes how "cowboys have occupied a unique position in the American historical myth and mystique, [but] in truth they were little different from other workers who used physical skill to perform their tasks", developing her point to identify how the cowboy "myth still plays into the hands of those who would use the cowboy personae to maintain gender hierarchies and power structures" and "denote masculine authority".<sup>104</sup> In accordance with this, I argue that Kerouac employs Frontier

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<sup>104</sup> Jacqueline M. Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 216.

iconography in an attempt to reassert a dwindling masculine autonomy in the conformist culture of postwar America, the reassuring familiarity of Frontier gender roles and hierarchies providing a convenient schematic with which to revitalise contextually obsolete images of American manhood. Kerouac's employment of Frontier imagery reflects a masculine aspiration, a desire to locate a sense of self in the elsewhere and 'other'. However, while the projection of Jack et al into a fictional Frontier landscape provides an affirmation of manhood within the pages of the novel, its real world implications have the opposite effect. Kerouac's real world self is already separated from the world of the narrative, with Jack serving as his avatar within the terrain of *The Scroll*. Inevitably, this separates Kerouac from the masculinities he presents within the text, defining his real world self by the impossibilities of the performance of that to which he aspires. This ultimately compounds his experience of detachment and dislocation, not unlike the dynamic experienced by Hemingway's characters through the impossibilities of their aspirations, as I discuss in Chapter One. This separation of author from narrator is addressed by Kerouac himself in his later work *Big Sur*. In the novel's preface, Kerouac notes how the narrative is "seen through the eyes of poor Ti Jean (me), otherwise known as Jack Duluoaz".<sup>105</sup> This presents a slight but significant difference between *Big Sur* and *The Scroll*, for in *Big Sur*, Kerouac wedges an additional alter ego (Ti Jean) between his real world self and his narrating avatar Jack Duluoaz. The conscious insertion of Ti Jean, while serving more as a pseudonym than a separate identity, introduces and acknowledges an additional layer of detachment between the author and his literary representative in the text, with Kerouac separating his real world self from the act of narration and handing the responsibility for storytelling to an 'other'. With this layering of identity established, the earlier sections of the narrative then focus not on individuals with whom Kerouac and/or his narrator share a fraternal bond (such as Neal/Cody in *The Scroll* and *Visions of Cody* respectively, and Gerard in *Visions of Gerard*), but on the literary manifestation of Kerouac himself, as if the greater sense of separation and detachment generated by this trio of identities grants Kerouac the licence to self-consciously approach his own literary avatar – Jack Duluoaz – as if it were an 'other', embellishing the masculinity of his literary self in the same way as he embellishes those of Neal and Gerard. The title of *Big Sur* relates to a largely unpopulated area of California, where the real life Kerouac sought refuge from the suffocating effects of his fame

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<sup>105</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Big Sur* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), iBooks edition, preface. Subsequent references in text.

in the wake of *On the Road*'s commercial success. In this isolated environment, Jack Duluoz finds himself in a context not wholly dissimilar to that of Thoreau in *Walden*, with the separation from society once more implementing spatial systems in the act of self-location. With no immediate fraternal connections in place, and with the aforementioned layering of identities established, Kerouac's romanticisation and hyperbolisation is brought to focus on the character of Jack Duluoz, with "the religious vestal lighting of the beautiful lamp" and the "suddenly erupting feathers" of a sleeping bag glorifying mundane events of necessity and inconvenience (chap. 5). While both *The Scroll* and *Big Sur* display the male self engaging in a tempestuous relationship with the formation and experience of identity, in *Big Sur*, Kerouac is more explicitly self-referential in his treatment of this tension. With the narrator socially isolated, it is perhaps inevitable that sections of the novel adopt an almost epistolary tone, that of a diary, conveying similar examples of explicit self-assessment and evaluation to those of Thoreau's offerings in *Walden*:

In fact, flying silently around my lamplit cabin at 3 o'clock in the morning as I'm reading (of all things) (shudder) *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* – small wonder maybe that I myself turned from serene Jekyll to hysterical Hyde in the short space of six weeks, losing absolute control of the peace mechanisms of my mind for the first time in my life (chap. 5).

Through reference to Robert Louis Stevenson's well-known work, the narrator is able to explicitly foreground the notion of duality and the tensions that accompany it. Despite this section of seemingly honest and frank introspection, and the use of the first person, the narrator still defines himself based on notions and images of the 'other'. This approach presents implications for both the literary masculinity presented as Jack Duluoz and also Kerouac's authorial masculinity. As far as Jack Duluoz casts his own sense of self into the pages of Stevenson's work, and by association brings those of Stevenson's characters into his own, Kerouac's reliance on exophora reflects the invocation and performance of an authorial 'other', an attempt to validate and authenticise the authorial self through the performance of an established model of authorial masculinity. Kerouac's narration therefore presents a paradox in which masculinity is depleted by abundance. While the plethora of presented 'selves' attempts the promotion of plurality and versatility in the masculine, it succeeds only in decentralising the individual from any reliable experience, performance, and conceptual location of selfhood. While Kerouac's masculinity is not synonymous with

those of Ti Jean and Jack Duluoz, and the masculinities of Ti Jean and Jack Duluoz are not those of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, in *The Scroll*, Kerouac's own masculinity is separate to that of Jack, and Jack's masculinity is separate to that which he performs in the concocted Frontier fantasy. In both texts, each stage of self (re)location, and the accompanying layering of masculinities, ultimately divorces the real world self from the literary self, consigning what is purportedly autobiographical writing further and further into the realms of fiction.

Despite Jack and Neal's fictional selves appearing untouchable within the fantasies of *The Scroll*, the Frontier's inherent turbulence complicates the positioning and presentation of manhood even further, particularly in relation to Neal. As the text progresses, and much like the Frontiersman grew to malign that which was previously celebrated as he progressed to new horizons, Jack's accounts of Neal convey an increasing sense of depreciation. Gradually, the once iconised Neal is reduced to an object of pity and bemusement as the realities of postwar social protocol obscure the abstract fantasy of Jack's Frontier existence. The detachment from society and social convention that initially defines Neal as a dynamic and autonomous hero eventually becomes the very thing by which his demise is measured; his present condition of self is therefore defined primarily by the loss of his past. Far from the untouchable "wrangler", reminiscent of "a young Gene Autry --- trim, thin hipped, blue eyes, with a real Oklahoma accent", and the invulnerable and transgressive "outlaw", Neal's masculinity is eventually defined by a perpetual state of disrepair (110). Jack describes the way in which "the Devil himself had never fallen further; in idiocy, with infected thumb, surrounded by the battered suitcases of his motherless feverish life across America and back numberless times, an undone bird, a broken turd" (288). Additionally, Jack is forced to acquiesce to the reality of the now ignominious Neal as "the father of four little ones", without "a cent", who is still "all troubles and ecstasy and speed as ever" (350). Lament and mockery exist side by side in Jack's account of the bedraggled Neal, the narrator's mourning stained by the self-induced bathos of his fallen icon in an exemplification of the bemoaned decline and experience of loss that permeate the text's accounts of both person and place. Neal's wounded thumb is symbolic, a broken hitchhiker's tool that is a physical manifestation of the now decaying appeal of the pair's nomadic lifestyle. Correspondingly, Jack's references to solvency and paternal responsibility display clear if reluctant criticism, a sign of the narrator's increasing resignation to the realities of a more routine existence, and respectful acknowledgement of those aspects of masculine identity that denote the traditional

and honourable family man, an identity which subsequently develops a sudden and surprising appeal, and which I now move to discuss.

In *The Scroll*, Jack's assessments of Neal are contextually reflexive, with Neal's character evaluated based on the function he fulfils within the particular physical, cultural and ideological spaces into which Jack casts him. When consigned to the plains of Jack's fictional Frontier narrative, Neal is an untouchable masculine icon, his identity affirmed by the dominance he exerts over his fictional surroundings. However, the inevitable ingress of reality corrupts this presentation, creating a discordant link between person and place that leaves the reality of Neal dislocated from the realities of postwar America and undermines his talismanic status. The favourable presentation of Neal is high on Kerouac's authorial agenda, as if Neal were the ultimate representative and literary embodiment of American masculinity. Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson are keen to note this tendency, drawing attention to how the "archetypal American male image appealed to Kerouac. It is interesting to observe, however, that Kerouac projected this archetype onto others: most notably, Neal Cassady".<sup>106</sup> Aside from Jack's reluctant concessions above, Kerouac's prose conveys a refusal to acknowledge any shortcoming of Neal, to the extent where Jack's ideology is reinvented to accommodate the validation of Neal's manhood. Contradicting the pair's resistance to the compliant routines of a domesticated life, Kerouac jarringly suspends both his Frontier affinity, and the peripatetic existence evidenced by Neal's brag that "no matter where I live my trunk's always sticking out from under the bed" with a sudden yearning for a sense of regularity and equilibrium (352). This equilibrium is equated with family ties, as if the postwar suburban ideal now suddenly provides an ultimate destination to the capricious spontaneity and uncertainty of their journeys. Maintaining the dialogue between identity and social context central to Stryker's concept of Identity Salience, but upturning all previous resistance to domesticity and stasis, this advocacy of the suburban ideal comes at a time when the pair are at Jack's mother's house, as if the 'family man' identity to which the pair suddenly aspire is invoked by the amicability of the physical and social space they inhabit, and the familial, domestic function the pair now perform alongside Jack's mother. Their discussion of suburban life is brief, with Jack's account of the exchange customarily evading the stark realities of life in favour of a simplified and romanticised presentation of the very conformity and stasis their travels customarily resist:

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<sup>106</sup> Frank Gaughan, "Kerouac, Jack (1922-1969)," in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 453.

“All I hope, Neal, is someday we’ll be able to live on the same street with our families and get to be a couple of oldtimers together.” “That’s right man---you know that I pray for it completely mindful of the troubles we both had and the troubles coming, as your mother knows and reminds me” (354).

In this abrupt departure from their established outlooks, the conversation between Jack and Neal replaces the frontiers of “IT” with their very antithesis: the predictable amicability of a mainstream lifestyle happily played out in a suburban neighbourhood. This departure from the established ideological component of the self is noteworthy, raising questions over the reliability of Jack’s narration and once again highlighting the contextually reactive nature of Kerouac’s characterisation. Despite this sudden advocacy of stasis and homogeneity, the image the pair enjoy is still located in the physical and temporal elsewhere, with uncertainty and possibility the only assurances available. Due to its lack of materiality, such a neighbourly abstraction remains mere fantasy, with the imagined masculinities of Jack and Neal immune to criticism due to the absence of tangible points of reference in the real world. However, Kerouac does go some way to materialising this identity, if only through the superimposition of yet another identity onto Jack and Neal: that of the teenage boy. As previously discussed in this chapter in relation to Mickey Martin in *The Town and the City*, Kerouac’s use of regression to adolescence/childhood facilitates a cocooning of the male self within a protective shroud, rendering the individual impervious to the dislocating gravities of the adult world. The performance of this adolescent masculinity in *The Scroll* is facilitated by the presence of Jack’s mother, collaboration with another male, and the traditionally feminine space of the home, respectively providing maternal, masculine, and suburban shields that celebrate the fraternally juvenile in a temporary deflection of the social protocols of adult life; effectively, Kerouac strives to recreate and reinstate the condition of youth. As Jack and Neal’s boyish selves chart a playful path through suburbia, Jack excitedly recalls the way the pair enjoy the throwing and catching of a baseball:

We tried extra special catches diving over bushes and barely missing posts. When a car came by I ran alongside and flipped the ball to Neal just barely behind the vanishing bumper. He darted and caught it and rolled in the grass, and flipped it back for me to catch on the other side of a parked breadtruck. I just made it with my meat hand and threw it back so Neal had to whirl and back up and fall on his back across the hedges (354).



The physicality of Jack's description is once more a celebration of the aesthetic, creating an excitement that conveys youthful joy at the performance of a simple activity, and the experience of the moment in which it exists. Both the performed behaviour and Jack's account of it are regressive, setting aside the pressures of postwar manhood, and even the allure of "IT" in favour of a more adolescent masculinity and diction that, much like Jack's observational account of Neal in the parking lot, elevates simple male physicality to an almost superhuman level. Exchanging voyeurism for involvement on this occasion, Jack's participation in the scene creates a dialogue between himself, Neal, and their immediate physical surroundings. Mirroring the challenge of the cars in Neal's parking lot, the materiality of suburbia is animated and framed in opposition to the pair, providing an army of obstacles which must, and in the reassuring invulnerability of youth, will be overcome. The popular boyhood narrative of hero and villain is invoked by both the hyperbolised tone and basic diction of childhood recollection, with Neal and Jack's ability to perform "extra special catches" enabling them to skilfully swerve, outwit, and overcome the literal and metaphorical suburban and domestic obstacles which conspire to threaten their enjoyment. Jack's account captures the quintessential image of boys heading home from play, unleashing a final burst of sustained enjoyment before autonomy dwindles in the face of a return to parental rule. Upon their arrival at the house, Neal engages in an exchange with Jack's mother, her reminder of his responsibilities met verbally and physically with a typically adolescent response of acquiescence and resignation:

"I hope you'll be able to take care of your new baby that's coming and stay married this time." "Yes, yass, yes." "You can't go all over the country having babies like that. Those poor little things'll grow up helpless. You've got to offer them a chance to live." He looked at his feet and nodded (354).

The freedom of Jack and Neal's brief walk home, and the constrictive authority they meet upon their arrival at the house provide a microcosmic reframing of the gender dialogues of postwar America, with male resistance to the literal and connotative matriarchy of Jack's mother and her house paralleling broader masculine aversion to feminised culture, the gender politics of postwar spatial systems, and the corresponding shackles of compliance and conformity that I discuss in Chapter One. The regression to adolescence, and the presence of feminine authority give rise to a more collaborative fraternal experience than in

earlier sections of the text, with Jack's detached admiration of Neal exchanged for his participation in the scene. Addressing the relationship between regression and escapism in the Beat mindset, Gary Cross states how, in "many ways, the Beats, and their fellow travelers in jazz and art were Peter Pans, perpetually running off to Neverland". Cross then continues his point, going on to note how Kerouac et al "rejected conventional manhood", "making youthful self-discovery a permanent way of life".<sup>107</sup> Cross's summary of the Beats' world view is of course highly simplified, but the physical flight of youth from social obligation and responsibility draws parallels with both the irresponsible, work-shirking Rip Van Winkle discussed in Chapter One, as well as Holden Caulfield, protagonist of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). The youthful wanderlust of Mark Twain's teenage protagonist in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) is also invoked by Kerouac's work, not least in its presentation of collaborative male travel. Of course, both Holden's and Huck's teenage adventures are authentically youthful, while Jack and Neal's reflect only a performance of the adolescent, whether explicitly as in their game of catch, or by cultural association, as in Gary Cross's reference to their travels. In Twain's narrative, Huck grows tired of domestic life with his guardian Widow Douglas, complaining how it "commenced again. The widow rang the bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals". Despite Widow Douglas's attempts to "sivilize" him, Huck dons his "old rags and my sugar-hogshead again", and takes off, "free and satisfied".<sup>108</sup> Following an abduction by, and subsequent escape from his drunken father, Huck transgresses the racial divide of the American south to join forces with Jim, a slave owned by Widow Douglas's sister. The pair embark on a journey along the Mississippi River, initially "a whole mile broad, and awful still and grand" (14) but which, during difficult times, becomes a thing of intimidation rather than wonderment, its breadth hyperbolised to "miles and miles across" in a voice of adolescent dramatisation similar to that which characterises Kerouac's account of the ball throwing (49). The river is a functional and aesthetic centrepiece of Twain's narrative, affording the temptation and opportunity to travel while simultaneously dictating the path that must be taken.

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<sup>107</sup> Gary Cross, *Men to Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), iBooks edition, chap. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (London: The Electric Book Company, 2001), Google Books online edition, 8, <[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=XTEApWWwigQC&pg=PA8&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=XTEApWWwigQC&pg=PA8&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false)> (accessed January 22, 2016). Subsequent page references in text.

Additionally, it provides the opportunity for the transgression of social norms, as Huck sidesteps both adult rule and racial division to forge an adventure free from the doctrines of society. In *The Scroll*, the roads of postwar America perform a similar function, providing an escapist masculine sanctuary that, to Jack and Neal, represents both the objective and the means. In the next section, it is on Kerouac's presentation of "the road" as a physical and ideological forum for the exploration and experience of masculinity that I focus my discussion.

**WHEEL MEN:  
DIALOGUES OF GENDER ON KEROUAC'S AMERICAN HIGHWAY**

He drove. That was what he did. What he'd always do.<sup>109</sup>

- James Sallis

At a point of Neal's absence during an early trip, Jack reflects on being "half-way across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future" (120). Drawing again on the aspiration and direction central to the Frontier concept, Jack acknowledges the interstitial quality of both his location and sense of self, his geographical position bisecting space and time as he offers a speculative personal chronology of origin and potentiality. Exactly what Jack's "future" entails remains unclear; however, later in the text, he does offer at least one concrete image of destination, claiming that "At the end of the American road is a man and a woman making love in a hotel room. That's all I wanted" (278). In comparison to the intensities of the hedonism and risk associated with the pursuit of the shapeshifting "IT", satisfaction of Jack's desire would seem simple enough to achieve: the conclusion of a journey with arrival at a safe haven, and the warmth of human companionship. Nonetheless, the frankness of the statement does little to mask the complex thematic intersection that lies beneath its presentation of person, activity, and place. In terms of location, a hotel is intermediary, providing a brief hiatus before movement is resumed, and Kerouac applies an equally ephemeral quality to the human relations by casting the nameless participants' liaison into such a venue. Also significant of course, is the way in which this road is uniquely "American", a subjective path beaten by the footsteps and horse hooves of the Frontier ethos. *The Scroll's* signature veiled lament is evident here, whether read as a microcosmic metaphor for the reduction of the American Dream to cheap and transient physical kicks, or as a cry for even the briefest sense of anchorage in a society in which the subjective experience of manhood is one of detachment and alienation. For Kerouac in postwar America, the road, and indeed the car, formed a uniquely masculine camp in a broader cultural dialogue between ideology and space, not unlike the raft on which Huck and Jim find themselves in Mark Twain's aforementioned narrative. While Huck and Jim's travels reflect an escape from the hypocrisy of a society rife with both slavery and Christian altruism, Jack and Neal reject the ways in which Cold War conformity and the

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<sup>109</sup> James Sallis, *Drive* (Harpenden: No Exit Press, 2011), iBooks edition, chap. 34.

feminised suburban ideal consigned American masculinity to what William Burroughs terms “lifeproof houses” with passive consumption of a reported world facilitated by “antennae of television to the meaningless sky” in *Naked Lunch* (1959).<sup>110</sup> Kerouac and Neal Cassady took advantage of the expansive physical geographies of the road in an attempt to forge a mobile masculine space from which they were able to engage with postwar America’s more marginal aspects through experience and experimentation. As both an object and a concept, ‘the road’ is simultaneously physical and metaphorical. In corporeal terms, its interchangeable end(s) and start(s) denote the extremities of its physical form, as well as the most extreme departure point(s) and/or terminus for the journey it facilitates. On a more metaphorical level, ‘the road’ serves as a convenient metonym for a potentially infinite succession of interstitial and formless locations and experiences. For Kerouac, being on the road was a way of rekindling the essence of pioneering America – ‘life on the trail’ – within the postwar context.

As I have shown, Kerouac’s neo-Frontier experiences in *The Scroll* are far from authentic, and the corresponding masculine images to which his characterisation aspires are based more on Hollywood representations of Frontier life than historical record. Shari Roberts claims that, with the growth of cinema, “the Western condensed further into what we now refer to as the genre of the road film”, driven by “frontier symbolism propelled by masculinity” and an “ideal of masculinity inherent in certain underlying conceptualizations of American national identity that have persisted, if only through continual ideological struggle.”<sup>111</sup> *The Scroll*, and Kerouac and Jack’s expectations and accounts of life on the road, are a manifestation of the very condensation that Roberts identifies. However, one significant way in which the logistics of Jack and Neal’s travels differ from the all but boundless directions and terrain available to the early pioneers is in their reliance on modern American transport systems. Started by bicyclists in the late nineteenth century, the Good Roads Movement sought to improve the condition of America’s roadways, expanding rapidly to form the Office of Road Inquiry. Its construction of the modern American system responded primarily to the emergence and popularity of the automobile, and its unsuitability

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<sup>110</sup> William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* [1959], ed. James Grauerholz and Barry Miles (London: Penguin Classics, 2015), iBooks edition, chap./section title: the rube.

<sup>111</sup> Shari Roberts, “Western Meets Eastwood,” in *The Road Movie Book*, ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London: Routledge, 1997), Questia online edition, 45, <<http://www.questia.com/read/109034168/the-road-movie-book>> (accessed January 4, 2016).

for roads that were, according to Owen D. Gutfreund, “in a pathetic state: muddy, rutted, overgrown, and often washed out”. Kerouac’s journeys and his chronicling of them occurred before considerable federal investment in 1956 laid the first slabs of the system American recognises today.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, the gratification Jack gains from the experience of travelling on the modern American road is clear. For Jack, the modern highway facilitates and gives licence to a robust performance of assertive masculine mobility, presented via Kerouac’s customary performative aesthetic. Jack’s accounts reinterpret traditional notions of a feminised American landscape to establish a dialogue of physicality between the car in which he and Neal ride and the land that it traverses, with the road presented not as a synthetic construct, but as part of the natural American terrain. Jack cherishes “The purity of the road. The white line in the middle of the hiway [sic] unrolled and hugged our left front tire as if glued to our groove. Neal hunched his muscular neck, T-shirted in the winter night, and blasted the car along” (235). There is a masculine egocentrism in Jack’s account, with the feminine anatomy of the road surrendering to the powerful physicality of Neal’s form and actions as the pair hurtle across the terrain. A sense of intimate human physicality pulsates in Jack’s use of verbs, with the personification of the road sustaining an earlier description in which “the car went as straight as an arrow, not for once deviating the slightest bit from the white line in the middle of the road that unwound kissing our left front tire” (218). Despite the presented dominance of Neal’s form and actions, the metaphorical sexual submission of the terrain is not the result of it being overpowered; instead, Jack’s account presents the road as a grateful and willing participant in the encounter, yielding voluntarily to the anatomy of the car as the narration frames the vehicle as a manifestation of masculine power. Jack’s repeated implication of the gender dialogue between the masculinity of the car and the femininity of the terrain reflects Kerouac’s attempts to once again revive mythical notions of hegemonic American masculinity and affirm a sense of the male self through the domination of the feminine. Ultimately however, the limitations of reliance on the elsewhere and the ‘other’ once again show through. Jack and Neal follow the established routes of the American highway system, a fixed network of roads that unites the body of the American continent and facilitates free movement only as far as a range of prescribed options allow. Unlike the early pioneers, who were all but absolved from such restriction,

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<sup>112</sup> Owen D. Gutfreund, *Twentieth Century Sprawl: Highways and the Reshaping of the American Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), Questia online edition, 9, <<https://www.questia.com/read/103543715/twentieth-century-sprawl-highways-and-the-reshaping>> (accessed January 4, 2016).

the physical routes taken by Jack and Neal are in fact prescribed, and most likely well trodden. Any physical destination at which the pair arrive is already discovered and charted, and the routes they follow are determined and sanctioned by the government incentives responsible for the design and construction of the highway system. Consequently, true ownership of travel and mobility lies with the state, whose roads – while at first appearing to liberate the individual – actually constrict movement to a series of approved paths. Despite their travels being a resistance to dominant culture and the conformity of stasis, Jack and Neal’s use of the American highway system places them as much ‘in the flow’ of postwar America as their intentions are against it.

The highway system threaded a rigid synthetic skeleton through the natural fabric of the American landscape, enlisting its diverse physical geographies into a national totality and providing what was effectively a vascular system through which American life could flow. Jack’s dismissal of the road’s synthetic nature assimilates the highway system into the natural forms of the American terrain, facilitating Kerouac’s assignment of pioneering Frontier identities to Jack and Neal through Jack’s narration. Significantly, Kerouac’s presentation of ‘the road’ aligns a duality of the material and the abstract with the gender binary. While Jack’s narration presents the physical surface of the tarmac as part of the natural landscape, and therefore metaphorically feminine, the concept of ‘the road’ as a behavioural arena, social space, and concept remains overtly masculine. This duality relies on the car as an intermediary agent between its passengers and the terrain; neither Neal nor Jack experience any direct contact with the physical road while driving or being driven, nor do they exert any direct control over it. Rather, it is their power and control over the car that, through the car’s engagement with the road, facilitates the masculine protocols of mobility, control, action, and physical domination of the feminine; metaphorically, the car functions as a form of masculine prosthetic. The space of the car is presented as a supercharger for primal notions of manhood, providing a shield to consequences and criticism as well as an arena for behaviours that would warrant them in the eyes of postwar American society. Amy L. Best is keen to note how the car is “often seen as a space where men can be men” providing “opportunities for men to forge emotional ties with other men”.<sup>113</sup> This can certainly be said of Jack and Neal, who are inextricably connected by

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<sup>113</sup> Amy L. Best, *Fast Cars, Cool Rides: The Accelerating World of Youth and Their Cars* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), Questia online edition, 4, <<https://www.questia.com/read/118395220/fast-cars-cool-rides-the-accelerating-world-of>> (accessed January 28, 2016).

their shared experiences of, and in, various automobiles. Indeed, the car, in both the main narrative and Jack's retrospection, provides a stage and a vessel for the performance of masculinity, and the transgression of moral and legal boundaries. Reflecting on Neal's past, Jack notes how his "specialty was stealing cars, gunning for girls coming out of high school in the afternoon, driving them out to the mountains, screwing them, and coming back to sleep in any available hotel bathtub in town" (140). Such behaviour was an apparent hallmark of Neal Cassady, with an account in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (1955) endorsing Jack's account and reflecting a shared iconisation of an individual "who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars, N.C., secret hero / of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver – joy to the memory of his / innumerable lays of girls in empty lots and diner backyards" (ll. 95-96).<sup>114</sup> In both accounts, it is the car that facilitates the actions by which Neal's character is defined, presenting a symbiosis between man and machine that validates both the function of the vehicle, and the masculinity of the individual controlling it in a mutual exchange. Neal's masculinity is affirmed and bolstered by his relationship with the car; in a metaphorical sense, the dialogue between man and machine is fraternal.

In *The Scroll*, the car is a central component in the formation of masculinity, with individual identity linked inextricably to the vehicle. Discussing the identity and social profile their car affords them en route to Chicago, Jack and Neal boast how "We'll come in there like gangsters in this Cadillac!" "Yes! And girls! --- we can pick up girls" (328). In contrast, the acquisition of a "37 Ford sedan with the rightside door unhinged and stuck on the frame" warrants less celebration (366). In fact, the only assurance offered by the Ford is the uncertainty and blind faith that "we'll be kissing senioritas b'dawn cause this old Ford can roll if y'know how to talk to her and ease her along---except the backend's about to fall but don't worry about it till we get there" (372). A far more complex example of the relationship between masculinity and the car follows a stay of "sixty odd hours" in San Francisco. Jack and Neal ride "towards Sacramento and eastward again", this time as passengers alongside two tourists in the car of another man (304). With five people in the car, Jack and Neal are simply passengers, with no means of vehicular control; their subjective masculine autonomy is metaphorically surrendered. In a reactive response to such passivity, Jack's narration reflects the way in which the man's vehicle, and his tentative

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<sup>114</sup> Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," *Howl and Other Poems*, ed. William Carlos Williams (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1959), 14.



handling of it, define his identity. Jack states “The car belonged to a tall thin fag who was on his way home to Kansas and wore dark glasses and drove with extreme care; the car was what Neal called a “fag Plymouth,” it had no pickup and no real power. “Effeminate car!” whispered Neal in my ear” (304). Based on his interactions with the vehicle, Jack and Neal relegate the man’s identity to a subjectively lesser masculinity through the alignment of his sexuality with the feminine.<sup>115</sup> Jack and Neal’s comments reflect an aggressive response to the usurpation of Neal’s established authority over the space of the car. The dynamic within the vehicle provides a metaphor for postwar gender dialogues, with the feminisation of space suppressing masculinity into a more passive role that leads to male reactivity. There is a clear contrast between Jack’s account of the aesthetic of the “tall thin fag” who drives with “extreme care” and that of Neal, who earlier in the novel “hunched his muscular neck, T-shirted in the winter night, and blasted the car along” (235). Much like the narrative of Steve Rogers and Captain America that begins my discussion in Chapter One, Jack’s alignment of male form with function celebrates the image of aggressive male physicality while maligning its opposite. Neal is shown to be physically powerful and dynamic at the wheel, with his robust and high octane driving a cause for admiration rather than criticism; conversely, the comparatively slight physique of the “tall thin fag” equates to a driving style defined by apprehension and impotency. Strikingly, after their derision of the man’s sexuality and Jack’s separation of his identity from that of Neal, Jack is soon “non-plussed” as he observes the way in which Neal “proceeded to handle the fag like a woman, tipping him over legs in the air and all and gave him a monstrous huge banging” (307). Once again, Jack’s narration shows a departure from the ideological aspect of self facilitating the celebration of Neal, with the criticism of that which is homosexual suddenly replaced by the approved enactment of it in an abrupt turn of face. Jack’s commentary elevates Neal’s sexual performance to a bullish display of physical masculine dominance, with the subjectively feminine framed as a consumable resource that facilitates the affirmation of the masculine. At the same time, Jack’s narration conveys sympathy for Neal’s investment in what is essentially an act of prostitution; “And after all that trouble”, Jack notes, “the fag

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<sup>115</sup> Note: homosexuality in postwar America has received much academic attention, not least due to its presented proximity to communism in government propaganda. For discussion, see:

- Robert J. Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).
- Heather Murray, *Not in This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
- Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009).

turned over no money to us, tho he made vague promises for Denver” (307). Neal’s immunity from the narrator’s criticism is therefore sustained, with a previously lamented sexuality given almost sacramental importance and endorsement due to Neal’s performance of it. Following his sexual encounter with the man, Neal then assumes control of the Plymouth, from which Jack immediately removes its “fag” moniker in tribute to the way in which Neal’s control reclaims the car as an overtly masculine space. With the reader soon swept up in Jack’s excited account of “crossing the Nevada desert by Noon after a hurling passage of the Sierras that made the fag and the tourists cling to each other in the backseat”, and the familiar sight of Neal “happy again”, with a “wheel in his hand and four on the road” (308), Kerouac celebrates the suppression of the feminine, with a masculine triumph in the battle for control of the car asserting both Neal’s characteristic physicality behind the wheel, and Kerouac’s subjective status quo.

## SPACES OF SELF: THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ROMANTIC

As I have shown, Kerouac's characterisation is shaped by a modified form of Stryker's concept of Identity Salience, with Jack's narration channeling a broad selection of masculine identities into the characters of both Neal and himself, identities deemed contextually auspicious by Kerouac's culturally nostalgic – rather than social – salience hierarchy. The extensive variability of these presented identities prompts the reader to question Jack's reliability as a narrator, with his accounts of person appearing to draw more on imagination than recollection. In this section, I explore how Kerouac's authorial voice is equally dependent on the assimilation and performance of identity. The identities to which I refer in this section are not abstract products of American cultural mythology as in the case of Jack's narration. Instead, I angle my discussion to encompass the employment of literary and philosophical identities and voices in the thematic and stylistic content of Kerouac's prose in *The Scroll*. My discussion focuses on a section of the novel to examine Kerouac's employment of the Romantic imagination, addressing the ways in which his postwar employment of the movement's approach to selfhood informs his presentation of American masculinity. My discussion draws particular attention to Kerouac's investment in the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, interrogating the disparate historical contexts of the two authors to explore how Kerouac's employment of Emerson's approach to mind/body dualism exacerbates Kerouac's difficulties in locating reliable notions of the male self in postwar America.

Unsurprisingly, life on the road exposes Jack and Neal to a range of rural American topographies. Jack does not fail to take stock of this, marveling at the spectacle of the natural world that he observes as he and Neal move across the United States. Jack's narration conveys a nervous awe at the form, scale, and extent of the landscape, wrapping elements of European Romanticism in a fraternal shroud of uncertainty symptomatic of American postwar nuclear paranoia. As Jack views the natural world, Kerouac's prose adopts the intensity of emotional experience common to Romantic works, just one of what Hugh Honour deems “a bewildering number of characteristics” identifiable in the tradition.<sup>116</sup> In observing the landscape, Jack replaces the medicinal and soothing experiences of nature enjoyed by Rip Van Winkle with an ominous veil that renders the eye

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<sup>116</sup> Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), Questia online edition, 13, <<http://www.questia.com/read/99884713/romanticism>> (accessed November 22, 2015).

with which he beholds the landscape one of uneasiness rather than wonderment. In this passage, which sees Jack stepping briefly outside the swim of the local nightlife, there is a considered attempt to contextualise the place of the self and its endeavours in relation to the aesthetic of the natural world, an attempt which serves only to exacerbate Jack's pre-existing uncertainties:

I wondered 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, and the big plateau that went to Steamboat Springs, and dropped, and led you to the Eastern Colorado desert and the Utah desert; all in darkness now as we fumed and screamed in our mountain nook, mad drunken Americans in the mighty land...We were situated 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 towards us with the Word and would arrive any minute and make us silent (157).

Even beyond the masculine sanctuary of the speeding automobile, Jack's narration retains its customary momentum, with each thought or observation segueing into the next as his description perpetually attempts to relocate the focus of the scene from "the ravine", to the "great western slope", "the big plateau", "Steamboat Springs", and "the Colorado desert and the Utah desert". On foot, and beyond the masculine exoskeleton of the car, Jack is forced to confront the sociopolitical realities of postwar America that seep insidiously into an otherwise natural vista: fear, paranoia, and invisible threat. This dynamic is shown through the implied menace of intangible entities such as "the Spirit of the Mountain", the "ghosts of old miners", the "whisper of the wind", and the ways in which he and the other "mad drunken Americans" "roared", "fumed and screamed" in an act of seemingly atavistic catharsis. By orientating firstly himself, and secondly the other "mad drunken Americans" in relation and opposition to the "mighty land", Jack draws on elements of the Romantic voice to present the same "subjective consciousness in conflict with surrounding phenomena" that Beverley Taylor and Robert Bain identify as a marker of Romantic

works.<sup>117</sup> Kerouac's affinity for William Blake is evident in this section, with the cathartic cries of Jack's peers responding to the ideological doctrines of Cold War America as if they were an incarnation of the "mind-forg'd manacles" that enslave the population in Blake's *London*.<sup>118</sup> Blake's influence is evident in the wider output of the Beats; while John Clellon Holmes places him at the centre of hallucinogenic epiphanies for Allen Ginsberg's literary alter ego Stofksy in *Go* (1952), Kerouac employs him as a fantastical identity to which his narrator aspires in *The Subterraneans* (1958). Echoing Jack's performance of identity as a tool for locating a sense of self in *The Scroll*, the narrator in *The Subterraneans* expresses delight at "seeing [himself] as William Blake with the meek wife in the middle of London early dewy morning".<sup>119</sup> Reference to Blake appears again in Kerouac's *Doctor Sax* (1959), with the description of "Blake sunflower collars leering up from hell with the same coy horror of Blake's figures" presupposing the reader's familiarity with the Englishman's work and further aligning Kerouac's authorial mindset with the darker face of the Romantic tradition.<sup>120</sup> Forest Pyle notes how "In the Romantic imagination we discover that we are not dealing with a stable property of mind or a concept of selfhood but with a matter of discourse".<sup>121</sup> This is clearly the case in not only the above section, but in the wider narrative of *The Scroll*, with masculinity presented more as a contextual symptom than a fixed condition. Jack's narration entwines the Romantic voice with the voice of an uneasy postwar nuclear America, and also, by implication, the voice of Walt Whitman, whose likely appearance as the "old man with white hair" frames *The Scroll* as an automotive reimagining of Whitman's *Song of the Open Road*, in which Whitman marvels at "The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose".<sup>122</sup> Joshua Kupetz identifies how "Kerouac was an avid reader of Whitman and his claims for a 'modern prose [narrative] in America' echo

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<sup>117</sup> Beverly Taylor and Robert Bain, "Bibliographical Essay," in *The Cast of Consciousness: Concepts of the Mind in British and American Romanticism*, ed. Beverly Taylor and Robert Bain (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), Questia online edition, 221, <<http://www.questia.com/read/27549187/the-cast-of-consciousness-concepts-of-the-mind-in>> (accessed November 22, 2015).

<sup>118</sup> William Blake, *Blake: The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (London: Longman Group, 2007), 161.

<sup>119</sup> Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), iBooks edition, chap. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Dr Sax* (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), iBooks edition, chap. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Forest Pyle, *The Ideology of Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>122</sup> Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road," in *Leaves of Grass*, comp. G Fuhrman and David Widger (Project Gutenberg eBook, 2012), book vii.

Whitman's prophecy of an 'infant genius of American poetic expression.'"<sup>123</sup> The optimism and opportunity that the road (the path) affords Kerouac and Whitman is perhaps more authentic for the latter, as the corporate, social, and spatial politics of modern America had not yet come to be in Whitman's time. Whitman was writing when America was – broadly speaking and with respect to its modern condition of nation – still under construction, positioning *Leaves Of Grass* as a seminal American poetic text, "a Yankee Genesis" in the words of Leo Marx.<sup>124</sup> In terms of influence and voice, Kerouac's prose – much like the hybrid American literature of the Revolutionary period – draws influence from both sides of the Atlantic, his fondness for the darker throngs of European Romanticism ensconced in the ominous fear and uncertainty of the early Cold War.

Further influence on Kerouac's approach to the location of the male self can be found in the works of Emerson and Thoreau, proponents in the Americanisation of European Romanticism and just two of many authors from whom, notes Ian Bickford, Kerouac "learned the self-examining mysticism and awe of the world that would inform his later writing".<sup>125</sup> In *The Scroll*, Kerouac's repeated attempts to locate an authentic condition and experience of manhood through individualism and (relative) isolation is redolent of Thoreau's sojourn into the woods in *Walden* (1854), though with the tranquility of a woodland cabin exchanged for the roar of a car engine. Recycling but hyperbolising the sentiments and actions of Thoreau, whose woodland cabin sat in relative safety a mere two miles from urban Concord, Kerouac's narrator in *Lonesome Traveller* (1960) states that "No man should go through life without once experiencing healthy, even bored solitude in the wilderness, finding himself depending solely on himself and thereby learning his true and hidden strength."<sup>126</sup> John Lardas is quick to identity the similarities between the Beat philosophy and that of Thoreau and Emerson, noting how "like the Transcendentalists, the

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<sup>123</sup> Joshua Kupetz, "'The Straight Line Will Take You Only to Death': The Scroll Manuscript and Contemporary Literary Theory," in Jack Kerouac, *On The Road: The Original Scroll* [2007], ed. Howard Cunnell (London: Penguin Classics, 2007).

<sup>124</sup> R. W. B. Lewis, "The New Adam," in *The Americanness of Walt Whitman*, ed. Leo Marx (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1960), Questia online edition, 103, <<http://www.questia.com/read/4665103/the-amicanness-of-walt-whitman>> (accessed February 2, 2016).

<sup>125</sup> Ian Bickford, "Jack Kerouac," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature*, ed. Jay Parini (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 366.

<sup>126</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Lonesome Traveler* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), iBooks edition, chap./section title: Alone on a Mountaintop.

Beats attempted to reform the social realm through an appeal to fine-grained perceptions”, developing his point to note that “Kerouac’s playfulness and sexual innuendo puts a gloss on Thoreau’s comment in *Walden*”, and that “Kerouac’s emphasis on natural awareness is reminiscent of Emerson’s notion of intuition”.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the influence of Emerson’s philosophy can be clearly identified in Kerouac’s prose in *The Scroll*, informing his employment of spatial and sociocultural politics, and his approach to the identification of self. In his essay *Circles* (1841), Emerson states that “Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens.” Reverberations of Emerson’s perpetually progressive dynamic certainly resonate in Kerouac’s reliance on the Frontier and its repeated presentation of opportunity; add to this Emerson’s subsequent identification of the quest for the “Unattainable, the flying Perfect, around which the hands of man can never meet, at once the inspirer and condemner of every success” and the connection between the two authors is concretised, with the “flying Perfect” manifesting in “IT”, an authentic experience of the male self, and the unreachable subjective perfection promised by Jack and Neal’s next physical destination in *The Scroll*.<sup>128</sup> Kerouac draws on Emerson’s work to establish a theoretical stage on which the unpredictable, performative, and frenetic masculinities of Jack and Neal play out, a stage which – as I shall show – is ultimately undermined by sociocultural disparities between the world of Emerson and that of postwar America. In the introduction to *Nature* (1836), Emerson identifies how “the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul”, with the former (as a proper noun, a convention which I adopt when referring to Emerson’s definition of both terms) defined as “the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body”. For Emerson, the Soul – the aspect of self devoid of corporeal form – is the most authentic manifestation of individual identity, while the extrinsic physical aspects of the world including the bodies of the individual and all others – defined as Nature – take material form. It is important to point out that the “art” to which Emerson refers is defined as man’s “will” converging with “essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf” to form “a house, a canal, a statue, a picture”. Effectively, “art” refers to creative output inspired by the physical world, which, while it may be

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<sup>127</sup> John Lardas, *The Bop Apocalypse: The Religious Visions of Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 99.

<sup>128</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays, First Series* (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1883), Questia online edition, 281-282, <<http://www.questia.com/read/4191060/the-complete-works-of-ralph-waldo-emerson-essays>> (accessed February 21, 2016).

appreciated, is “insignificant” in comparison to “an impression so grand as that of the world on the human mind”; simply put, for Emerson, the effects of artistic interpretations of Nature cannot compete with man’s engagement with the real thing. Through his concepts of Soul and Nature then, Emerson defines the self via a duality of material and abstract realms, the same dynamic that underpins much of Jack’s narration in *The Scroll*. For Emerson, the Soul, while abstract, is intrinsic and definable, a truly subjective ontological condition that exists alongside, and in response to Nature, rather than as a component of it. Emerson’s Soul is an autonomous entity, located immovably within the individual’s psyche. However, in *The Scroll*, Kerouac’s presentation of masculinity stems from the locating of the Soul in the extrinsic, positioning it as a component of, rather than a response to, the Nature of postwar America. In addition to this relocation of the truest component of self (at least in accordance with Emerson), disparities between the Natures with which Kerouac and Emerson engage further impede Kerouac’s search for a clear sense of manhood. Writing alongside Whitman during a period of substantial industrial growth, the physical and cultural world of Emerson had not yet assumed the character of mass production and commodification characteristic of Kerouac’s postwar surroundings.<sup>129</sup> Emerson’s Nature is most strongly defined by corporeal forms, with natural entities such as “flowers, the animals, the mountains” providing fixed points of orientation in the extrinsic world. Capitalist ownership is even aligned with natural topography as he exemplifies how “Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond.”<sup>130</sup> Almost a quarter of a century later, in *Wealth* (1860), Emerson’s focus on the physical world remains, with the ubiquity of natural imagery at least temporarily supplanted by the fruits of industry, his acknowledgement and support of technological advancement celebrating “genius...the madness of few for the gain of the world”, and offering physical examples such as “telegraph, mill, map...factories...iron rails”. However, in discussion of the human tensions inherent to such progress, natural imagery persists, with Emerson defining the creative process of industry as a series of “counteractions, as one tree keeps another down in the forest.”<sup>131</sup> Whether in relation to natural topography or the industrial fruits of human endeavour, I argue that Emerson’s Nature provided an array of comparatively clear, distinct physical forms far from the

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<sup>129</sup> Kevin Hillstrom, “Environmental Impact,” in *Industrial Revolution in America: Communications*, ed. Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier Hillstrom (California: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 147-151.

<sup>130</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1836), 7-11, <<https://archive.org/details/naturemunroe00emerrich>> (accessed February 18, 2016).

<sup>131</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), 81, <<https://archive.org/details/conductlife00emerrich>> (accessed February 21, 2016).



semantic cauldron of twentieth century popular culture from which Kerouac sought to extract meaning, and in which he attempts to define his own personal sense of Nature in *The Scroll*. While the corporeality of Emerson's physical and cultural landscape renders Nature easily definable, postwar America's persuasive and pervasive kaleidoscope of mass produced forms and popular culture renders the construction of meaning a referential, rather than absolute process. Consequently, the supposed material certainty of Kerouac's Nature is subsumed by analogous and intertextual simulacra, rendering it as abstract as the Soul which, in accordance with Emerson's material/abstract bisection, its physicality would normally oppose. This convergence of Soul and Nature produces an osmotic dialogue between the two usually disparate entities, with the mutual ingress of the material and the abstract rendering the two indefinable from each other in the postwar context. The outcome is that Kerouac's perceptions, embodiments, and literary presentations of the masculine self surrender the stalwart individuality and autonomy of Emerson's Soul, and are instead repeatedly immersed in, and sucked from, the simultaneously homogenous yet amorphous soup of postwar American popular culture, rendering them little more than fleeting and fantastical imaginings. Application of Emerson's definition of "art" complicates the process further. While for Emerson, "art" is the product of the channeling of Nature's materiality through the Soul's abstract consciousness (the mediation of the extrinsic world through an intrinsic condition of self), the synonymy and instability of both Soul and Nature in Kerouac's reality causes a breakdown in this process, the inability to define the boundaries of each fracturing the line between the real and the imagined to the point where both the recollection of experience, and the corresponding sense of the male self dissolve in a swirling cocktail of intertextuality.

By drawing on the Romantic imagination, Kerouac demonstrates a desire to define his authorial voice by the authorial performance of that which is – strictly speaking – located in the 'other'. Just as Kerouac's affinity for the imagery of the Frontier results in Neal's performance of corresponding identities, Kerouac's assimilation of established literary and philosophical models into his prose is itself based on a principle of performance, of emulation. Of course, Kerouac's employment of the Romantic tradition transcends the straightforward cloning of pre-existing discourse. Instead, it is the anachronistic fusion of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century voices in Kerouac's prose that positions it as a hybrid literature, facilitating the intersection of not only conflicting models of masculinity within the same space, but also the merging of temporally and culturally disparate spheres.

The unedited nature of *The Scroll*, and the spontaneity of Kerouac's style allow this process of hybridisation and mutual assimilation to go unchecked, with the extensive cultural tropes on which he draws bringing a range of discordant voices, both popular and scholarly, to bear on his creation of meaning. Consequently, the impression and presentation of Kerouac's authorial self are subject to the same instability as the masculinities of the characters presented by Jack's narration in *The Scroll*.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the closing words of *The Scroll*, Jack notes how “I think of Neal Cassady, I even think of Old Neal Cassady the father we never found, I think of Neal Cassady, I think of Neal Cassady” (408).<sup>132</sup> If Jack – and indeed Kerouac – were suggesting a point of origin for the exploration of masculinity within the text, there could perhaps, be no better place to start. As I have shown, Kerouac’s approach to Neal’s characterisation is born from both utility and idolatry, with Neal serving as a vehicle into which Kerouac is able to project subjective paradigms of American manhood. Neal’s embodiment and performance of such models reflect Kerouac’s response to the erosion of masculine autonomy by the conformism of the postwar climate, with the installation of such identities providing subjective reassurance that the romantic character of mythical America still endures. For Jack – and indeed Kerouac – Neal embodies all that the American man was, and should continue to be. To Kerouac’s reader however, the fluidisation of Neal’s identity within the pages of *The Scroll* renders him simultaneously ‘everything’ and ‘nothing’, perhaps explaining Phoebe Lou Adams’s frustration with his character. While Jack’s narration elevates Neal to the highest echelons of idolisation, the range of masculine identities he embodies challenges the extent to which the ‘real’ Neal can in fact be identified. The narrative of Neal’s shifting identity parallels the narrative of American masculinity that I have chronicled in this dissertation. As a cultural product, it is unsurprising that American manhood has proven to be located in the dialogues of ongoing process, rather than as a concrete experiential accompaniment to the biology of the American male. The early engendering of American nation has provided a critical point of reference for more traditionally Americentric and conservative responses to the evolution of manhood, equating the performance of traditional models of masculinity with the endorsement of national values, and sustaining cultural profiles of men and women under a banner of patriotism. As a vehicle for the assertion of masculine authority, engagement with nation is reflected extensively in *The Scroll*, though more through referential than explicit treatment. At once a proponent, student, and – colloquially speaking – ‘fan’ of American culture, Kerouac’s treatment and presentation of that which is subjectively ‘American’ relies on the invocation and repositioning of American cultural mythology, superimposing romanticised abstractions onto the realities of postwar America. The concept and imagery of

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<sup>132</sup> Note: the final few feet of the teletype paper on which Kerouac’s original prose was typed were lost. In the consulted version of *The Scroll*, these final sections are approximated from a selection of Kerouac’s post-April 1951 drafts, and the original published novel.

the Frontier is influential to Kerouac's work, providing the opportunity and means to position life on the road as a noble, patriotic, and distinctly masculine enterprise, seeking the next frontier of Jack and Neal's experiences and justifying their dismissal of the postwar suburban ideal under a pretense of the nationally celebrated pioneer image. The mobility facilitated by the Frontier dynamic enables Kerouac to engineer a distinctly masculine space that is, in both interactional and physical terms, anti-social, exchanging the period's wider cultural and behavioural collectivity for a male individualism, the integrity of which is assured and qualified by the cultural and literary histories on which Kerouac explicitly and implicitly draws. However, regardless of how credibly it may be presented by Jack's narration, the implementation of Frontier imagery in Kerouac's prose exemplifies wider literary and sociopolitical tendencies to locate American masculinity interstitially between the material and the abstract. Whether in the attempts of men in the Revolutionary period to live up to the demands of the National Imaginary; the amorphous allure of the American Dream; or the efforts of Hemingway's impeded male characters to triumph in competition, it is the gulf between the material and the abstract – between actuality and potentiality – to which masculinity is repeatedly consigned in *The Scroll*, ultimately producing a dislocation, rather than a validation of the male self.

It is of course unsurprising that Kerouac's portrayal of the masculine responds directly to his presentation of the feminine. The presence and purposeful employment of normative, stereotypical, and even hypermasculine models of manhood are immediately apparent in *The Scroll*, and these models sit in opposition to contrasting presentations of the male self that challenge the novel's dominant masculine aesthetic through their advocacy and performance of that which has been traditionally aligned with the feminine. Sustaining dialogues from history, Kerouac's treatment of the feminine provides a point of orientation against which he attempts to construct and deconstruct images of manhood. In diction and content, and in much the same way as the bullish masculinity of American Revolutionary politics, and the fiction of Mickey Spillane, Kerouac seeks to subordinate the feminine, drawing on hegemonic gender dialogues in an attempt to affirm the masculine by the consumption and domination of the subjective binary opposite through proposed or performed material interaction, or in the metaphors of spatial and ideological systems. Concurrently however, the visceral and philosophical tone of Kerouac's prose reflects an engagement with, and performance of, an exploration of emotion traditionally aligned with the feminine. This presents an inherent contradiction, with the simultaneous criticism and

performance of character obscuring any sense of a definitive self through a presented deviation of ideology. Given the engendering of American nation, and Kerouac's investment in its concepts, culture, and physicality, it is unsurprising that the coexistence of conflicting images of manhood in *The Scroll* parallels the contradictory politics of gender in the postwar climate, with the prescription of 'soft' social manhood by 'hard' masculine political policy yielding a metaphorical and national bifurcation of the American male self. This stark detachment of political masculinity from social masculinity reflects a direct contradiction of the Revolutionary principles that positioned the identity of the American man as synonymous with, dependent upon, and responsible for the identity of his nation. The question is therefore raised as to how far the postwar dislocation of American masculinity reflected in *The Scroll* is part of a broader contemporary dislocation of long standing American national ideals, with the nascent postwar counterculture of which the Beats were a part responding to the issue of identity in relation to both the totality of nation, and the individual and social selfhood(s) of its people.

Locating masculinity in *The Scroll*, from the standpoint of both author and reader, has proven to be an intertextual process, drawing the elsewhere and the 'other' to bear on the immediacy of Kerouac's prose which, much like the presentations of masculinity that it accommodates, is heavily reliant upon performance. In a postwar American socioculture characterised by collectivity, conformity, and suppression, Kerouac, influenced heavily by the individualist philosophies of Emerson and Thoreau, as well as the expressiveness and emotional literacy of the wider Romantic imagination, chose the relative isolation of the road as the theatre in which to explore the male self, and to mourn the loss of the subjective American ideal that he revered. Of course, the mythical and cultural constructs of nation and manhood to which Kerouac sought to grant physical form, and the history that inspired them, consigned his physical and ontological postwar quest to a series of potent (re)imaginings, defined – much like the American Dream – by the allure of their unreality. Accordingly, it is in the gulf between the actual and the potential, the present and the absent, the fantastical and the real that we are able to best locate a sense of masculinity within *The Scroll*. As Jack and Neal hurtle across the American tarmac on their automotive pilgrimage to that "specific elsewhere", it is American masculinity that finds itself without a purpose or clear sense of self, stranded at the metaphorical roadside of American society (375).

The absence of any concrete resolution – the very thing against which Phoebe Lou Adams protested in relation to *On the Road* – is in fact the very thing that renders *The Scroll* so poignant. Its absence is a manifestation of the lack of conclusion to Kerouac's travels, and a testament to the futility of his quest for an experience of the subjectively authentic. Most significantly however, it alludes to the author's inability to truly come to terms with his personal experiences of loss at an early age. *The Scroll* reflects a stalwart yet ultimately futile attempt to resurrect, rediscover, and reinstate that which has ceased to be. In personal terms, this corresponds to a definitive, reliable, and accessible model of masculinity against which Kerouac is able to measure his experiences and condition of self, the very thing which the death of his brother, father, and friend early in his life served to undermine. It is the desperate yearning for such a point of reference that produces the instability of character and voice that characterises both Neal and Jack in *The Scroll*. The state of perpetual flux in which masculinity finds itself within the text is the result of a frenetic and unrelenting search for a point of orientation. In his attempts to locate a definitive and dependable image of postwar American manhood, Kerouac frantically searches a subjective psychological archive of cultural images, drawn from his experiences of American culture and mythology, and attempts to resurrect them within the realities of his existence in a desperate bid to experience even the briefest moment of guidance or extrinsic validation. Essentially, this casts Kerouac's experience of any subjectively valid masculinity into the realms of nostalgic fantasy, his insistence on the employment of such images serving only as a nagging reminder of their inapplicability and absence.

Alongside the subject of sex and gender sits the subject of sexuality, and this is brought to the fore in my discussion of the individual driving the "fag Plymouth" and Neal's sexual encounter with him. However, sexuality has not featured strongly in this dissertation, and it would be enlightening to consider the ways in which Kerouac's prose negotiates images of the male self between the supposed binary distinctions of homosexuality and heterosexuality presented in postwar American propaganda, and the realities of more fluidised sexual identities existing between the two extremes. It would likely prove fruitful to broaden this discussion to encompass the wider social circle of the Beats, providing a more lucrative social and authorial cross section around which to orientate the exploration. Given the tendency of postwar American propaganda to align homosexuality with communism and broader images of that which was 'un-American', it would also be fascinating to interrogate the relationship between masculinity and nation beneath a spotlight of male sexuality in the

postwar period; how does male sexuality intersect with the social and physical geographies implicated in postwar suburban white flight and city life? How does male sexuality influence the authorial voice in postwar America? And, perhaps most significantly to this dissertation, how far do the boundaries of sexuality align with the boundaries of selfhood and 'otherness' so fundamental to Kerouac's experience and presentation of the male condition? It would also be revealing to explore Kerouac's engagement with masculinity in relation to social class. While the travels depicted in *The Scroll* lead Jack and Neal to most frequently rub shoulders with more socially marginalised individuals, Kerouac's background and time at Columbia University certainly place his origins within the middle class of white America. This perhaps goes some way to explaining the fascination that Jack expresses at the sight of America's most impoverished, as if such a lifestyle were in fact deeply romantic, and a product of choice rather than circumstance. Regardless of how destitute Jack and Neal appear to be at any given moment, and in spite of their insistence on engagement with the more liminal spaces of American society, the fact remains that the frequent dereliction brought about by their peripatetic existence occurs of their own volition; they are free to escape from it at any given moment, unlike the individuals they encounter on their travels. This once again raises the issue of performance, and the way in which the masculinities of Jack and Neal are formed in the emulation of an 'other'. Whether they are separated from this 'other' by time, physical and ideological geographies, the thresholds of reality and fantasy, or simply socioeconomic circumstance, the need for Kerouac to look elsewhere for a definitive notion of the American male self leaves considerable scope for further academic investigation.

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