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ON THE ROAD AGAIN:

THE INFLUENCE OF FRANCIS PARKMAN'S *THE OREGON TRAIL* ON JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD*

by

Scott F. Holman

A dissertation

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Committee Approval

To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of SCOTT F. HOLMAN find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

_____

Dr. Margaret Johnson, Major Advisor

_____

Dr. Terry Engebretsen, Committee Member

_____

Dr. Alan Johnson, Committee Member

_____

Dr. James DiSanza, Graduate Faculty Representative

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the probable influence of 19th-century American historian Francis Parkman's book *The Oregon Trail* on Jack Kerouac's writing of *On the Road*. This influence is noted in terms of theme and writing style. Thematically, this dissertation illustrates how Parkman and Kerouac romanticized their narratives in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road* to align with their preconceptions of the West. This act, unwittingly, saw both writers furthering, if not creating, Western myth. However, this dissertation illustrates how the myth constructed by Parkman became one which Kerouac actively attempted to experience and how this endeavor, represented in *On the Road*, illustrates Parkman's influence on Kerouac's road novel. This dissertation then examines the many parallels between Kerouac and Parkman's representation of non-white Others in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*. Through the use of postmodern and postcolonial theory, this examination foregrounds how Parkman's treatment of Native American Others appears to flavor Kerouac's writing in terms of the Hispanic Others he exoticizes in *On the Road*. Next, this dissertation uses gender theory and its idea of socially constructed identities to point out just how similar the masculine identities in these two books appear. In particular, this dissertation draws distinct parallels between Parkman's trusted trail guide Henry Chatillon and Kerouac's "perfect guy for the road," Dean Moriarty, to illustrate the probable influence of Parkman's most prominent male character in *The Oregon Trail* on the definitive hero of *On the Road*. Lastly, this dissertation shows how the actual writing style that Parkman utilizes in writing his trail narrative appears to have influenced Kerouac's writing style in *On the Road*. Utilizing Kerouac's spontaneous prose technique that he defines in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," this dissertation illustrates

how this method can be ascribed to much of the writing in *The Oregon Trail*, ultimately precluding coincidence in Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail* having influenced Kerouac's writing in *On the Road*.

Introduction: Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, and its Influence on Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

In 1950, John Kerouac published his first novel, *The Town and the City*, adhering to a verbose, formalistic style of writing akin to the work of Thomas Wolfe. *The Town and the City* was a "big book"—five hundred pages—that met with generally tepid reviews.[1] It wasn't until 1957 that *John* Kerouac, opting for the more informal *Jack* as his given name, published *On the Road*. This second novel abandoned the more traditional aesthetic of the first.[2] Paralleling his new first name, *On the Road* was written with a new, more informal stylistic, which Kerouac referred to as "spontaneous prose." The transformation between the two novels is markedly apparent. Many scholars have speculated on the catalyst for this aesthetic shift, citing the influence of improvisational jazz or inspiration from within the tight circle of Beat originators. What seems to have been overlooked by scholars seeking to define Kerouac's stylistic adjustment is the possible impact of the role played by 19th century historian Francis Parkman's writing.

This dissertation explores the influence of Francis Parkman on Jack Kerouac. By investigating Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail* (1849) and Kerouac's newfound spontaneous prose in *On the Road*, I evidence similarities between each author's writing style. However, other parallels exist between these texts, specifically regarding theme. This dissertation exposes the similarities between Kerouac and Parkman's response to the West as a literary subject; how each writer reacts to and treats the non-white Others in

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[1] Complicating the matter of the book's length was Kerouac's loquacious writing style, which perhaps *New Yorker* magazine summed up best saying Kerouac's "habit of using ten words where one would do inclines the reader to put the book aside until some day when there is absolutely nothing else around to read" (115).
[2] In 1960, Kerouac described *The Town and the City* as being "formal" and "written in the tradition of long work and revision" (*Lonesome* vi).

their road narratives; and how Kerouac and Parkman construct the masculine identities of male heroes of their road narratives. Ultimately, this dissertation illuminates the influence of *The Oregon Trail* on Kerouac's writing of *On the Road*.

To demonstrate this influence, evidence should first be given to support Kerouac having read Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. In May of 1949 – a time at which Kerouac was in the midst of the adventures he records in *On the Road* – Kerouac embarked on a trip from New York to Denver. He found himself in Independence, Missouri, penning in his journal, "We entered Independence, or that is, bypassed it, and I saw no signs of what it used to be in the days of Parkman. . ." (*Windblown* 344). Even though the timelessness that Kerouac believed might still exist in Independence was not to be realized, this passage serves to illustrate Kerouac's quest for the authentic travel experience that he perceived as being the reality of Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. Furthermore, this passage from Kerouac's journal would seem to support the notion that Kerouac was actively searching for a first-hand shot at experiencing Parkman's frontier. Parkman and Kerouac's styles as writers are deeply infused with romantic ideologies, and the exotic landscape of the West, perhaps, fulfills the most important tenet of this shared vision; however, it would appear, at least in this passage, that Parkman's writing flavored Kerouac's perspective.

Kerouac further corroborates his having read Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* in his highly autobiographical *On the Road*. Examining Kerouac's journals and letters demonstrates how very closely *On the Road* follows the actual events that took place during Kerouac's first journey to the West in the spring of 1947–a tipping-point moment in terms of his own identity, one he described as leaving "the East of [his] youth" to

experience "the West of [his] future" (*OR* 15). In *On the Road*, Kerouac speaks of "poring over maps of the United States" in preparation for his journey west, "reading books about pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron" (10). He also recounts, "All winter I'd been reading of the great wagon parties that held council there [Council Bluffs, Iowa] before hitting the Oregon and Santa Fe trails" (17). While one might merely speculate that these readings included Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* because of the broad American cultural influence of Parkman,[3] this connection is made concrete in a letter Kerouac wrote to his friend Hal Chase, who lived in Denver, the spring before Kerouac's journey west. Not only does the letter evidence Kerouac's reading Parkman, but it also reveals Kerouac's newborn zeal implicating Parkman as an impetus for his enthusiasm. Kerouac writes to Chase:

> Lately my interests have been undergoing a startling change, and I was pleased (once more) to learn that you yourself have been reorganizing or possibly just naturally turning your mind to new interests . . .My own development center[s] around a new interest in things rather than ideas. For instance, all my reading in the past few months has been of a very practical nature. Here's a list: Parkman's "Oregon Trail," another book concerned with that trail and also every other important trail in the country (don't ask me why: I'm crazy about this kind of reading now) . . . (*SL 1* 107)

[3] *The Oregon Trail* is a "perennial favorite of high school reading lists" ("Francis Parkman and the Oregon Trail").

Clearly a translocation of literary interest is occurring in Kerouac; just as clearly, Parkman can be seen influencing this shift.[4]

Background

The significance of revealing Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* as an influence on the seminal novel of the Beat Generation is underscored by enduring interest in Kerouac's *On the Road*, both in terms of popular culture and academia. In recent years, this interest in *On the Road* has exploded. 2007 marked the fiftieth anniversary of its publication. It was also the year that Viking-Penguin published *On the Road: The Original Scroll*, the first draft of *On the Road* that Kerouac wrote during a three-week Benzedrine-fueled exposition of his new spontaneous prose style. The scroll, written on telegraph paper so that Kerouac wouldn't need to stop typing and insert new sheets of paper into his typewriter, was bought in 2001 for 2.43 million dollars by Jim Irsay, the owner of the Indianapolis Colts. Ahead of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *On the Road*, in 2004, Irsay literally sent the scroll "on the road," displaying it under UV-proof glass at museums in the U.S., Ireland, and the UK. The international tour of the scroll was completed in 2009. The scroll was most recently displayed on February 3, 2012, by Irsay at a VIP-only Super Bowl party held at Indiana State University. Also in 2012 came the long-awaited movie version of *On the Road*. Francis Ford Coppola bought the movie rights to the book in 1979. After making several attempts at directing the movie himself, he entrusted director Walter Selles, director of *The Motorcycle Diaries*, to proceed with the project in 2010, and the film debuted at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival in May of that year. The *On the Road* movie was not the only Kerouac-

[4] The other items on this reading list are cause for further investigation, but it should be noted that *The Oregon Trail* is first upon this reading list and the only work to be followed by a parenthetical citation saying, "I'm crazy about this kind of reading now."

related film released in 2012. *Big Sur*, based on Kerouac's novel of the same name, was released in 2012, as well. This movie was directed by Michael Polish, who also wrote the screenplay for this adaptation of Kerouac's 1962 novel.

Critical literary interest in *On the Road* has also been on the rise in recent years. In 2007, Viking-Penguin published John Leland's *Why Kerouac Matters: The Lessons of On the Road (They're Not What You Think)*, a book that argues that the rebel image often associated with *On the Road* is misinformed and that the core of this novel is represented by friendship and family values. In 2009, Southern Illinois University press published *What's Your Road, Man?: Critical Essays on Jack Kerouac's On the Road*, a book of ten essays, featuring such Kerouac scholars as Matt Theado and Regina Weinreich. Edited by Hillary Holladay and Robert Holton, this book of criticism employs a variety of theoretical approaches in exploring race, class, gender, and historical context in Kerouac's novel. Gerald Nicosia's book *One and Only: The Untold Story of On the Road* was published in 2011and focuses on LuAnne Henderson, the character referred to as Marylou in *On the Road*. Nicosia seeks to illustrate that Henderson influences the narrative of Kerouac's novel in ways that have yet to be acknowledged by literary critics. These books, along with at least a dozen academic articles written per year over the last five years, indicate that critical literary interest in *On the Road* is alive and well.

Having illustrated the enduring interest in Kerouac and *On the Road*, I now shift my focus to illuminate the specific impacts of this dissertation in terms of Kerouac studies. This dissertation uncovers the previously unnoticed influence of Francis Parkman upon Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose technique and simultaneously brings into focus how gender constructs and the non-white Others of *The Oregon Trail*

influenced thematic issues of Kerouac's most recognized novel. This re-envisioning of Kerouac helps to explain the aesthetic shift in Kerouac's writing style between his first novel, *The Town and the City*, and his second novel, *On the Road*. My research also shows that the masculine characteristics Kerouac constructed in writing about Dean Moriarty as a "a side-burned hero of the snowy West" (*OR* 2) have been influenced by Parkman's mountain man idols in *The Oregon Trail*. This connection helps to explain Kerouac's impetus for choosing to write about a character like Moriarty in terms of him being "the perfect guy for the road" (*OR* 1). Lastly, this project contributes to scholarship pertaining to Kerouac's *On the Road* by showing how Parkman's portrayal of Native Americans in *The Oregon Trail* influenced the way in which Kerouac portrayed Hispanic characters in *On the Road*. This correlation not only uncovers a previously undetected influence on Kerouac's most famous work but also helps to explain Kerouac's romantic vision of the West.

Beyond being one of the founders of the Beat Literary Movement, Kerouac is widely regarded as the most influential novelist of the Beat Generation. The writing that sprung from the Beats diverged from the meticulous, purpose-driven literary conventions of the 1950s, as represented by such novelists as John Steinbeck and Truman Capote, and esteemed spontaneity in writing over writing that was highly-crafted. Kerouac's spontaneous prose contributed specifically to this non-conventional literary style, a technique he elevated above other forms of writing, believing a writer's first thoughts, recorded with the flurry of a pen or the buzz of a typewriter, were his best thoughts, fresh and right off the edge of the mind.

Just as Kerouac's prose style appeared asynchronous to the more conventional prose of the 50's, Francis Parkman's writing manifests several major departures from the norms of other historians writing during his era (the mid part of the nineteenth century). First of all, Parkman wasn't writing to chronicle the actions of others like most historians of his time, such as Henry Adams (1838-1913).[5] Instead, Parkman was an active participant in his historical narratives, offering first-person accounts of the experiences he recorded. Secondly, instead of writing with the banal, formulaic aesthetic of his contemporaries,[6] Parkman's syntax bolted from the page, a style of writing that helped him convey the excitement of his first-hand adventures.

Similar Themes

The Oregon Trail and *On the Road*, the formative road narratives of their respective generations, [7] are written from the perspectives of Easterners experiencing the West and its landscape head-on for the first time. Examining the journals and letters of Kerouac and Parkman reveals that both authors were enflamed with a vision of the West that lay beyond their Eastern environs. When reading Kerouac's and Parkman's accounts of their first sojourn to the West, journeys which interestingly took place almost exactly

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[5] Adams major contribution to historical writing was a nine-volume history titled *History of the United States During the Administration of Thomas Jefferson*.

[6]This style of writing is represented by Historians such as Richard Hildreth (1807-1865), who is most famous for his six-volume *History of the United State of America*. Such historians were often praised for their historical accuracy, but their writing style was dry, at best, leaving critics, such as 19th century American novelist William Gilmore, to comment, "At best, their sentences can lay claim only to an intelligible distinctness" (Busick 22).

[7] In regard to *The Oregon Trail*, "The first printing sold out in little more than a month. Another five hundred copies soon followed. These also would be bought in rapid order, prompting Putman to propose the delivery of yet another one thousand books" (*OT* X). Theodore Roosevelt dedicated his book *The Winning of the West* to Parkman, saying his "works stand alone . . . they must be models for all historical treatment of the founding of new communities and the growth of the frontier here in the wilderness" (Peterson 1). The *New York Times* said of *On the Road*, "Just as, more than any other novel of the Twenties, *The Sun Also Rises* came to be regarded as the testament of the Lost Generation, so it seems certain that *On the Road* will come to be known as that of the Beat Generation."

one-hundred years apart—*The Oregon Trail* in the spring and summer of 1846 and *On the Road* in the summer of 1947—the reader witnesses how each author willingly romanticized their Western narratives, mythologizing the people and places they encountered on these initial journeys to align with their preconceived fantasies of the West. One of the major reasons that Kerouac and Parkman felt the impetus to frame their Western adventures in this idealized fashion was that the West they had sought to discover was no longer there. Interestingly, Sal Paradise, Kerouac's pseudonym in *On the Road* and the novel's narrator, engages with this idea of constructing a West to maintain expectations of such and idealized place when he arrives in Cheyenne, Wyoming during "Wild West Week" and proclaims of the spectacle, "I was amazed, and at the same time I felt it was ridiculous; in my first shot at the West I was seeing to what absurd devices it had fallen to keep its proud tradition" (*OR* 30). In this passage, Paradise shows an awareness of the fact that many of the representations of the West are only maintained through fabrication. However, as this dissertation will illustrate in its first chapter, this type of fabrication is one in which Kerouac actively engages.

Historian David Levin believes that Francis Parkman was aware that the idealized West was vanishing, and that, in fact, the motivation for Parkman's heading west in the first place was his fear that the West he had dreamed of, particularly in regard to its Native American population, was about to change radically, if not disappear altogether. Of Parkman's first excursion West, Levin explains:

> Parkman, of course, already knew before setting out for the West that the Indians' way of life was doomed. His entire book is steeped in nostalgia for a primeval world that is fated to change drastically. Parkman arrives

> not only prepared to study strange manners and natural phenomena but also convinced that they will very soon disappear. (12)

In identifying *The Oregon Trail* as being "steeped" in a particular "nostalgia" for the West, Levin points to Parkman's enthusiasm for the West as being one that is based upon romanticized notions. And as will be illustrated in this dissertation, even with the knowledge that the romanticized West they so wished to experience was vanishing, if not gone, both Kerouac and Parkman still keenly heighten their frontier experiences so that these experiences parallel their preconceived notions of it.

American Studies scholar Henry Nash Smith's text *Virgin Land* explains how and why this type of romanticization occurs when Kerouac and Parkman portray their frontier visions. These ideologies can be framed within the realm of what Smith refers to as "myth" and "symbol" (XI). Kerouac and Parkman's belief in an idealized West that existed beyond their Eastern environs, according to Smith's thesis, is one grounded in the "myth of the West," a sort of collective construct of the American imagination that by and large didn't actually exist. Therefore, in line with Smith's theory, it is not so much that the West Kerouac and Parkman envisioned had died, but that in reality, it may have never existed because the myth of the West, like all myths, cannot be perceived as being an actual reality. Hence, once the West is viewed through this lens of myth, it becomes evident how writers like Kerouac and Parkman worked as active participants in contributing to, if not at times creating, Western myths that fail to be grounded in any particular reality of the West, a concept that will be more fully fleshed out in the first chapter of this dissertation.

According to American West scholar Fred Erisman, the mythologized narrative of the West is expressed in three particular ways: "the embodiment of a national hero, a belief in the diverse richness of the natural environment of the West, and a sense that the West as region functions in a special way in the vision of the national generally" (168). In *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, we witness Kerouac and Parkman engaging in all three of these Western mythological narratives. This dissertation will work to illustrate how Parkman's penchant for mythologizing and romanticizing the West served as a prototype for Kerouac in writing *On the Road.*

One of the ways Kerouac and Parkman idealize the West may be realized in the way that each author writes about the non-white Others they encounter on their road journeys. In reading Parkman's description of Native Americans in *The Oregon Trail* against Kerouac's portrayal of Hispanics in *On the Road*, it seems that Kerouac's depiction of the Hispanic people he encounters during his road experience has been influenced by Parkman's reported experience with "Indians." In fact, when Kerouac went west and didn't encounter the Native Americans of Parkman's book, he appears to have ascribed the characteristics of Parkman's Native Americans to the Hispanic people he writes about in *On the Road*, perhaps as a means of partaking in Parkman's Western experience.

Coming up with a vocabulary to describe how Parkman's portrayal of Native Americans manifests itself in Kerouac's description of Hispanics is problematic because, on the surface at least, it would seem difficult to express parallels between these two very different cultural groups. However, by locating this perception within the realm of

postmodern theory and its treatise of "the Other,"[8] the analogous perspectives of these writers materialize. The Other in postmodern theory is viewed as one who exists in the margins of the literary text. They are seen as being mystical and charming, as well as childlike and naïve, and are, in most aspects, the opposite of the centered/non-marginalized person viewing or writing about the Other. Theorist Jean-François Staszak explains this concept by defining Otherness: "Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ('Us', the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them', Other) by stigmatizing a difference—real or imagined—presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. To state it naively, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to discourse" (2). This discursive practice regarding Otherness manifests itself in the constructed identities that Kerouac and Parkman's apply to the non-white persons in their road texts. To describe and explain this treatment of Others, I buttress my analysis of Kerouac and Parkman's othering by utilizing postcolonial theory, which posits itself within the field of postmodern theory.

In employing postcolonial theory in examining Otherness in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, I engage with the work of seminal scholars in postcolonial theory, such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, to address the ways in which Kerouac and Parkman regard the Others they encounter as mystical and enigmatic. Much debate currently exists in the realm of postcolonial scholarship regarding theorists whose work is seen as laying the groundwork for postcolonial studies, like Said and Spivak. The debate here centers

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[8] Some writers capitalize Other and Otherness; some do not. The reasons for capitalization would seem to indicate a sign of respect for the Other. I have chosen to capitalize Other and Otherness in my writing not only as a sign of respect but also because most scholarly writing appears to follow this convention.

on whether or not the theories of these scholars work for or against the empowerment of those who are marginalized. Aijaz Ahmad casts forth the idea in his book *In Theory* that the work of many of the formative theorists in postcolonial studies reifies cultural ideas regarding the oppressed because these ideas cooperate with the dissonance between Others and the cultural hegemony. Ahmad argues, from his Marxist perspective, that these scholars speak from a position of academic privilege and elitism that renders them divorced from the world of the Others that they write about. While Ahmad's argument regarding theorists like Said and Spivak does seem to bear some significance, I avoid this politicized debate in my dissertation. I believe, at a minimum, the work of Said and Spivak works to expose the tension between a cultural dominant and its Other, while establishing a vocabulary with which this relationship can be described. These ideas surrounding Others and Otherness and the language used to describe this dynamic illuminate Kerouac and Parkman's perspectives regarding their representations of Hispanics and Native Americans in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*.

Using the work of Said and Spivak to examine the Other in the works of Kerouac and Parkman – distinct Others of the American continent – may appear to be problematic, as Said was born in Palestine and Spivak in India, and most of their work in postcolonial theory is contextualized within these geographic locations. However, it is important to note that all theories begin with their roots in a very particular place and time but nonetheless prove useful to scholars in seemingly different areas. This is not to say that there aren't very real dangers in using postcolonial theory born in other parts of the world to make a case for Kerouac reading Hispanics as a version of Parkman's Indians. For instance, saying that Hispanics have been dominated in the United States in a way that

reflects Said's notions of imperialism in Palestine would simply not apply to situations outside of that particular context. However, I contend that the concepts I will draw upon from postcolonial theorists such as Said and Spivak are grounded in a theory that has been used globally to describe relations between a dominant and an Other and are especially relevant to my arguments regarding *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail* because this type of othering continually manifests itself in these texts.

From under the larger banner of postmodern theory, I employ the work of theorists who demonstrate how Otherness, which "deals with issues of conflict, domination, class struggle, minorities, state power, and ideology" (Leitch 27), operates and why it is not merely a form of multiculturalism, which is most often seen as merely engaging with and representing ideas from varying cultures without addressing, as Henry Giroux puts it, "structures of domination" and calling into question issues of "equality, justice, and liberty" (459) . Noting how multiculturalism differs from Otherness is important to this dissertation because it could be argued that neither Kerouac nor Parkman would think of themselves as representing the non-white people in their books as Others, instead believing that this representation is merely a form of multiculturalism.[9]

Another facet of postmodern theory, gender theory, may be used to describe ways in which *On the Road* corresponds with *The Oregon Trail*. At the core of gender theory exists the belief that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon, meaning that while we

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[9] These sentiments would seem to be underscored in Stephen Slemon's article "Modernism's Last Post" when he discusses the need for postmodernism to take up the message of postcolonialism:

> Like modernism, postmodernism needs its (post-) colonial Others in order to constitute or frame its narrative of referential fracture. But it also needs to exclude the cultural and political specificity of post-colonial representations in order to assimilate them to a rigorously Euro-American problematic. This, it could be argued, is a typically self-sustaining postmodern contradiction; and yet in this contradiction there could perhaps exist a fissuring energy which could lay the foundation for a radical change of tenor with the postmodern debate. (436)

as human beings are referred to as male or female merely based upon our differing anatomies, it is the way in which a person is conditioned by society that will determine what makes us distinctly feminine or masculine. Foundational gender theorist Simone de Beauvoir succinctly asserts this idea when she states, "One is not born, but becomes, woman" (281). For a pragmatic example of how this notion might play out in real life, a young boy might be perceived as masculine because he plays with toy guns or toy trucks; however, through the lens of gender theory, we might see that this young boy as being conditioned to be masculine by a society that believes young boys *should* play with toy guns or toy trucks, instead of, say, dolls or children's tea sets. When applying this idea of socially constructed gender roles to *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, interesting similarities emerge in terms of how the authors of each book portray their Western heroes. In particular, when observing the characteristics that make Parkman's mountain men distinctly masculine in contrast with those of Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*, the constructed masculine identities of each appear remarkably similar.

This dissertation uses the work of gender theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler to expose the socially constructed masculine identities projected in Kerouac and Parkman's writing. Viewing gender as a socially constructed phenomenon allows me to illustrate how in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail* each author constructs the masculine identities of the male champions in their books. By looking at these characteristics as constructs, that is, the way each of these characters has been conditioned to be portrayed as a "wrangler" or "trailblazer," I am able to divorce these characteristics from the individual to expose the remarkable similarities between these characteristics in *On the Road*'s Dean Moriarty and *The Oregon Trail*'s mountain men,

thus showing that Kerouac's "ideal guy for the road" (*OR* 1) draws heavily from the constructs of Parkman's Western supermen.

Judith Butler contributes to de Beauvoir's idea of gender being a socially constructed phenomenon with her concept of gender performativity, which is the central idea of Butler's most famous text, *Gender Trouble*. The theory behind gender performativity and what makes it different from *just* seeing gender as a social construct is that as gendered people—people whose gender has been socially constructed—we perform roles which are viewed as "natural" to that specific gendered sex. For example, a gendered male would perform what Butler refers to as stylized acts that are distinctively heterosexual because this is what society would view as natural for him. Performing roles that are distinctively masculine and distinctively heterosexual are things that are readily witnessed in both *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, as both Kerouac and Parkman would seem to revere the masculine attributes of their road heroes that might be seen as being heterosexual.

Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan can be seen as having a hand in influencing the gender theory espoused by de Beauvoir and Butler. While Freud and Lacan have been dismissed by many contemporary theorists—Freud for his concept of penis envy and Lacan because his ideas regarding gender are viewed by some feminist scholars as operating in a sexist male tradition[10]—both have nevertheless influenced gender theory. Lacan's influence can be witnessed in his theory that asserts that gender, for the individual, functions at an unconscious level.[11] Freud, therefore, can be seen as

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[10] Elizabeth Grosz is perhaps Lacan's biggest critic in this regard. Grosz views Lacan's work as cooperating with sexist ideals established by Freud in the field of psychoanalysis.

[11] A theory that Lacan referred to as "sexuation." Lacan believed sexuation to be the way in which the masculine and feminine are organized in the subconscious.

influencing Lacan's approach to the idea of an unconscious gender because he was the first psychologist to theorize the unconscious. Regarding this belief, Freud speculated ideas become repressed but remain in one's mind even though a person is not conscious of them. Freud speculated that even though these ideas remain buried beneath a person's consciousness, they affect that person's behavior. Freud believed that this buried conscience—the unconscious—could be revealed through psychoanalysis—Freud's process for tapping into the repressed ideas of the mind. Of course, one of these repressed ideas, as Lacan theorized, was gender. Judith Butler, in particular, employs this belief by Lacan regarding gender. She negotiates the sexist aspects of Lacan's work by responding that the unconscious *is* where one's pure gender is located, thus the socially constructed gender that a person performs can been seen, in most cases, as not being true to the unconscious gender of the individual.

In this dissertation, I ascribe the ideas of socially constructed gender to the masculine heroes of the West. These men, who are by and large cowboys and mountain men, made their mythic debut in the literature of the West during the early part of the nineteenth century. Some regard James Fennimore Cooper as cultivating the first truly Western hero in his Leatherstocking Tales (1827—1841).[12] As this type of hero continued to evolve in the dime store novels of the nineteenth century, and was further represented in the Western movies of the twentieth century, consistent characteristics regarding this man of the West materialized. According to Erisman:

> The traditional Western hero…is a white male no older than his mid-thirties. He normally lacks extensive formal education, but he possesses a

[12] David Hamilton Murdoch believes Cooper to be the "the first literary creator of the Western hero" (13), and Erisman agrees, specifying that the Western hero emerged in Cooper's character Natty Bumppo (169).

> wealth of empirical knowledge and an intuitively profound sense of natural order. He is physically strong but soft-spoken; modest about his abilities, he is, when motivated by principle or threatened by enemies, capable of almost irresistible violence, assisted by the firearms (rifle or pistol) that he wields with disciplined precision. Unmarried and unfettered by family or occupational ties, he is free to come and go as he pleases, moving in and out of society with careless ease, his lack of deep-seated social obligations accentuating the individualism that controls his every act (168-169).

This definition pairs nicely to Parkman's mountain men in *The Oregon Trail* and displays many of the qualities found in Kerouac's trailblazer, Dean Moriarty.[13] By coupling the concepts of gender theory to these characteristics believed to be a part of the mythical Western hero, characteristics that can be that can be seen as constructs of gender, this dissertation further underscores the remarkable similarity between Dean Moriarty in *On the Road* and the mountain men in *The Oregon Trail*, particularly Parkman's trail guide Henry Chatillon.

Beyond the parallel themes found in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, the writing styles Kerouac and Parkman utilize in these books appear quite similar, as well. It is possible to speculate that at a time when Kerouac was feeling that "everything was dead" (*OR* 1), and after having had his first novel panned by critics who believed his writing was monotonous, Kerouac experienced something fresh in Parkman's writing. In reading *The Oregon Trail*, perhaps Kerouac observed an exciting, new approach to style

[13] Although not every one of these characteristics would seem a match for the twentieth-century character of Dean Moriarty, it is important to note that Erisman believes that the myth of the Western hero is one that adapts to the times (169-171).

in Parkman's galloping rhythm–a rhythm absent in the plodding text of Kerouac's first novel. Kerouac may also have been interested in Parkman's way of laying down words to tell a story that historian Mark Peterson refers to as telling a "ripping good yarn" (2). This excited style of writing is believed to be one of the key contributors to the longevity, in terms of popularity, of Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. According to American historian Henry Steele Commager, it is "this racy vigor…this unconquerably youthful quality which gives *The Oregon Trail* its perennial charm." This same vitality and freshness are qualities Kerouac engendered when writing *On the Road* with his newfound spontaneous prose style.

Many of the similarities between Kerouac's spontaneous prose writing style and Parkman's writing style are embedded within Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," a piece Kerouac wrote to explain the apparatus of his spontaneous prose method. Within this work, Kerouac describes how writing in this mode produces a particular style of writing, one that is charged with what Kerouac terms "meaning-excitement" ("Essentials" 57). In reading Kerouac's definition of "meaning-excitement" against Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail*, parallels between Parkman's writing and Kerouac's spontaneous prose become obvious. This dissertation examines how the writing in Parkman's book holds within it the "limitless blow-on-subject" ("Essentials" 57) spontaneity that Kerouac espouses in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" and utilizes in constructing *On the Road*.

Chapter Outline

"Chapter One: Easterners Heading West." This chapter draws parallels between Kerouac and Parkman's first sojourn to the West, chronicling the preconceptions of these

fellow Massachusetts natives before they left their Eastern environs, making use of both authors' journals and letters, and then deconstructs these preconceived notions to show how these ideas function within Smith's concept of the myth of the West. This chapter then moves on to illustrate how Kerouac and Parkman each romanticized their actual Western experience to fit their preconceived notions, showing how these moves helped to facilitate the myth of the West.

"Chapter Two: Kerouac, Parkman, and the Postmodern Other." This chapter explores Kerouac and Parkman's treatment of non-white Others in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, specifically focusing on Kerouac's treatment of Hispanics and Parkman's treatment of Native Americans. Ultimately, by using theoretical lens of the postmodern and postcolonial theory and its treatise of the Other, this analysis illustrates how Kerouac's handling of the Other in his road novel appears to be flavored by Parkman's description of the Other in his trail narrative.

"Chapter Three: Wranglers and Warriors and Mountain Men." Using gender theory as its premise, this chapter investigates how Kerouac and Parkman construct the masculine identities of the men they idolize in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*. In the end, this investigation shows how the masculine attributes Parkman used in constructing the identities of his masculine heroes in *The Oregon Trail* are reflected in the character of Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*.

"Chapter Four: Sketching the Jewel Center of Interest.'" This chapter utilizes Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" to illustrate how distinctly similar Kerouac's newfound writing style is to that of Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail*. Ultimately, this chapter works to explain how Parkman can be seen as influencing the

discernable aesthetic shift that occurred between Kerouac's writing of his first novel, *The Town and the City* and his second, and most widely recognized, novel, *On the Road*.

"Chapter Five: Teaching Kerouac." This chapter suggests an upper-division, major figures in literature course titled "Jack Kerouac and His Spontaneous Prose" that serves to illustrate to its students the significance of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method. This course teaches students about the evolution of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method by examining novels that best represent Kerouac's experiments with this writing style, working towards showing students how each of these experiments ultimately lead to Kerouac's most refined, and therefore significant, spontaneous prose.

Chapter One

Easterners Heading West: Kerouac and Parkman's Romantic Vision

> *The whole intervening country was a succession of verdant prairies, rising in broad swells and relieved by trees clustering like an oasis around some spring, or following the course of a stream along some fertile hollow. These are the prairies of the poet and the novelist.*
>
> —Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* are texts instilled with romantic prose, and both authors are often talked about in terms of their romantic notions.[14] Examining the romantic vision of Kerouac and Parkman in the context of these two works reveals remarkable similarities between the two authors' romantic approach, particularly when viewing these perspectives through the lens of the myth of the West. Both of these Massachusetts natives actively create Western myth in writing about their first sojourn to the West in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*. This act affords both authors a means with which they can romanticize their road adventures to correspond with their preconceived notions of the West.

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[14] Defining the term romanticism is a bit tricky because its meaning has been hotly contested since it first came into being. Marilyn Butler explains the historical difficulty of defining this term:

> Romanticism is impossible to define with historic precision because the term itself is historically unsound. It is now applied to English writers of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, who did not think of themselves as Romantics. Instead they divided themselves by literary precept and by ideology into several distinct groups, dubbed by their opponents "Lakeists," "Cockneys," "Satanists," "Scotsmen." It was in the middle of the nineteenth century before they were gathered into one band as the English Romantics. ("Romanticism" 37)

Although the term "Romanticism" can be seen as emerging from the English Romantic Movement, it has come to take on a broader, less contextualized meaning, which only adds to the debate in terms of seeking a definition. Jerome J. McGann makes this point apparent when he says, "It is important to realize that the term works according to fuzzy logic; that is to say, it is the very looseness of the term that can promote helpful critical discussion" (12). Despite the problems with presenting a stable definition of the term Romanticism, I would argue that as the term has been bandied about for the past two centuries that it has, in fact, come to take on a general meaning with fairly standard connotations. Under this generalized view, I see romanticism as referring to, as David Simpson puts it, "The privileging of emotion, intuition, and spontaneity" (5). It is this general concept that I refer to, here, when I discuss Kerouac and Parkman as being romantic writers.

In this chapter, I examine the romantic vision of Kerouac and Parkman, explaining what makes their perspectives distinctly romantic, and in the end, noting how these positions parallel one another. I begin by analyzing each author individually, explaining why they are viewed as working within a romantic framework. I then move on to discuss how these romantic perspectives can be contextualized within the myth of the West. This discussion brings into play the perceptions of both these Massachusetts natives before they actually embarked on their first journey to the West. I then end this chapter by illustrating how both of these authors synthesized Western myth in writing about their travels west.

Parkman's Romantic Vision

Francis Parkman's romantic interests sprung early in his literary career, for even while he was engaged with his Harvard coursework, Parkman, according to his biographer Wilbur Jacobs, "carried on a secondary program of reading in literature, ethnology, and history, with particular emphasis on the romantic themes of Francois Rene de Chateaubriand, Jules Michlet, Sir Walter Scott, and James Fenimore Cooper, all of which readied him for his own literary work" ("Oration" 692). These influential romantic readings, coupled with a six month grand tour of Europe at the age of twenty that evoked within Parkman an appreciation for romantic landscapes and romantic cultures, were the seeds of Parkman's romantic vision. This vision is articulated in the commencement speech Parkman gave upon his graduation from Harvard on August 28, 1844, less than two years before leaving Massachusetts on his first journey to the West, the trip he would record in *The Oregon Trail*.

In this speech, titled “Romance in America,” Parkman rails against what he perceives as a lack of romantic affection in American culture. This deficiency in Americans, according to Parkman, can be observed in their failure to celebrate the North American landscape and in their bankruptcy of heroic inclination. Regarding the American landscape, Parkman contends that it should be exalted in the romantic way that European landscapes have been rendered. Parkman explains, “The tourist in Europe finds the scenes of nature polished by the hand of art, and invested with a thousand associations by the fancies and the deeds of the ages. The American traveler is less fortunate. Art has not been idle here for the last two centuries, but she has done her best to ruin, not adorn the face of Nature” (“Romance” 696). It is the young Parkman’s belief that nature in America lacks the “halo of romance and poetry” he perceives as existing in European landscapes (696), and that America is hedging towards a state of cultural ruination because this natural world has failed to be appreciated by Americans who only see it in utilitarian terms. Parkman believes an American will “prefer to watch his sawmill and hoe his potatoes since these seem to him the more rational and profitable occupations” (“Romance” 697) instead of celebrating the romantic beauty of the natural world that surrounds these vocations. In the end, Parkman sees this failure in not celebrating the American landscape as an inability to recognize one of the “sublimest object[s] in the world” (“Romance” 696).

Parkman believes that this inability to appreciate the landscape is not the only American romantic failure. Parkman sees the character of men in America as manifesting a similar romantic disappointment, as well. Parkman makes this point clear in his Harvard commencement speech by saying that those who come to America will witness

"even fewer elements of the picturesque in the character of the men, than in the aspect of the country" (697). Parkman perceives this lack of romantic nature as a problem first manifest during the infancy of the United States. Parkman believes that the Revolutionary War was fought by men who instead of displaying any sort of "chivalry or headlong passion" (697) were guided by mere reason in taking up arms against the British. Parkman believes these revolutionaries fought with "deliberate effort in favor of an abstract principle. Cool reason, not passion, or the love of war" (697). Parkman finds these reasoned, historic men to be "the very antipodes of the hero of romance," further adding that they have an utter lack of "romantic charm" (696). Alas, Parkman laments that the traveler will find the American male to be quite mundane, "with no trace of primitive ignorance or romantic barbarism. He reads the newspapers; knows the latest improvements in agriculture, and keeps a watchful eye on all that is going on in the great world. Though quite confident in his power to match the whole earth in combat, he has no warlike ardor" (697).

Clearly, the lack of a celebrated landscape and the failure of American men to live up to their expectations as romantic heroes is something Parkman actively explores and would seem to reconstruct, if not rectify, in *The Oregon Trail*, the first book Parkman wrote after he delivered his speech at the Harvard commencement. Passages that exemplify Parkman's attempt to create a "halo of romance and poetry" around the American landscape in a manner akin to what has been done to the romanticized European landscape are abundant throughout *The Oregon Trail*, and for this act of romantic creation, Parkman utilizes the sublime. The idea of the sublime was of significant influence on the Romantics of the 19th century. Most Romantics viewed the

sublime as “a realm of experience beyond the measurable” (Greenblatt 54). The Romantics saw the sublime as something that existed outside the domain of rational thought, and they believed it presented itself primarily in the form of terrors induced by awe-inspiring natural phenomena. The Romantics considered the sublime something to be meditated upon and internalized in an attempt to understand it, and they trusted that ultimately this practice would lead them to enlightenment. The Romantic’s understanding of the sublime was gleaned from Edmund Burke’s classic definition of the term that he postulated in his 1757 treatise on aesthetics, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Burke defines the sublime in the context of someone being impacted by the natural phenomena of a landscape. Burke believes the viewer of such landscapes will be filled with a sense of astonishment. However, this sense is not evoked from the beauty of the scene; Burke sees the “sublime” as working in opposition to the “beautiful.” Something that is “beautiful,” according to Burke, is of pleasure, characterized by those “qualities in things as induce in us a sense of affection and tenderness” (72). It is “small,” “smooth,” and, in contrast to the harsh expanse of the sublime, “an appearance of delicacy, and even of fragility, is almost essential to it” (186). The “sublime,” on the other hand, when experienced in the contemplation of a landscape, is often “painful” and “threatening” (72).

A good example of Parkman evoking a sublime that matches the one Burke theorizes occurs in the chapter of *The Oregon Trail* titled “Ill-Luck,” when Parkman is travelling through the Black Hills area of the United States. In this chapter, Parkman wakes in the morning to meet a shocking sunrise scene over a distinctly American landscape. Of this moment, Parkman exclaims:

> In the morning, as glorious a sun rose upon us as ever animated that desolate wilderness. We advanced, and soon were surrounded by tall bare hills, overspread from top to bottom with prickly-pears and other cacti, that seemed like clinging reptiles. A plain, flat and hard, with scarcely a vestige of grass, lay before us, and a line of tall misshapen trees bounded the onward view. There was no sight or sound of man or beast, or any living thing. (220)

In this passage, a sense of astonishment is achieved through the impact of natural phenomena. A "glorious sun'" has risen, which at first might seem to align itself with the beauty Burke says is *not* a component of the sublime. However, it is what this sun illuminates that connects this landscape to Burke's sublime, for this natural scene is a "desolate wilderness," which would seem to be symptomatic of the threatening nature of the sublime which Burke theorizes. This sense of threat is further underscored by the landscape's "bare hills" that are covered with uninviting "prickly pears and other cacti, that seemed like clinging reptiles" and contain "scarcely a vestige of grass." This landscape portrayed by Parkman is not tender; it does not appear pleasurable; and it is most certainly *not* delicate or fragile. This landscape described by Parkman is one that evokes isolation and terror because it is absent of any "sight or sound of man or beast, or any living thing." This landscape is one that a person like Parkman, raised in one of the East Coast's most populated cities, Boston, would find astonishing, for its lack of people, as well as threatening and perhaps painful for this same reason. This scene resonates with Burke's definition of the sublime, and in the end, scenes such as this one found in

The Oregon Trail work to recognize the "sublimest object in the world" and connect Parkman to the ideologies of the Romantics.

Finding men in *The Oregon Trail* that work against the *anti*-romantic American men that Parkman decries in "Romance in America" is not a difficult task, either. The pages of *The Oregon Trail* spring to life with a multitude of chivalrous mountain men, trailblazers, and Native American warriors that typify what Parkman longed for in terms of romantic masculine characters in his speech "Romance in America." The following description of Parkman's most idealized Western champion in *The Oregon Trail*, Henry Chatillon, the man who served as Parkman's primary trail guide for his travels west, serves to illustrate a man of the romantic ilk Parkman advocates for:

> If sincerity and honor, a boundless generosity of spirit, a delicate regard to the feelings of others, and a nice perception of what was due to them, are the essential characteristics of a gentleman, then Henry Chatillon deserves the title. He could not write his own name, and he had spent his life among savages. In him sprang up spontaneously those qualities which all the refinements of life and intercourse with the highest and best of the better part of mankind, fail to awaken in the brutish nature of some men. In spite of his bloody calling, Henry was always humane and merciful; he was gentle as a woman, though braver than a lion. He acted aright from the free impulses of his large and generous nature. Henry's character…secured the esteem and good-will of all those who were not jealous of his skill and reputation. (463)

This description of Henry Chatillon works in black-and-white opposition to the American man that Parkman so vigorously assailed in "Romance in America." Clearly, in this characterization of Chatillon, we see a person imbued with boundless depths of chivalry: he contains all "the essential characteristics of a gentleman," and these "refinements" pop up "spontaneously," a term with strong romantic connotations.[15] Chatillon, who has "spent his life among savages" and could not even "write his own name," epitomizes Parkman's notions regarding the "primitive ignorance" and "romantic barbarism" mentioned in his speech that he believes are essential to the American romantic hero. Parkman most likely views this primitivism and barbarism as romantic because these modes of existence rely on intuition and spontaneity. Lastly, Chatillon's character perceptibly opposes the American who holds "an interest in agriculture," exemplified by Chatillon's engagement in a "bloody calling," one that appears to align itself with the "warlike ardor" Parkman believes absent in his American contemporaries.

Examining both these descriptions, of the American landscape and of one of Parkman's romantic heroes in *The Oregon Trail*, evidences Parkman actively seeking to undermine the two failings of American romantic inclination that he reports in his speech. In *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman chips away at these inadequacies by celebrating the sublime American landscape in his writing, giving it "polish," and simultaneously searching out and celebrating men whose character worked against that of the utilitarian, agrarian citizen he saw as dominant in American society during his lifetime.

Another aspect of Parkman's romantic vision can be witnessed in the "grand narrative" of American history that he utilizes in writing *The Oregon Trail*. Dorothy Ross

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[15] Most notably, Romantic poet William Wordsworth refers to poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (151).

frames this narrative within the realms of romance, declaring that "romance is not only a type of narrative plot but also a broader mode or tendency that shapes the literature lying beneath myth" (652). Ross further unpacks this concept of romance by explaining that it functions in contrast to realism: "Whereas, realism takes place on a horizontal plain, romance is plotted as an ascent from a lower to a higher world; the lower one demonic or regressive, the higher one ideal or progressive" (652). According to Ross, this "ascent from a lower to a higher world" is at play within the narrative structure of romance. She explains that this type of romance is "written from the standpoint of the human actor engaged in a mythic quest for identity. [This] hero embarks on a quest to achieve or recover an identity that is prefigured at the beginning and at the end enters an Edenic world, a world of mutual love within an order of nature which has been reconciled to humanity" (652-653). Ross goes on to explain that "in romance, this process often takes place in the form of exile" and that the "search for identity begins in the exile from home" (654). This romantic quest that Ross speaks of can be seen as operating within Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*.

With Parkman fulfilling the role of hero in the romantic quest Ross identifies, we see him at the beginning of *The Oregon Trail* leaving on a "long and arduous journey," (38) motivated by "restlessness, the love of wilds and hatred of cities," and also "anxious to pursue…remote Indian nations" (46). However, at the beginning of his narrative, Parkman is also a bit remiss, "half inclined to regret leaving behind the land of gardens, for the rude and stern scenes of the prairie and the mountains" (47). Within these lines, we see at play the romantic quest Ross mentions. Parkman will become an exile in "the rude and stern scenes of the prairie and the mountains" seeking to recover an identity that

connects him with "the love of wilds and hatred of cities." When Parkman returns to his native New England, he has, in fact, fulfilled the latter tenets of this hero's quest. Upon returning to his home, Parkman revels:

> In spite of the dreary rain of yesterday, there never was a brighter and gayer autumnal morning than that one on which we returned to the settlements…It was a beautiful alternation of fertile plains and groves, whose foliage was tinged with the hues of autumn…Every field and meadow bespoke the exuberant fertility of the soil…Squashes and enormous yellow pumpkins lay basking in the sun…Robins and blackbirds flew about the fences; and every thing in short betokened our near approach to home and civilization. (459)

This passage at the end of *The Oregon Trail* suggests the very "Edenic world" Ross explains as being a part of the hero's quest at his journey's end. Within the line reading "every thing betokened our near approach to home and civilization" we see the "world of mutual love within an order of nature which has been reconciled to humanity" that Ross points out is characteristic of the hero's return. But we also see the identity that was "prefigured" at the beginning of this quest come into play in the closing of *The Oregon Trail*, for even after passing through this "Edenic" scene upon his return home, Parkman reflects:

> We hailed these sights and sounds of beauty by no means with an unmingled pleasure. Many and powerful as were the attractions which drew us toward the settlements, we looked back even at that moment with an eager longing toward the wilderness of prairies and mountains behind

> us. For myself I had suffered more that summer from illness than ever before in my life, and yet to this hour I cannot recall those savage scenes and savage men without a strong desire again to visit them. (460)

It is here that we see Parkman yearning for what he had previously so identified with—"the love of wilds and hatred of cities" and his romantic desire to pursue "remote Indian nations"—thus completing his hero's journey and connecting Parkman and his text to the romantic quest traditions illuminated by Ross.

Making the episodes of one's life gel with the form of the romantic quest underscores the romanticism in Parkman's work in another way, for such an act can be seen as a form of myth-making, an inventive form that was highly symptomatic of the Romantic Movement. The Romantics looked to mythology, particularly the original texts of medieval romance, for inspiration in creating their own myths, including those regarding the romantic quest. However, the Romantics of the 18th and 19th century did not seek to infuse their work with the archaic. As Marilyn Butler explains it, these romantic mythologizers were "primarily concerned with the meaning the myths had for the society which created them. They wanted to reinterpret myth for their own age or, to put it another way, to use myth for themselves" ("Myth" 50). This is precisely what Parkman has done in turning his adventures in *The Oregon Trail* into a romantic quest—used the myth of the romantic quest for himself in his own era—and as we shall see, Kerouac, too, used this act of romantic myth-making in his own time, one-hundred years later, to create his own legend.

Parkman and the Romantic Historians

Francis Parkman belongs to the school of American historians known as the Romantic Historians. This group of writers, in addition to Parkman, included George Bancroft, William Prescott, and John Motley. All of these men were members of the Boston Brahmin and the Harvard elite, and most of their major works were written within fifty years of one another (from the 1830s through the 1880s). In his book *History as Romantic Art*,[16] David Levin delineates what makes this group different from other historians writing during the same era, why these historians are classified as romantic, and where this group drew their romantic inspiration.[17]

One of the key differences between these Romantic Historians and other historians writing during the same period, according to Levin, was that they all sought "to give the meaning as well as the experience of history an immediacy in their own time" (ix), implying that these historians would seek out historical narratives that could be conveyed through their own personal experience and/or could be contextualized within the current events of their era. In regard to *The Oregon Trail*, this sort of "meaning" coupled with "experience" can most readily be witnessed through Parkman's first-hand narrative: being an active participant in the Western Movement helps Parkman give his reader insight into this phenomenon.

Another feature that differentiated the Romantic Historians from other historians writing during their era, according to Levin, was their "romantic attitude towards the past" (8). Much of this "romantic attitude towards the past" can be seen as operating to

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[16] Dorothy Ross refers to Levin's 1967 text *History as Romantic Art* as "the best study of major historians of the nineteenth century" (654).

[17] Levin makes a point of acknowledging that there are very real differences between these writers in terms of subject, theme, and style, but in the end argues that that these differences "can too easily tempt one to ignore even more relevant similarities" (vii).

convey experience to one's readers, and this conveyance, for the Romantic Historians, gained influence from romantic poets like Wordsworth and Byron.[18] Reading these poets drew attention to "feelings," and as such, the Romantic Historian "acquired the habit of not only searching his own feelings when confronted with an affecting natural or historical scene, but of trying to share the felt experience with others" (Levin 9). Levin reasons upon the origins of the feelings experienced by the Romantic Historian, asserting that "what thrilled the writer was his contact with the life, the vital feeling of the past" (8). If this was the case, it would have been important for the Romantic Historian to foreground in his mind that the past was more than just a series of pragmatic events, that the past was actually lived by real people. Of the historians before them, according to Levin, the Romantic Historians took great delight in reading the histories of Sir Walter Scott. One might assume that at least part of this delight was taken from the way in which Scott acknowledged those who had lived, breathed, and felt the past. Scott makes clear in a proclamation to "writers of history" exactly how he feels about historical figures of the past when he states that "the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state-papers, and abstractions of men. Not abstractions were they, not diagrams or theorems; but men, in buff and other coats and breeches, with colour in their cheeks, with passions in their stomachs, and the idioms, features, and vitalities of very men" (qtd. in Levin 9). It was this attitude that the Romantic Historians put into effect in their own writing, of envisioning those who lived the past as real people with their own marked passions, and then transmitting this hot-blooded vision to their readers.

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[18] According to Levin, all four Romantic Historians read Wordsworth, and all four "read and admired" Byron (9).

However, for the Romantic Historians, this transmittance of passionate feelings regarding those who lived in bygone ages did not focus upon the ordinary or the banal. According to Levin, the Romantic Historian actively sought out an "interesting narrative, on a "grand theme," in which a varied group of remarkable vigorous characters acted heroically on the largest stage possible" (12). As such, Levin points out that the Romantic Historians "often dealt in character types" (14). Levin quotes Bancroft as admitting as much when he stated that his characters needed to be "grand in their character and capable of being arranged in an interesting narrative" (14).

These prescribed notions regarding the Romantic Historians proclivity towards "interesting narratives," "grand themes," and "remarkable vigorous characters" acting "heroically on the largest stage possible" are not difficult to discern in Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, with one such instance occurring in Parkman's description of a Native American he encounters on the American Frontier. While many of Parkman's portrayals of Native Americans are considered negative, this particular depiction is mostly positive, with Parkman giving praise to the Ogillallah Chief Mahto-Tatonka.[19] Parkman ruminates on the character of this chief, saying, "Mahto-Tatonka, in his rude way, was a hero. No chief could vie with him in warlike renown, or in power over his people. He had a fearless spirit, and a most impetuous and inflexible resolution. His will was law. He was politic and sagacious" (203). Parkman goes on to share a narrative involving Mahto-Tatonka that illustrates his heroics, telling of the day Mahto-Tatonka stormed into the village of a rival chief, by himself, and marched up to the lodge of his enemy, Chief Smoke, and demanded that Smoke come out of his lodge and fight him. When Chief

[19] Parkman referred to Mahto-Tatonka's tribe as the "Ogillallah" Tribe; however, this tribe is currently known as the Oglala.

smoke would not do so, Mahto-Tatonka "proclaimed him a coward and an old woman, and striding close to the entrance of the lodge, stabbed the chief's best horse, which was picketed there" (203-204). However, because of Mahto-Tatonka's intimidating nature and powerful presence, "even this insult failed to call him forth" (204). This story, written by Parkman, demonstrates the type of "interesting narrative" Levin discusses in describing the work of the Romantic Historians, as it involves a "grand theme," that of the vanishing Native American culture that so fascinated Parkman, and addresses a "remarkable vigorous character," the spirited and exuberant Chief Mahto-Tatonka. The fact that Parkman viewed this chief as a remarkable character is realized through Parkman's description of him: Mahto-Tatonka is a "hero," a "fearless spirit," that no other chief could compare with because of his "warlike renown" and his "power over his people." Having established Mahto-Tatonka's hero status as a chief, Parkman then illustrates for his reader, through Mahto-Tatonka's confrontation with a rival chief, a character acting "heroically on the largest stage possible," that of the American Frontier. Ultimately, this type of narrative serves to demonstrate the romanticized subject searched and longed for by Romantic Historians.

Another way in which the Romantic Historians, and therefore Parkman, might be considered romantic can be illustrated through an interesting parallel between the Romantic Historians and nineteenth-century landscape painters. When addressing his own writing, the Romantic Historian often referred to his craft pictorially. While one might assume that this was a convenient allegory to describe their writing, Levin points out that these references deserve more attention, concluding that "the Romantic Historian considered himself a painter" (12), often referring to his descriptions as "paintings" on

"broad canvases," or their character descriptions as "portraitures." Another term that suggests the Romantic Historians thought of his writing pictorially is that of "sketching." Levin contends that these references made by the Romantic Historians, of viewing their descriptions as sketches, affected their writing, in that such sketches revealed "the essential character of the subject" (13), just as a portrait or sketch rendered by a visual artist might reveal such character. In fact, Levin asserts that the Romantic Historians would study contemporary portraitures of historical subjects until such works revealed this "essential character of the subject" (13).

Francis Parkman was particularly adept at sketching scenes for his readers, and the fact that he attached the subtitle of *Being Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life* to the first edition of *The Oregon Trail* further underscores the parallels between Parkman's writing and the work of visual artists. Parkman achieved this sort of sketching with words, according to Levin, "through control of point of view" (18) in his written passages, just as a visual artist would control their point of view in a painting or sketch. This technique provided Parkman's readers a means with which they could share "the feelings of the participants" in a scene and help them to actually sense "the tangible presence of rock, river, and forest" (18). Of Parkman's ability to sketch scenes for his readers in this way, Levin asserts, "Again and again he tries to put the reader on the scene—inside a small stockade attacked by Iroquois, bivouacking with a French and Indian war party, trying to sleep in a reeking Indian hut" (18). But this knack for sketching scenes was not merely restricted to these small individual treatments/sketches. Parkman, like the other Romantic Historians, wished to "paint" on a grander scale, one that involved the American landscape and took into account their romantic desire to

celebrate the sublime. Of this notion, Levin proclaims that when writing about the American landscape, "The scenery had to include something of the picturesque, and as much of the sublime as possible," (11) further adding that the Romantic Historians were most content when they could present their narratives "on a sublime natural scene" (17-18).

This desire to illustrate scenes that manifest the sublime, and in the case of the Romantic Historians, particularly the American sublime, draws attention to Parkman's yearning to "polish the American landscape" that he speaks of in his speech "Romance in America." This aspiration brings into focus the parallels between Parkman's craft and that of American landscape painter Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School, drew much of his influence from romanticism, and like Parkman, Cole held an intense interest in celebrating the American landscape. Cole makes this concern apparent in his 1836 treatise of the American landscape titled "Essay on American Scenery." Within this piece of writing, obvious similarities surface regarding Parkman and Cole's perspectives on the American Landscape, but in particular, there is a plain connection between Cole's essay and Parkman's speech "Romance in America" in terms of their attitude regarding the American citizen's responsibility to appreciate the sublime of the American landscape. Of this idea, Cole implores:

> It [the American landscape] is a subject that to every American ought to be of surpassing interest; for, whether he beholds the Hudson mingling waters with the Atlantic—explores the central wilds of the vast continent, or stands on the margin of the distant Oregon, he is still in the midst of American scenery—it is his own land; its beauty, its magnificence, its

> sublimity—all are his; and how underserving of such a birthright if he can turn towards it an unobserving eye, an unaffected heart! (1)

This passage from Cole's essay certainly reflects Parkman's sentiments in his speech when he decries the American citizen's failure to appreciate the American landscape as "the sublimest object in the world." This connection between Parkman and 19th-century American landscape painter Thomas Cole is significant because it connects the two artists in terms of their romantic leanings regarding the sublime, further highlighting what it is that made Parkman's writing romantic, and this connection is made all the more significant because Parkman and the Romanic Historians, according to Levin, saw themselves as painters and used pictorial terms to describe their writing.

As has been shown, insight into Parkman's romantic vision can be gained through understanding the early romantic perspective set forth in his speech "Romance in America," paying attention to how Parkman's first-person perspective in *The Oregon Trail* can be seen as being a part of the romantic quest tradition, contextualizing his romantic perspective within the realms of his fellow school of Romantic Historians, and drawing parallels between the romantic positions of 19th-century American landscape painters and Parkman's own writing.

Kerouac the Romantic

Carolyn Cassady, wife of Neal Cassady, once told David Creighton in an interview, "The Romantics were typical Beats, all rebels against convention and despised by social order" (qtd. in Creighton 22).[20] These parallels speak to the similarities of the

[20] Here, I would assume Cassady is referring to the iconoclastic characters of the English Romantic Movement, which would include Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, the Shelleys, and Keats, but I believe members of the American Romantic Movement such as Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, and Whitman exhibited the same sort of "rebellious" attitudes in terms of their countercultural "convention" and "social order."

Beats and the Romantics regarding their lifestyles. However, only seeing the rebellious character of the major players in both of these literary movements ignores the core philosophies that guided these movements. The meaningful impact of both the Romantic Movement and the Beat Literary Movement can be found in their guiding ideologies, originated by the Romantics and actualized by the Beats. Jack Kerouac made it clear in a 1958 interview with *The San Francisco Chronicle* that the Beats were influenced by Romantic philosophy. In this interview, Kerouac said that whereas the Lost Generation only went about utilizing romanticism in an ironic way, the Beat Generation was really "sweating for affirmation" of their romantic dogmas (qtd. in Hayes 7).

Regina Weinreich believes Kerouac was very much responsible for bringing romantic philosophy to the Beats and that he did so with purpose: "[Kerouac] brought the myth of romance to the ethos of the Beat Generation in order to establish spiritual values in the fear that 'everything is collapsing' (as Kerouac warns in *On the Road*)" (141). Weinreich's supposition, that Kerouac entered the romantic tradition as a means of bolstering spirituality, makes sense. Finding and expressing a higher, truer reality brought on by spiritual enlightenment was a key tenet of Romantic thought (Holman and Harmon 416). This guiding philosophy would seem to parallel Kerouac's lifelong interest in maintaining a spiritual path, as a devout Catholic in his early life and then transitioning into an in-depth spiritual investigation of Buddhism in his thirties, before returning to his Catholic roots at the end of his life. Kerouac's passion for exploring both religions always hedged towards a mystic interpretation of these faiths, thus further underscoring the influence of romanticism upon his spirituality because of the romantic fascination

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When I discuss the Romantics and their guiding philosophies, I am referring to the core ethos that directed all of these Romantics.

with mysticism.[21] However, what truly built Kerouac into a romantic had more to do with his crafting of a self-made mythology rather than his spiritual proclivities.

Most critics agree that much of what made Kerouac romantic had to do with his Duluoz legend. The Duluoz Legend is the name given by Kerouac to the cumulative autobiographical narrative created by his novels. Kerouac explains his Duluoz legend in the preface to his novel *Big Sur*:

> My work comprises one vast book like Proust's except that my remembrances are written on the run instead of afterwards in a sick bed. Because of the objections of my early publishers I was not allowed to use the same personae names in each work. *On the Road*, *The Dharma Bums*, *Doctor Sax*, *Maggie Cassidy*, *Tristessa*, *Desolation Angels*, *Visions of Cody* and others including this book *Big Sur* are just chapters in the whole work which I call *The Duluoz Legend*. In my old age, I intend to collect all my work and re-insert my pantheon of uniform names, leave the long shelf full of books there, and die happy. The whole thing forms one enormous comedy, seen through the eyes of poor Ti Jean (me), otherwise known as Jack Duluoz, the world of raging action and folly and also of gentle sweetness seen through the keyhole of his eye. (v)

[21] Aspects of mysticism can be found in the writing of most of the writers of the Romantic Movement, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Shelleys, but perhaps Blake's works best typify mysticism in romantic writing. This mysticism is evidenced in Blake's most famous work of prose, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and in such poems as "Auguries of Innocence," where Blake's transparent mysticism is revealed in these famous lines: "To see the world in a grain of sand, /And heaven in a wild flower, /Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, /And infinity in an hour" (37).

Of course Kerouac never got around to aligning all his pseudonyms to create this epic, as he never lived to see "old age," dying at the age of 47 in 1969, just seven years after the publication of *Big Sur*.

A great deal of what makes the Duluoz Legend romantic has to do with the mythic form of Kerouac's saga. James T. Jones, in his book *Jack Kerouac's Duluoz Legend*, goes into abundant detail about the myth embedded within the Duluoz Legend. Jones sees Kerouac actively engaging in the romantic act of myth-making, previously delineated by Marilyn Butler, with the myth that Kerouac creates being aligned with the Oedipal cycle. Jones argues that all writers of the mid-twentieth century were operating under shadow of Freud's influence, and Jones provides much evidence for Kerouac and his group of Beat Generation comrades having been well-aware Freud's theories involving the Oedipal cycle, concluding that both Kerouac "and his friends shared the common currency of Freudian Theory" (12).

It is well-documented in the many biographies of Kerouac that he had a peculiar attraction to his mother, Gabrielle,[22] one that his former girlfriend Joyce Johnson noted as being "so encompassing and devouring that all other women flittered across his consciousness like shadows, blondes and dark ladies alike" (624). This attraction was also noted by Kerouac's friends, particularly William S. Burroughs, when Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs practiced amateur psychoanalysis on one another. Gerald Nicosia speaks of this incident and Burroughs psychoanalytic conclusions in his exhaustively researched biography of Kerouac, *Memory Babe*:

> [Burroughs] saw Jack going around in a wide circle around his mother, and he predicted that as Jack got older the circle would keep getting

[22] Kerouac called his mother by the name *Memere*, which is French for "Granny" (Nicosia 575).

> smaller. This insight had chilled Jack, and he spent several hours telling Allen [Ginsberg] just how tightly he was "tied" to his mother, how he internalized so many of her ideas about life (139).

Burroughs conclusion regarding Kerouac not only illustrates the Oedipal myth at play within Kerouac's life, but it also evidences Kerouac's awareness of its existence within his own life. Adding to the Oedipal imprint that Kerouac bore was his relationship with his father and brother.

Kerouac's relationship with his father, Leo, was a tenuous one. After the death of Jack's older brother Gerard, Leo put added pressure on Jack to become successful and make the family proud.[23] The first glimmer of this success came with Jack becoming a high school football star. This realization also brought on the first of Jack's major confrontations with his father. Jack's accomplishment as a football player produced with it offers of athletic scholarships to Boston College and Columbia. As Ann Charters reports, "His father wanted Boston College, his mother Columbia" (29). Underscoring Jack's Oedipal proclivities, Jack chose Columbia. This insolence by Jack towards his father was the first ripple in what would become a guilt-ridden relationship with his father. According to Jones:

> When Jack rejected his father's advice by choosing Columbia over Boston College, his defiance created a sense of guilt that was doubled when he quit Columbia to pursue his literary career…Kerouac's guilt was further compounded by the tension created between him and his father by his new

[23] Part of the reason for this pressure on Jack from Leo may have also been due to Leo's multiple failures as a businessman in Lowell, Massachusetts.

> circle of friends [that he discovered at Columbia], which included the Beat writers Burroughs and Ginsberg (14).

In the final days of Leo's life, lying in bed, dying of cancer, he warned Jack to be weary of Ginsberg and Burroughs, referring to Ginsberg as "that cockroach" (*BD* 106). Tom Clark recounts the final moments of Leo's life: "Jack and Leo had an argument about how to brew coffee. A little later Leo hunched forward in his chair in what Jack thought was a pouting repose. In fact, it was death" (72). To die in such a way after an argument surely added to the uneasy relationship Jack had with his father.

Beyond Kerouac's awkward attraction to his mother and ambivalent relationship with his father, Kerouac's connection to his brother Gerard further underscores the myth of the Oedipal cycle at play in Jack's life, as viewed through the lens of Freud's notions pertaining to sibling rivalry. Sibling rivalry is an extension of Freud's Oedipus complex. It was Freud's belief that brothers found themselves competing for attention from their mothers and that sisters competed for the attention of their father. The death of Jack's brother, when Jack was four and his brother was nine, was the catalyst for such a competition between brothers. According to Charters, "After Gerard's death [Gabrielle] was very protective of her only son Jack, yet held the memory of Gerard up to him as nearly a saintly figure" (24). This action by Gabrielle, making Jack compete against a saint, would haunt Kerouac his entire life, and this hagiography by his mother compounded guilt felt by Kerouac because of an incident that happened between Jack and his older brother right before Gerard's death. According to Jack, he always felt guilty because his older brother Gerard had slapped him and Jack had "wished Gerard would die, and he did die a few days later" (*SL1* 259). Gabrielle's insistence on holding

up Gerard as a model of perfection coupled with the overwhelming guilt from the circumstances of Gerard's death caused Jack to remain locked with his brother in a sibling rivalry that endured for the remainder of Jack's life.

The aforementioned circumstances highlight the apparent similarities between Kerouac's life and the myth of the Oedipus cycle and that Kerouac, in the circumstance regarding his mother, was aware of the Oedipus cycle at play within his own life. Jones further underscores this notion, saying, "Both Freud and Kerouac recognized that the patterns of their own life fit the Oedipal mold, and both created a body of work based on the similarity between their personal experiences and the mythic experience of their culture" (19). Jones goes on to say that Kerouac "reshaped the myth to suit both [his] personal needs and the demands of the era" (20). Jones identifies Kerouac's portrayal of his life through the perspective of the Oedipus cycle in this same way, calling it a "Romantic obsession with myth," (19) adding that "this studied conflation of author, narrator, and character places Kerouac's version of the Oedipus myth squarely in the Romantic tradition and brings its meaning home by personalizing his restatement and thus making it more immediate to modern readers" (22). Therefore, having illustrated that Kerouac was aware of the Oedipal cycle at play within his own life, and because the highly biographical Duluoz Legend is by and large a retelling of Kerouac's life events, it is easy to see how Kerouac engages with the romantic tradition of mythmaking, thus illustrating how Kerouac enacts Butler's theory that the romantic mythmaker "wanted to reinterpret myth for their own age or…to use myth for themselves." Hence, Kerouac's writing of the Duluoz Legend indicates Kerouac's romantic predilection.

There are other elements that link the Duluoz Legend to myth, further

demonstrating the romanticism of the Legend and its author. One such element deals with an epic quality of the Duluoz Legend. When observing the Duluoz Legend as a whole, it can be seen as containing the epic characteristic of beginning *in medias res*; in the case of this saga written by Kerouac, it both begins and ends *in medias res*. The first novel in the Duluoz Legend, *The Town and the City*,[24] recounts Kerouac's transition, as a youth, from the bucolic town of Lowell, Massachusetts to the more suspect New York City. The last novel that Kerouac wrote and contributed to the Duluoz Legend was *The Vanity of Duluoz*. This novel is a retelling of the narrative found in *The Town and the City*, only written with edgier characters that might be seen as truer representations of the people their pseudonyms correspond to in Kerouac's Legend.[25] Of the evident *in medias res* in the Duluoz Legend and its cyclical return to its origins, Jones states, "The implication is that the author is recollecting and renewing previous emotions in the Romantic tradition" (75). This "recollecting and renewing of previous emotions" was a guiding principle of romantic thought, as the Romantics believed such a process helped to develop human consciousness.[26] Having participated in such an endeavor in exploring his own life in the Duluoz Legend further signifies what made Kerouac and his writing romantic.

Beyond the mythic elements of the Duluoz Legend that link it and Kerouac to the romantic tradition, another feature of the Legend that ties it and therefore Kerouac to Romanticism is the possible influence of 19th century romantic writers. One of these

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[24] *The Town and the City* is perhaps the least autobiographical novel of the Duluoz Legend. However, the experiences of its protagonist, Peter Martin, largely reflect those of Kerouac and his experience as a high school football star who moves to New York City. This novel also introduces the cast of Kerouac's friends that became the founders of the Beat Movement, including Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs.
[25] The *Vanity of Duluoz* is also written utilizing Kerouac's spontaneous prose, which Kerouac first used in *On the Road*, the novel that followed *The Town and the City*.
[26] In particular, Wordsworth and Coleridge found it important to recollect and renew the experiences of youth as a means of "shaping adult consciousness" (Moore and Stachan 131).

authors is Herman Melville. Nancy Grace posits that like Melville Kerouac believed "that fiction could function as the most personal expression of not only artists' philosophical and theological positions but also their visions of the nature and plight of a writer" (7). Grace believes that Melville's protagonist in *Pierre; or the Ambiguities*, in particular, takes on this function and sets a template for Kerouac and his Duluoz Legend.[27] Grace explains, "Like Duluoz, Melville's Pierre Glendinning is based on the life of its author who exuberantly deployed florid conceits, gothic tropes, and sermonic discourses to plumb the psychological depths of his fictionalized self" (6). Grace further expounds upon the similarities between *Pierre* and the Duluoz legend by saying that the "construction of each" exhibits a "blending of autobiography, fiction, and philosophy underscor[ing] a generative response between nineteenth-century romance and Kerouac's Beat innovations," (7) thus further foregrounding Kerouac's romantic predisposition.

Melville was not the only nineteenth-century Romantic that sparked Kerouac's romantic notions. The English Romantic Poet John Keats may also be seen as influencing Kerouac's romantic vision. In a 1949 letter to New School professor Elbert Lenrow, Kerouac writes, "Also I'm reading the Letters of John Keats" (*SL1* 206). Perhaps the most famous idea to come out of Keats letters—the thing that has been most noted over the past two centuries—is his idea of "Negative Capability." Keats used the term "Negative Capability" to explain how the artist should react to the world around him and to speak against those who attempted to theorize and categorize knowledge, a precursor to poststructrural thought, which asserts that the world is devoid of stable meaning. Through Keats perception of "Negative Capability," he believed the world and humanity to be boundless in terms of their complexity. Keats describes such an

[27] Ann Charters cites Kerouac as having read *Pierre; or the Ambiguities*.

understanding as "when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (43). While claims could be made that this system of belief supported by Keats is reflected in much of Kerouac's creative work, a rare bit of printed literary criticism titled "The Origins of Joy in Poetry," written by Kerouac and published in the Spring 1958 edition of *Chicago Review*, appears to make the influence of Keats' "Negative Capability" much more obvious. In this piece, Kerouac espouses the "new American Poetry," proclaiming:

> The new American Poetry as typified by the SF Renaissance (which means Ginsberg, me, Rexroth, Ferlinghetti, McClure, Corso, Gary Snyder, Phil Lamantia, Philip Whalen, I guess) is a kind of new-old Zen Lunacy poetry, writing whatever comes into your head as it comes, poetry returned to its origin, in the bardic child…instead of gray faced Academic quibbling. Poetry & prose had for a long time fallen into the hands of the false. These new pure poets confess for the sheer joy of confession. They are CHILDREN. They are also childlike graybeard Homers singing in the street. It is diametrically opposed to the Eliot shot, who so dismally advises his dreary negative rules like the object correlative, etc. which is just a lot of constipation… (*GB* 74)

Kerouac's railing against the "gray faced Academic" and his dislike of the "negative rules' set forth by Eliot would certainly seem to be in line with Keats thought that the artist should avoid "reaching after fact and reason." And that Kerouac speaks positively of these poets by referring to them as children would seem to reflect Keats' sentiment of being "capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" as this would seem to be akin

to living in a world of childlike wonder. The remarkable similarities in attitude put forth in Keats' theory of negative capability and Kerouac's "The Origins of Joy in Poetry" would seem to evidence Kerouac's having been influenced by this English Romantic poet.

Kerouac also gained influence from modernists working in the romantic vein, particularly Thomas Wolfe and William Saroyan. Critics and biographers have been quick to point out the influence of Wolfe and Saroyan on Kerouac, with Kerouac himself saying that "Wolfe was a torrent of American heaven and hell that opened my eyes to America as subject" (Plimpton 117) and that Saroyan had "got me out of the 19th century rut I was trying to study" (Berrigan 555). In terms of a debt owed to these writers by Kerouac, one that is cast in a romantic vein, the sentimentality of Wolfe and Saroyan's family narratives are most easily observed in Kerouac's prose. However, both authors inspired Kerouac's romantic vision in different ways, as well.

Most Kerouac critics discuss the influence of Thomas Wolfe on Kerouac as being something that occurred at the beginning of Kerouac's career as a writer, citing Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* as the prototype for Kerouac's first novel, *The Town and the City*, but Wolfe's influence on Kerouac is something that survived long into Kerouac's writing career, carrying with it a touch of romanticism. Kerouac admits that early in his vocation as a writer, he emulated Wolfe's "rolling style" (*SL2* 248), and he also asserts that he knew he needed "to break away from this influence to find his own voice" (Charters xv). It was at this time that Kerouac began to experiment with his "spontaneous prose method," a stylistic he would use in the writing of *On the Road*, the novel that most critics, like Regina Weinreich, cite as Kerouac's "transitional period" (40) away from the

more formulaic prose of Wolfe. However, even though Kerouac was starting to find his own voice in terms of writing style, thematically, Wolfe's romantic influence can still be seen in *On the Road*. Evidence for this influence can be found in the last novel of the Duluoz Legend, *Vanity of Duluoz*, when Jack Duluoz, Kerouac's pseudonym in this novel, says that Wolfe "woke me up to America as a Poem instead of a place to struggle around and sweat in. Mainly this dark-eyed poet made me want to prowl, and roam, and see the real America that had never been uttered" (75). It is within these lines that we see a thematic framework for *On the Road*, influenced by Wolfe. Shawn Holliday supports this supposition, saying, "Wolfe's works provided the romantic impetus for Kerouac's years of traveling throughout America" (117-118). As such, this would mean that the Duluoz Legend, with its road novels and its family novels that are centered around Kerouac's youth in Lowell both owe a debt to Thomas Wolfe's influence, and likewise, this influence can be seen as operating with the realms of romantic ideologies.

One of Wolfe's subjects that may have contributed to Kerouac's romantic vision is that of the romanticized bum that appears repeatedly in Kerouac's Duluoz Legend. Holliday asserts that, "Like Wolfe, Kerouac infuses his vagabonds with a romantic dignity which he uses to devalue middle-class life" (119). This type of bum can be seen in Wolfe's short story "Death the Proud Brother." In this narrative, a well-to-do young couple from Greenwich Village come across a bum who has been killed at a construction site. They look at the bum "observing him with the curiosity with which, and with less pity than, one would regard a dying animal" (36). Even though this bum was killed while drunk, Wolfe doesn't speak of him in a condescending way. Wolfe tells his readers that the bum, in his younger years, "had wandered back and forth across the nation, until

now the man's features had a kind of epic brutality in which the legend…of pounding wheel and shining rail…and of the wild, savage, cruel, and lonely earth was plainly written" (35), thus putting a romantic bend on the man's life. This dignified representation of this bum juxtaposes the comfortable life of the young, middle-class couple who observe his dead body, seemingly as a means for Wolfe to indicate that despite the bum's destitute condition, he had lived a much more meaningful life than the young couple staring at his body. Likewise, Kerouac's bums are given the same affirmative romantic perspective. In particular regard to *On the Road*, Kerouac presents Sal Paradise as an amiable character to the less fortunate because he, too, is poor, and therefore they are apt to help him out by "sharing food, drink, and, often, well-needed advice. Paradise eats their grapes, reads their funny papers, and even swaps stories with them" (Holliday 120). Holliday believes that in *On the Road* Kerouac indicates that "such comradeship rarely occurs between wealthier American families who travel across the country" (120). One such scene that may support this position occurs in *On the Road* when Sal Paradise witnesses cars full of tourist families. Paradise reports that in such cars he sees "old men driving and their wives pointing out the sights or poring over maps…sitting back looking at everything with suspicious faces" (22). It is Holliday's belief that "because these types live in fear of the open road, they never learn about the interpersonal reliance that a hobo's life engenders. Also, their adherence to maps keeps them from discovering more interesting places in the country" (120). In these two anecdotes, one from Wolfe and one from Kerouac, we see that the life of the bum/hobo has been privileged in a way that subverts the ideologies of the middle class and champions the life of a bum. Wolfe's painting the lives of his bums with such a romantic

perspective would seem to have in some ways shaped Kerouac's perspective of bum life, thus evidencing Wolfe's influence on Kerouac and a corresponding romantic vision between the two authors.

Similarly, beyond the ostensible influence of the sentimental, romantic family narratives of William Saroyan on Kerouac, there existed a more permanent romantic influence from the elder author on Kerouac. As has been touched upon briefly, the Romantics were seen as rebels, both in terms of form and spirit. William Saroyan shared this romantic vision, that the author should see himself and his craft engaged in the act of rebellion. Saroyan's image of the author was one of a "spiritual anarchist…discontent with everything and everybody…a rebel who never stops" (7). Having coined the term "beat" to describe the writers of his generation, Kerouac was asked to explain exactly what being a "beat" writer meant: "Being beat goes back to my ancestors, to the rebellious, the hungry, the weird, and the mad" (qtd. in Hrebeniak 13). It would seem that both authors agree that writers should be rebels. However, it would be difficult to prove that Saroyan's ethos regarding rebellion, as an ideology, were directly absorbed by Kerouac in terms of his ethos as a writer. However, when observing Saroyan's influence on Kerouac's spontaneous prose, the influence of this romantic rebellion becomes more discernible.

Kerouac cites the early influence of William Saroyan on his writing when he was only eighteen. After having read Saroyan at this age, Kerouac says that he "began writing terse little short stories in that general style" (*SL2* 248). However, as Kerouac advanced as a writer, and began to develop his spontaneous prose technique, it is noteworthy to consider the similarities that remained between Kerouac's method and that

of Saroyan's. Saroyan believed that writing should be "something as natural and immediate as breathing" (Foster 75). In light of this perspective, it is interesting to consider what Kerouac dubs the technique of "Scoping" in his essay "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," in which he states that, when writing, a writer should write with "free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought, swimming in a sea of English with no discipline other than rhythms of exhalation and expostulated statement" (57). Both Saroyan and Kerouac seem to be pointing to the idea that writing should be as free and as natural as breathing; be that as it may, coupling these two ideas together regarding such an organic form of writing may still not show a direct influence on Kerouac by Saroyan. However, Allen Ginsberg brought the notion of influence closer to reality in a 1968 interview when he stated that, among a few other writers (including Thomas Wolfe and Proust) Kerouac was "following" William Saroyan's lead in developing his spontaneous prose technique (147). It would therefore seem that Kerouac's espousing of such an organic style of writing may take root under the influence of Saroyan, and if this is the case, it could also be postulated that such a natural form of writing goes against what some would consider a conventional writing process, thus evidencing a syncopated rebellion against traditional form by Saroyan and Kerouac and further underscoring the romantic influence Saroyan had on Kerouac.

Beyond Kerouac's Duluoz Legend and the influence of romantic writers on Kerouac, Kerouac's spontaneous prose can be seen as being symptomatic of his romantic vision. By simply examining the term "spontaneous prose," obvious parallels can be drawn between this term and the Romantic Movement, particularly regarding the word "spontaneous." Spontaneity has oft been associated with romanticism, partly because of

William Wordsworth's definition of poetry found in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, wherein he famously asserts that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (151). And while Kerouac, who considered himself a poet (as was previously mentioned in regard to his "The Origins of Joy in Poetry") may be linking the term "spontaneous" to prose rather than poetry, his idea of what prose should do, as is written in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," certainly seems akin to Wordsworth's beliefs concerning poetry when Kerouac exclaims "sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind" and "the best writing is always the most painful personal wrung-out tossed from the cradle warm protective mind—tap from yourself the song of yourself,[28] *blow!—now!—your* way is the only way—'good'—or 'bad'—always honest. ('ludicrous') spontaneous, 'confessional' interesting" (57).

Another aspect of romantic theory postulated by Wordsworth in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* that parallels Kerouac's spontaneous prose ideologies deals with their perspectives on language. In Wordsworth's "Preface," he advocates for "a selection of language really used by men" (143). This idea would seem to gel with Kerouac's thoughts on the construction of his spontaneous prose. In his "Belief & Technique for Modern Prose," Kerouac explains that words should be written with "[n]o fear or shame in the dignity of yr experience, language & knowledge" (59). Presumably, here, Kerouac is saying the "experience, language & knowledge" of all men is equally as interesting/important, an idea that would seem to reciprocate Wordsworth's advocacy for using the language of the common man. However common the language that both of these writers speak of, neither believes that the words themselves should be ordinary. In

[28] "The song of yourself" is an obvious allusion to Walt Whitman, further strengthening the supposition of the influence of romantics on Kerouac and his spontaneous prose.

fact, Wordsworth believes that the language of the common man deflects such banality, saying that this type of language does not "indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression" (143). This constructed type of speech would seem to be what Kerouac is railing against in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" when he disavows the use of pre-fabricated language, saying that it is the "spontaneous" language that comes from the individual that is most "interesting, because not 'crafted.' Craft *is* craft" (57). Coupling the thoughts of a Romantic like Wordsworth with Kerouac's in terms of their perspective on language further evidences Kerouac's romantic inclinations.

There are other connections to the romantic sensibility regarding spontaneity and Kerouac's spontaneous prose beyond this connection to Wordsworth. One of the most important ways in which Kerouac's spontaneous prose appears spontaneous deals with his insistence that there should be "*no revisions* (except obvious rational mistakes)" (57). Kerouac couples this non-revisionist ideology with the notion that writers should mine their deepest thoughts when conveying their words:

> Not "selectivity" of expression but following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought…write as deeply as you want, fish down as far as you want, satisfy yourself first, then reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by the same laws operating in his own human mind. (57)

These two ideas come together to reveal Kerouac's advocacy for an unrevised form of writing expressed through a tapping of the writer's unconscious "seas of thought." Under this ideology, the writer snatches their words and ideas spontaneously from the edge of their mind, laying them down on paper, and only returning to them for revision if

there are gross errors in the work. This concept would seem to align itself with one of the basic precepts of Romantic writing, that writing should be used as a tool for expressing the unconscious. M.H. Abrams explores this idea manifest by Romantic writers in his book *The Mirror and the Lamp*, in which he says, that for Romantic writers, this form of writing allowed for "the supervention of the antithetical qualities of foresight and choice" (224). When considering Abrams insight into the writing methodology of Romantic writers, his description would seem to be an apt description of Kerouac's own spontaneous prose methodology, thus further exposing Kerouac's own romantic inclinations.

Similar to Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, Kerouac's *On the Road* can be seen as fitting into the romantic quest tradition, therefore illustrating how Kerouac may be viewed as a romantic myth-maker. However, Kerouac's romantic quest in *On the Road* plays out a bit differently than Parkman's previously mentioned quest, as Kerouac's quest aligns itself with the tradition of elegiac romance. According to Regina Weinreich, *On the Road* as a whole can be viewed as an elegiac romance with the characters Sal and Dean being seen as active participants in the quest romance tradition of Western literature. Weinreich delineates how these characters from *On the Road* fit this tradition:

> The knight and squire of old are retained in the personages of Dean and Sal. While the knight is obsessed by the goal of the quest, the squire does not share in the knight's preoccupation, but instead seems satisfied to look meekly on. If Dean is driven by the immediate gratification of kicks, fast cars, women, and drugs, Sal—Kerouac's surrogate—is the observer who views Dean as a catalyst for the only action he knows: writing. (37)

There have been three distinct stages in the quest romance tradition. In the first stage, old romance, the knight can be seen as a dynamic character that undergoes change because of the events brought on by his quest. In the second stage of quest romance literature, both the knight and the squire experience this transformation caused by enduring their quest. However, in the third stage, the elegiac romance, the knight remains static. According to Weinreich, this unchanging knight, similar to Dean, "does not mellow, he experiences no enlightenment, his character remains constant" (37). In the elegiac romance, instead, the squire, akin to Sal, is the focus of the narrative. As Weinreich puts it, "It is his character that develops and it is his enlightenment we must try to understand" (37). Because Sal is Kerouac's surrogate, another dimension/layer has been added to Kerouac's romanticism, a sort of meta-romanticism, wherein Kerouac's romantic tendencies can be viewed from the multiple perspectives of author and participant, with both of these tendencies evidencing the act of romantic mythmaking.

Myth of the West

Having demonstrated how both Parkman and Kerouac can be viewed as working within a romantic framework, I now move on to illustrate how these romantic perspectives can be contextualized within the myth of the West. This discussion brings into play Kerouac's perceptions of the West before he left on his first sojourn there, showing how Kerouac's perception of the West was influenced by Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail*. This perspective is important to note because it shows how Parkman's mythologized West affected Kerouac's vision of the West. I combine Parkman's perspective of the West with Kerouac's to illustrate how both authors actively romanticized their experience, thus synthesizing and adding to the myth of the West,

while at the same time foregrounding Parkman's romantic influence on Kerouac's perception of the West.

Three incidents that I mention in my introduction as evidencing Kerouac having read Parkman are also significant because, cumulatively, they illustrate that Parkman affected Kerouac's vision of the West. The first incident involves the letter that Kerouac wrote to his friend Hal Chase the spring before he first journeyed to the West, saying that he was reading *The Oregon Trail* and further exclaiming that he was "crazy about this kind of reading now." This shows that Parkman may be seen as affecting Kerouac's preconceived notions of the West because, after all, Kerouac was reading about Parkman's first sojourn to the West without having actually travelled there himself. Therefore, Kerouac's enthusiasm for Parkman's text must have, in some way, sparked an accompanying image of the West Kerouac might hope to discover upon his first sojourn to the West. The next incident that adds evidence to Parkman's having influenced Kerouac's preconceptions of the West occurs at the beginning of *On the Road*, at a time that would align itself with Kerouac having written the letter to Chase. Kerouac's narrator, Sal Paradise explain that he had been "poring over maps of the United States for months… savoring names like Platte and Cimarron" (10). Referencing the names "Platte and Cimarron" is noteworthy because Parkman mentions the Platte numerous times throughout *The Oregon Trail*, and in one of the last chapters of his book, Parkman discusses "the old trail of the Cimarron" (432). This second incident, Kerouac writing these specific names into his book, coupled with the first incident, Kerouac's proclaimed fervor for *The Oregon Trail*, makes it possible to speculate that Parkman affected Kerouac's preconceived notions regarding the West. However, what makes this influence

clear is a third incident, Kerouac's journal entry written in May of 1949 at a time when Kerouac was engaged in the travels he would later record in *On the Road*. In this journal entry Kerouac laments, "We entered Independence, or that is, bypassed it, and I saw no signs of what it used to be in the days of [Francis] Parkman" (*Windblown* 344). That Kerouac would actively be looking for signs of Parkman's West shows that Parkman had, indeed, painted a picture of the West for Kerouac before Kerouac experienced this West himself.

Under Smith's theory of the myth of the West, the West, which is so often mythologized, never held a stable presence. With this understanding in mind, it can be understood that not only was the West Kerouac wanted to experience, one prescribed to Kerouac by Parkman, most likely never there in the way that Kerouac envisioned, but that the West Parkman hoped to engage with, in terms of his anxiousness to pursue "the wilds" of the West and its "remote Indian nations," was also not there in such an unwavering form. Coupling these two notions together foregrounds how Kerouac and Parkman romanticized their Western tales to meet their preconceived notions of the West. Showing that Kerouac and Parkman romanticized their exploits in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail* makes clear the romantic tendencies of both authors as mythologizers, and also demonstrates the influence Parkman had on Kerouac in his writing of *On the Road.* I will now move on to illustrate how both Kerouac and Parkman romanticized their journeys west in ways that would seem to indicate that both authors conducted this romanticization as a means of rendering their preconceived ideas about the West a reality.

Even though the way Kerouac conveys his narrative in *On the Road* is similar to Parkman's in *The Oregon Trail* in terms of first-person narrative and playing an active

role in one's literary work, the heroes of these two books contain essential differences: Parkman made himself the hero of his book; Kerouac portrays, Dean Moriarty, modeled after Neal Cassady, as the hero of *On the Road*. However, the manner in which each author brings his protagonist into play is strikingly similar and demonstrates how Parkman and Kerouac actively engage in a form of frontier mythmaking in order to facilitate their Western champions.

Francis Parkman's biographers remark upon his "intense interest in recreating the past" (Parkman VII). His propensity to create myth is probably best illustrated by the way Parkman wrote himself into *The Oregon Trail* as a Western paladin. Parkman suffered poor health his entire life. His impetus for *The Oregon Trail* was multi-fold. First, as has been mentioned, he wished to experience what he perceived as the romance of a vanishing West, particularly in regard to the Native American culture he believed was rapidly changing, if not disappearing altogether, and secondly, he wanted to experience its "wilds," which he also saw as vanishing,[29] but, also, Parkman believed the trip west would help improve his ailments.[30] Owing to his many health issues over much of his trip, Parkman found it difficult to follow in the tracks of the first pioneers; and, upon his homecoming to Massachusetts, he found himself exhausted and incapacitated, necessitating his dictation of large passages of his book to friends and family. Even as Parkman conveyed the narrative of his Western pilgrimage (on paper at least), his narrative persona read more like that of a bold hero on a mythic quest in the new frontier.

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[29] As a member of The Boone and Crockett Club, Francis Parkman sought to conserve the American wilderness for fear that it could completely vanish.

[30] Parkman referred to his ailments as his "enemy," defined by biographer Wilbur Jacobs as "a formidable combination of mental and physical complaints, including semiblindness, insomnia, extremely painful headaches, and palpitations of the heart" (*Francis Parkman* XI). While Parkman suffered ailments in his youth, it is highly probable that Parkman was, in fact, suffering from repeated bouts of amoebic dysentery, as he mentions in Chapter Ten of *The Oregon Trail*, "The War Parties," "I had been slightly ill for several weeks" (170). Amoebic dysentery was known to be a common ailment of pioneers on the Oregon Trail.

This aggrandized persona can be seen in chapter twenty four of *The Oregon Trail*, "The Chase," when a member of Parkman's exploration party attempts to kill a massive buffalo bull but only manages to wound it, and Parkman must swoop in to save the day. Of this incident Parkman writes, "Looking round as I galloped past, I saw the bull in his mortal fury rushing again and again upon his antagonist, whose horse constantly leaped aside, and avoided the onset. My chase was more protracted, but at length I ran close to the bull and killed him with my pistols" (406). Parkman then writes that he cut off the tail of the bull "by way of trophy" (406) and rode away. Such passages indicate that, in traveling to the West, Parkman, at least in his own head, loses his sickly Eastern identity and embraces the Western identity of a romantic hero on the new frontier. These acts show how Parkman actively romanticized his Western persona to agree with his preconceived idea of what the character type of a Western adventurer should be, for surely this character should be a man as rugged as those Parkman advocates for in his speech "Romance in America," and through this modification of persona, Parkman's perpetuation of the myth of the West can be witnessed.

Parkman biographer Wilbur Jacobs, in his book *Francis Parkman, Historian as Hero* suggests Parkman's "heroic image was self-fashioned" (XI), even conceding that Parkman went out of his way to cast his identity as that of a hero:

> Francis Parkman's life contained all of the elements of a romantic legend because he purposely cultivated a heroic image of himself for future biographers. During his lifetime he made a conscious effort to mold this kind of self-portrait by composing herolike autobiographical descriptions

> of himself by writing a popular account of his experiences on the Oregon Trail, which emphasized his brave exploits. (3)

Jacobs goes on to say Parkman's "herolike" inventions were so convincing his biographers and family members actually believed them true. In Jacobs' chapter entitled "The Hero on the Oregon Trail," Jacobs speculates how Parkman achieved these "emphasized" exploits. Parkman condensed the action "from several uneventful days, with some minor rearrangement of events, and presents them as belonging to one day of exciting life on the Great Plains" (*Francis Parkman* 37). So in essence, the travel story which evoked such nostalgia for the myth of the West within Kerouac was, in all actuality, based upon an inauthentic experience, further underscoring Smith's theory that the West never held a stable presence.

Jack Kerouac's penchant to spin a yarn is similarly reflected in his hero, Dean Moriarty. In his writing, Kerouac morphs Dean into a character right out of Western myth, describing him as "a young Gene Autry – trim, thin-hipped, blue-eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent – a side-burned hero of the snowy West" (*OR* 2). Kerouac even perceives Dean's lawlessness as being part of a great Western mythos, claiming, "It was a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy; it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming (he only stole cars for joy rides)" (*OR* 7,8). Although Neal Cassady, the person Moriarty is fashioned after, is from the West – born in Salt Lake City, raised in the pool halls of Denver – the identity Kerouac creates for him through his descriptions imply that Cassady was some sort of cowboy. This theatrical flair can be seen as paralleling Parkman's embellished identity as a Western adventurer. Although Cassady spent some time as a ranch hand in Colorado,

Kerouac saying that he had "a real Oklahoma accent" is indicative of this romanticization. This conflation is further realized when Kerouac writes that Neal's criminal behavior is "Western" when in fact Cassady was a delinquent kid on the streets of Denver, with only an alcoholic father (that Kerouac readily refers to as a "bum") to provide supervision. It would seem that Kerouac has perpetuated the same inauthenticity in his Western narrative through his alteration of Cassady's persona in creating the character of Dean Moriarty, perhaps evidencing what preconceived Western qualities Kerouac thought his "wrangler," his "perfect guy for the road" (1) should be instilled with, thus showing how Kerouac, too, can be seen as perpetuating the myth of the West.

The chronicled events regarding each author's initial foray into the West fall almost exactly one hundred years apart – *The Oregon Trail* in the spring and summer of 1846, *On the Road* in the summer of 1947. This is provocative for two reasons: the first being the exactitude in years – almost exactly one hundred to the season; the second being that, even after a century had passed, both authors shared similar dreams for what things they might find in the bold, new landscape of the West. Beyond the mythologizing of heroes in their respective literary works, both Kerouac and Parkman mirror each other in their tendency to mythologize their newfound West as a means of attaining a true Western experience. This propensity is, perhaps, most easily recognizable in Kerouac's ability to transform the Midwestern landscape and its people into the West he romanticized, making the characters he finds in the Midwest into living and breathing cowboys—personas of the West—when in fact, he acknowledges some of these people are actually farmers and the places they live in are now littered with "cute suburban cottages of one damn kind or another" (*OR* 17).

It is in Omaha, Nebraska, where Sal Paradise imagines he has finally encountered his first real cowboy, bursting out "and, by God, the first cowboy I saw, walking along the bleak walls of the wholesale meat warehouse in a ten-gallon hat and Texas boots" (*OR* 17). It stretches the notion of credibility to believe a cowboy might be found amongst Omaha's meat markets, but it is Kerouac's remarkable ability to perceive this experience as one that is authentically Western that so closely parallels Parkman's talent for recreating a West that suits him.

Also in Nebraska, Sal stumbles upon a man in a diner whom he calls a "rawhide oldtimer Nebraska farmer." The farmer hoots with wild, guffawing bouts of laughter; within this belting joy, Kerouac's character finds the West, proclaiming, "Wham, listen to that laugh. That's the West, here I am in the West" (*OR* 19). Kerouac goes on to pronounce this man to be "the spirit of the West." Kerouac, eager to realize his own western adventure, dabbles in the mythologizing penchant of Parkman transforming this Midwest farmer into a mythic character of the West.

In terms of geography and era, these Midwesterners exist miles and decades away from the Western fodder of dime-store novels and Saturday matinees, but Kerouac manages to transform these characters into real-life cowboys, in no small part because he was anxious to experience the West, but also because seeing cowboys in the West fulfilled his preconceived notions of the West.

Francis Parkman, too, can be seen as romanticizing his Western experience as a means of altering that experience to meet his preconceived notions of the West, particularly in regard to the "wilds" and the "remote Indian nations" he hoped to encounter there. Parkman's preconceived ideas pertaining to the "wilds" of the West can

be witnessed in the way he romanticizes the wildlife he encounters on his trip across the Frontier. One such occurrence happens in *The Oregon Trail* when Parkman in travelling through the Black Hills. He discusses the winter endeavors of hunters there, claiming, "They would dig pitfalls, and set traps for the white wolves, the sables, and the martens" (*OT* 317). In this passage, Parkman can be seen as romanticizing "the wilds" he is journeying through, partly because sables are a fur-bearing animal that does not exist in North America. Therefore, Parkman is relying on his preconceived, Eurocentric notions of a wild and exotic place to describe the American West that he is experiencing. Similarly, white wolves, more commonly known as Arctic Wolves, are, in fact, found in the Arctic, making it highly unlikely to find one in the Black Hills. However, gray wolves would have existed there during Parkman's time, and while there are indeed gray wolves that are nearly white in color, they do not represent the majority of the gray wolf species' coloration, consequently bringing attention to Parkman's romantic act of locating them there. Further along in Parkman's text, on the eastern plains of Colorado, Parkman claims to see a white wolf for himself, "larger than the largest Newfoundland dog" and with "red eyes" (428-429). With this observation, Parkman's penchant for creating Western myth can be witnessed in full force. Not only does Parkman claim to witness a white wolf that is gigantic in stature (Newfoundland's can weigh up to 200 pounds and measure six feet long from nose to tail), but Parkman's Wolf also has red eyes, a phenomenon which occurs, when contextualized within modern times, only in horror films. This fabrication by Parkman not only illustrates his penchant to romanticize his Western adventures, but it also exhibits his yearning to experience the exotic "wilds" of the frontier. Such a wolf never could have been a reality; therefore, Parkman's writing

this wolf into existence would seem to point to Parkman creating a West that met his preconceived notions regarding what might make this West "wild," and in constructing this West, Parkman has created a Western myth of his own.

Correspondingly, Parkman would seem to romanticize his experience with "remote indian nations." One such instance occurs in the chapter of *The Oregon Trail* titled "Hunting Indians." In this part of Parkman's narrative, Parkman and one of his guides, Raymond, are searching for the Ogillallah Tribe, which Parkman hopes to join and observe. In their search for the Ogillallahs, Parkman and Raymond come across "two Indian forts, of a square form, rudely built of sticks and logs" (*OT* 243). Parkman refers to these structures as "ruinous," speculating that they had "probably been constructed the year before" (*OT* 243). It is when Parkman begins to speculate as to why these structures are deserted that we see his affinity for romanticization brought into play. Parkman conjectures, "Perhaps in this gloomy spot some party had been beset by their enemies, and those scowling rocks and blasted trees might not long since have looked down on a conflict, unchronicled and unknown. Yet if any traces of bloodshed remained they were completely hidden by bushes and tall rank weeds" (*OT* 243). That there are no signs of a conflict near these abandoned lodges, yet that Parkman willingly creates this particular narrative to explain their dilapidated state not only illustrates his penchant to romanticize his Western experience, but it simultaneously brings to surface Parkman's preconceived notions regarding the "remote Indian nations" he hoped to find in the West and how, when he didn't find these imagined nations, he used his aptitude for romanticization to transform these preconceived notions into a seemingly authentic experience.

Thus far I have demonstrated how both Kerouac and Parkman romanticized their Western experiences to meet their preconceived notions regarding what they hoped to find in this exotic, new landscape, and how, ultimately, this romanticization facilitates the creation of Western myth. However, it is also interesting to note how Parkman's romanticized version of the West may have had a direct effect on Kerouac's conception of the West.

Despite transforming his persona into that of a bold explorer, Parkman does make mention of his poor health on his journey west in *The Oregon Trail*. He is in a constant struggle to surpass an illness that plagues him throughout his journey. Kerouac, too, mentions his poor health in *On the Road.* He begins his road narrative with Sal Paradise, Kerouac's pseudonym in *On the Road*, stating, "I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about" (*OR* 1). Beyond the fact that both narrator's are shy about explaining the facts of their illnesses, another interesting parallel emerges regarding their poor health: that both authors would choose to go West despite these illnesses. Parkman makes clear his reasons for heading West notwithstanding his illness when he is half-way through the travels he records in *The Oregon Trail*, saying, "'Well,' thought I to myself 'a prairie makes quick and sharp work. Better to die here, in the saddle to the last, than to stifle in the hot air of a sick chamber; and a thousand times better than to drag out life, as many have done, in the helpless inaction of a lingering disease'" (*OT* 266). Parkman is still dogged by his illness, but would prefer to die on the trail rather than die "in a sick chamber." For Paradise, his illness is a touchstone moment that leads him to engage in what his narrator refers to as "the part of my life you could call my life on the road" (*OR* 1). Kerouac writes of this rebound moment after this "serious illness" by

explaining, “I’d often dreamed of going West, always vaguely planning, and never taking off” (1). Although Parkman never explicitly mentions in *The Oregon Trail* that he left Kerouac’s same native Massachusetts as a means of improving his health, it is interesting to note that Parkman mentions in the second chapter of his book that his traveling companion, “friend and relative Quincy A. Shaw” (37), has headed West as a means of “shak[ing] off the effects of a disorder that had impaired a constitution originally hardy and robust” (46). With this passage in mind, it is possible to speculate that when Kerouac read *The Oregon Trail*, he may have seen the West as a healing agent that would make him more “hardy and robust” after suffering his “serious illness.” This perception of the West as having the means to heal is certainly a romantic one, for it makes the West seem supernatural or magic. Coupling Kerouac’s reading of *The Oregon Trail* with its sentiments of the West having the power to heal shows how Parkman’s romanticized version of the West could be seen as affecting Kerouac’s perception of the West.

A further extension of a way Parkman’s romanticized West may be seen as affecting Kerouac’s conception of the West deals with the transformative power of the Western landscape. During Parkman’s quest west, at the time when he is engaged in his pursuit of the Ogillallahs, he finds himself in what today would be Western Nebraska, near the North Platte River, heading northwest towards the Black Hills. As Parkman and his party are moving across this plains area of the United States, they are set upon by a “terrific” lightning storm that forces them to hunker down in a ravine with the storm “dashing floods of water” against Parkman and his party as they squat in the rain with a blanket over their heads (233). As the storm subsides, Parkman emerges from his makeshift shelter and walks to the plain above the ravine. As he observes the vastness

ahead of him, he wonders, "'Am I,' I thought to myself, 'the same man who, a few months since, was seated, a quiet student of belles-lettres, in a cushioned armchair by a sea-coal fire?'" (234). In this passage, it is evident that Parkman feels transformed; he has begun to question whether or not he is the same person he was when he left the East. Similarly, Sal Paradise seems to be transformed by the landscape around him when catches "the greatest ride of [his] life" on the back of a truck driven by "two young blond farmers from Minnesota" (22). It is during this ride that Sal finds himself in nearly the exact same area where Parkman was caught in the deluge, near North Platte, Nebraska. After leaving North Platte and heading west on the back of the truck driven by the farm boys, Sal proclaims:

> Suddenly I looked, and the verdant farmfields of the Platte began to disappear and in their stead, so far you couldn't see to the end, appeared long flat wastelands of sand and sagebrush. I was astounded…And soon I realized I was actually at last over Colorado, though not officially in it, but looking southward toward Denver itself a few hundred miles away. I yelled for joy…The great blazing stars came out, the far receding sand hills got dim. I felt like an arrow that could shoot all the way. (25)

Here, too, in nearly the same place where Parkman experienced his transformative moment looking out across the plains, Sal feels transformed, "like an arrow that could shoot all the way." There is no doubt that Kerouac may have actually experienced such an outstanding transformative moment when riding in the back of a truck in nearly the same plains region where Parkman's transformative experience occurred. However, when coupling the exactitude of the two locations with the knowledge that Kerouac was

actively seeking to engage in Parkman's frontier experience, it makes it possible to speculate that Kerouac may have been seeking to reenact Parkman's transformation or at least engage in the same experience. This conjecture simultaneously allows for speculation that Parkman's romanticized version of the West influenced Kerouac's version of the West.

Conclusion

In reading Parkman and Kerouac's narratives regarding their initial forays into the West, it becomes clear that both writers actively romanticized their adventures to align with their preconceived notions of the West. This act, unwittingly, saw both writers further the myth of West. However, for Kerouac, the myth constructed by Parkman became one which he actively attempted to experience. Ultimately, this endeavor by Kerouac, represented in *On the Road*, illustrates Parkman's influence on Kerouac's road novel.

Chapter Two

Kerouac, Parkman, and the Postmodern Other

> *Behind us lay the whole of America and everything Dean and I had previously known about life, and life on the road. We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed the extent of the magic.*
>
> —Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

One of the ways Kerouac and Parkman romanticize the West may be realized in the way that each author writes about the non-white Others they encounter in their travel narratives. In reading Parkman's romanticized descriptions of Native Americans in *The Oregon Trail* against Kerouac's portrayal of Hispanics in *On the Road*, it seems that Kerouac's depiction of the Hispanic people he encounters during his road experience has been affected by Parkman's depiction of "Indians." In fact, when Kerouac went west and didn't encounter the Native Americans of Parkman's book, he appears to have ascribed characteristics of Parkman's Native Americans to the Hispanic people he writes about in *On the Road*, perhaps as a means of romanticizing his own western experience so that it reflected Parkman's trail narrative. Producing precise reasons why these romanticized descriptions are so similar is challenging. However, by situating Kerouac's depiction of Mexicans and Parkman's portrayal of Native Americans within the framework of postmodern theory and its discourse of "the Other," the similar perspectives of these writer's manifest themselves and, ultimately, illuminate how Kerouac's approach to Hispanics in *On the Road* appears to be influenced by Parkman's representation of Native Americans in *The Oregon Trail*.

The Other in Postmodernism and Postcolonialism

The Other and Otherness are words that have been used in philosophy for decades, even centuries. Perhaps the first person to use the Other, theoretically, was Hegel in 1808 when he said in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself. This has a two-fold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded *the other*, for it does not see *the other* as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self [my italics]" (630). Here, Hegel encapsulates connotations associated with the Other in terms of contemporary theory. "The Other" operates as something different, different from one's self. Also in this passage, there is a negation of the other: "[I]t does not see the other as an essential being." In its evolution, the concept of the Other came into full presence in the age of postmodernism.

According to Ziauddin Sardars' book *Postmodernism and the Other*, one of the key characteristics of postmodernism has been "the concerns over representations of the 'Other' in history, anthropology and politics" (7).[31] In other words, the marginalized Other has been taken from the margins and placed center-page by postmodernists. As such, I will outline the overarching attitudes of postmodernist scholars regarding the Other.

In terms of a guiding sentiment by postmodernists towards the Other, Zygmunt Bauman may best capture such a notion in his article "Postmodernity, or Living with Ambivalence." In this article Bauman suggests, "One needs to honour the otherness in the other, the strangeness in the stranger…The right of the other to his strangehood is the

[31] It is important to note, here, the difference between postmodern(ity) and postmodernism: Postmodern marks a moment in time, whereas postmodernism is an intentional movement.

only way in which my own right may express, establish, and defend itself" (14). Bauman believes that the heterogeneity within each individual is what leads us as human beings to have a "shared fate" and as such, that "joint destiny requires solidarity" (14). Because of the uniqueness that makes each of us more or less an Other, it's important to realize just how relative Otherness can be. As Andreas Huyssen points out, "[F]orms of otherness…emerge from differences in subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal *Ungleichzeitigkeiten* [asynchronicity] and spatial geographic locations and dislocations" (147-148). So in collecting postmodernist sentiments toward Otherness, difference would seem to be a key term to keep in mind, but as is often the case with all things postmodern, terms are rarely stable and "difference" is no exception. As Linda Huthcheon asserts, "'Difference' unlike 'otherness' has no exact opposite against which to define itself" (247). The bottom line, here, would seem to be that one should respect the Otherness in the individual while simultaneously acknowledging the multiplicity of ways Otherness creates itself.

So this heterogeneity and multiplicity/subjectivity of perspective regarding the Other might lead one to ask, "Isn't the discussion of the Other within the realm of the postmodernism really just another way of talking about multiculturalism?" Postmodernist critic Henry Giroux answers this question by stating, "Multiculturalism is generally about Otherness, but is written in ways in which the dominating aspects of white culture are not called into question and the oppositional potential of difference as a site of struggle is muted" (459-460). What Giroux would seem to imply is that multiculturalism really doesn't get at the fighting of racism. In just celebrating diversity, racist attitudes will not be affected in any meaningful way. In this sentiment, Giroux

implies that postmodernism can be seen as a tool to combat racist ideologies. This is important to bear in mind in the latter discussion of the Other in the work of Parkman and Kerouac because it could arguably be assumed that neither writer would think of themselves as being outwardly racist, but instead might see their writing about the Other as being a form of multiculturalism.

By illustrating how the dominant discourses of modernity treated the Other, Giroux is able to further frame the Other within the realm of postmodernism.[32] Of primary concern for Giroux is the way in which modernist belief treated race and ethnicity as just "a discourse of the Other" (455). Giroux believes that such an attitude "often essentialized and reproduced the distance between the centers and margins of power" and when read against a white, male, Eurocentric subject the Other was "shown to lack any redeeming community traditions, collective voice, or historical weight," which ultimately "served to solidify the boundaries of race and ethnicity" (455). Giroux also notes the modernist attitude in which "the self-delusion that the boundaries of racial in-equality and ethnicity were always exclusively about the language, experiences, and histories of the Other and had little to do with power relations at the core of its own cultural and political identity as the discourse of white authority" (455). The result here, for Giroux, is that "the Other is reduced to an object whose experiences and traditions are either deemed alien by whites or whose identity has to bear exclusively the historical

[32] As with most of issues in postmodernism, the Other and Otherness have received their fair share of criticism. Most notable among these critics are those who speak from their position as African American cultural critics. Chief amongst these African American critics is Cornel West who skeptically wonders concerning the postmodern Other, "Does this debate highlight notions of difference, marginality, and otherness in such a way that it actually further marginalizes actual people of difference and otherness, eg., African Americans, Latinos, women, etc.?" (394). Also it should be noted, regarding Spivak, that arguably her most famous essay "Does the Subaltern Have the Right to Speak?" holds at its core the thesis that Otherness is primarily a discourse dominated by white, Eurocentric males, so to answer the question posited in her title, according to Spivak, no.

weight of Otherness and racialization" (471). Interestingly, these sentiments by Giroux can be seen being played out in Kerouac and Parkman's writing: the Other is indeed objectified as a race foreign to that of the white, Eurocentric male.

The Other indeed functions as a postmodern subject, and many postmodern critics have taken into account Otherness in their writing, but the roots of the idea of the Other as used in postmodern criticism stem from postcolonial theory, and although postcolonial critics may in fact be writing in the postmodern era, they don't necessarily identify themselves as postmodernists. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the Other in the context of postcolonialism. I would like to specifically mention the ideas of two of the most prominent postcolonial theorists: Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Each of these scholars' theories has contributed greatly to the concept of the Other and Otherness in postcolonial theory.

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* renders much of the foundational ideologies found in postcolonial theory through its critique of Western assumptions and attitudes towards the Middle East. This theory makes clear that "the Orient" is Europe and the West's "cultural contestant and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. This theory explains that the Orient has helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1-2). In the West's defining itself through this difference, Said's argument contends that the definition of "the Orient" has come up remarkably flawed. Said's theory exposes this flaw through its concept of the occidental, using the term occident to define Western culture in contrast to the culture of "the Orient." This concept delineates the negative inversion that has taken place between these two cultures in which "the Orient" has been defined by the occident as the opposite

of all of the good qualities of Western culture. As such, a myth has formed concerning "the Orient," wherein it has come to be viewed as "mysterious, backward, sensual, and passive" (Said 52), and therefore, the occidental has come to view "the Orient" as always "inferior and conquerable" (Said 105). Thus, these concepts, rendered through Said's theories in *Orientalism*, most importantly demonstrate the dichotomous nature of the Other in that the Other is viewed as having "the opposite of all the good qualities of Western culture." As shall be seen in my analysis of the Others in Kerouac and Parkman's writing, Said's foundational concept of the Oriental goes a long way in illuminating how Parkman and Kerouac depict the Others in their work.

Gayatri Spivak's conceptualization of the subaltern helps to further explain the perception of the Other. Spivak was by no means the first person to use the term subaltern in relation to postcolonial studies. The term has traditionally been used to denote those persons who find themselves outside the hegemonic power structure, having been pushed to the margins in either social or political terms. In essence, the subaltern is the Other. However, Spivak's theory takes the term subaltern and places it within a framework that calls attention to difference in regards to the various marginalized peoples of the world. In a 1992 interview, Spivak detailed how the subaltern should be read against the Other:

> Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie....In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern....Many people want to claim

> subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus, they don't need the word "subaltern"...They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern. (30)

Spivak clearly delineates, here, what her concept of the subaltern isn't: It is not the working class, and it is not academic minorities. In short, her conception of the subaltern does not apply to all of those who are marginalized. Accordingly, in looking at how the Other in Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* and Kerouac's *On the Road* – Native Americans and Hispanics, respectively –are portrayed, the term would seem to apply, not just because they are minorities outside of academe or a clearly defined working class, but because they have not been empowered to speak within some sort of "hegemonic discourse."

Said and Spivak's postcolonial theories, which were born in Palestine and India, respectively, have been used globally to describe power relations between a cultural dominant and a marginalized Other. However, the concepts of American literary theorist E. San Juan, Jr., which also operate within the framework of postcolonial theory, further add to these theories by providing an unambiguous definition of the Other and Otherness. San Juan postulates that humans know who they are by knowing what they are not, an idea traced back to Giabattista Vico's theory of *homo faber* and *homo loquens*, or what man makes, man can speak of. Through this lens, the Other is defined through

opposition, or as San Juan conceptualizes it, "the ultimate signifier of everything 'I' is not" (83). San Juan's theories specifically contextualize the Other within the realm of Western ideologies:

> In Western phallogocentric discourse, the Other is often acknowledged as the woman, people of color, whatever is deemed monstrous and enigmatic: all are excluded from humanity (to which, it goes without saying, the definer belongs) by being so categorized. The Other is outside or marginal to the regnant system of beliefs, an amorphous and deviant character against the background of conventional standards. (83-84)

According to San Juan's theory, the result of such a Western perspective regarding The Other is that this marginalized human will come to be defined by stereotypes that will in effect "normalize" the collective worldview of such persons as "fixed, passive, recalcitrant, irrational, [and] depraved" (84), all attitudes regarding the Other that can be witnessed in the writing of Kerouac and Parkman.

When discussing the postmodern and postcolonial treatise of the Other, it is important to note the impact of Michel Foucault's theory of discourse. Briefly, Foucault believed that discourse was a way in which we organized our knowledge, ideas, and experiences. In culture, these ideas are manifest through language. The problematic here, according to Foucault, is that one culture's discourse can, and often does, become privileged over another's. This idea gets at the very core of the notion of the Other, as it takes a cultural dominant to prescribe that there in fact exists an Other, and their discourse differs from that of their own. When Edward Said contextualizes the importance of Foucault's discourse theory to his own work in *Orientalism*, he illustrates

how the idea of discourse benefits the examination of power relations between the privileged and the marginalized:

> I have found it useful to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse…to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage–and even produce–the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively. (9)

When examining the Other through its varied theoretical lenses, we can observe Foucault's presence through continual reference to discourse and the power it exhibits in the tension between the dominant and the Other.[33] In terms of my work in examining the writing of Parkman and Kerouac, this concept is important to take into account because the writing of both of these authors is positioned within a dominant discourse and this writing does, in fact, dictate the existence of an Other. This concept will be used to examine representations in Parkman's writing regarding a Native American Other, and in Kerouac's writing regarding a Hispanic Other.

Kerouac, Parkman, and the Other

Having shown how the Other operates within the framework of postmodernist and postcolonial criticism, I will now move on to address the ways in which the depictions of the Native American Other in Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* and the Hispanic Other in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* not only reflect the ideologies embedded within

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[33] Foucault's discourse theory plays a huge role in most facets of postmodern theory. Regarding this dissertation and its use of gender theory in describing the masculine constructs found in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, Foucault's discourse theory can also be seen as describing the privileged relationship of the masculine over the feminine in most cultures.

these theories, but also how Parkman's portrayal of the Native American Other would seem to influence Kerouac's reading of the Hispanic Other. I have chosen to arrange this discussion by taking a similar subject from both Parkman and Kerouac and then showing how this subject highlights specific ideologies regarding depictions of the Other. In the latter part of this conversation, I investigate how these ideologies surface when Parkman and Kerouac come to live with the Others they write about.

But first, it is important to establish how the Native American and Hispanic characters I reference in my analysis can be viewed as "Others." Without going into the work of specific theorists, which will be done further along in this chapter, the Native American characters that Parkman encounters in *The Oregon Trail*, and the Hispanic characters that Kerouac portrays in *On the Road*, both in the United States and Mexico, can most easily be seen as Others because they exist on the margins of the privileged, white, male discourse from which both Parkman and Kerouac operate. Indeed, Parkman and Kerouac are a part of the cultural dominant that is prescribing the existence of these Others that they are writing about, and, therefore, their writing can be seen as creating Otherness around those characters who fall outside the parameters of the hegemonic discourse Parkman and Kerouac utilize in their writing.

As previously mentioned, one of the key reasons for Francis Parkman's embarking on his journey west that he would later record in *The Oregon Trail* was to observe a Native American culture he perceived as on the cusp of vanishing altogether. It is therefore interesting to note Parkman's reaction to one of the first instances of Native American hospitality shown to him on his road adventure. While feasting at what Parkman referred to as a "sumptuous banquet," Parkman comments, "So bounteous an

entertainment looks like an outgushing of good-will; but doubtless one half at least of our kind hosts, had they met us alone and unarmed on the prairie, would have robbed us of our horses, and perchance have bestowed an arrow upon us beside. Trust not an Indian. Let your rifle be ever in your hand" (201). In this passage, it is evident that Parkman is beyond merely being skeptical of the Native American subject he so anxiously set out to explore.[34] And here, Parkman has rendered an Other that, as San Juan postulates, "is outside or marginal to the regnant beliefs" of the cultural dominant.

Although Kerouac by no means advocates carrying a gun to defend oneself against the Other, it is interesting to note the parallel skepticism Kerouac manifests in correlation to the Hispanic Other he portrays in *On the Road*. Sal Paradise (Kerouac) finds himself at a bus station waiting for a bus to carry him on to California. While waiting for this bus, he happens to notice a beautiful Mexican woman in the bus station. Paradise is all too happy to find out later that this woman is on his same bus bound for California. He gains the courage to finally go over and sit next to this woman, Terry, and strike up a conversation, and before long the two of them are getting along wonderfully and agree to go to LA together. After a while, however, Sal becomes suspicious of Terry, saying, "I began getting these foolish paranoiac visions…that Terry was a common little hustler who worked the buses for a guy's buck by making appointments like ours in LA where she brought the sucker first to a breakfast place, where her pimp waited, and then to a certain hotel to which he had access with his gun or whatever" (*OR* 83). Clearly, here, Kerouac, through his narrator, Sal Paradise, externalizes an outright distrust in his depiction of this Hispanic woman reminiscent of that of Parkman's regarding his Native

[34] It is comments by Parkman such as this one that led one critic to comment, "One does not have to know a thing about Indian culture to recognize that the sweeping statements Parkman makes about it are authoritative only about the limitations of his own" (Townsend 106).

American hosts. In both cases, the Other is portrayed as one who cannot be trusted. In referencing San Juan's claims regarding the postcolonial Other, it would seem that both Kerouac and Parkman manifest the shared belief in their representations that the Other is a "deviant character against the background of conventional standards," the conventional standards here being that of the dominant, white, American discourse. This mistrust would also seem to illustrate Said's notion that the Other possesses "the opposite of all the good qualities of Western culture."

Throughout *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman uses the descriptor of "magic," a term chock full of romantic connotations, to refer to the actions and objects of the Native Americans he encounters: "their *magic* drum," "as if by *magic* one hundred and fifty tall lodges sprung up," "the ponderous bones fell asunder, as if by *magic*," "a medicine pipe and other implements of the *magic* art," "made of the wing-bone of the war eagle and endowed with *magic* virtues," and "the camp rose like *magic*" [my italics](256, 197, 270, 180, 139, 314). Similarly, in *On the Road*, we see Kerouac appropriate the term "magic" when he writes about things with Hispanic connotations: "All the magic names of the valley unrolled – Manteca, Madera, all the rest" (80). Two items are interesting to note here: one, both the names Kerouac mentions are Spanish, and two, the other names are just referred to as "all the rest." When Sal is driving to Mexico for the first time, he refers to the direction he is heading as the "magic *south*," south italicized; and Sal refers to the U.S./Mexican border as "the magic border" (273). But most telling of Kerouac's use of the term "magic" in writing about all things Mexican occurs during his first night in Mexico when Sal Paradise rhapsodizes:

> Shirt-sleeved Mexican cab drivers and straw-hatted Mexican hipsters sat at stools, devouring shapeless messes of tortillas, beans, tacos, whatnot. We bought three bottles of beer – *cerveza* was the name of beer – for about thirty Mexican cents or ten American cents each. We gazed at our wonderful Mexican money that went so far, and played with it and smiled at everyone. Behind us lay the whole of America and everything Dean and I had previously known about life, and life on the road. We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed the extent of the magic. (276)

This final passage makes clear that Mexico is quite different than America, and in exposing this difference, symptoms of the Other emerge. In the dual cases of Parkman's and Kerouac's use of the romantic term "magic," the Other is framed within the criticism of Said and San Juan, for clearly this "magic" aligns itself with the occidental notion of the "mysterious" Said denotes in *Orientalism* and the "enigmatic" nature of the Other that San Juan references in *Beyond Postcolonialism*. It is also interesting to note that although many wonderful things occur during the road adventures that Kerouac writes about in *On the Road*, things that might be referred to as "magic," Kerouac only uses this term in *On the Road* when referencing Mexico. Witnessing how Parkman and Kerouac appropriate the term "magic" in portraying the Native American and Hispanic cultures they are observing in these instances makes clear that both authors are utilizing their dominant discourse to prescribe Otherness in representing the marginalized Other, and furthermore, it interesting to note how Parkman's appropriation of the term has seeped into Kerouac's depictions of Otherness, as well.

Another term that Parkman and Kerouac use when depicting their respective Others in both *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road* is that of "thousands." On two different occasions, Francis Parkman uses this term. In one instance, he describes thousands of Indians descending on the white man's cornfields as an annual tradition, and "stealing" as much as they can carry (275). In another instance, he describes an expedition in which he hoped to come across an Indian rendezvous. Parkman remarks:

> There was no sight or sound of man or beast, or any living thing, although behind those trees was the long-looked-for place of rendezvous, where we fondly hoped to have found the Indians congregated by the thousands. We looked and listened anxiously…We emerged upon it, and saw, not a plain covered with encampments and swarming with life, but a vast unbroken desert…without anything that had life. We drew rein and gave to the winds our sentiments concerning the whole aboriginal race of America. (152)

The fact that Parkman believes that "thousands" of Indians are going to show up at the same place and same time, and that they don't, serves to illustrate Parkman's unbound, romantic perspective of Native Americans, in that he believed that the frontier would be brimming with Native American "encampments and swarming with life," when in fact the Native American population had seen huge declines leading up to the 19th century.[35] In both instances where Parkman has referred to "thousands" of Native Americans, he has essentialized the behavior of Native Americans. This is obvious in the former case because Parkman has assumed that "thousands" of Native Americans maintain a

[35] Some scholars believe that as much as 90% of the Native American population was decimated by Old World diseases, particularly smallpox (Walbert).

collective interest in descending upon white men's fields to steal their corn. And in the latter example, Parkman has essentialized the behavior of Native Americans by assuming that they would be inclined congregate by the thousands to "rendezvous," a term in the era of Parkman that would have been more appropriately used to describe the gathering of French mountain men and fur trappers.

In *On the Road*, Sal Paradise eventually proceeds to have a relationship with the aforementioned character Terry, a relationship that might be best summed up as one of boyfriend/girlfriend. After Sal and Terry have been together for several weeks, both working as farm laborers, a day comes when Terry and Sal catch a ride with several of Terry's cousins. Of this occasion Paradise comments, "In the morning her cousins came to get us in another truck. I suddenly realized thousands of Mexicans all over the countryside knew about Terry and me and that it must have been a very juicy topic for them" (*OR* 99). In this passage we can observe Kerouac toying with the same essentialist notions that Parkman adheres to when talking about "thousands" of Indians. The essentialist assumption Kerouac makes, in this case, is that all Mexicans are alike in that they would all be very interested in Sal's relationship with Terry. Therefore, we see the Other foregrounded in two ways: first, Kerouac renders the Other as a homogenous group, and secondly, the fact that a white man and a Mexican woman are having a relationship is something that might be perceived, at least in Kerouac's portrayal, as being a "juicy" topic to the Other.

In observing the use of the term "thousands" in both *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*, we see sentiments Giroux illuminates brought to the surface. Most importantly, and as has been pointed out, the Other has been essentialized: Parkman essentializes the

behavior of Native Americans, and Kerouac essentializes Mexicans as all being of the same mindset. The sum effect of these instances of essentialization gets at the racist aspects that San Juan exposes in his postcolonial discourse of the Other. In stereotyping the actions of the Other, the Other has become "amorphous," their actions "normalized."

Another shared action toward the Other by Parkman and Kerouac concerns their depicting the Other as naïve. In *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman relays an episode in his journey where they have reached the end of the day and are looking for a campsite. Parkman conveys the events of this moment, saying:

> "We will camp there," I said, pointing to a dense grove of trees lower down the stream. Raymond and I turned toward it, but the Indian stopped and called earnestly after us. When we demanded what was the matter, he said, that the ghosts of two warriors were always among those trees, and that if we slept there, they would scream and throw stones at us all night, and perhaps steal our horses before morning. Thinking it as well to humor him, we left behind us these extraordinary ghosts. (251)

In the tongue-in-cheek telling of their Indian guide's concern over "the extraordinary ghosts" and his humoring this guide by not camping there, Parkman portrays their guide as nothing more than naïve. Kerouac would seem to express a similar representation of naiveté regarding the Other through his narrator, Sal, driving through a particular town in Mexico. Paradise jubilates, "Their bare feet stuck out, their dim candles burned, all Mexico was one vast Bohemian camp. On corners old women cut up the boiled heads of cows and wrapped morsels in tortillas…this was the great and final wild uninhibited Fellahin-childlike city that we knew we would find at the end of the road" (*OR* 301). It

would seem, here, that Paradise insinuates that he has at last arrived at a pure and innocent place, as is indicated by using the terms “uninhibited” and “childlike” to describe this city, and just as clearly he implies that this innocence is represented in the marginalized—the Fellahin, or peasant laborers, of this town, who are Bohemian, subverting dominant social conventions, as is manifest by their “bare feet” and the eating of “boiled heads of cows.” Kerouac’s depiction, here, cumulates to infantilize the Other and make them appear naïve in the context of the social norms of the *inhibited* and *non-childlike* world from which he writes.

In reading the representations of naïveté regarding the Others manifest in both Parkman and Kerouac’s writing against Said’s theory of Orientalism, similar aspects between these depictions can be observed. In Parkman’s case, the Native American guide’s belief in ghosts very much locates this guide, in terms of Parkman’s illustration, within a space of backward beliefs that oppose the assumed correct beliefs of dominant, American, white culture. Similarly, in Kerouac’s case, infantilizing the Other parallels Parkman’s representation in that Kerouac portrays Mexican culture as backward when read against the same regnant culture. In both cases, these representations illustrate a dominant discourse negating the Other.

Not only has the discourse of the Other been negated, but these characters are further essentialized by both Parkman and Kerouac’s in portrayals that mark them as lazy. Parkman has a habit of depicting Native Americans as “lazy” throughout *The Oregon Trail*, but one particular instance stands out because of the image Parkman renders in describing a particular Native American. Parkman describes this Native American as being “a huge bloated savage,” referring to him as “the Hog” and saying “he had never

had ambition, for he was too fat and lazy" (91). Clearly, here, Parkman is stereotyping a man he knows very little of based upon his appearance, but when coupled with the many other instances in which he renders Native Americans as lazy, it becomes apparent that Parkman is representing Native Americans in a way that brings to mind Said's notion of the Other embodying qualities that a dominant culture would not perceive as "good" or San Juan Jr.'s belief that the Other is perceived as "deviant against the background of conventional standards."

Kerouac engages in this same practice of using a dominant discourse to negate the Other when he writes about the Mexican officials Sal Paradise meets when crossing the border. Paradise reports, "The Mexican officials came out, grinning, and asked if we could please take out our baggage. We did. The Mexicans looked at our baggage in a desultory sort of way. They weren't officials at all. They were lazy and tender" (*OR* 274). Once again, both Parkman and Kerouac depict the Other in a way that brings into play cultural stereotypes, but beyond that, they are both representing the Other in a way that negates them because their dominant discourse views the qualities of the marginalized as being, as Said puts it, "always inferior and opposed to the good qualities of Western culture," and as San Juan contends, "fixed" and "passive."

An additional way in which we might read Kerouac and Parkman's portrayal of the Other as similar is manifest in the way each author discusses the Other's use of language. In *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman gives an analysis of the Arapaho language, saying, "The language of the Arapahoes is so difficult, and its pronunciation so harsh and guttural, that no white man, it is said, has been ever able to master it" (397). In this passage, Parkman not only sets about establishing difference between Native Americans

and whites, but he would also seem to be negating this particular tribe's culture by referring to their language, a component of their culture, as "harsh and guttural." It may be assumed that Parkman believes the language he speaks, that of the cultural dominant, is the opposite of "harsh and guttural." As such, we can see ideas represented in postcolonial theory at play, as Said's occidental theory would say the Other is viewed by the cultural dominant (the occident) as containing "the opposite of all of the good qualities of Western culture," and as San Juan's theory reaffirms, the Other is "the ultimate signifier of everything 'I' is not."

Kerouac similarly negates the language of the Other in *On the Road* when he writes about Terry's brother Rickey and his friend. In referring to Rickey's friend, Sal proclaims, "His buddy was a big flabby Mexican who spoke English without much accent" (*OR* 92). Here Kerouac is overt in specifying the dominant discourse with which Paradise measures the speech of Rickey's friend – the English language—and in a certain way, Kerouac's narrator is stereotyping Mexicans in that he finds it somewhat anomalous that this particular Mexican might be able to speak without an accent. In another passage, Sal quotes Rickey's words, saying, "*Manana* man, we make it; have another beer, man, dah you go, *dah you go*" (93). Here, Kerouac explicitly writes in the accent, even italicizing it, underscoring the difference between the form of white dominant English and the marginalized's attempt to speak it. These instances regarding perceptions of the speech of the Other in Kerouac's writing, as well as the former example mentioned in Parkman's writing, seem to uphold Giroux's ideologies regarding the delusion that the cultural boundaries of ethnicity are primarily a symptom of language rather than seeing the true relation between these boundaries and the cultural dominance of white authority.

In these specific examples, we see that Kerouac and Parkman privilege their own speech in portraying the Other's they write about, thus privileging the discourse of the cultural dominant.

Parkman and Kerouac Live with the Other

An interesting parallel exists between Parkman and Sal Paradise in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road* in that they both spend time living with the Others of their respective narratives, with Parkman living amongst the Ogillallah tribe and Sal living in a migrant worker camp with his Mexican girlfriend Terry and her son.

As part of Parkman's unwavering eagerness to observe Native American culture during his Western expedition, he believed that living amongst the Native Americans he so wanted to study was the best way to gain insight into their culture. Parkman makes clear the reasons that brought on this desire in *The Oregon Trail*:

> I had come into the [Indian] country almost exclusively with a view of observing the Indian character. Having from childhood felt a curiosity on this subject, and having failed completely to gratify it by reading, I resolved to have recourse to observation. I wished to satisfy myself with regard to the position of Indians among the races of men; the vices and virtues that have sprung from their innate character and from their modes of life, their government, their superstitions, and their domestic situation. To accomplish my purpose it was necessary to live in the midst of them. I proposed to join a village, and make myself an inmate of their lodges. (168)

As scholarly as this design outlined by Parkman may sound, perhaps he had additional motives in seeking to live with Native Americans. According to Robert F. Sayre, many American writers of the antebellum period were intrigued by the idea of living in the wilds of America, wishing to partake of the "direct relationship with nature and the wild that 'the Indian' symbolized" (18). This desire stemmed from one of the most essential stereotypes held by European Americans living during that era regarding Native Americans. Philip G. Terrie delineates this stereotype, saying, "Reduced to its crudest formulation, the fundamental difference between Indians and Euro-Americans, as whites then perceived it, was that although both groups shared the same origins, Indians had resisted the march forward from the primitive to the civilized, an attitude summed up in the term 'savagism'" (377-378). This attitude regarding the dichotomy between the "civilized" and the "savage" can be observed in *The Oregon Trail* when Parkman surveys the Ogillallahs he comes to live with:

> These men were thorough savages. Neither their manners, nor their ideas were in the slightest degree modified by contact with civilization…their children would scream in terror at the sight of me. Their religion, their superstitions and prejudices were the same that had been handed down to them from immemorial time. (*OT* 251-252).

Parkman's depiction of Native Americans, here, works towards illustrating the appeal of Native American life to the American writers that Sayre mentions, as these men believed that the effects of civilization had left humanity out of touch with the natural world and the knowledge that it imparted. Men of this type, according to Terrie, believed, "Native Americans were inherently innocent and uncouth children of nature, with specifically

savage virtues and vices, all derived from living in the wilderness away from both the blessings and shortcomings of civilization" (378). These notions regarding the "savage" and "childlike" nature of Native Americans would certainly seem to be reflected in Said's premise that a cultural dominant perceives Others as "its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience," for surely the "savage" is functioning in opposition to the cultural dominant's civility and the "childlike" attributes are functioning in opposition to the cultural dominants "sophistication." Similarly, "inherently innocent and uncouth children of nature, with specifically savage virtues and vices" are Others that reflect San Juan's concept that the cultural dominant views Others as "monstrous," "deviant," and "depraved." These ideas that stem from postcolonial theory help to clarify the negative, racist impact of the white cultural dominant's perspective of the Other and work towards contextualizing the representations Parkman puts forth. However, Terrie goes on to note that certain aspects of the perceived Otherness of Indians were effects white men of Parkman's era oft times held in esteem. As Terrie explains, "The otherness of the Indian could prove seductive, for he represented those qualities the white man feared his society had lost or never possessed" (378). This idea is reflected in Parkman's own words when he worries, "The Indians will soon be corrupted" and that explorers in the West will soon pass "through their country" and "its danger and charm will have disappeared altogether" (*OT* 252). It is here, within the ideologies of Terrie and the sentiments of Parkman, that we can see Giroux's ideas regarding multiculturalism come into presence, as there is no doubt that within Parkman's writing he is esteeming the innocence and primitive ways of Native Americans, and he would most likely not believe his beliefs are racist. But as Giroux explains, the racism inherent in such a position is projected "in ways in which the

dominating aspects of white culture are not called into question." Therefore, what occurs in this situation wherein Parkman comes to idealize certain aspects of an Other is that he is failing to recognize his privileged position as a cultural dominant, with the consequence ultimately being that, as Giroux puts it, he is prescribing his own "discourse of the Other," which "essentialize[s] and reproduce[s] the distance between centers and margins of power."

It seems likely that Kerouac, too, perceived the Mexican Others Sal lived with as holding certain qualities that had been lost in his, then, modern world. This speculation gains much support from Kerouac's constant referral to the Hispanic people he writes about as the "fellahin," a term Kerouac uses in his writing to not only describe the people Sal encounters in Mexico, but those who Sal lives with in the labor camps of California, including the family of Sal's girlfriend, Terry. The etymology of term "fellahin" takes it root from the Arabic word *fellah*, an ancient term for a husbandman, one who "tills or cultivates the soil" ("fellah"). The fellahin, therefore, can be seen as being tied to the earth in this ancient way, toiling in the fields. When observing the term "fellahin" in this connotative way, it would seem to parallel the persona Sal believes he has come to reflect when he proclaims, "I was a man of the earth, precisely as I had dreamed I would be, in Paterson" (*OR* 97). That Sal had a preconceived notion of becoming "a man of the earth" akin to the "fellahin" Others that he lived and worked with at the time when he uttered this statement illustrates that, like Parkman, Kerouac's character wanted to partake of the qualities of the Others he lived with and that he may have believed were not available to him in his Eastern environs of Paterson. Such an analogous move by

Kerouac, in situating Sal in such a way, certainly reflects Parkman's action of speaking from the position of a dominant discourse and essentializing qualities of an Other.

It is Joseph L. Tribble's perspective that Parkman yielded to the seduction of taking on the characteristics of the Others he writes about in *The Oregon Trail*. Tribble elucidates Parkman's exit from civilization, saying, "The journey is a ritual for Parkman, a removal of the clothes of deadening custom and habit to find the Self beneath, to find the elemental man whose powers, no matter how they may be restrained and polished by civilization, must not be lost forever if a man is to be anything more than a hollow mockery of himself" (527). This shedding of one's civilized self, of trying to incorporate the "innate wisdom" white men perceived Native Americans as possessing into their own being, is the action for which Terrie allocates the term "Indianization," a process in which white men attempt to become Native American Others by trying "to act, even to think, like Indians—or, to be more precise, to act or think like they *thought* Indians would" (Terrie 378). Terrie concurs with Tribble regarding Parkman's "Indianization," saying, "We see Parkman adopting Indian ways and manners and, by the end of his stay, beginning to perceive the world around him in what seems to be an Indian frame of mind" (386-387). As evidence for Parkman's adopting these ways and manners, Parkman mentions numerous times in *The Oregon Trail* that he dresses in a manner similar to Native Americans, having at different points in his narrative "put on radiant moccasons," "worn buckskin attire," and at yet another point "put on a pair of brilliant moccasons" (146, 171, 259). And in another instance, Parkman engages in the Native American custom of eating dog, saying, "We attacked the little dog, and devoured him before the eyes of his unconscious parent" (163). Sometime later in his frontier travels,

Parkman even plays host to a dog feast, noting, “I intended that day to give the Indians a feast, by way of conveying a favorable impression of my character and dignity; and a white dog is the dish which customs of the Dahkotah prescribe for all occasions of formality and importance” (258).

Sal Paradise, too, can be seen as going through an action similar to that of Parkman’s “Indianization,” a process in which Sal begins to act like the Others he lives with and perhaps even come to believe that he has become a Hispanic Other. Sal takes on a job picking cotton in fields alongside migrant workers. He describes his labors, saying, “My back began to ache. But it was beautiful kneeling and hiding in that earth. If I felt like resting I did, with my face on the pillow of brown moist earth. Birds sang an accompaniment. I thought I had found my life’s work” (*OR* 96). It is unlikely that the emigrant Others toiling with Sal would share quite the same zealous view of their labor. Of this notion, Mark Richardson asserts, “Sal’s pastoral eye is hardly the eye of a migrant worker, whose felt relation to the cotton field is probably more economic in character than literary and romantic” (223). Richardson goes on to proclaim, “Sal Paradise never really sees the poverty in the California work camps” (227). Richardson’s perception would seem to extend to Sal’s beliefs regarding the tent that he and his girlfriend and her son live in during his time as a cotton-picker. Paradise describes his accommodations in the migrant camp, saying, “There were a bed, a stove, and a cracked mirror hanging from a pole; it was delightful,” (*OR* 94). It is clear, here, that Sal has, in fact, failed to see the poverty in this migrant camp. This is further underscored when Sal, like Parkman, eats the food of the Others he lives with. Sal proclaims of this experience that he “had tacos and mashed up pinto beans rolled in tortillas” and that “it was delicious” (93). Sal later

says he paid a dollar for this meal that fed two adults. Instead of seeing the economic circumstances that might lead a person to eat such a cheap meal, Sal celebrates the new experience, not realizing that the Others eating this same meal may have been choosing this option because it was all they could afford.

After some time working in the immigrant camp in Central California, it would seem that Sal Paradise makes a fairly substantial cognitive leap in that he actually starts to believe that, he, too, is Hispanic, perhaps believing he shares in the challenges of the migrant workers he lives and works with. Sal makes this idea clear when he explains that some "Okies" had been causing trouble in the camp: "From then on I carried a big stick with me in the tent in case they got the idea we Mexicans were fouling up their…camp. They thought I was a Mexican, of course; and in a way I am" (*OR* 98). However, Sal's continued inability to see the poverty amongst the Hispanic Others he is living with illustrates exactly how disconnected he is from the actual life experiences of an immigrant worker. His privileged perspective is rooted in that of a dominant discourse. Sal has actively chosen this lifestyle and can leave it at any time. This is made evident when he begins to feel "through with his chores in the cottonfield" and sends his "aunt a penny postcard across the land and ask[s] for another fifty" dollars so that he can escape the migrant camp. That Sal views his work in the cotton fields as merely "chores" and not a means to survive and that he is easily able to contact a relative to deliver him from his temporary, impoverished lifestyle highlights the difference between the cultural dominant and the marginalized. In absconding from the migrant camp, Sal in essence has, as Giroux puts it, served to reproduce "the distance between the centers and margins of power" because participating in the impoverished lifestyle of the migrant worker camp is

a decision of free will for Paradise, not a necessity, just as it was Parkman's choice as a white man to live amongst a Native American tribe. As such, we see aspects of Sal's choice to live amongst the Other he writes about reflected in Parkman's choice to do so, as well. For example, Parkman has not chosen to wear buckskin and moccasins or eat dog out of necessity, like the members of the tribe that he lives with, and the very fact that he has the privilege of doing so serves to highlight a position similar to that of Paradise in that they are both engaging with and taking on characteristics of the Others in their narratives while maintaining their positions as a members of dominant, white culture.

Despite the time Parkman spends amongst the Ogillallahs and the time Paradise spends in the immigrant camp, it would seem that both narrators come out on the other side of this experience realizing that they were not destined to be Others. This notion is made quite clear by Parkman in *The Oregon Trail* when he speaks vehemently, saying:

> For the most part, a civilized white man can discover but very few points of sympathy between his own nature and that of an Indian. With every disposition to do justice to their good qualities, he must be conscious that an impassable gulf lies between him and his red brethren of the prairie. Nay, so alien to himself do they appear, that having breathed for a few months or a few weeks the air of this region, he begins to look upon them as a troublesome and dangerous species of wild beast, and if expedient, he could shoot them with little compunction as they themselves would experience after performing the same office upon him. (*OT* 336-337).[36] [37]

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[36] In a review titled "Mr. Parkman's Tour," Herman Melville wrote of this quote, deploring Parkman's racism:

And while Sal is in no way bluntly racist like Parkman when he departs from the Others he lived amongst, it is clear that he, too, in some way senses the "impassable gulf" that exists between him and the Hispanic Others he once believed he was part of. This is exhibited when Sal says goodbye to his girlfriend: "'See you in New York, Terry,' I said. She was supposed to drive to New York in a month with her brother. But we both knew she wouldn't make it" (*OR* 101). The fact that both Sal and Terry know that Terry won't make it to New York, a move that might be seen as the inverse action of Paradise coming to living with the Other, demonstrates the disparity between the culturally dominant and the marginalized. Unlike Sal, Terry doesn't have an aunt with the means to wire her the money she needs to make the trip all the way across the country, something Sal would seem to know, even while outwardly pretending this is not the case. The division between the two worlds of Sal's former life in New York and his life in the migrant camp is crystallized when Sal arrives at the train station upon his departure, discovering that the money his aunt wired him had been delivered: "The ticket master got back and…[t]he money was in; my aunt had saved my lazy butt again. 'Who's going to win the World Series next year?' said the gaunt old ticket master. I suddenly realized it was fall and that I was going back to New York" (*OR* 101). The ticket master's comment would seem to jar Paradise back into another world quite different from the world of the migrant camp, a place where things like the World Series are not so "alien." From Sal's reaction, it would

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> It is too often the case that civilized beings sojourning among savages soon come to regard them with disdain and contempt. But though in many cases this feeling is almost natural, it is not defensible; and it is wholly wrong. Why should we condemn them?—Because we are better than they? Assuredly not…We are all of us—Anglo Saxons, Dyaks and Indians—sprung from one head and made in one image" (291).

[37] Of the supposed unabashed violence regarding Native Americans that Parkman proclaims, Philip G. Terrie responds, "It is essential to note that the presumption of Indian predisposition to casual, unremorseful violence is an utter projection of inner fears; Parkman…witness[es] absolutely nothing of the sort during his Indian days" (183).

appear that professional baseball is not a talked about subject in the world of the migrant camp, where perhaps no one has time to worry about "America's Pastime" or, for that fact, has time to engage in such a pastime. Sal's realization of the difference between these two worlds underscores the "impassable gulf" between the worlds of the white, cultural dominant and the marginalized Other, and makes clear that Sal, in fact, recognizes that this gulf exists.

Conclusion

Using Foucault's theory of discourse as a lens, we might simply surmise that Kerouac's depiction of the Other is so strikingly similar to Parkman's because they are both active participants in a discourse that privileges white, American males. However, when observing the exactitude of terms and attitudes each conveys in describing the Other, especially when contextualized within the critical framework of the Other, it would seem to preclude mere coincidence in each writer's portrayal of the Other. As such, it would appear that Parkman's influence on Kerouac extended to Kerouac's representation of Mexicans, thus reiterating Kerouac's romantic penchant for experiencing Parkman's West, when in fact it was no longer there.

Chapter Three

Wranglers and Warriors and Mountain Men

A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long,
But in the space of one revolving moon,
Was a gamester, chemist, fiddler, and buffoon.
—John Dryden, "Man," quoted in *The Oregon Trail*

One of the most striking parallels between *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road* is the similarity between the male characters in these road narratives. This sameness can be observed by comparing the numerous men of the frontier in Parkman's book to the various male cohorts of Sal in *On the Road*. However, a particular resemblance can be noticed in comparing Parkman's trail guide, Henry Chatillon, to Kerouac's "perfect guy for the road," Dean Moriarty. In this chapter, I expose the numerous parallels between the masculine characters in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*, paying particularly close attention to the tight kinship between Chatillon and Moriarty. I believe these analogous character portrayals serve to strengthen my supposition that Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* influenced the writing of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. In making these comparisons, I use gender theory and its notion of socially constructed gender identities to help illustrate why some of the masculine characters appear so similar. I will begin by discussing the aspects of gender theory that help me to evidence the similarities between these masculine characters.

What is a Gender Construct?

To be clear, "gender theory" is a fairly large blanket term that can be generically used to describe the deductions taken into account in the interdisciplinary field of gender studies, a field that takes on gender identity as its primary area of focus. Of the many different ways in which gender identity is discussed, I bring into play how gender is taken up as a socially constructed phenomenon to bring light to the similitude between masculine characters in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*.

At the heart of social constructionism is the idea that a thing comes into existence when a society—a collective group of humans at any historical moment—constructs an understanding of that thing, thus giving said thing significance and meaning. Paul Boghossian clarifies this idea by explaining:

> To say of something that it is socially constructed is to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves. It is to say: This thing could not have existed had we not built it; and we need not have built it at all, at least not in its present form. Had we been a different kind of society, had we had different needs, values, or interests, we might well have built a different kind of thing, or built this one differently.

One of the key ideas Boghossian hits upon in this explanation is that of the idea of "contingency," which closely aligns itself with the term "relativism," meaning that what a society takes on as valid or meaningful is all contingent on that societies' present situation, thus making it relative to that specific historical moment. Therefore, when something bears the weight of social construction, it carries with it all those things that reflect a societies' current status in terms of who or what they believe. Not surprisingly,

this premise of social constructionism is one that is much talked about by postmodern theorists working within the realm of cultural studies (such as postcolonialism and gender studies), as much of this conversation can be linked to the influence of Foucault' notions regarding discourse, as discussed in the previous chapter. The intersection between Foucault's theory of discourse and social constructionism can be observed in Foucault's very definition of discourse, in that he refers to it as the "historically variable ways of specifying knowledge and truth—what it is possible to speak of at a given moment" (19). Foucault's definition gets at the core of contingency in terms of social constructionism—a societies' means for coming up with a "truth" at any given moment will be informed by the things that are relative to that society in that moment, therefore clarifying what a social construct truly is: A societies' perception of an individual, group, or idea that is contingent upon that societies' historical situation and the discourse they use to describe these things.

For most contemporary critical theorists, the idea that gender can be seen as a socially constructed phenomenon is one that is rooted in the work of the French feminist and socialist theorist Simone de Beauvoir. In her book *The Second Sex*, which was first published in 1949, Beauvoir famously postulates, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (281). While there is some debate as to what Beauvoir meant by this statement, poststructuralist theorists, such as Judith Butler, believe that Beauvoir's statement was directed at seeing gender as something that is different than one's sex, with one's gender being the result of social construction.[38] Butler makes this clear in her much-publicized

[38] Some contemporary feminist critics believe that seeing gender as socially constructed is problematic because this perspective does not take into account all of the aspects that might lead someone to identify with their sex or gender. Amy Allen explains this dilemma:

article "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," when she argues, "Simone de Beauvoir's formulations [specifically, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'] distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired" (30). Butler further delves into the difference between sex and gender, guided by what she believes were Beauvoir's intentions, by adding that "sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspect of the female body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires, the variable modes of that body's acculturation" (30). With this differentiation in mind, Butler believes that it is possible to no longer designate "values or social functions" (30) to a person merely based upon their male or female anatomy. Within these ideas set forth by Butler, as initiated by Beauvoir, the notion of "gender constructs" emerges. As Butler asserts, it is not one's physical body that necessarily makes a male or female masculine or feminine. Instead, it is the perceptions a society or culture ascribes to a body that will determine whether or not the body is masculine or feminine. Therefore, when we begin to discuss gender in terms of social constructs, we see that what a society believes to be masculine or feminine influences what it means to be of that gender.

Masculine Constructs Found in *The Oregon Trail* That Resurface in *On the Road*

Parkman would seem to define the masculinity of some of his favored Native American males through a negative comparison in which he contrasts these men to "dandies." A "dandy" in the parlance of Parkman's era, was defined as a man whose

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> [A]s useful as it can be to see gender and sex categories as social rather than natural kinds, doing so leaves unexplained the ambivalent attachments that we all form to our sex and gender identity (which Beauvoir analyzed in terms of bad faith). As a result of these attachments, the mere realization that sex and gender are contingent, historically emergent social categories…is not enough to unseat the sexed and gendered expectations, norms, and ideals that structure our lives. (80)

primary interest was that of "dressing elegantly or fashionably," a man who might alternatively be referred to as a "fop" ("dandy"). Parkman espouses the masculine virtues of one of his favorite Native American males, the previously mentioned Mahto-Tatonka, in such a negative comparison by saying:

> [Mahto-Tatonka] had struck more enemies and stolen more horses and more squaws than any young man in the village…he was no dandy. He never arrayed himself in gaudy blankets and glittering necklaces, but left his statue-like form limbed like an Apollo of bronze, to win its way to favor. His voice was singularly deep and strong. It sounded like an organ. Young rival warriors look askance at him; vermillion cheeked girls gaze in admiration, boys whoop and scream in a thrill of delight, and old women yell forth his name and proclaim his praises from lodge to lodge. (*OT* 205-207)

The characteristics that Parkman issues forth in this portrayal of Mahto-Tatonka as not a dandy would seem to adhere to the conventional definition of dandy as used in Parkman's day, in that Mahto-Tatonka is "never arrayed in gaudy blankets and glittering necklaces." But there is something else going on here that surpasses the standard definition of a dandy during Parkman's era.

In characterizing Mahto-Tatonka as *not* a dandy, Parkman would also seem to attribute certain masculine qualities to Mahto-Tatonka that go beyond dress but still stand in obvious contrast to the characteristics of a "dandy." To be clear, Mahto-Tatonka's masculine qualities would seem to include his violent behavior—he "had struck more enemies and stole more horses and squaws than any young man in the village"—as well

as his masculine voice, which was “deep and strong” and “sounded like an organ.” Mahto-Tatonka’s masculinity can also be realized in the distinction he garners from the perception of others in his tribe, in that “young rival warriors” can barely bare to look at him, and that the girls in his village “gaze” upon him “in admiration,” and “old women yell forth his name and proclaim his praises from lodge to lodge.” But it also should be noted that Mahto-Tatonka’s masculinity may also be perceived through his un-adorned body, which, left in its bare form, is “statue-like…like an Apollo of bronze,” and “win[s] its way to favor” without the embellishments of a dandy.

To understand how Parkman’s perception of a dandy opposes the masculinity of a character like Mahto-Tatonka, a reader would need to look no further than Parkman’s description of another Native American male from the Dahcotah tribe named The Horse:

> [He] was a dandy of the first water. His ugly face was painted with vermillion; on his head fluttered the tail of a prairie-cock, in his ears were hung pendants of shell, and a flaming red blanket was wrapped around him. He carried a dragoon-sword in his hand, solely for display, since the knife, the arrow, and the rifle are the arbiters of every prairie fight; but as no one in this country goes abroad unarmed, the dandy carried a bow and arrows in an otter-skin quiver at his back. (169)

In this description of The Horse, we see the definition of the term “dandy,” as used during Parkman’s era, fully wrought in that The Horse seems to be primarily concerned with his dress and appearance. However, also within this portrayal, Parkman hints at characteristics of The Horse that underscore why such a dandy might be seen as non-masculine. These non-masculine characteristics are highlighted when contrasted with the

masculine characteristics detected in Mahto-Tatonka. Explicitly, The Horse has an "ugly face" whereas "girls gaze" upon Mahto-Tatonka "in admiration." And when The Horse seems to materialize as a bit of a coward, in that all of his weapons would seem to be used purely for adornment, Mahto-Tatonka appears as a fierce warrior who has "struck more enemies and stolen more horses and more squaws than any young man in the village," acts that perhaps induce envy in the "young rival warriors" of his tribe. But perhaps most importantly, and most telling of the dichotomy between a true masculine identity, as signified by Parkman, and that of a dandy is that Mahto-Tatonka appears to emerge as the more masculine character because his body doesn't receive or require the adornment of The Horse, who has a face "painted with vermillion," "the tail of a prairie-cock" fluttering on his head," "pendants of shell" hanging from his ears, and is draped with a "flaming red blanket." Instead, Mahto-Tatonka's body, "limbed like an Apollo of bronze," "win[s] its way to favor" without the gaudy adornment that bedecks The Horse's body. The significance of this latter comparison would seem to show that dandies must decorate themselves from head to toe to distinguish themselves, whereas men with true masculine identities have bodies that do this distinguishing for them.

Parkman further brings to the surface what aspects make up the character of a "dandy" by later comparing The Horse to his brother, The Hail-Storm, who Parkman perceives as being a "man of gallantry."[39] Parkman describes The Hail-Storm and his character by saying:

> It was about two months since I had known the Hail-Storm, and within that time his character had remarkably developed. He had lately killed his

[39] Parkman sometimes capitalizes the article "the" before the names of The Hail-Storm and The Horse, but at other times does not. I have chosen to capitalize it throughout my analysis merely for the sake of consistency.

> first deer, and this had excited his aspirations after distinction. Since that time he had been continually in search of game, and no young hunter had been so active or so fortunate as he. It will perhaps be remembered how fearlessly he attacked the buffalo-bull, as we were moving toward our camp at the Medicine-Bow Mountain. All this success had produced a marked change in his character. As I first remembered him, he always shunned the society of the young squaws, and was extremely bashful and sheepish in their presence; but now, in the confidence of his own reputation, he began to assume the airs and the arts of a man of gallantry. I have no doubt that the handsome smooth-faced boy burned with a keen desire to flesh his maiden scalping knife, and I would not have encamped alone with him without watching his movements with a distrustful eye. (*OT* 326-327)

In this portrayal, Parkman renders an illustration of The Hail-Storm's character that contains within it definitive aspects of a masculine identity. In killing his first deer and otherwise becoming an intrepid hunter, The Hail-Storm begins to crave distinction, and this distinction, in turn, helps bolster his self-confidence. This self-confidence may be seen as being distinctly masculine in that it increases The Hail-Storm's assertiveness around the females of the tribe, and for these actions, Parkman lauds upon The Hail-Storm the particularly masculine moniker of "a man of gallantry." However, Parkman adds another quality to The Hail-Storm that would seem to be symptomatic of most of the other truly masculine characters that Parkman portrays in *The Oregon Trail*, including

that of Mahto-Tatonka, which is that of being good-looking. In The Hail-Storm's case, this is realized in Parkman's description when he refers to him as being "handsome."

One last masculine quality might be derived from Parkman's representation of both Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm in that they are both men of action. Mahto-Tatonka, as previously mentioned, can be seen as a man of action because he has "struck more enemies and stolen more horses and more squaws than any young man in the village," whereas The Hail-Storm can be seen as taking initiative in terms of not only his hunting prowess, but also because Parkman has no doubt that The Hail-Storm wouldn't waver in using his scalping knife if given the opportunity.

All of these masculine qualities found in Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm stand in opposition to that of The Hail-Storm's "dandy" brother The Horse, who, subsequent to the short narrative regarding the masculine attributes of The Hail-Storm, is described by Parkman in the following way:

> [The Hail-Storm's] elder brother, The Horse, was of a different character. He was nothing but a lazy dandy. He knew very well how to hunt, but preferred to live by the hunting of others. He had no appetite for distinction, and The Hail-Storm, though a few years younger than he, already surpassed him in reputation. He had a dark and ugly face, and he passed a great part of his time adorning it with vermilion, and contemplating it by means of a little pocket looking-glass which I gave him. As for the rest of the day, he divided it between sleeping, and sitting in the sun on the outside of a lodge. He would remain there for hour after

> hour…flattering himself that he was the centre of attraction to the eyes of the surrounding squaws. (*OT* 326)

This ancillary depiction of The Horse serves to underscore the masculine qualities of The Hail-Storm, in particular. Unlike his brother, The Horse is not a hunter. He knows how to hunt, but is simply too lazy to do it and instead relies on others to gather meat for him. This laziness is further emphasized by the fact that The Horse lounges in the sun and sleeps all day. It is this type of laziness that would seem to lead Parkman to proclaim that The Horse has "no appetite for distinction." This laziness leading to a lack of distinction, and the fact that The Hail-Storm's reputation has "already surpassed" that of his older brother, presumably because of The Hail Storm's hunting prowess, would seem to evidence characteristics in The Horse that not only make clear that he is not a man of action, but also that he is not imbued with the masculine characteristics of his brother, as it is this distinction that leads Parkman to observe the masculine bravado of The Hail-Storm amongst the squaws of the village, an action that Parkman would seem to think The Horse incapable of, considering his sarcastic tone in stating that The Horse flattered "himself that he was the centre of attraction to the eyes of the surrounding squaws." Parkman's insinuation that the squaws of the village were most likely not attracted to The Horse may also be linked to the difference in appearance between these two Native American brothers: while The Hail-Storm's face is "handsome," The Horse's face is "dark and ugly," a comparison that in this context would seem to be tied to the masculine identities of these brothers.[40]

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[40] I realize that my analysis here relies on a very heteronormative approach, but I would argue that in the context of Parkman's era (and Kerouac's for that matter) heteronormativity was the norm.

Ultimately, the titles that Parkman gives to these brothers, with The Hail-Storm being referred to as a "man of gallantry" and The Horse being referred to as a "lazy dandy," serve to illustrate the difference between them, for it is within these terms that we can see the constructs of gender played out, particularly as defined by Butler. And we see this because while all three of the previously mentioned characters—Mahto-Tatonka, The Horse, and The Hail-Storm—are male, the characteristics that define them as masculine are quite different, with Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm being foregrounded as truly masculine characters, defining what it means to be a "man of gallantry," and The Horse illustrating the opposite of masculinity, or what it is to be a "dandy." However, we see that just because The Horse is rendered as having characteristics which oppose masculinity, he is not, in fact, female, illustrating Butler's point that "sex is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspect of [one's] body, whereas gender is the cultural meaning and form that that body acquires." With this thought in check, we can begin to see how the different aspects that made Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm masculine in Parkman's eyes are merely masculine constructs, and this understanding is important because by divorcing these masculine constructs from the individual male players in both *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*, we are able to examine these constructs and see the remarkable likeness between them, illustrating what aspects of masculinity Parkman sees as being essential to his favored masculine characters and how these representations appear to be reflected in Kerouac's portrayal of masculine characters in his book, thus underscoring the influence of Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* on Kerouac's writing of *On the Road*.

One character in *On the Road* whose masculine qualities, in particular, correspond to those of Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm is that of Kerouac's dominant male character, Dean Moriarty. Dean's character can be seen as playing into the negative comparison that Parkman sets up by contrasting his favored Native American males to dandies, as Dean is definitely not a dandy, in the traditional sense or in the non-masculine sense, as identified by Parkman. Regarding the standard definition of a dandy as used during the era of Parkman, Moriarty rarely dresses in a flashy way, as is exhibited by Parkman's "dandy of the first water," The Horse. In fact, most of the time Kerouac refers to Moriarty as wearing a t-shirt (*OR* 108, 135, 216, 249) or being clad in clothing that is on the verge of wearing out, as when Kerouac describes the ensemble Dean wears when he was working at his job parking cars, saying he wore "greasy wino pants with a frayed fur lined jacket and beat shoes that flap" (*OR* 6). Beyond Dean's simple attire, he is imbued with many other masculine constructs that link him to the masculine identities of Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm.

One of the particular qualities that Parkman appears to associate with Mahto-Tatonka's masculine identity is that he has "stolen more horses and more squaws than any young man in the village." This is compelling because Dean Moriarty appears in *On the Road* as a modern day horse thief. In fact, Dean has stolen more "horses" than any of the young men in his "village," too. Of course Dean's proclivity for theft is that of stealing of cars, and of this predilection, Kerouac explains:

> He set a Denver record for stealing cars and went to the reformatory. From the age of eleven to seventeen he was usually in reform school. His specialty was stealing cars, gunning for girls coming out of high school in

> the afternoon, driving them out to the mountains, making them, and coming back to sleep in any available hotel bathtub in town. (*OR* 37)

Obvious parallels crop up between Mahto-Tatonka's and Dean's thievery. To be sure, Dean and Mahto-Tatonka had done more stealing than anyone else in their respective places of origin, but beyond that, it is interesting to note that Mahto-Tatonka and Dean both "steal" women, with Mahto-Tatonka stealing "squaws" and Dean sweeping up "girls coming out of high school in the afternoon." If Parkman views Mahto-Tatonka's action as being symptomatic of masculinity, we can therefore ascribe this masculine construct to Dean, as well. And while the remarkable similarities between these two male characters might be seen as a way in which one of Kerouac's characters appears to mimic one of Parkman's characters, this evidence becomes even more compelling when Kerouac refers to Dean's "criminality" as being "Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains" (*OR* 7-8). Perhaps the ode that Kerouac is referring to here in referencing Dean's propensity for stealing cars is an ode to a Plains Indian—Mahto-Tatonka. Regardless, we can see this type of dominant behavior in both Dean and Mahto-Tatonka as being a type of masculine construct. As Jessie L. Krienert points out, "[M]asculinity is an important construct for understanding crime," as the "toughness" and "dominance" associated with criminal behavior "are central characteristics of masculine identity" (2). Therefore, when observing how Dean's "criminality" reflects Mahto-Tatonka's behavior, we can see that both characters are being portrayed as having similar constructed masculine identities.

Dean may not be a hunter or a warrior like The Hail-Storm and Mahto-Tatonka, but he does have, in his own way, a special skill that apparently contributes to the well-

being of his cohorts, and that talent is driving.[41] It is Dean who drives Sal back and forth across the U.S. and down into Mexico in *On the Road*. Of Moriarty's driving skills, Sal attests, "I was never afraid when Dean drove; he could handle a car under any circumstances" (124). This is demonstrated on one wintry drive, in particular, when the heater in the car they are driving goes out and the windshield is enveloped in "fog and ice." Paradise narrates this event, saying:

> Dean kept reaching out while driving seventy to wipe [the windshield] with a rag…and Dean talked, no one else talked. He gestured furiously, he leaned as far as me sometimes to make a point, sometimes he had no hands on the wheel and yet the car went straight as an arrow, not for once deviating from the white line in the middle of the road that unwound, kissing our left front tire. (*OR* 117)

Dean's driving abilities contribute to his own masculine identity in a similar fashion to that of Parkman's characterization of both Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm as men of action. Dean may not be a fierce warrior like Mahto-Tatonka or an adept hunter like The Hail Storm, but as witnessed in Sal's quote, his actions produce an admiration from those around him akin to the masculine distinction found in Parkman's characterizations of Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail Storm.

This masculine distinction created through Dean's driving skills is also witnessed in some of Sal's first impressions of Dean when Sal observes Dean working as a parking attendant in New York:

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[41] This is a talent Neal Cassady maintained for the rest of his life. For more on Cassady's driving heroics, read Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, which attests to Cassady's driving skills. In this work of non-fiction, Wolfe chronicles Cassady's driving of a 1939 International Harvester school bus from California to Florida to New York in 1964, five years before Cassady's death.

> [H]e worked like a dog in parking lots. The most fantastic parking-lot attendant in the world, he can back a car forty miles an hour into a tight squeeze and stop at the wall, jump out, race among fenders, leap into another car, circle it fifty miles an hour in a narrow space, back swiftly into a tight space, *hump*, snap the car with the emergency so that you see it bounce as he flies out; then clear to the ticket shack, sprinting like a track star, hand a ticket, leap into a newly arrived car before the owner's half out, leap literally under him as he steps out, start the car with the door flapping, and roar off to the next available spot, arc, pop in, brake, out, run; working like that without pause eight hours a night, evening rush hours and after-theater rush hours. (*OR* 6).

This passage underscores Dean Moriarty's incredibly adept driving skills. Dean can park cars into tight spaces with absolute dexterity at speeds of forty and fifty miles an hour, a skill that distinguishes Dean, at least in Sal's eyes, as "the most fantastic parking-lot attendant in the world." But the distinction brought on through Dean's savvy driving abilities, as observed in this passage, is not the only characterization of Dean that might be seen as paralleling Parkman's men of action. In this passage we also see that Dean is an astonishingly hard worker. This is made obvious by Sal's description of Dean as working "like a dog" and is illustrated by the fact that Dean literally dashes from parked car to new car "eight hours a night, evening rush hours and after-theater rush hours." Such hard work contributes to Dean's masculine identity as a man of action. And even though Dean, in most regards, is an unscrupulous womanizer, he works hard to support

his wife, Camille, and his daughter, Amy.[42] This is made clear when Dean breaks his hand and continues to work at a job recapping tires. Dean explains the grueling circumstances of his work to Sal:

> I had to support Camille and Amy and had to work as fast as I could at Firestone as mold man, curing recapped tires and later hauling big hunnerd-fifty-pound tires from the floor to the top of the cars—could only use my good hand and kept banging the bad—broke it again, had it reset again, and it's getting infected and swoled again. (185)

These descriptions of Dean as a hard-working man parallel the endeavors of Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm in terms of being men of action, men who work hard to contribute to the wellbeing of their tribe. Additionally, Mahto-Tatonka's skills as a warrior and The Hail-Storms abilities as a hunter not only make them men of action, but also contribute to them as being seen as men of distinction. It is this same type of distinction that Dean would seem to earn when Kerouac refers to him as "the most fantastic parking-lot attendant in the world." And just as Mahto-Tatonka's skills as a warrior and The Hail-Storm's actions as a hunter might be seen as helping the tribe, Dean's actions, too, might be seen as helping others in that his work recapping tires, even with a lame hand, is done in the interest of supporting his wife and daughter. These portraits of Dean's work ethic serve to support the idea that the masculine construct of a man of action might be equally lauded upon his character.

Another masculine construct evident in both Mahto-Tatonka and The Hail-Storm that resurfaces in the character of Dean Moriarty is that of being good looking. In the early pages of *On the Road*, Sal refers to Dean's good looks by declaring, "My first

[42] This is a fact that Carolyn Cassady corroborates in her memoir *Off the Road*.

impression of Dean was of a young Gene Autry—trim, thin-hipped, blue-eyed" (*OR* 2). This description of Moriarty's physical appearance would seem to make Dean out to be a good-looking fellow. However, when coupling the physical aspects of Dean with the direct comparison to a "young" version of Gene Autry, this notion becomes all the more apparent. Holly George-Warren, in her book *Public Cowboy No. 1: The Life and Times of Gene Autry*, reports that Gene Autry's fans saw him as "good looking" because of his "famous smile and those pretty blue eyes" (282), and George-Warren even asserts that in his younger years, Gene Autry was seen as a "sex-symbol" (139), thus serving to bolster the case that Kerouac is referring to Dean as being an attractive man when he compares him to "a young Gene Autry." Therefore, this depiction of Dean by Kerouac can be seen as engaging with the same masculine constructs that Parkman participates in by calling The Hail-Storm "handsome" and referring to Mahto-Tatonka as being a "statue-like form limbed like an Apollo of bronze," significantly illustrating a parallel masculine construct shared by these male characters.

A final similarity in the masculine constructs found in Mahto-Tatonka, The Hail Storm, and Dean Moriarty can be witnessed in the way they are regarded by women. Just as The Hail-Storm maintains an air of strong self-confidence around the women in his village, and Mahto-Tatonka makes "vermillion cheeked girls gaze in admiration," Moriarty can be seen as conducting himself with a similar self-confidence when it comes to women, while garnering their attention, as well. An anecdote in *On the Road* illustrates this self-confidence. At one point in Kerouac's road narrative, one of Sal Paradise's friends, Roland Major, goads Dean, saying, "'Moriarty, what's this I hear about you sleeping with three girls at the same time?' And Dean shuffles on the rug and

said ‘Oh yes, oh yes, that’s the way it goes’” (46). The fact that Dean is sleeping with three women at the same time serves to illustrate that he is not only self-confident around women, akin to The Hail-Storm, but also that he has no problem garnering attention from women, similar to Mahto-Tatonka, thus exposing how Dean’s character can further be seen as being enlivened with analogous masculine constructs to those of The Hail-Storm and Mahto-Tatonka.

Having shown how the masculine constructs that help to fashion the identities of two of Parkman’s favored Native American men parallel those that Kerouac uses in constructing Dean Moriarty’s identity, I will now move on to illustrate how aspects of Dean’s masculinity also parallel those of Parkman’s mountain men and trailblazers in *The Oregon Trail*, beginning with the French fur trapper Rouleau.

Parkman’s description of Rouleau as a “bold adventurer from another race,” would seem to typify, in many regards, the character of Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*. Parkman paints an exuberant image of Rouleau when he writes:

> [N]othing could check his inveterate propensity for laughter and gayety. He went all day rolling about camp…talking and singing and frolicking with the Indian women, as they were engaged at their work. In fact Rouleau had an unlucky partiality for squaws. He always had one, who he must needs bedizen with beads, ribbon, and all the finery of an Indian wardrobe; and though he was of course obliged to leave her behind him during his expeditions, yet this hazardous necessity did not trouble him, for his disposition was the very reverse of jealous. (*OT* 304)

This description of a cavorting womanizer fits Dean Moriarty to a T. Sal describes Moriarty's zestful behavior by saying, "And a kind of holy lightning I saw flashing from his excitement and his visions, which he described so torrentially that people in buses looked around to see the 'overexcited nut'" (4-5). Adding to the previously mentioned subject of Dean's relationship with women, Kerouac reports at the beginning of *On the Road* that for Dean, "Sex was the only holy and important thing in life" (2). Furthermore, Dean, like Rouleau, doesn't get too hung up on the idea of jealousy. In fact, Dean tries to share his lovers with Paradise. At one point in *On the Road*, Dean pulls Sal aside and says to him, in an atypical moment of dead seriousness, "'Sal, I have something to ask you—very important to me—I wonder how you'll take it—we're buddies, aren't we?' 'Sure are, Dean.' He almost blushed. Finally he came out with it: he wanted me to work Marylou" (130-131). Dean's shuffling around, excitement, and appetite for and attitude towards women would seem very much akin to the behaviors of the Parkman's trapper Rouleau. Moreover, when we separate these latter behaviors from Rouleau and Dean and observe them as masculine constructs, presented as what might be seen as manly in regard to both men being able to attract numerous women and being similarly comfortable with their own sexual prowess, so much so that they don't worry or get jealous of other men being with their women, the synchronicity between these two characters becomes all the more compelling.

Aspects of Dean's persona are shared with another one of Parkman's mountain men, a French fur trader named Rouville. Parkman shares a camp with Rouville for a single night and reports:

> He contributed more that night to the liveliness of the camp than all of the rest of the party put together. At one instant he would be kneeling by Delorier [one of Parkman's trail guides], instructing him in the true method of frying antelope-steaks, then he would come and seat himself at our side, dilating upon the orthodox fashion of braiding up a horse's tail, telling apocryphal stories how he killed a buffalo bull with a knife, having first cut off his tail when at full speed, or relating whimsical anecdotes of the *bourgeois* Papin. At last he snatched up a volume of Shakespeare that was lying on the grass, and halted and stumbled through a line or two to prove that he could read. He went gambolling about the camp like some frolicksome ape; and whatever he was doing at one moment, the presumption was a sure one that he would not be doing it in the next. (356-357)

Roulville's dancing around the camp, being interested in everything all at once, would very much seem to reflect the previously mentioned excited behavior of both Dean and Rouleau; however, this behavior would also seem to be symptomatic of the "mad ones" Kerouac so famously speaks of in chapter one of *On the Road*. Perhaps the most quoted lines in the entire book, Sal enumerates upon the wild friends that he adores by bursting out:

> [T]he only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing but burn, burn, burn like fabulous roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in

> the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!' (*OR* 5)

The impetus for this exclamation comes from Sal observing Dean Moriarty and Carlo Marx (Allen Ginsberg's pseudonym in *On the Road*), dancing down the New York streets in front of him as he saunters behind them. Of this dancing, Sal proclaims that they "danced down the street like dingledodies" (5). This statement about the dingledodies, with its distinctly Western connotations, combined with the previous statement regarding "mad ones" who are acting quite similarly to the way that Rouville is behaving couple together in a way that calls attention to the possible influence of Parkman on Kerouac.[43]

Furthermore, Kerouac confides after he has watched his dingledodies gambol down the street that "I shambled after [them] as I've been doing all my life after people who interest me" (*OR* 5). With this statement, an explicit parallel between Kerouac and Parkman emerges. Both writers were outsiders to the experience of their Western champions, uplifted by their actions, acting less as participants and more like removed agents to the men whose behavior they recorded. Interestingly, biographers of Parkman have noted that the mountain men Parkman wrote about were men whose behavior he sought to emulate; and coincidently, Kerouac's biographers believe that he sought to capture the energetic passion of Neal Cassady, the person Dean Moriarty is modeled after in *On the Road*, into his own being.[44] This correlation is compelling because it would

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[43] Here, it is important to point out how Kerouac is using the descriptor "mad," as mad is a term that has been historically gendered as feminine. In Kerouac's case, he is using the term mad to indicate a person who is "carried away by or filled with enthusiasm" instead of "mentally unbalanced" or "subject to delusions" ("mad"). Kerouac's use of the term mad can be seen as masculine because it characterizes a type of assertiveness, a quality that is typically gendered as masculine.

[44] According to Wilbur Jacobs, "The major figures in [Parkman's] writing were frequently men of the type Parkman hoped to be" (*Francis Parkman* 3). Similarly, Ann Charters notes, "Neal [Cassady] became almost an extension of Jack's personality, a part of his own life" (*Jack* 72).

seem to add a layer of credibility to the notion that Parkman and Kerouac were actively engaging in gender constructionism in that both authors might be seen as applying masculine constructs to the identities of the men they wished they could be. Additionally, because the gender constructs that create Dean Moriarty's identity would seem to be so remarkably similar to those of the masculine characters in *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman's idea of the quintessential masculine hero can be seen as influencing Kerouac's perception of this masculine ideal.

Henry and Dean

Even though Dean Moriarty would appear to be an amalgam of all of the men Parkman idolizes in *The Oregon Trail*, the largest part of this conglomerate can be realized in Parkman's trailblazer Henry Chatillon. Primarily, Chatillon and Moriarty parallel each other in that they are the most venerated Western heroes of *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*, respectively. In the beginning lines of *On the Road*, Kerouac proclaims, "Dean is the perfect guy for the road because he was actually born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake City in 1926, in a jalopy, on their way to Los Angeles" (1). If being on the road from a young age counts toward your being the "perfect guy for the road," then Henry Chatillon, too, might receive this appellation, for Parkman explains in the closing chapter of *The Oregon Trail* that "since [Chatillon's] sixteenth year he had scarcely been for a month together among the abodes of men" (462).

Perhaps one of the key characteristics of being the perfect guy for the road, however, is being prepared for the adversity and inadequacy that the road or trail might

inflict upon its traveler. These hindrances would seem to be something that both Chatillon and Moriarty's formative years prepared them for. Parkman proclaims of his masculine hero's early years that "Henry had led a life of hardship and privation" (*OT* 424). Dean Moriarty, too, led a boyhood full of hardship and deficiency. His mother died when he was young, and his father was an alcoholic bum on the streets of Denver. Moriarty speaks of the times when his father was arrested in *On the Road*, saying, "I had to plead at court to the judge to let him go cause he was my pa and I had no mother" (*OR* 208). Moriarty makes clear that growing up he lived "whole weeks of incredible hardship" (*OR* 208).

Another aspect of what makes Dean Moriarty and Henry Chatillon the perfect guys for the road is that they are both so adept with the tools of the road. Just as Moriarty is a fantastical driver, as previously noted, being able to "back a car forty miles an hour into a tight squeeze and stop at the wall, jump out, race among fenders, leap into another car, circle it fifty miles an hour in a narrow space, back swiftly into a tight space, *hump*, snap the car with the emergency so that you see it bounce as he flies out" (*OR* 6), Chatillon is an amazing horseman, being able to race among buffalo herds and simultaneously reload his rifle, all to the buffalo's astonishment, of which Parkman proclaims, "Now and then some old bull would face toward Henry with an air of stupid amazement" (*OT* 423).

All of these things that tie Moriarty and Chatillon together as perfect guys for the road may be seen as masculine constructs. As such, these constructs illustrate that the character of Dean Moriarty appears to have been modeled after the character of Henry Chatillon. However, there is one last masculine construct that would undoubtedly seem

to link the identities of these men together, and that is that they are both so damn good-looking, a characteristic that has already been shown to have been used by Parkman to underscore the masculinity of his other male characters. As previously mentioned, Kerouac casts his hero as a "trim, thin-hipped, blue-eyed, young Gene Autry." This image draws a close parallel to one that Parkman renders of his Western paladin. Parkman describes Chatillon by saying, "He was very neatly and simply dressed in a suit of dark cloth. His tall athletic figure, with its easy flexible motions appeared to advantage in his present dress; and his fine face though roughened by a thousand storms, was not at all out of keeping with it" (463). These two sketches, especially in terms of the physical appearance of these two characters, mirror each quite closely, leading a reader to believe that an essential quality for being a "perfect guy for the road" is being undeniably handsome. However, it is compelling to consider exactly why such a trait would make Chatillon and Moriarty perfect guys for the road. Perhaps the answer here is a psychological one. As psychologist Robert Cialdini writes, "We automatically assign to good-looking individuals favorable traits" (143), talent being one of these them. In psychology, this phenomenon is referred to as the "halo effect," wherein an individual with an agreeable quality is assumed to possess mostly favorable qualities. Therefore, it is possible to presume, at least from a psychological perspective, that when Parkman and Kerouac's texts create handsomeness in these characters, it highlights their other talents, like hunting buffalo and driving cars. Thus, the value of good looks in these narratives would seem to further persuade readers of the all-around positive qualities found in these masculine characters.

However, beyond Chatillon's good looks rendered in this description, we also see that he is "neatly and simply dressed," adding evidence to the supposition that Chatillon, too, is not a dandy, bringing him full-fold into the presence of the previously mentioned masculine characters Parkman writes about, as well as adding yet another masculine construct that might be seen as being reflected in the character of Dean Moriarty, seemingly precluding coincidence that Kerouac's portrayal of his Western hero may have been flavored by Parkman.

The French Connection

From the outset of *The Oregon Trail*, the pages come to life with myriads of Frenchmen, both fur trappers and mountain men. These French frontiersmen function as Parkman's guides and traveling partners, and Parkman draws sketches of them everywhere along the trail, including the frontier forts he enters along his journey and the Native American villages that Parkman was so excited to witness.

Perhaps it is not too strange, then, that the first masculine character that Sal Paradise, engages with once he arrives at the end of his Western trail (San Francisco), is, too, a Frenchman. This character's name is Remi Boncouer, which is the pseudonym for Henri Cru, a friend Kerouac had met in 1939 in prep school.[45] In *On the Road*, Boncouer has located a job for Paradise as a merchant marine in the Bay Area. In some regards, this job could be seen as part of the impetus for Kerouac's Western Migration in *On the Road*. However, the merchant marine job never materializes, and instead Boncouer finds a job for Paradise as a barrack guard. Paradise then goes on to live with Boncouer and Boncouer's girlfriend Lee Ann in Remi's Shack in Mill City. In a 1986 interview with David Moore, Cru was asked if the events Kerouac chronicles as happening between

[45] Cru introduced Kerouac to his first wife, Edie Parker.

them during this time in *On the Road* were actually true. Cru responds to this query by saying, "Most everything Jack wrote was generally true, but he did change the names of his characters, towns, and ships" (Moore). In Cru's case, the change in his name is particularly provocative, in that it is so obviously French and that the French last name that Kerouac chooses for Cru, *Boncouer*, literally translates into "good heart." A "good heart" is certainly a quality Kerouac may have perceived as being essential to the French mountain men and fur trappers Parkman wrote about in *The Oregon Trail*, for Parkman often lauds such praise upon a particular Frenchmen, another Henry, his trail guide Henry Chatillon. Parkman speaks of Chatillon's "good heart" in *The Oregon Trail*, ruminating:

> If sincerity and honor, a boundless generosity of spirit, a delicate regard to the feelings of others, and a nice perception of what was due them, are the essential characteristics of a gentlemen, then Henry Chatillon deserves the title. He could not write his own name, and he had spent his life amongst savages. In him sprang up spontaneously those qualities which all the refinements of life and intercourse with the highest and best of the better part of mankind, fail to awaken in the brutish nature of some men. In spite of his bloody calling, Henry was always merciful and humane; he was gentle as a woman, though braver than a lion. He acted aright from the free impulses of his large and generous nature. (463)

Another interesting change Kerouac made to Henri Cru's character that would align itself with the French frontiersmen that Parkman writes about in *The Oregon Trail* is that Kerouac went to great lengths in *On the Road* to make Remi Boncouer 100% French. Paradise describes Boncouer in *On the Road* by saying, "Remi was a tall, dark,

handsome Frenchman" and goes on to further say that because Boncouer "was French he had to talk in jazz American" (64). Sal even goes so far as to muse upon Boncouer's French childhood by saying "…somewhere in his past, in his lonely schooldays in France…" (70). However, in fact, Henri Cru was born and raised in Massachusetts, just like Kerouac (and just like Parkman). This change in Henri Cru's character by Kerouac, making Boncouer so distinctly French, may be seen as an attempt by Kerouac to not only romanticize his Western experience—when the French trappers/mountain men of Parkman's West weren't to be found in Kerouac's sojourn west, he invented them—but to also model his male characters after Parkman's.

Similar Endings

One last similarity regarding the male characters in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road* should be mentioned, and this deals with the similar way in which both of these books end, in that each work ends with the narrators, Parkman and Paradise, saying goodbye to their trailblazers, Henry Chatillon and Dean Moriarty, and then reminiscing about them and imagining them as they travel back to their Western environs. In the final paragraph of *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman says goodbye to Henry and gives him his gun. Parkman records this moment, saying "My rifle, which [Chatillon] had always been fond of using…is now in his hands, and perhaps its voice is startling the echoes of the Rocky Mountains" (463). Sal, too, in the final pages of *On the Road*, says goodbye to his trailblazer before going to a concert. Paradise narrates this moment, saying, "And off we went to the sad and disinclined concert for which I had no stomach whatever and all the time I was thinking of Dean and how he got back on the train and rode over thousand miles over that awful land" (307). And whereas Parkman concludes his book with a

footnote regarding Henry Chatillon that begins by asserting, “I cannot take leave of the reader without adding a word of the guide who had served us throughout with such zeal and fidelity…” and then goes on to detail his plentiful virtues, Kerouac ends his novel with a sketch of Sal reminiscing about Moriarty, saying, “So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all the raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast…I think of Dean Moriarty…I think of Dean Moriarty” (307). It is striking that both books would end in such a similar way, with both Parkman and Paradise remembering and imagining their masculine Western champions, thus further illustrating the likely influence of Francis Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* on Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road.*

Chapter Four

Sketching the Jewel Center of Interest

Man, wow, there's so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even begin to get it all down…

—Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*

Write in recollection and amazement for yourself

—Jack Kerouac, "Belief & Technique for Modern Prose"

The aesthetic shift in writing style between Jack Kerouac's first novel, *The Town and the City* and his second novel, *On the Road*, is markedly apparent. The latter novel utilizes Kerouac' new approach to writing, a style he referred to as "spontaneous prose."[46] It is important to note that in between the writing of this first and second novel, Kerouac read Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. When observing Kerouac's spontaneous prose technique, direct correlations can be drawn between this newfound writing style and that of Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail*. In this chapter, I will expose these similarities between Parkman's writing style in *The Oregon Trail* and Kerouac's spontaneous prose method. I will begin by discussing the definitive elements

[46] Some critics, such as Matt Theado (read "Revisions of Kerouac: The Long Strange Trip of the *On the Road* Typescripts" (2009)) and Fiona Paton (read "A New Style for American Culture: Kerouac's Spontaneous Prose and the Post-War Avant-Garde" (2003)) argue that *On the Road* wasn't written using Kerouac's spontaneous prose method because of the editing done to the text by Viking/Penguin editor Malcolm Cowley and because Kerouac didn't write his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," outlining his process for writing spontaneous prose, until after the famous marathon writing session which produced *On the Road*. I, however, argue that Kerouac did, in fact, use his spontaneous prose method in writing *On the Road*. I believe this can be evidenced in two ways: by observing the "original scroll" manuscript of *On the Road* and the obvious shift in style between the writing of *The Town and the City* and *On the Road*. Regarding Kerouac having written his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" after he composed his scroll manuscript, I believe that this was a piece of reflective writing in which Kerouac articulated his method for writing *On the Road*. As evidence for this latter claim, all one needs to do examine *On the Road* in light of "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" to see Kerouac's technique at play. Critics, such as Regina Weinreich (Read *Kerouac's Spontaneous Poetics: A Study of the Fiction* (1987)) also believe Kerouac's spontaneous prose sculpted the writing of *On the Road*.

of Parkman's writing style and Kerouac's spontaneous prose. From this vantage point, I will then be able to discuss the multiple similarities between these two styles of writing, thus illustrating yet another way in which Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* might be seen as influencing Kerouac's writing of *On the Road*.

Defining Kerouac and Parkman's Writing Styles

Both Parkman and Kerouac are famous for a literary aesthetic that breaks from the traditional writing styles of their occupations as historian and novelist. To demonstrate these departures from convention, I will describe the elements of Parkman's writing style that made it unique in terms of 19th century historical writing. I will then move on to discuss Kerouac's spontaneous prose writing style, and how this style of writing changed between the writing of his more traditional first novel and his second novel, which utilized his unconventional spontaneous prose method. Then, to get at what truly defines Kerouac's spontaneous prose and what his purpose was in writing with such a technique, Kerouac's "The Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" will be examined. In this examination, I will directly compare Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail* to Kerouac's spontaneous prose style.

Perhaps the thing that most set Parkman's writing aesthetic apart from his contemporaries was that his writing was not dull. As has been noted, Parkman had a knack for maintaining a narrative that drew his readers in because of this exciting writing style that subverted the norms of other historians writing during his era. In fact, some critics, such as Otis A. Pease, actually believe that Parkman "studiously avoided the style and mannerisms of historians while absorbing their facts and ideas" (80). Parkman biographer Wilbur Jacobs supports this notion, saying, "Parkman's behavior was

idiosyncratic in that he persisted in his literary efforts more to sustain his gallant romantic image than to makes his reputation as an able writer-historian" (122). Another facet that further separated Parkman from his contemporaries was the source of his literary influence. Pease asserts that Parkman drew heavily from "the idiom of Scott and Cooper and the romantic poets" (80) and by and large "owed more to purely imaginative writers than to historians" (83).

However, the creative and exciting manner in which Parkman laid down his words as an author was not the only thing that separated Parkman's writing from that of other historians. Parkman's manuscripts also differed from that of other historians in that they manifest plain, good writing. David Levin comments on this, saying:

> I hope we have passed the time when Carl Becker[47] declared that modern professionals would have considered Francis Parkman a good historian if only Parkman had not written so well. Yet too many of us, although we may recognize a relationship between clear thinking and clear exposition, regard good writing in history as an unsuspected blessing that has little to do with the most important business of the historian. (*In Defense* 2).

There is no doubt that Parkman took his writing seriously. Referencing Parkman's journals and letters evidences this fact. Jacobs expounds on Parkman's aim as a writer, asserting, "[Parkman] was highly motivated to make his mark as a writer, even to the extent of achieving some kind of perfectionism" (*Francis Parkman* 122). One of the ways this perfection can be witnessed is the painstaking revisions Parkman endured in the creation of his works, a trait that would seemingly divorce Parkman's writing philosophy

[47] Carl Becker was an American historian who was a history professor at Cornell University from 1917 to 1941.

from that of Kerouac's, which will later be discussed. Nonetheless, Parkman's revision-heavy philosophy did little in terms of actually affecting Parkman's writing style. As Jacobs points out, Parkman's constant revisions were done with the intent of "revising to incorporate new material into previously written works" and "seldom changed his basic interpretation" (*Francis Parkman* 24). However, it should be noted that *The Oregon Trail* was one of the works Parkman constantly revised and that these revisions, in fact, had a significant impact on the writing style manifest in this book.

Chapters of *The Oregon Trail* first appeared in installments in *Knickerbocker Magazine* from February of 1847 to February of 1849. The first edition of *Oregon Trail* was published in 1849. Then, in 1872, Parkman published a second edition that he had thoroughly edited and revised. Parkman made his last intensive revision of the book in 1892, a year before he died. It is difficult to ascertain exactly which of the three editions of *The Oregon Trail* that Kerouac might have been reading the winter before he left on his first sojourn to the West, but the edition I have chosen to use for this dissertation is the 1849 edition. I have made this move partially because it is the edition most scholars use in their analysis of the text, but, more so, I have chosen this text because I feel that it utilizes a writing style that captures the youthful zest that Parkman had as a twenty-two-year-old young man, leaving his Eastern environs for the first time to explore a frontier he had romanticized for some time in his own mind. This zestful style of writing very much parallels that of Kerouac's writing in *On the Road*. Also, the writing style of the first edition of *The Oregon Trail* does a fine job of capturing Parkman's first-person frontier experience. Jacobs supports my supposition here, saying that the latter edits of *The Oregon Trail* made by Parkman give it a "more impersonal tone" (*Francis Parkman*

39). This lack of personality may come from the fact that Parkman chose to omit many of his health issues that he experienced on the trail, but for me, these episodes are all a part of the trail experience and make for a more honest style of writing, a style that Kerouac tried to infuse into his spontaneous prose writing style. And, as David Levin points out in his introduction to the 1849 version of *The Oregon Trail* that I have utilized, this edition offers insight into "how the young man wrote, and what he believed at the time his book might have had an immediate influence" ("Introduction" 30). Levin further adds that "[t]he changes Parkman made in 1872 and in the year before his death included substantive and stylistic departures from the romantic judgment of [Parkman's] youth" ("Introduction" 30). With that being said, it would seem clear that the 1849 edition would draw most closely to Kerouac's own tale of a Massachusetts native heading west for the first time in terms of writing style. However, even if it was not the 1849 edition that Kerouac read, it should be noted that critics uniformly point out that above all of Parkman's other texts, *The Oregon Trail* most readily displays qualities that would seem to illustrate a different type of book for Parkman in that he wrote it while he was young and wasn't as concerned with overly crafting his narrative. As Pease points out, regarding the writing style of *The Oregon Trail*, "[O]ne seeks in vain the penetrating, terse exactness of his later writing" (8). According to Pease, the reason one can't find this terse style in *The Oregon Trail* is because Parkman experienced the trail adventure he writes about in this book firsthand, and in his later writing, Parkman was attempting to recreate "the experiences of others" (8). Having discussed the essential elements of Parkman's writing, I will now move on to discuss the advent of Kerouac's spontaneous prose writing style.

Upon its publication, Kerouac's first novel, *The Town and the City*, was met with luke-warm reviews. Had it not been for the fantastic success of Kerouac's sophomore novel, *On the Road*, the literary notoriety of Kerouac, to put it in the words of critic Warren French, "would certainly be as lost to history as those of many other aspiring writers who break into print every year, to be indifferently received and never heard from again" (24). One of the reasons for the tepid reviews of *The Town and the City* was its length. Critics often refer to Kerouac's *The Town and the City* as "the big book." It is a big book indeed – five hundred pages – Kerouac's longest. Part of the reason Kerouac may have written such a lengthy work may be due to the admiration he had for literary epics at the time he wrote *The Town and the City*. In a 1943 letter to childhood friend Bill Ryan, twenty-one-year-old Jack Kerouac said, "I have always wanted to write epics and sagas of great meaning and beauty" (*SL 1* 43). *The Town and the City* fits this bill, at least in terms of its length and that it is, in fact, the saga of the Martin family in post-World War II America. The sheer length of this book hints at Kerouac's attempt at writing a book comprised of "great meaning," perhaps even suggesting the serious endeavor of a young author who believes that he has the power within himself to write the fabled "great American novel."

However, with its great length, *The Town and the City* brought with it a particular shortfall: it can be downright wordy. This fault only serves to make the reading of the "big book" that much more difficult. Take the following sentence, which describes the father of the Martin family preparing to leave for a day at the track with his son Mickey, for instance:

> And then for the next few minutes the father was in the bathroom coughing thunderously and barging around and swooshing water in the sink, while Mickey sat by the screen door gazing out at the yard and his mother took milk out of the icebox and fussed around the kitchen, and finally the old man emerged from the bathroom all shaved and combed and sleek, with a big cigar trailing smoke behind him and an absorbed morning frown on his face, and he marched into the den, picked up his racing form sheets from the desk, stuck them in his vest pockets along with a handful of cigars, he sharpened a few pencils, stuck his straw hat on the top of his head, and he was ready to go. (101)

Such lengthy sentences are not an anomaly in *The Town and the City.* A review of *The Town and the City* that appeared in *New Yorker* magazine in March of 1950 perhaps sums up best the effect of such rambling sentences by complaining that Kerouac's "habit of using ten words where one would do inclines the reader to put the book aside until some day when there is absolutely nothing else around to read" (115).

With the emergence of his new spontaneous prose method, Kerouac became less interested in the craft of writing an epic saga, and more invested in getting his words down on paper as quickly and as spontaneously as possible. As George Dardess points out, "Kerouac was not satisfied that [*The Town and the City*] represented his own most characteristic ways of thinking. He wanted to invest in a method that would allow him to write his next book with a more consistently sustained intensity" (733). Presumably, this intense writing style would circumvent the wordiness of Kerouac's previous novel, a convention that may have been symptomatic of his attempt to write an epic saga. Beyond

these concerns for Kerouac was the fact that critics consistently pointed out the apparent similarities between his writing in *The Town and the City* and that of Thomas Wolfe, particularly drawing parallels between Kerouac's first novel and Wolfe's *Look Homeward Angel*. Kerouac didn't receive this criticism fondly. Regina Weinreich speaks of this reaction, saying:

> Kerouac reacted profoundly to this critique, and indeed to the anxiety of Wolfe's influence with *On the Road*. Kerouac liked to think that his…second novel was written in a manner unlike of that of any other, in a style and language commensurate with the rhythm and tempestuous speed he found in the experience itself. *On the Road* is the exemplary case of Kerouac's break with an unsatisfactory style (40).

Kerouac may be clueing his readers into the new aesthetic of a style that has broken away from the Wolfean influence of his previous novel through the voice of Dean Moriarty at the beginning of *On the Road*. While looking over Sal Paradise's shoulder as he writes, Dean erupts, "Man, wow, there's so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even *begin* to get it all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on like literary inhibitions and grammatical fears" (4). This quote captures not only the excited style of Kerouac's spontaneous prose, but also speaks to the break from a more formal aesthetic that can be seen as being symptomatic of the more traditional style of Wolfe's writing. Biographically, this moment is interesting because the novel Kerouac would have been writing in this passage is *The Town and the City*. But perhaps Moriarty's words in this passage can be seen as a critique of the writing in *The Town and the City*. Perhaps, here, because this passage comes at the beginning of *On the Road*, Kerouac is

letting his readers know that this new novel will not be written with the same aesthetic as the first, ridding itself of the "literary inhibitions" and the "grammatical fears" he experienced while under the influence of Thomas Wolfe.

According to John Clellon Holmes, chronicler of the Beat Generation and confidant of Kerouac during the writing of Kerouac's first novels, Kerouac just wanted to "tell the truth" in writing *On the Road* (qtd. in Gifford and Lee 77), and this, for Kerouac, would seem to be one of the key differences between *On the Road* and *The Town and the City*. It wasn't that Kerouac was lying when he wrote *The Town and the City*; it was just that the formal way in which he wrote the novel didn't capture, for Kerouac, the essential truths that could be found in images when writing about them spontaneously and non-stop. Weinreich supports this idea, saying that when Kerouac wrote in this spontaneous fashion, he was trying "to define himself by more personal forms that told the truth about his experiences, regardless of inherited literary conventions" (4). However, with this subversion of standard literary form came the most controversial of Kerouac's methodologies regarding his spontaneous prose technique: that after writing in the animated mode that got the truth out on paper, one should never revise what they had written.

Writing without revision did not come without criticism. Perhaps most famously, Truman Capote protested Kerouac's non-revisionist style by complaining, "That's not writing. That's typing" (qtd. in *Kerouac* 132). It's important to point out, though, that most of the rhetoric surrounding Kerouac's espousing of no revisions is myth. Kerouac, in all actuality, revised *On the Road* several times. Most of the myth surrounding Kerouac's non-revisionist technique came into presence because of an interview that

misquoted Kerouac. In 1959, a *New York Post* interview with Kerouac reported that he had said that "it took me twenty-one days to write *On the Road*. I wrote it on one long roll of paper with no periods, no commas, no paragraphs, all single-spaced" (qtd. in Theado 88), but in the extended version of this interview, published a decade later, Kerouac actually states, "I wrote *On the Road* on a roll of Cannasstra's drawing paper…It was all no paragraphs, single-spaced—all one big paragraph. I had to retype it so they could publish it" (qtd. in Theado 88). Furthermore, Kerouac's editor at Viking, Malcom Cowley, further edited *On the Road*, as did the copy editors at Viking who cut some of the longer sentences in the novel and took out parts of the book that they found redundant. I believe that even if the myth of no revision is debunked in regard to Kerouac's spontaneous prose technique, the writing style that Kerouac utilizes after writing *The Town and the City* still manifests a significant departure from Kerouac's more formal writing style and literary convention in general. It would seem to me that what is most important to take away from Kerouac's newfound spontaneous prose writing style that he utilizes in writing *On the Road* is that he appears to have found a new way to get his words out on paper that serves to not only reflect a truer version of the images set before his mind, but also signifies a radical shift in style, or as Tim Hunt puts it, "a significant transition and a decisive turn" (107) away from the writing style Kerouac engendered in writing his first novel.

With this clearer understanding of the makeup of the writing styles in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*, it is important to quickly point out the crossroads that each of these books represent for their authors, in that in Parkman's case, after writing *The Oregon Trail*, he was moving towards a more formulaic style of writing, while Kerouac

was trying to shift away from such a formulaic style after the writing of his first novel. Therefore, the intersection between these two writers, in terms of writing style, really only occurs with the writing of *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*.

However, before moving on to compare Parkman's writing style in *The Oregon Trail* to that of Kerouac's spontaneous prose style in *On the Road*, it is important to provide a clearer definition of Kerouac's spontaneous prose. Fortunately for those seeking such a definition, Kerouac wrote a piece rendering just that—his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." This defined process came into presence because Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs were quite impressed with Kerouac's spontaneous prose method, both aesthetically and in terms of the speed with which Kerouac could lay down one of his novels, and during their midnight conversations, Kerouac would try to tell them exactly how he went about it. After one of these conversations, Ginsberg and Burroughs asked Kerouac if he could articulate his technique on paper, so in November of 1953, Kerouac did just that, and "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" was written, a piece Ann Charters describes as "Kerouac's major aesthetic statement in a lifetime of writing books" (*Kerouac* 189). Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" can be distilled down to three central ideas: recollection, emulation, and amalgamation. *Recollection* takes place when a writer perceives of a "jewel center" of interest and writes outward from this recollected idea. The *emulation* then speaks to the process of how this writing should be done, with Kerouac espousing the mimicking of bop jazz musicians and their frenzied, spontaneous style of improvisation. Through such emulation, an *amalgamation* of words will begin to form, words that are produced without the

inhibitions of style or form. This process will be further highlighted in my direct comparison of Parkman's writing to that of Kerouac's spontaneous prose.

Kerouac, Parkman, and "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose"

As has been discussed in this dissertation, Parkman often referred to his writing as sketching, and in fact, the title of the first edition of Parkman's book was *The California and Oregon Trail: Being Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life*. Parkman even prefaces short narratives in *The Oregon Trail* by calling them sketches. An example of such a reference occurs in a chapter of Parkman's book titled "The Chase" where Parkman describes the procedure for buffalo hunting. Parkman begins this description by declaring, "The country before us was now thronged with buffalo, and a *sketch* [my italics] of the manner of hunting them will not be out of place" (43). With these references to sketching by Parkman in mind, it is compelling to note the presence of the term "sketching" in Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" is arranged in a series of paragraphs, each beginning with a word or phrase in all caps that Kerouac expounds upon in correlation to his spontaneous prose method. The first term Kerouac elaborates upon is "SET-UP," of which Kerouac explains, "The object is set before the mind, either in reality, as in sketching (before landscape or teacup or old face) or is set in the memory wherein it becomes the sketching from memory of a definite image-object" ("Essentials" 57). Clearly, here, in this statement regarding the "SET-UP" of Kerouac's spontaneous prose, "sketching" correlates to one's writing. The exactitude of the terminology that Parkman and Kerouac use to describe their writing gives us insight into how both writers perceived their writing. One who would sketch something onto paper, as Kerouac points out, either

perceives that thing in reality or in their memory, and, like a visual artist with a pencil or charcoal, tries to convey the essence of whatever lays before their eyes, or at least their mind's eye. That both Kerouac and Parkman refer to their writing in this way would seem to imply that both writers take the same initial approach to getting their words down on paper. However, further analogies between Kerouac and Parkman's writing can be drawn regarding the actual method each uses in the sketching of their language, especially in terms of how Kerouac divulges this method in the "SET-UP" of his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose."

When Kerouac states in his "Essentials" that "[t]he object is set before the mind, either in reality…or is set in the memory wherein it becomes the sketching from memory of a definite image-object," he is quite precisely describing the way Parkman went about his writing. According to historian Mason Wade, "Parkman's natural way of writing was to compose the narrative in his head before he set a word on paper, and this practice stood him in good stead in the years to come" (31). The mechanism for Parkman's writing that Wade describes here would seem very much in line with the sketching from the mind of objects "set in the memory." This notion of sketching from memory is further realized in Parkman's writing because of the way much of *The Oregon Trail* was written. When Parkman returned from the trail exploits that he records in *The Oregon Trail*, he found it necessary to dictate large passages of his trail narrative because he was incapacitated from his journey west. Through this dictation, Parkman would seem, as Kerouac espouses in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," to have sketched "from memory" the events of his adventures on the frontier.

Kerouac further elaborates on his method for sketching words in his second paragraph in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" under the banner of "PROCEDURE," stating, "Time being of the essence in the purity of speech, sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret-idea words, blowing (as per jazz musician) on subject of image" (57). Here, Kerouac is saying that when "sketching language," that language should flow from the writer without inhibition. To facilitate this state of writing, Kerouac believes the writer should come up with "personal secret idea-words," words the writer makes up on the fly to keep their narrative flowing. Kerouac compares this action to a jazz musician, presumably a bop jazz musician, who is expounding on a theme through improvisation.[48] An example of Kerouac's own writing when he uses such a procedure can be found in his famous statement regarding the "mad ones," mentioned in the former chapter:

> The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like a fabulous roman candle exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everything goes "Awww!" (*On the Road* 5)

This passage illustrates the "undisturbed flow from the mind" because of its sheer length of extended thought, giving the reader bit after bit of description of the "mad" people that Kerouac desires to be surrounded by. Also evident in this passage are "secret idea-words" like "centerlight" or using the "Awww" of fireworks exploding to elucidate the energy of the mad people. And although Parkman would not have been familiar with the

[48] One of the trademarks of bop is improvisation.

workings of bop jazz, it is provocative to see just how many passages in *The Oregon Trail* would seem to be symptomatic of the "procedure" for "sketching language" that Kerouac espouses. One excellent example of such writing occurs in chapter eleven of *The Oregon Trail* when Parkman describes the sneak attack on Mahto-Tatonka's tribe that would lead to the chief's death. In this passage, Parkman exclaims, "Instantly—for the attack was preconcerted—came the reports of two or three guns, and the twanging of a dozen bows, and the savage hero mortally wounded, pitched forward headlong to the ground" (204). While this passage may not match Kerouac's quote about "the mad ones" in terms of length, it nicely matches Kerouac's passage in terms of its "undisturbed flow from the mind." This is represented in Parkman's passage by the multiple excited phrases Parkman strings together—separated by space dashes, commas, and coordinating conjunctions—as well as Parkman's hedging towards his own "secret idea-word" that manifests itself in the "*twanging* of a dozen bows," a term that is most commonly used to describe the playing of a stringed instrument. Further parallels between the diction of Parkman and Kerouac's writing can be realized through the way each writer establishes flow within their writing.

Parkman's critics have been quick to point out that his diction is yet another thing that sets him apart from historians of his era. While most of the historians writing during Parkman's day were prone to utilizing gaudy phraseology, Parkman's diction subverts this rhetorical style with straightforward word choice. David Levin speaks to this, saying, "Parkman usually avoids the more elaborate rhetoric of conventional characterization and relies instead on simpler, though equally common language" (219). In averting "elaborate rhetoric," Parkman keeps his narrative rolling, establishing a certain flow in

his writing that is achieved by avoiding diction that halts or stifles the reading of his work. Kerouac speaks of the necessity for maintaining flow in one's writing through word choice in the "LAG IN PROCEDURE" section of "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." In this section, Kerouac asserts, "No pause to think of proper word but the infantile scatological buildup words till satisfaction is gained, which will turn out to be a great appending rhythm to a thought and be in accordance with Great Law of time" (57). In this step of "Essentials," Kerouac would seem to be saying that if a writer takes the time to locate the precise word when writing he will lose the flow or the "rhythm" of his writing. Presumably, the "pause" incurred by trying to think of the "proper word" will derail one's narrative. Therefore, the writer should allow for "the infantile scatological buildup of words," using simple diction to write what they feel in that moment, without the restraints of proper form, until they feel satisfied with what they have written. Kerouac would seem to advocate for this style of writing because it keeps with the "great appending rhythm" of one's own thought, further adding that such a process adheres to a metaphorical "Great Law of time," which would presumably be a good thing because, as Kerouac later states in the "TIMING" section of "Essentials," "Nothing is muddy that *runs in time* and to the laws of *time*," seemingly meaning that such rhythmic writing adds clarity to one's writing.

The following passages serve to illustrate how this narrative flow is maintained in Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail* and Kerouac's writing in *On the Road*. Consider the way Parkman describes a sunset while on the trail. The diction is simple and common, as Levin points out (and as Kerouac refers to as "infantile"), but Parkman clearly conveys exactly what is going on in this scene, perhaps a symptom of being in

tune with the "great appending rhythm" of his own thought and the clarity to writing that it establishes:

> In the savage landscape before our camp, nothing but the rushing of the Platte broke the silence. Through the ragged boughs of the trees, dilapidated and half dead, we saw the sun setting in crimson behind the peaks of the Black Hills; the restless bosom of the river was suffused with red; our white tent was tinged with it, and the sterile bluffs, up to the rocks that crowned them, partook of the same fiery hue. (143)

Most any reader could pick up this passage and read every word without confusion. And while it would be impossible to know Parkman's process in terms of his word choice—whether the diction in this passage represents an "infantile scatological buildup" of words that resulted in Parkman being satisfied with the scene he created—there is a discernable "flow" to this passage created through its imagery, particularly in regard to the way Parkman moves from object to object describing the light of the sunset. And through this description, a rhythm is created that suggests the "great appending rhythm to a thought" that Kerouac speaks of, which would presumably be satisfying to its writer and does, indeed, add clarity to this piece of writing through its clear and uncomplicated approach. Kerouac renders a scene in a similar way in *On the Road* while hitchhiking with a group of men, at night, on the back of a flatboard truck:

> We zoomed through another crossroads town, passed another line of tall lanky men in jeans clustered in the dim light like moths on the desert, and returned to the tremendous darkness, and the stars overhead were pure and bright because of the increasingly thin air as we mounted the high hill of

> the western plateau, about a foot a mile, so they say, and no trees obstructing any low-leveled stars anywhere. (28)

In this short passage written by Kerouac, we see the same straightforward, uncomplicated diction that Parkman's previous passage demonstrates. This passage also carries with it a certain rhythm set up by seamlessly moving the reader's eye from the town they "zoomed" through, to the darkness, to the "stars overhead." As in Parkman's case, it is impossible to say if Kerouac wrote this piece without "pause to think of proper word," but it would be hard to deny the clarity with which Kerouac conveys his imagery in this scene, perhaps a manifestation of his writing "in accordance with Great Law of timing." It is also meaningful to compare this bit of spontaneous prose to the previous piece of writing taken from *The Town and the City*. Both pieces are lengthy sentences, but this latter piece, written with Kerouac's spontaneous prose method, conveys the action at hand with a lucidity missing in the first piece. Recognizing this difference serves to illustrate how Kerouac's writing style changed between the writing of *The Town and the City* and *On the Road*, and signifies the arrival of Kerouac's newfound spontaneous prose writing technique.

This effortless diction, according to other critics like Otis Pease, is advantageous to Parkman's writing because it fills Parkman's words with action, which in effect helps him to convey the experience of his narratives. Pease elaborates on Parkman's lively diction by saying:

> Parkman rendered movement and action in words of force and elemental simplicity. He stripped his style of phrases that intellectualize or that tend to obstruct one's direct experiencing of what he wished to show.

> Consequently, his style enables his own apprehension of the experience to become that of his readers, who thereby share in the event to the extent which he did. (54)

This critique of Parkman's writing by Pease, saying that Parkman didn't over-intellectualize his word choice, would appear to get at the heart of what Kerouac means when he says writers shouldn't worry about rendering a slew of "infantile scatological buildup words," and the latter part of this statement, in terms of the way Parkman's simple, stripped-down diction facilitates the experience to his readers, would appear to be very much akin to the "meaning-excitement" Kerouac theorizes upon under his "SCOPING" method in "Essentials."

Kerouac speaks directly to writers, regarding his "SCOPING" mechanism in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," professing to them, "Blow as deep as you want—write as deeply, fish as far down as you want, satisfy yourself first, then the reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by same laws operating in his own human mind" (57). In this statement, once again, Kerouac uses jazz as a metaphor to express his thoughts on writing. In expressing to his reader that they should "blow as deep as [they] want," Kerouac is admonishing his reader to search the depths of their soul when they write and express what it is that they truly want to explore in their writing, an action that Kerouac might see as being akin to a jazz musician, presumably a sax player,[49] improvising and exploring the notes and sounds they wish to express. Kerouac underscores this thought by telling his readers to "write as deeply, fish as far down as you

[49] In the realm of jazz, Kerouac not only had a proclivity for bop but also bop sax players. According to Ann Charters, Kerouac told Allen Ginsberg that, in terms of creativity, he identified more with sax players Charlie Parker, Lester Young, and Gerry Mulligan than with anyone involved with the "established literary scene" (*Kerouac* 226).

want," then adding that the writer shouldn't concern themselves with what others might think of their writing, but instead "satisfy [themselves] first." When one writes in this introspective, explorative mode, Kerouac believes that their writing will appeal to others, essentially saying that if you are excited about what it is that you are writing, others "cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement" from your writing. This "meaning-excitement" is evident in Parkman's writing. As Pease pointed out in saying that Parkman's "style enables his own apprehension of the experience to become that of his readers, who thereby share in the event to the extent which he did," Parkman is transmitting the "telepathic shock and meaning-excitement" to his own readers, allowing them to engage in his experiences. Enabling his readers to directly partake of his experience through his writing is perhaps something that is most readily witnessed in *The Oregon Trail* above all of Parkman's other writing because, as has been mentioned, the adventures Parkman records in *The Oregon Trail* are his own experiences and not the experiences of others. As such, *The Oregon Trail* is imbued with a "meaning-excitement" that fully expresses to its readers what it was like for a young Parkman to witness firsthand the fascinating world of the frontier for the first time. Pease speaks to this force that *The Oregon Trail* has on readers, explaining, "Perhaps the foremost quality of his 'Oregon' story is its ability to evoke an awareness of the raw new land, its weather, its moods. The impact is as direct on the reader as it was on Parkman" (7-8). In fact, Pease continues by saying that much of Parkman's legacy as a historian is staked to this type of narration that draws from personal experience. Pease argues, "Parkman's achievement lives, because to the large and permanent themes which he found in history he added a quality from his own experience that enables the reader in turn to experience

them. This quality lay at the root of his artistry" (52). When connecting this artistry that Parkman is perhaps most famous for to Kerouac's concept of "meaning-excitement," it is not difficult to speculate, considering Kerouac's familiarity with Parkman, that it's probable that Kerouac extrapolated this meaning-excitement from Parkman's writing, thus contributing to the "startling change" Kerouac found himself experiencing at the time when he was reading *The Oregon Trail*.

In his book *History as Romantic Art*, David Levin elucidates upon Parkman's approach to writing. Levin uses a letter written by Francis Parkman to fellow Boston Brahmin historian George Bancroft to articulate how Parkman went about this style of writing. In Parkman's letter to Bancroft, Parkman assesses the writing of James Fenimore Cooper in *The Deerslayer*. Parkman praises Cooper for his ability to bring readers, "as it were, to play a part in the scene" (qtd. in *History* 18). Parkman, in particular, is impressed with the way that Cooper portrays battle scenes in *The Deerslayer*, saying that "the reader is enlisted in the fray," and is able to actually sense the splash of the "foaming cataract" (qtd. in *History* 18). Levin takes this image of a "foaming cataract" and turns it into a metaphor to describe Parkman's writing technique. Levin says that the "foaming cataract" operates in Parkman's writing to give his scenes a central focus, saying that "again and again he puts the reader on the scene—inside a small stockade attacked by Iroquois, bivouacking with a French and Indian war party, trying to sleep in a reeking Indian hut [a direct reference to *The Oregon Trail*]" (*History* 18). For Parkman, the "foaming cataract" is the thing that not only brings his readers into the scene, it also focuses their attention. Parkman, as writer, then curls out from this center point and conveys the other important details of this scene before achieving an end that

has fully "enlisted the reader into the fray." This process closely aligns with the process that Kerouac outlines in the "CENTER OF INTEREST" and "STRUCTURE OF WORK" sections of his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose."

In these sections, Kerouac states that writers should "[b]egin not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from the jewel center of interest in subject of image at *moment* of writing, and write outwards swimming in sea of language to peripheral release and exhaustion" (58). The procedure that Kerouac outlines here advises a writer to avert preconceived notions concerning what it is that they should write about, and instead jump into their writing by starting with the thing they are most passionate about writing about. This passionate thing is represented by the "jewel center of interest," the jewel functioning as a metaphor for the thing the writer is most attracted to. Starting at this jewel center, Kerouac then instructs the writer to expand upon this subject, "moving" outwards until everything has been said about this subject. From a utilitarian stance regarding writing, this may sound like little more than beginning an essay or paragraph with a thesis or topic sentence and then saying all there is to say about this main idea until supporting ideas have been exhausted. But what Kerouac is espousing goes beyond this pragmatic perspective. Not only is Kerouac admonishing his reader to reach for a point of interest that excites them, he also hints at the fact that this process is organic. This latter concept is highlighted when Kerouac further clarifies the movement from jewel center outwards in "STRUCTURE OF WORK" in his "Essentials."

Under the banner of "STRUCTURE OF WORK," Kerouac proclaims the following regarding writing with his "jewel center of interest" intact: "Follow roughly

outlines in outfanning movement over subject, as river rock, so mindflow over jewel-center need (run you mind over it, *once*) arriving at pivot, where what was dim-formed 'beginning' becomes sharp-necessitating 'ending'" (58). Using river imagery as an analogy for the organic process of writing spontaneous prose, Kerouac directs his readers to let their ideas flow over the main concept—the jewel center—that they are writing about and then let their ideas ripple outwardly from this idea. Through this process, a tipping point will occur in which the writer's "dim-formed 'beginning'" will "pivot" and arrive at a "sharp-necessitating 'ending'," seemingly meaning that the writer has worked themselves into a space where they have clearly articulated their thoughts. This process, described by Kerouac, would seem to imply that this movement is natural and unencumbered, akin to the quivering lines which spontaneously form when water in a stream flows over a rock.

It would seem that the writing process that Levin described earlier in describing Parkman's writing shares more than just the metaphorical river imagery Kerouac uses to describe his concept of the "jewel center of interest" in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." These parallels are best illustrated by observing pieces from Parkman and Kerouac in *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*.

Consider the following scene from chapter thirteen of *The Oregon Trail* wherein Parkman has just left Fort Laramie and started to head south through the desolate hills of present-day Wyoming. Parkman sketches this scene, writing:

> If a curse had been pronounced upon the land, it could not have worn an aspect of more dreary and forlorn barrenness. There were abrupt broken hills, deep hollows and wide plains; but all alike glared with an

> insupportable whiteness under the burning sun. The country, as if parched by heat, had cracked into innumerable fissures and ravines, that not a little impeded our progress. Their steep sides were white and raw, and along the bottom we several times discovered the broad tracks of the terrific grizzly bear, nowhere more abundant than in this region. The ridges of the hills were hard as rock, and strewn with pebbles of flint and coarse red jasper; looking for them, there was nothing to relieve the desert uniformity of the prospect, save here and there a pine-tree clinging at the edge of a ravine, and stretching over its rough, shaggy arms. Under the scorching heat, these melancholy trees diffused their peculiar resinous odor through the sultry air. There was something in it, as I approached them, that recalled old associations: the pine-clad mountains of New-England, traversed in days of health and buoyancy, rose like a reality before my fancy. In passing that arid waste I was goaded with a morbid thirst produced by my disorder,[50] and I thought with a longing desire on the crystal treasure poured in such wasteful profusion from our thousand hills. Shutting my eyes, I more than half believed that I heard the deep plunging and gurgling of waters in the bowels of the shaded rocks. I could see their dark icy glittering far down amid the crevices, and the cold drops trickling from the long green mosses. (228-229)

Parkman actualizes this scene by focusing on a particular aspect of the landscape he describes, its "dreary and forlorn barrenness." With this focus, Parkman is drawing his

[50] Parkman is referring to the illness, most likely dysentery that plagued him throughout the journey he records in *The Oregon Trail*.

readers in, delivering them to the scene, and from this point, he moves outwards, detailing every aspect of this desolate expanse, as Levin puts it, allowing his readers "to feel the spray of the 'foaming cataract'" (*History* 18). Within this scene, we also very much see Kerouac's writing method regarding the "jewel center of interest" at play. The "dreary and forlorn bareness" of the land operates as "subject of image at the *moment* of writing" that Kerouac espouses in his "Essentials." Because Parkman begins this scene by writing about its "dreary and forlorn barrenness" and then circles this idea, ever expanding upon it, it is possible to assume that Parkman, as Kerouac advocates for, began "not from preconceived idea of what to say about [the] image" but instead, he wrote about the thing that first impressed him about it, or as Kerouac refers to it, the "jewel center of interest in subject at *moment* of writing."[51] From this beginning written by Parkman, we do see Parkman writing "outwards swimming in a sea of language." However, what we see with even more clarity is that Parkman is following "outlines in outfanning movement over subject," starting with this image of a desolate landscape, and moving outwards from it in ripples, covering its ridges, its hill, its "innumerable fissures and ravines," arriving at seemingly the only vegetation in this landscape: pine trees "clinging at the edge of a ravine." And it is with these pine trees that we see the "pivot" Kerouac explains in his "Essentials." Where Parkman initialized this scene with a "dim-formed 'beginning'" regarding its "dreary and forlorn barrenness," he has now shifted his attention and moves towards a "sharp-necessitating 'ending'." The pine trees, through their olfactory presence, evoke within Parkman a certain homesickness. They remind him of the mountains of his New England home, far away from the parched earth of

[51] Having already spoken of Parkman's interest in the sublime, it is easy to see why this image of "dreary and forlorn barrenness" might be something that Parkman would draw Parkman's attention and be something that he would be excited to write about, thus becoming his "jewel center of interest."

Wyoming, and in doing so, Parkman descends, at least in his mind, to a far different scene, chock full of lushness and moisture, and reminiscent of his days of better health. In delivering his readers to a landscape so totally opposite of the "dreary and forlorn" landscape that Parkman first focused upon, we see how the rippling away from the "jewel center of interest" has brought readers to this "sharp-necessitating 'ending'" that Kerouac advocates for in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." Arriving at this "sharp-necessitating 'ending'" once again serves to illustrate how this process differs from that of expository writing. Beyond the loose structure suggested through the natural movement away from an initial focal point, the main idea, or the thesis, would seem to arrive at the end of this process—the "sharp-necessitating 'ending'"—suggesting a subversion/inversion, of expository form, working organically through the writing process, arriving at/discovering your main idea in the end instead of exposing it at the begin of your writing with a thesis statement or topic sentence. However, to illustrate how Parkman's writing style may have influenced Kerouac's spontaneous prose, particularly the prose written in *On the Road*, it is important to point out a passage from Kerouac's novel that engages in the same sequence noted regarding Parkman's "foaming cataract" and Kerouac's "jewel center of interest."

One of the best examples in *On the Road* of the writing method Kerouac postulates through his "jewel center of interest" involves the last paragraph of the book. In this final paragraph, which was also mentioned in the previous chapter of this dissertation, Kerouac sets a scene, which can be seen as his "jewel center of interest" or 'foaming cataract" and then expands from this central image:

> So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and tonight the stars'll be out, and don't you know God is Pooh Bear? the evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty. (307)

The "jewel center of interest" that Kerouac begins this scene with is clearly that of watching a sunset on the pier of a river in New Jersey. Starting from this central image, Kerouac then swirls around it in a wider and wider "outfanning" motion, moving away from his river in New Jersey and outwards towards all of America, imagining the "people dreaming" between where he sits and the West Coast, and the children of Iowa crying. As Kerouac's writing ripples further outward, he reaches a 'pivot' in this scene, which is the impending darkness that will soon cover the landscape from coast to coast, and with this pivot, we see Kerouac move towards his "sharp-necessitating 'ending'." Where Kerouac initialized this scene with the "dim-formed 'beginning'" of the setting sun on a river in New Jersey, we see, in the end, that he has arrived at the essence of his writerly

thought—Dean Moriarty—his "sharp-necessitating 'ending'" to this scene and the entire book. In comparing these passages from Parkman and Kerouac, we witness a similar movement in their writing, wherein both authors begin with a focal point and eddy around it, moving outwards, and ultimately arrive at a perception that would seem to expose the main sentiment of their writing. This original image—the "jewel center" or "foaming cataract"—would seem to act as the driving force that propels Kerouac and Parkman's writing towards their actualized ideas.

One of the most famous elements of Kerouac's writing is his notorious space dash. Kerouac undoubtedly brought on his own notoriety for its use in writing his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." Under the heading of "METHOD" in "Essentials," Kerouac asserts, "No periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas—but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases)" (57). Kerouac then couples his concept regarding "rhetorical breathing" with the words of William Carlos Williams to underscore the importance of spaces between thoughts and ideas in ones writing: "'measured pauses which are the essentials of our speech'—'divisions of the *sounds* we hear'—'time and how to note it down'" (57). The idea that Kerouac would seem to be trying to encapsulate here is that a writer's notions should be separated using space dashes as a means of creating space between these ideas, which Kerouac would seem to be implying, as per his use of Williams words, is the best way to recreate the natural rhythm of speech in writing.

Curiously, despite Kerouac's advocating for this type of use of the space dash in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," its usage isn't all that prominent in *On the Road*.[52] In fact, one can read for pages on end in *On the Road* and not come across a space dash. However, when observing Kerouac's prose in *On the Road*, one can witness the "outblown phrases" Kerouac advocates for in the "METHOD" section of his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." These space-dash rhythms are found in *On the Road*, not set off with space dashes, but instead with the commas that Kerouac ridicules as being "timid" and "usually needless." Compellingly, these short, excited phrases separated by commas also appear all over Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail*.

The following two descriptive passages, one from *The Oregon Trail* and the other from *On the Road*, serve to illustrate the discernable similarity between Kerouac and Parkman's prose in terms of their comma use. From *The Oregon Trail*:

> Meanwhile, the cow, taking advantage of the tumult, ran off, to the great discomfiture of the Captain, who seemed to consider her as his own special prize, since she had been discovered by Jack. In defiance of the storm, he pulled his cap tight over his brows, jerked a huge buffalo-pistol

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[52] Kerouac's "vigorous space dash" is, however, more evident in his latter works. Take the following lines from *Subterraneans*, for instance:

> Even somehow the presence of Yuri, whose personality was energized already in my mine from the energy of the dream, added to my love of Mardou—I suddenly loved her. –They wanted me to go with them, sit in the park—as agreed in solemn conclaves Mardou said "But I'll stay here and read and do things, Leo, you go with them like we said"—as they left and trooped down the stairs I stayed behind to tell her I loved her now—she was not as surprised or as pleased as I wished— (66)

Beyond the more evident space dash in this passage, it is also interesting to note that the comma hasn't been entirely abandoned. While it may be absent in some places—as before the quote in this passage and the dependent clause starting with "as they left…"—it is still there, setting off adjective clauses and embedded phrases.

Critics such as George Dardess actually argue that *Subterraneans* is the first book in which Kerouac's "spontaneous prose method…is fully realized" (729). I believe that this is only true as far as Kerouac's use of the space dash. Beyond this use of the space dash, I argue that all of Kerouac's spontaneous prose techniques are alive in *On the Road*.

> from his holster, and set out at full speed after her. This was the last we saw of them for some time, the mist and rain making an impenetrable veil. (92)

From *On the Road*:

> Dean had dispatched the occupant of the apartment to the kitchen, probably to make coffee, while he proceeded with his love problems, for to him sex was the one and only holy and important thing in life, although he had to sweat and curse to make a living and so on. You saw that in the way he stood bobbing his head, always looking down, nodding, like a young boxer to instructions, to make you think he was listening to every word, throwing in a thousand "Yeses" and "That's rights." (2)

While many of these phrases operate in the same grammatical way—functioning to separate cumulative actions or as embedded adjective or adverb phrases, that is not the important thing to notice here. The significance of the similarity of these two passages is in the rhythm they establish. These "measured pauses" serve to create the "outblown phrases" Kerouac calls for in his "Essentials." Following the "METHOD" section in "Essentials" is the "SCOPING" section, in which Kerouac proclaims that one should write "with no discipline other than the rhythms of rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement, like a fist coming down on a table with each complete utterance, bang!" (57). The "rhythms of rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement" appear to be very much at play in both of the previous writing examples, as is exemplified by proclamations, such as "the cow, taking advantage of the tumult, ran off, to the great discomfiture of the Captain" and "he stood bobbing his head, always looking down,

nodding, like a young boxer to instructions." These statements align themselves with Kerouac's descriptive idea of "rhetorical exhalation." They appear as winded breaths chock full of "outblown phrases." And they mimic the energy one might find in an "expostulated statement," which one would expect to be quick to make a point, like these strung-together phrases. Observing the similarity of this animated writing makes it possible to speculate that Kerouac may have observed a new approach to style in Parkman's hurdling rhythm in *The Oregon Trail* and may have tried to infuse *On the Road* with such an aesthetic, especially after his previous novel had been disregarded by critics with reviews that stopped just short of calling it boring.

Lastly, one of the most simple and evident similarities between *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road* should not be overlooked: the obvious similarity between these two books in terms of their plot structure, in that each book is an episodic series of sketches narrating chronological events that took place on the road. Neither book has a very traditional plot line.[53] While it might be argued that Parkman's text has a beginning and an end in that his road journey starts with his leaving the settlements and ends when he returns to the settlement, really, *On the Road* has a similar circular pattern in that it begins with Dean entering Sal's life and ends with Dean leaving it. An entirely different investigation could be devoted to noting the similarities in terms of plot between *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*. However, the key thing to note here regarding the plot of these two texts is that *On the Road* is written in the exact same fashion as *The Oregon*

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[53] Some critics argue that works of non-fiction don't contain a plot line. I do not believe this to be the case. Instead, I believe writers of non-fiction arrange their narratives so as to create the most dramatic effect. This can be witnessed in Parkman's own writing in *The Oregon Trail* when, as was quoted from Jacobs, Parkman condenses the action "from several uneventful days, with some minor rearrangement of events, and presents them as belonging to one day of exciting life on the Great Plains" (*Francis Parkman* 37).

Trail, thus making it possible to hypothesize that Kerouac may have found a form for his own "trail" narrative in reading Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*.

Conclusion

It is clear that Kerouac's writing underwent a dramatic aesthetic shift between the writing of his first novel, *The Town and the City*, and his second novel, *On the Road*. Knowing that Kerouac read *The Oregon Trail* in between the writing of these two novels, and having evidenced the many similarities between Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail* and Kerouac's newfound spontaneous prose method, it would be difficult *not* to speculate that Parkman maintains at least some influence on the new writing style Kerouac utilized in writing *On the Road*.

Chapter Five

Teaching Kerouac

Literature is no longer necessary. Teaching is left.

—Jack Kerouac, *Some of the Dharma*

In Ann Charters' biography *Kerouac* (1969), she points out that "[Kerouac's] main boast as a writer, what he thought would make him legendary, was that he'd originated a new writing style, spontaneous prose, that he hoped would revolutionize American literature as much as Joyce had influenced English prose" (342). While it would be difficult to quantify the latter part of this statement, I do believe that Kerouac's greatest contribution to literature is his spontaneous prose writing style. What has drawn me to Kerouac's prose from the first moment I picked up *On the Road* as an undergraduate is that Kerouac can articulate with this style of writing an exact feeling, mood, moment, place that pulls me, the reader, into Kerouac's world, experiencing what he saw/felt through his written images that appear so organic and so fresh upon the page. For me, no other writer is able to pull off this trick in quite the same way, and because of this, I think Kerouac's spontaneous prose deserves the literary world's esteem. George Dardess parallels this idea when he says, "[Kerouac] plays the role of teacher and student with his own experience as the main text, and he plays them with a dexterity and passion that deserve our respect" (730).

With these ideas in mind, this chapter proposes an upper-division, major figures in literature course titled "Jack Kerouac and His Spontaneous Prose" that maintains as its primary course objective conveying the significance of Kerouac's spontaneous prose

writing style. To facilitate this objective, this course focuses on the evolution of Kerouac's spontaneous prose technique as manifest through his novels. Such a track allows students to witness Kerouac's spontaneous prose coming into presence and further allows them to observe the successes and failures of this originative writing style through its continued evolution, ultimately illustrating how Kerouac arrived at a writing style that could indeed be seen as "revolutionary." Secondary learning objectives for students of this course include the following:

1. Recognize Kerouac's spontaneous prose as distinct in the broader context of 1950's American prose.
2. Explain Kerouac's idea of spontaneous prose and identify its use in multiple contexts.
3. Recognize changes in the evolution of Kerouac's spontaneous prose writing style.
4. Understand the influences on Kerouac's spontaneous prose.
5. Develop the ability to perform close reading skills.

Therefore, the following chapter considers the theoretical and practical pedagogies that would aid in fulfilling all of these teaching objectives. This chapter begins by discussing the texts, particularly Kerouac's novels, that would be used for this course, and offers a rationale for each of these works. The chapter then outlines this course, describing how progressive lessons work towards conveying the significance of Kerouac's spontaneous prose. Lastly, this chapter discusses the papers that I would assign for the course and how they facilitate my course objectives.

Day-to-Day Procedure

I see this class as being a synthesis of lecture, discussion, and collaborative learning. On a daily basis, I would see myself opening with a lecture on new material. Based on my teaching experience, I know that when starting a class with a lecture, I usually have about a ten to fifteen minute window to successfully engage with my students. Of course, as an educator who aligns himself with the critical pedagogy of Paolo Freire, I would not see my lectures as a means for filling up the "empty vessels" of the classroom with my knowledge. Instead, I would be sure to let my students know that they are always welcome to add their knowledge to the lecture portion of class by raising their hand and contributing to the conversation, thus undermining any notions of the "lecture" portions of the course being a monologue instead of a dialogue.

After opening up the course with such a lecturing style, I see the class moving fluidly into discussion. To be sure, a teacher can't rely on such a natural evolution, so I would prepare numerous open-ended questions that would work towards engendering class discussion. Depending on the specific dynamics of the students in a particular class, I see this discussion period lasting for ten to fifteen minutes before moving into some sort of collaborative learning exercise involving the breaking down of the class into smaller groups.

Through my teaching experience, I have learned that I am most effective as a teacher when operating in the collaborative learning mode because I am better able to address the needs of individual students when they are broken down into these smaller groups. Another benefit that I have found occurs through working in small, collaborative groups is that students who are less vocal during a class discussion tend to become more

engaged in course conversation in these smaller groups. However, I have learned that an instructor needs to seek a balance in conducting the breaking down of the class into groups: it is nice to let students chose their own groups from time to time, as this autonomy seems to promote an amiable rapport between teacher and students, but the teacher does need to step in and periodically create groups as a means of preventing students from falling into habit in terms of group dynamics (outspoken students versus introverted students, etc.) and to help facilitate broader perspectives based on having students interact with other classmates. The amount of time spent in collaboration with other students will obviously rely on the scope of the project, but I believe it is always important to allow time at the end of the class for individual groups to report on their work, thus unifying the class once again and promoting a broader perspective of the subject at hand.

Selection of Primary Texts

As previously mentioned, Kerouac saw his novels as contributing to one vast literary epic, which he referred to as "The Duluoz Legend," and he planned to amalgamate all of these novels by giving their characters uniform names. But because Kerouac died before completing this project, a debate has sprung up among scholars as to how the novels of The Duluoz Legend should be ordered. This critical debate informs my pedagogical approach to teaching Kerouac's novels because it implies a suggested sequencing of the novels, a sequencing that could be used for a course such as the one I'm proposing.

Ann Charters first suggested an arrangement of the works comprising The Duluoz Legend. Her approach is simple. She believes that Kerouac's legend should be read

chronologically in terms of the way each novel parallels the events of Kerouac's own life. Warren French, in his critical analysis of Kerouac's Duluoz Legend, *Jack Kerouac: Novelist of the Beat Generation* (1986), was next to suggest an arrangement of Kerouac's novels based on The Duluoz Legend. French's approach is very similar to Charters' in that he believes that the Legend should follow Kerouac's life chronologically. However, French advocates for dividing these novel into four distinct stages: "childhood in Lowell," "narratives that bridge Kerouac's moves from his hometown to the city and the road," "years on the road," and the final stage, "end of the road" (xiii). The next critic to come along and postulate a major reworking of The Duluoz Legend was Regina Weinreich in her book *Kerouac's Spontaneous Poetics: A Study of the Fiction* (1987). Weinreich, too, calls for a sequencing of the novels that comprise Kerouac's Duluoz Legend in a way that parallels the events of Kerouac's own life. However, her chronological sequencing is more thematic in nature and is based on what she refers to as the "literary repetition" that occurs in Kerouac's novels, in which she sees Kerouac as consistently attempting to "recapture an original paradise or origin from which all else is a decline" (11). Weinreich sees this cyclical literary pattern as taking part in four distinct stages: Weinreich refers to the first stage as the "original paradise"; the second stage as an "extension of the 'road' metaphor, where experience and hyperactivity reveals the lapsed innocence of the early stage"; she sees the third stage as Kerouac enveloping "a Buddhist philosophy, an Eastern corrective to his lapsed Catholicism" ; and Weinreich regards the fourth and final stage as the "meditative retreat from society" (11). Matt Theado, in his book *Understanding Kerouac* (2000), is the most recent scholar to propose a major repositioning of the novels that comprise The Duluoz Legend. Theado sees The Duluoz

Legend as less of an autobiography, like Charters and French (and to some extent Weinreich) and more as an "intimate chronicle of a writer's maturation" (5). Thus, Theado proposes that "the most sensible approach to a critical study of [Kerouac's] books is to consider them in the order of their composition" because he sees this as "a better guide to the story of a growing and, near the end of his life, a fading writer" (5). Therefore, to illustrate this writerly maturation, Theado ultimately believes that all of Kerouac's novels need to be included within a Kerouac canon.

Theado agrees with Charters' assertion that Kerouac believed his legacy as a writer was based upon his creation of spontaneous prose, and as Theado further points out, this development is the most important thing to track in terms of a Kerouac canon. Therefore, I agree with Theado that constructing a Kerouac canon based upon how Kerouac's novels link together to reveal themselves in an autobiographical manner is not the best way to represent a Kerouac canon. And I also agree with Theado that the "real legend of Jack Kerouac" (5) is his legacy as a writer[54] and that Kerouac's key contribution to that legacy as a writer is his spontaneous prose. However, unlike Theado, I believe that the focus of tracking Kerouac's development as a writer can be limited to the development of his spontaneous prose because this *is* Kerouac's chief legacy as a writer. Thus, unlike Theado, I believe that this tracking can be done without acknowledging each and every novel that Kerouac wrote, as some of his final novels,

[54] I also agree with Weinreich that there are certain themes in Kerouac's novels that repeat themselves, such as the continual quest for "bliss." The seeking of a sublime that Weinreich also mentions can be seen as symptomatic of other repeated themes in Kerouac's works, such as desiring freedom and adventure, not only in new landscapes, but also through engaging with people whose personalities are wildly divergent.

such as *Vanity of Duluoz*, and *Pic*, seem to stray away from the original tenets of Kerouac's spontaneous prose.[55]

Therefore, the novels I have chosen for my Kerouac canon, the canon I suggest for use in the course "Jack Kerouac and His Spontaneous Prose," stand as the greatest markers of the development of Kerouac's spontaneous prose. I see this development as taking place on a path that started with Kerouac writing in a very formal style with *The Town and the City* and then jumping into his initial foray into spontaneous prose with *On the Road*. From there, Kerouac's subsequent novels manifest a deeper and deeper experimentation with spontaneous prose until Kerouac reels in this undertaking to a certain degree with the writing of *Dharma Bums*, wherein Kerouac returns to his original spontaneous prose aesthetic. From this novel on, up until the writing of *Big Sur*, Kerouac continued to refine his original spontaneous prose style, the style of writing that brought him his greatest critical and commercial success. Consequently, the novels that I believe best track Kerouac's path to his most refined spontaneous prose and therefore constitute my Kerouac canon are as follows:

- *The Town and the City*
- *On the Road*
- *Visions of Cody*
- *The Subterraneans*
- *The Dharma Bums*

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[55] This isn't to say that the prose used in these novels isn't some sort of hybrid form of Kerouac's spontaneous prose; however, the prose used in these books would seem to be much less successful in terms of conveying things like the "meaning excitement" and the "jeweled-center of interest" that Kerouac's earlier novels did such a fine job of representing, things that seem to have resonated with not only Kerouac's readers, but his critics alike. Moreover, it most likely should be acknowledged that Kerouac was in the furthest depths of the alcoholism when he wrote many of these late works that do not seem to be representative of his earlier spontaneous prose.

- *Desolation Angels*
- *Big Sur*

Having chosen *The Town and the City* as a starting point, I believe each subsequent novel on this list illustrates the advances that Kerouac made to his writing style until it culminates into his most refined spontaneous prose in *Big Sur*. These advances will be discussed further along in the chapter when I examine how I would teach each of these novels in the sequence listed above.

Course Outline

A major part of laying out the initial groundwork for this course would not so much be illustrating what Kerouac's spontaneous prose is, but rather what it is not. This would be facilitated by the reading of Kerouac's first published novel, *The Town and the City*. Reading this book would give students a sense of Kerouac's writing aesthetic before the development of his spontaneous prose technique. In delineating this aesthetic, the influence of Thomas Wolfe's writing on Kerouac would most certainly come into play. Much has been written in Kerouac's biographies and critical texts regarding the direction of Kerouac's writing throughout his career, and without fail, these texts identify the influence of Thomas Wolfe on Kerouac's writing of *The Town and the City*, and as previously mentioned in this dissertation, Kerouac, himself, acknowledged Wolfe's influence. However, despite this certain inspiration, a comprehensive critical text that makes these connections explicit has yet to be written. Therefore, an interesting class exercise for this course would be to have students make these specific correlations themselves.

For such an exercise, I propose taking excerpts from *The Town and the City* and Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*—the novel that is most often discussed as having influenced Kerouac's writing of *The Town and the City*—and having students make connections between these two works. In addition to the thematic parallels that would come up in such an exercise, I would encourage students to take note of the things that are happening at the line level in these two pieces of writing, such as sentence construction, diction, and punctuation use. To facilitate this exercise, I would assign different passages to different groups in the class and have them take these passages home, read them, and write down a prescribed number of similarities between the two pieces of writing. Then, when the class met again, I would have them gather in groups and discuss their findings. I would then have each group present their discoveries to the rest of the class. Assigning different passages to each group would help to reinforce the depth of the influence Wolfe had on Kerouac's writing of *The Town and the City*, as well as giving students a clear sense of Kerouac's writing aesthetic before he conceived of his spontaneous prose style.

The exercise outlined above would be relatively informed by Harold Bloom's classic critical text *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. In this book, Bloom claims that when aspiring writer's read the work of great writer's, the aspiring writer will be stirred to write in a way that is, for all practical purposes, derivative of the original author's work. Despite this influence, and the derivation that accompanies it, Bloom claims that the aspiring writer will struggle to create work that maintains its own originality. In this struggle, Bloom claims that the aspiring writer will maneuver through "revisionary ratios" in which the writer will mimic their precursors work and then strive

to break away from it before finally openly accepting the influence of their predecessor. These steps, or "revisionary ratios," that inform an exercise illustrating the influence of Wolfe on Kerouac[56], such as I am suggesting, include those that Bloom refers to as *tessera*, *kenosis*, and *apophrades*. In the stage known as *tessera*, Bloom believes that the aspiring writer will utilize the former writer's words and concepts, but put them to another use. We see this in regard to Wolfe's influence on Kerouac in that both *Look Homeward, Angel* and *The Town and the City* can be seen as highly autobiographical American Bildungsromans, with Wolfe's novel telling the story of the Gant family in North Carolina in the early 20th century and Kerouac's novel telling the story of the Martin family in Massachusetts in the mid-20th century, thus fulfilling Bloom's idea of concepts being used in a different context. In terms of the actual diction used in both of these novels, many a critic has commented on the similar poetic language used in both books. Bloom's *kenosis* relates to Wolfe's influence on Kerouac because it is in this stage, according to Bloom, that the aspiring author will break away from and isolate themselves from the influence of the predecessor's work, which is the case for Kerouac when he breaks away from the Wolfean stylistic after writing *The Town and the City* to create the spontaneous prose he would utilize in the writing of *On the Road*.

In Bloom's final stage, *apophrades*, the aspiring writer openly admits and comes to terms with the influence of the precursor. This can be witnessed in the relationship between Wolfe and Kerouac in that Kerouac, after developing his own spontaneous prose style and having already published *On the Road*, openly admitted Wolfe's influence on him. The *apophrades* stage further correlates to Kerouac and Wolfe in that Bloom

[56] Although Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* explicitly contextualizes this influence in regard to poets, the relationship Bloom describes in this text has been used for decades by scholars to describe the literary influence of one writer upon another.

believes that this reveal by the successor has no negative effect on the writer and, in fact, can be seen as the aspiring writer coming into full presence and moving beyond their predecessor. This would be an easy argument to make in regard to the Kerouac/Wolfe dynamic because Kerouac had already achieved much success as a writer of his own novels when he openly admitted to Wolfe's influence in writing *The Town and the City*.[57] I see revealing the correlation between Kerouac and Wolfe regarding the aforementioned steps borrowed from Bloom's theory as being a book end to the student reports on the parallels between the two writers' prose.

The exercise outlined above works towards my pedagogical goal of laying the groundwork for this course in several different ways, as well as aligning with many of my learning objectives for the course. First, through a side-by-side close reading of the writing of Thomas Wolfe, this exercise would help to convey the more formal aesthetic of Kerouac's writing before he engaged with his spontaneous prose technique in *On the Road*. Secondly, the conversation involving Bloom's ideas in *The Anxiety of Influence* would serve as an in-road for discussing Kerouac's leap into spontaneous prose, which would assist students in identifying this writing style. Additionally, another learning opportunity would be brought into play through examining the influence of Thomas Wolfe while engaging with the *Town and the City*, for just as much as Kerouac broke away from the formal aesthetic of Wolfe's writing style, Kerouac also carried elements of Wolfe's writing into the next era of his writing, the era of his spontaneous prose.

Regina Weinreich has most precisely tracked what aspects of Wolfe's writing Kerouac continued to utilize in the years following his writing of *The Town and The City*,

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[57] Kerouac most famously disclosed this influence ten years after the publication of *On the Road* in a 1967 *Paris Review* interview with Ted Berrigan, saying, "Wolfe was a torrent of American heaven and hell that opened my eyes to America as a subject in itself" (66).

narrowing it down to five specific categories: 1) "their treatment of the effect" in which Weinreich sees "delight in sheer sensation," "romantic melancholy," and "the wild expectancy that flourishes in youth"; 2) "their use of the theme of the gigantic American earth" in which Weinreich believes both authors see the American landscape as desolate, but that "its desolation is spiritual"; 3) "their use of nostalgic tone" in which Weinreich believes both authors engage in "a consistent nostalgia for the past which once held permanence as myth"; 4) "their reliance on the frantic mode of composition" in which both writers had a "frenetic mode of working, which consisted in writing as fast as [they] could, for hours, days, weeks at a time, then assembling the result"; and 5) "their reliance on the dominance of the autobiographical impulse" in which both writers "create their fictions from the myth of themselves" (19). Discussing these aspects of Wolfe's writing that transitioned into the next phase of Kerouac's writing style with students would show how Wolfe continued to influence Kerouac's career as an author, thus engaging with my course objective of having students understand the influences on Kerouac's spontaneous prose.

In delving into the more formal style of *The Town and the City* and showing how this style would appear to reflect the writing aesthetic of *Look Homeward, Angel*, another teaching opportunity would present itself in that a broader conversation could be pursued in discussing how the aesthetic of these two novels appear to be symptomatic of many of the novels during this period in American literature. In engaging with this conversation, I would discuss with my students how these novels, both thematically and in terms of writing style, appear similar to works of the same time period, such as Steinbeck's *East of Eden* and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*. With this context in mind,

my student would have a clear understanding of how Kerouac's spontaneous prose stood as dissimilar to much of the American prose written during the same period when they witness the aesthetic shift that occurs in Kerouac's writing between the writing of *The Town and the City* and *On the Road*.

Having read *The Town and the City*, and therefore having laid the initial groundwork for this course in terms of exposing the formal aesthetic of Kerouac's writing before he developed his spontaneous prose, it would then be time to move on to *On the Road*, the novel in which Kerouac first utilizes his spontaneous prose technique. In taking this next step in the course, it would be important to have students think about the aforementioned aesthetic shift between these two novels, and thus see the spontaneous prose at play within *On the Road*. There is perhaps no better passage in *On the Road* to help illustrate this for students than the scene in which Dean delineates the "IT" for Sal. In this passage, Dean reminisces about a jazz performance they had seen the night before, telling Sal, "Now, man, that alto man last night had IT," to which Sal wonders "what 'IT' meant" and Dean responds:

> Here's a guy and everybody's there, right? Up to him to put down what's on everybody's mind. He starts the first chorus, then lines up his ideas, people, yeah, yeah, but get it, an then he rises to his fate and has to blow equal to it. All of the sudden somewhere in the middle of the chorus he *gets it*—everybody looks up and knows; they listen; he picks it up and carries. Time stops. He's filling empty space with the substance of our lives, confessions of his bellybottom strain, remembrance of ideas, rehashes of old blowing. He has to blow across bridges and come back

> and do it with such infinite feeling soul-exploratory for the tune of the moment that everybody know it's not the tune that counts but IT. (207-208)

Although Dean is specifically talking about the performance of a jazz musician, this passage does an excellent job of illustrating the process for writing spontaneous prose that Kerouac delineates in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose": starting from an idea, a "jewel center of interest," and then expanding outwards into "limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought," "blow[ing] as deep as" you can, until transmitting "telepathic shock and meaning excitement" to your audience ("Essentials" 57).

An excellent exercise to build around this passage that would further help to expand student knowledge of Kerouac's spontaneous prose is an exercise that I would refer to as the "IT Project." In this exercise, I would have students submit a song of their choosing that they believe illuminates the "IT" that Dean excitedly accounts for in *On the Road*. I would ask students to submit a five-hundred word write-up with their song, explaining how the work they chose demonstrates the "IT." I believe that having students take this song, an artifact from their own lives, and having them analyze it in light of Dean's "IT" would help them to gain a deeper understanding of the function and aesthetic of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method. This idea is upheld by Charles Dethier who asserts that music not only "brings the conversation of the classroom into [students] lives," but that it also helps students by providing "language and metaphors with which they can make sense of their experience," which ultimately "leads to insights that inspire outstanding writing" (x, xi). Dethier further bolsters my rationale for a class assignment such as the "IT Project" by saying, "Music provides interesting analogies to all of the

processes of reading and writing…any lesson about music applies, it seems, to other forms of writing" (xii). Of course in the case of the "IT Project," the analogy created would be between that of a piece of music students had chosen from their own lives and Kerouac's spontaneous prose. Having students make this connection through their own music would be beneficial to my teaching of this course because it would assist them in thinking critically about the process of Kerouac's spontaneous prose, thus helping them to understand and be able to explain what spontaneous prose is.

After having had my students read *On the Road* and participate in the "IT Project," I believe it would be important to have them read Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" and "Belief and Technique for Modern Prose." These short pieces, written by Kerouac to explain what spontaneous prose was and how to go about writing it, would further facilitate a student understanding of what spontaneous prose looks like and what Kerouac's intent was in writing it, helping students to further recognize the spontaneous prose used in *On the Road* and contextualize its purpose. By having my students read *On the Road* and participate in the "IT Project" before reading these two pieces, they will be able to gather their own first impressions of the novel and Kerouac's spontaneous prose. I feel that this is important because it would allow students to have their own experience with the novel without having their perceptions of it altered by Kerouac's own words regarding his spontaneous prose writing style. This would allow students to think critically, on their own, about what changed, in terms of writing style, between the writing of Kerouac's freshman and sophomore novels. It would also allow them to project their own ideologies upon what the "IT" in the "IT Project" is without

being affected by this same influence, which would allow them to further ground their perceptions of Kerouac's spontaneous prose.

In transitioning from the reading of *On the Road* to the reading of *Visions of Cody*, this course would address the next step in Kerouac's experimentation with spontaneous prose—Kerouac's focus on making his writing flow like a natural conversation. Kerouac thought that adding this element to his prose would give his characters a more individualized voice; in fact, according to Tom Clark, Kerouac went as far as implementing recorded conversations between himself and Neal Cassady into the text of *Visions of Cody*.[58] Clark claims that Kerouac believed this would expose "another vein of Neal's character, something that would have been impossible to display so well in expository prose" (105). To emphasize this permutation in Kerouac's spontaneous prose style, it will be important to have students conduct close readings of passages that portray similar events in *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*. Because these two novels contain parallel narratives, the differences between these two works will manifest themselves. To conduct a student-centered dialogue that accounts for these differences, I could break down my class into smaller groups and have each group consider different sections of the two texts that mirror one another and discuss why differences between these sections may have been produced through Kerouac's attempt to bring a conversational style to his writing. Specifically, I would ask the groups to consider what was gained or lost through passages that are now conveyed through dialogue rather than prose descriptions, and a final consideration I might have my students take into account would be to examine each passage in light of the tenets of Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," which they would now be familiar with, and discuss what aspects of "Essentials" they see operating

[58] Neal Cassady is the Cody in *Visions of Cody*; his pseudonym is Cody Pomeroy.

in each piece. Such an investigation would further assist students in recognizing the spontaneous prose at play in Kerouac's writing, and further flesh out differences between the two pieces of writing that they were analyzing.

However, before asking my students to conduct a close reading of passages from *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*, I would first need to make sure they knew what close reading was. I believe that handing out an explanation, such as this one written by Elaine Showalter for one of her contemporary fiction courses, and reading it with my students before they endeavored with this exercise would help to bring clarity to their understanding of close reading:

> Close reading is slow reading, a deliberate attempt to detach ourselves from the magical power of story-telling and pay attention to language, imagery, allusion, syntax, and form. It is one of the major techniques of contemporary literary criticism. In a sense, close reading is a form of defamiliarization we use in order to break through our habitual and casual reading practices. It forces us to be active rather than passive consumers of the text. Since novels are very long texts, we don't attempt a close reading of the whole book. Instead, we look at particular important sentences, sometimes even phrases; we may group them together to reach an interpretation or to illustrate an observation.
>
> To learn to do close reading, start by selecting a paragraph and look at it sentence by sentence. Why does the author us particular words, images, grammatical constructions, even punctuation? How do these choices affect your responses as a reader? What other choices might the

> author have made? Are there allusions or quotations from other works? How does the verbal texture of this paragraph illuminate the theme of the book? (98-99)

I like the way Showalter delineates close reading, not only because it is written in a language that most students in an upper-division literature course will understand, but also because it draws attention to the idea of divorcing one's self from the narrative of a text and paying careful attention to the bare bones of a passage as a means of raising awareness of the language at play within this piece of writing. To be clear, the previous student exercise comparing Kerouac's writing in *The Town and the City* to Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* is, too, an exercise in close reading. However, I see introducing students to Showalter's idea of close reading at this point in the course, rather than at the formerly mentioned point in the course, as being more appropriate because of her notions of separating one's self from the narrative of the text, which would be particularly relevant in examining *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody* because of their similar narratives.

The next novel to be taught for this course is *The Subterraneans*. This novel illustrates Kerouac taking his spontaneous prose ideologies to some of its furthest depths, finding and perhaps surpassing their limit. Of the writing in *The Subterraneans*, Kerouac proclaims, "The prose is what I believe to be the prose of the future," (qtd. in Clark 127). But the problem with this "prose of the future" is that its sentences are strung together in seemingly endless, at times monotonous, barrages of thought that jump from one idea to another until, as Theado points out, their meaning "may be lost" (120). It is also within *The Subterraneans* that we see Kerouac expanding his spontaneous prose experiment to

not only include the conversational voice he tries to emulate in *Visions of Cody* but also progressing towards trying to encompass the voice of an entire culture, specifically that of hip, Black, urban culture. This move perhaps takes Kerouac too far outside of the realm of his experience, as the ideas and concepts he interacts with, those taken from Black, urban hipsters,[59] do not entirely mesh with Kerouac's true persona, which falls more in line with being a "momma's boy" who has never truly lost faith in his conservative Catholic roots. Kerouac's character in *The Subterraneans*, Leo Percepied, exemplifies this disconnect between cultures, making him appear as an outsider in *The Subterraneans*. Theado perfectly articulates Leo's disassociation from the hipster crowd Kerouac writes about in *The Subterraneans*, saying, "At heart, he remains a romantic with old-fashioned notions. His drunkenness, his pursuit of kicks, and his devotion to home and his mother prevent him from being a subterranean himself" (116). Therefore, in trying to emulate the voice of a culture that Kerouac is not really a part of, his writing becomes slightly disingenuous, a characteristic Kerouac himself warns against in his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" when he proclaims that a writer's prose should be "always honest" (58).

To provide a cultural context for students regarding what Kerouac was aiming for in terms of language in *The Subterraneans*, and perhaps why he missed this mark, it would be beneficial to have students supplement their reading of *The Subterraneans* with the reading of Norman Mailer's essay "The White Negro." In this essay, Mailer writes about young white people of the 1950's—those that perceived themselves to be hipsters—coopting Black culture as a means of disassociating themselves with the

[59] In *The Subterraneans*, Kerouac refers to his character as "the bop writer" (90). As such, his ideas that skip from one thought to the other until his original concept has been lost might be seen as being symptomatic of a writer who was trying to parallel the improvisation of bop jazz players in his own writing.

"square" white culture of that era. Mailer believes that jazz was the vehicle through which this cultural transmission took place:

> It is no accident the source of Hip is the Negro for he has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries. But the presence of Hip as a working philosophy in the sub-worlds of American life is probably due to jazz and its knife-like entrance into culture, its subtle but so penetrating influence on an avant-garde generation (585).

This "avant-garde" generation of hipsters that Mailer writes about were no doubt Kerouac's primary audience of this era, which might help to explain why Kerouac chose to engage with his prose as a "bop writer." Mailer further explains, "It is impossible to conceive a new philosophy until one creates a new language" (599). This sentiment, and Mailer's explication of this ideology, will help students to grasp why it is that Kerouac's language in *The Subterraneans* stands out as different in terms of the spontaneous prose Kerouac utilizes in the writing of his other novels, and helps to communicate why this particular style of writing may not adhere to Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose."

According to French, *Dharma Bums*, the next novel in my Kerouac canon that would be taught for this course, is little more than a "commercial enterprise" (xiii); however, to see *Dharma Bums* as only a profit-making venture dismisses much about Kerouac as an earnest writer, first of which being the fact that Kerouac had written six novels since he had written *On the Road*, and with each subsequent novel that he wrote, he continued to experiment with his spontaneous prose style. As such, by the time

Kerouac had written novels like *Subterraneans*, his experimentation with spontaneous prose had expanded well beyond the original parameters he utilized in writing *On the Road*. Therefore, *Dharma Bums* is a particularly provocative as a marker of the path that Kerouac's spontaneous prose followed because it signifies, in many regards, a return to the original spontaneous prose aesthetic that Kerouac used in writing *On the Road*. Perhaps Kerouac thought that his initial spontaneous prose aesthetic better resonated with his readers and that perhaps he had lost something in furthering his experiments with spontaneous prose, such as the aforementioned "meaning excitement" that appears absent in *Subterraneans*. And although the spontaneous prose in *Dharma Bums* doesn't exactly match that of *On the Road*, it does match it more closely than any other of Kerouac's works and therefore should be noted as a fundamental marker of the refinements that Kerouac made to his spontaneous prose technique since its inception in *On the Road*.

Students will likely be able detect this shift in aesthetics in progressing from *The Subterraneans* to *Dharma Bums*. And while they could attribute this difference to a mere change in setting—urban life versus that of mountain life in the Sierras and the laid back life Kerouac describes living in a cottage in Berkeley—students will most likely be able to discern this difference in the actual writing style of these two novels, because in *Dharma Bums*, Kerouac loses the overly-wrought, outdrawn passages of *The Subterraneans* that ricochet from one idea to the next and replaces them with unified passages that work towards progressing his narrative. Students will also see, like in *Subterraneans*, Kerouac seeking to encapsulate the voice of a culture into his writing style in *Dharma Bums*, but it's a culture that he's grounded in—that of the poets and

writers that Kerouac has known for years—so the voice he articulates in *Dharma Bums* will appear more "honest," and therefore more in line with "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" than that of the hipster manifest in *The Subterraneans*.[60]

To help foreground exactly how the aesthetic of *The Subterraneans* differs from *Dharma Bums*, it would be useful to have students compare passages with similar themes from both books, passages that expose the different social groups in each novel through the description of party scenes, for example. Showalter suggests a similar practice to this involving poetry, saying that this is "one of the most effective ways to show students how poetic language works" (73). Similarly, I believe that such a process involving *The Subterraneans* and *Dharma Bums* would expose how the language in both texts not only operates but differs from one another. To get students to dig deeper into the differences between these two novels, it would be beneficial to ask students a qualitative question regarding the two passages. An example that Showalter offers regarding poetry is to have students read three poems that share the theme of mourning and then ask them which poem they would "prefer to have as [their] memorial?" (74). In my example involving the social gatherings in both *The Subterraneans* and *Dharma Bums*, I might ask students, "Which party would you rather attend?" Showalter contends that "such an exercise…provides opportunities for arguments about taste and value" (74). From this vantage point, I could springboard into a conversation regarding the language and form in *Dharma Bums* and how much it resembles that of *On the Road*, asking students what specific aspects of Kerouac's spontaneous prose aesthetic appear to be similar between

[60] The biggest extension of a cultural voice in *Dharma Bums* involves Kerouac's new fascination with Zen Buddhism. However, this fascination does not appear too distant from Kerouac's former and continuing fascination with mystical Catholicism.

these two novels and therefore signify a return to the original spontaneous prose aesthetic Kerouac utilized in writing *On the Road*.

In terms of teaching the evolution of Kerouac's spontaneous prose, *Desolation Angels*, the novel Kerouac wrote immediately after *Dharma Bums*, illustrates that Kerouac chose to continue to write with the original prose aesthetic he utilized in *On the Road*. This will be particularly evident to students because Kerouac sustains this style of writing in a longer work (409 pages) like *Desolation Angels*. Another element that should become apparent to students at this point is the narrative continuity in not only *Desolation Angels*, but the novel that preceded it, *Dharma Bums*. To ensure that my upper-division students make this connection, I see myself asking them questions directed at comparing the narratives of these novels, either in the discussion portions of our class or during a collaborative learning session, where I would have students mull over these questions as a group. Through such conversation, I believe students would begin to see that works that display such a narrative continuity are associated with Kerouac's original spontaneous prose style, and the novels that Kerouac wrote exhibiting his deepest experimentations with spontaneous prose exhibit discontinuity in their narratives.

However, having students come to these realizations regarding Kerouac's engagement with a sustained writing style and helping them to notice the continuity of his narrative in *Desolation Angels* comes at a cost, one that has been a challenge to those teaching literature throughout the ages, and that is students would need to engage with a lengthier novel. This could be even more problematic in teaching *Desolation Angels* because this novel would come in the latter half of the semester when, perhaps, students

are feeling a bit more burned out in terms of the totality of their school loads, thus making the task of reading a lengthy novel appear all the more daunting. A pragmatic solution to teaching this lengthier novel would be to make sure that each class session regarding *Desolation Angels* dealt with a range of pages rather than the novel as a whole. This would help to assuage the anxiety of having to have read *Desolation Angels* in its entirety before the first class meeting regarding this novel. But because longer novels will implicitly lead to more class sessions that deal with that specific work, another type of burnout beyond the mere reading of numerous pages can occur, and that is growing weary of talking about a specific novel.

Therefore, it is important to maintain students' attention in each class session that pertains to a lengthier novel. In Ken Bain's book *What the Best College Teachers Do*, he reports that the best college teachers "succeed in grabbing students' attention by beginning a lecture with a provocative question or problem that raises issues in ways that students had never thought about before" (109-110). An example of a "provocative question" that I might ask regarding *Desolation Angels*, one that I would hope would get students to think about the writing in this book "in ways they had never thought about before" would be to have students consider the setting of this book versus others, like *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*, as *Desolation Angels*, at least initially, is set in isolation, with Kerouac atop a lonely mountain manning a fire lookout. Theado perfectly articulates Kerouac's solitary position and how it differs from Kerouac's other novels, saying, "[I]nstead of the constant motion of the automobile, he would be absolutely stationary; instead of listening to jazz, he would observe the silence of the stars above the mountain" (141). Calling attention to the vastly different setting of *Desolation Angels*, I

could ask students how this setting informs Kerouac's worldview and how that perspective would seem to differ from the other novels we had read up until this point for the course. Pointing students towards this idea would appear to be particularly important, at least from Kerouac's perspective, as Kerouac seems determined to take the insights he gathers on the mountain in *Desolation Angels* and share them with the world: "This is the Great Knowing, this is the Awakening…So shut up, live, travel, adventure, bless and don't be sorry" (*Desolation* 6). I believe asking students such a question at the beginning of a class discussion regarding *Desolation Angels* proves "provocative" because of the sweeping difference in setting and the excited insights it produces within Kerouac. And not only would this question serve to capture students attention, but it would also serve a secondary purpose in that it would support student realization of the sustained prose narrative found in *Desolation Angels*, as Kerouac maintains a theme of self-discovery through experience throughout this novel. Therefore, the total effect of this question works towards helping students think about *Desolation Angels* "in ways they had never thought about before,"[61] and engaging with my course learning objective of recognizing changes that occurred in the evolution of Kerouac's spontaneous prose.

The final novel for the course, *Big Sur*, represents Kerouac's most refined spontaneous prose, thus serving to articulate the major argument for this course, and, therefore, my overall course objective, that Kerouac's greatest contribution to literature is his spontaneous prose. However, how do I make sure that my students realize this objective, particularly in the context of teaching this novel? The objective of helping students see that *Big Sur* is Kerouac's most refined work of spontaneous prose must

[61] Of course, these tactics for teaching a lengthier novel would also be employed in the teaching of *The Town and the City*, which, as has been mentioned, is Kerouac's longest novel.

therefore not be seen as a sudden realization students come to upon reading it, but rather a cumulative effort brought on through an incremental understanding of Kerouac's spontaneous prose, facilitated by the step-by-step study of the novels that preceded *Big Sur*. This evolution is one that I see as aligning itself with the concepts of Bloom's Taxonomy, in which higher order educational objectives, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, are privileged over rote learning, or just the memorization of facts. Therefore, in regard to facilitating my major course objective for "Jack Kerouac and His Spontaneous Prose," it would not be good enough for me to simply be able to make sure that my students could render a definition of spontaneous prose by the time we had arrived at the final novel for the course. Instead, they should be able to look at *Big Sur* and see the spontaneous prose at play within it because of the cumulative knowledge produced through the application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of Kerouac's spontaneous prose achieved through the course readings and exercises leading up to the reading of *Big Sur*. With this cumulative knowledge, students would have the tools necessary to realize Kerouac's most refined form of spontaneous prose as manifest in *Big Sur*. To help give further context to how this comprehension would be brought about, I will next discuss the papers I would assign for this course.

Papers

For an upper-division course such as this, I would assign two major papers: a midterm paper, which would be about five pages long, and a final term paper, which would be about ten pages long. Compared to traditional literature courses, two papers might appear to be a fairly sparse bit of writing. However, I do not believe that writing essays should be the only way for a student to show their comprehension of the material I

am teaching in a literature course. Showalter echoes this idea, saying, "I am constantly looking for assignments that do not require students to write essays—group presentations, annotated bibliographies, anthologies—whatever allows bright students who do not write as a well as they think to show what they understand. In literary study, too often all assignments depend on writing skills" (100). I believe that the course I have described here does a good job of balancing writing assignments with assignments that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge outside of essays. This demonstration of knowledge can be witnessed in the close reading assignments that require students to conduct close readings on their own and then present them to a group or work collaboratively with other students to conduct close readings. Projects like the "IT Project" work towards demonstrating knowledge outside of essays, as well, by requiring students to do a minimal amount of writing while focusing more directly on demonstrating their comprehension of a particular idea.

Regarding the two essays I would assign, I see these essays as accomplishing two different objectives, which are largely symptomatic of the time during the semester in which these essays would be assigned. For the midterm essay, I would not be looking for the same overall comprehension of course objectives that I would for the final paper. As such, the prompt that I would give for the midterm essay would deal more directly with specific texts or ideas rather than dealing with the whole of my Kerouac canon or the ultimate progression of Kerouac's spontaneous prose. For this course, I see the midterm as arriving sometime after the reading of *Visions of Cody*. I would say that the most important idea for students to grapple with up until that point in the semester would be the aesthetic shift that occurred in Kerouac's prose style between the writing of *The Town*

and the City and *On the Road*. As such, a solid fit for the midterm essay would involve a prompt that dealt with a close reading of passages from these two texts that would expose the differences between these two writing styles. Because students would have just engaged in an in-class close reading exercise involving *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*, I believe that they would be suitably prepared to conduct this close reading essay involving *The Town and the City* and *On the Road*.

Whereas the midterm essay dealt with specific texts and ideas, the final term paper would engage with the broader objective of this course—helping students to appreciate Kerouac's contribution to literature through his spontaneous prose. Therefore, for this essay, the prompt should be directed towards an overall comprehension of the course and thus manifest the previously mentioned higher order objectives of Bloom's Taxonomy. The core of a prompt that would demonstrate this might be written as such: "As discussed at the beginning of this course, Jack Kerouac believed that his greatest contribution to literature was his spontaneous prose writing style. If this is true, what novel do you think best utilizes this writing style and therefore offers the best example of the writing style Kerouac saw as revolutionary?" Because this essay doesn't ask students to write about a specific novel and illustrate how that novel utilizes spontaneous prose, but instead asks students to select, on their own, the novel that they think represents Kerouac's finest use of spontaneous prose, this prompt will work towards reaching the upper reaches of Bloom's Taxonomy, which, most importantly, helps me to achieve my course objective of bolstering student appreciation of Kerouac's contribution to literature through his spontaneous prose. To illustrate how this might work, I will trace the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy that I believe students would draw upon to create this essay.

The first step in writing this essay would rely on the students *remembering* the form of Kerouac's spontaneous prose style. Student knowledge of the fundamentals of spontaneous prose would rely on remembering their reading of Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" that they had read at the beginning of the semester. Next, students would need to rely on their *understanding* of what Kerouac's spontaneous prose is, an understanding that would be achieved through their previous essay in which their close reading helped them to ascertain the differences between Kerouac's more formal style of writing in *The Town and the City* and the spontaneous prose style Kerouac used in writing *On the Road*, as well as the comparative group work students had done regarding these two novels. Then, students would need to *apply* this information to their prompt—figuring out which novel they believe best employed this spontaneous prose style. This would then lead to students *analyzing* the novels they had read during the course of the semester, comparing them in light of their prompt to determine which one illustrates Kerouac's best utilization of the prose style he believed was revolutionary. This would then lead to *evaluation*, when students would need to define their argument and defend their novel of choice, ultimately leading to the *creation* of the student's essay in which they would combine these hierarchical steps to write their essay.

Conclusion

This correlation between levels in Bloom's Taxonomy and how students gained this knowledge throughout the course of the semester demonstrates why I believe "Jack Kerouac and His Spontaneous Prose" would be a successful course in terms of facilitating my core course objective—that of conveying the significance of Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose to my students.

Conclusion: Discovering the Influence of Francis Parkman on Jack Kerouac—A Research Narrative

In the fall of 2006, I entered my third year as an adjunct instructor at Adams State College, a small liberal arts college in Southern Colorado. After drifting several semesters from full-time to part-time contracts, and with much encouragement from colleagues, friends, and mentors, I decided it was time to apply to Ph.D. programs. I started looking at schools that interested me and pulling together the needed materials to apply to their programs. Of course, one of the application items that every program wanted was a writing sample. In the years that had passed between graduating with my M.A. and teaching as an adjunct instructor, I had done very little in the way of academic writing, so I perused through the papers I had written as a graduate student, including my thesis project, and I couldn't believe the writing I was seeing. Having taught numerous composition courses since I had written these papers, I was my own worst critic when looking at this writing. I felt that none of this writing would give a graduate committee an accurate idea of where I currently stood as a writer, so I decided that I would write something new for the writing sample I would submit with my Ph.D. applications.

In writing my thesis project at Colorado State University, I had described how Jack Kerouac's writing had changed between the writing of *The Town and the City* and *On the Road*, delineating the differences between the two writing styles and then speculating on what may have influenced this aesthetic shift, and ultimately, the advent of Kerouac's newfound spontaneous prose method. This speculation at the end of my thesis never satisfied me. I wanted something more concrete, something I could point and say, "This! This is what changed Kerouac's writing style." So I thought about this idea, let it

churn in my mind, and wondered if I could find the piece that could definitively point to an actual influence on Kerouac, not only in terms of the creation of his spontaneous prose, but that could help explain why Kerouac's writing had changed so much between the writing of his first and second novel.[62] If I could, undoubtedly, it would make for a nice writing sample for my Ph.D. applications.

So through the fall, I searched for this lost piece, and I came upon the usual explanations for Kerouac's new writing aesthetic—it was the influence of bop jazz, it was the influence of Ginsberg and Burroughs, and it was the influence of Neal Cassady—but none these explanations ever quit seemed to have the evidence they needed to back up their validity.[63] Then, one day that fall in a bookstore in Santa Fe, I came upon Kerouac's *Windblown World*, a compilation of Kerouac's journals from 1947-1954 that had been published in 2004. I was immediately intrigued by this book, not only because it hadn't been available to me at the time I defended my thesis project (spring of 2004) but because these journal entries would account for the years Kerouac was actually on the road in *On the Road*.

I quickly jumped to the index of this book to see if any of the topics I had been researching were mentioned. When I looked up "Parker, Charlie" (I had been digging a

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[62] Of course Kerouac had written a novel before *The Town and the City*, *The Sea is My Brother*, which was published in 2011, five years after I articulated a possible dissertation topic. Kerouac wrote *The Sea is my Brother* when he was twenty years old and never published it because he thought it was "a crock as literature" (Bates).

[63] To be clear, there are definite correlations that can be drawn between Kerouac's writing style and bop jazz, and clearly Kerouac viewed himself as a sort of "bop writer," but Kerouac was turned on by this style of music when he was writing *The Town and the City*, so this begs the question as to why didn't Kerouac incorporate this bop-style of writing into that novel. Regarding the influence of Cassady on Kerouac's newfound writing style, Kerouac, himself, said in 1959 that a letter Cassady sent him from a youth correctional facility inspired his spontaneous prose method, but I have always been skeptical of this claim because, for one, the letter that inspired Kerouac was supposedly lost, and two, when Kerouac made this statement, the interviewer, Al Aronwitz, reported that Kerouac was drinking. But most of all, when I read any of Neal Cassady's writing, including his selected letters from the era when Kerouac supposedly received his inspirational letter, I see little correlation in terms of Kerouac's spontaneous prose method.

bit deeper into the bop influence on Kerouac's writing), I came across a name that I neither recognized nor associated with Jack Kerouac—"Parkman, Francis." I turned to page 344 of the book, the only entry for this Francis Parkman, and read, "We entered Independence, or that is, bypassed it, and I saw no signs of what it used to be in the days of [Francis] Parkman." Who was this Parkman character? At the end of this sentence was an asterisk, and a footnote at the bottom of the page stated, "Francis Parkman wrote of the Missouri River in his classic travelogue *The California and Oregon Trail*." With this information, I began to connect ideas. This was, in fact, one of the many journal entries found in this book that was written during the road adventure Kerouac would record in *On the Road*, and in reading this particular entry, it appeared that Kerouac was looking for something that he had probably read about in Parkman's book, which also appeared to be a travelogue. With these connections in mind, I knew that I needed to investigate Francis Parkman a bit more, so I closed the book and took it to the cashier.

One the first things that I learned about Parkman that fall was that, like Kerouac, he was a Massachusetts native, and not long after this discovery, I began to investigate the book written by Parkman that was footnoted in *Windblown World*. This was when the parallels between these two authors became abundantly apparent. Not only were Kerouac and Parkman from the same Eastern state, but their most famous books, *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, were both travelogues about these authors' first journeys to the West, and to boot, these journeys took place almost exactly one hundred years apart. So then I was charged with actually reading *The Oregon Trail*, and within the first chapter a number of things occurred to me.

First of all, Parkman's book wasn't written like any other historical text I'd ever read; it was actually charged with drama—the writing was interesting and not written with the banal diction I associated with other historical texts. And after a while, it also occurred to me that there was something familiar about Parkman's writing, something that reminded me of *On the Road*. Most overtly, there was a passion and excitement about heading west in the opening of both of these books—you could definitely get the sense that both of these writers were excited to leave their eastern environs and see the West for the first time—but beyond that there was something else that was recognizable about Parkman's writing, something I associated with Kerouac's books. It took a bit more reading to figure it out, but then it hit me: The way both authors constructed their sentences using short jubilant phrases in their travelogues, and the rhythm created by this arrangement was nearly identical. It was then that it occurred to me that Parkman may have influenced the newfound spontaneous prose that Kerouac utilized in writing *On the Road*. However, in further researching Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, other similarities between these two writers began to surface.

Even though you can look at Kerouac's letters and journal entries and see just how closely his narrative in *On the Road* follows the actual events of his life, I had to take some of Kerouac's descriptions of the West, especially in light of being a fifth-generation citizen of the West, with a grain of salt when I read them, particularly regarding how he turned Midwesterners into living, breathing cowboys and how he built up Neal Cassady to be such a cowboy, as well, when in fact Cassady would have been called a Denver city slicker in rural Colorado where I grew up. And in researching and gaining context for Parkman's *Oregon Trail*, it wasn't long before I found a consensus

amongst historians that Parkman, too, had a penchant for embellishing his western tales, particularly by condensing the events of several days into one for dramatic effect. With these similarities in mind, I knew that I had more than enough material to write the writing sample for my Ph.D. applications, and I also knew that I had what appeared to be the beginnings of a dissertation idea.

Eventually I was accepted into a Ph.D. program, and through my years as a Ph.D. student at Idaho State University, I continued to research the similarities between *The Oregon Trail* and *On the Road*. As my theoretical background grew through my Ph.D. coursework, I began to discover similar themes in the two books. Through the lens of gender theory, I saw how the masculine identities of the Western heroes portrayed in these narratives aligned with one another, and through the lens of postcolonialism, I observed how each writer represented and wrote about the Others in their narratives appeared analogous, as well. Having completed my coursework at Idaho State, I then went on to successfully propose my dissertation topic, take my comprehensive exams, and begin to write in earnest on my dissertation.

Then, in the fall of 2013, I presented a paper at the Western Literature Association Conference in Berkeley, California taken from the dissertation chapter I was currently working on—the similar masculine identities in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*. One of my favorite things to do in the Bay Area is to go to North Beach, eat Italian food, and of course go to the most famous Beat bookstore in the world, City Lights. So one evening, after a day at the conference, I convinced an old graduate school friend who was also presenting at the conference to go with me to North Beach. After our dinner, we went to City Lights.

When I enter City Lights, my first move is to usually go to the back of the store and climb the worn, wooden staircase to the small second floor where an entire wall is dedicated to Beat Literature.[64] This was my move that night, as well, and, as per usual, I went straight to the Kerouac section on that wall. I like how City Lights carries not only the creative works written by Kerouac, but biographies about him and critical works regarding his writing, as well. It was in this section that I saw for the first time Joyce Johnson's book *The Voice Is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac*, a book that had just come out earlier that year. As was my habit over the past seven years, any time I entered a bookstore or library and saw a book on Kerouac that I had never seen before, I flipped immediately to the index and looked for Francis Parkman's name. I always took delight in never finding his name in these books because this assured me that I had a solid dissertation topic, something that either hadn't occurred to anyone else or that hadn't been written about. However, this time, almost as if my eyes were mistaken, Francis Parkman's name appeared in the index, and the index reported that Parkman was not just mentioned on one page…but on three pages! I don't think I breathed as I looked up the first pages mentioned in the index. Johnson, Kerouac's former girlfriend, first mentioned Parkman, saying, "…the contours of another book were already forming in [Kerouac's] mind [the book he would write after *The Town and the City*] as he read Parkman and devoured other books about the West and American history" (238), which definitely made my heart sink a bit but at the same time wasn't too bad because anybody who had read the same journal that I had read could conclude that Kerouac had been reading Parkman around the time he was writing *On the Road*, but then, several pages later, Johnson wrote

[64] Lawrence Ferlinghetti—owner of the bookstore and Beat legend—has his office beyond that wall, as I once saw him go into it through a door just to the left of this section. It tickles my imagination to think that there is a famous Beat writer lurking behind a wall chock full of Beat Literature.

about Kerouac's first journey to the West saying that he had come "all the way west looking for Parkman's frontier" (252), which really demoralized me because this was, in fact, the major premise of my chapter on the similar romantic notions of both Parkman and Kerouac, that Kerouac was, in essence, trying to re-live Parkman's frontier experience when he journeyed west for the first time.

To say the least, I was disheartened to see these connections that I thought had only occurred to me, and that I had crafted my entire dissertation around, in print, that evening, on the dimly lit second floor of City Lights. When I got home from this trip, I started to digest what this meant to my dissertation and the idea that I thought was mine and mine alone.

This Dissertation's Impact on Kerouac Studies

Rebounding in a positive way, I began to see Joyce Johnson's pointing out of this connection to Parkman and *On the Road* as a good thing because in some ways it was proof that I had been right in my thinking all along. But beyond that, I came to realize that my dissertation did much more than point out that Kerouac had read *The Oregon Trail* and tried to re-live Parkman's frontier experience in traveling to the West for the first time. What my dissertation does is make explicit comparisons illustrating that Kerouac's *On the Road*, the seminal text of Beat Literature, has been influenced by Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. And perhaps even more importantly, I show that Kerouac's spontaneous prose appears to be influenced by Parkman's writing style, which is, after all, the missing link that I have been looking for all along.

Therefore, I see this dissertation as contributing to Kerouac scholarship in several important and original ways. First of all, while Johnson may point out that Kerouac

traveled to the West, "looking for Parkman's frontier," this dissertation makes explicit connections to show how Kerouac actively romanticized his Western experiences to align with those of Parkman in the actual writing of *On the Road*. This focus moves from the biographical to the textual and illustrates how Parkman's frontier experience worked towards shaping Kerouac's road narrative. This influence is shown in several different ways.

First, this dissertation illustrates the romantic inclinations of both Kerouac and Parkman and how they these ideologies promote the myth of the West, which ultimately demonstrates how Parkman's mythologized West affected Kerouac's vision of the West before he embarked on his first journey to the "frontier." Through the use of journals, letters, and the actual text of *On the Road*, this dissertation evidences Kerouac's fascination with Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. With this information in mind, this dissertation then moves on to utilize textual support from both of these books to show how Parkman's perspective of the West as an agent for healing a person both physically and emotionally appears to have affected Kerouac's perception of the West, as well.

Having provided solid support for both Kerouac and Parkman's penchant to romanticize their Western experiences and having provided textual support illustrating how Parkman explicitly appears to affect Kerouac's perspective of the West, this dissertation then moves on to examine the many parallels between Kerouac and Parkman's representation of non-white Others in *On the Road* and *The Oregon Trail*, which can be seen as being symptomatic of each authors romantic ideologies. Through the use of postmodern and postcolonial theory, this examination foregrounds how

Parkman's treatment of Native American Others appears to flavor Kerouac's writing in terms of the Hispanic Others he exoticizes in *On the Road*.

This dissertation also makes clear how the masculine identities of the frontier characters in *The Oregon Trail* would also seem to manifest themselves in the male characters of *On the Road*. This dissertation uses gender theory and its idea of socially constructed identities to point out just how similar the masculine identities in these two books appear. In particular, this dissertation draws distinct parallels between Parkman's trusted trail guide Henry Chatillon and Kerouac's "perfect guy for the road," Dean Moriarty, to illustrate the probable influence of Parkman's most prominent male character in *The Oregon Trail* on the definitive hero of *On the Road*.

These thematic influences make a strong case for *The Oregon Trail* having affected the content of *On the Road*. However, this dissertation goes on to show how the actual writing style that Parkman utilizes in writing his trail narrative appears to have influenced Kerouac's writing style in *On the Road*. Utilizing Kerouac's spontaneous prose technique that he defines in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," this dissertation illustrates how this method can be ascribed to much of the writing in *The Oregon Trail*. These comparisons would seem to preclude coincidence in Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail* having influenced Kerouac's newfound spontaneous prose technique.

Further Research

While exploring the influence of Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* on Kerouac's *On the Road*, I came across two ideas that I believe call for further research. First of all, Kerouac, in both *On the Road* and his written correspondences, makes mention of other books that excited his vision of the West, saying in *On the Road* that he had been

"reading books about pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron" (*OR* 10), and in the aforementioned letter to his friend Hal Chase, "all my reading in the past few months has been of a very practical nature. Here's a list: Parkman's 'Oregon Trail', another book concerned with that trail and also every other important trail in the country (don't ask me why: I'm crazy about this kind of reading now), a history of the United States, a biography of George Washington, a history of the Revolutionary War" (*Selected Letters* 107). Although the two history books and the biography that Kerouac writes about in this letter do not receive an immediate parenthetical statement behind them exclaiming Kerouac's enthusiasm for their content, it would be interesting to track down, either through library records, journal entries, or other correspondences, exactly what these books were and see if they evidence any sort of significant influence on the writing of *On the Road*.

Another prospect that needs further attention is the possible influence of Parkman's writing on the entire Beat movement. As previously mentioned in this dissertation, Kerouac wrote his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" as a means of explaining his spontaneous prose method to his literary compatriots Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. And it is clear that Kerouac can be seen as influencing the writing of not only Ginsberg and Burroughs, but the entire Beat movement. This idea is underscored by Edmund White in his introduction to Ginsberg's collected interviews, *Spontaneous Mind*, when White declares, "Again and again Ginsberg insists on Kerouac's position as the prime mover and chief inspiration to the entire Beat movement" (xv). Ginsberg, himself, in a 1966 *The Paris Review* interview discusses Kerouac's influence on Burroughs, saying, "So I think in a sense it was Kerouac that

encouraged Burroughs to write really, because Kerouac was so enthusiastic about prose, about writing…he turned Burroughs on in a sense, because Burroughs found a companion who could write really interestingly, and Burroughs admired Kerouac's perceptions" (21). And while Ginsberg may not have stated that it was specifically Kerouac's spontaneous prose that "Burroughs admired," the perceptions Burroughs admired most likely included those involving Kerouac's spontaneous prose. Whatever the case may be, Ginsberg makes clear that Kerouac's spontaneous prose was an influence on his own writing when he explained to Tom Clark in the same *The Paris Review* interview where he got the impulse for his lengthy poetic line:

> …what it boils down to is this, it's my *movement*, my feeling is for a big long clanky statement—partly that's something that I share, or maybe even got from Kerouac's long prose line; which is really, like he once remarked, an extended poem. Like one long sentence page of his in *Doctor Sax* or *Railroad Earth* or occasionally *On the Road*—if you examine them phrase by phrase they usually have the density of poetry, and the beauty of poetry, but most of all the elastic rhythm running from beginning to end of the line and ending "mop!" (25)

The influence of Kerouac's prose on Ginsberg's poetry, clearly indicated in this interview, can be correlated to Kerouac's conception of sketching writing from a "jewel center of interest" and working towards a "peripheral release and exhaustion" ("Essentials" 58). And as this dissertation has illustrated, this style of writing is also one that is exhibited in Parkman's writing in *The Oregon Trail*. When all of these connections are taken as one, it would seem that a thread can be traced back to Parkman

that would seem to indicate a possible influence on one of the major players of the Beat movement. And this possibility, without a doubt, also calls for further research.

Conclusion

This dissertation engenders a compelling case for Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* having influenced the seminal novel of the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. This case is made through a close examination of Parkman's influence on Kerouac's romantic perception of the West, which includes how Kerouac perceived and wrote about non-white Others in *On the Road* and the masculine identities of his characters, particularly Dean Moriarty, in this novel. But beyond these thematic influences, this dissertation lends substantial evidence for Parkman's writing style in *The Oregon Trail* having influenced the newfound spontaneous prose method Kerouac utilized in *On the Road*. And lastly, this dissertation opens up the possibility that Parkman's influence may be observed within the broader spectrum of Beat Generation writing.

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