

The Travails of Sal Paradise

Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* as Narrative Psycho-Geography

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In Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel *On the Road*¹, the central observing character, Sal Paradise, is caught in a double bind. He is explicitly searching for 'kicks' and an elusive essence of being, which the novel terms "IT," by traveling incessantly across the American continent, discovering its foreignness from within through encounters with eccentric others (eulogized in the novel's most famous passage as "the mad ones"² and primarily embodied in his most frequent travel companion, Dean Moriarty); yet simultaneously Sal secretly pursues a more conventional project of self-realization, namely finding the right girl to settle down with.

Paradise ultimately fails on both counts in the novel, and his psycho-geography can be mapped very directly onto the movements of his physical journeys, as lack of movement and the idea of settling down – with or without a woman – very quickly leads to him suffering a sense of dread and impending death.

This theme represents one of two unresolvable paradoxes in Kerouac's life and writing, namely his desire for constant motion while simultaneously requiring order and stability, and his desire to valorize deviance and madness positively in others, while deeply fearing it within himself. The journeys in *On the Road* are thus a metaphor for socially triggered psychological travails³

Paradise Lost?

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* features two central characters with such overdetermined names as "Sal [short for 'Salvatore'] Paradise" and "Dean Moriarty". Contrary to what one might expect with one angelic and holy-sounding name and another echoing the evil criminal mastermind of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, as well as another young, dead [James] Dean, these two are not embroiled in any Miltonian antagonistic struggle, but are each other's best friends, soul mates, even missing halves. Yet they do not escape betrayals and separation from each other at the end. In the early parts of the novel Sal is a protagonist looking for new beginnings and displacing a past that has made him miserable, sick, weary, even dead. Sal narrates:

I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up. And my feeling that everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road. (Kerouac, 1957:7)

This ominous beginning, setting the agenda of psychological travails from the very onset of the novel, is clearly similar to another American 1950s fictional beginning, namely that of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* which famously parodies the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* in the following words: "If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield crap, but I don't feel like going into it." (Salinger, 1951:5)

Holden, the protagonist of Salinger's novel, has the same desire to bury his past in a territory beyond speech that Sal expresses. Of course, both narrators are caught in the insoluble paradox of having to say that they don't want to say certain things, thereby already saying too much. Both narrators come to learn that there is no escaping from their illnesses, misery, lousy childhood and other 'Copperfield'-like psychological baggage.

Kerouac's protagonist is also similar to the most famous Lost Generation anti-hero, Ernest Hemingway's main character of *The*

Sun Also Rises, Jake Barnes, in his “feeling that everything was dead” (Kerouac, 1957:7). Sal is also finished with the life of a married man, (although his sexual apparatus is not permanently damaged by any war as Barnes’ was) and ready to embark on another life (on the road), but this time with another man as the most important figure in his life. He does attempt a form of heterosexual domesticity with Terry, a Mexican girl, but rather perfunctorily dumps her after a week or so of mixing with this “Fellahin” member of the salt of the Earth, “a Pachuco wildcat” (Kerouac, 1957: 86), and other “wild-buck Mexican hotcat[s]” (88).

Other than this fling with the exotic Other, the domesticity in Sal’s life is represented by his aunt, on whom he can always rely for shelter from “life on the road” and financial aid to get off the road and come home. Sal is less definitively wounded than Barnes, since he has a safer, more conventional refuge available to him, and while he, like Barnes, claims to be the happiest when among his male friends, in reality he is better off with the maternal figure in his life, his aunt. Still, the similarity remains that a male-bonding, moving utopia is constructed by Kerouac’s novel (life on the road becomes “the road is life” (199), only to be undermined by Sal’s actual experiences on said road.

Looking now at the role of Dean, as he is introduced in the initial Kerouac quote, it is evident that he is presented both as a direct substitute for the wife of Sal, first as the direct successor in time “not long after” (Kerouac, 1957:7), and also much in the same manner that one would expect the next woman to enter Sal’s life, as the remedy, albeit temporary, of Sal’s depression and existential crisis. Secondly, the sound of the phrase “the coming of Dean Moriarty” seems to signal a rather portentous event, not unlike some religious comings or even second comings, certainly signifying new beginnings. Yet, the past tense narration inevitably activates a feeling in the reader that the “life you could call my life on the road” is already past and over at the time of telling, a *gestalt* which the completed reading of the novel indeed bears out.

After the temporal setting of the past desiring erasure, and the future (perfect) waiting to be lived by Sal has been established, the whirlwind narrative of Sal’s many roads begins. The rest of the novel is taken up with motion and talk as the protagonists pendulate back and forth across the North American continent in search for

something indefinable known to them and us only as "IT", the thing to have, or "kicks", sensuous enjoyment. After several futile east-west-east crossings, through a gallery of minor characters which tend to either be representatives of the common man, down and out or downright bumming around, or of more 'primitive' races such as Mexicans or African Americans, the characters embark on the ultimate road which is to take them south into the unspoiled heart of darkness, here represented by the Mexican jungle. This quest also ends in sickness and betrayal, and the characters then separate and Sal is left to muse over the state of God ("don't you know that God is Pooh Bear?" (291), and realizing that "nobody, nobody knows [echoing a well-known negro spiritual] what's going to happen to anybody" (291), and that lost fathers can never be found.

Coast to Coast Fever

As will be apparent from a glance at a list of the road trips⁴ in *On the Road*, the eleven stages of the motion of the novel take the protagonist, Sal Paradise, five times all the way across the USA from New York to San Francisco or the other way, from west to east. Further crossings are planned and aborted, or are too uneventful to be represented in the narrative, and overall the feeling one gets from thinking schematically about the novel is one of dizziness at the back-and-forth motion of its protagonists. Only once is the rigorous swing of the eastward/westward pendulum replaced by a penetration into the south in the drive to Mexico City – a trip which will be discussed in depth later.

What is significant about all these trips and all these roads is the manner in which travelling versus non-travelling is figured in the text. All the ends and beginnings of trips are prefigured by feelings of a liminal nature, as if the apocalypse is catching up with Sal if he does not keep moving. It starts in Denver at the end of his first big road trip where he engages in a major party with his newfound Denver friends. At the end of the night, Sal announces in his narratorial voice, quite out of the blue: "Everything seemed to be collapsing." (55) This turns out to be the prelude for his leaving Denver to push along to the West Coast: "My moments in Denver were coming to an end, I could feel it when I walked her [Rita, a character Sal has a brief unfulfilling fling with] home, on the way back I stretched out on the grass of an old church with a bunch of hobos, and their talk made me want to get back on that road." (56)

The exact same symptom reveals itself when Sal reaches California, and finds Terry, the Mexican girl whose life he imposes himself on. He spends some time with her relatives, who never accomplish anything, and again in his narratorial voice he announces: "Everything was collapsing. That night we slept in the truck. Terry held me tight, of course, and told me not to leave." (95) Of course, he leaves: "I told Terry I was leaving. She had been thinking about it all night and was resigned to it. [...] She just walked on back to the shack, carrying my breakfast plate in one hand. I bowed my head and watched her. Well, lackadaddy, I was on the road again." (97) The desire for domesticity that Sal tries to live out in practice in this episode turns out to be as suffocating as any he might find with a white, middle-class all-American girl, and he is mandated to again attempt the travails of the road as a cure.

At the end of part II Sal has similar emotional or psychological symptoms before leaving. The perpetual duality of departure and anticipated arrival at a new goal stages itself again: "What is that feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? - it's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies." (148) There is sadness in departure, but it is quickly drowned out by the excitement of the next "crazy" thing in waiting. Of course, that turns out to be another disappointment: "What I accomplished by coming to Frisco I don't know. Camille wanted me to leave; Dean didn't care one way or the other. [...] It was the end; I wanted to get out" (168). Ultimately, none of the locations have delivered on their promise of 'kicks' or craziness in the positive valorisation of the novel. All that arrival has produced is the desire to depart, all that departure produces is the desire to arrive elsewhere again.

This parade of emotions continues: "It was the Denver night; all I did was die. Down in Denver, down in Denver, all I did was die" (170), and therefore he runs from Denver back to Dean in San Francisco: "[F]or there was nothing behind me any more, all my bridges were gone and I didn't give a damn about anything at all." (171) "Everything fell apart in me." (172)

No sooner has Sal arrived in San Francisco before he starts making plans to depart for Italy with Dean, by way of New York, and the whole thing starts over again. The motion of the characters in

the novel gradually reveals how the significance of specifics of location is becoming emptied out by the constant desire for motion away from/ towards something perpetually postponed, an enlightenment that is never found in the novel. One coast is very much like another, one town along the road is very much like another, one encounter on the road is very much like any other, and in fact the whole of the USA is much the same in this figuration. There is wilderness everywhere.

This is strikingly shown to us in an allegorical scene where Sal meets “the Ghost of the Susquehanna”, a little hobo character who is irredeemably lost in the American night. He wishes to go from Pennsylvania to “Canady”, but somehow gets lost along the way. Sal sees him:

[P]oor forlorn man, poor lost sometimeboy, now broken ghost of the penniless wilds. I told my driver the story and he stopped to tell the old man.
‘Look here, fella, you’re on your way west, not east.’
‘Heh?’ said the little ghost. ‘Can’t tell me I don’t know my way around here. Been walkin this country for years. I’m headed for Canady.’ (101)

It is impossible to convince the old man that he is on the wrong road. Sal is of course none the wiser himself, although he believes to know the difference between going east and going west, but in reality what the old man knows is that it makes no difference where you go and which road you take to go there. Sal manages a summation of sorts: “I thought all the wilderness in America was in the West until the Ghost of the Susquehanna showed me different. No, there is a wilderness in the East” (101). And it is possible to get lost in that, and everywhere. This ties in with the figuration of Los Angeles as a jungle: “[I] examined the LA night. What brutal, hot, siren whining nights they are! [...] LA is the loneliest and most brutal of American cities; New York gets god-awful cold in the winter but there’s a feeling of wacky comradeship somewhere in some streets. LA is a jungle.” (82-83)

Thus, America has many wildernesses and jungles, some more human than others, but all wild. Later we shall see how images of the Mexican jungle tie in with this. America makes Sal ill, it makes

him lonely, it fragments him, and at the same time he needs it to live. At the end of one of his round-trips from coast to coast Sal says in summation:

Suddenly I found myself on Times Square. I had travelled eight thousand miles around the American continent and I was back on Times Square; and right in the middle of a rush hour, too, seeing with my innocent road-eyes the absolute madness and fantastic hoorair of New York with its millions and millions hustling for ever for a buck among themselves, the mad dream - grabbing, taking, giving, sighing, dying, just so they could be buried in those awful cemetery cities beyond Long Island City. The high towers of the land - the other end of the land, the place where Paper America is born. (102)

While Sal positions himself as the returned outsider who sees things with greater innocence and is outside the general hustling, it is clear from the following scene that he is no such thing. First, he attempts to grab a cigarette butt from under the feet of the crowds of people, and then he has to hustle a Greek minister to get bus fare to go the last bit of the way home. If he has any innocence, New York quickly takes it out of him with its tempo and mad rush.

Both coasts and their metropolises are figured in *On the Road* as brutal constructs that rob a person of his humanity, but on the other hand all chances at meaningful human relations offered to Sal in the middle, between coasts and urban wildernesses, are rejected because of his ever imminent collapse of self, which can only be postponed through new movement. However, even the final major journey of the novel ends in sickness and betrayal of friendship, despite its entailing even greater travails and greater joys (the protagonists come closer than before to finding "IT") than the preceding travels.

Southward-Ho

In *On the Road's* Mexican segment, Sal and Dean take off southward, "Officially, Sal, to get a Mexican divorce, cheaper and quicker than any kind." (Kerouac, 1957:246) This, however, seems purely incidental once the trip gets under way, but is worth remembering as the first ascription of quality to Mexico - that it is freer in terms of

marriage legislation and cheaper to navigate than the States. As the trip gets under way it is figured explicitly as a good occasion for storytelling, and the protagonists, Sal, Dean, and their friend Stan, take turns telling their life stories. However, the trip is beset with omens of fear, starting with a strange bug that bites Stan, and makes Sal wonder:

[H]ow can homely afternoons in Colorado [...] produce a bug like the bug that bit Stan Shepard? (252)
Here we were, heading for unknown southern lands, and barely three miles out of hometown [...] a strange feverish exotic bug rose from secret corruptions and sent fear into our hearts. [...] It made the trip seem sinister and doomed. We drove on. (253)

The trip is figured apparently quite traditionally as beginning in “homely” Colorado, and moving towards “unknown southern lands”, but there is a reversal in that the sinister bug of fear comes from “hometown” and “secret corruption”, so perhaps the trip is not “doomed” but an escape to healthier climes. As the trip and the story-telling progresses through Texas, the men encounter signs that Mexico has already begun. The heat is “absolutely tropical”, and you “had the feeling all this used to be Mexican territory indeed.” (255) The houses seem fewer and different: “We entered town in a wilderness of Mexican rickety southern shacks” (255).

Thus, the borderline between the USA and Mexico seems not to follow the actual border, but Mexico stretches up north into Texas, both historically and at the present of telling. Mexico is figured as a “wilderness”, which as has already become clear is not an unusual figuration of place in this text. In San Antonio the dichotomy of USA and Mexico is depicted along class differences. The clinic they go to for Stan’s bug bite is “near downtown, where things looked more sleek and American” (256), yet the clinic is “full of poor Mexican women, some of them sick or bringing their little sick kids. It was sad. I thought of poor Terry and wondered what she was doing now.” (256) An unsurprising dichotomy of sleekness and American-ness versus sickness, poverty, and Mexican-ness is established.

What is more interesting is the joy that especially Dean feels as he ‘digs’ the streets of “Mexican San Antonio” (256). He loves the crazy-

ness and madness he interprets out of the Mexicans they encounter, and this raises his appetite for further movement south: "I never knew this mad San Antonio! Think what Mexico'll be like! Lessgo! Lessgo!" (257). Madness in the usual (for Beat texts) positive valorization is ascribed to the Mexicanness of San Antonio, which coupled with the sexual charge Dean gets from the place, means that the quest for the unknown south, becomes loaded with sexual and psychic energy, just as the 'going' itself gets sexualized through anticipation. "And now we were ready for the last hundred and fifty miles to the magic border" (257).

The border still gets invested with "magic" or transcendental qualities, as the act of crossing becomes established as tantamount to a sexual entering of Mexico, a long anticipated climax to the trip. This theme is heavily played out in the description of Laredo, the border town as an American libido: "Laredo was a sinister town that morning. [...] It was the bottom and dregs of America where all the heavy villains sink, where disoriented people have to go to be near a specific elsewhere they can slip into unnoticed." (258)

The crossing itself is heavily symbolic, and yet tellingly empty of signification: "But everything changed when we crossed the mysterious bridge over the river and our wheels rolled on official Mexican soil [...] Just across the street Mexico began. We looked with wonder. To our amazement, it looked exactly like Mexico." (258) This is indeed a rich scene. Not only is the bridge "mysterious", and the wheels synecdochally⁵ standing in for the first touch of the wonder that is Mexico, finally reached after long postponement of desire, but Mexico looks exactly like Mexico! The scene of course refers to the stereotypical index of Mexico the average American will have in mind, which is "fellows in straw hats and white pants [...] lounging" (258).

These stereotypes have specifically been lodged in Sal's mind from his experiences with Terry's relatives who always seem ready to lounge and loaf and put off getting rich till *Mañana* (89-91), but here they are to be put to the test. It turns out that the Mexican cops are exactly like waiters or hustlers in the USA. One of them says, embodying this stereotype: "Welcome Mehico. Have good time. Watch you money. Watch you driving. I say this to you personal, I'm Red, everybody call me Red. Ask for Red. Eat good. Don't worry. Everything fine. Is not hard enjoin yourself in Mehico." (259)

Thus blessed, the trio once more get the impatient urge to penetrate further into the south. Dean cannot wait: "And think of this big continent ahead of us with those enormous Sierra Madre mountains we saw in the movies, and the jungles all the way down and a whole desert plateau as big as ours and reaching down to Guatemala and God knows where, whoo! What'll we do? What'll we do? Let's move!" (259-260)

It is clear that for Dean the significance of Mexico is always seen in a comparison with the America he knows, and that in itself what matters is less the place than the movement first towards it and then through it. This never changes for Dean, but for Sal the significance of place is just about to dawn on him in the otherness of Mexico. He first muses over the difference of roads as he drives while the others are sleeping:

[T]he road ran straight as an arrow. Not like driving across Carolina, or Texas, or Arizona, or Illinois; but like driving across the world and into the places where we would finally learn ourselves among the Fellahin Indians of the world [...] These people were unmistakably Indians and were not at all like the Pedros and Panchos of silly civilized American lore [...] they were not fools, they were not clowns; they were great, grave Indians and they were the source of mankind and the fathers of it. (263-264)

Sal can make the comparisons between "civilized American lore" and the observation of greater authenticity that he personally makes, unlike Dean who still expects the "enormous Sierra Madre mountains" to look like they do in American movies, expecting a one to one equivalence between mediated representation and reality. Sal desires what he startlingly formulates as to "learn ourselves among the Fellahin", and is apparently on a quest for enlightenment as well as a quest of regression into the sources and fatherhood of mankind. This heavy romanticization of the Indian other as more original and primordial than civilized American man is a core formulation of the 'Beat' ethos, which includes this anti-intellectual striving.

The attainment of the goal of enlightenment also presupposes a letting go of the super-ego and American uptightness for Sal. He

achieves this in the key jungle scene, which involves the assimilation of bugs into the body, now without the sinister implications of the American bug-scene:

We took off our T-shirts and roared through the jungle bare-chested. [...]

Thousands of mosquitoes had already bitten all of us on chest and arms and ankles. Then a bright idea came to me: I jumped up on the steel roof of the car and stretched out flat on my back. [...] For the first time in my life the weather was not something that touched me, that caressed me, froze or sweated me, but became me. The atmosphere and I became the same. Soft infinitesimal showers of microscopic bugs fanned down on my face as I slept, and they were extremely pleasant and soothing. (276-277)

Thus, the bugs are no longer sinister and poisonous, but rather mingle with Sal's body and become part of him as he becomes part of them. The jungle welcomes him and takes away all his bodily discomfort. Everything is entirely benevolent and he becomes one with nature, reverting to the same level of primitiveness that his idolized Fellahin have as their birthright. This Romantic notion of becoming one with the world as one living breathing organism is an essential image of the novel and of the Beat ethos of striving for 'it-ness', and Sal has to go to a renewing, ancient location to achieve it. At the end of the night Sal is rewarded with a vision in a highly allegorical scene involving a ghostly white horse, "immense and almost phosphorescent and easy to see" (278), trotting directly towards Dean. The horse seems sent for Dean to bestow some form of blessing upon him, and Sal as usual is there to witness the event and testify to us about it. He wonders: "What was this horse? What myth and ghost, what spirit?" (278)

These questions remain unanswered as the trio again are urged to move on by their desire to see more and go further. But the next day Dean is offered the promised enlightenment Sal has announced from the beginning of the novel: "Somewhere along the line I knew there'd be girls, visions, everything; somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me." (14) Since Sal has such confidence that the world is his oyster, it is not surprising that such events in-

deed unfold, and that they do so in Mexico. What is noteworthy is that they come to pass for Dean, and not at such for Sal, who is once more consigned to observer status. The trio meet some children that wish to sell them rock crystals. Dean wants one (“no bigger than a berry”), “the sweetest and purest and smallest crystal she has personally picked from the mountain for me” (281). He exchanges the crystal for a wristwatch, and as the “pearl” now has been handed to him: “He stood among them with his ragged face to the sky, looking for the next and highest and final pass, and seemed like the Prophet that had come to them.” (281) As they leave the children follow them, and Dean muses: “‘Would they try to follow the car all the way to Mexico City if we drove slow enough?’ ‘Yes’, I said, for I knew.” (281)

This crucial exchange is Sal’s high point of knowledge and certainty in the world, but it is not an insight pertaining to himself. He has seen the coming of Dean as the prophet among the Fellahin, and by witnessing the act of the handing on of the pearl, he has to an extent personally partaken in it. Dean has been his prophet all along, and as he would follow Dean “all the way”, he knows that others would too. This epistemological certainty is the height of affirmation of purpose in the novel, and it is not incidental that it takes place in primitivity, in Mexico, and that it takes place in view of the “next and highest and final pass”. Thus, place is represented in liminal and apocalyptic terms in the Mexico scenes of *On the Road*, especially in this last scene where visions and girls (albeit in a purified and sexually immature version) become unified with the gift of the ‘pearl’.

However, when the travellers reach Mexico City, Sal falls ill and is summarily abandoned there by Dean who follows his libido back to the US in search of new girls and more sex. Sal makes his way home alone, as single as ever and now newly friendless as well.

Conclusion

Ultimately, *On the Road* does not indicate any permanent escape from the “miserable weary split-up[s]” of the opening quote (Kerouac, 1957:7), but at best a passing of time while waiting around to grow old and die. This world-weariness is contradicted throughout the novel by the breathlessness and insistence of the prose it is narrated in, which occasions us to query whether the haste of the nar-

rative might not be a large-scale displacement of the fear of old age and death. The themes of questing (for meaning), remembering, talking, and suffering are inscribed in a wistful eulogy to madness as the ultimate state of illumination.

In this scheme of things the man who knows time and has 'it' is also the harbinger of "the end" - in both senses, as 'the goal' and 'the conclusion', presumably. Thus, it is Dean who has a full-fledged religious philosophy complete with salvation, resurrection and an afterlife, while Sal Paradise is temporarily 'lost' as to the meaning of this philosophy. He might eventually have been initiated into it, and also transcend it as any disciple must do to become his own master. Sal, however, chooses to renounce the church of 'it', and instead follow the path of the Beatific, the path that leads to knowing that "God is Pooh Bear", that all is suffering, and that the road may be life, but also that all roads come to an end, and that all human beings come to the end of the road (the last time Sal meets Dean, "Dean couldn't talk any more and said nothing" (290), having also lost it all, life, time, 'it').

The novel refuses to be resolved into a neat and tidy message about its central concerns and instead ambiguously captures the anxiety of many white middle-class males in 1950s America – the fear of conventionality is only trumped by an even greater fear of going mad if the structures of everyday life and peer recognition are transgressed too much. Sal's psycho-geography equally remains in limbo – standing still is tantamount to death, but movement leads to illness and betrayal, as travel and travail melt into one.⁶

Notes

- 1 The experiences described in the novel date back to Kerouac's road trips in 1947, and composition began in 1948. The final draft of the novel was composed in a frenzied 3-week-period in 1951, but the version that came out of those sessions was edited considerably before eventual publication in 1957. The 1951, so-called scroll version of the manuscript has recently been published, but as 95 % of all Kerouac criticism addresses the 1957 version, this is also the edition I refer to in this article.
- 2 The full quote reads: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of

- everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in middle you see the blue centrelight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'" (11)
- 3 Travels and travails are of course etymologically linked in the most intimate of manners, cf. OED: "The sense-development (of 'travail') has not followed the same course in French and in English. Thus English has not developed the simple sense 'work', for which the Old English word has lived on. On the other hand, French has not evolved the sense 'journey' = French *voyager*, which appeared early in Anglo-Norman, and has become the main sense in English, and is differentiated by the spelling 'travel', while the more original senses, so far as they continue in use, retain the earlier spelling 'travail'."
- 4 There are in all 11 roadtrips, told or described, in *On the Road*:
 pt. I (Buses and hitchhikes): 1. Trip to Denver. Sal solo; w. Eddie; w. bums ("Everything seemed to be collapsing", p. 55); 2. (Denver to San Francisco) Sal solo: "uneventful", p. 58; 3. San Fran. to Southern California. Sal solo; w. Terry ("Everything was collapsing", p. 95); 4. Back to New York. Sal solo; Ghost of the Susquehanna
 pt. II (The Hudson): 5. Virginia to N.Y. and back to Virginia, and back to N.Y. Sal/Dean w. Marylou & Ed; Sal/Dean w. "my aunt"; 6. N.Y. via New Orleans to San Fran. Sal/Dean w. Ed; Sal/Dean w. Marylou & hitchhikers ("the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye", p. 148) ("It was the end; I wanted to get out", p. 168)
 pt. III (Gas-share: Fag-Plymouth; The Caddie): 7. (N.Y. via Denver to San Fran.) Sal solo. Largely untold. ("all I did was die", p. 170) ("my bridges were gone", p. 171); 8. San Fran to New York: via Denver: Sal/Dean w. fag ("nauseas", p. 210), via Chicago: Sal/Dean w. jesuit college boys, via Detroit: Sal/Dean ("horror-hole at dawn", p. 231) (Plan to go to Italy (Sal/Dean) abandoned)
 pt. IV (The '37 Ford): 9. N.Y. to Denver. Sal solo; w. Henry. Told in brief; 10. Denver to Mexico City (via Gregoria whorehouse) Sal/Dean w. Stan (illness)
 pt. V: 11. Home: plans to go to San Fran. (Sal/Dean w. Laura) abandoned; Dean goes alone.
- 5 A synecdoche is a rhetorical figure where the part stands for the whole. In this case the wheels of their car stand for the whole carload of travelers about to set foot on foreign soil. Because the car is their preferred

means of transport, it is to be expected that 'wheels' and not 'feet' will be the first part of theirs to touch Mexico.

- 6 The paper above owes much to the great Danish-based American Beat scholar Gregory Stephenson, whose truly ground-breaking volume *The Daybreak Boys* (1990) was one of the very first attempts to wrest Beat Studies out of the biographical mire it had been stuck in till then. Of the many other Beat scholars the author has exchanged ideas with over a decade of working with the ideas of the Beat psycho-geography, he would like to single out the work of Glenn Sheldon on the figuration of Mexican space in the poetry of the Beats in his book *South of Our Selves* (2004), as well as Erik Mortenson's recent study, *Capturing the Beat Moment: Cultural Politics and the Poetics of Presence* (2010). The above piece does not refer explicitly to these highly praiseworthy volumes, for the simple reason that they use other terminologies, not consistent with the present author's neo-Freudian reading of space and character-narration in *On the Road*.

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